Masculinity and Religion in Nigeria

Findings from qualitative research

Part of the Landmark Research Report
November 2015

christian aid

VOICES4CHANGE

ISLAMIC RELIEF

Acknowledgements

This is to thank all those who contributed to the management of the operations and logistics as demanded by this study in various ways.

Special thanks to the participants who, despite all the apprehension and possible criticisms from some quarters and the possible exposure of their beliefs, personal and collective stance of their religious affiliations, have boldly participated and provided relevant information as required for this study. We remain grateful to the religious leaders and teachers who volunteered their time and efforts in mobilising members and also participating in the study as key informants.

We also thank the research data collectors, consultants and their assistants at all levels who provided committed and commendable support during the various stages of the project.

Finally, thanks to the staff of V4C, CA and IRW who participated actively during data collection tools development, field data collection and reflections on reporting and other relevant meetings.

Temitope Fashola
Governance Programme Manager,
Christian Aid Nigeria

Christian Aid is an international development agency that insists the world can and must be swiftly changed to one where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty.

We work globally for profound change that eradicates the causes of poverty, striving to achieve equality, dignity and freedom for all, regardless of faith or nationality. We are part of a wider movement for social justice.

We provide urgent, practical and effective assistance where need is great, tackling the effects of poverty as well as its root causes.

christianaid.org.uk

Contact us

Christian Aid Nigeria Country Programme
Plot 802 off Ebitu Ukiwe Street
Jabi District
Abuja, FCT
Nigeria
T: +234 (0) 703 255 9282
E: nigeria-info@christian-aid.org
W: christianaid.org.uk/nigeria

Christian Aid is a member of the

actalliance

Contents

List of acronyms

CA	Christian Aid
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CWO	Catholic Women Organisation
DFID	Department for International Development
ECWA	Evangelical Church of West Africa
EFWACPFN	Evangelical Fellowship of West Africa
EHAIA	Ecumenical HIV & AIDS Initiative in Africa
FGC(M)	Female Genital Cutting (Mutilation)
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FOMWAN	Federation of Muslim Women's Association in Nigeria
GBV	Gender Based Violence
IRW	Islamic Relief Worldwide
JDPC	Justice Development and Peace Commission
JNI	Ja'Matu Nasir Islam
KII	Key Informant Interview
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSCIA	Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs
OAIC	Organisation of African Instituted Churches
PBUH	Peace Be Upon Him (in Reference to Prophet Muhammed, PBUH)
PFN	Pentecostal Federation of Nigeria
SWT	Subhanahu Wata'ala
UKAid	United Kingdom Agency for International Development
V4C	Voices for Change
WCC	World Council of Churches

Executive summary

This study on religion and masculinity in Nigeria was conducted in June 2015. It sought to establish the impact of religious beliefs on masculinity amongst Christians and Muslims, paying particular attention to selected states (Enugu, Kaduna, Lagos and FCT) spread across the geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The overall aim of the research was to understand how religion and religious institutions influence and reinforce both positive and negative attitudes, behaviours and practices of men and the perception of masculinity. The study also explored how religious teachings and institutions shape the notion of masculinity, namely, what it means to be a man, among boys, men, girls and women. It explored how men and women appropriate religious teachings to inform their behaviours, including attitudes to gender-based violence, the exclusion of women from decision-making and leadership. The study also sought to identify and profile religious leaders, institutions and teachings that promote positive values, behaviours and ideas of masculinity in their respective communities. In addition, it sought to make practical suggestions and recommendations on how to appropriate the positive potential of religious leaders and institutions to promote positive masculinity and advance gender justice.

Being informed by an extensive review of the literature on religion and masculinity and utilising qualitative methodologies, the study established that religion plays a key role in shaping masculinity in contemporary Nigeria. A post survey validation workshop with key stakeholders was held to review, clarify and validate key findings from the study. Religion is central to the conceptualisation of "masculinity," and it informs ideas relating to who a "real man" is and how such a person must carry himself in society. Sacred texts are "mined" to determine appropriate masculine identity, behaviour and roles. One recurrent motif was that according to Christianity and Islam, a man is "the head of the family, created in the image of God, and by God to lead and provide for his family and community, spiritually and physically." Most respondents believed that men were created to be superior to and dominant over, women. It was generally believed across age groups, religions and genders that men express their "masculinity" more in their homes, where they had the most control over women, and were seen as having more physical strength.

The study found out that religion was a major factor in defining responsibilities of men in the family, within religious settings, in the community and in the nation. Despite overwhelming support for role distribution by gender, it was mostly agreed that neither Christianity nor Islam explicitly specifies detailed roles for men and women, beyond biological roles based on the physical features of men and women. That these roles and responsibilities were apportioned by culture, and not specifically by religion, was repeated across different groups of respondents. Younger men in particular, both Christian and Muslim, while recognising that men are leaders in their homes, disagreed more on the specific roles for men and women, and mostly believed that women and men could perform the same roles.

With respect to domestic chores, responses varied by region, religion and age. In general, younger men in both Christianity and Islam were more open to participating in domestic work, whereas older men were more hesitant. Younger women in both religions found the concept of men participating in household chores consistent with the teachings of their religions and sought to have it promoted in more active ways. This dimension is important to establish notions of gender equality, as domestic work is often minimised when employment statistics are consolidated in different contexts.

On the theme of leadership, the general trend was to associate leadership with men. Women were believed to have the capacity to lead, but mainly as "supporters", or when men were absent. Alternatively, women could lead other women. In particular, Muslim respondents emphasised that women could not lead men in prayer, although a woman could lead other women in prayer. However, for most Christian and Muslim respondents, men remained the leaders at home. Some respondents referred to changing economic contexts that have seen women becoming "providers" in their own right.

Christian and Muslim respondents emphasised the point that both religions were against gender-based violence. They regarded those who appealed to religion to justify violence against women as abusing the sacred texts or traditions. It was also argued that it was possible for men and women in Christianity and Islam to share roles and responsibilities. Although this appeared to contradict the earlier notion that leadership was reserved for men, study participants maintained that their religions provided platforms for promoting equal participation. Furthermore, they indicated that as human beings, women also had inalienable rights. However, there was the insistence that women had to remain humble, even as they sought to ensure that their rights were upheld. Both Christianity and Islam did not suppress the education of women, respondents averred.

While accepting that men generally had low or poor health seeking behaviour, participants maintained that religion did not justify this trend. If men were failing to adopt proactive health seeking behaviour, this should not be blamed on religion. Both Christianity and Islam were projected as religions that encourage their adherents to be health conscious. It is believed instead that culture, peer pressure, a lack of funds, low levels of education, and men's egos prevented them from seeking medical help when ill.

In relation to the emergence of male religious leaders who are promoting positive ways of being male, the study identified a number of such individuals in both the Christian and Muslim communities. These preachers were mostly viewed with respect and as role models by other preachers and the community, provided they preached within the tenets of religion. However, other male religious leaders who may want to promote gender equitable behaviour among men in their respective religions hesitate due to possibility of being considered "unorthodox" by other religious leaders or followers.

There were a number of recommendations made concerning the role of religion in promoting transformative masculinity. It was suggested that the two religions could deepen collaboration, paying particular attention to the need to support men who are working towards women's advancement. Other areas of collaboration that were supported by respondents include teaching men to respect women more, teaching men to share roles and responsibilities, promoting women and girls to speak out and sometimes manage resource allocation, and promoting education for women and girls. There were also calls for further sensitisation of men within religious communities, as well as ensuring that men are involved in the struggle for gender justice at home, in faith communities and the nation at large. The study established that there was great potential for religion to act as a change agent or catalyst and to propel men to embrace transformative masculinity as a life style. This would contribute towards the emergence and achievement of a gender just society, where all human beings were respected and could, therefore, thrive by achieving their full potential.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Christian Aid, in partnership with Voices for Change (V4C) and Islamic Relief Worldwide based on their core organisational focus, especially as it relates to gender justice, have committed to undertake this study/research on Masculinity and Religion in Nigeria.

This study as conceptualised will form part of the landmark research being conducted by V4C, but in addition will provide an additional source of information for programme planning and design of intervention activities in response to critical issues in gender and development as relevant to the Nigerian environment. There is evidence, some of which is captured in the literature review, to justify the importance of gaining deeper insight into the role of religion in the construction of masculinity in Nigeria.

The overall aim of the research is to understand how religion and religious institutions influence and reinforce both positive and negative attitudes, behaviours and practices of men and the perception of masculinity. This overarching goal allows the research to attempt a general overview of the roles and influences of religion and adherents of these religions on men. However, in recognition of the regional peculiarities, multiple ethnicities and the varying cultural practices in the diverse Nigerian environment, it is imperative to have more specific objectives that helped this study to generate information that guided some of the discussion and key findings.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To explore how religious teachings and religious institutions/affiliation shape perception, attitudes and behaviour of boys, men, girls and women around "masculinity" and what it means to be a man.

2. Explore how men and women are using religious teachings to inform their behaviours, including identifying common misconceptions and misinterpretations of these, especially in relation to violence against women, exclusion of women from decision-making and leadership.

3. Explore how the perception and behaviour of boys and men and what it means to be a man affect their health seeking behaviour.

4. Identify and profile religious leaders, institutions and teachings that promote/ influence positive values, behaviours and ideas of masculinity and examine their acceptance by communities.

5. Advance practical suggestions and recommendations on how to harness the positive potential of religious teachings and institutions to promote positive masculinity in ways that will ultimately benefit both gender, exploring opportunities and barriers that exist.

With these specific objectives in mind, this report, therefore, has sections under the pertinent chapters, which attempted to respond to the various key objectives.

The reader will, therefore, expect to encounter some insight into some previous work in relevant areas of religion, masculinity, gender justice, human rights, governance and development, amongst others. The style of analysis and discussion of key findings is aligned with some of the literature as and when necessary.

This report also presented clear indications of the methodology adopted in this study, providing justification for using certain approaches as against others. The chapter on methodology also provides some links to other sources of information, such as relevant attachments and data that are not provided in this report. Participants for the study were restricted to the two dominant religions in Nigeria – Christianity and Islam (mentioned in alphabetical order and not in any order of importance or superiority).

The later chapters of this report present key results and findings, some analysis and discussion, as well as some recommendations. Again, these key findings from information obtained from study participants are presented in line with study key objectives for ease of linking and to provide appropriate matching of the study to key objectives and to reasonably respond to the overarching goal of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

The role of religion in society has begun receiving greater attention in the contemporary period. In the specific case of Africa, religion has always been an integral part of society. As John S. Mbiti famously remarked many years ago, "Africans are notoriously religious."[1] The Nigerian doyen of religious studies, E. Bolaji Idowu, concurred with Mbiti when observing that the African worldview is thoroughly spiritual.[2] Religion acts as a guide to belief and action. In the particular case of religion and masculinity in Nigeria (the focus of this literature review), it is critical to acknowledge the extent to which religion continues to shape, influence and guide socially accepted norms and values of what it means to be a man. As Adriaan van Klinken has highlighted with particular reference to African Christianity, there is a growing realisation of the need to establish the impact of religious teachings on the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of men.[3] The Christian Aid gender theology report, "Of the Same Flesh: Exploring a Theology of Gender" (2014), highlights the need to interrogate "machismo cultures that skew masculinity…"[4] and Islamic Relief Worldwide's Gender Justice Policy (2015) recalls the prophetic examples of being a man and suggests to work on the transformation of harmful cultural norms of masculinity[5].

This literature review seeks to draw attention to some of the main themes that have emerged from studies on religion and masculinities in Nigeria. It is not possible to exhaust the extant literature on this topic.[6] Furthermore, not all aspects identified in this literature review will be pursued in the research, given the specific nature of the terms of reference guiding this study. A thematic approach has been adopted in order to organise the material in a more coherent manner. In the first section, a brief analysis of the central concepts is provided. There is a focus on religion and masculinities as the key operating/operative categories in this study. This is followed by an analysis of the interplay between these two concepts in the context of Nigeria, paying attention to the major themes. After this, there is an overview of the concept of Transformative Masculinity, followed by an examination of the emerging themes and a conclusion.

