

A comparative study of spousal abuse in rural and urban communities: A case of Lafia Local Government Area, Nasarawa State

Sunday Adesina Ayesoro¹, Stephen Sunday Ojo², Deborah Ibechone Peter³

Isa Mustapha Agwai Polytechnic, Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria¹

Federal University Gashua, Yobe State, Nigeria^{2,3}

adesina.Sunday40@yahoo.com¹, drstephenajo@fugashua.edu.ng², Peterdeborahibechone@gmail.com³



Article History

Received on 17 November 2024

1st Revision on 26 November 2024

2nd Revision on 17 December 2024

3rd Revision on 28 July 2025

Accepted on 4 August 2025

Abstract

Purpose: The study is to consider the rural and urban dimension of the problem with a view to proffering sustainable and applicable solutions to the problem.

Methodology/approach: The research design of this study was survey-based. A stratified random selection strategy was used to choose a representative sample of 100 married women in the study area. Instrument used was self-administered questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and analyzed through content analysis and descriptive statistics.

Results/findings: The findings revealed that the prevalence of spousal abuse is higher in rural areas than in urban areas, as indicated by 70% of the respondents. Also, 68% from rural area and 60% from urban area strongly agreed that women's economic standing and educational attainment are related to the occurrence of spousal abuse in every given location.

Conclusion: The study concludes that illiteracy, ignorance, and women's economic dependence significantly contribute to the higher prevalence of spousal abuse in rural communities. Women empowerment and education are essential to mitigating this issue.

Limitations: The study is limited to comparison between the prevalence of spousal abuse in rural and urban communities without considering personal factors.

Contribution: The study contributes to knowledge in the area of identify the factors that causes variation in the prevalence of spousal abuse in rural and urban communities in the context of socio-economic development in Lafia Local Government area of Nasarawa state. This will add to literature in the field of gender relations and women development.

Keywords: *Comparative, Communities, Rural, Spousal Abuse, Urban*

How to Cite: Ayesoro, S. A., Ojo, S. S., & Peter, D. I. (2025). A comparative study of spousal abuse in rural and urban communities: A case of Lafia Local Government Area, Nasarawa State. *Journal of Social, Humanity, and Education*, 6(1), 1-16.

1. Introduction

Domestic violence, intimate partner violence, battering, and family violence are other terms for spousal abuse. It is a pattern of behavior in which one person abuses another in a domestic context, such as in a marriage, cohabitation, familial relationship, or relationship between partners. Both heterosexual and homosexual couples may experience spousal abuse, and occasionally, it may involve family members who

are children. Authors, academics, and organizations have taken different stances on the issue of spousal abuse. One in three women worldwide who have ever been in an intimate relationship has, at some point in their lives, been the victim of spousal abuse (WHO, 2013, 2021).

According to a World Health Organization (WHO) survey, 13–61% of women of reproductive age have been victims of violent behavior from their spouses at some point in their lives (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2006). The prevalence of intimate partner violence is greater in low/middle income countries (LMICs) (36.6%–37.7%) and lower in high income countries (23.2%) than the worldwide average (30%) (WHO, 2021). Such violence is characterized as physical, sexual, and psychological violence in the family, which can include marital (spousal) rape, sexual abuse, and battering. From a different perspective, the domestic violence legislation passed by the Indian Congress defines spousal abuse as female genital mutilation and other traditional practices that harm women, non-spousal violence, and exploitation-related violence (CHELD, 2014). This view is considered comprehensive because it covers a wider range of violence, not only involving women and their husbands but also involving in-laws and relations.

Any act, omission, or conduct that is of such nature as to harm or has the potential to harm or negatively affect the health, safety, or well-being of a woman. Such violence can be physical, sexual, verbal, mental, or economic.

This definition strongly emphasizes violent acts with the potential to damage the victim's well-being. The law also inclines strongly in favor of women, showing gender bias, which reflects the cultural notion implicit in the phenomenon in the country. Furthermore, the other provisions of the law underscore the circumstances of spousal abuse occurring in a family relationship defined either by marriage, birth, custom, consanguinity, or cohabitation. Spousal violence includes physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, or financial abuse committed by a person against a spouse, child, or other person who is a member of the household or dependent.

Violence occurs in every community (Döndü & Yasemin, 2021; Torazzi et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2019). Different social classes and strata within a society are affected by domestic violence (Nikolova, Postmus, Buttner, & Bosk, 2020). The incidence of violence is as significant as how society's members and law enforcement perceive it (Yalley & Olutayo, 2020). Religion and culture frequently prevent certain violent acts, typically directed toward women, from being recognized as such (Mshweshwe, 2020). The attitudes and behaviors of members of a society are influenced by its culture. Therefore, any attempt to eradicate such aggressive or abusive behavior by men from society would be hampered by a culture that condones and encourages violence against women and young girls. Even the most vulnerable women and girls grow to view abusive behavior and domestic violence as normal and acceptable. Men disregard the wants and goals of women as human beings and view them as objects of sexuality to be used for their own purposes. In African society, patriarchy promotes male supremacy over women in all spheres of life (Mshweshwe, 2020). Women have been forced by this system to accept their vulnerable status in society and the repercussions that follow as the norm. Consequently, women are socialized to be timid, quiet, and even feel inferior to males, particularly their spouses (Raval & Walker, 2019).

It is important to remember that the concept of spousal abuse is heavily influenced by scenarios, contexts, and conditions that are common in different countries. The 2015 Nigerian Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act offers another synthesis of various perspectives on spousal abuse. This is unavoidable, given that Nigeria reflects a wide range of intricate sociocultural perspectives on the subject. Therefore, the Act broadly defines violence against “persons” According to the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act of Nigeria (2015, p. 4),

Unless the context otherwise requires, violence against persons includes any act or attempted act that causes or may cause any person physical, sexual, psychological, verbal, emotional, or economic harm, whether this occurs in private or public life, in peacetime, or in conflict situations.

Women in Nigeria are the main victims of spousal abuse, including woman trafficking, wife battering, incest, sexual harassment, rape, female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage, forced marriage, acid baths, and ritual killings (Ityavyar, 2004). These are efforts to assert the dominance of men in a patriarchal society like Nigeria. Be it as it may, spousal abuse has become a hydra-headed problem with almost similar effects on the victims everywhere, but varies in the dimension they occur due to their social contexts. There is significant regional heterogeneity in its occurrence, which equally represents rural and urban areas and varies from 17% to 78.8% of the total population.

