

Socioeconomic Correlates of Domestic Violence among Married Women in Nigeria: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of the 2024 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey

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Research Article

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Abstract

Background

Despite legal and policy interventions, domestic violence remains a major public health and human rights challenge in Nigeria. Previous studies have linked women's individual socioeconomic status to their experience of domestic violence, but little evidence exists on the role that socioeconomic differences between partners play in that risk. This study assessed the socioeconomic correlates of domestic violence against married women in Nigeria using the 2024 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS).

Methods

A cross-sectional analytical design was applied to secondary data from the nationally representative 2024 NDHS. All ever-married women aged 15–49 years who completed the domestic violence module were included. Survey weights and Stata survey commands accounted for the complex sampling design. Descriptive statistics summarised the prevalence and distribution of domestic violence; chi-square tests assessed bivariate associations; and multivariable logistic regression estimated adjusted odds ratios (AORs) with 95% confidence intervals (CIs). Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results

Overall, 22.2% of women had experienced at least one form of domestic violence. Emotional violence was the most common (17.8%; 95% CI: 17.0–18.6), followed by physical (12.0%; 95% CI: 11.4–12.7) and sexual violence (3.4%; 95% CI: 3.0–3.7). Prevalence was highest among women with primary education (27.3%), in the South South (33.8%) and South East (32.2%) regions, and among women whose husbands consumed alcohol (45.2%). In the adjusted model, higher parity (AOR = 1.59–1.84), husbands' alcohol consumption (AOR = 3.55; 95% CI: 2.73–4.62) and moderate decision-making autonomy (AOR = 1.43; 95% CI: 1.09–1.86) were associated with increased odds of domestic violence, while women's employment was protective (AOR = 0.57; 95% CI: 0.40–0.81). Spousal differences in education and employment were not statistically significant after adjustment.

Conclusions

Husbands' alcohol consumption, parity and intra-household decision-making dynamics — rather than women's individual or relative socioeconomic status alone — are the dominant correlates of domestic violence among married women in Nigeria. Interventions should combine alcohol-policy enforcement, women's economic empowerment, gender-norm transformation and the integration of domestic violence

prevention into reproductive and maternal health services. Longitudinal research is needed to clarify the causal pathways linking socioeconomic inequality and domestic violence.

Trial registration:

Not applicable.

Background

Domestic violence, especially intimate partner violence (IPV), is a significant public health and human rights issue that affects millions of women across the globe [1]. According to the World Health Organization, about 27% of women worldwide aged 15–49 years have been physically and/or sexually violated by an intimate partner at least once in their lifetime [2]. This means that almost one-third of women around the world are victims of violence, transcending socioeconomic, cultural and geographic boundaries [3]. Progress towards eliminating domestic violence has been slow despite global commitments such as Sustainable Development Goal 5.2, especially in low- and middle-income countries [4].

Domestic violence is under-researched in Africa compared with many other parts of the world [5]. Although the prevalence of IPV against women of reproductive age in Africa is alarming, pooled estimates suggest 30–40% of ever-partnered women are affected [2]. Patriarchal norms remain prevalent, and access to social and legal protection systems is limited [6]. Cross-country differences further indicate that socioeconomic and cultural factors are important determinants of women's vulnerability to violence.

Recent analyses of Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data show that domestic violence is highly prevalent, with 12-month emotional (22.97%), physical (16.62%) and sexual (6.16%) violence among women of reproductive age in Sub-Saharan Africa [7]. Evidence from the region also links individual, household and community factors — education, wealth, employment and gender norms — to domestic violence [8]. However, most of these studies focus on women's individual characteristics and pay insufficient attention to intra-household power dynamics and the relative socioeconomic positioning of partners [9, 10, 11, 12].