Religion and masculinities: summarising the key concepts

In order to appreciate the interplay between religion and masculinity in Nigeria, it is vital to pay attention to the need for conceptual clarity. Although the concept of religion is contested, religion may be defined as beliefs and practices regarding the Sacred that serve as a guide to action within a particular community. It must also be conceded that religion does not occur in the singular, but in the plural: there are many religions found in the world. Furthermore, the three dominant religions of Nigeria, namely Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religions are characterised by internal variations.[7] There is need, to keep this in mind when analysing religion in Nigeria (and in every other place): religions are characterised by internal diversity, various religious constructions and manifestations. Whereas in their declarations and self-definitions religions seek to project a united and solid front, in reality and in practice religions are marked by diverse beliefs and practices.

---

[1] John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann, 1969.

[2] E. Bolaji Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*. London: Longman, 1962.

[3] Adriaan van Klinken, *Transforming Masculinities in African Christianity: Gender Controversies in Times of AIDS*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013.

[4] Christian Aid, "Of the Same Flesh: Exploring a Theology of Gender," London: Christian Aid, July 2014, 5.

[5] Islamic Relief Worldwide, "Gender Justice Policy", Birmingham: IRW, April 2015, 14, 21.

[6] For an overview of the development of masculinity studies in Africa, see for example, Ezra Chitando and Sophie Chirongoma, "Introduction: On the Title," in Ezra Chitando and Sophie Chirongoma, eds., *Redemptive Masculinities: Men, HIV and Religion*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2012, 1-28.

[7] See for example, Olukayode A. Faleye, "Religious Corruption: A Dilemma of the Nigerian State," *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 15(1), 2013, 171.

Alongside the term religion, the term masculinity is not straightforward. In general, it refers to socially accepted values and norms of what a man is, in a particular society. It is critical to note that across almost all cultures, masculinity is defined in contrast to femininity. In other words, society often prescribes that a man *is* what a woman *is not*. This has had the effect of pitting men and women against each other. In responding to the question, "what is masculinity?" Flourish Itulua-Abumere writes:

The closest answer to this question is to state that masculinity consists of those behaviors, languages and practices, existing in specific cultural and organizational locations, which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine.[8]

The connection between religion and masculinity can be seen clearly in the fact that religion plays a major role in defining the roles and responsibilities of men (and women). In many instances, it is religion that shapes the names given to men and women at birth. Also, in many African contexts, it is religion that outlines what a "real man" is supposed to be, spells out his qualities and outlines his roles in the home, in the community, in the religion and in the nation. Religion plays a major role in shaping the roles of men and women in society. However, because there various ways in which men express their gender identity, there is a growing emphasis on masculinities in the plural.[9] This is a timely reminder to always be conscious of the fact that there is scope for different men to express different ways of being male, even as they may share the same space and religion. This observation has a lot of promise as it alerts advocates of gender justice to the possibilities of the transformation of masculinity.

Nigerian masculinities across the years

The observation that masculinity can be transformed is also built on the understanding that Nigerian (like other) masculinity has evolved over the years. In other words, masculinity is never given once and for all. While we have identified religion as one major factor shaping masculinity, it is critical to observe that religion is itself open to change too. In addition, different people often understand religion in different ways. Historical, economic, political, social, technological and other factors shape both religion and masculinity. This section will summarise the fact that masculinity in Nigeria has changed over the years.

There is a growing consensus that the rigid and binary gender identities that prevail in contemporary Nigeria are in sharp contrast to the pre-colonial context. Although the roles of women in pre-colonial Nigerian societies differed in relation to specific ethnic communities, it is generally agreed that these tended to be complementary to those of men. Uzodike and Isike contend that "precolonial African women held complementary rather than subordinate positions to men in their societies and played far more important roles in the economies of their societies…"[10] Denis (1987), cited by Nkiru Igbelina-Ibokwe suggests that before colonial administration Igbo women played an important role in agriculture, Yoruba women had the responsibility for material resources, although Hausa women were constrained by prevailing interpretations of Islam and were confined to the home.[11] Lisa A. Lindsay has demonstrated how the colonial state played a major role in the emergence of the "male breadwinner" among

---

[8] Flourish Itula-Abumere, "Understanding Men and Masculinity in Modern Society," *Open Journal of Social Science Research* 1(2), 2013, 42.

[9] Adriaan van Klinken, "Transforming Masculinities towards Gender Justice in an era of HIV/AIDS: Plotting the Pathways," in Beverley Haddad, ed., *Religion and HIV and AIDS: Charting the Terrain*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011, 277.

[10] Ufo Ekeke Uzodike and Christopher Isike, "Towards a Theoretical and Cultural Analysis of Dangerous Masculinities in Contemporary Africa: Can We Reinvent African Patriarchies to Curb HIV and AIDS?" in Chitando and Chirongoma, *Redemptive Masculinities*, 39.

[11] Nkiru Igbelina-Ibokwe, "Contextualising Gender-based violence within Patriarchy in Nigeria," Pambazuka Issue 632, 2013-05-30. http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/87597. Accessed 01/05/15.

the Yoruba. By only employing men for work that women were also familiar with, the colonial state created the concept of a male breadwinner.[12]

In a doctoral thesis, Leonard Ndubueze Mbah has shown the emergence of masculinities among the Ohafia-Igbo. He analyses the community's engagement with the Atlantic and domestic slave trade, legitimate commerce, British colonialism, Scottish Christian missionary evangelism and Western education in the 19th and 20th centuries.[13] On the other hand, Frank A. Salamone has argued that, "[G]ender relationships and concepts of masculinity must be understood within the context of Hausa history and ethnic relationships."[14] These observations confirm the point that masculinity is not frozen, but that it is affected by various factors.

In many instances, men are associated with "strength, vigour, virile/powerful courage, self-confidence and the ability to meet the outside world…"[15] In tandem with this, Uchendu's study found that notions of masculinity among Nigerian youth included:

…Superior physical strength, firmness, fearlessness, decisiveness, an ability to protect the weak, to be principled, to control, to conquer, to take risks, to provide leadership, to be assertive, to enjoy a high social status, and to display versatility in martial arts. Also added to this list are: intelligence, bravery, sobriety, unemotionality, and an absence of smiles.[16]

The above list outlines some of the key attributes of masculinity that one encounters in other parts of the world. The patriarchal basis of masculinity suggests that it is constructed in opposition to femininity. Even as masculinity has undergone transformation due to a multiplicity of factors, the emphasis on rigid gender roles has remained prominent. Strikingly, new churches and mosques in Nigeria seek to "reclaim" and "reinstitute" these rigid gender roles. Writing on her findings in Kaduna, Harris maintains that, "…the newer churches and mosques are particularly insistent on preserving male control over women."[17] Establishing how new forms of Christianity and Islam are constructing masculinity and influencing gender relations in contemporary Nigeria, therefore, remains strategic.

Religion, masculinity and women's education and leadership

Globally, men dominate positions of power at various levels. In most instances, the gender ideology at play is buttressed and lubricated by religion. The status of women in world religions is generally low[18] and this has in turn translated to women's marginalisation from positions of power and authority. Religious ideas regarding the man having been created first, women's images as temptresses and men's supposed higher rationality have been deployed to deny women's leadership roles.[19] In Nigeria, the emphasis on "a real man" as including being married and succeeding in exercising authority over the wife/wives and children has implications for women's leadership.[20]

---

[12] Lisa A. Lindsay, "Working with Gender: The Emergence of the 'Male Breadwinner' in Colonial Nigeria," in Catherine M. Cole *et al*, eds., *Africa After Gender?* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007, 241-252.

[13] Leonard Ndubueze Mbah, 'Emergent Masculinities: The Gendered Struggle for Power in Southeastern Nigeria, 1850-1920,' Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, Michigan University, 2013.

[14] Frank A. Salamone, "Hausa Concepts of Masculinity and the *'Yan Daudu*," *Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality* 1(1), 2007, 47.

[15] Abidemi R. Asiyanbola, 'Patriarchy, Male Dominance, the Role and Empowerment of Women in Nigeria,' Paper submitted for presentation as a poster at the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP/UIESP) XXV International Population Tours, France, 2005.

[16] Egodi Uchendu, "Masculinity and Nigerian Youths," *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 16(2), 2007, 283.

[17] Colet Harris, "Masculinity and Religion in Kaduna, Nigeria: A Struggle for Continuity in a Time of Change," *Religion and Gender* 2(2), 2012, 226.

[18] Arvind Sharma, ed., *Women in World Religions*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987.

[19] See for example, Elna Mouton *et al*, eds., *Living with Dignity: African Perspectives on Gender Equality*. Cape Town: EFSA, 2015.

[20] Uchendu, "Masculinity and Nigerian Youths," 286.

The religio-cultural construction of men as leaders has led to the subordination of women in different social and political contexts. This has led to many men asserting their right to leadership and to deny women the space for taking up leadership roles. Within Christianity, this has meant that religious leadership is firmly in the hands of men.[21] This pattern is also found in Islam, where men dominate positions of leadership. In turn, this has had a negative effect on women's leadership in society. In her study on women's leadership in Kenya, Nyokabi Kamau has highlighted how women politicians have to struggle more than men for them to make it to the top.[22]

Socialisation plays a major role in preparing men for leadership and women for taking up more subordinate roles. In a study on gender prejudice in the Dutch Reformed Church in Nigeria, Dorcas Weor and Agnes Ntayi make the following observation, "Men avail themselves for the privilege of service much more than women because of child rearing and household chores, traditional beliefs, early marriages, cultures, societal restrictions or lack of self-confidence."[23] Writing with particular reference to the education of the girl-child in Islam, Sidiqat Ijaiya bemoans her fate. Thus:

However, the Muslim girl-child, in comparison with her counterpart in the other religions in Nigeria remains more deprived, more ignorant and more under-developed. She has been the house-help in almost every home; she is the yam, groundnut, sachet-water, tomatoes seller in Nigerian markets. She is the more likely to drop out of primary or secondary school either for trading or forced early marriage.[24]

Women's access to education has been severely constrained in many contexts. In Nigeria, this has significant consequences as girl children, who drop out of school, usually at between primary 4 and 5, have limited opportunities in life.[25] It is critical, therefore, for male religious leaders to play a major role in supporting the education of the girl child. This would contribute towards more effective strategies to ensure that girls stay in school.[26] Such an intervention by male religious leaders would help to overcome the bias in favour of the boy child. According to T. Alabi and O. S. Malabi:

The fact that most religious practitioners and leaders are male makes for a powerful image in favour of that sex, and it would be a very helpful move if religious leaders of all faiths and denominations were to speak out strongly in support of the female cause…[27]

Although the definition of "religious practitioners" in the foregoing citation is open to interpretation (since more women are actively religious than men), the notion of male religious leaders mobilising for the education of the girl-child is a significant one. A report from a USAID intervention in Yemen confirms that, "when religious leaders are properly trained and briefed by respected religious scholars and trusted health professionals, they become powerful agents

---

[21] H. Jurgens Hendriks *et al*, eds., *Men in the Pulpit, Women in the Pew? Addressing Gender Inequality in Africa*. Cape Town: EFSA, 2012.

[22] Nyokabi Kamau, *AIDS, Sexuality, and Gender: Experiences of Women in Kenyan Universities*. Eldoret: Zapf Chancery, 2009.

[23] Dorcas Weor and Agnes Ntanyi, "Challenging Gender Prejudice amongst Church Youth: The Case of the Dutch Reformed Church in Nigeria," in Mouton *et al*, *Living with Dignity*, 173-174.

[24] Sidiqat Ijaiya, "Education and the Muslim Girl-Child," *Al-Maslaha: Journal of Law and Religion* 3, 2004-2006, "Women, Gender and Other Issues in the Shariah," 179.

[25] Grace Nmadu *et al*, "Girl Child Education: Rising to the Challenge," *African Journal of Reproductive Health* Special Issue 14(3), 2010, 107-112.

[26] Hannah Olubumi Ajayi and Theodora Olufunke Bello, "Approaches to Reach and Teach the Most Marginalized Children in Nigeria: The Girld-Child Education," *African Research Review: An International Multidisciplinary Research Journal, Ethiopia* 5(3), 2011, 81-89.

