

PERCEIVED ROLES OF MEN AND BOYS IN ENDING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: Gender-Based Violence (GBV) continues to be a widespread and persistent challenge in Nigeria, with high prevalence and widespread awareness. It is a multidimensional issue that intersects with critical global development concerns and transcends generations. While women and girls are the primary victims, men and boys are often identified as key perpetrators who may also be engaged as important stakeholders in efforts to prevent and address GBV. This study examines the perceived roles of men and boys in the mitigation of GBV in Nigeria, highlighting their potential as allies and agents of change. Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 269 male respondents (167 men and 102 boys) aged 14-64 years ($M = 41.39$) using convenience sampling. Data were gathered using a self-developed questionnaire disseminated online via Google Forms across social media platforms and offline (to accommodate those without internet access). The instrument was subjected to face and content validation and demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$). Six hypotheses related to GBV awareness and intervention roles were tested. Chi-square analysis indicated a high level of GBV awareness among respondents and identified key perceived roles of men and boys in addressing GBV. These included promoting positive masculinity, fostering education and awareness, demonstrating empathy and emotional intelligence, participating in advocacy efforts, and serving as role models. The findings suggest that these roles are perceived as important components of GBV prevention and response efforts. The study recommends the strengthening and integration of these roles within existing prevention and intervention frameworks. It also highlights the need for future research to explore specific behavioral and socio-cultural factors, such as silence, stigma, gaslighting, and bread-crumbling, that may be associated with the persistence of GBV, thereby providing deeper insight into culturally embedded practices and attitudes.

Keywords: Gender-Based Violence, Positive Masculinity, Male Engagement, Nigeria, Advocacy, Prevention Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a pervasive global concern that affects diverse population groups, although its prevalence and impact vary across contexts. While women and girls are disproportionately affected, the consequences of GBV extend beyond individual survivors, influencing families, communities, and broader social structures. These effects contribute to persistent patterns of inequality, trauma, and insecurity. According to the World Health Organization (2024), approximately 30% of women worldwide or nearly one in three, have

experienced physical and/or sexual violence, most often perpetrated by an intimate partner. Furthermore, intimate partner violence accounts for up to 38% of female homicides globally, as reported by UN Women (2024).

In Africa, the prevalence of GBV remains particularly high, though with notable regional variations. The United Nations (2023) estimates that approximately 42% of women in Eastern and Southern Africa have experienced physical or sexual violence. Country-level data further illustrate this variation; for example, in Kenya, 41% of married women and 20% of unmarried women report experiences of physical violence (UN Women, 2024). Nigeria similarly faces widespread GBV in multiple forms, including domestic violence, sexual assault, rape, child and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, acid attacks, and femicide (UNFPA Nigeria, 2023). These manifestations not only compromise the safety and dignity of victims but are also associated with broader socio-economic consequences, including reduced educational attainment, limited workforce participation, and potential negative impacts on national productivity.

The European Commission (2024) defines GBV as violence directed at an individual based on their gender or violence that disproportionately affects a particular gender. Although women and girls are most frequently affected, GBV also has implications for men, children, and society more broadly. Forms of GBV include;

- **Physical violence:** Actions intended to inflict bodily harm, often including misuse of medication or physical restraint to exert control.
- **Sexual violence:** Unwanted and non-consensual sexual activities that cause psychological and/or physical harm.
- **Psychological violence:** Behaviors that cause emotional or mental harm, including trauma and negative shifts in behavior.
- **Economic violence:** Actions that limit or deny individuals access to financial resources or decision-making in economic matters.

Other emerging forms: These include bread-crumbling; manipulative behavior that gives victims false hope, gas-lighting; a psychological tactic to undermine victims' perceptions, technology-facilitated abuse and femicide; the systematic killing of women due to their gender. These evolving manifestations highlight the need for context-sensitive and adaptive responses.

