

Perception of Domestic Violence Among Married Adults in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Domestic violence among married adults is widespread, with women mostly documented as victims. However, little is known regarding the perspectives of married adults with respect to domestic violence, particularly in patriarchal societies such as Nigeria. This study, therefore, investigates married adults' perspectives on domestic violence against women in Southwest Nigeria. Underpinned by the Social Learning and Feminist theories, the study adopted a quantitative research design. The study sample was 216 married adults in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Data were collected via a questionnaire tagged 'Perception of Domestic Violence Questionnaire (M-CPDVQ)' and analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics on SPSS version 26. Findings reveal that both spouses (Mean = 4.03) were reported as the major perpetrators of domestic abuse, while with respect to perceived causes of domestic violence, lack of love (Mean=4.35), infidelity (Mean = 4.35), irresponsible habits of a spouse (Mean = 4.35), and nagging attitudes (Mean = 4.20). The most perceived effects of domestic violence, according to the respondents with Mean ≥ 4.00 , include threat to life and family stability, physical harm, emotional trauma, psychological trauma, marital breakdown, and children's exposure to societal violence. The solutions to domestic violence as perceived by respondents were counselling and psychological services, and family support services from governmental and non-governmental organisations. Regarding the tested hypothesis on gender difference in the perception that husbands are the most common perpetrators of domestic violence more than their wives, the result was not significant ($\chi^2(1) = 1.209, p = 0.0271$). A significant difference was found in the perception of males and females about the causes of domestic violence, with females reporting that inherited violent habits ($U = 4008.00, Z = -4.229, p = .000$) and poverty ($U = 4614.00, Z = -2.725, p = .006$) are the major causes. The study recommends that the teaching of safe relationship skills early reduces violence risk by promoting healthy communication and boundaries, providing economic supports, such as job training for women, lessening dependency, and empowering victims, among others.

Keywords: Domestic violence, Perspectives, Victims, Nigeria.

Introduction

Domestic violence encompasses physical, emotional, and sexual violence that occurs in adult relationships or among family members (Tomisin, 2020; Sen & Bolsoy, 2024). It is a global problem that cuts across sociocultural and religious divides, affecting many families, regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, religion, sex, gender identity, socioeconomic or educational backgrounds (Thobejane, 2012). In the Global South, the menace of domestic abuse of women continues to rise (Sulaiman et al., 2025). It is a serious issue that occurs in many homes behind closed doors, and often with impunity (Amuda & Alghanmi, 2024; Archer, 2020; Gateri et al., 2021). However, recent literature has revealed the abuse of men (Rouse et al., 2024; Tshoane et al., 2024).

The statistics of domestic violence against women in Nigeria have continued to increase, especially from 2013 to 2018, with over 41% of different forms of violence being reported in Nigeria's south-south, 42% in the north, 29% in the south-west, and 78.8% in the southeastern region (Amuda & Alghanmi, 2024). In many African countries including Nigeria, wife beating is seen as a disciplinary measure for misconduct or for checkmating unruly behaviours (Amuda & Alghanmi, 2024; Olorunsaiye et al., 2022). Adegbite and Ajuwon (2015) further stressed that the level at which women experience physical, sexual, psychological, and economic forms of violence by their intimate partners is alarming. Izugbara et al. (2020) noted that a lot of women, including married and unmarried, are beaten and ill-treated, raped, and even murdered by members of

their families in Nigeria. Jouriles et al. (2020) also stated that abuse against women takes a variety of forms, including physical assault such as hits, slaps, kicks, belittling, intimidation, and humiliation, among others. It also includes controlling behaviours such as isolating a woman from family and friends, monitoring her movement, and restricting her from economic resources (Evans et al., 2024). In some cases, dangerous substances such as acid and petrol are used on them, resulting in high morbidity and mortality, lengthy hours of medical and surgical salvage, and residual lifelong horrific disfigurements and disabilities (Oluchi et al., 2024).

