

Public Perception of Informal Strategies for Curbing Domestic Violence against Women in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria

By

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Abstract

Domestic violence in any form is like a canker-worm in the society which must be eradicated. Informal control mechanisms have been favoured in dealing with domestic violence against women, especially, in the rural areas. This study examines the perceived informal strategies for controlling domestic violence against women in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. The study employed questionnaire and in-depth interview to generate data from 398 study participants. While majority agreed that the offending partner is made to pay fine or flogged publicly as a deterrence, some of the respondents disagreed with the use of some elements of the strategies which are likely to impact negatively on their relationship with their offending partners. The study concludes that, domestic violence is a social problem which must be tackled on time before it gets out of proportion. It recommends among others that, a more vigorous advocacy campaign against domestic violence should be intensified through the mass media, family, community and religious organisations. Government and Non-governmental organisations should intensify efforts on initiating free education; community based educational programmes, vocational training, and life-skills development centres to empower the most vulnerable in the communities

Keywords: public, perception, women, domestic violence, informal strategies, curbing, Ofu

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Introduction

According to Kaur and Gard (2008), domestic violence is widespread, deeply ingrained and has serious impact on women's health and wellbeing. Its continuous existence is morally indefensible, its cost to individuals and the society is enormous, yet no other major problem of public health has been so widely ignored and so little understood. When domestic violence is mentioned, what easily comes to mind are the beating, molestation and brutalisation of women by their husbands (Ali & Bustamante-Gavino, 2020). This assertion implies that women are the targets of abusers. According to early Roman law, a man could beat, divorce or murder his wife for offences committed that either damaged his honor or threatened his property rights; such acts were considered private matters because, a

woman was deemed the property of the husband and was therefore, subject to his rules (Gill, 2019). The Catholic Church's endorsement of "The Rules of Marriage" in the 15th century allowed the husband to stand as a judge of his wife and could beat her with a stick, not bigger than his thumb, upon her commission of an offense (Ezegwui, Ikeme & Onwasigwe, 2018). According to the rules, beating showed a concern for the wife's soul and maintaining family discipline.

Bacchus, Bewley and Gillian (2019), reported that it was not until the 1870's that the first State in the United States of America banned a man's right to beat his family, and was moderately enforced until the feminist movement of the 1960's started bringing the problems of domestic abuse to the attention of the media. The global prevalence of domestic violence presents that in the United States of America, each year, women experience about 4.8 million intimate partner-related physical assaults and rapes, while men are victims of about 2.9 million intimate partner-related physical assaults (Sardinha & Cataláno, 2019). According to the World Health Organisation, approximately 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Nigeria is ranked among the nations that have high records of domestic violence (Amnesty International, 2018).

According to MacGregor, Wathen and MacQuarrie (2019), in Nigeria, reports revealed high level of violence against women. The recent death of Nigeria's leading gospel music artistes, Osinachi Nwachukwu, who was allegedly battered to death by her husband, has elicited nationwide outcry. Christian leaders have risen in outright condemnation of the act, with many calling for her husband to face the law (Ibekwe, Abiodun, Okehi & Ayodele 2022). According to the Challenged Parenthood Initiative (2020), the organisation received several reports of domestic violence and other crimes ranging from rape, sexual molestation, coercion, female circumcision and forceful ejection from home within six months in Kogi State. It also explained that other gender-based violence reported during the COVID-19 lockdown included verbal abuse, psychological abuse, harmful widowhood practices, spousal battery, harmful traditional practices and abandonment of spouse, children and other dependents without sustenance, and concluded that girls and women in Kogi State are no longer safe, in the hands of abusers, who they reside with, and cannot come out for fear of intimidation and stigmatisation. The reason why there is a stringent bill on ground, that is the 'Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) bill', is to discourage any individual from perpetuating these crimes. Nevertheless, the rate of domestic violence remains unabated.

Researchers have tried to define domestic violence in various ways. For instance, Johnson (2019) defined domestic violence as an assaultive behaviour involving adults who are married, cohabitating, or who have an ongoing relationship. It is characterised by a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviours, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, along with economic coercion, that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners. The aim of this study, therefore, is to identify the causes of domestic violence against women and determine the informal strategies that are used to control domestic violence against women in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria.

Domestic violence in any form is likened to a canker-worm in the society which must be eradicated, informal control mechanisms have negative implications where its decisions are not upheld. As such, it could lead to much greater violation and untold negative implication for the victim. Arisukwu, et al (2019), stated that compounding the problem of domestic violence is the issue of women's perception and level of awareness of what constitutes domestic violence in the society especially the rural communities. The rates of domestic violence in rural and urban areas appear to be similar, victim experiences may be different. For rural victims of domestic violence, levels of education, employment opportunities, and income are all usually lower. More are homeless, economic and social support options are generally fewer.

