

Shaving Habits in Nigerian Men

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: Recently we noticed that young men in our environment shave their beards with hair clippers at the barbers shop. Little is known about Nigerian men's shaving habits and reasons for choice of shaving method. The aim of this study was to determine shaving methods among Nigerian men and associated factors.

METHODS: A community survey of 1003 men residing in an urban community in Ibadan, Nigeria was done. Data was obtained on socio-demographic characteristics, history of skin problems and allergies, shaving attitudes and practices and reasons for use of the shaving methods mentioned. Associations between shaving method reported and variables were explored.

RESULTS: The most commonly used instrument was the clipper in 67.5%, followed by shaving stick (19.3%), razor blade (9.8%) and shaving powder (5.8%). Shaving sticks were used more in older respondents while clipper use was found among younger men. The factors independently associated with clipper use were younger age, higher education and not currently married. Also significantly associated were higher frequency of shave, shave period and history of shaving bumps.

CONCLUSIONS: Shaving habits in Nigerian men appeared to have changed over the years. The younger generation requires shaving instruments that consume less time and are unlikely to cause pseudofolliculitis barbae. There is a need to educate young Nigerian males on the correct procedures of shaving so they can practice safe shaving methods.

INTRODUCTION

Shaving remains an effective and quick method of hair removal on most parts of the body. Other methods of hair removal include use of shaving powders, depilatories, waxing and hand picking. Shaving of facial skin remains a major component of "personal grooming" or morning ritual in males. Men shave facial hair for religious reasons, improved appearance, sports and work demands. Instruments for shaving can be grouped into straight, safety and electric razors. Straight razors are the traditional razors where the blades are bare. Safety razors come with holders or casings and are further subdivided into double-edged razors, single edge, injector razors, cartridge razors and disposable razors. Cartridge razors range from single to multi-bladed types. Disposal razors are quite common and are affordable in most communities. Shaving methods are also divided into wet and dry shaving

Over time, shaving methods and instruments have continued to change. In some societies myths exist concerning use of different shaving methods, for

example Chinese men believe that shaving with a razor may be injurious to the skin.¹ There is little or no literature on shaving habits especially among black native Africans such as in Nigeria though anecdotal evidence suggests that young Nigerian men prefer to have a shave with clippers in their closets or in the barbers' shop. Furthermore some who use safety razors shave dry. It is believed that clippers prevent the development of *Pseudofolliculitis barbae* – a common problem in Africans possibly due to their relatively thick and curly beard hair.² The objective of this study is to examine current shaving habits in men in Ibadan, South-West Nigeria.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross sectional household survey of men aged 18 to 49 years residing in rural and urban households in Nigeria was done. The study was carried out in Ibadan, the second largest city in Nigeria by population after Lagos and the largest in geographical area. Its population is 2,550,593 according to 2006 census results, including 11 local government areas. The principal inhabitants of the city are the Yoruba people. Multistage cluster

sampling method was used for sample selection. One locality in Ibadan North Local government was randomly selected and the community was divided into 25 clusters/enumeration areas (EAs) and about 40 households in each EA were studied. One individual who met the study criteria was selected in each household. When more than one man met the criteria balloting was done to select the respondent. The minimum sample size was determined assuming a prevalence of shaving stick use of 50% (no previous local estimates of shaving prevalence were available) and expected to estimate the prevalence of use with 5% precision and at 95% confidence level. A design effect of 2 for the cluster sample design and 80% response rate were used in the computation. This resulted in a minimum sample size of 1000 however 1003 men were eventually studied.