Domestic violence arises from a complex interplay of individual, relational, socio-cultural, and economic factors. Contributing factors relate to physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, and economic issues, alongside neglect and failure to meet a partner's needs (Amuda & Alghanmi, 2024). Research identifies substance and alcohol use, financial stress, poor mental health, anger and low self-esteem, chronic stress, and poor spousal communication as important individual and interpersonal drivers of domestic violence (Afifi et al., 2011; Henning et al., 2019; Tomisin, 2020; Agbemaflé, 2023; Sapkota Bhattarai et al., 2024). Socio-cultural influences, such as beliefs in male superiority, limited female autonomy, accusations of infidelity, and the pursuit of power and control within intimate relationships, also contribute significantly to domestic violence against women (Fareo, 2024; Sapkota Bhattarai et al., 2024; Sen & Bolsoy, 2024).

Domestic violence has profound physical, psychological, social, and economic consequences for victims and their families (Susmitha, 2021). Women's physical, emotional, and social well-being are significantly undermined by domestic violence experiences, particularly within patriarchal contexts such as Nigeria (Ali et al., 2022). Its physical health impacts include injuries such as bruises, fractures, traumatic brain injuries, chronic pain, cardiovascular and gastrointestinal disorders, pulmonary and musculoskeletal symptoms, as well as sexual and reproductive health problems (Blake, 2020; Holden, 2023; Cros, 2024; Evans et al., 2024; Ose, 2025). In severe cases, domestic violence may result in disability or death (Maternowska & Fry, 2018). Psychologically, domestic violence is associated with fear, insecurity, anxiety, depression, emotional exhaustion, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep disturbances, suicidal risk, and substance abuse (Maternowska & Fry, 2018; Cros, 2024; Lortkipanidze et al., 2025). Victims can also experience social withdrawal, difficulties expressing affection or forming healthy emotional attachments, and impaired daily functioning (Susmitha, 2025; Horner, 2015). Domestic violence also negatively affects occupational and family life, contributing to missed workdays, reduced job performance, strained parent-child relationships, and marital instability, including separation or divorce (Harry, 2023; Adekeye et al., 2024; Wilcox, 2025; Wright & Cropanzano, 2024). The consequences extend beyond direct victims to children and wider social systems. Children who witness domestic violence

frequently experience disruptions in emotional development, attachment formation, and individual growth (Holt et al., 2020; Stanley et al., 2021). At the societal level, domestic violence reinforces gender inequalities by sustaining expectations that women should tolerate abuse to preserve family unity (Blake, 2020).

The literature on perpetrators of domestic violence presents competing perspectives regarding the role of gender in abusive relationships. Some scholars argue that domestic violence is perpetrated by both men and women and may occur as reciprocal aggression between partners (Archer, 2020; Birkley & Eckhardt, 2021). However, these studies also acknowledge that men are generally more likely to inflict severe physical harm. In contrast, other researchers emphasise that domestic violence is predominantly gendered, with men more frequently identified as perpetrators of physical violence, threats, and harassment, while women are disproportionately affected as victims (Evans et al., 2024; Lasong et al., 2020; Muluneh et al., 2021).

The controversy surrounding perpetrators is further complicated by cultural norms, social perceptions, and patterns of underreporting. Domestic violence is often regarded as a private family issue, shaped by gender roles, cultural expectations, and power relations, which discourages disclosure and obscures the identification of perpetrators (Yusuf et al., 2021; Gracia et al., 2021). Fear, shame, and social pressure frequently prevent victims, particularly women, from reporting abuse, contributing to the normalisation and persistence of violence

within families and communities (Cleary, 2023; Fareo, 2024; Tanimu et al., 2016). The widespread occurrence of domestic violence has led scholars to describe it as a significant social problem with intergenerational consequences, as children exposed to violence may reproduce similar behaviours later in life (Ajah et al., 2024; Amuda & Alghanmi, 2024; Wallace, 2005; Wilcox, 2025). Most existing studies focus mainly on women's experiences without adequately examining the views of men or both genders' perceptions of the causes and effects, as well as ways of mitigating domestic violence, which has hindered the development of holistic intervention strategies. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate married adults' perspectives on domestic violence in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

The study raises the following questions:

1. What are the causes of domestic violence as perceived by married adults?
2. Which group of household members is most perceived as the perpetrators of domestic violence?
3. What are the effects of domestic violence as perceived by married adults?
4. What are the perceived solutions to domestic violence as perceived by married adults?

