

## Perception of Forms and Causes of Domestic Violence Against Women in Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is a longstanding issue in Nigeria, often perceived as a normal part of life and not considered a matter deserving of public health attention as it is today. This study explored perceptions of the forms and causes of domestic violence against women in Chikun LGA, Kaduna State. Data were collected through a survey, and questionnaires were administered to 382 respondents. Stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used to select respondents. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. The results revealed that 45.5% of respondents perceived wife beating as the most common form of domestic violence, driven by cultural and socioeconomic factors, lack of education, and gender inequality. About 82.1% of respondents were aware of the frequency of domestic violence in the area. The study found that domestic violence often results from deep-seated cultural practices that encourage male dominance, coupled with economic challenges and limited access to education. The consequences are far-reaching, affecting not only victims but also their families and communities. The study concludes that low-income family relationships, illiteracy, poor economic status, and substance abuse contribute to domestic violence. It recommends establishing Guidance and Counselling centers to educate and counsel partners on peaceful coexistence. Additionally, community-based initiatives are needed to address the cultural and socioeconomic factors driving domestic violence and to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. By addressing these underlying issues, it is possible to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence and create a safer, more equitable society for all.

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## 1 Introduction

Domestic violence (also named domestic abuse or family violence) is violence or other abuse in a domestic setting, such as in marriage or cohabitation. Domestic violence may be used as a synonym for intimate partner violence, which a spouse or partner commits in an intimate relationship against the other spouse or partner (Tesfa et al., 2020). In the broadest sense, domestic violence can also involve violence against children, parents, or the elderly. Violence against women has been characterized as the most pervasive yet least recognized human rights abuse in the world (Lomazzi, 2023). Indeed, it has been generally accepted as an “understandable behavior” that, unfortunately, has been a reality since ancient times, and patriarchy has lent credibility to it through continuous perpetuation of male dominance (Saunders et al., 2022). This violence has many forms, including physical aggression or assault (hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, restraining, slapping, throwing objects), or threats; sexual abuse; emotional abuse; controlling or domineering; intimidation; stalking; passive/covert abuse, otherwise known as neglect; and economic deprivation (Breiding et al., 2015; Iloka, 2022).

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2024) estimates the average global prevalence of domestic violence at 30%. The WHO added that as many as 38% of

murders of women are committed by intimate partners. Modern-day interest and research into domestic violence began in the 1970s and 1980s, largely generated by feminists who were concerned about women who had been severely beaten and injured by their partners (Hall, 2015). Stories and studies from that era provided us with a vivid picture of the battered woman, her assailant, and their relationship (Zepinic, 2023). Zepinic (2023) added that the battered woman is always under chronic apprehension of imminent doom, of something terrible to happen, and any symbolic or actual sign of potential danger results in increased activity, agitation, pacing, screaming, or crying.

In Nigeria, domestic violence remains widespread and deeply rooted in socio-cultural practices that perpetuate male dominance and relegate women to a subordinate status (Arisukwu et al., 2021; Ajayi et al., 2021; Ekwueme, 2025). Reports of domestic violence are frequent, ranging from spousal killings and sexual abuse of children to exploitative practices such as so-called “baby-making factories” (Ishola, 2016). Consequently, many Nigerian women experience severe psychological abuse, including threats, insults, intimidation, and destruction of property (Adebayo, 2003; Adjah & Agbemaflé, 2016; Oli, 2012).

Despite global efforts to eliminate violence against women, progress at the local level in Nigeria has been limited due to weak enforcement of international conventions and protocols by successive governments (Mshelia, 2021). As a result, non-governmental organizations have taken the lead in advocacy and intervention. This situation highlights the need for empirical studies to generate evidence that can stimulate government action and increase public awareness of the nature and dimensions of domestic violence in Nigeria.

Evidence indicates that many Nigerian women have experienced physical and sexual violence by current or former spouses, often repeatedly, with pregnant women not exempted. Prolonged economic hardship over the past two decades has further intensified household stress, leading to increased abuse, neglect, and violence (Kana et al., 2019). Domestic violence has therefore emerged as a significant public health concern, with potential outcomes including severe injury, long-term disability, or death (Kaufman, 2004).