Men aged 18-49 years and were usual residents of the city were eligible. Residents were excluded if they were in occupations that required maintaining a clean shave such as the military or the police force. Interviewer administered questionnaires were used to obtain data on respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, history of skin problems and allergies, shaving attitudes and practices and reasons for use of the shaving methods mentioned. Interviewers were trained in the administration of questionnaires in a 3-day session involving each interviewer reading out and interpreting the questions in turn and also participating in a role play. A pretest was carried out in a local government not selected for the study and corrections made to question wording and content. Questionnaires were edited by the supervisor/data editors on the field on a daily basis and errors and implausible entries corrected. These documents were kept in lockers where they were safe and ensured confidentiality. Data was entered into SPSS version 16 and still checked for errors and edited. Appropriate summary statistics were reported depending on the variable. For the four main shaving methods reported (shaving sticks, clippers, shaving cream and razor blades) separate chi square tests and multiple logistic regression analysis were used to test their association with socio-demographic and shaving-related variables. Level of significance for all tests will be 5%.

RESULTS

The mean age of the respondents was 31.6 years (SD = 8 years). Table 1 shows the distribution of the socio-demographic characteristics of the men studied.

Concerning shaving habits, majority (98.9%) of the respondents had shaved before. The reasons mentioned for shaving include comfort (48%), improved appearance (51.3%), to be acceptable by society (5.3%) and to meet the expectations of the public (2.2%). The mean age of first shave was 19.9 years (SD = 3.8).

The barber's clippers were mostly used as first shaving instrument (39.9%) followed by shaving stick (26.9%), razor blade (17.6%), shaving powder (7.4%) and personal clippers (5.7%). Other methods include other types of clippers such as traditional locally made clippers (1%), traditional shaving with blade (straight razors) (0.5%), scissors (0.5%), depilators (0.3%) and handpicking (0.1%).

When asked about the respondents' perceptions about the shaving method which gives the smoothest shave, clippers were most commonly mentioned (46.5%). The proportions reporting other shaving methods are as follows: shaving stick (22.5%), shaving powder (17.2%), traditional shaving methods (1.9%) and depilators (0.5%).

Concerning number of shaving methods used, majority of respondents (932, 92.9%) reported using only one shaving method, 45 (4.5%) use two methods and 3 (0.3%) use three different methods. The most commonly used shaving method stated is the clipper (67.5%) followed by the shaving stick (19.3%), razor blade (9.8%) and shaving powder (5.8%). Other shaving methods currently in use include depilators (0.4%), traditional methods (0.3%) and scissors (0.1%).

Our results also showed that the most likely time of shave is before a shower (52.2%) followed by when having a haircut (28.8%). Fewer men prefer to shave directly after a shower (6.9%) or during a shower (2.1%). Some men indicated a preference for shaving at night (2.6%) while about 7.4% would shave at anytime.

The main reasons reported among clipper users include comfort (34.9%), 'it does not give rashes' (30.9%), ease of use compared to other shaving methods (9.6%), and that it gives a smooth shave

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Frequency*	Proportion
Age (years)		
Less than 25	151	15.3
25-34	475	48.1
35-44	260	26.3
45+	102	10.3
Total	988	100
Ethnicity		
Yoruba	838	83.6
Hausa	22	2.2
Ibo	72	7.2
Others	71	7.1
Total	1003	100
Level of education		
No formal education	25	2.5
Primary	125	12.5
Secondary	494	49.5
Tertiary	353	35.3
Total	997	100
Occupation		
Professionals	24	2.4
Artisans	579	58.7
Traders	150	15.2
Students	91	9.2
Civil servants	42	4.3
Others	100	10.1
Total	986	100
Marital status		
Single never married	432	43.3
Currently married	561	56.2
Separated	4	0.4
Divorced	1	0.1
Total	998	100

*Missing data on variables is responsible for the inconsistent totals

(9%). Other reasons for using clippers include: it is less messy (2.4%) and more economical (1.4%).

There were 606 (60.4%) men who apply some substance after shaving. About a quarter (25.3%) use aftershave, 23% use methylated spirit, 13.7% use powder while 12.4% apply antiseptics. Other substances used post-shave include menthol (6.1%), brake oil (4.3%) and dermatol cream (2.5%). The frequency of shaving was weekly in 35.6%, twice a week in 32.8% and less frequent than weekly in 19.8% of respondents. About 10.5% shave three times a week while 1.4% shave every day.