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory

This current study is underpinned by Social Learning Theory (SLT). The social learning theory was propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977 and can be used to explain domestic violence as a phenomenon (Tshoane et al., 2024). This theory is a

psychological framework explaining how individuals develop new behaviours, attitudes, and emotional responses by observing and mimicking others (Bandura, 1977). It views learning as a cognitive process in a social environment, which can happen purely through watching or instruction, without requiring physical practice or direct reinforcement (Firmansyah & Saepuloh, 2022). This theory suggests that domestic violence is a learned behaviour, often passed down through generations. In furtherance, adults may view violence as an acceptable way to resolve conflicts if they have witnessed it in their families or communities. In this study, being conducted in a patriarchal society, we argue that the perspectives of married men and women regarding domestic violence against women could be influenced by their learned behaviours emanating from their experiences of domestic violence in their environment. Therefore, by examining adults' perspectives through this lens, it clarifies how cultural expectations and traditional gender roles influence attitudes towards domestic violence. Given these theoretical perspectives, the following hypotheses were raised:

Hypothesis

- H₀1: There is no significant difference in the perception of men and women on the most common perpetrators of domestic violence.
- H₀2: There is no significant difference in the perception of males and females about the causes of domestic violence.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts quantitative cross-sectional research design. Using questionnaires to gather and analyse numerical data to test hypotheses, spot trends, and extrapolate findings to broader populations, quantitative research design is a methodical, objective approach to research (Slater & Hasson, 2025).

Study Population: This study population consists of all adults in two Local Government Areas (Ado-Ekiti and Oye-Ekiti) of Ekiti State, Nigeria. Ekiti State has 16 local government areas with an estimated adult population of 2.3 million (Ekiti State Bureau of Statistics, 2020)

Sampling Technique, and Sample: The sample for the study was selected in three stages. Stage one was a purposive sampling of two out of the 16 LGAs in the state. These two LGAs have a total adult population of 676,000 (City Population, 2022) and were selected based on proximity to the researcher. Stage two involves sample size calculation of 384 adults using Cochran's formula at 95% CI, and 5% error margin. The third stage involved convenience selection of married adults who were accessible and consented to the study. This gave a final sample size of 216 respondents.

Instruments: The Perception of Domestic Violence Questionnaire (PDVQ) was used in collecting the data for this study. It has five sections: A to D. Section A depicts the respondents' bio-data, such as gender, number of years in marriage, highest level of education, employment status, religion, and which gender perpetrates domestic violence the most. Section B has 12 items that measure the perceived causes of domestic violence and were adopted from

Susmitha (2021). Section C has 10 items, which measured the perceived effects of domestic violence and were adapted from the published studies of Izugbara et al. (2020) and Huth-Bocks et al. (2020). Section D consists of 8 items that measure the perceived solutions to domestic violence and were adapted from Gracia et al. (2021). These items were placed on a 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1).

Method of Data Collection: Three hundred and eighty-four copies of the questionnaires were used for data collection in this study and were administered by the researcher and three trained research assistants. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents (married adults) individually at their workplaces and business centers, and some at their homes. These questionnaires were later retrieved from the respondents after being checked for completeness and were processed for data coding and analysis. However, out of the

384 copies administered, 216 completed copies were received, representing 56.3% return rate. Data collection lasted for five weeks.