Although domestic violence is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria, it was previously regarded as a private family matter and normalized within domestic life. This perception limited public discourse and policy attention. However, despite increased awareness through media and advocacy by non-governmental organizations, the prevalence of domestic violence continues to rise across ethnic, religious, and socio-economic groups (Ibegbulam et al., 2022). It is against this backdrop that this study examines perceptions of the forms and causes of domestic violence against women in Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

While several studies in Kaduna State have examined violence broadly, few have specifically focused on domestic violence against women, and even fewer have explored public perceptions of its forms, causes, and effects. No recent study has addressed this gap in the study area. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this void by focusing on women aged 16–50 years, adopting a perception-based approach rather than concentrating solely on victims, and employing survey research, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews.

This study aims to determine the perception of respondents on the forms and causes of domestic violence against women in Chikun L.G.A of Kaduna State. Specific objectives of the study include (i) identifying the forms of domestic violence against women in Chikun LGA, and (ii) identifying the major causes of domestic violence against women in Chikun LGA. The study aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, particularly Target 5.2 and Indicator 5.2.1, which seek to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls and measure the prevalence of intimate partner violence. Additionally, the findings are relevant

to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), highlighting the interconnected effects of domestic violence on health, education, inequality, and access to safe living conditions. The findings will contribute to a better understanding of the forms and causes of domestic violence against women in Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State by providing data and research findings based on respondents' perceptions.

## 2 Materials and Methods

### 2.1 Study Area

Chikun Local Government Area (LGA) is situated in southern Kaduna State, Nigeria, between latitudes 10°00'N and 10°50'N and longitudes 6°04'E and 7°05'E (Figure 1). It covers approximately 4,801 km<sup>2</sup>, with Kujama as its administrative headquarters. The LGA borders Kaduna South LGA to the north, Niger State to the southwest, and Kajuru and Kachia LGAs to the east. Chikun LGA has a tropical continental climate, classified as Köppen Aw. This is characterized by a pronounced harmattan season (November–February) that is cold, dry, and dusty, and a rainy season from April to October, peaking in August. Mean maximum temperatures range from 33.4°C to 34.9°C (March–May), with minima of 19.1°C–21.8°C in December–January (Baba et al., 2020). Soils are predominantly ferruginous, tropical, fragile, and leached, with 30–40% clay content and poor nutrient retention, requiring fertilizers for sustained agriculture. Some low-lying areas feature permanently waterlogged 'fadama' soils prone to seasonal flooding and cracking. Vegetation falls within the northern Guinea savannah zone, characterized by scattered trees such as *Isobberlinia doka* and *Isobberlinia tomentosa*, interspersed with grasslands, though heavily modified by farming, grazing, firewood collection, and deforestation (Baba et al., 2020).

Economic activities are diverse: rural areas focus on subsistence and commercial farming of crops such as yams, cassava, maize, beans, millet, rice, and groundnuts, as well as livestock rearing (cattle, sheep, goats, poultry). Urban and peri-urban zones feature trade, public service employment, and industries such as the Kaduna Refinery, agro-allied processing, manufacturing (e.g., Indomie, pure water), quarrying, and cement production.

Chikun LGA has a projected population of 503,242 people in 2020. The population is predominantly Christian, with roots in traditional African beliefs and a minority Muslim community. This mix of rural agriculture, urban trading, and industrial activities shapes socio-economic dynamics relevant to domestic violence patterns.