Despite an existing policy and legal framework for the protection of women, domestic violence remains a major problem in Nigeria [13]. Nationally representative DHS data typically show that 30–36% of ever-married women have experienced some form of domestic violence during their lifetime [14]. Prior research has largely focused on single determinants of socioeconomic difference between partners — education, employment or wealth — with limited empirical attention to relative socioeconomic differences, which can be understood as a driving force of power dynamics within the household [15, 16]. This gap signals the need for more nuanced research into the implications of intra-household inequality for domestic violence in Nigeria.

Recent research continues to relate women's individual socioeconomic factors — education, employment and household wealth — to domestic violence risk, generally finding that low socioeconomic status is a risk factor and that higher education and economic empowerment are protective [17, 18] [19, 20, 21]. Yet growing evidence suggests that it is the relative socioeconomic status of partners, rather than women's status alone, that better explains domestic violence risk [22, 23]. Gender disparities in couples' education, income or employment can shift power dynamics and precipitate violence, particularly where traditional gender norms persist [24, 25, 26, 27]. Few studies, however, have applied this relational approach to nationally representative DHS data in Nigeria, leaving a limited understanding of how intra-household inequalities shape women's risk of domestic violence.

Theoretical framework

Relative Resource Theory holds that socioeconomic differences between partners — income, education and occupational status — shape the distribution of power and roles within households: the more resources a partner controls, the less likely they are to occupy an undesirable or subordinate role [28, 29, 30, 31, 32]. Empirical evidence indicates this relationship is not always linear; for example, women do not necessarily lose dominant status within the family when they out-earn their partners [31]. Applied to domestic violence, the theory suggests that partners' relative socioeconomic position shapes household power dynamics, and that violence can serve as a means of asserting power, particularly when traditional notions of male superiority feel threatened.

Connell's theory of gender and power emphasises three structures — the sexual division of labour, the sexual division of power, and cathexis (the social norms governing emotional and sexual relationships) — that together reinforce male dominance and women's subordinate social role, both normatively and institutionally [33, 34, 35]. Applied to domestic violence, this theory highlights how patriarchal socialisation legitimises male authority and control over women, positioning violence as a socially reinforced tool for securing power. Read alongside Relative Resource Theory, it suggests that women's socioeconomic advancement may not uniformly reduce violence, but can instead increase it where it shifts power in ways that challenge prevailing gender norms.

Objectives of the study

This study evaluated the socioeconomic correlates of domestic violence among married women in Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

1. estimate the prevalence and distribution of physical, emotional and sexual violence across socioeconomic characteristics (education, employment status and wealth index) among married women aged 15–49 years in Nigeria, using 2024 NDHS data;
2. describe the composition of domestic violence victims across socioeconomic characteristics among married women aged 15–49 years;

3. evaluate differences in domestic violence experience by married women's own education and employment status relative to their partners' education and employment status; and
4. examine the distribution of domestic violence by household socioeconomic and behavioural characteristics among married women aged 15–49 years.

The null hypothesis tested was: there is no correlation between socioeconomic characteristics and domestic violence among married women in Nigeria.

Methods

Study design and data source

A cross-sectional analytical design was applied to secondary data from the 2024 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), a nationally representative survey providing standardised data on population health, including domestic violence. The study population comprised ever-married women aged 15–49 years who completed the domestic violence module. Respondents were retained only where complete information was available on all study variables.

The NDHS used a two-stage stratified cluster sampling design: enumeration areas were selected with probability proportional to size, and households within selected enumeration areas were then systematically sampled to ensure national representativeness. All analyses accounted for sampling weights and the complex survey design.

Outcome and explanatory variables

The outcome variable, domestic violence, was a composite binary variable capturing women's lifetime experience of physical, emotional or sexual violence, drawn from the DHS domestic violence module. Domestic violence was coded as present if a respondent answered 'yes' to one or more items in the physical (d105a–d105j), emotional (d103a–d103e) or sexual (d105k–d105m) violence domains. The primary explanatory variables were indicators of relative socioeconomic position within the household, namely relative education, employment and wealth positioning of women and their partners.

