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## A STATISTICAL APPROACH TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN NIGERIA BASED ON TWO DOMAINS.

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**Abstract:-** This paper examined the level of women's empowerment in Nigeria based on two household domains of empowerment - decision making autonomy and attitudes towards wife beating, using data from a national survey called the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey conducted in 2008. For the purpose of the study, this data set was used by applying some statistical techniques and analysis in order to assess the level of women's empowerment in the study area and also establish the relationship between women's socio-economic and demographic background with the two selected domains of empowerment. Findings from the study revealed that women's socio-demographic characteristics significantly influence their decision making autonomy and their perception to gender roles which is directly linked to their level of empowerment. Furthermore, the study revealed that less than one-third of women in the study area are fully empowered, about one-half of are partially empowered and more two-third are totally not empowered. This indicates that the empowerment level of the women considered is below average. Therefore, the study suggests policy actions that will increase women's decision making autonomy in their individual households be implemented so as to enhance women's empowerment.

**Keywords:** Statistical approach, decision making autonomy, women's empowerment, domain, Nigeria.

### INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment is receiving world attention ever since the United Nations has included gender equality and women's empowerment as part of its developmental goals. This is because women's empowerment is an essential ingredient for achieving all the other development goals. While, at the level of development bodies, the concept of empowerment was adopted after the Beijing Conference (1995), in its declaration of section 13 at the conference were it presented women's empowerments as a key strategy for development. Ever since then, many countries including the developed and developing like Nigeria are on track to achieve at least some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) at the appointed dateline of 2015. However, these goals can only be achieved if individual countries improve their economic growth, educational and health systems, which eventually will improve the quality of life of the people (Zaid 2010, The World bank, 2007). The concept of empowerment is not a new one, references to the term was dated back to the 1960s, particularly in the Afro-American movement and in Paulo Freire's theory based on the development of critical conscience, Charlier and Caubergs (2007). Since 1985, popular women's movements in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as feminist movements have seen the notion of empowerment as being tied. On the other hand, to the seizing of power, by emphasising mainly the improvement of self-esteem and self-confidence as well as the ability to chose what direction one's life should take; and on the other to the collective power to change gender relations in the economic, political, legal and socio-cultural spheres. "Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and their acceptance of some gender roles, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace."

Administrators, researchers and policy makers are realizing the growing importance of the study of human groupings because these are capable of providing better understanding of the social, cultural, economical and demographic behaviour of people. Perhaps the most important human grouping that can be of concern in a population study is the household. Though the study of household is important in itself, its analysis becomes desirable because the behaviour of an individual is also influenced by ethnic, social and economic characteristics of the household.

### **1.1 Why women empowerment?**

In an effort to answer the question "why women empowerment", Ar kabrata (2001) in one of his presentation on "women empowerment, says that "the role of women in the development of society is of utmost importance, in fact it is the only thing that determine whether a society is strong and harmonious, or otherwise, women are the backbone of the society", which is also in agreement with the popular saying that 'Educating a man means educating an individual, but educating a woman/female is educating an entire family,' women need to be empowered for the progress of any nation. However, there are so many other reasons why women need to be empowered, some of these reasons in addition to the above includes; educational, culture, Gender prejudice, Low confidence, Lack of unity, Problem related with Health, Poverty and Ignorance, traditional barriers, these and many more reasons calls for the need to empower women. Furthermore, empowerment of women can also be viewed as an essential avenue for reducing the differences that exist between the sexes nearly in all societies.

Empowerment is multidimensional in nature and hence defined in several different ways depending on the purpose or usage of the term. It can be referred to as "the process by which the powerless gain greater control over the circumstances of their lives. Greater control over resources but also greater self- physically coercive acts used against adult and confidence and the ability to make a decision on equal adolescent women by current or former male intimate partners.

Kishor (2008) says empowerment denote women's increased control over their own lives, bodies, and environments. In discussions of women's empowerment, emphasis is often placed on women's decision-making roles, their economic self-reliance, and their legal rights to equal treatment, inheritance and protection against all forms of discrimination, in addition to the elimination of barriers to access such resources as education and information. One of the major and direct indicators of empowerment is the decision-making ability of women. Kabeer (2005) lists decision making power as one of the elements required to enable one gain power, authority and influence over others, institutions or society. In short, empowerment is the process that allows one to gain the knowledge, skill-sets and attitude needed to cope with the changing world and the circumstances in which one lives.