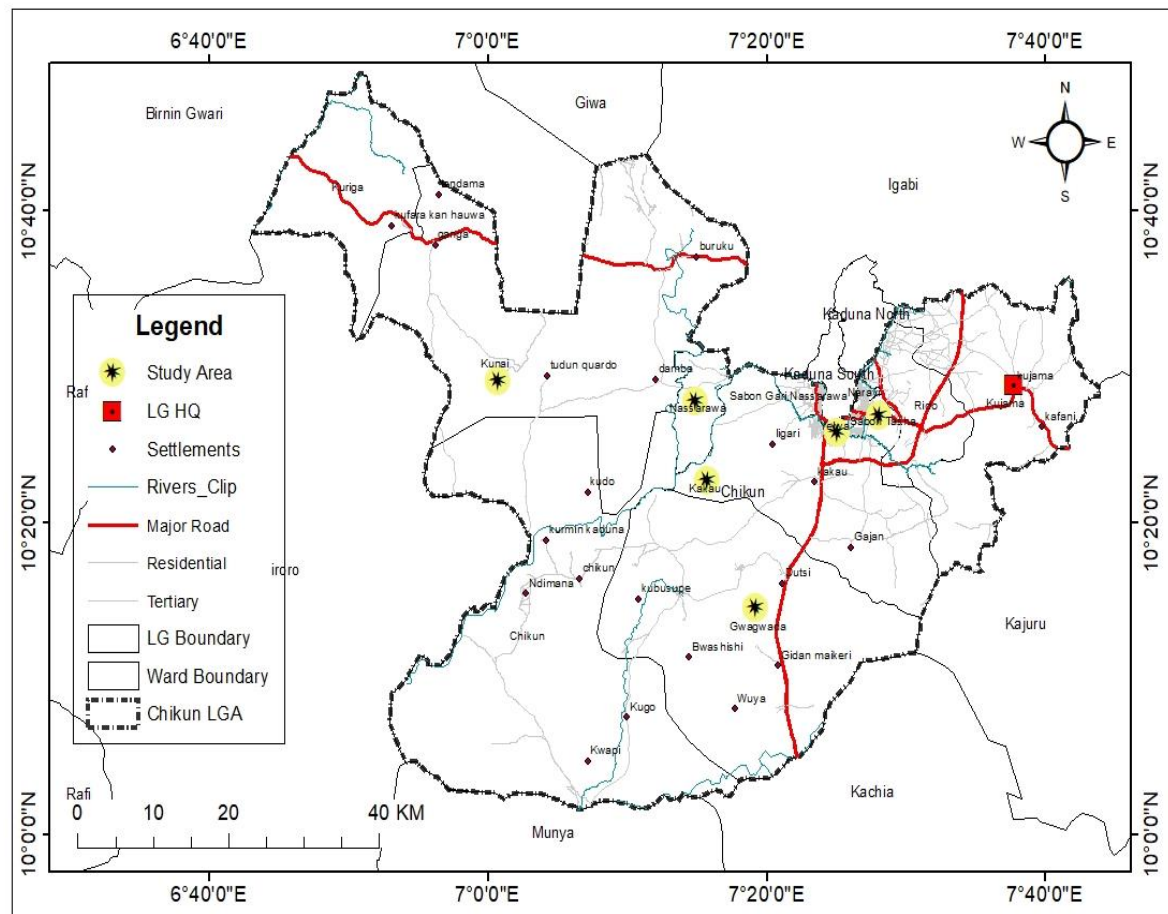


Figure 1: Chikun L.G.A Showing the Selected Wards and Districts  
Source: Kaduna State Ministry of Land and Survey 2020.

## 2.2 Data Types and Sources

Socio-demographic data (age, marital status, educational background, etc.) from respondents. Data on forms and causes of domestic violence (physical violence, verbal abuse, etc.) from respondents.

## 2.3 Sample Size and Method

The study's target population was women aged 16 to 50. Oloruntosin et al. (2021) in a study on violence against women, stated that women in this age bracket were most vulnerable. The projected population of Chikun LGA in the year 2020 was 553,306, with females accounting for 268,337. The study area is made up of twelve (12) political wards, both in the urban and rural areas. The wards in urban areas include Sabon Tasha, U/Yelwa, Narayi, Kujama, Maraban Rido, Nassarawa, and Trikania. While Kunai, Kakau, Chikun, Gwagwada, and Kuriga are wards in the rural areas.

For this study, six of the twelve wards in the Local Government Area were selected because it was difficult to study the entire population. The researcher used a stratified sampling technique to select a portion of the population by dividing the study area into urban and rural areas. This was used to gather data based on

respondents' perceptions, as revealed by Gay et al. (2006), and was conducted so that attributes exhibited by the smaller portion were accepted as representative of the total population, enabling generalization.