Statistical analysis

Analyses were conducted in Stata using survey commands to account for the complex sampling design. Descriptive statistics (weighted frequencies and percentages) summarised the distribution of study variables. Bivariate associations between independent variables and domestic violence were assessed using chi-square tests. Multivariable binary logistic regression was used to examine associations between relative socioeconomic status and domestic violence across three models: an unadjusted model; a model adjusted for key sociodemographic variables (age, residence, region, religion); and a fully adjusted model that additionally included media exposure, women's decision-making autonomy,

husband's alcohol consumption, marital duration and number of living children, based on variables reported in the literature. Results are presented as odds ratios (ORs) or adjusted odds ratios (AORs) with 95% confidence intervals (CIs); $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

NDHS data are publicly available in de-identified form. Informed consent was obtained from participants during the original data collection, and ethical clearance for the survey, including the domestic violence module, was obtained by the DHS Program.

Results

This section presents findings from the 2024 NDHS on the extent, distribution and correlates of domestic violence among married women aged 15–49 years in Nigeria. Descriptive and bivariate results are presented first, followed by the multivariable logistic regression models identifying factors independently associated with domestic violence after adjustment for potential confounders.

Prevalence of domestic violence by type

Table 1 Prevalence of types of domestic violence among married women aged 15–49 years in Nigeria (NDHS 2024, survey-weighted)			
Type of domestic violence	No (%)	Yes (%)	95% CI (Yes)
Emotional violence	82.2	17.8	16.97–18.63
Physical violence	88.0	12.0	11.36–12.67
Sexual violence	96.6	3.4	3.03–3.72

Physical violence combines less severe and severe forms. Percentages are survey-weighted.

Table 1 and Fig. 1 shows the prevalence of the types of domestic violence among married women aged 15–49 years in Nigeria. Emotional violence was the most common form, reported by 17.8% of women (95% CI: 17.0–18.6), followed by physical violence at 12.0% (95% CI: 11.4–12.7). Sexual violence was least commonly reported, at 3.4% (95% CI: 3.0–3.7). Non-physical violence, particularly emotional violence, was therefore more common than physical or sexual violence, underscoring the need to address psychological abuse alongside physical abuse in domestic violence programming.

Table 2
Overall prevalence of domestic violence among married women
aged 15–49 years in Nigeria, by sociodemographic characteristic
(NDHS 2024)

Variable	Category	No DV (%)	Yes DV (%)
Overall prevalence	Total	77.85	22.15
Age group	15–24	81.89	18.11
	25–34	76.34	23.66
	35–49	77.23	22.77
Education	None	81.06	18.94
	Primary	72.75	27.25
	Secondary	73.82	26.18
	Higher	81.99	18.00
Wealth index	Poorest	79.45	20.55
	Poorer	77.47	22.53
	Middle	76.10	23.90
	Richer	76.47	23.53
	Richest	79.64	20.36
Residence	Urban	78.03	21.97
	Rural	77.73	22.27
Region	North Central	79.88	20.12
	North East	83.58	16.42
	North West	75.93	24.07
	South East	67.82	32.18
	South South	66.21	33.79
	South West	81.22	18.78
Ethnicity	Hausa	80.76	19.24
	Yoruba	71.53	28.47
	Igbo	86.47	13.53
	Others	75.36	24.64
Religion	Christian	70.30	29.70

Variable	Category	No DV (%)	Yes DV (%)
	Islam	82.10	17.90
	Traditionalist	70.20	29.80