The study conducted by Maxwell, Garner and Fagan (2019), discovered that arrest reduced the rate by half of re-offending against the same victim within the following six months. While protective orders appear to be equally effective for victims living in urban areas, rural victims encounter more problems obtaining the orders and getting them enforced, and they experience more personal distress and fear than the urban counterparts. Rural living presents additional problems for victims of domestic violence, as well as for healthcare providers practicing in rural settings. This study was carried out to examine the public perception of the informal strategies for controlling domestic violence against women in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria.

Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- i. Identify the causes of domestic violence against women in Ofu local Government Area of Kogi State
- ii. Identify the informal strategies that are used to control domestic violence against women in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria

Conceptual Clarification

Domestic violence against women

Aihie (2019) observed that in a United Nation's publication, domestic violence was interpreted to mean incidents of physical attack, which may take the form of physical and sexual violations such as pushing, pinching, spitting, kicking, hitting, punching, choking, stabbing, throwing boiling water or acid and setting on fire. The result of such physical violence can range from bruising to killing. According to George (2020), domestic violence also includes psychological or mental violence consisting of constant verbal insults, harassment, denouncement by spouses of one another, confinement, child abuse or neglect etc. such that it gives rise to wife battering which is a prominent feature of domestic violence (Döndü & Yasemin, 2020). This gives credence to Hamby (2017), who saw domestic violence as a constellation of abusive and controlling behaviours, including psychological abuse, sexual coercion, financial abuse, isolation, threats, stalking, and physical violence to create a climate of fear and intimidation that maintain one partner in a position of domination and control, with the other partner in a position of subordination and compliance. Domestic violence occurs without regard to race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender. It doesn't matter if one comes from upper, middle or lower-class families (Wolitzky-Taylor, *et.al* 2008 cited by Ojewuyi, 2021).

Holmes (2019), noted that domestic violence, which is a form of violent behaviour is defined as the intentional, harmful and unwanted societal behaviour perpetrated by a person or group of people that may result to physical, sexual, psychological or emotional abuse. However, according to the United Nations (1993), cited by Fraser (2020), domestic violence is any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological harm, or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, occurring in public or private life. The most common form of domestic violence is wife battering (wife beating), which may results to grievous bodily harm or death by someone who is expected to be an intimate partner (Oti, Paul & Duru, 2017).

According to Robeyns (2019), the most widely used model for understanding violence is the ecological model, which proposes that violence is a result of factors operating at four levels: individual, relationship, community and societal. Campbell (2020) stated that very few people recognize themselves as abusers or victims because, they may consider their experiences as family disputes that just got out of control.

Informal Strategies for Curbing Domestic Violence against Women

According to Aisokhina (2019), an informal strategy refers to a non-official, flexible approach or plan that is not necessarily documented or structured. It often involves practical day to day actions and initiatives that individuals or communities undertake to address a particular issue or to achieve a goal without strict formal guidelines. Informal strategy strengthens bond and it is an attachment tool to control violence situation within the domestic circle; the family, church, peers or colleague / community are all important tools within the informal control mechanism disposal that can be influential in the control of a person's action and inactions. Informal mechanism is most essential due to the perception that it is internal, and there is a level of secrecy and confidence, it would also be easy for victims to confide in family members than with an external party, revealing that most a time members of the informal communities refer to themselves as family, which in some times are actual (extended families) or factual (church, mosque, school, community etc.), due to the number of times they interact among them. Informal strategies are adaptable and often rely on personal relationships, communications and grassroots effort (Trainor, 2020). Therefore, the effect of domestic violence, where it is physical or pro-occurrence (psychological) cannot be hidden for long, informal control mechanism (elements) can be quick to notice it, and were such is established, informal control mechanism is sometime quick to establish proceeding to settle cases with or without formal invitation by the battered. However, there are such cases were the victim feels the needs to share feeling with someone else, to know how overcome the feelings. Dickson (2020), noted that the cost of "formal legal system in Nigeria is very expensive and out of reach for the majority of Nigerians," stating the need for informal justice, in rural areas. Domestic violence can be aggravated by factors like isolation, limited resources and traditional gender norms. Therefore, tailoring interventions to rural contexts is crucial for effective outcomes.

From the above reviewed literatures, victims of domestic violence residing in rural communities have smaller populations and are characterized by a closer-knit social fabric. They often face challenges such as limited access to services, economic opportunities and healthcare. However, these communities also have a sense of community bond, close relationship and a connection to nature.

Causes of Domestic Violence against Women

a) Individual Factors

A review of social science literature in North America on risk factors for physically assaulting an intimate partner by Black (2020), identified a number of demographic, personal history and personality factors, as consistently linked to a man's likelihood of physically assaulting an intimate partner. Young age, past history of husbands that had either themselves been beaten as children or had witnessed their mothers being beaten. According to Ibekwe et al. (2022), the use of alcohol by husbands were consistently found to be factors linked to the likelihood of a man committing physical violence against a partner. Comparatively in females, the risk factors for abuse include observing a mother hitting a father, alcohol use, neuroticism and past perpetrated partner abuse.