The stratified sampling technique was employed by drawing a list of the twelve political wards, arranged in descending order into six groups. In order to capture population diversity in the area. Three with the highest population distribution and three with the lowest were selected to form the sampling frame, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Population of Chikun Local Government by Political Wards**

S/N	Political Wards	Population Census 2006			Projected Population 2020		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	Gwagwada	4039	6423	10462	6,049	8876	15825
2	Kakau	3755	12319	16072	6472	17839	24311
3	Kunai	4898	15159	22057	13518	19846	33364
4	Kuriga	9035	13365	22400	17882	16002	33882
5	Sabon Gari	11986	12060	24046	14222	22150	36372
6	Rido	8280	18932	27212	12900	28260	41160
7	Narayi	10368	19123	29491	18428	26180	44608
8	Chikun	11997	17560	29557	18958	25650	44708
9	Kujama	13659	21060	34718	22,484	31030	52514
10	Nasarawa	14327	23928	38355	23369	34647	58016
11	Sabon Tasha	36801	17159	53960	56774	24846	81620
12	U/Yelwa	30402	27066	57468	47735	39191	86926
<b>Total</b>			<b>204145</b>	<b>365798</b>		<b>268337</b>	<b>553306</b>

Source: NPC 2006 Census Projected to 2020 at 3.2% Growth Rate

The selected wards were assigned the number of questionnaires proportionate to the projected 2020 population of the localities, based on the local

government area's lists and figures (NPC, 2006), as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Female (Women) Population Sample Proportion by Political Wards**

S/No.	Selected Wards	Population Census (2006)	Projected Population (2020)	Sample Number of Questionnaire	Population Distribution (Rural % Urban)
1.	Gwagwada	6,423	8,876	31	Rural Lowest Population Distribution
2.	Kakau	12,319	17,839	42	
3.	Kunai	15,159	19,846	59	
4.	Nasarawa	23,928	34,647	74	Urban Highest Population Distribution
5.	Sabon Tasha	17,159	24,846	73	
6.	U/Yelwa	27,066	39,191	83	
Total		104,054	145,245	382	

Source: Extracted from NPC (2006) Census as Projected to 2020 at 3.2% Growth Rate

To determine the sample size, the SPSS calculator was used, based on a population of 145,245, a confidence level of 0.95, and a confidence interval of 5, yielding a sample size of 382. The Krejcie and Morgan (1970) method for determining sample size was also adopted, using the simplified sample size table, which indicates that for a population between 75,000 and 999,000 people, the sample size could be 384. Since the population of the study area falls between this range, the sample size used was 382. However, this shows that only 99.47% (382) of the respondents were eligible for analysis.

The projected ward population is derived from the formula:

$$\frac{\text{Number of Questionnaire} = \text{Outcome of women in Chikun L.G.A}}{\text{Total number of women in Chikun L.G.A}} \times 382$$

## 2.4 Questionnaire Administration/Data Collection

The questionnaire was administered to women aged 16-50 residing in the selected wards using a purposive sampling technique, with direct administration to targeted respondents. The questionnaire contained four sections (A – D), i.e., Section A: Socio-economic and demographic data of respondents; Section B: Knowledge of existing domestic violence against women in the study area; Section C: Types/forms of domestic violence against



women in the study area; Section D: Causes of domestic Violence against women in the study area. The researcher obtained the respondents' consent, and their responses were kept confidential.

### 2.5 Data Analysis

The study used descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, and graphic illustrations, including bar and line charts, to present the characteristics of the research subject and the basic forms and causes of domestic violence against women, using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.0.

Lastly, the Global Positioning System (GPS) was used to obtain the coordinates of identified areas with the highest incidence of domestic violence. The collected coordinates were tabulated in Microsoft Excel as a comma-delimited (.csv) file, which was imported into ArcGIS and converted to shapefiles.

## 3 Results

The age distribution of the respondents showed that most were within the age brackets of 31-40 (29.5%) and 41-50 (23.29%), while, on educational level, most had secondary education (32.4%). Regarding occupation, the data show that most respondents are engaged in business/trading (25.9%). Married respondents accounted for the largest share at 44.7%. From the research findings, it is seen that the majority of the people in the study area were engaged in petty trading/business for many reasons which include low educational qualifications (secondary) 32.4%, within the age range of 31-40 113 (29.58%), mostly married who needs to fend for their families 44.7% and other means of livelihood. This is presented in Table 3.