[27] T. Alabi and O. S. Malabi, "Review: Female Education: A Sociological Analysis of Girl-Child Education in Nigeria," *International Journal of Educational Policy Research and Review* 1(1), 2014, 11.

of social change…"[28] There must, therefore, be major investment in mobilising male religious leaders to become advocates for the education of girls.

Religion, masculinity and gender-based violence

Alongside the emphasis on men as leaders (and the implications for women's education and leadership), the theme of religion and masculinities has attracted attention due to its impact on sexual and gender-based violence. A Zimbabwean study highlighted the extent to which men (including those who are not actively religious); use religious arguments/citations of sacred texts, to justify their use of violence in relationships.[29] In most cases, texts that are interpreted as supporting men's "headship" feature prominently. By using (or abusing) religion and its sacred writings, some men rationalise their deployment of violence in intimate relationships. Notions relating to religion's supposed command to men to lead and protect women are often utilised to justify violence against women.

At the heart of gender-based violence (GBV) is a patriarchal ideology that suggests that women are inferior to men and must "obey" men. Within Christianity, notions of "recovering biblical manhood and womanhood"[30] convey the understanding that God preordained men and women to occupy fixed roles and stations in life. Within Islam, the concept of male dominance enjoys a lot of currency, with the Quran often being deployed to represent men as protectors of women.[31] However, as the study shall highlight in the section on initiatives to transform masculinities, such interpretations must not be used to harm women.

Dominant or hegemonic masculinity sometimes appeals to religion to support violence against women. This is a systematic misuse of religion. Religious ideologies and manipulations of sacred texts are deployed to uphold physical, economic, spiritual and psychological violence against women. Igbelina-Igbokwe, writing with particular focus on Nigeria, contends that women are vulnerable to GBV in both the home and public settings. According to her:

These sites of patriarchy also host various forms of GBV. At the household level, resistance to patriarchal control especially within conjugal relationships manifests in physical forms such as wife battery, marital rape, acid bath, harmful traditional practices (Female Genital Cutting – FGC), widowhood rites/disinheritance and deprivation of material and economic resources which promotes continued dependence on the male spouse for financial and material needs. Restriction of mobility and use of the public space are also some of the measures that men have utilized to keep women and girls in consistent subjugation. Women who have overcome these barriers also face issues of GBV in the public arena in the forms of political violence, denial of promotional opportunities in the formal work environment, psychological abuse through intimidation and negative media posturing.[32]

There is need to establish the sacred texts (and ideologies) that worsen women's subordination. Alongside being deployed to increase women's vulnerability in the domestic and public spheres as described by Igbelina-Igbokwe above, there is a growing awareness that sometimes male religious leaders have abused their authority to exploit women sexually.

---

[28] USAID, "Muslim Religious Leaders as Partners in Fostering Positive Reproductive Health and Family Planning Behaviours in Yemen: A Best Practice," accessed at www.pathfinder.org/publications-tools-pdfs/Muslim-Religious-Leaders-as-Partners-in-Fostering-Reproductive-Health-and-Family-Planning-Behaviors-in-Yemen-A-Best-Practice-pdf. 01/05/2015.

[29] Patrick Chiroro *et al.*, *The Zimbabwean Male Psyche with Respect to Reproductive Health, HIV, AIDS and Gender Issues*. Harare: Centre for Applied Psychology, University of Zimbabwe and UNFPA, 2002.

[30] John Piper and Wayne Gruden, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991.

[31] Nicole Ravelo-Hoerson, "Islam and Domestic Violence: Collusion and Collision," *Missionalia* 34(1), 2006, 77-102.

[32] Nkiru Igbelina-Ibokwe, "Contextualising Gender-based violence within Patriarchy in Nigeria."

Within Christian settings, there is recognition that sometimes "pastors prey,"[33] instead of pray. There is, therefore, need to interrogate how the social construction of men as authority figures has been used to subject women to abuse across the different religious traditions.

Religion, masculinity and fatherhood

One of the recurrent images and expressions of masculinity is fatherhood. Across most cultures, fatherhood is one distinctive characteristic of masculinity. A study in South Africa confirmed that fatherhood plays a major role in the lives of most men.[34] Religions socialise men to fulfill the role of fathers. It is vital to observe that the fatherhood role does not always imply physical fatherhood. There is also social fatherhood where a man can mentor the young men he comes into contact with. In addition, examining the theme of fatherhood in a study on religion and masculinity in Nigeria is strategic as this is likely to bring the phenomenon of teen fathers to the fore.[35] This has implications regarding young men's access to sexual and reproductive health services in the country and how religious leaders can play a role in improving this. The African Fatherhood Initiative has emerged to promote effective fathering on the continent and it is strategic for religious leaders to collaborate with them in this quest.

Religion, masculinity and development

The themes examined in the foregoing section logically lead to discourses on religion, masculinity and development. How religion socialises men has definite implications on how men relate to women and this in turn has a bearing on development. In Africa, the HIV epidemic has precipitated the call for religion to rethink its impact on masculinities.[36] Furthermore, there is a growing interest in how religion can play a role in ensuring that men contribute to care work and, by extension, towards holistic development.[37]

Transformative masculinity: mobilising men in faith communities for gender justice

From the foregoing discussion, it has become clear that there is need for planned and systematic interventions to ensure that the interface between religion and masculinity promotes gender justice and development. Since the mid-2000s, the World Council of Churches (WCC) through the Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA) has promoted reflections on this intersection through its Transformative Masculinity/Masculinities workshops. These workshops are designed to challenge religious leaders, theologians, secular men's groups and other activists to mobilise men in faith communities to contribute towards the advancement of girls and women.

Essentially, the Transformative Masculinity initiative seeks to have male religious leaders (from diverse communities of faith) become advocates or champions of gender justice. They are expected to become role models who exhibit a masculinity that is more harmonious, life-giving and accommodating. Such men will promote the education of girls, accept women's advancement, utilise sacred texts and traditions to support women's leadership and avoid the use of violence.[38] In the case of churches, the Contextual Bible Study methodology has been

---

[33] Vali Boobal Batchelor, ed., *When Pastors Prey: Overcoming Clergy Sexual Abuse of Women*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.

[34] Lisa Richter and Robert Morrell, ed., *Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa*. Cape Town: Human Science Research Council Press, 2006.

[35] Emmanuel Olagunji Amoo, 'Emerging Teen Fatherhood and its Implications for National Development,' 2012, pdf available at eprints.covenantuniversity.edu.nig/…/Emerging%20Teen%20Fatherhood… accessed 01/05/2015.

[36] Adriaan van Klinken and Ezra Chitando, "Masculinities, HIV and Religion in Africa," in Emma Tomalin, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Religions and Global Development*. London: Routledge, 2015.

[37] Tomas Sundness Drønen, ed., *Religion and Development: Nordic Perspectives on Involvement in Africa*. New York: Peter Lang, 2014.

[38] Pauline Njiru Wanjiru and Ezra Chitando, "Contextual Bible as a Strategy for Combating Sexual and Gender-based Violence: Transforming Masculinities," in Ezra Chitando and Sophia Chirongoma, eds., *Justice Not Silence: Churches Facing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence*. Stellenbosch: EFSA, 2013.

utilised to empower communities to read sacred texts and reflect on images of positive masculinity.[39]

In Islam, a process similar to the one described above has been undertaken. The organisation, Positive Muslims (in South Africa) has sought to mobilise Muslim leaders to project masculinities that support gender justice. Academic reflections on Islam's contribution to the quest for women's empowerment and men's role in such a struggle have been published.[40] The underlying motivation is that through a more rigorous and robust process, it is possible to "mine" (hopefully deconstruct) the sacred text and traditions of Islam to generate Transformative Masculinities.

It is crucial to observe that the emergence of Transformative Masculinity within faith-based organisations in Africa has occurred at the same time as non-governmental organisations promoting men as gender activists have emerged. This is mainly after the year 2000, although a few organisations had been formed earlier. These organisations include Padare, Men's Forum on Gender in Zimbabwe, Sonke Gender Justice Network in South Africa, White Ribbon Campaign in Namibia, Men for Gender Equality Now in Kenya and others. Significantly, such a development is in its incipient stages in West Africa in general.

Religion and masculinity: emerging themes

This review of religion and masculinity has drawn attention to a number of key themes that are emerging. First, there is need, to be sensitive to how masculinity is defined. It is important to establish the extent to which religious ideas, concepts of sacred texts are appealed to when articulating who a man is in a particular society. Although not emerging from this review, it is critical to listen to how women also use religious categories when defining masculinity. Understanding the extent to which religious beliefs shape the understanding of masculinity is vital for developing effective interventions that promote gender justice. Which definitions of masculinity suggest that girls and women must remain subordinate, and which definitions promote social progress?

Second, there is need to pay attention to perceptions of change within masculinity across the years. Gender stereotypes are continually changing; although at the ideological level the temptation to imagine that everything is "as it was in the beginning" is real. It is, therefore, crucial to be sensitive to openness to the fact that masculinity has been/is undergoing change. Such openness provides what one could call "redemptive windows" that allow for social transformation to occur. Consequently, the study on religion and masculinity in Nigeria must be on the lookout for sensitivity to changing expressions of masculinity across time.

Third, the role of male religious leaders in promoting the education of the girl-child and women's leadership needs to be assessed. What are the arguments proffered for the marginalisation of the girl-child in relation to access to education? Are there any scriptural texts that are cited? What are the counter-arguments that have been marshalled to support girls' education and women's leadership? Are there some male religious leaders who have emerged as advocates and allies for women? How are they perceived by their communities?

Fourth, the deployment of religion to justify gender-based violence needs to be interrogated. What are some of the major arguments used to support gender-based violence? What is the

---

[39] Ezra Chitando and Nyambura Njoroge, *Contextual Bible Study Manual on Transformative Masculinity*. Harare: EHAIA, 2013.

[40] Farid Esack and Sarah Chiddy, eds., *Islam and AIDS: Between Scorn and Pity*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2009.

dominant model of interpretation that is applied in such exercises? Is it legitimate? Are there counter-texts that are available to challenge such interpretations and are they being utilised? Such questions are critical as religion is always a double-edged sword. On the one hand it can be used to deny life, while on the other it can be a powerful resource for social transformation.

Fifth, the theme of fatherhood can provide a viable avenue for expressing progressive masculinity for men in religious settings. It is, therefore, strategic to reflect on how men in religious communities approach the theme of fatherhood. What do the sacred texts and traditions that have been passed down from one generation to another say about effective fathers? What do men regard as the traits of a good father and what would they want to accomplish as fathers? This theme is strategic as it can be a powerful ideology around which to mobilise men within religious communities.

Sixth, the concept of development can be a rallying point for joint action by male religious leaders, politicians and development/NGO practitioners. If it can be established that the interface between religion and masculinity has definite implications for development, it becomes easier to mobilise for collective action. Consequently, it is important for the study to probe the contribution of male religious leaders who are advocates and allies of women struggling for gender justice in development.

Seventh, the ideals of Transformative Masculinity are pertinent to the study. The struggle to promote "men of quality who are not afraid of equality" (Padare declaration) is significant to the study. The quest to ensure that religion plays a more strategic role in socialising boys and men to accept that men and women are meant for partnership requires ongoing reflection and education. Transformative Masculinity does not suggest that "supermen/superheroes" exist somewhere: it merely acknowledges that "ordinary boys and men" can and must contribute to social transformation. In addition, there is need to examine the potential for collaboration between male religious leaders and men's organisations working for social change.

Eighth, there is need to interrogate the possibility of inter-faith collaboration to ensure that the interface between religion and masculinity contributes towards gender justice. This is one major deficit that emerges from the review of the literature: there are no initiatives that consciously and deliberately adopt an inter-faith perspective to promote positive masculinity. There is a tendency to undertake activities within particular communities, yet there must be a vision of community engagement in the broader sense.