b) Relationship factors

Jewkes (2018) stated that at an interpersonal level, the most consistent marker to emerge from partner violence is marital conflict or discord in the relationship. Marital conflict is related to partner assault. Such conflict has also been found to be predictive of partner violence in a population-based study of women and men in South Africa (Christian, 2018). Verbal marital conflict remained significantly related to physical assault of the wife.

c) **Community Factors**

According to Pennucci (2021), high socio-economic status has been found to offer some protection against the risk of physical violence against an intimate partner. Conversely, women living in poverty are disproportionately affected. Smith and Chen (2017), observed that poverty does not only include the lack of money, but also the lack of the basic amenities of life like shelter, food and clothing. Poverty causes educational disadvantage and gender discrimination and these potent factors could force people to engage in child marriage and domestic violence.

d) **Societal Factors**

According to Obarisiagbon (2017), structural inequalities between men and women, rigid gender roles and notions of man linked to dominance, male honour and aggression, all serve to increase the risk of partner violence. Also, many people believe that, the historical inequality of women and gender socialisation of females and males contribute to the causes of domestic violence (Pennucci, 2020).

Forms of Domestic Violence Against women

Begum and Saha (2019), stated that domestic violence against women usually takes diverse forms or patterns. It could be in a form of economic deprivations, emotional dominations and physical exploitations. According to (UN, 2019), violence against women has taken an alarming dimension, both at home and work places as it has ‘become a socially tolerated way of depriving women their basic human rights in Africa (Masterson, 2019)’. It dehumanizes women and exposes them to all manner of exploitation by men in the society. Domestic violence does not only infringe on the fundamental human rights of women, it leaves them more frustrated and helpless as the victims do not voice out due to ignorance, fear of retaliation and shame (Papalia & Feldman, 2020). The following are some forms of domestic violence prevalent globally: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse and psychological abuse.

Physical Abuse: Andrew (2021) stated that physical abuse is the most recognizable form of domestic violence; it involves the use of force against the victim, causing injury. For example, kicking, stabbing, shooting, choking, slapping, etc. The injury does not need to be a major one. For example, an abuser slaps his wife a few times; causing only minor injuries that does not require a visit to the hospital, but can be considered to be called a domestic violence. Obi and Ozumba (2019) found that 83% of respondents in their study reported physical abuse. Also, Adezion (2018), observed that the actual physical damage inflicted by men is much greater than the actual physical harm inflicted by women.

Emotional Abuse: According to Adebayo (2017), emotional abuse involves the destruction of the victim's self-worth, and is brought about by persistent insult, humiliation, or criticism. In most states, emotional abuse is not enough on its own to bring a domestic violence action, unless the abuse is so persistent and so significant that the relationship can be labeled extremely coercive (Nussbaum, 2020). Most commonly, evidence of emotional abuse is combined with other abuse like physical, financial, sexual, or psychological to bring a domestic violence action.

Sexual Abuse: Okemgbo, Omideyi and Odimegwu(2017), stated that sexual abuse is a common form of domestic violence. It does not just include sexual assault and rape, but also harassment, such as unwelcome touching and other demeaning behaviours. Forced sexual contact can take place at any time in a woman's life and includes a range of behaviours from forcible rape to non-physical forms; of pressure that compel girls and women to engage in sex against their will. In such cases, a woman lacks choice and faces severe physical, social, or economic consequences if she resists sexual advances.

Financial Abuse: Nussbaum (2020), opined that financial abuse may take on many forms, such as husband preventing his wife from obtaining an education or a job outside the home. Financial abuse is extremely common, particularly when families have pooled their money into joint accounts (with one

partner controlling) and where there is little or no family support system to help. Financial abuse is simply another form of control, even though it is usually less obvious than physical or sexual abuse. Often, the victim is completely dependent on his or her partner for money with no access to money except through the abusive partner; the victim is completely at the abusive partner's mercy. In the late Osinachi's case as gleaned from the Honourable Minister for Women Affairs, Dame Pauline Tallen observations after visiting the late gospel singer's family, it was understood that money from her singing career were paid to the husband's account, making her dependent on him (Ibekwe, *et al.*,2022).

Psychological Abuse: Allen (2020), stated that psychological abuse is basically a catch-all term for intimidating, threatening, or fear-causing behaviour. This behaviour must be persistent and significant. A one-time event generally would not be enough to bring a domestic violence action. A wide variety of behaviours fall under the umbrella of psychological abuse. Some common examples include: preventing the victim from talking to people unless they have been given permission, preventing the victim from leaving the house, threatening the victim with violence or emotional blackmail for doing something the abusive partner do not agree with, etc. From the above literatures, domestic violence may take any form and could occur once, or repeatedly, often in an escalating manner.

Informal Strategies for controlling Domestic Violence against Women

Parkinson and Zara (2020), stated that many people believed in the historical inequality of women and gender socialisation of females and males contributing to the causes of domestic violence. Traditional Leaders are influential in most rural communities in Nigeria, and they play a key role in addressing issues of domestic violence (Ragusa, 2019). Traditional Leaders can reach thousands of people in their communities through community dialogues; they influence policy making that affects the lives of millions of people in mostly rural populations. Traditional Court are made up of council of traditional leaders who intervene in issues of domestic violence among families.