However, the majority of earlier research on this topic in Nigeria was conducted in urban neighborhoods or hospitals. The prevalence of spousal abuse in rural Nigerian communities is not well understood. This study attempts to bridge the gap in many studies that directly compare women in rural and urban areas. This study's primary goal is to examine the prevalence and factors of spousal violence against women in Nasarawa State's rural and urban populations, focusing on the Lafia local government area. The study is guided by the following questions: Does the prevalence rate of spousal abuse differ in rural and urban settings? What factors account for the variance, and what dimensions of spousal abuse are more prevalent in the two settings?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Spousal Abuse in Rural and Urban Areas

According to Saeed Ali et al. (2017), VAW is mostly caused by family dynamics and sociocultural norms in different geographical regions. One of the main causes of women's low social status in developing countries is patriarchal attitudes and perceived cultural ideals. In Pakistan, gender roles are shaped by a blend of cultural norms and tradition. They are mainly founded on the ideas of reproduction and production, which are interpreted as reflecting an individual's masculine and feminine characteristics (Ali, 2011). In Pakistan, women are typically expected to take care of the home, raise children, be obedient, and obey their husbands and families. According to Inayat, Pirani, Ali, Khan, and Särnholm (2017), it has been noted that husbands and in-laws frequently limit women's autonomy, rights, and decision-making involvement, which raises the risk that women and girls would become victims of violence. Because domestic violence is viewed as a personal matter, victims in these places become more resolute, normalized, and denial-prone, which further contributes to Pakistan's inadequate reporting and documentation of such instances (Pakeeza, 2015).

2.2 Prevalence of Spousal Abuse in Rural and Urban Areas

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has a high prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) (WHO, 2024). The high prevalence of IPV in African nations is mostly caused by cultural norms that uphold gender roles and the acceptance of IPV. Research indicates that women are more likely than men to tolerate intimate partner violence (IPV) (Chiang et al., 2018; Cools & Kotsadam, 2017; Sardinha & Catalán, 2018). The high frequency of physical and other types of IPV seen in the area is a result of the high degree of acceptance of wife beating in the community. Furthermore, there is a culture in Africa that discourages talking about violence, particularly when it occurs in marriages (Idoko, Ogbe, Jallow, & Ocheke, 2015). Similarly, IPV is viewed as a typical way for husbands to reprimand misbehaving wives.

Similar to other poor nations, IPV is frequently dismissed in Nigeria as a family matter that should be resolved between couples rather than reported to the police (Adebawale, 2018; Balogun & John-Akinola, 2015). Consequently, offenders are not prosecuted because victims frequently fail to disclose and seek assistance (Idoko et al., 2015; Semahegn & Mengistie, 2015). Due to the prevailing patriarchy and social norms that encourage male control over decision-making, family resources, the economy, and reproduction, intimate partner violence is common in Nigeria. According to studies, both men and women are more likely

to accept IPV and abuse of women when they live in households where women lack financial and decision-making autonomy (Awolaran, OlaOlorun, & Asuzu, 2021; Okenwa-Emegwa, Lawoko, & Jansson, 2016). Similarly, research has shown that illiterate women in low-income settings, such as slums and rural areas, are more likely to support IPV perpetration and be victims of IPV (Okenwa-Emegwa et al., 2016).

2.3 Factors Contributing to Spousal Abuse in Rural and Urban Areas

In a qualitative study carried out in Ibadan's rural and urban communities, women cited the following as causes of IPV: women's stubbornness, extramarital affairs by either partner, denying sex, disobeying, and not submitting to the partner, late food preparation, men viewing women as inferior and thus "considering women as men's possession," inappropriate clothing, and maintaining friends that the partner disapproves of (Balogun & John-Akinola, 2015). By citing prevailing social standards that require women to be subservient and tolerate any abuse from their partners to maintain their family, women can sometimes blame IPV on the attitudes of women and exonerate men. Many Nigerian women continue to live in abusive relationships because of their children, social pressure to stay married, and the absence of a social support network (Balogun & John-Akinola, 2015; Fawole, Okedare, & Reed, 2021). Women in Nigeria are aware of the various forms of abuse they encounter as well as what abuse is (Arisukwu, Igbolekwu, Adebisi, & Akindele, 2021).

However, because they were raised to believe that the husband is the head of the household and that a woman must submit to him, many women do not view their experiences of IPV as crimes (Abdullahi, Cusairi, & Abdullah, 2017). Consequently, current sociocultural standards prevent women from reporting incidents of intimate partner violence or ending violent relationships. When a woman refuses to stay in an abusive relationship, she and her family are compelled to repay the dowry (Abdullahi et al., 2017). Family members thus push women to tolerate and remain in violent marriages despite the abuse. Because of the high rates of poverty, low levels of education, and subordination of women, this scenario is worse in rural and other low-income areas.

2.4 Dimensions of Spousal Abuse in Rural and Urban Areas

According to Ajah, Iyoke, Nkwo, Nwakoby, and Ezeonu (2014), there is a higher prevalence of spousal abuse among rural dwellers than among their urban counterparts because more rural women excuse the practice of spousal abuse than urban women. This might be because, compared to their rural counterparts, urban women are more likely to be educated and have economic power. Furthermore, he believed that rural women make excuses, such as going out without telling their partners or ignoring their children, to defend their maltreatment. Because it tends to protect offenders and encourage them to carry on, this rationale raises the prevalence of spousal abuse among rural residents. While more urban women come forward to denounce domestic violence to law enforcement and other authorities, some of them file lawsuits against the abusers and leave the marriage. This may stem from the fact that urban women possess higher levels of education, greater economic empowerment, and a more profound comprehension of their fundamental human rights than their rural counterparts.

Ugwu and Atima (2022) noted that the elevated incidence of spousal violence in rural regions could be attributed to the cultural norms of traditional societies, which endorse physical punishment as a means of correcting the behavior of individuals who deviate from societal expectations. This view is maintained by the fact that most rural women lack economic freedom and are illiterate. In addition, name-calling, insults, and economic violence are more common in rural communities. Nonetheless, metropolitan areas are more likely than rural areas to experience sexual violence as a type of marital abuse. This could be related to the stereotypes surrounding all types of sexual relationships in Africa, as well as the fact that sexual violence is typically the most overlooked in patriarchal settings (Idoko et al., 2015; Semahegn & Mengistie, 2015).

Heise et al. (2019) also revealed that experiences of spousal abuse are connected with the economic status of the couples. This indicates that spousal abuse against women is more prevalent among families with poor

economic backgrounds. Therefore, the rate and prevalence of spousal abuse in any place can be connected with the rate of poverty in such places, be it rural or urban areas. Furthermore, women in rural communities, particularly those who are less educated and economically reliant on men, are more likely to defend the physical abuse of women (Nakyazze, 2020; Flowe & Kanja, 2020). The justifications are often based on the following: refusal to prepare food in good time or outright failure to prepare food, uncleanness, neglect of children, food burning while cooking, and refusal of sexual advances by the husband. This has increased the rate of this form of abuse of women in rural areas in Nigeria from 21% to 30% in 2013 (Foundation, n.d.). There are signs that more rural women in Nigeria experience many forms of spousal abuse, despite the fact that spousal abuse is prevalent in both urban and rural households. This implies that despite all media campaigns against it, there is still a significant prevalence of women's abuse in Nigeria.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

Aronson, Wilson, and Akert (2005) using vicarious learning model as one of the operant conditioning theories opined that man learn through observation of other in his environment. People pick up prejudices through the vicarious learning process, which may occur through family, school, mass media, religions, and other social institutions that are peculiar to the environment where they are found. In the same vein, aggression and portrayals of women as subservient to men shape and bolster attitudes of violence against women (Roberts, 1996); such attitudes are linked to violent behaviors, although this may vary from person to person and place to place, people tend to be fairly consistent in the different attitudes they hold. As learned behaviors, they tend to be reinforced by the rewards gained by the models.