### **1.2 Status of Women in Nigeria.**

Although Nigerian women have been under the yoke of all forms of abuse meted out by men, and though fellow Nigerian women have been trying to get them empowered, with a view to liberating them, however, the women's empowerment struggles have not yet yielded commensurate and significant results in Nigeria Roseline et al. (2009). Unfortunately, in traditional African societal norms, a woman is still not expected to be an equal to a man. Lack of adequate education, economic and political development has been identified as significant factors for poor performance at the level of women's empowerment programmes in Nigeria. This paper is designed to show and highlight how some of the socio and demographic factors influence women empowerment in the Nigerian context. According to the assessment carried out by UNICEF (2002), the level of education of women is low in Nigeria most especially in Northern parts of Nigeria.

### **1.3 Need for the study**

Several studies have been conducted by many people on diverse issues relating to women's empowerment, some of which includes; measuring women empowerment, level of women empowerment, sources of women empowerment, constraints of women empowerment and the likes, but very few population-based study have been carried out on the statistical approach to women's empowerment in the Nigerian context. This study, therefore, will consider and examine level of women's empowerment using two household domains in Nigeria based on a national health survey data, so as to establish whether women's empowerment level in the area is on the increase or decrease. A statistical scientific study can as well show the extent to which some demographic and socio-economic variables such as women's age; level of education, work status, wealth status and other developmental variables affects women's empowerment in Nigeria.

## 2.0 DATA AND METHODS:

Secondary data was used in the analysis of this study which comes from the 2008 Nigeria Demographic and Health Surveys (NDHS) obtained through Measures DHS. The NDHS includes a rich nationally representative information of household survey on women of reproductive age (15-49) years, where data was collected using standardized questionnaires from a selected representative samples of the population. Both descriptive and multivariate regression methods were employed to provide a broader understanding of the association between women's empowerment domain and their socio and demographic characteristics, after controlling for other factors. The study provides evidence on the important impact of women's decision making autonomy and attitude towards domestic violence on their level of empowerment.

For the present study, the key variable of interest used is the women's empowerment which is measured by two domains: women's decision making autonomy in the household, and their views/attitude towards intimate partner violence (wife beating). Each of these domains of women's empowerment was measured specifically as described below:

The measure on household decision making autonomy focuses on issues around decision on some household variables, specifically; the study uses the following questions which are adopted from the DHS to measure women's decision making autonomy:

- Who usually decides on your health care?
- Who usually makes decisions about making household purchases?
- Who usually makes decisions about making purchases for daily household needs?
- Who usually decides on your visit to family/relatives?
- Who usually decides on money earned by husband/partner?

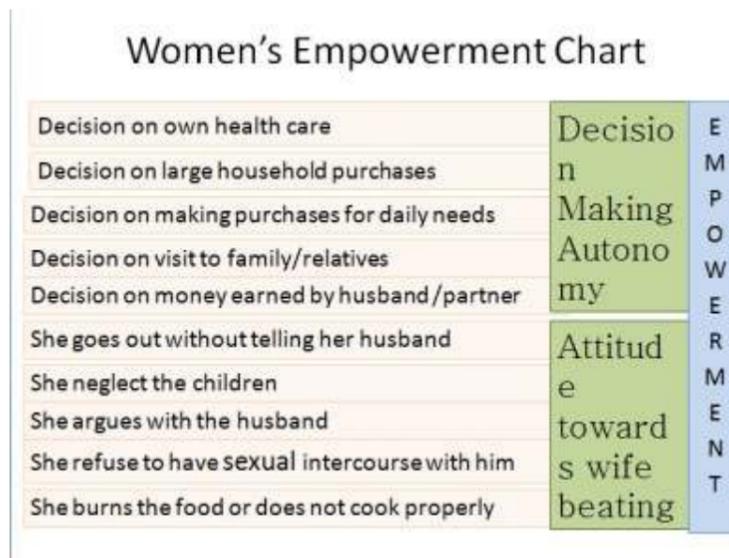
There are six responses to these questions; respondent alone, respondent with husband/partner jointly, respondent and another person, Husband/partner alone, someone else or others. A respondent is said to have no decision making autonomy (No autonomy) if she reported not participating in any of the household decisions given above; she is said to have partial autonomy if she reported participating jointly either with either her husband/partner or another person in making household decision on each of the variables. Similarly, the respondent is said to have full autonomy if she independently participate in making household decisions.