The following are the traditional ways of curbing domestic violence against women in some cultures like Ibibio, Efik and Isoko of Nigeria (Tayton, *et.al* 2021):

- (1) Perpetrators of domestic violence pay a fine of three to four cows depending on the severity of the case.
- (2) Traditional rulers can deprive the perpetrators access to their farmlands.
- (3) Victim's family can withdraw their daughter from marriage without returning the bride price.
- (4) When domestic violence leads to death, the perpetrator will also face the punishment of instant death.
- (5) Perpetrator can be flogged in public etc.
- (6) Open communication.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Social Learning Theory and Functionalism. The social learning theory by theorist Albert Bandura (1973), cited by Archer (2020), states that people model behaviour that they have been exposed to as children. Violence is learned through role models provided by the family (parents, siblings, relatives, and boyfriends/girlfriends), either directly or indirectly (i.e., witnessing violence), is reinforced in childhood, and continues in adulthood as a coping response to stress or as a method of conflict resolution (Fletcher 2018). According to Chen and Stevens (2019), during childhood and adolescence, observations of how parents and significant others behave in intimate relationships provide an initial learning of behavioral alternatives which are appropriate for these relationships. Children infer rules or principles through repeated exposure to a particular style of parenting. If the family of origin handled stresses and frustrations with anger and aggression, the child who has grown up in such an environment is at greater risk for exhibiting those same behaviors witnessed or experienced, as an adult (Straus & Yodanis, 1996, cited by Breiding, 2018). Emery (1989) cited by Dutton(2019), however observed some shortcomings in the theory where it assumes that one's

behaviour and actions are determined by society, and not by how a person handles or processes information. The theory also ignores ordinary developmental milestones. Although children do not mature at identical rates, some normal milestones may still occur irrespective of the environmental setting. The theory further fails to account for all behaviour, more specifically in the case when there is no apparent role model for the observer to emulate. Social learning theory in domestic violence also fails to account for how individuals learn to inhibit family violence, which is an important issue given the fact that anger management is also a learned phenomenon.

Functionalism Theory

The key figures associated with functionalism include Emile Durkheim and Herbert Spencer. Functionalism is a sociological perspective that views society as a complex system with interrelated parts, each contributing to the stability and functioning of the whole. It emphasises the functions and roles of institutions in maintaining social order and cohesion. This theory assumes that each part of society serves a purpose in maintaining the overall stability and equilibrium. Hearn (2013), opines that functionalism in domestic violence is a breakdown in the smooth functioning of family roles and structures. In this perspective, domestic violence could be seen as a dysfunction resulting from a failure in fulfilling the expected functions of family, such as providing support, care, and emotional stability. It might be attributed to the breakdown of social norms and values within the family unit, leading to a disturbance in the equilibrium that functionalists argue is necessary for a stable society. The theory would suggest that addressing issues within family structures and reinforcing societal values could help reduce instances of domestic violence. Strength of functionalism theory is socialization and how social order is achieved through a set of norms and roles accompanied by the existence of a shared culture which is shaped due to the members of a society, whereas a weakness of the functionalism theory is meritocracy which is established on the concept of rewarding individual efforts. By doing that it completely disregards the fact that some people are at a disadvantaged level due to certain circumstances that is out of their control.

Research Method

Research Design: The study adopted the descriptive survey research design, which employed the use of questionnaire and in-depth interview to collect data from the study population across the selected communities.

Study Setting: Ofu Local Government is one of the twenty-one Local Government Areas in Kogi State. It was initially created by the Shehu Shagari's Administration on 2nd December 1980, and later scrapped by General Buhari's Administration in 1983. It was again re-created on the 11th May, 1989 when the military government of President Ibrahim Babangida created six additional local governments in Benue State. Ofu local government at creation had only three gazetted districts. In June 1991, however, eleven wards were created. The people are predominantly engaged in agriculture with a sizeable proportion engaged in government employment and business (Independent National Electoral Commission, 2012).

Study Population: The study population consisted of all males and females of adult age, who were resident within the selected communities of the LGA. The total population of the selected communities was projected to be 66,464 at 2.6% population growth rate by 2022 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

Sample size and determination: A sample size of three hundred and ninety-eight (398) respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) procedure as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where n = required sample size

N = Total population of the study i.e. 66,464 as at 2022

e^2 = Level of significance or error margin at 95% error margin i.e. 0.05

l = Constant

The in-depth interview was an open-ended question, conducted with twelve (12) female respondents, two (2) community chiefs from selected communities, and one (1) head of a social welfare for the local government.

Sampling techniques: A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the study. The first stage involved a purposive selection of five (5) wards in Ofu Local Government Area namely: Ugwolawo Ward 1, Alloma Ward, Ochadamu Ward, Aloji ward, and Ejule/Alla Ward, while the second stage involved selection of two (2) communities from each of the selected five (5) wards. This was done using simple random sampling technique via balloting. The selected communities were: Ugwolawo, Atoda, Iboko, Okula, Ochadamu, Umomi, Aloji, Ogbabo, Ejule, and Alla. Questionnaires were administered to respondents using systematic sampling techniques to select eligible adult males and females of 18 years and above, beginning from the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th, 11th... etc houses of each street or road in the five chosen communities.