According to vicarious learning theory, people can learn how to be violent from their social and environmental circumstances, whether they live in an urban or rural setting. As a result, aggressiveness is viewed as a behavior that can be explained in terms of rewards rather than as an inevitable outcome (Parke, 2014). The vicarious learning hypothesis examines both the direct rewards that people receive and the indirect incentives that males who act as role models for proper behavior obtain for their violent actions against women. According to the theorists, people observe the behaviors of models (who may include older men, parents, friends, neighbors, colleagues, teachers, etc.) and the subsequent consequences of those behaviors. If the consequences are positive, such behaviors are imitated. It must be pointed out that there are socio-cultural rewards for men's aggression towards their female partners in patriarchal societies.

Coercive power, social control, normative appeal, self-esteem, identity management, and other material and social benefits that enhance male aggression are examples of these rewards. Given this, Ugwu and Atima (2022) observed that rural areas have a higher prevalence of elements that encourage positive rewards for violence against women. He states that these might include any element that tends to legitimize violence against women and support those who commit it. Furthermore, the fundamental beliefs of traditional patriarchal societies, which uphold the repression of women and give men greater authority than women, are more deeply ingrained in rural areas than in metropolitan ones. Moreover, the presence and availability of modern structures and practices that may discourage positive rewards for spousal abuse in urban areas may account for its lower prevalence (Muntazir et al., 2020).

3. Research Methodology

The research design of this study was survey-based. This approach is deemed suitable for this investigation because it enables researchers to gather data from a sizable sample of women in the study area. A stratified random selection strategy was used to choose a representative sample of women in the study area for the survey. The sample was ensured to be representative of all married women in both rural and urban areas by employing this methodology. The sample size for this study consisted of 100 married women, 50 from rural and 50 from urban settings, chosen through purposive sampling. Fifty households were systematically chosen in a designated rural setting (Kurikyo) and Millionaire's Quarters representing the urban setting in the Lafia LGA. Data were gathered from the respondents using a self-administered questionnaire. However,

during the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), ten women were purposefully chosen from each of the rural and urban areas.

The survey was divided into two parts. The demographic profiles and personal details of the respondents were included in Section A. The items in Section B were organized according to the goals of the study. The chosen respondents were given the chance to ask any questions they might have had and to ask for help completing any sections of the survey. The researcher administered the questionnaire to the respondents in person. It should be noted that privacy and secrecy were permitted in the questionnaire. Content analysis was used to examine the data gathered from the focus group discussions, and descriptive statistics, such as frequency and simple percentage, were employed to examine the data from the self-administered questionnaires.

3.1 Ethical Considerations

The Kurikyo community head was adequately informed about the purpose of the study, and he sought the consent of the husbands of the rural women, all of whom gave their approval. The researchers explained the study objectives, risks, and benefits to the women, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. The participating household heads and women signed consent forms to confirm that they understood and agreed to participate in this study.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Result

The study included 100 respondents, and quantitative and qualitative data were obtained via questionnaires and focus group discussions, respectively. The data are presented and discussed as follows.

Table 1. Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Age	Rural	%	Urban	%
18 – 26	15	30	13	26
27 – 35	20	40	18	36
36 – 44	10	20	15	30
45 and above	5	10	4	8
Total	50	100	50	100
Occupation	N	%	N	%
Unemployed	10	20	5	10
Full time Housewife	21	42	8	16
Teaching	5	10	15	30
Farming	10	20	4	8
Civil Servant	0	0	12	24
Trading	4	8	8	16
Others (pls specify)	0	0		0
Total	50	100	0	100
Highest Educational Qualification	Rural	%	Urban	%
No formal Schooling	5	10	0	0
Primary	15	30	4	8
WAEC/TC	20	40	12	24
OND/NCE	9	18	20	40
HND/B.Sc	1	2	10	20
M.SC/PH,D	0	0	4	8

Others (pls specify)	0	0	0	0
Total	50	100	50	100

Source: Field survey, 2024

The table 1 indicates that majority of the respondents, both in rural and urban areas, were between 27 and 35 years old, although those from the rural area were more, representing 40 %, while those from the urban area were 36%. Respondents within the age bracket of 45 and above formed the least from both the rural and urban areas; those from the rural area were 10%, while those from the urban area were 8%. The table also shows that 42% of respondents from the rural area are full-time housewives, while respondents who were full-time housewives from the urban area were only 16%. Moreover, 20% of respondents from rural areas were unemployed, while 10% of those from urban areas were unemployed. In rural areas, 10% of respondents were teachers, compared with 30% in urban areas. Farmers accounted for 20% of the rural population and only 8% of the urban population. There were no government servants in rural areas, but 24% were in urban areas. While 8% were rural traders, 16% were urban. Ten% of rural respondents had no formal education, whereas none of the urban respondents had no formal education. More respondents from rural areas (40%) had secondary education; however, respondents with OND/NCE were concentrated in urban areas. Of the respondents from the urban area, 20% have BSC/HND, but only 2% have BSC/HND in the rural areas. While no respondent has M Sc/Ph D in the rural area, 8% of respondents from the urban area have M Sc/Ph D.