Table 2 shows the overall prevalence of domestic violence among married women aged 15–49 years in Nigeria, by sociodemographic characteristic (NDHS 2024). As shown in the table, 22.15% of ever-married women aged 15–49 years had experienced domestic violence, while 77.85% had never experienced it. Prevalence followed a non-linear pattern by education: women with primary (27.2%) and secondary education (26.2%) reported the highest prevalence, while those with no education (18.9%) and higher education (18.0%) reported the lowest, suggesting intermediate education is associated with the greatest risk. Prevalence rose slightly with age, from 18.1% among women aged 15–24 years to 23.7% and 22.8% among those aged 25–34 and 35–49 years respectively, though the differences were modest. Prevalence varied only weakly across wealth quintiles, ranging from 20.4% among the richest to 23.9% in the middle quintile. Regional variation was substantial: prevalence was highest in the South South (33.8%) and South East (32.2%) and lowest in the North East (16.4%) and South West (18.8%). Rural (22.3%) and urban (22.0%) prevalence were similar. By ethnicity, prevalence was highest among Yoruba women (28.5%) and lowest among Igbo women (13.5%), suggesting that ethnic and sociocultural norms may shape both experience and reporting of violence. By religion, prevalence was lowest among Muslim women (17.9%) and higher among Christian (29.7%) and Traditionalist (29.8%) women, although the confidence interval for Traditionalist religion was wide, reflecting a smaller subsample; these differences may partly reflect reporting practices or other sociodemographic differences across religious groups.

Composition of domestic violence victims

Table 3
Composition of domestic violence victims by
sociodemographic characteristic (weighted %, among women who experienced domestic violence; NDHS 2024)

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Age group	15–24	17.07
	25–34	41.68
	35–49	41.25
Education	None	37.46
	Primary	15.24
	Secondary	37.39
	Higher	9.91
Wealth index	Poorest	19.30
	Poorer	21.37
	Middle	21.30
	Richer	19.77
	Richest	18.27
Region	North Central	32.36
	North East	12.16
	North West	19.91
	South East	10.25
	South South	13.82
	South West	11.50
Residence	Urban	41.67
	Rural	58.33
Ethnicity	Hausa	31.18
	Yoruba	12.32
	Igbo	5.07
	Others	51.44
Religion	Christian	47.90

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
	Islam	51.50
	Traditionalist	0.60

Table 3 shows the distribution of victims (rather than prevalence) across sociodemographic categories. Victims were concentrated among women aged 25–34 (41.68%) and 35–49 years (41.25%). By education, victims were concentrated among women with no education (37.46%) and secondary education (37.39%), with fewer among women with higher education (9.91%), indicating that women with low-to-moderate education are over-represented among victims. The distribution across wealth quintiles was fairly even. Regionally, the largest shares of victims were in the North Central (32.36%) and North West (19.91%). More victims resided in rural areas (58.33%) than urban areas (41.67%). By religion, the largest shares of victims were Muslim (51.5%) and Christian (47.9%) women, reflecting in part the larger share of Muslim women in the sample; these figures describe composition, not risk, and should not be interpreted as prevalence.

Domestic violence and spousal socioeconomic differences

Table 4

Prevalence of domestic violence by spousal socioeconomic differences among married women aged 15–49 years (NDHS 2024, survey-weighted)

Variable	Category	No DV (%)	Yes DV (%)
Education difference	Wife < husband	75.05	24.95
	Same level	78.37	21.63
	Wife > husband	77.66	22.34
Employment difference	Wife < husband	78.39	21.61
	Same level	80.79	19.21
	Wife > husband	80.40	19.60

Table 4 presented the prevalence of domestic violence by spousal socioeconomic differences among married women aged 15–49 years. As revealed in the table, women who were less educated than their husbands reported the highest prevalence of domestic violence (24.95%), compared with 21.63% among women with the same education level as their husbands and 22.34% among more educated women, suggesting that an education gap — particularly a husband's educational advantage — may elevate risk. A similar pattern was observed for employment: women with lower labour-force status than their husbands reported higher prevalence (21.61%) than women with equal (19.21%) or higher (19.60%) status, consistent with a link between economic dependency and domestic violence risk.