Sources of Data Collection: The study made use of both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source involved the use of structured questionnaire and in-depth interview, while secondary sources were from published materials like textbooks, journals, newspaper, and other materials sourced from the internet.

Methods of Data Collection: Quantitative data were collected through a community survey via administration of questionnaires, while qualitative data were collected through in-depth Interview guide (IDI). The wards and communities used in the study were randomly selected from the local government area, and questionnaires were distributed through face-to-face contact with the respondents

Instruments of Data Collection: The instruments for data collection were questionnaire and in-depth interview guide. The questionnaire was useful in obtaining information on socio-demographic characteristics of respondents as well as the awareness of domestic violence against women residing in the local government. It also provided data on the perceived causes and consequences of domestic violence with possible strategies in curbing the issue of domestic violence. While the in-depth interview was useful in collecting information on the subject matter where the selected respondents were less able to provide adequate information.

Administration of instruments of data collection: The questionnaire was administered face to face to the selected respondents with the help of four trained research assistants; one for each ward in the local government. This was done in order to facilitate quick and efficient administration of the questionnaire. The face-to-face administration of questionnaire afforded the researcher an opportunity to explain any point of confusion or misunderstanding to the respondents, and also to retrieve the completed questionnaire, immediately. It also was also meant to ensure that the actual person, for whom the questionnaire was meant, was the one that completed the questionnaire.

The in-depth interview was an open-ended question, conducted with twelve (12) female respondents, two (2) community chiefs from selected communities, and one (1) head of a social welfare for the local government. The choice of open-ended questions was to allow free responses from the people

who are knowledgeable in the subject matter for the study. The purpose is to collect information about participants or situations, where the other respondents are less able to provide adequate information.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument: The instrument for data generation, which is the questionnaire and in-depth interview, were validated by experts in the Department of Sociology and Education Faculty before it was administered to the respondents.

To find out the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted among adult men and women in Anyigba. Following the analysis of the data generated using Cronbach's Alpha, a reliability coefficient of 0.74 was derived, which implied that the instrument was valid and reliable. The reliability of the research instrument reflected the worthiness of the instrument because it was established through the test-pretest method of stability measure.

Pilot Study: The pilot study was carried out using thirty (30) literate men and women within Anyigba, in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State, to ascertain their perception of domestic violence against women.

Methods of Data Analysis: Data generated through the questionnaire were sifted, coded and analyzed with the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0, it is valued for its ease of use, versatility and comprehensive statistical capabilities, while data generated through in-depth interviews were transcribed and analysed using content analysis, because it offers a structured and systematic approach to interpreting diverse forms of content.

Ethical Clearance: This study, which has human beings as its participants, adhered to key guiding principles of research ethics which includes: beneficence, risk, justice, and non-maleficence. The principle of informed consent ensured that respondents are informed about their rights to participate in the research, and are also free to withdraw from the research question whenever they feel like. The participant informed consent was sought for before the study. All the participants were aware of the purpose of the study. Consequently, ethical clearance with certificate number CHSREC/2022/0003 was obtained from the College of Health Science Research Ethics Committee in Prince Audu Abubakar University before the study was conducted, thereby ensuring that information gotten were treated with utmost confidentiality and that the participants would not be harmed.

Results and Discussion of Findings

The results in table 1 show the socio demographic characteristics of the respondents in the study area, in which 200(50.3%) of the total respondents were female, while 198(49.8%) were male. This indicated a near proportionate selection of respondents, which greatly reduced gender bias between the female and the male respondents in the study. The results also show that 65(16.3%) of the total respondents were within the age bracket of 18-27 years, 82(20.6%) within the age bracket of 28-37 years, majority 102 (25.6%) within the age bracket of 38-47 years, 78 (19.6%) within the age of 48-57 years, while 71(17.8%) of the total respondents were within the age bracket of 58 years and above. This indicated that majority of the respondents were within the age bracket of 38 - 47 years. Results on the educational background of respondents show that 53(13.3%) of the total respondents selected none, which means that they had no formal education, 72 (18.1%) selected primary, 151(37.9%) selected secondary, and 122(30.65%) selected tertiary. This showed that majority of respondents have at least a secondary educational qualification which is adequate for understanding of what constitute domestic awareness. Jahid (2020), posited that women's level of awareness of what constitute domestic violence, especially in the rural area is high but nothing can be done to eradicate it because women are socialized into accepting domestic violence as a result of their strong believe in culture and family members.

In terms of marital status, the result shows that majority of the respondents were married women which is important because, married women are better placed to say their minds on what they perceive

as domestic violence in their environment. Results also show that majority of the respondents are from monogamous homes, which could be a reason why it was easy to know when domestic violence has taken place.

