

Perceived Effect of Domestic Violence on Women in Dekina Local Government Area, Kogi State, Nigeria

Usman Hussein Ibrahim^[a]; T. I. Gomment^{[b],*}; Mabe Danjuma Sherifat^[a]

^[a] Sociology Department, Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, Nigeria.

^[b] Professor, Sociology Department, Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, Nigeria.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

Domestic violence against women remains a persistent social and public health problem that undermines women's dignity, safety, and socio-economic participation. This study examines public perception of domestic violence against women in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. Anchored on Radical Feminist and Black Feminist theories, the study adopts a mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. Data were generated from a sample of 384 respondents drawn from a population of 458,911 using stratified and purposive sampling methods. Structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews were used for data collection, while analysis involved descriptive statistics, t-test, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, ANOVA, and thematic analysis. Findings reveal that domestic violence against women in Dekina LGA is prevalent and manifests in physical, psychological, sexual, and economic forms. Public perception largely reflects cultural acceptance of male dominance, patriarchal norms, and economic dependency of women. Major causal factors identified include poverty, entrenched cultural practices, substance abuse, and weak enforcement of legal frameworks. The consequences include physical injuries, emotional trauma, family instability, and reduced productivity among women. The study concludes that domestic violence against women in Dekina LGA is structurally embedded and requires sustained legal enforcement, community sensitization, and women-centered empowerment initiatives to alter public perception and reduce its prevalence.

Key words: Domestic violence; Women; Public perception; Patriarchy; Dekina Local Government Area; Nigeria

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1. INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence against women is a cross-cultural, cross-religious and cross-socio-economic issue that is very well-reported yet tolerated by society, it is one of the most untold and least noticed types of violence. In Nigeria, patriarchal social systems that legitimize men and normalize women subordination are deeply rooted in domestic violence. In this context, domestic violence against women is commonly understood as a domestic issue that belongs to the family and not crime or human rights abuse.

Domestic violence against women in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State is a social issue of a great concern with dire consequences to the physical wellbeing, psychosocial wellbeing, family stability, and communal growth of women. The women are subjected to various types of abuse such as beatings, emotional and psychological humiliation, sexual coercion and financial deprivation. Although there are systems of law and advocacy interventions, the fact that domestic violence still persists implies that the social perception remains a key factor in perpetuating or intervening in the process of abusive behaviors.

The institutions encourage male domination, financial reliance of women, fear of stigma, and ineffective responses by institutions to abuse by deterring the

reporting of abuse by the victim. Therefore, numerous women live in silence with violence, and children in such households are at risk of becoming victims of violence and having to continue the cycle. It is therefore important to understand what the people think since societal attitudes determine the prevalence of domestic violence as well as the success of the remedial measures. This paper will focus on the perception of domestic violence against women in Dekina LGA, the types of domestic violence, its causes, and effects with an aim of informing practical intervention.

2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to examine effect of domestic violence on women in Dekina Local Government Area, Kogi State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. Identify public perception of domestic violence against women in Dekina LGA.
- ii. Ascertain the perceived causal factors of domestic violence against women in Dekina LGA.
- iii. Identify the effects of domestic violence against women in Dekina LGA.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by the following research questions.

- i. What are the public perception of domestic violence against women in Dekina LGA?
- ii. What are the perceived causal factors of domestic violence against women in Dekina LGA?
- iii. What are the effects of domestic violence against women in Dekina LGA?

4. STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance which guided the study:

H₀: There is no significant difference in the perception of domestic violence against women between male and female respondents in Dekina LGA.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between causes and effects of domestic violence against women.

5. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Concepts such as violence, domestic violence, and public perception of domestic violence against women are x-rayed.

5.1 Violence

Social scientists attempting to come to grips with the phenomenon find the concept of violence “either under-, or over-defined, or both.” (Aziz, & El-Gazzar, 2019). Even though two overarching assumptions seem to be that: 1. violence is typically assumed to be motivated

by hostility and the willful intent to cause harm and 2. violence is - legally, socially, or morally- deviant human activity, it has been argued that these assumptions are based on ‘conceptual quicksand’ in which important questions about the defining attributes of violence have slipped away. The very social and policy imperatives that have motivated sociological examination of violence have shaped and twisted our knowledge of it, spawning a picture of violence that is prejudiced and ethically charged while also being confused and unmanageable (Bakare, et’al, 2010).