Addressing GBV requires multifaceted strategies that extend beyond single-group interventions. Increasingly, attention has focused on the engagement of men and boys as part of prevention efforts. While dominant gender norms and expectations may contribute to the perpetration of violence, men and boys may also play constructive roles in challenging harmful norms, promoting gender equality, and modeling non-violent behaviors. Their involvement is therefore increasingly recognized as an important component of broader GBV prevention and response strategies.

Statement of the Problem

Despite growing efforts to curb Gender-Based Violence (GBV) through survivor support and legal sanctions for perpetrators, gaps remain in the engagement of men and boys as proactive participants

in prevention efforts. GBV continues to pose significant challenges to the health, safety, dignity, and freedom of women and girls in Nigeria and globally. Social and cultural factors, including traditional gender norms and patriarchal structures, have been identified in the literature as contributing to the normalization or justification of violent behaviors, thereby reinforcing patterns of silence, stigma, and underreporting.

While many interventions emphasize victim support and legal redress, increasing attention has been directed toward the role of men and boys in prevention strategies. This study aims to **assess** the level of knowledge of men and boys regarding GBV, examine their perceptions of its underlying causes, and explore their perceived roles in prevention efforts. It also investigates how men and boys may influence attitudes and practices related to GBV within their social contexts.

By examining these perspectives, the study seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the potential roles of men and boys in GBV prevention. The findings are intended to inform ongoing discussions on gender-responsive interventions and the inclusion of diverse stakeholders in efforts to address GBV.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to assess the perceived role of men and boys in preventing and eventually stopping gender-based violence in Nigeria.

Specific Objectives

1. To examine the level of awareness of GBV among men and boys in Nigeria.
2. To assess the influence of promoting positive masculinity on reducing GBV.
3. To evaluate how well education and awareness efforts help reduce instances of gender-based violence.
4. To explore the role of collaborative advocacy efforts involving male partners working with women and girls to advance gender equality.
5. To investigate how role modeling by men and boys can foster healthy and respectful relationships within communities.
6. To determine the extent to which interventions promoting empathy and emotional intelligence among men and boys can reduce GBV.
7. To provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, educators, and community leaders on effectively engaging men and boys in GBV prevention and gender equality efforts.

These objectives aim to generate a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted roles men and boys can play in eradicating GBV and promoting a more inclusive and equitable society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Trauma Theory

Trauma theory, as articulated by Caruth (1995), underscores the psychological and emotional consequences of experiencing or witnessing traumatic events, including GBV. Trauma can disrupt cognitive and emotional functioning, resulting in long-term mental health outcomes such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Earlier psychoanalytic perspectives, including those of Freud (1961), suggest that trauma arises when the mind's protective mechanisms fail to manage overwhelming stimuli, leading to psychological distress and maladaptive behavioral responses.

Beyond individual experiences, trauma theory has been extended to include cultural trauma, where shared exposure to violence shapes collective attitudes and behaviors. In the context of this study, trauma theory provides a useful framework for understanding how exposure to or awareness of GBV may influence the perceptions and behavioral orientations of men and boys. For instance, individuals who recognize the psychological consequences of violence may be more likely to reject harmful norms, support survivors, and endorse non-violent roles.

Accordingly, this perspective informs the study's focus on GBV awareness and the perceived roles of men and boys, particularly in relation to empathy, advocacy, and prevention, as reflected in the hypotheses tested.

2. Empathy and Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EI), defined as the capacity to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions, plays a critical role in interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution (Goleman, 1995). Empathy, a central component of EI, enhances an individual's ability to respond sensitively to the experiences of others, particularly survivors of GBV. Empirical evidence (e.g., Cao & Chen, 2024; Tsigotou & Łuczak, 2016) suggests that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to demonstrate prosocial and empathetic behaviors.

Within the context of this study, emotional intelligence is particularly relevant to understanding how men and boys perceive and enact roles related to GBV prevention. Higher levels of empathy and emotional awareness may be associated with greater support for non-violent behaviors, willingness to challenge harmful gender norms, and active participation in advocacy efforts.