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Category	Frequency (N=398)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	198	49.8
	Female	200	50.3
Age in years	18-27	65	16.3
	28-37	82	20.6
	38-47	102	25.6
	48-57	78	19.6
	58 and above	71	17.8
Educational background	None	53	13.3
	Primary	72	18.1
	Secondary	151	37.9
	Tertiary	122	30.7
Marital status	Married	297	74.6
	Single	101	25.4
Type of marriage	Monogamous	273	68.6
	Polygamous	125	31.4
Length of marriage	Less than 1 year	39	9.8
	1- 10 years	74	18.6
	11-20 years	120	30.2
	21-30 years	42	10.6
	31 -40 years	65	16.3
	41 and above	58	14.6
Number of Children	None	58	14.6
	1 -2	58	14.6
	3	126	31.7
	4	72	18.1
	5 and above	84	21.1
Religion	Christianity	163	40.9
	Islam	190	48.0
	Traditionalist	45	11.3
Occupation	Farming	66	16.6
	Petty trading	105	26.4
	Civil service	175	43.9
	Partisan Politics	52	13.1
Monthly income	Less than minimum wage (#30000)	125	31.4
	Minimum wage (#30,000)	171	43.0
	Above minimum wage (#30,000)	102	26.0

Source: Field Survey (2022)

Perceived Causes of Domestic Violence against Women in the Study Area:

Table 2 shows the perceived causes of domestic violence against women in the study area. It shows that, 186 representing 46.7% of the total respondents strongly agreed that past history of an individual can cause domestic violence; 201(50.5%) of the total respondents also agree to this assertion. However, one (1) respondent strongly disagreed to it, while 10(2.5%) of the total respondents, disagreed. The results indicate that majority of the respondents agreed that past history of an individual can cause domestic violence against women. This was corroborated by an in-depth interview conducted during an interactive session with the leader of Victory Widow's Empowerment Foundation in the study area:

Men that witness their father, beating their mother will abuse their wives too, if no counseling is done before marriage, and it will be seen as normal. Before I married my husband, he told me that he came from an abusive family, so, I made sure we both had a serious counseling session with professionals in Abuja, and it really helped us in our marriage.

(Female respondent, 40 years; Ejule community, 20th May, 2022).

Black (2020) identified a number of demographic, personal history and personality factors, as consistently linked to a man's likelihood of physically assaulting an intimate partner that includes: Young age, past history of husbands that had either themselves been beaten as children or had witnessed their mothers being beaten. Jewkes (2018) stated that at an interpersonal level, the most consistent marker to emerge from partner violence is marital conflict or discord in the relationship. Marital conflict is related to partner assault. Such conflict has also been found to be predictive of partner violence in a population-based study of women and men in South Africa (Christian, 2018). Verbal marital conflict remained significantly related to physical assault of the wife.

Majority of the respondents 213(53.5%), strongly agreed that low income from work or business can trigger negative emotions leading to domestic violence; 105 (26.4%) of the total respondents also agreed that this is true. However, 71(17.8%) of the total respondents were neutral or not sure whether this was true, while 9(2.2%) disagreed that low income from work or business can cause domestic violence. Low income is a prerequisite for poverty. Thus, in this study, majority of the respondents strongly agreed that living in poverty is a major cause of domestic violence against women.

Out of the total respondents, 208(52.3%) strongly agreed that living in poverty can cause domestic violence; 181(45.5%) of the total respondents also agreed, while 9(2.2%) of the respondents disagreed. Often times, women living in poverty are disproportionately affected. Smith and Chen (2017), observed that poverty does not only include the lack of money, but also the lack of the basic amenities of life like shelter, food and clothing. Poverty causes educational disadvantage and gender discrimination and these potent factors could force people to engage in child marriage and domestic violence. Furthermore, Millward (2021), observed a link between poverty and mental health challenges, including stress, depression and anxiety. All these mental health related problems are risk factors for engaging in the act of domestic violence.

According to Fletcher (2018), the worsening economic situation in Nigeria is often an excuse given for domestic violence. As a man becomes unable to provide for the family, the woman is left to support the family economically. In order to compensate for their own feelings of weakness or insecurity, many men resort to hitting the woman (Sabina, 2020). Also, majority, 397(99.7%) of the total respondents strongly agreed that marital conflict between husband and wife is a cause of domestic violence against women; one (1) respondent agreed.

One of the interviewees said the following during an in-depth interview session with regards to causes of domestic violence in the study area:

In this our local setting, men do not like certain things when it comes to marriage, like their wives talking back at them, going against their word; men in this place have pride, and when their rules are disobeyed, their pride is pulled down as well.

(Male, 60 years, Elder in Ejule community, 17th May 2022).

Results in Table 2 also show that, 156(39.2%) of the total respondents strongly agreed that gender differences (Structural inequalities between men and women) can cause domestic violence, while 163(40.5%) of the total respondents agreed. However, 38(9.6%) of the total respondents were neutral, while 41(10.3%) of the total respondents disagreed. Therefore, the results are indicative of the fact that majority of the total respondents agreed that gender differences (Structural inequalities between men and women) can cause domestic violence, against women. According to Obarisiagbon (2017), structural inequalities between men and women, rigid gender roles and notions of man linked to dominance, male honour and aggression, all serve to increase the risk of partner violence.