Concerning the most desired results in a shave, the men stated 'a smooth shave' (73.5%) and 'improvement in skin appearance' (20.9%). Majority of the men studied shave at the barbers shop (89.4%) while 6.4% will shave themselves, however about 35.5% own a personal clipper. The commonest facial

hair is the fringe beard around the jaw found in about 27.9% of respondents followed by chin or goatee beard (16.4%), no facial hair or clean shaven (14.1%), and side whiskers or burns (13.1%). Moustache only (7.7%) and full beard (5.6%) were least reported.

The association between shaving method used, socio-demographic and shaving related variables for the four main shaving methods are shown in Table 2. Safety razor use was significantly higher among older respondents, those currently married, men who shave during or after a shower, frequent shavers of 3-4 times a week, and respondents without a history of shaving bumps. Clipper use was however significantly higher among younger men, those with higher education, students and professionals, those who had never married, men who shave less frequently, and those who shaver at the barber's.

Table 2: Association between use of f different shaving methods and selected socio-demographic and shaving-practice variables

Variable	% using Shaving safety razors	P value	% using Clipper	P value	% using Shaving powder	p value	% using razor blade (straight razors)	p value	N
Age in years									
Less than 25	7.9	<0.001	84.1	<0.001	2.6	0.001	2.6	<0.001	151
25-34	15.2		79.2		4.0		5.1		475
35-44	22.3		58.1		8.5		14.2		260
45+	46.1		15.7		11.8		29.4		102
Education									
No formal	32.0	0.095	40.0	<0.001	4.0	0.399	32.0	<0.001	25
Primary	23.2		45.6		5.6		24.0		125
Secondary	16.8		70.9		4.7		9.3		494
Tertiary	21.0		72.5		7.4		3.7		353
Occupation									
Professionals	12.5	0.612	75.0	0.030	8.3	0.032	8.3	0.006	24
Artisans	19.7		66.0		4.3		12.3		579
Trader	23.3		67.3		8.0		4.0		150
Students	16.5		82.4		3.3		2.2		91
Civil servants	21.4		61.9		7.1		9.5		42
Others	16.0		62.0		12.0		12.0		100-
Marital status									
Never married	11.6	<0.001	84.5	<0.001	2.1	<0.001	3.0	<0.001	432
Currently married	25.3		54.4		8.4		15.0		561
Weekly frequency of shaving									
1-2	19.6	<0.001	67.0	<0.001	6.8	0.084	10.2	0.249	678
3-4	34.7		47.5		5.9		12.7		118
Weekly or less frequent	8.7		84.7		2.6		7.1		196
Shaving period									
During or after a shower	35.3	<0.001	57.6	<0.001	1.2	<0.001	10.6	<0.001	85
At barber's shop	24.3		56.9		1.9		1.9		270
At night/anytime	8.5		89.6		3.2		11.7		94
Before a shower	8.5		76.6		9.6		13.5		490
Ever had shaving bumps									
Yes	11.9	0.001	71.9	0.143	12.7	<0.001	5.8	0.015	260
No	21.6		67.0		3.3		11.0		721

Significantly associated with higher shaving powder use were older age, professional or trader, being currently married, shaving before a shower and a history of shaving bumps while straight blade use was reported significantly more among older men, those with lower education, artisans, those currently married, men who shave before a shower, and respondents with no history of shaving bumps.

The odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals from multiple logistic regression analysis of the four

shaving methods on variables are shown in Table 3. Concerning safety razors, age, shaving period and history of shaving bumps remained significant. Respondents aged less than 25 years were about five times less likely than those aged 45 years and above to use shaving sticks (95% CI = 0.082 – 0.513). Respondents who shave once or twice weekly were about twice more likely (95% CI = 1.01 – 3.44) and those with shave frequency of 3 to 4 times a week about 3.4 times more likely (1.62 – 7.05) than those who shave less often to use shaving sticks.

Respondents without previous experience of shaving bumps were more likely to use shaving sticks (95% CI = 0.23 – 0.60).