Data Analysis: The data were analysed via SPSS version 26 software, using descriptive and inferential statistics to answer the formulated research questions. In this regard, the mean and standard deviation were used to analyse research questions 1 to 4, while the Mann-Whitney U test was used to analyse the two hypotheses. Items with mean values ≥ 4.00 are considered the most important perceptions of the respondents, while for the hypothesis

testing, interpretations were based on 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The demographic data of the respondents show a slight predominance of males (54.6%) over females (45.4%), indicating that both male and female viewpoints were represented in the study. Educational attainment among the respondents was notably high, as 96.3% had a tertiary education, while only 3.7% had a secondary school education. Regarding employment status, over half of the respondents were employed (54.6%), while a significant proportion was self-employed (28.7%). Unemployed respondents constituted 11.1%, and retirees accounted for 5.6%. In terms of religion, Christianity was the predominant faith among respondents (91.7%), followed by Islam (6.5%) and traditional religion (1.9%).

RQ 1: What are the perceived causes of domestic violence?

As presented in Table 1, the most important causes of domestic violence (having an overall Mean value ≥ 4.00) were lack of love ($\bar{x} = 4.39 \pm 0.87$), intergenerational violent habits ($\bar{x} = 4.00 \pm 0.91$), nagging attitudes ($\bar{x} = 4.20 \pm 0.84$), wrong choice of spouse ($\bar{x} = 4.27 \pm 0.99$), negative children's upbringing ($\bar{x} = 4.27 \pm 0.93$), irresponsible habits of a spouse ($\bar{x} = 4.35 \pm 0.76$), and infidelity and lack of trust ($\bar{x} = 4.35 \pm 0.80$).

Table 1: Most Important Causes of Domestic Violence Against Women

Items	$\bar{x}$	SD
Lack of love	4.39*	0.87
Intergenerational violent habits	4.00*	0.91
Nagging attitudes	4.20*	0.84
Wrong choice of spouse	4.27*	0.99
Negative children's upbringing	4.27*	0.93
Extended family's interference in home affairs	3.98	1.03
Irresponsible habits of a spouse	4.35*	0.76
Socio-cultural norms and expectations of society	3.89	1.00
Poverty and lack of financial assistance	3.83	1.13
Barrenness	3.45	1.13
Infidelity and lack of trust	4.35*	0.80
Weak policy against domestic violence	3.63	1.14

*= Most significant causes

RQ 2: Which gender do you think perpetrates domestic violence?

The results presented in Table 2 reveal that respondents perceive domestic violence as a complex phenomenon involving various household members, with a particularly strong recognition that both spouses may be involved. Both spouses were identified as the most common perpetrators ($\bar{x} = 4.03 \pm 0.85$), followed by husbands ($\bar{x} = 3.85 \pm 0.91$).

Table 2: Perceived Most Common Perpetrators of Domestic Violence

Items	$\bar{x}$	SD
Family members	3.69	0.91
Caregivers of the children	3.44	0.90
Husbands	3.85	0.90
Wives	3.63	0.84
Both spouses	4.03*	0.85

*The most rated gender that is perceived to perpetrate domestic violence.

RQ 3: What are the effects of domestic violence?

The result presented in Table 3 shows that the most rated effects of domestic violence, with a mean of 4.00, include threat to life and family stability ($\bar{x} = 4.70 \pm 0.72$), physical harm ($\bar{x} = 4.56 \pm 0.67$), emotional trauma ($\bar{x} = 4.66 \pm 0.58$), psychological trauma ($\bar{x} = 4.61 \pm 0.61$), marital breakdown ($\bar{x} = 4.62 \pm 0.57$), and exposing the children to further societal violence ($\bar{x} = 4.54 \pm 0.65$).

Table 3: Effects of domestic violence

Items	$\bar{x}$	SD
It is a threat to life and family stability	4.70*	0.72
It results in economic instability	4.36	0.80
It causes physical harm	4.56*	0.67
It causes emotional trauma	4.66*	0.58
It causes psychological trauma	4.61*	0.61
It results in marital breakdown	4.62*	0.57
It exposes the children to further societal violence	4.54*	0.65
It causes social isolation and stigma	4.28*	0.73
It causes emotional imprisonment and torture	4.44*	0.71
It can lead to suicide or untimely death	4.49*	0.68

*The most significant effects.