The interface between religion and masculinity has come under increasing scrutiny, especially within the last few years. While earlier approaches tended to approach men as "the evil, unrepentant perpetrators," there is a growing awareness of the need to regard men as partners in the quest for gender justice. This review of the literature has confirmed the fact that religion remains a highly potent and strategic resource in shaping masculinity. Utilising an inter-faith approach, recognising generational differences and upholding the principle of the common good and upholding dignity, religion can, indeed, become the spark that propels masculinity in Nigeria (and elsewhere) to become a source of health, peace, security and development.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This section presents a contextual background to this study with respect to key stakeholders, support for the study, the methodology for planning, literature review, design and deployment of field data collection tools and the operational details of data collection, collation and analysis.

This study, supported through funding from UK DFID, commissioned by V4C and implemented by Christian Aid, in partnership with Islamic Relief World Wide is aimed at gaining more understanding on the relationship between Masculinity and Religion in Nigeria. The study/research which was conducted in selected states (Enugu, Kaduna, Edo, Lagos and FCT) spread across the geopolitical zones in Nigeria.

As conceptualized, the research focused on Nigeria with field activities in 4 states namely: Enugu, Kaduna, Lagos, Kano and FCT. These states were chosen mainly to cover the geopolitical zones in Nigeria, as well as key institutions and faith leader's diverse views on the subject matter. FCT in particular was chosen because some of the key informants (respondents) whose views are of utmost important to this research (such as the Cardinal of Catholic Church, Primate of Anglican Church, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) president, CAN secretary/treasurer, as well as Secretary General of National Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs) reside in Abuja, FCT.

The study was conducted only in the capital cities of Kaduna, Kano and Enugu states, however in Lagos, given its unique nature, the study covered beyond the city capital of Lagos state. In all the 4 states participants were selected as discussants at FGD and also the Religious Leaders and Teachers of either the Muslim or Christian faith were interviewed as key informants through an In-depth /Key Informant Interview. In Lagos and Kaduna, participants were drawn from both Christian and Islamic faith, while only Muslims participated in Kano and only Christians participated in Enugu. This is in line with the consideration of the value of interviewing Christians or Muslims in locations where they are significantly in minority as is the case for Kano and Enugu respectively. Also the available resources and time for this research and the value of such inclusion seems to support the step taken.

The overall aim of the research is to understand how religion and religious institutions influence and reinforce both positive and negative attitudes, behaviours and practices of men and the perception of masculinity.

1. To explore how religious teachings and religious institutions/affiliation shape perception, attitudes and behaviour of boys, men, girls and women around "masculinity" and what it means to be a man.

2. Explore how men and women are using religious teachings to inform their behaviours, including identifying common misconceptions and misinterpretations of these especially in relation to violence against women, education, exclusion of women from decision-making and leadership

3. Explore how perception and behaviour of boys and men and masculinity and what it means to be a man affect their health seeking behaviour.

4. Identify and profile religious leaders, institutions and teachings that promote/ influence positive values, behaviours and ideas of masculinity and examine their acceptance by communities.

5. Advance practical suggestions and recommendations on how to harness the positive potential of religious teachings and institutions to promote positive masculinity in ways that will ultimately benefit the both gender, exploring opportunities and barriers that exist.

Study method and design

Based on these broad and specific objectives, the study approach used included desk review of relevant documents and materials, focus group discussions and key informant interviews (KIIs)/In-depth interview (IDI). The process of pilot and review of data collected during trials indicated that these approaches were appropriate and would provide adequate information to satisfy the study objectives.

The literature review enabled the researchers to review existing projects, programmes and good practice used in working with faith communities in Nigeria and other countries to address social norms related to gender relationships, masculinity, violence against women and girls, women in leadership and decision making roles. It also helped to examine existing interpretations of the teachings of the Bible and the Qur'an on masculinity with the divergent views among the Christian and Muslim faiths, especially relating to the roles of men and women on specific subjects such as domestic violence, leadership and decision-making, and education for girls. The literature review influenced the design and content of the interview guides used for the study.

The qualitative guide was designed for ease of application to the various categories (by age, sex, locations and faith) involved in the study. The Key Informant Interview (KII) guide was administered across the various categories of key informants and the FGD guide used to moderate discussion and interrogate discussants in the aforementioned categories.

Participants were carefully selected and prioritized to enable the investigators/interviewers obtain best and most appropriate responses. The participants selected were known to be keen, knowledgeable and active adherents of their specific religions. Keeping in mind that focused group and in-depth interviews as qualitative research techniques that allow person to person discussion can lead to increased insight into people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviour on important issues, the data collectors/researchers were careful with purposive selection of participants. It was considered that since the investigators needed to ensure adequate time for focused groups and key informant interviews, interviews and discussions would be planned with adequate intervals between events. Some other considerations such as day of the week, time of the day and locations for focused group discussions and interviews influenced the study design and approach.

All research assistants were adequately trained on the use of the tools, briefed, underwent mock practice and were well supported and supervised during data collection. The use of data collection and research assistants was imperative considering the number of data to be collected, the uniqueness of locations, especially where the lead researcher is unable to fully manage language and pertinent religious conditions that will enhance open and easy discussion. Note takers were equally trained and briefed. Recorders were used to support note taking during the process of data collection.

To ensure reduced loss of time in mobilising and getting participants, especially for FGDs, a special arrangement was made which involved the use influencers (both peer and religious gate keepers) to mobilise already selected participants for FGD. Distinctive criteria that indicated the persons to participate in the FGD were strictly adhered to. The list of participants, available as annex to the report, will indicate the efforts made to ensure the right participants are involved for the FGDs.

For the KII, time for appointments was managed through constant gentle reminders and flexibility of the researcher/data collector in adapting to the time and location best suited to the key informant. This is in recognition of the often very busy schedules of the key informant and the likelihood of their being called off on short notice to attend to needs of congregation members or other religious matters.

Collation of key findings and analysis/discussion

Information obtained from discussants at FGD and key informants was collated through a traditional and manual approach (note taking and recording), which required review of all submissions and extraction of key findings and reports in line with study objectives. Reporting of key findings are therefore, presented in a summary in line with commonalities, divergence and suspended statements or perceptions. Analytical discussions and reflections of key findings were guided by set objectives, past studies as obtained from literature review and also by researchers' insight as provoked during data collection, collation and reflections.

Limitations

This study has considered only the 2 dominant religions in Nigeria – Christianity and Islam. However, it is imperative to recognise that there are minority groups who practice traditional religious worship and some free-thinkers who do not align with any religion. However, it is assumed that these groups are so marginal that not addressing them in this study will not affect significantly the outputs from this study.

Some anticipated challenges such as inability to interview designated persons were manifest during this study. The alternative use of a proxy, especially for KII, might be expected reduce the authority and weight attached to responses and outputs from the study. However, given the opportunity of a validation meeting/forum which enriched and validated the findings or facts from the study, this limitation is assumed not to have any significant effect on the study.

The period for this study was just few days post Nigerian transition from previous to present (new) government after the general elections. The apprehension and sense of politicking was still in the air and as such the gathering people for FGD needed and demanding interviews with KI required extra caution.

A purposive sampling approach was adopted and there was some control on who participated in this study, therefore one can argue, especially from a religious bias or perspective, that outputs (outcomes too) obtained may only be fairly generalized to the participating religious group(s). Other limitations associated with KII and FGD may be applicable to this study.

Chapter 4: Summary of findings

This chapter presents key findings and results extracted from the data obtained from FGD and KII. Results and key findings have been presented here in a combined summary form, against the study objectives. This approach has helped to maintain confidentiality in few instances where it would be prudent to refrain from being very specific and allow room for contact tracing. The approach has also allowed for ease of comparison and attribution of comments, perceptions, submissions and contributions by locations, gender, religious affiliations and age. This, therefore, allows the reader more effective data analysis to relate information as appropriate and contemplation of ideas for planning or programming is better enhanced. In addition, this approach has helped to avoid unnecessary irritations associated with repetition which would have occurred if results were presented either by location, by religious affiliation, by sex, by age or by positions. In keeping with the study's phenomenological orientation, the quotations/translations of specific passages from sacred texts are presented from the point of view of the participants. A separate study is required to analyse the accuracy of the translations and citations of traditions (hadith), or why one interpretation was preferred over others.

In many instances, study participants would ascribe certain beliefs and attitudes relating to masculinity to culture, and not religion. In this scheme, religion represents a superior source of authority, while culture was presented as negative. The study does not seek to disentangle religion from culture, but presents the field findings where some respondents would charge that a particular practice was influenced by culture, not religion. A separate study is required to analyse the interface between religion and culture in Nigerian contexts.

It should be noted that further details and information is available with the data as available in the annex.

How religion shapes perceptions, attitudes and behaviour

Study Objective 1: To explore how religious teachings and religious institutions/affiliation shape perception, attitudes and behaviour of boys, men, girls and women around "masculinity" and what it means to be a man.

Definition of "masculinity" or what it means to be a man

Across all respondents, a common definition of a man was, "the head of the family, created in the image of God (mostly a submission by Christian respondents), and by God to lead and provide for his family and community, spiritually and physically." Physical features such as having a beard and modes of dressing were also used to define a man. Men were also defined in terms of their relationships with women, such as father, brother, husband and son, or in terms of age or maturity.

"A man by definition is a male, different from a woman, they have different features, when you see a man you know he's different from a woman, he has to dress in accordance with what a man is expected to wear, so also his behaviour. He is the head of the family, he has to be just and fair, so in all spheres of life, there's a difference between a man and a woman. A man is supposed to fear Allah whatever he does in life, and in accordance with the teachings of Islam." (KII with JNI Secretary, Kaduna)

"In Genesis 1, God said let's make man in our image." (FGD with young Christian men, Lagos)

"Islamically speaking, when you say one is a man, it means that person is first of all male, he has certain features different from a woman. He has a penis, broad voice, hairy, and others". (FGD with Muslim women, Kano state)

"…When one has reached 30 years according to the bible teaching, although there was no quotation to support this" (KII with Secretary CWO Assumpta Parish, Enugu).

Most respondents believed that men were created to be superior to, and dominant over women, and were seen as having more strength. They were also created to take care of, and be responsible for the family.

"A man is a creation of God and He made them to become so dominating and to take responsibility (by providing and caring) for the whole family"… (FGD with Muslim women, Kano)

These beliefs were supported by religious quotes such as *"Arrijalu qauwamuna alal nisa'l,"* which is being translated from Arabic in different ways, one given explanation is *"men are placed on top of women",* as interpreted from/referring to the Qur'an, and by quoting from the Bible, from the book of Colossians (3:18) *.."Wives, submit yourselves unto your husband, as unto the Lord…"* and Genesis (2:22) where God is described as having used the rib of man to create woman which was viewed as a symbol of superiority of men.

This perception on superiority based on creation of woman from rib of man (as submitted by few respondents) was, however, challenged by the President of FOMWAN, Kano Chapter who was of the opinion that while the teaching that women were created from the rib of men makes men think that they are superior to women, in the Qur'an, men and women are comparable.

"…Even in the Qur'an you can see that wherever God mention a man at the same time he mention a woman "wattabi'ina wattabi'ati, Walmuminina walmuminati" and a lot of them a comparison with a man and a woman in the Quran." (KII, FOMWAN President, Kano State Chapter)

She also stated that because women were created from the left side of the men's rib, which is close to the heart, women keep life in everyone, and infers that women mean a lot. *"…If we look at the left side of the rib, it contains the heart which is the main cavity that holds the heart and the life of every one of us, if the heart stops then you are dead…"* (KII, FOMWAN President, Kano State Chapter). It is important to note that from the perspective of the consultants and this study, they may be other interpretations and claims within both the Christian and Islamic context that challenge the assumption that the man is the "head."

It was generally believed across age groups, religions and genders that men express their "masculinity" more in their homes, where they had the most control. Men were also perceived to express their "masculinity" in religious spaces as they lead in prayer or worship, in order to be seen as upright and religious.

Men's roles and responsibilities

It was believed by most respondents that men have been vested with the responsibility to marry, protect and provide for women and children. These beliefs were backed by religious scripture that respondents provided, such as Chapter 4 verse 34 of the Qur'an that states a man has the responsibility to provide food, shelter, clothing, and education (whether western

or Islamic) for his family, as well as satisfy women's sexual needs. Other scriptures quoted to support this belief include the teachings of the Quran that "*men are custodians of the women on issues ascribed by Allah,*" and as recorded in Genesis during the fall of man in the Garden of Eden when God said that the man must till the soil to eat"….