Violence is socially constructed, since who and what is deemed violent varies depending on socio-cultural and historical context. While legal experts may demand restricted categories for penal conduct, the issue of violence is always more complicated in social reality. Not only can people’s perspectives on violence differ, but their sentiments toward physical violence shift as a result of societal and cultural changes. The meanings that participants in a violent episode assign to their own and others’ actions and experiences vary and can be critical in determining what is and is not considered violence, as there is no simple relationship between the apparent severity of an attack and the impact that it has on the victim. For example, in some cases, verbal aggression may prove to be more debilitating than physical attack (Necula, 2020).

Violence is there defined as the purposeful use of force or power threatened or actual against oneself or another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of ending in damage, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation (WHO, 2017).

5.2 Domestic violence

Violence against women happens in all countries and is one of today’s most severe unaddressed issues. Despite progress in the development of international legal norms, standards, and principles, as well as the creation of international legal and political structures that monitor the various forms and types of violence committed in public places and in the family, progress in reducing the level of violence against them is limited. (Akhmedshina, 2020). Domestic violence is ‘misuse of power by a husband or intimate partner against a woman, resulting in a loss of dignity, control and safety as well as a feeling of powerlessness and entrapment experienced by the woman (Sunmola, Mayungbo, Ashefor, & Morakinyo, 2020). Domestic violence is one of the most common types of violence against women that exists in all societies and among rich as well as poor women. Domestic violence refers to abuse that occurs between husband and wife, or other current or previous cohabiting partners. Other phrases commonly used to describe domestic abuse include: Intimate relationship violence, beating, and abuse of wife, spouse, or partner (Miller et’al, 2021).

5.3 Public perception of domestic violence against women

Various authors defined domestic violence in different ways, despite the fact that there appeared to be a link between violence and women. For example, Bishwajit and Yaya (2018) described it as gender discrimination, intimate partner violence (IPV), or abuse, and claimed that both men and women might be victims. Nevertheless, quoting consciously from the World Health Organization (WHO), they, Bishwajit and Yaya (2018) affirmed that domestic violence is “the range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against adult and adolescent women by a current or former male partner” (p.22).

When it came to domestic violence, particularly in Nigeria, Odion and Eboigbe (2018) were even more pedestrian. They divided it into five categories: physical abuse, sexual violence, psychological abuse, emotional violence, and economic violence (pp.934-935). In addition, they provided some breakdown as:

“the most common form of violence is wife battery, ranging from beating, slapping or kicking to verbal abuse, punishment, eviction from the home, denial of financial resources, rape, maiming, and death... Failure to prepare tasty meals or not preparing meals on time, talking to her husband disrespectfully, arguing with her husband, being disobedient to her husband, or refusing sex when it is demanded by her husband, or being under suspicion of having an extramarital affair or being disrespectful to her in-laws are among some of the many reasons for domestic violence” (Odion & Eboigbe, 2018, p.935)

As ridiculous as these reasons may sound, its perpetuation found strength and encouragement in some age-long cultures and traditions (Nwabunike & Tenkorang, 2017). Situating these abysmal cultural practices within the social construct, Tabassum et al. (2015) stated that “The social structure of the social institutions in society conditions its overall functioning and the status of different groups of people living within it. The social structure of Pakistani society is based on patriarchy (Sunmola et’al, 2020), men dominate women in most aspects of social life (Jura & Bukaliya, 2015). Therefore, women in Pakistan face discrimination at all levels of the social life.” These situations are almost similar in many countries where women still suffer significant discrimination in most spheres of life. Menjívar and Walsh (2017) extended it further to include all kinds of marginalization, vulnerabilities, brutalities, and all forms of inequalities suffer by women as distinct from their male counterparts in the Honduran society. Therefore, all types of depravations that are gendered inclined can be categorized as constituting the elements of domestic violence against women.

6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on Radical Feminist Theory and Black Feminist Theory.