Also, many people believe that the historical inequality of women and gender socialization of females and males contribute to the causes of domestic violence (Pennucci, 2020). Culture and religion have given men, especially husbands, undue authority and control over women in the society. The culture of a particular society affects their way of life to a large extent and this affects also, the manner in which women are treated and accorded respect in the family and community (Owen & Carrington, 2019). Many customs in Nigeria believe that women are the lesser beings, probably because of their feminine nature, soft attitude and lesser physical strength and assume that men should be revered by women at all times. Customary practices across Nigeria generally, hold that the man is the head of the house and has the greater control and decision-making powers. As a result, the woman is regarded as the property of the man and he is therefore entitled to discipline her as he deems fit (MacGregor, Wathen & MacQuarrie, 2019).

Furthermore, often times culture and religion coversome violent practices against women in the society, from being seen as what it is (Mshweshwe, 2020). The fear of going against the culture, tradition and religion of the community, cripples the ability to see domestic violence, as violence by the weak and vulnerable members of the society. Millward (2021), opined that when violence is justified by culture and religion, it becomes accepted and tolerated by members of the society. According to Döndü and Yasemin (2020), a culture that supports and upholds some form of violence against women and young girls, will constitute a social barrier to any effort in eradication of such violent or abusive behaviours by men, in the society. Even the vulnerable women and girls will come to accept domestic violence and abusive conducts as normal and good. The victim may believe she is to be blamed for her abuse, and such feelings of responsibility may decrease the likelihood that victims will report the abuse. In addition, they opined that the victim may engage in reasoning strategies, such as denying that the abuse occurred, minimizing the threatening nature of the abuse, or rationalizing why the abuse happened. Some women may not decide to take any formal proceedings against the perpetrator for reasons such as lack of money to prosecute their cases, fear of further violence, and fear of losing the children, their home, employment or family and having nowhere else to go. Similarly, the fear of loneliness and hope that things would change, can deter women from leaving violent situations. These strategies may help the victim to cope with the abuse, but they further decrease the likelihood that the abuse will be reported, causing a low documentation of domestic violence against women.

The results also show that 156(39.2%) of the total respondents strongly agreed to influence of alcoholic drinks to be a cause of domestic violence against women, while 198(49.8%) of the total respondents agreed; 29(7.3%) were neutral and 15(3.8%) disagreed. This indicated that majority of the respondents agreed that influence of alcoholic drinks is a cause of domestic violence against women. According to Ibekwe *et al.*(2022), the use of alcohol by husbands were consistently found to be factors linked to the likelihood of a man committing physical violence against a partner. Comparatively in females, the risk factors for abuse include observing a mother hitting a father,

alcohol use, neuroticism and past perpetrated partner abuse. Researchers believe that alcohol operates as a situational factor, increasing the likelihood of violence by reducing inhibitions, clouding judgment and impairing an individual's ability to interpret situations. Excessive alcohol drinking may also increase partner violence, by providing ready fodder for arguments between couples. Oyefeso (2021), argue that the link between violence and alcohol is culturally dependent, and exists only in settings where the collective expectation is that drinking causes or excuses certain behaviours. For example, in South Africa, men speak of using alcohol in a premeditated way to gain the courage to give their partners the beatings they feel are socially expected of them.

Results show that majority of the respondents strongly agreed to a nagging partner being a cause of domestic violence, 270(67.8%) of the total respondents strongly agreed to this among other causes, while 128(32.2%) of the total respondents also agreed. Men who assault their wives are more likely to be emotionally dependent, insecure and low in self-esteem, and are more likely to find it difficult to control their impulse (Alokan, 2019).

Finally, 94(23.6%) of the total respondents strongly agreed that frustration from being unemployed can cause domestic violence; 245(61.6%) of the total respondents agreed, while 59(14.8%) disagreed. Thus, majority of the respondents agreed to frustration from being unemployed as a cause of domestic violence against women.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Respondents on the Perceived Causes of Domestic Violence against Women in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State

S/N	Items	SA 5	A 4	Neutral 3	SD 2	D 1
1	Past history of an individual	186(46.7%)	201(50.5%)		1	10(2.5%)
2	Low income from work	213(53.5%)	105(26.4%)	71(17.8%)		9(2.2%)
3	Marital conflict between husband and wife	397(99.7%)	1(0.3%)			
4	Living in poverty	208(52.3%)	181(45.5%)			9(2.2%)
5	Gender differences (Structural inequalities between men and women)	156(39.2%)	163(40.5%)	38(9.6%)		41(10.3%)
6	Influence of alcoholic	156(39.2%)	198(49.8%)	29(7.3%)		15(3.8%)

	drinks			
7	Nagging partner	270(67.8%)	128(32.2%)	
8	Frustration from been unemployed	94(23.6%)	245(61.6%)	59(14.8%)