Furthermore, the attitude of women towards domestic violence was used as a proxy women's perception to gender role and autonomy.

The following questions from the DHS were also adopted in other to find out the women's attitudes or their perception towards intimate partner violence, that is whether it is right for a husband/partner to beat/hit his wife in any of the following situations

- If she goes out without telling him
- Is she neglects the children
- If she argues with the husband
- If she refuses to have sex with him
- If she burns the food/does not cook properly.

There are two responses to the above questions, Yes or No. A respondent said 'Yes' if she is justified that it is right for a husband to beat/hit his wife under the given situation, and said 'No' if she do not justify wife beating under any of the given situation.



### 3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1, shows the percentage distribution of some demographic and socio-economic variables of currently married women of age 15-49 years. It can be observed that more than 50% of the women lives in the rural areas, about 39 percent of them are in the age group 25-34 years, 67 percent married at age below 18 years as seen in table 1 which is about and their age at first birth is on the average 18 years and above. Results on their parity revealed that, most (66 %) of the women considered in the study have 3 and above children, 52 percent of them have no formal education (i.e., illiterates). The table also revealed that 65% of the women in the study reported working and 35% not working; results on standard of living revealed that higher percentage (50%) were observed to have a low standard of living.

Characteristics	Frequency	%
<b>Age of respondent</b>		
15-24 years	5,569	23.7
25-34 years	9,154	39.0
35-49 years	8,756	37.3
<b>Age at marriage</b>		
Below 18 years	15,739	67.0
18 years and above	7,740	33.0
<b>Age at first birth</b>		
Less than 18 years	11,012	46.9
18 years and above	12,467	53.1
<b>Residence</b>		
Rural	17,049	72.6
Urban	6,430	27.4
<b>Parity</b>		
No child	2,004	8.5
1 - 2 children	6,063	25.8
3 children and above	15,412	65.6
<b>Women's level of education</b>		
No education	12,229	52.1
Primary	4,986	21.2
Secondary/higher	6,264	26.7
<b>Standard of living Index</b>		
Low	11,644	49.6
Medium	4,402	18.8
High	7,433	31.7
<b>Women's Occupation</b>		
Not working	8,137	34.7
Working	15,342	65.3

Table 2 presents the distribution of decision making ability on different decision variables of currently married women in Nigeria. It can be observed from the table that more than half (58%) of the women do not have decision making autonomy on their own health; two-third (62%) and 53% of them do not participate in making decision on large and daily purchases in their households, 47% do not take decision on the visit to family/relatives, and about three-fifth (69%) never involve in making decision on husband's earnings. The result in Table 2 revealed generally low percentage of women's decision making autonomy in their households in the study area.

Decision making Variables	No autonomy		Partial autonomy		Full autonomy	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Own health care	13,633	58.1	7,890	33.6	1,956	8.3
Large household purchases	14,777	62.9	7,480	31.9	1,222	5.2
Daily household purchases	12,349	52.6	7,717	32.9	3,413	14.5
Visit to family/relative	10,924	46.5	10,239	43.6	2,316	9.9
Husband earnings	16,180	68.9	5,823	24.8	1,476	6.3

Table 3 is the results on the distribution of women's attitude towards wife beating based on the different situations considered. It can be seen from the table that most of the women considered in the study area do not justify wife beating on any of the stated reasons, this is seen in high proportion of respondents saying "No" to questions on wife beating.