Radical Feminist theory posits that domestic violence against women is a direct outcome of patriarchal social structures that institutionalize male dominance and female subordination. According to radical feminists, violence is a mechanism through which men maintain power and control over women within intimate relationships and the wider society. Domestic violence is therefore not an isolated behavior but a systemic expression of gender inequality embedded in cultural norms, socialization patterns, and legal institutions.

Black Feminist theory complements this perspective by emphasizing the intersection of gender, culture, class, and socio-economic marginalization. Black feminists argue that women in African societies experience domestic violence within unique cultural and economic contexts that intensify vulnerability. In Dekina LGA, women’s experiences of domestic violence are shaped by patriarchy, poverty, cultural traditions, and limited access to justice. This framework provides a lens for understanding how multiple forms of oppression reinforce public tolerance of domestic violence against women.

7. METHODS

This study adopts a mixed-method research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of public perception of domestic violence against women. The research design aligns with survey research and descriptive cross-sectional methods, complemented by in-depth interviews for qualitative insight. The population comprised men, women of reproductive age, community leaders, and other relevant stakeholders in Dekina Local Government Area, totaling 458,911 persons. A sample size of 384 respondents were drawn from Dekina, Biraidu and Okura Districts using standard sampling procedures. Sampling techniques included stratified sampling to ensure representation across wards and demographic groups, and purposive sampling for key informants. Data collection instruments consisted of structured questionnaires and in-depth interview guides. Quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Frequency count and percentage were used to represent the data collected. Hypothesis one was tested using t-test, hypothesis two was tested with Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient, and hypothesis three, four and five with one-way ANOVA., while qualitative data were analyzed thematically.

8. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

To be able to arrive at true conclusions, it is incumbent that the research questions be subjected to analysis as shown Table 1.

Table 1
Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Perceptions, Causal Factors, and Effects of Domestic Violence

Perception of men on domestic violence							
Items		SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
Men have good perception	Frequency	94	108	-	71	111	384
	Percentage	24.5	28.1	-	18.5	28.9	100.0
Women have good perception	Frequency	68	51	51	161	53	384
	Percentage	17.7	13.3	13.3	41.9	13.8	100.0
Perceived causal factors of domestic violence against women in Dekina LGA							
Cultural factors	Frequency	36	51	-	210	87	384
	Percentage	9.4	13.3	-	54.7	22.7	100.0
Low-level education	Frequency	196	100	-	82	6	384
	Percentage	51.0	26.0	-	21.4	1.6	100.0
Psychological factors	Frequency	71	82	41	110	80	384
	Percentage	18.5	21.4	10.7	28.6	20.8	100.0
Political factors	Frequency	21	61	22	198	82	384
	Percentage	5.5	15.9	5.7	51.6	21.4	100.0
Financial factors	Frequency	205	86	-	33	60	384
	Percentage	53.4	22.4	-	8.6	15.6	100.0
Childlessness and male child syndrome	Frequency	85	106	12	156	25	384
	Percentage	22.1	27.6	3.1	40.6	6.5	100.0
Religious factors	Frequency	42	67	-	189	86	384
	Percentage	10.9	17.4	-	49.2	22.4	100.0
Effects of domestic violence against women in Dekina LGA							
Financial effect	Frequency	172	104	-	87	21	384
	Percentage	44.8	27.1	-	22.7	5.5	100.0
Effect on children	Frequency	151	98	6	102	27	384
	Percentage	39.3	25.5	1.6	26.6	7.0	100.0
Physical effect	Frequency	108	51	16	53	156	384
	Percentage	28.1	13.3	4.2	13.8	40.6	100.0
Social effect	Frequency	132	72	-	102	78	384
	Percentage	34.4	18.8	-	26.6	20.3	100.0
Political effect	Frequency	-	21	-	268	95	384
	Percentage	-	5.5	-	69.8	24.7	100.0
Stigmatization	Frequency	207	93	-	50	34	384
	Percentage	53.9	24.2	-	13.0	8.9	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2025)

9. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

9.1 Public perception of domestic violence against women

It was found out that majority of the respondents were aware of the domestic violence in Dekina LGA, but the men were more positively perceiving than the women. Interviews revealed that the respondents had defined domestic violence as a form of abuse like beating, verbal

abuse and denial of resources and acknowledged that it was prevalent in their communities.