This framework, therefore, underpins key variables examined in this study, including empathy, role modeling, and advocacy, and helps explain variations in how men and boys engage with GBV-related issues.

Trauma theory and emotional intelligence, together, provide complementary perspectives for understanding the attitudes and behaviors of men and boys in relation to GBV. While trauma theory highlights how exposure to violence may shape perceptions and responses, emotional intelligence emphasizes the role of empathy and emotional regulation in promoting non-violent interactions.

These frameworks inform the study's focus on awareness, perceived roles, and behavioral engagement, which are operationalized in the hypotheses tested.

The Roles of Men and Boys in Ending GBV

A. Awareness of GBV among Men and Boys

Awareness is widely recognized as a foundational step in GBV prevention. Prior research shows that men's recognition of abusive behaviors can influence their willingness to engage in preventive actions (UNFPA, 2023). While several studies document high prevalence of GBV in Nigeria, few examine how men's awareness relates to their perceived roles in intervention. Comparing rural and urban contexts, rural teenage girls experience higher early pregnancies linked to GBV, highlighting the broader social consequences of male inaction.

From a trauma theory perspective, understanding the psychological consequences of violence may shape men's attitudes toward harmful behaviors. Emotional intelligence similarly suggests that awareness enables empathetic recognition of victims' experiences. Therefore, this study examines awareness as a key variable and hypothesizes that higher awareness will positively associate with engagement in GBV prevention.

B. Promoting Positive Masculinity

Positive masculinity involves expressing male identity in non-violent and socially responsible ways. A study by Izugbara et al. (2023) across Nigeria, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo explored the effects of promoting positive masculinity. Using the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), researchers engaged 1,454 men and boys aged 18–19. Findings revealed a significant correlation between participation in masculinity interventions and supportive attitudes toward gender equality, including willingness to perform domestic duties and resist gender-based stereotypes. It concluded that masculinity-focused interventions improve support for gender equality. However, other research indicates that traditional masculine norms still dominate in many communities, suggesting a contextual gap in promoting non-violent norms.

Trauma theory posits that exposure to socialized violence can reinforce harmful behaviors, but structured interventions may redirect these behaviors toward empathy and constructive roles. Linking theory to this study, positive masculinity is examined as a variable influencing men's likelihood to reject GBV, forming the basis for this study.

C. Education and Awareness Initiatives

Education is consistently linked to improved attitudes toward gender equality. Ekine (2020) based on a survey of 1,126 participants in Western Nigeria, highlights that GBV remains poorly addressed in Nigerian schools, whereas structured curricula in some regions improve understanding of consent and respect. Comparing these contexts reveals gaps in formal education that this study seeks to address.

Emotional intelligence theory suggests that educational interventions enhance empathy and reflective thinking, promoting proactive behaviors. Hence, this study hypothesizes that higher education and awareness correlate with reduced engagement in GBV-perpetuating behaviors.

D. Acting as Allies and Advocates

Men and boys serving as advocates can amplify prevention efforts. Hyeladzira (2023) documented a campaign involving over 1,000 men and boys across cities such as Enugu, Lagos, and Abuja, that showed that mobilizing men in advocacy campaigns increased discussion of GBV and social accountability. However, the literature lacks integration of advocacy with other roles such as empathy or awareness in a single study.

Emotional intelligence provides the mechanism: empathetic understanding motivates advocacy. Trauma-informed perspectives suggest that those aware of violence's impact are more likely to intervene. This study examines advocacy as a behavioral variable, linking it to reduced engagement in GBV-perpetuating behaviors.

E. Role Modeling and Social Influence

Social learning theory emphasizes that behaviors are acquired through observation. Programs like the Fatherhood Programme in Tanzania (CDF, Men Engage Africa) engaging men and boys aged 20 to 75, where participants were trained to model gender-equitable parenting and reject patriarchal norms, demonstrate how role modeling improves attitudes toward equitable family relationships. Yet, comparative studies in Nigeria are sparse, leaving a contextual gap.