The sociodemographic results show that most respondents were between 31 and 40 years old (29.5%) and 41 and 50 years old (23.29%), had secondary education (32.4%), were engaged in business/trading (25.9%), and were married (44.7%). The findings suggest that in the study area, many people engage in petty trading/business, likely due to limited educational qualifications, being in a productive age range, and family responsibilities, indicating people are trying to make ends meet through informal business activities.

**Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

	GWAGWADA		KAKAU		KUNAI		NASSARAWA		SABON TASHA		U/YELWA		TOTAL (N=382)	
Sex	(N=31)		(N=42)		(N=59)		(N=74)		(N=93)		(N=83)		Freq	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Male	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Female	31	8.1	42	11.0	59	15	74	19.4	93	24	83	21.7	382	100.0
<b>Age</b>														
16 - 20	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	8	4	5.4	2	2	5	8.2	16	4.2
21 - 25	5	16.1	8	19.1	6	10	5	6.8	13	14	18	16.4	55	14.4
26 - 30	7	22.6	5	11.9	6	10	13	17.6	11	12	9	6.6	51	11.0
31 - 35	11	35.5	14	33.3	9	15	27	36.5	28	30	24	31.2	113	29.6
36 - 40	4	12.9	6	14.3	21	36	12	16.2	31	33	15	24.6	89	23.3
41 - 45	2	6.5	8	19.1	7	12	8	10.8	7	8	7	8.2	39	10.2
46 - 50	2	6.5	1	2.4	5	8	5	6.8	1	1	5	4.9	19	5.0
<b>Educational Qualification</b>														
Primary	11	35.5	8	19.1	14	24	30	40.5	12	13	23	21.3	98	25.7
SSCE	8	25.8	13	31.0	20	34	19	25.7	38	41	26	26.2	124	32.5
OND/NCE	3	9.7	9	21.4	2	3	7	9.5	5	5	5	8.2	31	8.1
Undergrad	2	6.5	4	9.5	13	22	11	14.9	27	29	15	24.6	72	18.9
PGD/MSC/PHD	5	16.1	5	11.9	8	14	3	4.1	8	9	12	19.7	41	10.7
Others	2	6.5	3	7.1	2	3	4	5.4	3	3	2	0.0	16	4.2
<b>Marital Status</b>														
Single	6	19.4	7	16.7	10	17	13	17.6	7	8	23	27.7	66	17.3
Married	14	45.2	12	28.6	29	49	37	50.0	42	45	37	44.6	171	44.8
Divorced	4	12.9	5	11.9	8	14	7	9.5	6	6	5	6.0	35	9.2
Widow	5	16.1	10	23.8	7	12	8	10.8	27	29	11	13.3	68	17.8
Separated	2	5.3	8	19.1	5	8	9	12.2	11	12	7	8.4	42	11.0
<b>Years of Marriage</b>														
0-10 years	10	32.3	7	22.6	16	27	27	36.5	25	27	27	27.9	129	29.3
10-15 years	13	41.9	21	67.7	21	36	31	41.9	31	33	31	34.4	148	38.7
15-25 years	5	16.1	10	23.8	15	25	10	13.5	14	15	9	14.8	63	16.5
25-30years	3	9.7	4	9.5	7	12	6	8.1	23	25	16	23.0	55	15.2
<b>Occupation</b>														
Unemployed	4	12.9	8	19.1	8	18	13	18.1	12	13	19	14.8	64	16.8
Student	1	3.2	6	14.3	3	7	5	6.9	11	12	15	8.2	41	10.7
Apprentice	7	22.6	4	9.5	6	14	9	9.7	5	5	6	6.6	37	9.7
Farming	9	29.0	11	26.2	20	34	5	6.9	0	0	4	6.6	49	12.8
Civil Servants	3	9.7	5	9.5	13	7	11	15.3	19	20	22	36.1	73	19.1
Business/Trade	6	19.4	7	16.7	7	16	30	41.7	37	40	12	19.7	99	25.9
Others	1	3.2	1	2.4	2	5	1	1.4	9	10	5	8.2	19	5.0
<b>Religion</b>														
Christianity	17	54.8	24	28.4	33	52	28	36.1	75	81	57	90.2	234	61.3
Islam	10	32.3	10	48.7	17	27	35	48.6	11	12	24	6.6	107	28.0
Traditional	3	9.7	2	14.9	8	18	9	12.5	7	8	2	3.3	31	8.1
Others	1	3.2	6	8.1	1	0	2	2.8	0	0	0	0.0	10	2.6