Household socioeconomic and behavioural characteristics

Table 5
Household socioeconomic conditions and behavioural characteristics and domestic violence among married women in Nigeria (NDHS 2024)

Variable	Category	No DV (%)	Yes DV (%)
Wealth index	Poorest	79.45	20.55
	Poorer	77.47	22.53
	Middle	76.10	23.90
	Richer	76.47	23.53
	Richest	79.64	20.36
Media exposure	No exposure	78.73	21.27
	Exposed	76.59	23.41
Decision-making autonomy	Low autonomy	79.05	20.95
	Moderate autonomy	66.95	33.05
Husband's alcohol consumption	No	81.84	18.16
	Yes	54.84	45.16

Table 5 presented the household socioeconomic condition and behavioural characteristics and domestic violence among married women in Nigeria. As shown in the table, domestic violence prevalence varied only weakly and non-linearly with household wealth. Women exposed to media reported slightly higher prevalence (23.4%) than those with no exposure (21.3%), possibly reflecting greater awareness or willingness to report violence among women with more information access. Prevalence was notably higher among women with moderate decision-making autonomy (33.1%) than those with low autonomy (20.9%), suggesting that greater negotiating power within the household does not straightforwardly translate into lower exposure to violence. The strongest association observed descriptively was with husbands' alcohol consumption: prevalence was 45.2% among women whose husbands drank alcohol, compared with 18.2% among those whose husbands did not, identifying alcohol consumption as a salient risk factor.

Multivariable analysis

Table 6
Survey-weighted multivariable logistic regression of domestic violence among
married women, adjusted model (NDHS 2024)

Variable	Category	AOR	95% CI	p-value
Age group	25–34	0.94	0.65–1.35	0.734
	35–49	0.87	0.59–1.30	0.500
Education	Primary	1.44	0.95–2.18	0.087
	Secondary	1.42	0.95–2.13	0.088
	Higher	1.25	0.79–1.97	0.341
Wealth index	Poorer	0.85	0.49–1.48	0.572
	Middle	0.88	0.54–1.44	0.603
	Richer	0.81	0.48–1.35	0.413
	Richest	0.63	0.37–1.09	0.098
Residence	Rural	0.86	0.67–1.10	0.217
Region	North East	0.68	0.42–1.09	0.108
	North West	1.02	0.65–1.59	0.939
	South East	1.55	0.76–3.14	0.227
	South South	1.03	0.63–1.68	0.918
	South West	0.82	0.49–1.37	0.443
Religion	Islam	0.80	0.56–1.13	0.196
	Traditional	0.95	0.15–6.23	0.958
Ethnicity	Yoruba	0.46	0.22–0.95	0.037
	Igbo	1.08	0.67–1.76	0.749
	Others	0.99	0.64–1.53	0.948
Parity	2–3 children	1.59	1.15–2.18	0.005
	4–5 children	1.69	1.14–2.50	0.009
	6 + children	1.84	1.20–2.81	0.005
Media exposure	Exposed	1.11	0.89–1.38	0.339
Employment	Employed	0.57	0.40–0.81	0.002
Education difference	Same level	0.83	0.59–1.17	0.285

Variable	Category	AOR	95% CI	p-value
	Wife > husband	0.85	0.57–1.26	0.423
Employment difference	Same level	0.91	0.61–1.38	0.669
	Wife > husband	0.66	0.34–1.27	0.208
Husband's alcohol use	Yes	3.55	2.73–4.62	< 0.001
Decision-making	Moderate autonomy	1.43	1.09–1.86	0.009