"Also in the Holy Qur'an Suratul AN- Nisa Quran 4, verse 34, men are the protector and maintenance of women because Allah has made one of them to excel the other and because they spend (to support them) from their means." (FGD with Muslim men, Lagos)

"…The bible states that a man that does not take care of his family is worse than an infidel. --- Respondent did not quote the specific verse" (FGD with Christian women, Lagos).

Beyond providing for their families, a key role universally recognised by respondents as ascribed to men was paying the bride price in marriage. The underlying contention was that men are supposed to "take charge" of domestic affairs.

… Men are to feed women; men are different from women when it comes to marriage, when it comes to inheritance, and many things… (FGD with Muslim men, Kaduna)

"…Men were created to protect women as Allah (SWI) said "men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah has made one of them to wed the other one because they spend to support them from their means". (KII with the Chairman of the Council of Ulama, Kano State)

Other roles ascribed for men, include priesthood in the Catholic Church, as well as leading of prayers and divorcing of women in Islam. Women were believed to provide support to men's roles, including cooking and caring for the family, and providing for the family in the absence of a man.

"..A man is the provider for the family, while a woman is the help mate." (FGD with young Christian women, Lagos)

"..A man is the head of the family. He leads in prayers, a woman cannot lead men in prayers, in terms of marriage, and a man divorces a woman and not a woman divorcing the man. And no matter how much wealth she has, she is not expected to feed her family. The man as head is also expected to educate and take care of his children." (KII with JNI Secretary, Kaduna)

Despite overwhelming support for role distribution by gender, it was mostly agreed that neither Christianity nor Islam explicitly specifies detailed roles for men and women, beyond biological roles based on the physical features of men and women. That these roles and responsibilities were apportioned by culture, and not specifically by religion, was repeated across different groups of respondents.

It was mostly agreed that women who take on the roles ascribed to them by religion are respected by society. There was, however, a fear from women, particularly older Muslim women in the South that if they (women) took on these roles men would stop providing for them. While Christian women in the South were in support of role sharing, they felt there had to be a balance.

"…Some women will be liked(meaning appreciated) by fellow women, while others will feel pity towards the woman, believing she did not have luck in marriage…when women take on these roles and responsibilities, people feel it may be because the man did her a favour and she is paying back. If she does not do any job, they tend to see her as a lazy woman. So there must be balance..." (FGD with Christian women in Lagos)

Younger men in particular, both Christian and Muslim, while recognising that men were leaders in their homes, disagreed more on the specific roles for men and women, and mostly believed that women and men could perform the same roles. This was a consistent finding.

"From the biblical/ religious perspective and teachings, God did not out rightly say man should have overall dominion or complete control. For instance in the Bible, Queen of Shaba [Sheba], Esther, were assigned roles and rights and some men came under their rule. Thus it will be difficult to conclude that God has assigned certain roles and rights to men. Thus women and men should have equal rights and roles." (FGD with young Christian men, Kaduna)

"Islam has no problem with women who take on roles perceived to be men's roles and responsibilities." (FGD with male Muslim youths, Kaduna)

Older men, both Christian and Muslim, were in support of sharing roles with women, but stressed that women need to be submissive and have respect for men. While this still represents the subordination of women, it expresses a willingness to accommodate women.

Men and domestic chores

With regards domestic chores, responses varied by region, religion and age. Women in Northern Nigeria, regardless of age or religion, perceived men's participation in domestic chores to be an indication of support from their husbands, as well as a fulfillment of their religious obligations.

"… It is there in the Quran, there is a verse that says women should not cook for their husbands. Islam says all the family's responsibility is the man that will handle it. During (the time of the) prophet, his followers used to cook food for their wives and eat." (FGD with Muslim Women in Kano)

However, they (Muslim women in Kano) noted that culture perceives men who perform domestic duties as being weak. In contrast, Muslim women in the South, mostly from the older age range, believed that domestic work performed by men was a new trend for the younger generation that is wrong, and not supported by religion.

Younger men and women, regardless of religion and location, were more open and accepting of men performing domestic roles, seeing this as a sign of love and support for women. Young Muslim men in Northern Nigeria, while mostly being happy to perform domestic roles, were, however, concerned about how they would be perceived by society. Older men were also open to supporting domestic work, especially when their wives were ill or incapacitated. Generally, it was agreed that upbringing and the presence of a male role model were the determinants of the likelihood of men taking up domestic work and care duties. Men who grew up observing their fathers or father figures participating in domestic work and care duties were more likely to do the same, participants argued.

Scriptural support for masculinity

Some scriptural references stated to support the definition of "masculinity" and the roles of men and boys. It is important to state that this report has only reproduced what was shared by respondents and not an attempt to run citation quiz or interpretation of the Holy Bible or Holy

Qur'an. Some of the provided scriptural supports on men and boys headship and space for dominion include:

Christianity	Islam
- Genesis, during the fall of man in the Garden of Eden as stated in the Bible (FGD with Christian Women in Kaduna) - Ephesians 5: 1 – 21; 23-28 (FGD with Christian Women, Kaduna) - Genesis 2: 24 (FGD with Christian Women, Kaduna) - Proverbs 31:10-31 (FGD with Christian Women, Kaduna) 1 Timothy 5:1, 8 (FGD with Christian Women, Kaduna) - Timothy 3:1-6. (FGD with Christian Women, Kaduna) - Ephesians 6 (FGD with young Christian men in Lagos) - Genesis 2 (FGD with young Christian men in Lagos) - John 13:1, 15:13 (FGD with young Christian men in Lagos) 1 Peter 3:3 (FGD with Christian women in Lagos) - Hebrews 13: 14 (FGD with Christian women in Lagos) - Romans 13: 17 (FGD with Christian women in Lagos) - In the book of Esther in the bible, a king demoted his queen and married a new queen due to the fact she disrespected him by not answering his call. (FGD with young Christian women, Lagos) - A man should love his wife as Christ loves the church (FGD with young Christian women, Lagos) - A man after Gods heart, used to describe David in the Bible (FGD with young Christian women, Lagos) - Matthew 9:36 - Compassionate (KII with Pentecostal Pastor, Abuja) - Ephesians 5:20, Ephesians 6:4 - Loves his wife and children (KII with Pentecostal Pastor, Abuja) 1 Timothy 5:8 - Provides for his family (KII with Pentecostal Pastor, Abuja) - Genesis 2 verse 15 (KII with Pentecostal Pastor, Abuja) - Genesis 3 verse 16 to 20 (KII with Pentecostal Pastor, Abuja) - Ephesians 5 verse 22 - The man should love his wife (KII with Pentecostal Pastor, Abuja) - All the apostles of Jesus were male. (KII with Catholic Priest, Enugu) - All the seven Deacons of the Acts of the	"Arrijalu qauwamuna alal nisa'l - *"men are placed tops on women"* as stated in the Qur'an. (FGD with Muslim Women in Kano; FGD with Muslim men, Kaduna); Qur'an 4:34 - the teaching in the Holy Qur'an that "Men are standard bearers over the affairs of women" (FGD with Muslim Women in Kano) - From the Qur'an, "*alimra'atu shakikatu filhayatul rajulu, la hayatu illabihi wabi ha. (Her life entirely and his is the one that come together to form one particular thing).* (FGD with Muslim Women in Kano) - Chapter 4 verse 34 of the Qur'an (KII with Chairman of the Council of Ulama, Kano State; FGD with Muslim men, Lagos) - According to Qur'an, Suratu An- Nisa Quran 4 verse 34 (FGD with young Muslim men in Lagos) - Quran 4 verse 35 (FGD with Muslim men, Lagos) - Suratul Ansar Quran 23 verse 21 (FGD with Muslim men, Lagos) - According to the holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH) "*if you cannot be able to feed your family you don't have to marry*" (KII with JNI Secretary, Kaduna)

- Apostles, chapter 6 were males. (KII with Catholic Priest, Enugu)
- All the Levites, descendants of Aaron were all males. (KII with Catholic Priest, Enugu)
- All the priests of old were males. (KII with Catholic Priest, Enugu)
- In the Old Testament, only male children who are circumcised are counted as nominal roll. (KII with Catholic Priest, Enugu)
- Not specific, though some areas in the bible encourage men to go out and work and provide for their families and help make their society better place. (FGD with Christian men, Enugu)
- Genesis 1:18 (FGD with Christian women, Enugu)
- Ephesians - Woman should be submissive (FGD with Christian women, Enugu)
- Acts 2: 1-10 - women were never counted as members of church/ during the feeding of 5000 (FGD with Christian women, Enugu)
- Only men were chosen as apostles (FGD with Christian women, Enugu)

Citation of Bible with reference to God creation of Adam and instructing Adam to overcome and rule the earth and have control over all beings and things created by God (FGD with young Christian men, Enugu). As the study elaborates in the discussion below, the selection of the sacred texts is guided by specific gender ideologies, although other participants offered alternative interpretations of some of these texts. The report will note that interviews and discussions were held at different times and places for the Christian and Muslim participants and as such did not provide room or allow for equal or counter citations as would be encouraged in a joint discussion. So the reader may notice that one religion has more reference than the other.

How men and women use religious teachings to inform behaviour

Study Objective 2: To explore how men and women are using religious teachings to inform their behaviours, including identifying common misconceptions and misinterpretations of these especially in relation to violence against women, exclusion of women from decision-making and leadership.

Leadership

Leadership was believed to be the role and responsibility to guide, influence, empower and lead people to the right path, while a leader was seen as someone who has the fear of God, who is religious, and as someone that God selects to guide people. While leadership was a role believed to be ascribed to men, and while most respondents agreed that both men and women could lead, there were some limitations placed on women's leadership.

For most Muslims, both men and women across age groups, it was believed that while religion does not forbid women from holding leadership roles, they are not supposed to lead men, especially in prayers. Additionally, while women could be leaders in other spheres of life, they could not lead at home or religious spheres. This view was shared by Muslim women in the North and in the South, regardless of age.

"According to the Prophet, Peace be Upon Him (PBUH,) "no people will ever progress if they allow a woman to serve as their leader" women can be elected to represent their interests but they cannot take leadership positions." (KII with the Chairman of the Council of Ulama, Kano State)

Arrijalu Kawwamuna alal nisa'I" (men are always ahead of women), it was believed that a man is supposed to be a leader, because God said man is always ahead of women, and a woman is not supposed to be a leader. (FGD with young Muslim women, Kano)

Apart from Religion (leading prayers), women cannot do that. In other aspects, she can lead. If we do not see any man that can do more than her, then she can lead. In terms of religion, Men must lead but in other things, Islam does not disturb women to lead thus both women and men could lead. (FGD with Muslim men, Lagos)

Among Christians, regardless of age group, gender or location, either women or men can be leaders in the church or elsewhere if they are qualified and committed to service provision. Female leaders in the Bible such as Deborah and Esther were cited in support of this belief. However, men are still the heads of homes. Additionally, in the Catholic Church, women cannot be ordained priests, although they are allowed to hold any other position in the church if they were capable. It was also believed by some respondents that some features of women disqualify them from taking leadership roles in the church.

"For instance during her menstrual period, she is forbidden from entering the Holy of Holies in the Old Testament which is believed to still be obtainable especially in some white garment churches"(FGD with Christian women, Enugu)

Men and women holding leadership roles were seen as not being a new trend. With references to past male and female leaders in the Bible and Qur'an, such as Esther, Deborah, and the Prophet's wife, it was believed that while religion never forbade women leadership, culture and tradition have, mostly because of the perception that men were superior to women. This perception was believed to be false, as supported by the Qur'an: *"alimra'atu shakikatu filhayatul rajulu, la hayatu illabihi wabi ha. (Her life entirely and his is the one that come together to form one particular thing*) (FGD with Muslim women in Kano).