Figure 2 revealed that most of the respondents 82.1% knew of the existence of domestic violence in the study area. According to them, although domestic violence occurs in every community, certain areas are more prevalent, and they identified the following, among others: Ungwan Gimbiya in Sabon Tasha ward, Ungwan Kadara in Ungwan Yelwa ward, Trikaniya in Nasarawa ward, Kagurna in Kakau ward, Buruku in Kunai ward, and Haying Dogo in Gwagwada ward.

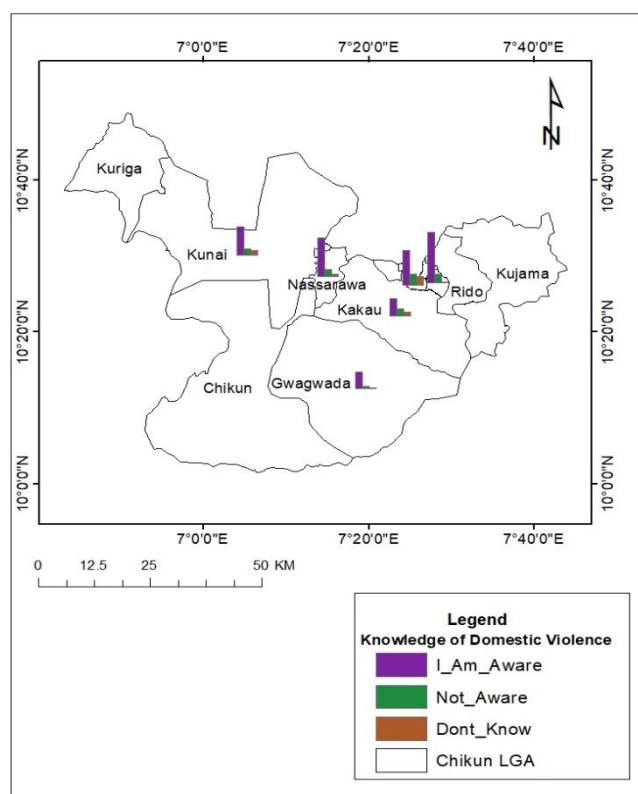


Figure 2: Knowledge of Victims of Domestic Violence

Figure 3 revealed the most common and dominant form/type of domestic violence in Chikun LGA. Out of

the 382 respondents, 45.5% of them viewed wife beating as the commonest form of domestic violence, and 42.9% agreed it is dominant in their communities, respectively. This is similar to the findings of Fawole et al. (2005) and Igbolekwu et al. (2021), who all reported that wife beating is a very common form of domestic violence in Nigeria. Alabi and Ramsden (2021), however, found that due to cultural influence, women are more likely to accept intimate partner violence than men.

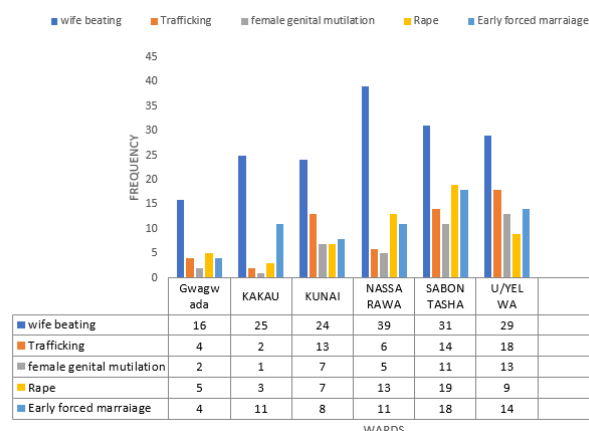


Figure 3: Respondents' Distribution on Forms/Types of Domestic Violence Against Women

Table 4 revealed that most of the respondents agreed that cultural, educational, and socio-economic factors are the major causes of domestic violence against women. This result is consistent with the findings of Alabi and Ramsden (2021), who argued that culture significantly increased the odds of IPV justification. The influence of stimulants is also perceived to be another encouraging factor of domestic violence. Male dominance, according to the respondents, is also a reason why violence occurs, as culture places the male highly above the female gender in every area of life.