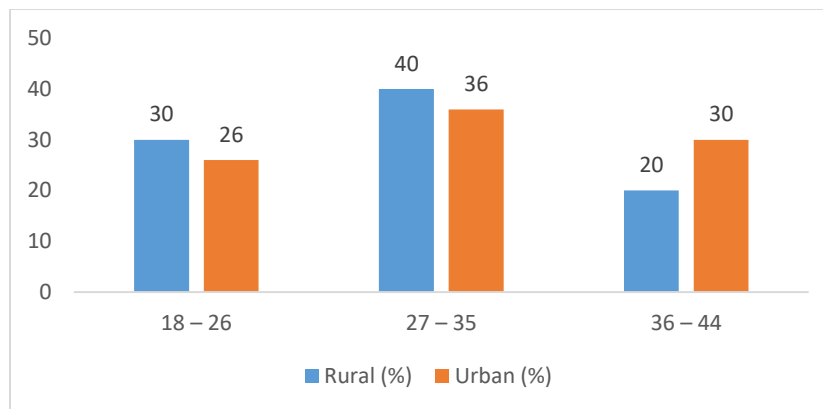


Figure 1. Age distribution of respondents in rural and urban areas of the study

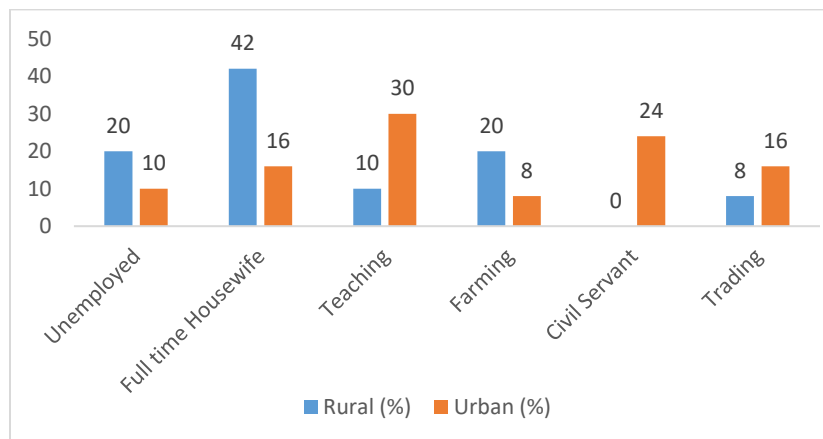


Figure 2. Occupation of respondents (Rural and Urban Distribution)

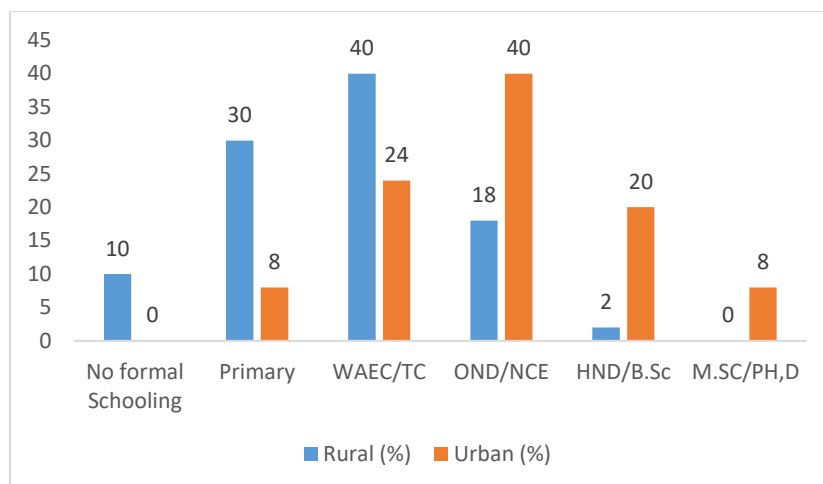


Figure 3. Educational Distribution of Respondents in b=rural and urban areas

Table 2. Is spousal abuse more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas?

Frequency	Rural	%	Urban	%
Strongly agree	35	70	33	66
Agree	10	20	10	20
Strongly disagree	5	10	3	6
Disagree	0	0	2	4
I don't know	0	0	2	4
Total	50	100	50	100

Source: Field survey, 2024

The table also shows that 20% of respondents in rural and urban areas agreed that spousal abuse is more prevalent in rural areas. Meanwhile, 10 of rural respondents and 6% from urban areas strongly disagreed, and no respondent disagreed from the rural area, but 4% from the urban area disagreed.

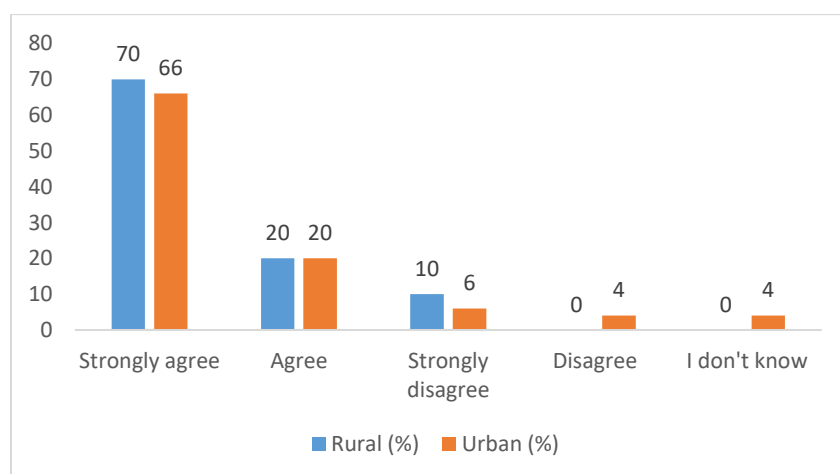


Figure 4. Prevalence of spousal abuse in urban and rural areas

Table 3. Frequency table on experience/witness of spousal abuse in the area

Frequency	Rural	%	Urban	%
Always	25	50	3	6
Sometimes	15	30	9	18

Rarely	7	14	15	30
Never	2	4	20	40
Don't Know	1	2	3	6
Total	50	100	50	100

Source: Field survey, 2024

Table 3 indicates that 50% of respondents from rural areas said that they always experienced or witnessed spousal abuse, while only 6% of respondents from urban areas indicated that they always experienced spousal abuse. Among the respondents from rural areas, 30% said they sometimes experienced or witnessed spousal abuse in their area, while 18% said they sometimes experienced or witnessed spousal abuse. Among the rural respondents, 14% rarely experienced or witnessed spousal abuse, while 30% of the urban respondents reported that they rarely experienced or witnessed spousal abuse in their area. While only 4% of rural respondents had never experienced or witnessed spousal abuse, 40% of urban respondents had never experienced or witnessed it.

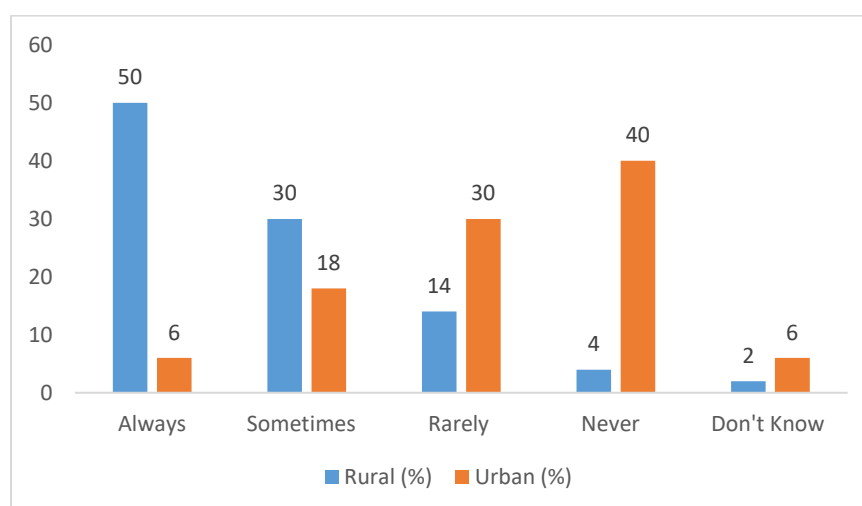


Figure 5. Experience/witness of spousal abuse in the area (Rural and Urban)

