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## **Do Women's Education and Economic Empowerment Reduce Gender-based Violence in Nigeria?**

By Adaobiagu Nnemdi Obiagu<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

Women's education and economic empowerment are key measures to promoting gender equality and reducing gender-based violence (GBV) against women, which is one of the indicators of gender equality. Whereas women's education has been shown to positively impact child's health, women's fertility, and women's participation in civic life and paid jobs, evidence on the relationship between women's education, economic empowerment, and women's exposure to GBV is not sufficiently established. Mapping this relationship is important for informing effective gender policies and practices. Hence, this study used the Nigeria demographic and health survey data of 2008, 2013, and 2018 to investigate the direction of the relationship between women's education, economic empowerment, and exposure to intimate partner or domestic GBV. Feminist and empowerment theories, which this study is anchored in, presuppose that education and economic empowerment could lead to freedom from violence. Findings have demonstrated that women's education and economic empowerment are not sufficient for protecting women against GBV, especially domestic violence. Women's education and economic empowerment do not directly reduce women's GBV victimization. Nigerian women who are unemployed, have little to no education, and lower income experienced the least domestic GBV victimization while women who are more educated than their husbands experienced higher incidence of domestic violence in the years studied within Nigeria. The findings were influenced by patriarchy, culture, religion, media, and the "hidden curriculum" in schools. The study recommends gender education intervention programs that challenge social norms and empower men and women to have equalized power relations from a young age.

*Keywords:* Education, Gender-based violence, Domestic violence, Feminism, Patriarchy, Economic empowerment, Sociocultural factors

### **Introduction**

Gender-based violence (GBV), especially violence against women, is a public health and human rights issue that is motivated by gendered power imbalances. It can be institutional (perpetrated by government institutions, security agencies, laws, and schools) or non-institutional (perpetrated by individuals in both domestic and non-domestic realms) and can happen to any gender, but women are the most common victims. Forms of GBV against women include institutional, physical, emotional, and sexual violence. The most common and severe forms of violence against women include domestic violence, intimate partner violence, sexual abuse, trafficking, forced prostitution, exploitation of labor, and rape in war (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). Factors that are associated with GBV in sub-Saharan Africa include culture and laws that promote and condone male domination of women, male alcoholism, conceptions of insubordinate female

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partners, perceptions justifying of partner's violence, and all-female children in a family (Nwabunike & Tenkorang, 2017; Obi & Ozumba, 2007). Factors that protect women from GBV in sub-Saharan Africa have been identified as having male offspring, women's education, and women's economic empowerment (Aguocha et al., 2017; Obi & Ozumba, 2007). As Garcia-Morene et al. (2014) conclude, "Violence against women is a barrier to their equal participation in society and affects overall social and economic development."

Many intervention programs have aimed to reduce gender inequality that undergirds GBV. These efforts include increasing girl-child enrollment in school, "skill building and economic empowerment programming, community mobilization, and participation group education efforts aiming to change attitudes and norms that support violence against women and girls" (Ellsberg et al., 2015). Girl-child education is, however, the most popularly advocated measure for combating poverty, infant mortality, gender inequality, and GBV, especially domestic violence. Following increased implementation of the girl-child education agenda, literature in Gender Studies has mapped the relationship between women's education and other factors such as infant health, participation in labor, and exposure to GBV.

While there is robust evidence supporting a positive relationship between girl-child education and fertility, infant health (Currie & Moretti, 2002; Pratley, 2016), women's participation in a paid job (Bianchi, 2000; Klasen & Lamanna, 2009) and the creation of human capital of the next generation (Hill & King, 1995; Klasen & Lamanna, 2009), findings on the relationship between women's education and gender-based violence are inconsistent (Aguocha et al., 2017; Anita & Ravindra, 2020; Chisamya et al., 2012; Ellsberg et al., 2015; Obi & Ozumba, 2007). Existing studies in various contexts show contradictory results suggesting that women's economic empowerment can either decrease or increase GBV against women (Anena & Ibrahim, 2020; Dalal, 2011; Hughes et al., 2015). Also, 82.3% of the sampled population in Nigeria believe that women's economic dependence on men is among the causes of domestic violence in Nigeria (Igbolekwu et al., 2021). The reality of this belief needs to be empirically examined.