RQ 4: What are the perceived solutions to domestic violence?

The results in Table 4 indicate that the most rated solutions to domestic violence with $\bar{x} \geq 4.00$ include counselling and psychological services ($\bar{x} = 4.60 \pm 0.49$), and

family support services from governmental, non-governmental organizations ($\bar{x} = 4.54 \pm 0.48$), Community engagement and public sensitization ($\bar{x} = 4.44 \pm 0.71$), Strong government support and judicial intervention, ($\bar{x} = 4.38 \pm 0.78$), and Religious/faith-based intervention ($\bar{x} = 4.22 \pm 0.78$).

Table 4: Perceived solutions to domestic violence

Items	$\bar{x}$	SD
Counselling and psychological services	4.60*	0.49
Mindfulness practices by the victims	4.20*	0.74
Strong government support and judicial intervention	4.38*	0.78
Community engagement and public sensitization	4.44*	0.71
Family intervention	4.02*	0.87
Religious/faith-based intervention	4.22*	0.78
Economic empowerment of men and women	4.13*	0.83
Family supports services from governmental and non-governmental organizations	4.54*	0.48

*The most significant solutions

Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no gender difference in the perception of husbands as most perpetrators of domestic violence.

Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to determine whether respondents with respect to gender differed significantly in their perceptions of husbands, wives, or both spouses as perpetrators of domestic violence. As indicated in Table 5, for the perception that husbands are perpetrators of domestic violence, the result showed that: husbands ($U = 5314.00$, $Z = -1.10$, $p =$

.0.271), with female Mean Rank (113.28) rating higher than those of males (104.53); however, the result was not significant. Since the p-value (0.071) is greater than 0.05, there is no statistically significant difference in respondents' perceptions across gender regarding husbands as perpetrators of domestic violence. Similarly, for the perception regarding both spouses' perpetrating domestic violence,

(U = 5012.00, Z = -1.81, p = .0.271), with male Mean Rank (115.03) rating higher than those of the females (100.64); with their p-value greater than 0.05, depicting that there is no significant difference in these perceptions based on gender. However, wives (U = 4896.00, Z = -2.10, p = 0.036), showed a statistically significant difference since the p-value is less than 0.05.

Table 5: Gender Difference in the Perception of Husbands as the Most Perpetrators of Domestic Violence

Ranks	Sex	N	Mean Rank	U-test	Z	P-value
Husbands	Male	118	104.53	5314.00	-1.10	.271
	Female	98	113.28			
	Total	216				
Wives	Male	118	116.01	4896.00	-2.10	.036
	Female	98	99.46			
	Total	216				
Both spouses	Male	118	115.03	5012.00	-1.81	.070
	Female	98	100.64			
	Total	216				

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the perception of males and females about the causes of domestic violence. The Mann-Whitney U test, as indicated in Table 6, was conducted to determine whether male and female respondents significantly differ in their perception of the importance of each cause of domestic violence; there were significant differences (p < 0.05) regarding rated intergenerational

violent habits (U = 4008.00, Z = -4.229, p = .000) and poverty and lack of financial assistance (U = 4614.00, Z = -2.725, p = .006). The mean rating of the female respondents was higher than that of males on intergenerational violent habits ((Mean Rank = 126.60 vs 93.47) and poverty and lack of financial assistance (Mean Rank = 120.42 vs 98.60). For other factors, there was no statistically significant difference between males' and females' perspectives.