Women's reluctance to take up leadership

It was generally believed (mainly by men) that women are reluctant to take up leadership roles because of cultural or traditional beliefs, beliefs that women's place was in the kitchen, or the need for women to seek their husband's permission to aspire for leadership. It was also believed, especially by male respondents, that women were weak and pliable, and would not make good leaders. In addition, female respondents believed men or the society would not

support them if they sought leadership positions. They, however, expressed the desire to be more involved in decision-making and leadership. In addition, older women indicated that church activities were time consuming and would not leave them with adequate time to attend to domestic issues (FGD with older Christian women in Lagos).

Making decisions

Opinions on decision making correlated with beliefs on leadership, with most respondents believing that men should make decisions, especially in the home. It was also believed that men should, however, consult others, including women, before making decisions.

"Decision making: it is men who are supposed to take decisions because they are ahead of the women; God said "Arrijalu Qauwamuna Alal nisa'i." (FGD with Muslim women in Kano)

The prophet (PBUH) was commanded by Allah "anytime you want to do something anytime that Allah has not sent divined inspiration to you, you must consult your companions." These companions include women. The prophet (PBUH) also said "anybody that sought for advice shall never go astray" (KII with JNI Secretary, Kaduna).

Allah said "wata awanu alal birri wat taqwa" meaning we should put heads together in fear of Allah in order to succeed"(FGD with Muslim women in Kaduna State).

Violence against women and girls

It was agreed by all respondents, regardless of age, gender, location or religion that no religion supports gender based violence. Referencing the Qur'an, a male respondent said, "*The prophet (PBUH) said "wouldn't one of you be shy to beat his wife during the day and later coming to her in the night to ask for sex?"* (KII with male JNI Secretary, Kaduna). In addition, referencing the Surat Nisai, it was stated that women have a chapter dedicated to them in the Qur'an, indicating God has a special place and respect for women which all should follow (KII with male Muslim Leader, Lagos). From the Christian FGD for older women in Lagos, there was the submission from them that the Bible also encourages violence against women and girls where they mentioned the portion which states that women should submit to their husband's leads some husbands to justify the use of violence in marriage. They also indicated that even marital vows have also promoted violence against women, where marriage counsellors/preachers tell women to always bear with the situation they find themselves in marriage.

Women's rights and privileges

Most respondents were of the opinion that religion prevents men and boys from sharing leadership roles with women, although for some respondents, roles such as priesthood and leading in prayer were for men. Religion does not forbid women having rights to control family or society resources, as supported by the Hadith, "we should not be unjust as Allah is not unjust" (FGD with Muslim men, Kaduna).

However, it was stated that in Sharia, women were entitled to smaller inheritance because they stand to inherit from their immediate families and from their husbands (FGD with young male Muslims, Lagos). Furthermore on inheritance, it was believed by some respondents that the bible advises that the man should keep inheritance for the children. In biblical context, it is in the presence of men and women that the father gives/shares inheritance to men and gives gift to the women (FGD with older male Christians, Kaduna). Respondents, both male and female, however, stressed the need for women to remain humble and respectful to men.

Women and girls' education

Citing the examples of the Prophet's wife in the Qur'an (Ayesha bint Abu Bakr), and Esther in the Bible, it was agreed that religion does not stop women from speaking out or taking action, especially if they are being denied such privileges. Women not being allowed to talk was also seen as a misinterpretation of the scripture, "*let the woman keep silent in the church (1 Cor 14:34, 1 Tim 2:12)*" (KII with male Christian leader, Abuja). It was argued that the injunction was addressing a specific context and should, therefore, not be generalized.

Women are also not forbidden from accessing education. As referenced by respondents, "*according to the hadith "seek for knowledge even if it means going to seek for it in China"* and *"seeking for knowledge is mandatory for every Muslim man and woman"* (FGD with Muslim young men, Kaduna; FGD with older Muslim men, Kaduna). In addition, while women were generally less accepting of not having the same rights and privileges as men, most male respondents were of the perception that women accept male dominance as God's will.

Men's health and health seeking behaviour

Study Objective 3: To explore how perception and behaviour of boys and men and manhood and what it means to be a man affect their health seeking behaviour.

Health effects of ascribed roles for men and women

There were mixed responses on whether there were health effects of ascribed roles and responsibilities on men and women. Most male Muslim respondents believed that there were no health implications for men or women, except from Muslim men in Lagos who believed that if there was peace at home; men would suffer no health implications from their ascribed roles and responsibilities. Younger Muslim women were also of the opinion that there were no health implications on men or women due to their ascribed roles.

In contrast, some older Muslim women believed that there were health implications on men, especially for those who had many children but not the means and therefore could not cater for them. In addition, they believed that women were at the risk of depression, leading to substance abuse and suicide because of being denied the opportunities to partake in roles ascribed to men. However, this argument was not raised by other groups. Most Christian men, especially the younger men, believed that there were health implications such as hypertension among men due to work overload, and obesity among women due to their sedentary lifestyles. They believed role sharing among men and women would help to ease this burden.

Seeking medical help

That religion does not forbid men from seeking medical help was common across all age groups, genders and religions, supported by scripture from the Qur'an such as "*Allah said I send before I send sickness I send the medicine first*" (KII with President of FOMWAN, Kano Chapter). It is believed instead that culture, peer pressure, a lack of funds, level of education, and men's egos prevented them from seeking medical help when ill. There is also the perception among older male Muslims in the South, and Christians both male and female regardless of location, that false faith teachings sometimes prevented men from seeking health care as well. Teachings that put emphasis on "miracles" or "faith healing" were used as examples.

Teachings such as "*when a man is sick, he should call the elders to pray for him and he will be well*", "*My son harken to my word, there are medicines to your flesh*" and "*let the weak say I*

am strong" (FGD with Christian women, Lagos and FGD with Christian women, Kaduna) from the Bible were reported to be misinterpreted as not being in support of seeking medical help when ill. In addition, reliance on faith, holy water and anointing oil as sources of healing over medical care was mentioned. This was mentioned by various groups. In addition, during the validation meeting, there were supportive contributions from representatives of NSCIA and CAN which seems to indicate that Muslims and Christians should seek health care and also that faithful (submission by NSCIA representative) can experience sickness as part of life.

Risky behaviour

It was also believed by all respondents that although not supported by religion, men and boys do engage in risky behaviours as a way to prove their "manhood" to their peers and to women and girls, or as an outlet from the stress of their ascribed roles and responsibilities. Pressure from family and society for men to be "successful" also resulted in men engaging in risky behavior even at the risk of their lives, or to the detriment of their self-respect, health and integrity. It was argued that religion presents men as "breadwinners" and successful heads of families, thereby putting them under pressure.

Women's counsel on health

There were mixed perceptions on the acceptance of women's counsel to men on health seeking behaviours. For most respondents, men would accept advice from women, and this was believed to be due to love and communication, between the men and women as well as humility and respect from the woman. For other respondents, mostly women regardless of age group, gender and religion, men would be reluctant to accept their suggestions because women are seen as inferior and lacking knowledge. There was also a fear that their suggestions by women could result in/to conflict, especially at home. Such suggestions, as mentioned by a few respondents in one FGD, are best provided through the religious leaders and will be better accepted when from such quarters than from women or girls.

Religious leaders that promote positive ideas of masculinity

Study Objective 4: To identify and profile religious leaders, institutions and teachings that promote / influence positive values, behaviours and ideas of masculinity and examine their acceptance by communities.

Identified religious leaders and teachings

The following religious leaders and scriptural teachings were identified in support of men and women having equal rights and opportunities:

Location	Religious teacher	Teaching / Role	Source
Kaduna State	Sheikh Jafar	Preach respect for women	FGD with Muslim male youths (15-25 years) in Kontagora Road by Lagos Street, Kaduna North LGA, Kaduna State
	Dr Ahmed		
	Sanusi Khaleel		
	Mallam Dahiru Bauchi		
	Mallam Maraya		
	Malama Rabiatu	Influential teacher	
	Dr Aisha		
	Justice Abdusallami Abubakar's wife		
	Mallam Suleiman Ladan*	Preach religious	Focus Group Discussion

	Mallam Tahir Bauchi*	unity and harmonious living	with Muslim female youths (15-25 years) in Islamiyya School, Bayajida Street, Kaduna Metropolis, Kaduna North LGA, Kaduna State
	Mallam Tukur Al Mannar		
	Mallam Asadus Sunnah,	Encourages women to seek knowledge; promote women inheritance, respect, freedom of choice on whom women marry, and marital unity	Focus Group Discussion with Muslim women (above 25 years) in Bayajida Street, Kaduna Metropolis, Kaduna North LGA, Kaduna State
	Kabir Gwambe,		
	Mallam Suleiman Aliyu,		
	Mallam Kabiru,		
	Aminu Daurawa		
	Baba Emmanuel Mayau	Preaches gender equality in the home	Focus Group Discussion with Christian women (above 25 years) in Unguwar Mission Makera Kaduna South LGA, Kaduna State
	Pastor Benjamin Mamman		
	Bishop Kuka of Sokoto Diocese	Preaches gender equality	Focus Group Discussion with Christian female youths (15 – 25 years) in Kakuri Hausa, Kaduna State
	Musa, a teacher in the chapel of Good News		
	Ahlus Sunnah,	Preaches that both men and women have rights	Focus Group Discussion with Muslim men (above 25 years) in Kontagora Road by Lagos Street, Kaduna North LGA, Kaduna State
	Sheikh Balarabe		
	Mallam Abubakar		
	Reverend Matthew John	Encourages women to run for political position and supports 35% affirmative action for women	Focus Group Discussion with Christian men (above 25 years) in Assemblies of God Church, Kakuri, Kaduna State, Kaduna State
	Reverend John Martin of ECWA Gospel Church	Encourages women to participate in politics	Focus Group Discussion with male Christian youths (15 – 25 years) in Kaduna South LGA, Kaduna State
	Dr. Paul		
Kano	Sheikh IBRAHIM KHALEEL aka Starcomms	Preaches in support of women	KII with Hajiya Sa'adatu Hashim, the Ameera Of Federation Of Muslim Women Association in Nigeria Kano Branch and President of Kano State Chapter

Lagos	None	Women (SURA al-NISA) has a chapter dedicated to them in Quran, so indicating God has a special place and respect for women which all should follow	KII with Yakubu Abdullateef, Imam. No 12, Ajani Akingbogun St Akowonjo, Lagos State
	None	Quran 16 verse 90 states that we should do same thing with everyone including our wife and children	FGD with Muslim men (above 25 years), Akowonjo, Lagos.
	Pastor Adedokun from Redeemed Christian church of God	Preaches that men and women should express their sexual rights	FGD with Christian women (above 25 years) in Ogba, Ikeja, Lagos
	Faith Family Bible church	Encourages men to be equal with their wives	
	Pastor Bolaji Idowu of Harvesters church	Both sexes should be given equal opportunity	FGD with young Christian women (15 – 25 years), Akerele, Surulere, Lagos.
Enugu	Rev.Fr.John Onwe, Seminary Teacher and Administrator of Diocese	Encourages men to share roles, power and responsibilities with women, and make time for recreation and relaxation.	FGD with Christian men (above 25 years) in Catholic Church of Maria Assumpta Parish Awkunanaw, Achara Layout, Enugu
	Reverend Father Benignus Ugochukwu Ugwu, Parish Priest, Enugu Diocese.	Preaches equality of sexes	KII with Reverend Father Benignus Ugochukwu Ugwu, Parish Priest, Enugu Diocese, Enugu State.
* Mentioned by the female youths, as well as older women in the location.			

These preachers were mostly viewed with respect and as role models by other preachers and the community, provided they preached within the tenets of religion. It was reported, however, that preachers in Makera, Kaduna South LGA and in Kano who preached in support of gender equality face resistance from other preachers in the community. Additionally, some preachers

in Kano and Enugu do preach equal rights for women and men but not directly, due to fear of their fellow preachers.

It was believed by young Christian men in Enugu that Nigeria is not yet ready for preaching on gender equality, and that is why religious leaders were preaching gender equality with caution, using scripture and stressing submissiveness of women, even within the discourse of gender equality. It is also believed by a male Pastor in Lagos that gender equality could not be preached in rural churches, as it will be seen as trying to make men become weak and unmanly. He also believed that tradition views gender equality as a problem that could result in separation or divorce of couples. Most respondents were unable to provide scriptural support for these preachers' teachings.