These results echo Bishwajit and Yaya (2018), who theorized domestic violence as a series of intimidating actions which are frequently perpetrated on women by their close ones, even though there were previously some unsuccessful attempts at gender neutrality. On the same note, McQuigg (2018) contended that gender-neutral framing results in the concealment of the fact that the

proportion of women as victims of domestic violence is disproportionately high because of the inequalities inherent in the system. These views are consistent with Dekina where Odion and Eboigbe (2018) believe that domestic violence usually takes the form of battery of wives, verbal abuse, refusal to provide finances, neglect due to their perceived failure in marriage tasks.

Through implication, although the awareness is high, perceptions are still patriarchal, meaning men undervalue the realities that women face, as opposed to women themselves. This is in line with Cejvanovic et al. (2015) who discovered that women are the overwhelming victims of domestic violence and thus gender neutrality is deceptive. This result that more men than women showed more positive perceptions despite high awareness is a strengthening of Radical Feminist Theory since it demonstrates how patriarchal social systems legitimize male dominance and Black Feminist Theory demonstrates how women live in the realities they experience and tolerate violence based on their cultures. Therefore, the research validates the gendered, omnipresent, and entrenched violence that is highlighted in the literature.

9.2 Perceived causal factors of domestic violence against women

The study identified low education and financial constraints as the main causes of domestic violence, followed by childlessness or the absence of a male child, and psychological factors. Political, cultural, and religious factors were less recognized. Interview responses further highlighted poverty, unemployment, jealousy, and infertility as major triggers.

These results echo Kabir et al. (2019) and Fareo (2015), who listed cultural factors, low education, poverty, psychological traits, politics, finances, childlessness, and religion as key drivers. Specifically, Arisukwu et al. (2019) emphasized cultural norms that empower men to dominate women, often normalizing violence as “discipline.” Similarly, Ajayi and Airewele (2018) discovered that women were more susceptible to violence through low education, which is consistent with the finding of Gillum (2019) and Project Alert/NOIPolls (2016) that identified economic hardship as the most frequently mentioned reason that led to violence in the Nigerian homes. The link between childlessness and violence is also confirmed by Solanke et al. (2018), who showed that infertility fuels marital conflict and abuse. The argument that low education, poverty, childlessness, and economic hardship are the key factors in the case confirms the claim of Radical Feminist Theory that violence is a means of imposing male domination and the claim of Black Feminist Theory to situate the causal factors in contexts of intersecting systems of socio-economic marginalization and cultural patriarchy that increase the susceptibility of women in Dekina LGA.

In Dekina, the findings confirm that domestic violence is largely driven by socioeconomic stress and educational disadvantage, while cultural and political influences act more subtly in the background.

9.3 Perceived effects of domestic violence against women

The findings revealed that stigmatization, financial strain, and negative effects on children were the most significant consequences of domestic violence in Dekina. Social consequences were moderately acknowledged, while political effects were least observed. Interviews supported these, as respondents described emotional trauma, poverty, and children’s exposure to abuse as the gravest effects.

These findings align with Shalini (2019), who classified effects into short-term (bruises, cuts, humiliation) and long-term (PTSD, depression, suicidality). McCauley et al. (2017) also linked domestic violence to pregnancy complications, maternal injury, and poor child outcomes, consistent with respondents’ observations.

Financial dependency as an effect was highlighted by Stop Violence Against Women (in Alokun, 2019), noting that many women remain in abusive marriages due to lack of economic alternatives. In the same vein, exposure to abuse on the part of children has been identified as a cause of PTSD and continuation of the violence cycle (Reif et al., 2020; Ingutia et al., 2020), echoing Dekina respondents’ concerns. The noted effects of stigmatization, financial dependency, psychological trauma, and intergenerational effect on children confirm the role of Radical Feminist Theory in showing how structural gender inequality is perpetuated through domestic violence and the Black Feminist Theory in demonstrating how accumulated economic and cultural disadvantages increase the level of oppression faced by women in the community. Thus, the study confirms that domestic violence has multi-layered consequences in Dekina, with stigma and economic hardship as central, and children bearing significant intergenerational trauma.