Table 6: Gender Difference in the Perception of Causes of Domestic Violence

Items	Sex	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Z	P-Value
Lack of love	Male	118	106.69	5568.0	-.53	0.60
	Female	98	110.68			
	Male	118	93.47			

Intergenerational violent habits	Female	98	126.60
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Nagging attitudes	Male	118	114.99	5016.0	-1.86	0.64
	Female	98	100.68			
Wrong choice of spouse	Male	118	102.65	5092.0	-1.67	0.10
	Female	98	115.54			
Negative children's upbringing	Male	118	102.81	5110.0	-1.62	0.12
	Female	98	115.36			
The extended family's interference in home affairs	Male	118	102.13	5030.0	-1.74	0.08
	Female	98	116.17			
Irresponsible habits of a spouse	Male	118	104.30	5286.0	-1.21	0.23
	Female	98	113.56			
Socio-cultural norms and expectations of society	Male	118	106.91	5594.0	-.44	0.66
	Female	98	110.42			
Poverty and lack of financial assistance	Male	118	98.60	4614.0	-2.73	0.01
	Female	98	120.42			
Barrenness	Male	118	103.53	5196.0	-1.33	0.19
	Female	98	114.48			
Infidelity and lack of trust	Male	118	109.04	5718.0	-.156	0.88
	Female	98	107.85			
Weak government violence policy	Male	118	104.13	5266.0	-1.18	0.24
	Female	98/	113.77			

Discussion

Domestic violence has continued to negatively impact societies globally. This study has examined the nuanced perspectives of married adults with respect to domestic violence. Findings of this study indicate that domestic violence is perceived as a problem caused by issues related to interpersonal, familial, socio-cultural, and economic factors (Agbedo et al., 2022). Lack of love in the home is perceived to be one of the most prominent causes of domestic violence (Ajah et al., 2024). Intergenerational violent habits and wrong choice of spouse, nagging attitudes, negative children's upbringing, infidelity and lack of trust, and irresponsible habits of a spouse were strongly acknowledged by the respondents in line with previous findings (Tomisin, 2020). This perception

reflects the belief that persistent verbal conflict and unresolved communication issues can provoke frustration and aggression within domestic relationships (Oluchi et al., 2024). Culturally embedded beliefs about gender roles, power, and authority within households may legitimise or excuse violent behaviour, infertility/barrenness, poverty and lack of financial assistance, inadequate legal frameworks, or poor enforcement were also acknowledged as causes (Firmansyah & Saepuloh, 2022; Stanley et al., 2021). This finding supports those of past research.

A finding of the study indicates that domestic violence is viewed as behaviour that can be perpetrated by diverse actors within the household, rather than being attributed exclusively to a single gender or role (Fawole et al., 2022). With respect to

spousal roles, both spouses were acclaimed to be key perpetrators. This finding indicates a prevailing perception that domestic violence is often reciprocal or bidirectional, involving mutual conflict between spouses rather than being solely unidirectional (Dobash & Dobash, 2025).

The findings indicate the effects of domestic violence, to include threat to life and family stability, physical harm, emotional trauma, psychological trauma, marital breakdown, social isolation and stigma, emotional imprisonment and torture, suicide or untimely death, and children's exposure to societal violence. Domestic violence was perceived as a serious threat to life and family stability. It highlights the recognition that violence within the home undermines safety, trust, and cohesion, and can place lives at risk. Economic instability was also widely acknowledged as an effect of domestic violence, indicating that violence in the home is understood to disrupt income generation, increase healthcare and legal costs, and reduce productivity, thereby weakening the economic foundation of households.

In addition, respondents strongly recognised the physical consequences of domestic violence. It also reflects a clear understanding of the direct bodily injuries and health complications that victims may suffer as a result of abuse (Adekeye et al., 2024; Ansara & Hindin, 2024). Emotional and psychological consequences were similarly emphasized, implying that violence is widely seen as incompatible with healthy marital relationships and is likely to result in children's vulnerability to further societal violence, separation,

divorce, or persistent marital conflict. Social consequences were also evident in the findings, as it indicates that domestic violence leads to social isolation and stigma (Lortkipanidze et al., 2025; Susmitha, 2025). These effects, as indicated by this current study, reiterate those of past studies within the literature (Wright & Cropanzano, 2024).