Table 6 presents the fully adjusted multivariable logistic regression model. Age, education, wealth index, residence, region and religion were not significantly associated with domestic violence after adjustment, although women in the richest households showed a borderline reduction in odds. Ethnicity remained significant: Yoruba women had significantly lower odds of domestic violence than Hausa women (AOR = 0.46, 95% CI: 0.22–0.95). Parity showed a consistent, graded positive association, with odds rising from 1.59 among women with 2–3 children to 1.84 among women with six or more children, relative to women with fewer children. Employment was strongly protective (AOR = 0.57, 95% CI: 0.40–0.81), consistent with a role for women's economic empowerment in reducing vulnerability. Media exposure was not significant after adjustment. Spousal differences in education and employment were not statistically significant predictors in the adjusted model. Moderate decision-making autonomy was associated with significantly higher odds of domestic violence (AOR = 1.43, 95% CI: 1.09–1.86), pointing to the continued relevance of intra-household power dynamics. The strongest predictor was husband's alcohol consumption, associated with more than a three-fold increase in the odds of domestic violence (AOR = 3.55, 95% CI: 2.73–4.62, $p < 0.001$).

These findings are based on cross-sectional data and do not establish causal relationships. Some measures were derived from self-reported data and may be subject to unmeasured influences or limitations.

Discussion

This study found that one in five ever-married women aged 15–49 years in Nigeria (22.15%) had experienced at least one form of domestic violence. Although lower than the 30–36% range reported in earlier Nigerian estimates [14], this remains a substantial burden and confirms domestic violence as a continuing public health priority. The prevalence was also somewhat lower than global estimates suggesting that roughly one-third of women experience IPV [1, 2, 3], a gap that may reflect differences in measurement, underreporting linked to stigma, or genuine contextual variation [4]. Consistent with prior work, emotional violence was the most prevalent form, followed by physical and then sexual violence, confirming that non-physical violence is often the most common yet least recognised form of abuse.

The descriptive, non-linear relationship between education and domestic violence – with the lowest prevalence among the most educated women – corroborates the protective role of education reported

elsewhere [19, 20, 21], though its non-significance in the adjusted model aligns with evidence that education's effects may operate indirectly through other socioeconomic and contextual pathways [12]. The modest, non-significant association between age and domestic violence found here is consistent with some prior studies [10, 11] but contrasts with others reporting stronger age-related vulnerability [5, 7].

Wealth showed only a weak, non-linear association with domestic violence, partially supporting evidence that economic transition can reshape family structures in ways that do not map neatly onto risk [24, 26], while diverging from studies reporting a linear inverse relationship between wealth and violence [8, 21]. Regional differences were substantial descriptively but not significant after adjustment, echoing the emphasis placed elsewhere on contextual and cultural variation [5, 6]. Ethnicity, however, remained an independent predictor, with Yoruba women at significantly lower risk than Hausa women, consistent with the emphasis on cultural norms and social structure found elsewhere [6, 25], though not universally supported [15]. Descriptive religious differences — lower prevalence among Muslim women — did not persist after adjustment, suggesting these patterns may be confounded by other sociodemographic factors.

Employment was protective against domestic violence, corroborating evidence that women's economic empowerment reduces vulnerability [19, 20, 21], though this diverges from arguments that employment can heighten risk where it challenges prevailing gender roles [12]. The strong, consistent association between husbands' alcohol consumption and domestic violence is well supported in the wider literature [5, 7, 27]. Parity was also a robust risk factor, with each additional child associated with higher odds of violence, consistent with prior findings [7], although the literature on this association remains mixed. Spousal differences in education, employment, media exposure and religion were not significant predictors after adjustment, which contrasts with several studies emphasising relational/relative socioeconomic status as a driver of violence [22, 23, 24, 25] but is consistent with work suggesting individual and behavioural factors carry more weight once confounders are controlled [15, 16]. Taken together, these results indicate that domestic violence in Nigeria is a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by both structural and behavioural determinants.