Table 4. Whether experiences of spousal abuse have to do with level of education and economic independence

Frequency	Rural	%	Urban	%
Strongly agree	29	68	30	60
Agree	15	30	10	20
Strongly disagree	5	10	4	8
Disagree	0	0	3	6
I don't know	1	2	3	6
Total	50	100	50	100

Source: Field survey, 2024

Table 4. In the rural area, 68% of the respondents and 60% of the respondents from the urban area strongly agreed that the experience of spousal abuse in their areas was related to the individual's level of education and economic independence. Of the respondents, 30% from rural areas and 20% from urban areas agreed with this statement. While 10% of the rural respondents and 8% of the urban respondents strongly disagreed, no respondents from the rural area and 6% of the urban respondents disagreed.

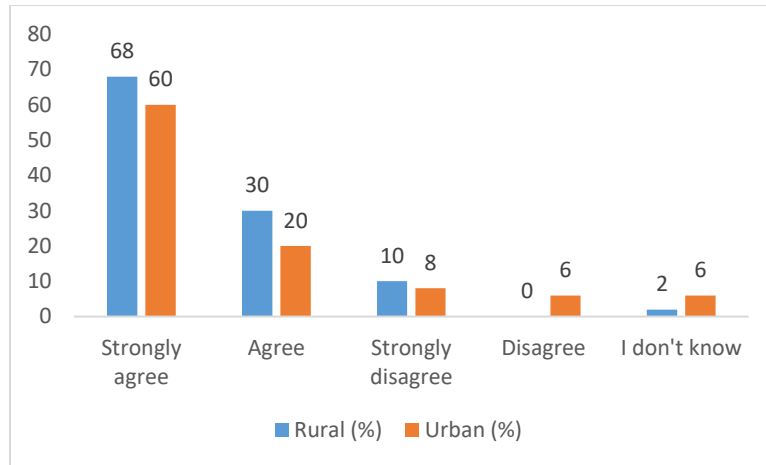


Figure 6. Experiences of spousal abuse have to do with level of education and economic independence

Table 5. Which dimension of spousal abuse is more prevalent in the area?

Frequency	Rural	%	Urban	%
Physical beating	21	42	11	22
Insult & name calling	12	24	10	20
Withdrawal from spouse	6	12	4	8
Deprivation of sex	5	10	4	8
Deprivation of food and money	5	10	3	6
No idea	1	2	18	36
Total	50	100	50	100

Source: Field survey, 2024

Table 5 shows that 42% of respondents from rural areas and 22% of urban respondents said physical beating was more prevalent in their area, while 24% rural respondents and 20% from the urban area were of the view that, insult and name calling was more prevalent in their area. Moreover, 12% of the respondents from rural areas, as well as 8% of their urban counterparts, said that withdrawal from spouses was more prevalent in their areas than in others. In contrast, 36% of the urban respondents had no idea about this.

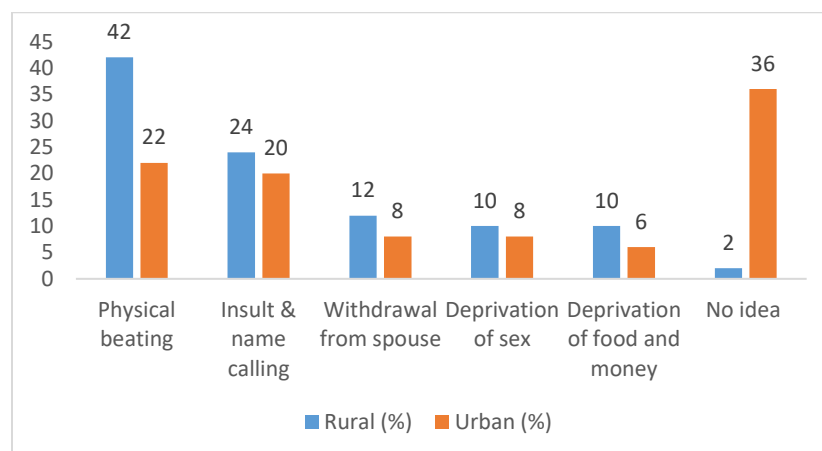


Figure 7. Dimension of spousal abuse more prevalent in the area

4.1.1 Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

Two sessions of focus group discussions were held in the study area, one for rural women and the other for urban women. The discussions are presented below.

4.1.1.1 Group 1 (rural women) at G.S.S Keffi-Wambai, Lafia L.G.A

All the participants in the group admitted that they had adequate knowledge of spousal abuse. Two of them opined, one after the other, “It is violence against married women that involves conflicts with the husbands at home”. One of them added, “It often starts with a little misunderstanding, which may lead to an open and big fight, in which women are mostly the victims.” Another participant noted, “Though husbands can equally be victims in such situations, we have never witnessed or experienced that here, as it is against our culture”.

When asked whether open or big fight is the only form of spousal abuse in the area? One of the participants exclaimed, “No! There are many forms of them here, and they may include: withdrawal of love or home/family desertion and abandonment, denial of access to finance or money, denial of sex and food, name calling and insults etc.” Another participant added, “open fight is just the most known and open for people to see, but others are silent and more common.” At this point, they all (participants) agreed that they had experienced and witnessed one form of spousal abuse or the other. One of them said that her husband often withdrew his love to show his displeasure. According to her, “he would just stop eating my food, or stop talking to me, he would not even moved near my room.” Another participant said, “My husband often insults me as a way of cautioning me.” When asked how they used to come together again, all of them exclaimed, “We have to beg them, so as to portray us as good wives and for the sake of our children”. A participant added that they had no option, reporting that separation or divorce was not an option.

Most of the participants were of the opinion that their experiences were because of their level of education and economic status, as they were mostly dependent on their husbands. Meanwhile, all the participants, except two, were of the view that spousal abuse was more prevalent in rural communities than in urban ones due to the high level of ignorance among rural dwellers. However, one of the disagreeing participants said, “spousal abuse is more prevalent in the urban areas, but because they live an individualistic life style, nobody knows what the other person is passing through in her family.”

4.1.1.2 Group 2 (urban women) at Social Welfare Office, Lafia

The group was of the view that spousal abuse includes any act that constitutes a threat to the life of the victim, which may involve physical, psychological, sexual, emotional, or economic torture of the victim. Another participant added, “It may include restriction and monitoring of the woman, withdrawal of love from her, withdrawal of economic benefits, or family/wife abandonment”. In addition, the majority of the participants noted that sexual violence was the most experienced form of violence from their husbands, because they could not report it to anyone. According to a participant, “To whom will you report such, you have to either bear it as one of the pains of marriage, or silently walk away from the marriage if you can.”