Table 4: Respondents' Views on the Major Factors Encouraging Domestic Violence Against Women

Variable	GWAGWADA (N=31)		KAKAU (N=42)		KUNAI (N=59)		NASSARAWA (N=74)		SABON TASHA (N=93)		UNGWAN YELWA (N=83)		AVR (N=382)	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Religious	7	22.6	6	14.3	6	10.2	4	5.4	5	9.4	5	6.0	33	8.6
Economic	5	16.1	5	11.9	10	17.0	13	17.6	10	10.8	10	12.1	53	13.9
Educational	12	38.7	13	31.0	14	23.7	28	37.8	29	31.2	20	24.1	116	30.4
Culture	3	9.7	15	35.7	21	35.6	17	23.0	33	35.5	29	34.9	118	30.9
Social	4	12.9	3	7.1	8	13.6	12	16.2	16	17.2	19	22.9	62	16.2

Table 5 revealed that culture has really affected women's responses to violence against them; even when they feel aggrieved at having been dehumanized, they choose to live with the situation rather than opt not to tolerate it.

**Table 5: Respondents' Rated Responses on Culture as a Contributing Factor Encouraging Domestic Violence**

Wards	Very strong	Strong	Weak	Very weak
Gwagwada	12	8	6	5
Kakau	7	14	11	10
Kunai	2	31	15	11
Nassarawa	13	35	16	10
Sabon Tasha	14	56	20	3
Ungwan Yelwa	9	27	10	37
Total	57	171	78	76

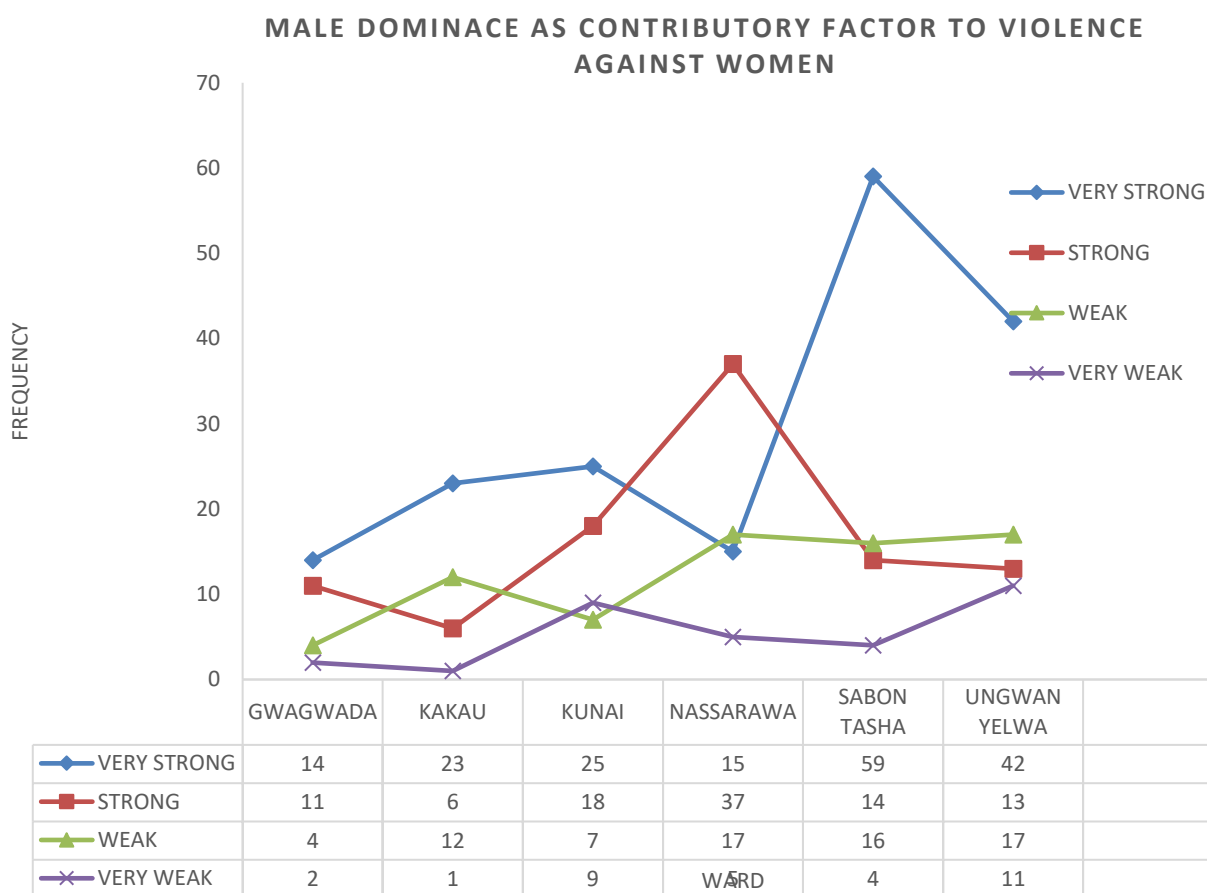
*Figure 4: Respondents' Views on Male Dominance as a Factor Encouraging Domestic Violence Against Women*