The factors significantly independently associated with clipper use were age, education, marital status, frequency of shave, shave period and history of shaving bumps remained significant. Other age groups were significantly more likely than those aged 45 years and above to use clippers. Respondents with primary level of education were about 2.3 times less likely than those with tertiary education to use clippers (95% CI = 0.23 – 0.79). Being never married was also significantly

associated clipper use (OR = 2.66, 95% CI = 1.69 – 4.21) while those with a shave frequency of 3-4 times weekly were less likely than those with less frequent shaving (95% CI = 0.24 – 0.95) to use clippers. Men with history of shaving bumps were 1.57 times more likely to use clippers (95% CI = 1.06 – 2.34). Shaving powder use was significantly more likely among those currently married, those with no particular set time for shaving, and those with history of shaving bumps. Razor or straight blade use was significantly more likely among older men, those with lower educational attainment, those who shave before a shower and those without history of shaving bumps.

Table 3: Multiple Logistic Regression of Use of Different Shaving Methods on Variables*

Variable	Shaving safety razors		Clipper use		Shaving powder		razor blade (straight razors)	
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
Age in years								
Less than 25	0.2	0.1 – 0.5	15.4	6.0 – 39.5	0.6	0.1 – 3.1	0.2	0.04 – 0.7
25-34	0.4	0.1 – 0.7	11.5	5.6 – 23.7	0.4	0.2 – 1.1	0.3	0.1 – 0.6
35-44	0.5	0.3 – 0.8	6.7	3.3 – 13.5	0.7	0.3 – 1.5	0.6	0.3 – 1.1
45+(ref)	1		1		1		1	
Education								
No formal	1.5	0.5 – 4.7	0.3	0.1 – 1.1			6.5	1.8 – 24.1
Primary	0.7	0.4 – 1.3	0.4	0.2 – 0.8			4.4	1.9 – 10.3
Secondary	0.9	0.6 – 1.3	0.8	0.5 – 1.2			3.2	1.5 – 6.5
Tertiary(ref)	1		1				1	
Occupation								
Artisans			1.0	0.5 – 2.1	0.7	0.2 – 2.3	0.6	0.2 – 1.7
Trader			0.7	0.3 – 1.6	2.0	0.6 – 7.0	0.3	0.1 – 1.1
Students			0.7	0.3 – 2.0	0.6	0.1 – 7.1	0.7	0.1 – 4.4
Others			0.7	0.3 – 1.7	2.6	0.7 – 9.2	0.8	0.3 – 2.7
Professionals /Civil servants (ref)			1		1		1	
Marital status								
Never married	0.6	0.4 – 1.1	2.7	1.7 – 4.2	0.3	0.1 – 0.8	0.5	0.2 – 1.0
Currently married (ref)	1		1		1		1	
Frequency of shaving								
1-2	1.9	1.0 – 3.4	0.6	0.4 – 1.1	1.4	0.5 – 4.4		
3-4	3.4	1.6 – 7.1	0.5	0.2 – 1.0	0.7	0.2 – 2.8		
Weekly or less frequently (ref)	1		1		1			
Shaving period								
During or after a shower	1.6	0.9 – 2.8	1.4	0.8 – 2.6	0.2	0.02 – 1.2	0.4	0.2 – 1.1
Before a shower	0.4	0.2 – 0.7	6.8	4.0 – 11.4	0.2	0.1 – 0.6	0.1	0.05 – 0.3
At the barber's shop	0.3	0.1 – 0.7	3.4	1.8 – 2.3	0.3	0.1 – 1.1	0.7	0.3 – 1.5
At night/anytime(ref)	1		1		1		1	
Ever had shaving bumps								
Yes	0.4	0.2 – 0.6	1.6	1.1 – 2.3	4.3	2.3 – 8.1	0.4	0.2 – 0.8
No(ref)	1		1		1		1	

*Ref indicates reference category

OR – Odds ratio; 95% CI – 95% Confidence interval the odds

DISCUSSION

Although there are no previous reports on shaving habits in men in this environment, observations and personal interviews would suggest that shaving the beard area with razors either straight or with safety blades (wet shaving) was the predominant instrument for shaving facial hair in this environment until some years back.