When asked how common domestic violence is in rural and urban regions, most of them said that spousal abuse was more common in rural areas because rural women were less conscious and more tolerant than their urban counterparts. However, one participant claimed that because of the current state of the economy, marital abuse is more common in urban areas than in rural ones: She underlined,

The cost of living is rising in cities, but the means to meet these expenditures are decreasing; in contrast, living expenses are more easily attainable in rural areas. Therefore, domestic violence against women is more common in cities than in rural areas.

She explained further, “during economic prosperity, spousal abuse is more prevalent in rural areas due to high level of ignorance and illiteracy, as well as influence of parents and friends.” According to another

participant, “The issue of spousal abuse is an individual attitude. It has nothing to do with the location; ‘urban or rural, location is not a barrier’ one of them added, “Not even is the level of education of an individual a barrier to spousal abuse or domestic violence against women; it is an individual thing”.

4.2 Discussion

This study demonstrated that although spousal abuse occurs in both urban and rural areas, its prevalence is higher in rural areas than in urban areas within the study area. In addition, consistent with previous studies, spousal abuse is more prevalent in rural areas. The prevalence of spousal abuse incidents in rural areas was due to a high level of ignorance and illiteracy. However, it was also revealed that the individualistic lifestyle that characterizes life in urban centers makes the secrecy of acts of spousal abuse against women possible, which makes it look as if it is not common in urban areas. This study succinctly demonstrated a correlation between the incidence of spousal abuse and geographical context, distinguishing between rural and urban settings (Adesina & Ojo, 2022). This confirmed the hypothesis of vicarious learning theory that people can learn how to be violent from their social and environmental circumstances, whether they live in an urban or rural setting (Parke, 2014).

The findings indicate that women's economic standing and educational attainment are related to the occurrence of spousal abuse in every given location. Furthermore, the high incidence of spousal abuse in rural areas can be attributed to a lack of knowledge of its implications. This supports the findings of Heise et al. (2019), who found a correlation between a couple's economic standing and their experiences of marital abuse. The study also revealed that physical abuse and name-calling are more prevalent in rural communities than in urban areas, which is in agreement with the findings of the Foundation (n.d.). On the other hand, sexual violence is more experienced among urban women because of the culture of secrecy surrounding the practice. This was supported by the majority of participants in the FGD in the urban group.

The findings also showed a correlation between the level of spousal abuse in a community and its economic situation. Therefore, the high rate of spousal abuse among rural residents is caused by extreme poverty in these areas. However, the increasing cost of living in urban areas could lead to a rise in spousal abuse. The high frequency of psychological abuse in urban areas supports other researchers' findings that the most common form of spousal abuse is non-contact violence, such as psychological or emotional IPV (Benebo, Schumann, & Vaezghasemi, 2018; Clark et al., 2018; Izaguirre & Calvete, 2014; Orindi et al., 2020). The current study's findings contradict those of certain earlier research (Benebo et al., 2018; Ler, Sivakami, & Monárrez-Espino, 2020; Lövestad, Löve, Vaez, & Krantz, 2017; Thakuri, Ghimire, Poudel, & Khatri, 2020; Yitbarek, Woldie, & Abraham, 2019) that found that sexual and psychological abuse was less common than physical IPV. Additionally, physical abuse is frequently underreported because it is socially acceptable in many low-income countries as a method for a male to discipline his wife/girlfriend and show her love (Adejimi, Akinyemi, Sekoni, & Fawole, 2022; Antai, 2011). According to this study, the prevalence of physical abuse in rural areas is lower than that reported in India (Derouiche, Manita, & Muessig, 2021) but comparable to that found in Egypt (El-Nimr, Gouda, & Wahdan, 2020).

The study's findings demonstrated that several young women's and their partners' sociodemographic traits increased the risk of abuse. In urban areas, the experience of physical intimate partner violence decreased as educational attainment increased, whereas in rural areas, physical intimate partner violence increased as educational attainment increased. The observation in rural areas was not surprising because the ancient practices that support the victimization of women are upheld by individuals with less education. Submission to the spouse is a culturally accepted standard, and any behavior that deviates from this leads to intimate partner violence, which is in line with Tanzanian studies (Mosha, Akyoo, & Ezekiel, 2019). As a result, these women develop subjectivity and persist in tolerating domestic violence (Deuba, Mainali, Alvesson, & Karki, 2016). Low education is a risk factor for IPV (McCloskey, Boonzaier, Steinbrenner, & Hunter, 2016; Yakubovich et al., 2018), while higher education was protective against IPV (Kwagala, Wandera, Ndugga, & Kabagenyi, 2013; Sambisa, Angeles, Lance, Naved, & Thornton, 2011). According to

Ahinkorah, Dickson, and Seidu (2018) and Yakubovich et al. (2018), women's educational attainment enhances their work prospects, financial independence, communication abilities, and decision-making ability, all of which have an impact on their experiences with intimate partner violence.

5. Conclusion

According to the study's findings, spousal abuse is more common in rural communities than in urban ones because of the high rates of illiteracy, ignorance, and women's economic dependence on their husbands. In addition, urban women experience more sexual violence as a result of the culture of secrecy among them. This study has implications for women's empowerment and education. To lower the rate of spousal abuse in rural communities and further lower the prevalence of sexual assault in urban communities, more work needs to be done in the areas of advocacy, women's empowerment, and education. Government and non-governmental organizations, including other stakeholders, should be involved in many measures to improve the status of women. They can organize preventive and intervention programs aimed at reducing marital stress. Although this study contributes significantly to the existing literature, it has some limitations that should be considered. It would have been more beneficial if participants were sampled across various communities in Nasarawa State for generalizing the findings.

Additionally, some suggestions for feasible steps to eliminate violence in families and civilizations are included below.

5.1 Recommendations

The researchers make the following recommendations in light of the study's findings:

- i. To empower rural women and reduce their reliance on their husbands, the government and non-governmental organizations should invest more time and money.
- ii. Education in of rural dwellers should be prioritized, this should be done with a view to sensitize both men and women on the negative impact of spousal abuse and reduce the level of ignorance among them.
- iii. The Ministry of Women's Affairs, non-governmental organizations, and other appropriate agencies should work to encourage urban women to share their stories of sexual violence.
- iv. To lessen stress and tension in relationships, the government should endeavor to improve the economic situation of the populace.

Acknowledgement

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

There was no funding support from any agency or organization.