Figure 4 revealed that in most locations, male dominance is viewed as a substantial contributor, with "Very Strong" and "Strong" responses generally outnumbering the weaker perceptions. The pattern is particularly striking in Sabon Tasha, where an exceptionally high 59 respondents rated it as "Very Strong", while Ungwan Yelwa also shows a notably high "Very Strong" frequency (42). Other locations display more moderate perceptions, but they are still predominantly strong. The number of those who responded with "Weak" and "Very Weak" remains consistently lower across all locations, indicating broad agreement that male dominance plays an important to very important role in contributing to violence against women in these communities. This agrees with the

findings of Mshweshwe (2020), who reported that patriarchy in African society encourages male dominance of women at all times and in all things, leading to domestic violence.

In all the wards, studies revealed that most respondents agreed that it usually takes time before victims of domestic violence seek professional help. This agrees with the findings of Huntley et al. (2019), who reported that victims of domestic violence usually take time to contemplate seeking help. This was agreed by the respondents from the survey. From the research, it was revealed that most of the respondents know agencies that deal with violent cases, but are not willing or do not know their rights enough to report. Ikenga (2016) also noted that



some women are unaware of their rights or where to seek redress when their rights are infringed. Hence, she thinks that women should be sensitized on the need to report while men should be provided with proper treatment of women, which is with respect and not as punching bags, because when the home is peaceful, the society will be at peace," she said.

#### 4 Conclusion

Domestic violence against women is a significant issue and prevalent in the study area, with wife beating being the most common form, largely perpetrated by men. The causes are cultural norms that promote male dominance, economic dependence of women on men, limited access to education, poverty, and substance abuse. These factors contribute to physical, economic, social, and health consequences for the victims.

To address this, there is a need for increased awareness of the importance of reporting cases and seeking help. Communities should work on treating women with respect and tackling underlying issues like poverty and illiteracy. This can help reduce domestic violence and create a more supportive environment for women. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were drawn:

- i. Kaduna State Government should set up Guidance and Counselling centres on family matters where Religious Leaders, elders in the communities, and guidance and counselling experts will educate and counsel partners against

wife beating so they can live peacefully and arrive at a collective decision to improve family relationships.

- ii. There should be institutional mechanisms where women and girls who are victims of violence can feel free to report acts of violence against them in a safe and confidential environment.
- iii. Efforts should be made to establish these agencies that deal with violence against women in rural areas. This will enable women in rural areas to access these agencies and benefit from their services, just as urban dwellers do.
- iv. Victims of domestic violence should avoid this culture of silence and see the need to report their cases to these agencies. They should be eager to visit these agencies to resolve their problem, rather than resign themselves to their fate.

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