Theoretical implications

These findings can be interpreted through Relative Resource Theory and Gender and Power Theory. The non-linear relationship between education and violence, together with the weak association with household wealth, partially supports Relative Resource Theory [28, 29, 30, 31, 32], which holds that access to resources such as education and employment shapes bargaining power within the household; the protective effect of women's employment reinforces this interpretation. However, the non-significance of spousal differences in wealth, education and socioeconomic status after adjustment suggests that Relative Resource Theory alone cannot fully account for domestic violence in this context. Gender and Power Theory [33, 34, 35] offers a fuller explanation: the outsized role of husbands' alcohol use, the graded risk associated with higher parity, and the persistence of ethnic differences all point to

entrenched patriarchal norms and unequal power relations. The elevated risk among women with moderate decision-making autonomy further suggests that shifting intra-household power dynamics can, in some circumstances, increase rather than reduce exposure to violence. That domestic violence occurred across all socioeconomic strata reinforces that it is fundamentally a structural, not merely an economic, problem — women's economic empowerment matters, but is insufficient on its own without addressing the social and cultural norms and gendered power relations that underlie domestic violence in Nigerian society.

Implications for policy, programming and research

The findings carry three broad implications. First, because domestic violence affects women across social, demographic and socioeconomic groups, universal rather than narrowly targeted policy responses are warranted, with particular attention to relational risk factors such as spousal educational gaps and shifting gender roles. Second, the significance of the education gap between spouses and the complex relationship between women's economic empowerment and violence risk point to the need for gender-transformative programmes that address intra-household power dynamics directly, rather than economic empowerment alone. Third, given the comparatively limited explanatory power of traditional socioeconomic factors in the adjusted model, further research is needed on structural and cultural drivers — entrenched gender norms, male behaviours and power imbalances within intimate relationships — to build a fuller picture of the determinants of domestic violence in Nigeria.

Strengths and limitations

This study drew on a nationally representative sample, applied appropriate survey weighting and a complex-sampling-aware analytic approach, and moved beyond individual socioeconomic status to examine relative and household-level socioeconomic and behavioural correlates of domestic violence. Three limitations should be noted. First, the cross-sectional design of the 2024 NDHS precludes causal inference between socioeconomic factors and domestic violence. Second, domestic violence was self-reported, raising the possibility of underreporting due to stigma, fear or social desirability bias. Third, the analysis was constrained to variables available in the NDHS; community-level factors and some partner behaviours and cultural norms that may be relevant to domestic violence risk could not be captured.

Conclusions

Domestic violence against married women remains a serious public health problem in Nigeria, with one in five women affected and emotional violence the most common form. Behavioural and relational factors — particularly husbands' alcohol consumption, parity, women's employment status and household decision-making autonomy — had a greater influence on risk than basic socioeconomic status alone. Because domestic violence cuts across socioeconomic groups, effective interventions will need to combine alcohol-policy enforcement, women's economic empowerment, gender-norm transformation, and integration of domestic violence prevention into reproductive and maternal health services, underpinned by stronger legal enforcement and support systems. Longitudinal studies are

recommended to clarify the causal pathways linking socioeconomic inequality, household power dynamics and domestic violence in Nigeria.

Abbreviations

AOR: Adjusted odds ratio

CI: Confidence interval

DHS: Demographic and Health Survey

DV: Domestic violence

IPV: Intimate partner violence

LMIC: Low- and middle-income country

NDHS: Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey

OR: Odds ratio

SDG: Sustainable Development Goal

WHO: World Health Organization

WRA: Women of reproductive age

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

This study is based on secondary analysis of publicly available, de-identified data from the 2024 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS). The survey implementers (National Population Commission, Nigeria, and ICF International) obtained ethical clearance and participant consent for the original survey, including the domestic violence module, in line with WHO ethical and safety guidelines for research on domestic violence. This secondary analysis did not require separate institutional ethical approval. Access to the dataset was granted following registration and an approved data request through the DHS Program data request system.

Consent for publication

Not applicable. This manuscript does not contain any individual person's data, images or videos.

Availability of data and materials

The 2024 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) dataset analysed in this study is publicly available from the DHS Program (<https://dhsprogram.com>) following registration and submission of a data request describing the intended use.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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Authors' contributions

SAO conceived and designed the study, undertook data analysis and coordination, and drafted the manuscript. SOB contributed to study design and coordination and critically reviewed the manuscript for intellectual content. MTA contributed to study development and coordination and revised the manuscript. PTI contributed to study design and coordination and was actively involved in data collection and data analysis. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Authors' information

Not applicable.