References

- Abdullahi, U., Cusairi, R. M., & Abdullah, S. F. (2017). The Influence Of Culture In Domestic Violence Against Women In Nigeria. *J Islam Soc Econ Dev*, 2, 273-286.
- Adebowale, A. S. (2018). Spousal Age Difference And Associated Predictors Of Intimate Partner Violence In Nigeria. *BMC Public Health*, 18(1), 212. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-5118-1>
- Adejimi, A. A., Akinyemi, O. O., Sekoni, O. O., & Fawole, O. I. (2022). Reaching Out To Men In Ending Intimate Partner Violence: A Qualitative Study Among Male Civil Servants In Ibadan, Nigeria. *International journal of qualitative studies on health and well-being*, 17(1), 2128263. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/17482631.2022.2128263>
- Adesina, A. S., & Ojo, S. S. (2022). Perception of Spousal Abuse: The Bane of Family Stability in Nigerian Contemporary Society. A Study of Lafia Local Government Area, Nasarawa State *Families in Nigeria: Understanding Their Diversity, Adaptability, and Strengths* (pp. 17-43): Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Ahinkorah, B. O., Dickson, K. S., & Seidu, A.-A. (2018). Women Decision-Making Capacity And Intimate Partner Violence Among Women In Sub-Saharan Africa. *Archives of Public Health*, 76(1), 5. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13690-018-0253-9>

- Ajah, L. O., Iyoke, C. A., Nkwo, P. O., Nwakoby, B., & Ezeonu, P. (2014). Comparison Of Domestic Violence Against Women In Urban Versus Rural Areas Of Southeast Nigeria. *International journal of women's health*, 865-872. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2147/ijwh.s70706>
- Ali, T. S. (2011). *Living With Violence In The Home: Exposure And Experiences Among Married Women, Residing In Urban Karachi, Pakistan*: Karolinska Institutet (Sweden).
- Antai, D. (2011). Controlling Behavior, Power Relations Within Intimate Relationships And Intimate Partner Physical And Sexual Violence Against Women In Nigeria. *BMC Public Health*, 11(1), 511. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-11-511>
- Arisukwu, O., Igbolekwu, C., Adebisi, T., & Akindele, F. (2021). Perception Of Domestic Violence Among Rural Women In Kuje. *Heliyon*, 7(2). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e06303>
- Aronson, E., Wilson, T. D., & Akert, R. M. (2005). *Social Psychology*: Prentice Hall.
- Awolaran, O., OlaOlorun, F. M., & Asuzu, M. C. (2021). Experience Of Intimate Partner Violence Among Rural Women In Southwest, Nigeria. *African journal of reproductive health*, 25(5), 113-124. doi:<https://doi.org/10.29063/ajrh2021/v25i5.12>
- Balogun, M. O., & John-Akinola, Y. O. (2015). A Qualitative Study Of Intimate Partner Violence Among Women In Nigeria. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 30(14), 2410-2427. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260514553112>
- Benebo, F. O., Schumann, B., & Vaezghasemi, M. (2018). Intimate Partner Violence Against Women In Nigeria: A Multilevel Study Investigating The Effect Of Women's Status And Community Norms. *BMC women's health*, 18(1), 136. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-018-0628-7>
- CHELD. (2014). *The Red Diary-Tips for Surviving Domestic Violence and Abuse: A Directory for Help in Nigeria*: Centre for Health Ethics Law and Development.
- Chiang, L., Howard, A., Gleckel, J., Ogoti, C., Karlsson, J., Hynes, M., & Mwangi, M. (2018). Cycle Of Violence Among Young Kenyan Women: The Link Between Childhood Violence And Adult Physical Intimate Partner Violence In A Population-Based Survey. *Child abuse & neglect*, 84, 45-52. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.07.010>
- Clark, C. J., Ferguson, G., Shrestha, B., Shrestha, P. N., Oakes, J. M., Gupta, J., . . . Yount, K. M. (2018). Social Norms And Women's Risk Of Intimate Partner Violence In Nepal. *Social Science & Medicine*, 202, 162-169. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2018.02.017>
- Cools, S., & Kotsadam, A. (2017). Resources And Intimate Partner Violence In Sub-Saharan Africa. *World Development*, 95, 211-230. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2017.02.027>
- Derouiche, I., Manita, R., & Muessig, A. (2021). Risk Disclosure And Firm Operational Efficiency. *Annals of Operations Research*, 297(1), 115-145. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10479-020-03520-z>
- Deuba, K., Mainali, A., Alvesson, H. M., & Karki, D. K. (2016). Experience Of Intimate Partner Violence Among Young Pregnant Women In Urban Slums Of Kathmandu Valley, Nepal: A Qualitative Study. *BMC women's health*, 16(1), 11. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-016-0293-7>
- Döndü, Ş., & Yasemin, B. (2021). Determination Of The Society's Perceptions, Experiences, And Intentions To Use Violence Against Health Professionals. *Safety and health at work*, 12(2), 141-146. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.shaw.2020.12.004>
- El-Nimr, N. A., Gouda, S. M., & Wahdan, I. M. H. (2020). Violence Against Women In A Slum Area In Helwan, Cairo, Egypt: A Community Based Survey. *Journal of Research in Health Sciences*, 20(1), e00466. doi:<https://doi.org/10.34172/jrhs.2020.01>
- Fawole, O. I., Okedare, O. O., & Reed, E. (2021). Home Was Not A Safe Haven: Women's Experiences Of Intimate Partner Violence During The Covid-19 Lockdown In Nigeria. *BMC women's health*, 21(1), 32. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-021-01177-9>
- Foundation, C. (n.d.). Summary of Policy Brief on Rape in 2012. Retrieved from <https://cleen.org/policy-briefs/>
- Garcia-Moreno, C., Jansen, H. A., Ellsberg, M., Heise, L., & Watts, C. H. (2006). Prevalence Of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings From The Who Multi-Country Study On Women's Health And Domestic Violence. *The Lancet*, 368(9543), 1260-1269. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(06\)69523-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(06)69523-8)