Trauma theory reinforces that exposure to non-violent models may counteract prior harmful norms. This variable forms the basis for one of the objectives of this study, hypothesizing that role modeling positively influences GBV prevention behaviors.

F. Fostering Empathy and Emotional Intelligence

Empathy and EI are consistently associated with prosocial behavior and reduced aggression (Manrai, 2025; Tsirigotis & Łuczak, 2016). Their studies indicate that men with higher EI are more likely to challenge harmful norms and engage in supportive actions.

Although prior research documents this association, few studies link EI interventions directly to GBV prevention in Nigeria. Therefore, this study predicts that interventions promoting empathy and EI among men and boys will enhance their preventive roles.

G. Ending Silence and Stigma

Silence and stigma perpetuate GBV by discouraging disclosure and intervention. Cultural norms often reinforce secrecy (UNFPA, 2023). Prior research documents the negative effects of stigma but rarely investigates men's role in breaking it, indicating a gap this study addresses.

Trauma theory suggests that stigma exacerbates distress, while EI equips men to navigate sensitive discussions. This study examines breaking silence as a variable influencing GBV prevention engagement.

H. Engaging in Prevention Efforts

Engagement in proactive prevention (policy advocacy, community initiatives, education campaigns) links theoretical insights to practical behaviors. Early intervention disrupts cycles of violence, consistent with trauma-informed theory. Emotional intelligence facilitates informed, empathetic engagement.

Existing research documents isolated examples of engagement but rarely considers its integration with awareness, empathy, advocacy, and role modeling. This examines how active engagement in prevention correlates with other variables and contributes to reducing GBV.

Summary of Literature

Trauma theory illustrates how GBV is often a learned response to earlier violent experiences, while emotional intelligence provides a framework for understanding and reshaping such behaviors. Together, these frameworks emphasize the importance of empathy, social modeling, and structural change in addressing GBV.

Across the literature, men and boys have multiple potential roles in GBV prevention: awareness, positive masculinity, education, advocacy, role modeling, empathy, breaking silence, and active engagement. While prior studies support the importance of these roles, most research examines them in isolation or outside the Nigerian context. Few integrate trauma theory and emotional intelligence to explain variations in behavior. This study addresses these gaps by examining all roles collectively, testing their associations with GBV prevention behaviors, and grounding hypotheses in theory and empirical evidence.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- 1) The level of awareness of GBV among men and boys will not be different.
- 2) Promotion of positive masculinity among men and boys is not positively associated with non-violent attitudes and proactive GBV prevention.
- 3) Education and awareness initiatives about GBV are not positively associated with men and boys' recognition of harmful behaviors and preventive actions.
- 4) Active involvement of men and boys as allies and advocates is not positively associated with increased participation in GBV prevention efforts.
- 5) Role modeling by men and boys is not positively associated with the adoption of non-violent behaviors among peers and younger males.
- 6) Higher levels of empathy and emotional intelligence among men and boys are not positively associated with engagement in supportive and preventive GBV behaviors.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design, which is appropriate for assessing the awareness, perceptions, and self-reported behaviors of a population at a specific point in time. The aim was to explore the roles of men and boys in preventing and addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigeria.

Participants

The study comprised 269 respondents, including 167 adult men and 102 adolescent boys, aged between 14 and 64 years ($M = 41.39$). Participants were recruited from various regions of Nigeria using convenience sampling, allowing the inclusion of willing respondents with and without internet access and basic digital literacy.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using a self-constructed Gender-Based Violence Questionnaire (GBV-Q) developed by the researcher. Pilot study was carried out on the instrument to ascertain the validity and reliability using 50 (30 men and 20 boys) participants, representing a substantial pre-test sample drawn from the target population. The participants were aged 15-62 years with mean age of 40.12 years. Convenience sampling was utilized and participants were excluded from the main study to prevent contamination bias.