Finding indicates a range of strategies for addressing domestic violence. These include counselling and psychological services, and family support services from governmental and non-governmental organizations. Counselling and psychological services emerged as the most strongly endorsed solution, implying the belief that professional counselling and mental health support are critical in helping victims cope with trauma and in addressing behavioural issues among perpetrators. Also, mindfulness practices by victims also received substantial support, emphasizing the role of personal coping strategies in managing stress, emotional distress, and trauma associated with domestic violence. Strong government support and judicial intervention were also widely perceived as essential, highlighting the expectation that effective laws, enforcement mechanisms, and judicial processes are necessary to deter perpetrators and protect victims.

Other strategies were family intervention, religious and faith-based interventions, community engagement and public sensitization, including awareness-raising, education, and community-level dialogue, which are vital for challenging norms that tolerate violence and for encouraging early reporting and collective responsibility in addressing domestic

violence (Stanley et al., 2021; Stanley et al., 2021). Moreover, economic empowerment of both men and women highlights the perception that financial independence and stability can reduce stressors linked to violence and enhance victims' ability to make safe choices (Adekeye et al., 2024; Tomisin, 2020). It also reflects an understanding that economic vulnerability can trap individuals in abusive relationships (Ali et al., 2022; Cleary, 2023). Family support services provided by governmental and non-governmental organisations were also widely supported, suggesting the importance of coordinated support systems, including shelters, legal aid, social services, and advocacy, in responding effectively to domestic violence (Gottlieb & Mahabir, 2021; Oluchi et al., 2024). These findings highlight comprehensive solutions that integrate multiple support systems. The strong levels of agreement across most items support the belief that domestic violence cannot be addressed through a single intervention, but rather requires sustained, collaborative efforts at individual, family, community, and policy levels.

Gender comparison of the perceived causes of domestic violence suggests that although respondents ranked several factors differently in terms of importance, men and women largely agree on what drives domestic violence, with only two exceptions: intergenerational violent habits and poverty, with women perceiving these causes more strongly than men. This may be because women are often thought to be more sensitive to

structural and historical drivers such as poverty and learned violence patterns (Essue et al., 2025; Maphakela et al., 2026; Patel et al., 2025).

Hypothesis test further revealed that gender does not significantly influence respondents' perceptions of husbands or both spouses as most perpetrators of domestic violence. This suggests that respondents, regardless of gender, generally shared similar perceptions concerning husbands and both spouses as the most perpetrators of domestic violence. However, the null hypothesis is retained, indicating that gender perceptions do not differ regarding husbands as most perpetrators of domestic violence. Nonetheless, a significant difference was found with respect to the perception of wives. A greater number of men than women believe that wives are the most perpetrators of domestic violence. This may be because many men usually consider women who "nag, disobey, or want to take over the seat of authority" from their husbands, as the root cause of violence in the home (Ukoji & Ukoji, 2024).

Conclusion

This study provides further empirical evidence on domestic violence in a patriarchal context. The study has revealed that domestic violence is perceived as a problem caused by issues related to interpersonal, familial, socio-cultural, and economic factors. It has also been shown that domestic violence is viewed as a

behaviour that can be perpetrated by diverse actors within the household, rather than being attributed exclusively to a single gender or role. Findings have revealed that domestic violence is perceived as a serious threat to life and family stability, including economic, emotional, psychological, and social consequences. The strategies for addressing domestic violence include provision and availability of counselling and psychological services, mindfulness practices, government support and judicial intervention, family intervention, religious and faith-based interventions, community engagement, and public sensitization. Furthermore, husbands (men) were the main perpetrators of domestic abuse, while with respect to perceived causes of domestic violence, there exists no significant gender difference.

Recommendations

Based on this study's findings, it is recommended that:

- i. Teaching safe relationship skills early enough to young adults to reduce the risk of violence by promoting healthy communication and boundaries.
- ii. Providing economic supports, such as job training for women, to lessen dependency and enhance female empowerment.
- iii. Organisation of community education and mobilization programmes, thereby shifting gender norms through workshops and leader involvement.
- iv. Organising pre-marital counseling to assist adults in setting roles and addressing controlling behaviors.
- v. Strengthening of laws criminalizing all forms of domestic violence,

including marital rape, with better enforcement.

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