- Heise, L., Greene, M. E., Oppen, N., Stavropoulou, M., Harper, C., Nascimento, M., . . . Hawkes, S. (2019). Gender Inequality And Restrictive Gender Norms: Framing The Challenges To Health. *The Lancet*, 393(10189), 2440-2454. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(19\)30652-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(19)30652-x)
- Idoko, P., Ogbe, E., Jallow, O., & Ocheke, A. (2015). Burden Of Intimate Partner Violence In The Gambia- A Cross Sectional Study Of Pregnant Women. *Reproductive health*, 12(1), 34. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-015-0023-x>
- Inayat, S., Pirani, S., Ali, T. S., Khan, U. R., & Särholm, J. (2017). Physical Violence And Its Associated Factors Among Married Women In Multan, Southern Punjab, Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Public Health*, 7(1), 38-47. doi:<https://doi.org/10.32413/pjph.v7i1.23>
- Ityavyar, D. (2004). The Family And Gender Violence In Contemporary Nigeria. *Journal of Family Development*, 1(1), 1-15.
- Izaguirre, A., & Calvete, E. (2014). Intimate Partner Violence During Pregnancy: Women's Narratives About Their Mothering Experiences. *Psychosocial Intervention*, 23(3), 209-215. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psi.2014.07.010>
- Kwagala, B., Wandera, S. O., Ndugga, P., & Kabagenyi, A. (2013). Empowerment, Partner's Behaviours And Intimate Partner Physical Violence Among Married Women In Uganda. *BMC Public Health*, 13(1), 1112. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-13-1112>
- Ler, P., Sivakami, M., & Monárrez-Espino, J. (2020). Prevalence And Factors Associated With Intimate Partner Violence Among Young Women Aged 15 To 24 Years In India: A Social-Ecological Approach. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 35(19-20), 4083-4116. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517710484>
- Lövestad, S., Löve, J., Vaez, M., & Krantz, G. (2017). Prevalence Of Intimate Partner Violence And Its Association With Symptoms Of Depression; A Cross-Sectional Study Based On A Female Population Sample In Sweden. *BMC Public Health*, 17(1), 335. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-017-4222-y>
- McCloskey, L. A., Boonzaier, F., Steinbrenner, S. Y., & Hunter, T. (2016). Determinants Of Intimate Partner Violence In Sub-Saharan Africa: A Review Of Prevention And Intervention Programs. *Partner abuse*, 7(3), 277-315. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1891/1946-6560.7.3.277>
- Mosha, I. H., Akyoo, W., & Ezekiel, M. (2019). Factors For Intimate Partner Violence In Tanzania: A Qualitative Experience Of Women Living In Informal Settlements In Iringa Tanzania. *Int J Sci Res*, 8, 534-544. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096231215699>
- Mshweshwe, L. (2020). Understanding Domestic Violence: Masculinity, Culture, Traditions. *Heliyon*, 6(10), e05334. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2020.e05334>
- Nikolova, K., Postmus, J., Buttner, C., & Bosk, E. (2020). Working Together To Protect Women And Children From Domestic Violence: Factors Influencing Willingness To Collaborate Between Organizations. *Children and youth services review*, 118, 105503. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105503>
- Okenwa-Emegwa, L., Lawoko, S., & Jansson, B. (2016). Attitudes Toward Physical Intimate Partner Violence Against Women In Nigeria. *Sage Open*, 6(4), 2158244016667993. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244016667993>
- Orindi, B. O., Maina, B. W., Muuo, S. W., Birdthistle, I., Carter, D. J., Floyd, S., & Ziraba, A. (2020). Experiences Of Violence Among Adolescent Girls And Young Women In Nairobi's Informal Settlements Prior To Scale-Up Of The Dreams Partnership: Prevalence, Severity And Predictors. *PloS one*, 15(4), e0231737. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0231737>
- Pakeeza, S. (2015). Domestic Violence Laws And Practices In Pakistan. *VFAST Transactions on Education and Social Sciences*, 3(1), 46-49. doi:<https://doi.org/10.21015/vtess.v6i1.205>
- Parke, R. D. (2014). *Recent trends in social learning theory*: Academic Press.
- Raval, V. V., & Walker, B. L. (2019). Unpacking 'Culture': Caregiver Socialization Of Emotion And Child Functioning In Diverse Families. *Developmental Review*, 51, 146-174. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2018.11.001>

- Roberts, A. R. (1996). Battered Women Who Kill: A Comparative Study Of Incarcerated Participants With A Community Sample Of Battered Women. *Journal of Family Violence*, 11(3), 291-304. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02336946>
- Saeed Ali, T., Karmaliani, R., Mcfarlane, J., Khuwaja, H. M., Somani, Y., Chirwa, E. D., & Jewkes, R. (2017). Attitude Towards Gender Roles And Violence Against Women And Girls (VAWG): Baseline Findings From An RCT Of 1752 Youths In Pakistan. *Global health action*, 10(1), 1342454. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/16549716.2017.1342454>
- Sambisa, W., Angeles, G., Lance, P. M., Naved, R. T., & Thornton, J. (2011). Prevalence And Correlates Of Physical Spousal Violence Against Women In Slum And Nonslum Areas Of Urban Bangladesh. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 26(13), 2592-2618. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260510388282>
- Sardinha, L., & Catalán, H. E. N. (2018). Attitudes Towards Domestic Violence In 49 Low-And Middle-Income Countries: A Gendered Analysis Of Prevalence And Country-Level Correlates. *PloS one*, 13(10), e0206101. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0206101>
- Semahegn, A., & Mengistie, B. (2015). Domestic Violence Against Women And Associated Factors In Ethiopia; Systematic Review. *Reproductive health*, 12(1), 78. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-015-0072-1>
- Thakuri, D. S., Ghimire, P. R., Poudel, S., & Khatri, R. B. (2020). Association Between Intimate Partner Violence And Abortion In Nepal: A Pooled Analysis Of Nepal Demographic And Health Surveys (2011 And 2016). *BioMed Research International*, 2020(1), 5487164. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1155/2020/5487164>
- Torazzi, E., Merelli, V., Barbara, G., Kustermann, A., Marasciulo, L., Collini, F., & Cattaneo, C. (2021). Similarity And Differences In Sexual Violence Against Adolescents And Adult Women: The Need To Focus On Adolescent Victims. *Journal of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology*, 34(3), 302-310. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpag.2020.11.018>
- Ugwu, A., & Atima, M. (2022). Breaking the Silence on Domestic Violence in Nigeria: We Must All Be Advocates. Retrieved from <https://articles.nigeriahealthwatch.com/breaking-the-silence-on-domestic-violence-in-nigeria-we-must-all-be-advocates/>
- UNESCO. (2019). Behind the numbers: ending school violence and bullying. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000366483>
- WHO. (2013). Global and regional estimates of violence against women. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241564625>
- WHO. (2021). Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240022256>
- WHO. (2024). Violence against women. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>
- Yakubovich, A. R., Stöckl, H., Murray, J., Melendez-Torres, G., Steinert, J. I., Glavin, C. E., & Humphreys, D. K. (2018). Risk And Protective Factors For Intimate Partner Violence Against Women: Systematic Review And Meta-Analyses Of Prospective–Longitudinal Studies. *American journal of public health*, 108(7), e1-e11. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2018.304428>
- Yalley, A. A., & Olutayo, M. S. (2020). Gender, Masculinity And Policing: An Analysis Of The Implications Of Police Masculinised Culture On Policing Domestic Violence In Southern Ghana And Lagos, Nigeria. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 2(1), 100077. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2020.100077>
- Yitbarek, K., Woldie, M., & Abraham, G. (2019). Time For Action: Intimate Partner Violence Troubles One Third Of Ethiopian Women. *PloS one*, 14(5), e0216962. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0216962>