10. TEST OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following hypothesis were formulated to ascertain the relationship between the presented variables and the subsequent results were presented in the tables that follow:

Hypothesis one:

H₀: There is no significant difference in the perception of domestic violence against women between male and female respondents in Dekina LGA.

Independent-Samples t-test Showing the Difference in the Perception of Domestic Violence Against Women

Between Male and Female Respondents in Dekina LGA

Group Statistics

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics (N, Mean, Standard Deviation) by Gender

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Male	384	3.01	1.49	.076
Female	384	2.80	1.29	.066

Table 4
t-test for Equality of Means

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	2.10	766	.036	.21	.10	.01	.41
Equal variances not assumed	2.10	752.41	.036	.21	.10	.01	

Since $p = .036 < .05$, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The analysis revealed that male respondents ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.49$) reported slightly higher perception scores than female respondents ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 1.29$). The mean difference between the two groups was 0.21. The result of the t-test indicated that this difference was statistically significant, $t(766) = 2.10$, $p = .036$. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Independent Samples Test

Table 3
Results of the Independent Samples t-test on Perceptions of Domestic Violence by Gender
 Levene's Test for Equality of Variances

	F	Sig.
	5.84	.016

This implies that there is a significant difference in the perception of domestic violence against women between male and female respondents in Dekina LGA.

Hypothesis two:

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between causes and effects of domestic violence against women.

Table 5
Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Showing the Relationship between causes of domestic violence and Forms of Domestic Violence

		Financial Effects	Developmental Effects	Physical effects	Social Effects	Political Effects	Psychological Effects
Level of education	Pearson correlation	.924**	.877**	.758**	.881**	.718**	.963**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384
Psychological factors	Pearson correlation	.854**	.883**	.947**	.948**	.686**	.809**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384
Political factors	Pearson correlation	.702**	.724**	.813**	.779**	.772**	.678**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384
Financial Factors	Pearson correlation	.923**	.872**	.722**	.863**	.729**	.968**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384
Childlessness and male Child Syndrome	Pearson correlation	.832**	.869**	.934**	.947**	.621**	.782**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384
Religious Factors	Pearson correlation	.715**	.743**	.853**	.803**	.705**	.674**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation results reveal very strong and significant correlations across the board. For example, financial factors correlated highly with effects such as financial (.923), developmental (.872), physical (.722), social (.863), political (.729), and psychological (.968) - all significant at $p < .01$. Similarly, low-level education, psychological, political, childlessness, and religious factors also showed high correlations with different effects of domestic violence (all above $r = .674$, $p < .01$). The null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between the causes and effects of domestic violence against women in Dekina LGA. Specifically, factors such as financial hardship, low education, psychological stress, childlessness, and cultural/religious influences strongly predict the financial, social, developmental, and psychological consequences women face.

11. CONCLUSION

This paper has shown that the domestic violence of women in the Dekina Local Government is prevalent and well embedded in the culture, practices of patriarchy, poverty and ill enforcement of the law. Domestic violence is normalized or justified, mostly by the masses, especially when it is presented as a disciplinary or a marital matter. The impact is experienced more by women who get battered, traumatized, family life disrupted, and become economically inactive.

The results highlight the significance of a multidimensional intervention that does not only focus on personal behavior but also on social attitudes and social disparities. Enhancing the spirit of enforcing the laws that are in place, creation of more community based sensitization programs, as well as economic empowerment of women are important measures in changing the perception of people and curbing domestic violence. The problem of domestic violence against women will always be a stumbling block to gender equality and sustainable development in Dekina LGA and other such situations without a radical change in the values and institutional commitment of society.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the research questions and findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Community sensitization programs should target men to increase empathy and understanding of women's experiences, promoting more balanced and gender-sensitive perceptions of domestic violence.
- Policies and interventions should focus on improving women's education and economic empowerment, while addressing cultural norms and providing support services for couples, to reduce the incidence of domestic violence.

- Support systems including counseling, legal aid, and economic assistance should be strengthened to mitigate the psychological, social, and intergenerational consequences of domestic violence.

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