Practical suggestions on harnessing potential religious teachings to promote positive masculinity

Study Objective 5: To advance practical suggestions and recommendations on how to harness the positive potential of religious teachings and institutions to promote positive masculinity in ways that will ultimately benefit the gender, exploring opportunities and barriers that exist.

Collaboration between religious groups

Few examples of collaboration between faith communities were identified such as between the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Bible Society Group in Kaduna, as well as between the 5 blocks of CAN - CPFN, PFN, Catholic, ECWA and OAIC. Others include collaboration between the Justice, Development and Peace Committee (JDPC) and communities in Enugu, and between unspecified Muslim and Christian communities in Lagos, especially during Ramadan.

The main areas of collaboration were in peace and unity (encouraging men to avoid violence), as well as human rights. It was also noted that Muslims have joined with others (religious and non-religious) to condemn the terrorism of Boko Haram. In addition, to support collaboration between religious groups, it was quoted from the Qur'an that the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) met some people who fasted using Moses' direction and encouraged his followers to join them.

Other areas of collaboration that were supported by respondents include teaching men to respect women more, teaching men to share roles and responsibilities, promoting women and girls to speak out and sometimes manage resource allocation, and promoting education for women and girls. In this instance, collaboration implied Christians and Muslims coming together to promote these ideals.

However, in most groups regardless of age, gender, location or religion, there were mixed feelings about equality in religious activities and spheres, and the emergence of men who relate with women on an equal basis. This was mostly not supported by Muslim men, who back their perception that women were not equal to men with quotes from the Qur'an such as, *"Arrijalu qawamuna alan nnisaa"* which may have different meanings, but the respondent's submitted translation, is that *"men are placed tops on women" and "where you don't find one male witness, you should get two female witnesses"* (FGD with older Muslim men, Kaduna). They also stated that it was against their religion for women to lead men in prayers, even though women could lead other women.

Practical suggestions

Practical suggestions made by respondents for redefining masculinity and sustaining gender equality include:

a. Create awareness in churches and mosques. This would entail preaching the message of responsible masculinity and gender equality in religious settings.

b. Conduct trainings, workshops and seminars for religious leaders. These trainings would mobilise religious leaders to become champions who promote equality and partnership between men and women.

c. Develop a guide for use for trainings, campaigns and advocacy on gender equality. Such a guide would approach the theme from Christian and Muslim perspectives.

d. Have religious leaders preach about equality from the pulpit, and lead by example. Most respondents extended this example to include preachers and religious teachers who are not violent at home, who educate their girl child and allow their wives space to lead and make decisions (for married persons) and other positive examples.

e. Organise monthly or quarterly workshops, seminars and lectures, especially for the couples to have more respect for each other.

f. Teach more at marriage course on equality, sex education and modesty in managing livelihoods.

g. Involve corporates, working with them to promote work-life balance, and couple retreats.

h. Have communities of faith act as role models.

i. Support women associations and role models to speak more and be visible.

j. Create a website to empower women, build their morale, as well as use role models to push for women advancement.

k. Involve the schools and media.

l. Conduct community conversations on gender quality monthly or quarterly.

m. Ensure that men are carried along in all fora, and work with men as champions.

n. Continuous advocacy and campaigns.

Simplify campaign messages so everyone can understand them.

Other suggestions made include prayer, the need for women to be submissive and humble, the need for men to love and respect their wives, the need for children to be trained to respect gender equality and to have role models, and the need for husbands whose wives are uneducated to send their wives to school, and the need for people to live out the true tenets of their religions.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Notions of masculinity

The socially constructed understanding of who a man is, and the man's role in society, is built on a religious edifice with the conviction that it was God, who established once and for all who a man should be. To this extent, religious imagination is crucial to the formulation of beliefs and attitudes defining masculinity. Older Christian women in Enugu went as far as asserting that, the man "resembles God. After God is man. He is next/second to God." To a very large extent, this dimension has been overlooked in global discourses on notions of who a man is (see Van Klinken 2013). The Nigerian context demonstrates that Christians and Muslims derive their ideas regarding masculinity from their religions. Although there may be internal contestation concerning exactly what "true Christian or Islamic" teaching on masculinity is, it is clear that the religious dimension to masculinity must be taken seriously in the Nigerian context. Earlier studies (for example, Uchendu 2007) did not place emphasis on this critical dimension.

The study also highlights that sacred texts/scriptures and sacred traditions are marshaled and deployed to articulate, defend and justify definitions of masculinity, across religion, gender, region and level of leadership. In the context of Christianity, numerous biblical passages were put forward as justifying men's leadership and dominance of the home, the place of worship and society in general. In the context of Islam, Chapter Four of the Quran featured prominently in terms of articulating male dominance and women's inferiority. Strikingly, almost all the participants accepted the authority of *their* reading or interpretation of the particular texts. The dominant interpretive paradigm employed was the literalist reading of the text. Only a few religious leaders/scholars were willing to suggest that the texts had to read in their own particular contexts that tended to be characterised by patriarchy.

One consistent factor emerging from the study is the projection of the man as the one with the responsibility to fend for or support the family. This notion came out clearly across all the FGDs. As earlier studies have demonstrated (Lindsay 2007 and Mbah 2013), this concept emerged from, and was rigidified by, the encounter with colonialism. The notion that a "real man" is one who is able to support his wife, children and the larger community is consistent with patriarchal views of society where the man is the primary focus, with women and children as the supporting cast. Poignantly, this ideology was expressed by Christian and Muslim respondents. While on the one hand this notion can mitigate the exploitation of women's energy and promote male responsibility, on the other hand it has the attendant challenge of trivializing women's domestic labour.

Globally, domestic labour has not been recognized in national financial projections, thereby consigning women to invisibility (and many times, inconsequence). It is striking to note that definitions of masculinity from both Christianity and Islam in the study centre around the male performance of masculinity on the domestic front, projecting a man as one who is married, has children and can look after them satisfactorily. Study participants assumed that the family or household is defined by a married man who is in charge of "his" domestic space. This has consequences for men who do not get married for one reason or the other, or who get married but are unable to have children in their marriages, or those who fail to provide for their families due to the prevailing economic situation. Indeed, the awareness that many women are "winning bread" was expressed in some FGDs, indicating that harsh realities are forcing a rethinking of rigid gender ideologies.

Religion, masculinity and men's participation in domestic chores

Religions tend to be characterised by greater concern with 'this-worldly' matters including bodily and emotional wellbeing (health and healing) and the quality of intimate and familial relationships, and to be more centred around the home, domestic work, and sometimes the natural world. Such a conclusion is not surprising, given the widespread gender division of labour which leaves women in most societies with greater responsibility than men for bodily and emotional care, for the maintenance of affective and kin relationships, and for domestic concerns in general. What is more surprising is the way in which activities whose religious significance has previously been overlooked start to appear in a new light once a gender-critical perspective is applied.

On men and domestic chores, it can be seen that there is a prior understanding that gender roles are divinely prescribed and that women are to be generally responsible for undertaking tasks at the home front. On the other hand, the man is expected to concentrate on "winning bread," as highlighted above. However, there was a constant concession that "if the woman is unavailable, especially on health grounds," the man could step in and accomplish tasks relating to cooking, childcare and cleaning. Although such a stance appears to increase women's workload, given that men appear willing to step in only when the woman is unwell, it does provide a "redemptive window" for men's participation in domestic work. It shows that there is at least some opportunity or scope for "allowing" men's participation in domestic chores.

It is crucial to observe that while Islam does provide religious justification for men's participation in domestic chores, this aspect did not receive as much prominence as the teaching that the man is the head of the household. It would appear culture dominates religion when it comes to this particular dimension. However, as the study has indicated, there is need for a separate study to untangle religion from culture in the different Nigerian contexts. For example, the FGD with older women in Kaduna elicited the following response; "The Prophet (PBUH) had always been supportive to his family by supporting them with basic household and domestic chores. He sliced onions, he swept, he visited the kitchen and so on… There is a Hadith saying that, 'the best among you is the one who is supportive to his family, and I am the most supportive to my family.' Some women participants felt that culture prevented men from taking up domestic chores: "As a Hausa community, our men hardly engage in such domestic and house chores. But that is not Islamic" (FDG Older Women Kaduna).

For most Christian respondents, men's participation in domestic chores could be framed in the discourse of love and partnership. A number of younger Christian male participants (For example, Lagos FGD with younger Christian men) expressed pleasure in undertaking domestic chores, considering this a vivid demonstration of the call for men to love their partners and be willing to die for them. They shared details of washing their partners' underwear, seeing no need to apologise for acts that would not be regarding as "macho" in strict patriarchal contexts. This confirms the potential for young men in particular to embrace more equitable gender norms. Overall, younger Christian and Muslim participants (both male and female) were more open to changing gender roles.

Ambivalence and contradictions in interpreting sacred texts and gender

It is instructive to note that the notion of the man as the religiously legitimated "head and leader", as well as provider of the family, was not without contestation. Some Christian women drew attention to the "Proverbs 31 woman" as a good example of women's industriousness and capacity to provide for the household. On the other hand, some Muslim women cited the

example of the wife of the Prophet (PBUH), Khadijah, who was a woman of means. Essentially, this implies that there are some divergent, underlying and less prominent interpretations of the status and role of the man in the family, religion and community. It would appear that these versions of masculinity yield more promises for gender justice than the dominant ones. As the study will highlight with reference to role models below, there are already some male religious leaders who aspire to promote these more equitable interpretations of masculinity and relationships between women and men.

The observation that religiously (and culturally) inspired definitions of masculinity are flexible and not cast in stone is confirmed by the extent to which some study participants (in almost every FGD) across age, religion and gender expressed their longing for a more equitable society. More importantly, they maintained that their respective religions already possessed resources to bring about social transformation with particular reference to the quest for gender justice. In particular, younger men in both religions demonstrated greater openness and flexibility. This highlights the fact that although at the ideological level a perception is created that the religions have handed down fixed canons about masculinity; in reality men are always changing (Morrell 2001).

It emerges that religious texts are amenable to different interpretations and changing contexts. They are like the proverbial double-edged sword. They can be deployed to achieve male dominance, or they can also be appropriated to promote gender justice. Whereas some texts and traditions have been appealed to support male dominance and women's subordination (Machingura 2013), alternative interpretations of the same texts are possible. For example, one of the texts put forward to justify men's headship and authority is the story of the dethronement of Queen Vashti in the book of Esther in the bible. However, alternative interpretations show that Vashti was an assertive, confident and intelligent woman who resisted being used as a sex object. A Christian Aid (2015: 9) document makes the following critical observation, "No reading is ever impartial or without interests, and the reading of any text can serve the interests of the rulers of a society or of its poorest or most vulnerable."

Religion, masculinity and space for women's leadership

The dominant trend in the submissions is to define leadership as a male preserve, with concessions being made for women's leadership in a few, specific and well-defined areas. At the ideological level, religions project men as the "natural" and God-designated leaders. Women are accepted as "helpers," with men vested with the authority to make decisions at home, in religious institutions and society in general. In an earlier study, Harris (2012) made reference to how men in Kaduna were striving to impose order and control in changing contexts. Religion provides men with the theological/spiritual/religious aura to take up leadership, while relegating women to followership, at least at the level of ideology.

Notions of women's "weakness" were deployed to justify women's subordination. Mainly Christian participants made reference to how Eve was "easily tricked by the serpent" in the garden. However, in the biblical story, alternative interpretations would suggest that the man was completely inept and failed to take responsibility for his actions. Muslims did not refer to the story of temptation by the serpent to justify women's subordination; however, Muslim participants were more insistent on clear separation between men as the leaders and women as the followers. Participants used what they saw as clear physiological and psychological reasons why women could not lead prayers (when men were present). Thus in opinion of one person, "A leader is expected to be fearless, just, strong, educated and a complete man. According to Islam, leadership is the responsibility of men. Men lead in prayers. Men should lead as directed by Allah" (Young Muslim man, Kaduna).