The questionnaire consisted of eight sections (A–H), each designed to assess a specific construct:

- Section A: Demographics: Collected data on participants' age, gender, educational level, and employment status.
- Section B: Awareness of GBV: Measured general knowledge and understanding of GBV.
- Section C: Positive Masculinity; Assessed beliefs about masculinity and its relation to violent behaviors.
- Section D: Education and Awareness: Explored the role of educational exposure and awareness campaigns in reducing GBV.
- Section E: Empathy and Emotional Intelligence: Measured perceptions of how these emotional competencies relate to GBV reduction.
- Section F: Collaborative Advocacy: Assessed the involvement of men and boys in advocacy and alliances against GBV.
- Section G: Role Modeling: Explored participants' understanding of modeling positive behaviors to influence others.
- Section H: Open-Ended Responses: Included items that invited participants to suggest strategies for GBV reduction, describe personal experiences as allies or advocates, and identify additional support required to promote gender equality.

The questionnaire contained a total of 13 Likert-scale items (e.g., Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree), 5 polar (yes/no) questions, and 3 open-ended questions (Items 23 to 25).

For validity, the instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts in psychology and gender studies to ensure relevance and clarity.

Face validity was established through expert review. The instrument was examined by 2 Clinical Psychologists, a Social Worker and a Measurement and Evaluation Expert. The experts assessed the clarity of items, appropriateness of language and relevance to GBV constructs. The instrument was judged to have good face validity, as all items were considered clear, relevant, and appropriate for measuring the intended constructs. Minor corrections were made in wording and sentence structure to improve readability. For content validity, the item-level CVI (I-CVI) ranged from 0.80 to 1.00 and Scale-level CVI (S-CVI/Ave) = 0.88. The CVI values indicate that the instrument has adequate to high content validity, confirming that the questionnaire sufficiently covers all dimensions of the study variables.

For reliability, Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha based on responses from the 50 participants and the results showed that all scales demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha \geq 0.70$), with the overall reliability coefficient of 0.86, indicating that the instrument is highly reliable for the main study.

Data Collection Procedure

The survey was administered online using Google Forms and offline on a paper form to capture those without internet access or familiarity with digital tools. The link was disseminated via social media platforms and online communities within Nigeria. Prior to participation, individuals were informed of the study's purpose and gave informed consent. Ethical standards concerning voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality were strictly observed.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Chi-square (χ^2) statistical test, which is suitable for examining the relationships between categorical variables. This test was used to assess whether the differences observed in responses (e.g., awareness levels, attitudinal shifts, and reported behaviors) were statistically significant or could be attributed to chance. Chi-square analysis thus enabled the evaluation of whether the hypothesized associations among variables, such as awareness, education, empathy, and advocacy, were meaningful within the sample.

RESULTS

Table 1: Awareness of GBV among Men and Boys

Awareness Level	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	(O-E) ² /E
Very Familiar	133	67.25	65.75
Familiar	77	67.25	9.75
Somewhat Familiar	26	67.25	-41.25
Not Very Familiar	33	67.25	-34.25

In Table 1, a chi-square test was conducted to examine whether there would be differences in the levels of awareness of GBV among men and boys. The observed frequencies for the four levels of awareness (very familiar, familiar, somewhat familiar, and not very familiar) significantly differed from the expected distribution: $\chi^2 (3) = 104.84, p < .01$. There is a statistically significant difference in awareness levels, indicating that respondents disproportionately report higher familiarity with GBV. This result indicates a statistically significant variation in GBV awareness levels, suggesting a difference in the awareness levels among the respondents.

Table 2: Positive Masculinity and GBV

Response Category	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	(O-E) ² /E
Strongly Agree	66	53.8	12.2
Agree	118	53.8	64.2
Neutral	58	53.8	4.2
Disagree	21	53.8	-32.8
Strongly Disagree	6	53.8	-47.8

Table 2 presents the chi-square analysis, which examined whether promoting positive masculinity is associated with GBV reduction. Results revealed a significant difference among the five response categories: $\chi^2 (4) = 118.32, p < .01$. The result shows that responses are significantly skewed toward agreement, indicating strong perceived relevance of positive masculinity in addressing GBV. The result concludes that promotion of positive masculinity among men and boys is positively associated with non-violent attitudes and proactive GBV.