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Figures

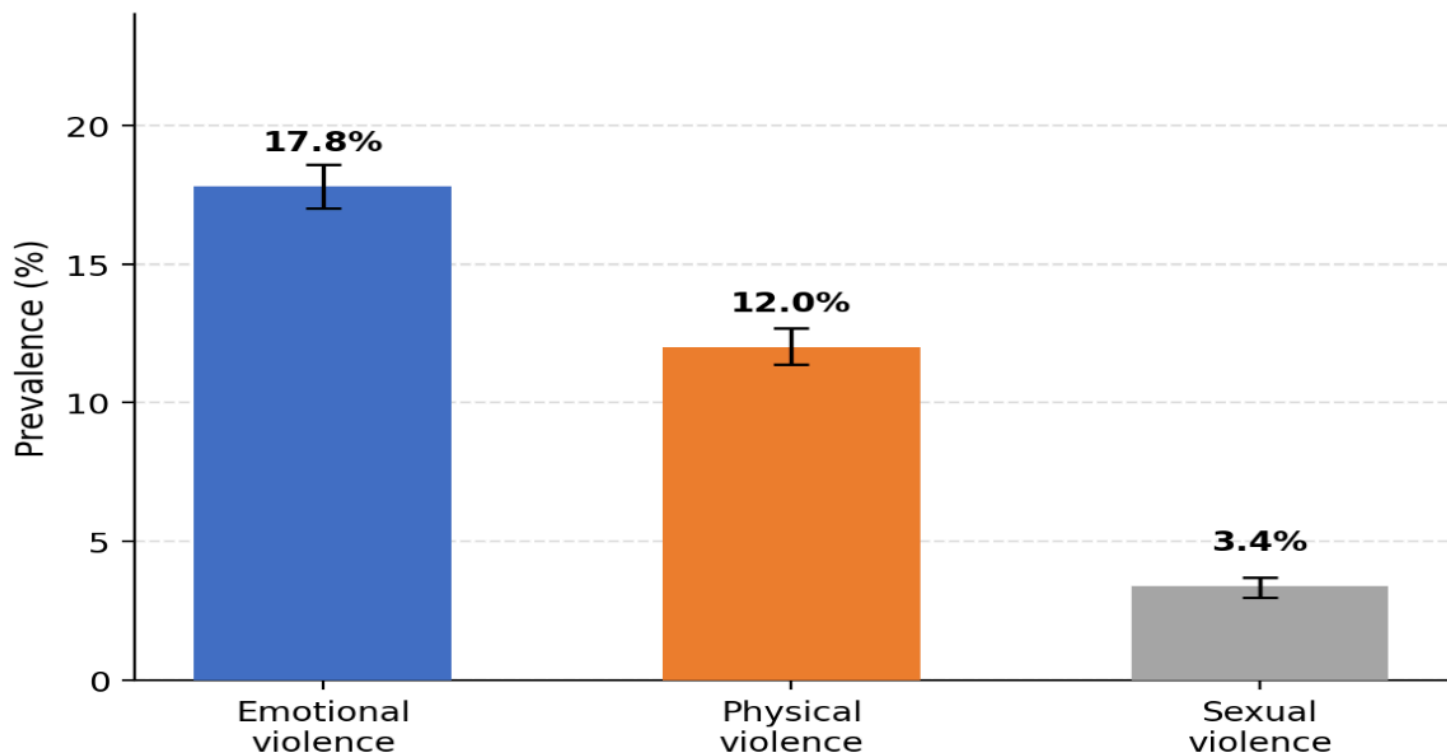


Figure 1

Prevalence of types of domestic violence among married women aged 15–49 years in Nigeria, with 95% confidence intervals (NDHS 2024)