Despite the ideological declaration that leadership is the province of men, the study demonstrated the discrepancy that often occurs between ideology and practice. Whereas some Christian male respondents suggested that women could not lead since all the apostles were male, some women participants observed that some women served as judges and women were among the most consistent followers of Jesus. Both Muslim and Christian participants were able to name competent women leaders in their respective communities in the contemporary period.

The emphasis on education as one of the major characteristics of a good leader suggests that the current marginalization of women in the education system disadvantages women when it comes to taking up leadership. Since men tend to have greater access to education as part of the patriarchal dividend, women are at a significant disadvantage. Whereas it does appear fair and consistent to require that the one who has the better educational qualification be the one to take up a leadership role within a community of faith or in the community, such as stance glosses over the struggles that women face when trying to access education.

The contention that men must monopolize the leadership position in the home has been undermined by the changing socio-economic context. Global capitalism has had an impact on indigenous patriarchies, rendering the notion of the male provider obsolete in most instances. Older women in Kano made the following observation, "If it is in the aspect of marriage, the husband is supposed to be the leader, but in the present reality of life and generally speaking, everyone should be a leader, because these days, let's say the truth, it is women that feed the men."

Religion, masculinity and girls' education

The study highlighted the underlying theological support for the education of girls and women. Although some conservative interpretations of both Christianity and Islam suggest that it is boys and men who must pursue education in order to perform the leadership role more effectively, there was strong support for the education of girls and women in both Christianity and Islam. One of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) was put forward to support the education of girls, "seeking for knowledge is mandatory for every Muslim man and woman to achieve" (Older Men, Kano). Older Christian women in Enugu contended that husbands whose wives had not had access to education had the responsibility to support them.

Older Muslim women in Kano argued that the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) was called upon to "recite" at a time when he could not read. Although he was not educated, God made him read. This was used to support the argument that both men and women should "read." Religions, therefore, have underlying threads that can be retrieved, reinterpreted and appropriated to support the call for girls' and women's education in the contemporary period. What is required is creativity and sensitivity to identify positive concepts and utilize them to meet a contemporary need.

Men's health and health-seeking behaviour

The study showed that there is some concern and awareness that religion's emphasis on men as the ones who are designated for leadership and the exclusion of women from leadership can have health implications. For example, some participants suggested that men hardly found time to rest as they had to meet family and religious responsibilities. However, most respondents did not appear to have been fully sensitized about the discourse on men's health. For men, admitting that their health could be compromised by working too hard to meet family and religious obligations might have been seen as a sign of weakness. On the other hand,

many women might have felt that framing men's health as vulnerable might lead men to stop fulfilling their responsibilities.

Perhaps as a result of the observations above, there was an overly defensive stance regarding the possible impact of masculinity on men's health and health-seeking behaviour. Globally, men's interaction with the health delivery system is minimal (Bogle 2013). As the study by Bogle shows, across cultures, men tend to utilise health services less than women. Whereas some Christian participants admitted that there was a possibility that the religion's emphasis on masculinity and leadership could be a source of vulnerability, there were much fewer concessions on the part of the Muslim participants.

The dominant responses by study participants might be a reflection of the religious ideology that undertaking religious duties and responsibilities should not be experienced as burdensome. Any sense of wanting to rest, delegate or share leadership with women is regarded as a sign of slackening in faith. However, there are also cultural forces at play as culture presents the man as strong and always available to accomplish tasks. It does seem there is a need to invest in exposing this blind spot in religion's (and culture's) construction of masculinity as it highlights the cost of patriarchy on men.

Religion, masculinity and gender-based violence

Most study participants insisted that religion must be absolved when discussing gender-based violence. As was the case with the theme of religion and men's health, it would appear an idealized version of religion was at play in this regard. According to this idealized version of religion (as opposed to the practical/sociological version), religion only acts as a positive social force and do not have any negative impact. Respondents might have felt compelled to present an ideal version of their religion, especially in an environment characterised by competition between the religions. In reality, by emphasizing male dominance and primacy over women, religious interpretations/constructions have the potential to provoke sexual and gender-based violence.

The document, Restoring Dignity: A Toolkit for Religious Communities to End Violence against Women (2009: 8-9), indicates that there are different forms of violence against women. These include rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, dowry murder, early marriage, femicide, female genital cutting and honour killing. Some of these forms of violence of occur in Nigeria, where the majority of people identify with either Christianity or Islam. Consequently, it can be argued that some of the perpetrators must be individuals who are actively religious. The insistence on women's subordination on the basis of religious ideology sponsors, justifies and fuels violence against women. Thus:

The incidence of GBV breeds essentially on the lower status of women. Subordination is the central weapon to exercise patriarchal control over women and girls in Nigeria. It is successfully perpetuated through cultural and religious socialization to the degree that most girls and adolescent women in Nigeria grow into adult women believing that these occurrences are natural and divinely ordered. As a result, most often change is resisted by such women themselves as they tend to perceive messages about gender equality as an aberration to cultural dictates of appropriateness of behavior for women and men (Igbelina-Igbokwe 2013).

The admission by some study participants (Older Muslim Men, Lagos) that the man has the authority to "send the woman away if she misbehaves" is a pointer towards the possible deployment of religion to support violence against women. The power to send the woman away rests with the man and he is the one who decides what constitutes "misbehaviour."

Similarly, older Christian women in Lagos indicated that the emphasis on women's subordination by preachers and counselors fuels violence against women. Essentially, both Christian and Muslim patriarchal ideologies based in patriarchal society are appealed to justify the man's authority to discipline all members of his household, including his wife. In most discussions, the notion of the man "allowing" his wife to engage in some activities expressed this underlying idea that the man has complete power over "his" wife and has a high degree of latitude in deciding what she may or may not do. It is likely that authority extends to "correcting" her in different ways, including the use of physical violence.

Male religious leaders supporting women

The study highlighted the presence of male religious leaders who are defying the dominant patriarchal interpretations of Christianity and Islam. They are playing an important role in supporting women's leadership and challenging negative interpretations of the sacred text. These represent the "alternative voices" or "voices of resistance" that Gary Barker (2005) has drawn attention to. Study participants were clear that there were men who are actively involved in promoting girl's access to education, leadership and partnership.

The study participants highlighted that the male religious leaders who support women do not always receive support in their religious communities. While they are respected, they have to ensure that they remain within the traditional tenets of their religions. They have to negotiate their way in contexts where patriarchy views them with suspicion as they are questioning the patriarchal dividend and challenging the status quo. The male religious leaders who support gender justice are role models and embody the aspirations of *transformative masculinity*. Transformative masculinity speaks of the quest for men who support gender justice.

Such men challenge violence against women and children. They are committed to the equality of men and women, question the notion of male headship and are open to the leadership of women, youth and children (Chitando 2010).

Opportunities for transformative masculinity within religious settings in Nigeria

The following opportunities exist for the emergence of Transformative Masculinity within religious settings in Nigeria:

- Existence of male religious leaders (Christian and Muslim) who are serving as role models
- Pre-existing platforms for addressing gender equality within Christian and Muslim communities
- Degree of openness to inter-faith collaboration on reflecting on religion and masculinity
- Young men and women are ready to adopt more gender equitable behaviour
- Some scholars and religious leaders willing to engage in critical re-examination of sacred texts and traditions in order to promote gender justice. This approach will benefit from the involvement of both male and female leaders and teachers of the faith

Threats for transformative masculinity within religious settings in Nigeria

The following threats to the emergence of Transformative Masculinity within religious settings in Nigeria:

- Conservative theologies and interpretations of sacred texts
- Policing and criticism of male religious leaders who promote gender justice
- Conservative interpretations of African culture
- Religious competition where the possibility of mutual learning and sharing is discouraged
- Community perceptions and viewing more equitable attitudes of masculinity as weaknesses; some social norms, attitudes and negative constructs should not be ignored as these are strong threats.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The most visible face of religion in Nigeria – from both Christian and Islamic perspective is always its 'male face', not only because men will be able to give greater prominence to the organisational forms and activities in which they have most power, but also because religion [as this report has established in definition and profiling] is represented in the academia, the media, civic and political life in a way which renders male dominated activities and organisations most visible. Methods which represent themselves as 'objective' and 'scientific' mask their political effect, which is to perpetuate male domination by rendering it normal. What is clear from the work as reviewed and discussions held with different categories of people above is that by taking different routes, using different methods or the same methods to different effect, asking different questions, seeking out different activities and discourses, and being more self-conscious about political and personal interests in research, it is possible for development practitioners to probe beneath the presenting surface of religion to make new discoveries. Some of these discoveries often generate more questions and seek more interventions.

Even in relation to topics in which there has already been some concentration of interest by development experts of religion, perhaps most notably culture within religion, the family and sexuality, there is still a very great deal of work to be done in bringing these into closer relation with gender.

This study provided descriptive and in-depth information regarding the role of religion in shaping masculinity in Nigeria and the relationship between these religions and gender role beliefs. Overall, the study highlights the importance of challenging the predominantly one dimensional portrayals of Christianity and Islam masculinity and opens the scope for using religion as a drive to more equitable relationships and achieving gender justice.

Recommendations

It is obvious that religion is an extremely important aspect of private and public life that must be included and embedded in every type of future intervention in Nigeria, and the emergence of the egalitarian position among men in Nigeria indicates that gender equality is possible to achieve in this population.

However, it is important to note that suggestions presented in chapter 4 under the key findings and results are derived from the study participants' comments, contribution and submission during the data collection process. Given the varying religious affiliations, cultural and ethnic differences as they affect religious practice in Nigeria and the likely role of gender predisposition (as obtained in either being male or female), it is advised that these recommendations be treated on their merits by location, religion, age, gender and period in time.

In addition, it is important to review and reflect critically on the various suggestions presented by participants at this study which are available in chapter 4 (presentations of key findings and results). The consultants have refrained from repeating or prioritizing these suggestions as presented under the result and key findings chapter for some reasons which include that doing such may not be objective and prone to bias on the part of study consultants.

However some recommendations are imperative and very critical from the perspectives of programme and policy planning.

These include:

- The importance of working with religious leaders and religious institutions to first further sensitize and conscientise the key persons in this religion to join the struggle for gender justice. In doing this, it is important to provide trainings, advocacy skills and advocacy information to these leaders, scholars and teachers to enable them face the possible resistance and challenges that they will face.

- It is important to engage government, gatekeepers at community level and religious levels, employers of labour and other relevant duty bearers to consider moving from words to action to promote gender justice, equity, positive masculinity and gender equality within their various spaces.

- Need to prompt relevant Civil Society Organisations as facilitators to work out more efficient ways of promoting collaborative actions within and across religious sects, institution and persons towards building/strengthening systems and structures that will promote positive and transformative masculinity. This synergy and collaboration is important to ensure that, no religious group (especially within Islam or Christianity) is seen as compromising their faith beliefs in preaching or standing out strongly for gender justice.

- It is important to leverage on existing systems and structures identified in churches, mosques and other religious places to promote positive and transformative masculinity. Some of these had been mentioned under the key findings in chapter 4.

- Development practitioners must continue to exercise caution and be creative in what steps are taken in recognition of the likely fanatical opposition that may emerge from little, but influential quarters within any of the two key religions. This therefore means that planning, design of intervention, implementation and monitoring must keep in focus such opposition and challenges.

- Efforts must be intensified to enhance working with youth (male and female), men, little boys and girls and women through provision of sensitisation, training, organising discussion circles and others. This, hopefully, will open more space for re-consideration of masculinity and femininity in the context of family and society best interest or outcomes. In this vein, all women and girls need to become allies of positive masculinity approach so as to re-enforce the efforts made by men and boys to transform positively and their (Men and boys) acceptance of gender justice as a mutually beneficial and worthy cause

There is need to keep in focus the special needs of disabled women and girls who will even have more demands as we articulate gender justice as these persons are more vulnerable.

This report summarizes the findings from a qualitative research on Masculinity and Religion in Nigeria. The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Christian Aid. Christian Aid is not liable for damages arising from interpretations and use of this material by a reader.

Contact us

Christian Aid Nigeria
Plot 802 off Ebitu Ukiwe Street
Jabi District
Abuja, FCT
Nigeria

+234 (0) 703 255 9282
nigeria-info@christian-aid.org
christianaid.org.uk/nigeria