Our results show that clippers were currently used by two thirds of the respondents, much higher than for other shaving methods. Also the hair clipper was the commonest instrument used for the first shave and a significant number of men who used shaving sticks for their first shave had since changed to clippers. The men in our study believed that the clipper gave a smooth shave compared with other instruments known although they had not tried other shave methods. Clippers were thought to give less shaving bumps (*pseudofolliculitis barbae*). This may be because it gives the cut hair a straight blunt tip rather than a beveled and sharp one as seen with the shaving stick.^{2,3} The cut hair is also longer and lifted from the skin. The straight edge from the clipper is less likely to irritate the skin after a hair cut causing less extra follicular penetration of the hair.^{2,4} The chances of trans-follicular in-growing hairs are also less with the clippers.

Only about a third of those who had their beards shaved at the barbers shop had their personal clippers. The men claimed the barbers sterilized their instruments and considered it safe. Although the risk of acquiring blood borne diseases such as hepatitis viruses and human immune deficiency virus (HIV) is low through cuts, there still exists some transmission risk.⁵ Furthermore studies have shown only moderate levels of awareness about transmission of diseases such as Hepatitis B and C infections among barbers.⁶ Most of the men that shaved their beard at the barbers' did not consider shaving to be part of personal grooming and felt comfortable having others shave for them.

Some of our respondents shaved dry with the straight razor. There is a need to educate individuals on the benefit of hydrating or lubricating the skin before shaving with razor. The use of straight and safety razors are best done wet using pre shave items. When shaving with razor, a lathering or lubricating agent such as water, soap, cream, gel, foam or oil should be applied to the skin. This

lubricates the skin making the blade move easier on it. The hydrated hair swells and lifts from the skin and is easier to cut with less traction.⁷ The edge of the hair is also less beveled. Electric razors are used dry. They come with features which help to raise the hairs, allowing them to be cut more efficiently. This reduces the irritating effects that would have occurred from the motion of the razor on the skin.

Post shave applications were also found to be varied in this study. The commonest was the commercially prepared aftershave lotion most of which contain an antiseptic lotion such as isopropyl alcohol which prevents infection from cuts. Some also contain fragrance and moisturisers. Methylated spirit (ethyl alcohol) was used by our respondents as an aftershave preparation to prevent shave bumps. Other preparation used included various antiseptic lotions undiluted, Neo-medrol, a steroid containing lotion, and various medicated germicidal soaps. PFB was treated with various caustic substances to the skin with potential risk of skin damage.

Age was strongly associated with clipper use even after adjusting for other variables. Clippers appear to be the preferred shaving method among the young, single men who shave less frequently, at the barber's shop and who had shaving bumps in the past. The concern about the popularity of clippers among the younger men remains the possibility of contracting infections when those without personal clippers share clippers with other men. Shaving sticks are not popular among the young, however shaving sticks are still commonly used in the older age group and most of them had never had shave bumps possibly because they shaved wet and more frequently. The fact that less frequent shavers used clippers as opposed to frequent shavers' use of shaving sticks suggests that the occurrence of bumps could be less common with sticks. The more frequent shave with sticks could however be explained by the convenience of not having to visit the barbers' shop or needing power supply. The higher clipper use among those with previous bumps indicates that previous unpleasant experience with bumps could explain the reason for leaving other methods for clippers.

An important limitation of this study is the inability to ascertain the time sequence of occurrence of bumps and use of clippers due to the cross sectional nature of the data.

In conclusion in our environment older men are more likely to shave with razors and more frequently, while younger ones are more likely to use clippers for shaving because it is perceived to be more economical, give a smooth shave and less PFB. A good number of the respondents did not know the correct procedures for wet shaving in which there is a lower chance of sharing shaving instruments. The common use of the barber's clippers for shaving hair is worrisome as blood borne infections such as human immune deficiency and Hepatitis viruses could be acquired through this method. There is a need to educate boys on proper shaving techniques even before they shave so they can practice safer shaving methods.

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