Table 3: Education and Awareness of GBV

Response Category	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	(O-E) ² /E
Strongly Agree	92	53.8	38.2
Agree	84	53.8	30.2
Neutral	39	53.8	-14.8
Disagree	27	53.8	-26.8
Strongly Disagree	27	53.8	-26.8

Table 3 assesses whether education and awareness are associated with GBV perceptions among men and boys, a chi-square test yielded: $\chi^2(4) = 92.11, p < .01$. The result shows that participants significantly endorse education and awareness as important factors in GBV prevention. The result confirms that education and awareness initiatives about GBV are positively associated with men and boys' recognition of harmful behaviors and preventive actions.

Table 4: Ally-ship and Advocacy

Response Category	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	(O-E) ² /E
Strongly Agree	72	53.8	18.2
Agree	118	53.8	64.2
Neutral	48	53.8	-5.8
Disagree	21	53.8	-32.8
Strongly Disagree	10	53.8	-43.8

Table 4 evaluates the association of male involvement in GBV advocacy, the chi-square test produced: $\chi^2(4) = 101.76, p < .01$. The results show that participants significantly perceive advocacy and allyship as important in addressing GBV, indicating that active involvement of men and boys as allies and advocates is positively associated with increased participation in GBV prevention efforts.

Table 5: Role Modelling and GBV Reduction

Response Category	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	(O-E) ² /E
Strongly Agree	178	53.8	124.2
Agree	39	53.8	-14.8
Neutral	21	53.8	-32.8
Disagree	21	53.8	-32.8
Strongly Disagree	10	53.8	-43.8

In Table 5, a chi-square test was performed to examine the relationship between role modeling by men and boys on GBV-related attitudes and behaviors. Results showed a very strong relationship: $\chi^2(4) = 182.63, p < .05$. The result shows a very strong skew toward agreement, indicating that respondents overwhelmingly perceive role modelling as important in GBV prevention. This indicates that role modelling by men and boys is positively associated with the adoption of non-violent behaviors among peers and younger males.

Table 6: Empathy and Emotional Intelligence

Response Category	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	(O-E) ² /E
Strongly Agree	118	53.8	64.2
Agree	104	53.8	50.2
Neutral	25	53.8	-28.8
Disagree	11	53.8	-42.8
Strongly Disagree	11	53.8	42.8

Table 6 tests whether emotional intelligence and empathy relate to GBV-related behaviour; the chi-square result was $\chi^2(4) = 136.45$, $p < .01$. This indicates a statistically significant association, suggesting a strong perceived importance of empathy and emotional intelligence. Findings show that higher levels of empathy and emotional intelligence among men and boys are positively associated with engagement in supportive and preventive GBV behaviours.

DISCUSSIONS

This study examined the perceived role of Men and Boys in ending gender based violence (GBV) in Nigeria. Six (6) hypotheses guided this work and the summary of the results revealed statistically significant differences in response distributions across all examined variables, including awareness of GBV, positive masculinity, education, empathy, advocacy, and role modelling ($p < .001$). These findings indicate strong participant endorsement of these roles as important in addressing gender-based violence. The results indicate that men and boys, if they perform the identified roles, may contribute to reducing GBV.

Hypothesis 1 which states that there is no significant difference in the level of awareness of GBV among men and boys is rejected. The rejection of the hypothesis indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in the level of awareness of gender-based violence (GBV) among men and boys. The generally high awareness observed in this study suggests that GBV is a widely recognized issue within the study population. This may be attributed to increased advocacy, media coverage, and intervention programs addressing GBV in Nigeria.