Wife beating variables	No.	%	Yes	%
she goes out without telling him	14,689	62.6	8,790	37.4
she neglects the children	15,418	65.7	8,061	36.7
she argues with him	16,185	68.9	7,294	31.07
she refuses to have sex with him	16,090	68.5	7,389	31.47

Table 4 gives the results on the level of women's empowerment based on the women's decision making autonomy and their attitude to wife beating. As can be observed from the table, almost half of the women in the study area have low empowerment in terms of their household decision-making autonomy. However, reverse is the case with regards justification to wife beating, where high proportions (60%) of women are highly empowered. The results on the level of women's empowerment showed that women in Nigeria are moderately empowered (64%).

Decision Making Autonomy	Frequency	Percent
No autonomy	11,653	49.6
Partial autonomy	3,918	16.7
Full autonomy	7,908	33.7
<b>Justification to Wife Beating</b>		
Not justified	4,995	21.3
Partially justified	4,309	18.4
Justified	14,175	60.4
<b>Empowerment level</b>		
Not Empowered	3,051	13.0
Moderately Empowered	15,025	64.0
Fully Empowered	5,403	23.0
Total	23,479	100

Table 5 present results of binary logistic regression for women's level of empowerment on various covariates among currently married women in Nigeria. Logistic regression (odds ratio) reveals the increase or decrease chance of under the given set level of the reference variable.

Odds ratio >1 indicate that the chance of women being empowered in that category is higher than that of the reference category.

Odds <1 indicate that the chance of women being empowered in that category is less than that of the reference category of each variable.

From the table, it was revealed that older women were more likely to be empowered than the younger women. The values of the odds ratio showed 1.546\*(18-24) years and 2.044\*(above 24) years. Place of residence shows no significant contribution to women's empowerment, but women's level of education and standard of living were seen to have a significant effect on women's empowerment. However, high parity women were seen to be less likely empowered than the low parity women, which agrees with findings from Ibrahim and Tripathi (2014). Furthermore, women with age at first birth 18 years and above were more likely to be empowered than those with less age at first birth. Age at marriage was also observed to have significant contribution to women's empowerment, since the results of odds ratio value revealed that women with higher age at marriage (18 and above) years were more likely empowered (odds ratio = 1.373\*) than those with age at marriage below 18 year. Finally, the logistic regression revealed that working women were more likely empowered than the non working women.

Background characteristics	Odds Ratio(CI)
<b>Respondent Age</b>	
less than 18 (Ref)	[1]
18-24 years	1.546*[1.383, 1.709]
25 years and above	2.044*[1.80488, 2.283]
<b>Age at First Marriage</b>	
Below 18 years(Ref)	[1]
18 years and above	1.373*[1.25148, 1.495]
<b>Age at First Birth</b>	
less than 18 years (REF)	[1]
18 years and above	1.037[0.94684, 1.127]
<b>Type of Residence</b>	
Rural (Ref)	[1]
Urban	1.011[0.92868, 1.093]
<b>Level Of Education</b>	
No education (Ref)	[1]
Primary education	1.862*[1.69736, 2.027]
Secondary/Higher education	2.874*[2.59764, 3.150]
<b>Standard of Living</b>	
Low (Ref)	[1]
Middle	1.311*[1.18948, 1.433]
High	1.480*[1.333, 1.627]
<b>Parity</b>	
No Child (Ref)	[1]
1-2 children	1.071[0.924, 1.218]
Above 2 children	0.916[0.78468, 1.047]
<b>Respondent Work Status</b>	
Not working (Ref)	[1]
Working	1.353*[1.25108, 1.455]
Note: * indicates significant at 5%; CI= 95% confidence interval; [1] = odds value of the reference category; Ref = reference category.	

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION.

We can conclude that about half of the population of women considered in this study are partially empowered only one-third of them are fully empowered. Furthermore results obtained on women's decision making autonomy indicates that most women in Nigeria have partial autonomy in making household decision, while their perception to wife beating revealed that larger numbers of women in the study area does not support wife beating, which gives them a greater sense of empowerment.

Findings from the study also revealed that women's demographic and socio-economic characteristics such as age, residence, parity, standard of living, work status, age at marriage have a significant contribution to their decision making autonomy and their attitude to acceptance of gender role.

Furthermore, the study revealed that less than one-third of women in the study area are fully empowered, about one-half of are partially empowered and more two-third are not empowered. This indicates that the

empowerment level of the women considered is below average.

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