Source: Field Survey (2022)

SA= Strongly agree; A= Agree; SD = Strongly disagree; D = Disagree

Informal Strategies for Curbing Domestic Violence against Women in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State:

Results in table 4 show that majority of the respondents disagreed with the use of informal strategies like deprivation of access to farmlands, withdrawal of the victim from the marriage and death sentence to the abuser which are likely to impact negatively on their relationship with their offending partner. The respondents will rather, prefer a situation where the offending partner is made to pay fine or even flogged publicly as a deterrent. Maxwell, Garner and Fagan (2019), stated that informal strategy for control of domestic violence typically involves individuals internalizing certain norms and values; it is believed that the social values present in individuals are products of informal social control, exercised implicitly by a society through particular customs, norms, and mores. The findings of this study agree with Tayton, *et.al.* (2021), who reported similar informal strategies for curbing domestic violence against women in some cultures like Ibibio, Efik and Isoko of Nigeria, where perpetrators of domestic violence are made to pay a fine of three to four cows depending on the severity of the case; traditional rulers can deprive the perpetrators access to their farmlands and perpetrator can be flogged in public; The results of this study however, did not agree with them when they asserted that victim's family can withdraw their daughter from marriage without returning the bride price, and when domestic violence leads to death, the perpetrator will also face the punishment of instant death. Aisokhina, (2020), observed in his study that although some respondents agreed that informal mechanism is a better treatment to domestic violence, many still belief in the formal sector, which was an indication that there are yet important issues in the informal strategies that need to be addressed. Additionally, Tayton, *et.al.* (2021), opined that informal control mechanisms have negative implications where its decisions are not upheld. As such, it could lead to much greater violation and untold negative implication for the victim. The results of this study which show a rejection of most elements of the informal strategies confirm this assertion. This is not to say that the informal control strategies of domestic violence are out of place. According to Ragusa (2019), traditional leaders are influential in most rural communities in Nigeria, and they play key roles in addressing issues of domestic violence. Aisokhina (2020) also opined that informal control strategies of preventing domestic violence against women strengthen bond and attachments tools to control violence situation within the domestic circle which is the family, church, peers and community. According to Trainor (2020) and Setty (2021), although the informal strategies for the control of domestic violence are not of universal acceptance because there are culturally relative, when people are bound together by strong cohesive bonds of community consciousness, domestic violence can be reduced to a barest minimum.

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Respondents on perceived Informal Strategies for Curbing Domestic Violence against Women in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State

S/ N	Informal Strategies:	SA	A	Neutral	SD	D
		5	4	3	2	1

1.	Payment of fine	78(19.6%)	96(24.1%)	102(25.6%)	62(15.6%)	60(15.1%)
2.	Public flogging		160(40.2%)	6(1.5%)	64(16.1%)	168(42.2%)
3.	Deprivation of access to farmlands			25(6.3%)	49(12.3%)	324(81.4%)
4.	Withdrawal of the victim from the marriage		1(0.2%)	45(11.3%)	87(21.9%)	265(66.6%)
5.	Death sentence to the abuser			86(21.6%)	194(48.7%)	118(29.7%)

Source: Field Survey (2022);

Key: SA= Strongly Agree; A= Agree; SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree

Conclusions

Domestic violence is a huge and widespread social-psychological burden that victims alone cannot carry in the society. In this study, three hundred and ninety-eight (398) respondents were involved, and majority showed high understanding of what constitute domestic violence. The study identified past history of an individual, poverty, low income from work or business, marital conflict between husband and wife, gender differences, influence of alcoholic drinks, nagging partner and frustration from being unemployed as possible causes of domestic violence against women in the study area. Majority of the respondents also agreed that death, unwanted pregnancy or diseases, physical injury, depression, low self-esteem and loss of job are all consequences of domestic violence. Violence against women does not only affect targeted women, but it also affects the whole family and the society. Victims of domestic violence and other forms of abuse have reduced concentration and effectiveness at work or in life.

Education of the girl child increases knowledge and perception of domestic violence, and reduces tolerance and the adverse effects of domestic violence in the community. While girls are taught to be submissive and obedient, boys should also be taught to respect and love women, especially their wives. The culture of silence will be reduced when victims of domestic violence are encouraged to speak out and offenders reprimanded by the society. The informal strategies are perceived relevant for the control of domestic violence against women, but majority of the respondents disagreed with the

use of some elements of the strategies which are likely to impact negatively on their relationship with their offending partner. They will rather prefer a situation where the offending partner is made to pay fine or flogged publicly as a deterrent.

It is recommended, based on the results of this study, that: Governments at all levels should create conditions that will guaranty equal opportunities and choices for the men and women. Most importantly, there should be continuous awareness creation about domestic violence through the mass media, especially radio and the television. Ofu local government area authority and non-governmental organisations will also do well by setting up guidance and counseling centres for better education of couples on family matters, and initiating free education, community based educational programmes, vocational training and life-skills development centres, to empower the most vulnerable in the communities.

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