This finding aligns with reports by the United Nations Population Fund (2023), which highlight the widespread occurrence of GBV in Nigeria. While high prevalence does not necessarily equate to high awareness, the visibility of GBV cases may have contributed to increased public consciousness, particularly among men and boys. However, the observed variation in awareness levels suggests that knowledge of GBV is not evenly distributed, indicating the need for more targeted educational and sensitization efforts to address existing gaps.

Hypothesis 2 which states that promotion of positive masculinity among men and boys is not positively associated with non-violent attitudes and proactive GBV prevention is rejected. The rejection of the null hypothesis indicates that promoting positive masculinity has a significant effect on reducing the likelihood of violence perpetration among men and boys. This suggests that interventions aimed at reshaping masculine norms can play a critical role in preventing gender-based violence (GBV).

The findings of this study demonstrate that encouraging positive masculinity contributes to non-violent attitudes and behaviors, thereby supporting efforts to curb GBV. This is consistent with the work of Izugbara, et al. (2023), who found that positive masculinity fosters a better understanding of gender roles and promotes supportive behaviors toward women and girls, including shared domestic responsibilities.

This relationship may be explained by the fact that positive masculinity challenges harmful traditional norms that associate masculinity with dominance, aggression, and control over women.

By promoting healthier, non-violent expressions of masculinity, men and boys are better equipped to question and resist these norms.

Therefore, strengthening programs that promote positive masculinity could be an effective strategy for reducing GBV, particularly by addressing the root social and cultural drivers of violent behavior.

Hypothesis 3 which states that education and awareness initiatives about GBV are not positively associated with men and boys' recognition of harmful behaviors and preventive actions is rejected. This indicates that education and awareness of gender-based violence (GBV) have a significant effect on reducing the tolerance of violence among men and boys. This suggests that increased knowledge and exposure to GBV-related information can play a critical role in shaping attitudes and discouraging acceptance of violent behaviors. The findings of this study reveal that education and awareness programs is associated with the prevention of GBV by promoting informed perspectives and challenging harmful beliefs. This is consistent with the study by Ekine and Sokari (2020), which emphasized the role of awareness initiatives in educating the public particularly men and boys, about the societal consequences of GBV. This relationship may be explained by the fact that education enhances understanding of key concepts such as consent, respect, and equality in relationships, while also increasing awareness of the causes and consequences of GBV. As individuals become more informed, they are more likely to reject norms that justify violence and to adopt attitudes that support prevention. Furthermore, the dissemination of knowledge through peer engagement, community programs, seminars, and workshops can amplify these effects by fostering collective responsibility and social change. Therefore, strengthening educational and awareness-based interventions remains a crucial strategy for reducing GBV in Nigeria.

Hypothesis 4 which states that active involvement of men and boys as allies and advocates is not positively associated with increased participation in GBV prevention efforts is rejected, indicating that the involvement of men and boys as allies and advocates, in collaboration with women and girls, can lead to significant improvements in gender equality and reductions in gender-based violence (GBV). This finding highlights the importance of inclusive, collective approaches to addressing GBV. The results of this study suggest that engaging men and boys as active participants in advocacy efforts can foster shared responsibility and strengthen prevention strategies. This is supported by the work of Hyeladzira (2023), which emphasizes the role of allyship in encouraging men to listen to survivors, validate their experiences, and provide emotional and social support. Such engagement helps to shift attitudes and promotes accountability in addressing GBV. This relationship may be explained by the fact that involving men and boys as allies can challenge traditional norms that frame GBV as solely a "women's issue." By participating in advocacy and support initiatives, men and boys may become more aware of the impact of violence and may be more likely to adopt behaviors that promote respect, equality, and non-violence. Furthermore, institutional support for allyship; through community groups, educational institutions, and organizations, can enhance the effectiveness of these efforts by creating structured platforms for engagement. Therefore, promoting collaborative advocacy initiatives that actively involve men and boys is essential for achieving sustainable reductions in GBV in Nigeria.

Hypothesis 6 which states that higher levels of empathy and emotional intelligence among men and boys are not positively associated with engagement in supportive and preventive GBV behaviours

is rejected, indicating that interventions aimed at promoting empathy and emotional intelligence among men and boys can lead to significant positive changes in attitudes and behaviours toward violence and gender equality. This suggests that emotional and psychological competencies are important factors in preventing gender-based violence (GBV). The findings of this study support the work of Tsirigotis and Luczak (2016), who established a link between emotional intelligence, empathy, and the development of healthy social relationships among men and women. This relationship may be explained by the role of empathy in enabling individuals to understand and share the feelings of others, thereby reducing the likelihood of engaging in harmful or violent behaviour. Similarly, emotional intelligence enhances the ability to regulate one's emotions, manage conflict constructively, and respond appropriately in interpersonal situations. These skills can challenge aggressive tendencies and promote respect and equality in relationships. Therefore, integrating empathy and emotional intelligence training into GBV intervention programs could significantly improve their effectiveness by addressing the emotional and behavioural drivers of violence among men and boys.

Hypothesis 5 which states that role modeling by men and boys is not positively associated with the adoption of non-violent behaviors among peers and younger males is rejected. The rejection of the null hypothesis indicates that role modeling has a significant influence on reducing gender-based violence (GBV) among men and boys. This suggests that exposure to positive role models can shape attitudes and behaviours in ways that discourage violence and promote gender equality.

The findings of this study are consistent with initiatives by Men Engage Africa (2023), particularly through programs such as the Children Dignity Forum (CDF), which emphasize fatherhood engagement and the transformation of harmful gender norms. These programs demonstrate how positive male role models can influence men and boys to challenge patriarchal beliefs, reject violence, and adopt more equitable behaviours.

This relationship may be explained by the social learning process, where individuals model behaviours observed in respected figures within their families, communities, or institutions. When men and boys are exposed to role models who demonstrate respect, emotional responsibility, and non-violent conflict resolution, they are more likely to internalize these values and replicate them in their own interactions.

Given the influential positions that men often occupy within social, cultural, and religious structures, promoting positive role models in these contexts can be particularly effective in addressing GBV. Therefore, strengthening role-modeling initiatives should be considered a key strategy in efforts to reduce GBV and promote gender equality in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the prevalence and awareness of gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigeria are high, with women and girls remaining the most affected. Given that men and boys are frequently identified as perpetrators, their involvement in prevention and advocacy is essential. This study highlights roles that men and boys perceive as potentially effective, such as promoting positive masculinity, supporting survivors, and participating in preventive efforts.

While these roles do not guarantee the elimination of GBV, they suggest avenues through which men and boys may contribute to reducing violence and fostering gender equality. Incorporating these strategies into interventions could enhance efforts to challenge harmful norms and encourage more equitable social behaviours, positioning men and boys as potential agents of positive change.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Given that men and boys demonstrated high awareness of GBV, targeted interventions should focus on groups with lower awareness to reinforce recognition and understanding of GBV.
- ii. Programs that encourage non-violent, equitable expressions of masculinity can reduce the likelihood of perpetrating GBV. Schools, workplaces, and community groups should integrate such initiatives.
- iii. Structured educational and awareness initiatives can reduce tolerance for violence by promoting knowledge of consent, respect, and gender equality.
- iv. Incorporating training that builds emotional intelligence and empathy among men and boys may improve interpersonal behavior and reduce GBV-related attitudes.
- v. Engaging men and boys as allies in collaborative efforts with women and girls can strengthen preventive measures and promote shared responsibility in addressing GBV.
- vi. Exposure to male role models demonstrating non-violent, respectful behavior can influence attitudes and challenge harmful gender norms. Families, schools, and organizations should facilitate such initiatives.
- vii. Additional studies should examine other factors, such as addressing stigma, ending silence, and challenging harmful interpersonal practices (e.g., gaslighting, breadcrumbing), to assess their association with GBV prevention and mitigation.

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