Further research on the relationship between women's education, economic empowerment, and exposure to GBV is necessary in the Nigerian context where little is known about it. The present study contributes knowledge on this question by drawing on the 2008, 2013, and 2018 Nigeria demographic and health surveys (National Population Commission (NPC), 2009, 2014, 2019) to investigate the relationship between women's education or economic empowerment and women's exposure to GBV in Nigeria. Women's education includes attainment of basic formal education while women's economic empowerment is defined by access to employment and wealth. The GBV covered in this study is intimate partner violence—simply defined as violence (sexual, economic, verbal, physical or emotional) inflicted or perpetrated by someone against his or her intimate partner within or outside a household—with a particular focus on violence against women. The findings of the study address patriarchal, sociocultural, religious, media, and curriculum perspectives and aim to inform gender policy and practical reforms.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Feminist and empowerment theories provide important frameworks for better understanding the relationship between women's education and economic empowerment and women's exposure to GBV. Feminist theory assumes that power imbalance and existing inequalities between men and women are a result of institutionalized patriarchal structures that limit women's agency and voice (Lerner, 1986; Turner & Maschi, 2015). Feminism posits that women should have equal access to power and resources (Turner & Maschi, 2015). The

overarching aim of feminism is to eliminate the patriarchy through liberating women by closing the gaps created by gender inequality. Eliminating patriarchal structures could lead to the reduction or elimination of GBV in the long-run. Women's education and economic empowerment are the dominant approaches emphasized by the feminist movement for tackling the problem of gender-based violence. Empowering women "is central to realizing women's rights and gender equality" (UN Women, 2018).

Empowerment theory notes that increasing (a) an individual's possession of control over their lives and (b) their participation in solving problems and making decisions that impact their lives, community, and functioning promotes efficiency, egalitarianism, development, and social change (Carr, 2003; Kieffer, 1984; Maton & Salem, 1995; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman, 2000). Following this assumption, women's economic empowerment includes promoting women's equal access to existing markets, productive resources, and decent work. With increased participation and agency in economic decision-making at all levels women have more control over their time, resources, and lives (UN Women, 2018). And women's "education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process" (UNFPA, 1994).

Feminist and empowerment theories presuppose that women who are educated, work, and earn income are less likely to experience oppression, domination, and domestic violence since they have attained some level of equality with men through their economic independence. Some studies have investigated this presupposition in various countries while the present study focused on the Nigerian context.

## Literature Review

Gender-based violence against women is prevalent across the globe as 30% of women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence from their intimate partners (Garcia-Morene et al., 2013; WHO, 2005, 2021) with the worst scenarios in Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (Garcia-Morene et al., 2013; Kanga et al., 2017; Orpin et al., 2020; WHO, 2005, 2021). Gender-based violence against women is high in Nigeria as 31% of women aged 15 and above have experienced intimate violence in the country (NPC, 2019). This may be because Nigerians endorse intimate partner violence and blame women victims (Fakunmoju et al., 2015). Also, the high rate of GBV against women seems to be connected to women's poor education and lack of economic independence.

Literature on the protective capacity of women's education and economic empowerment to limit women's exposure to intimate partner violence revealed an inconsistent result. In Nigeria, Obi and Ozumba's (2007) small scale study showed that being educated did not protect women from domestic violence but instead threatened men's traditional power. Studies in Bangladesh, Malawi, and India showed that girls' education did not lead to better gender relations and equity for women in these countries (Chimsanya et al., 2012; Anita and Ravindra, 2020). Erten and Kestin (2018), showed that increase in women's education was associated with increase in psychological violence and financial control behavior, without changes in physical violence in Turkey. Other studies showed that women's attainment of higher education reduced their exposure to GBV (Aguocha et al., 2017; Garcia-Morene et al., 2013).

A popular belief is that women who are economically independent from their spouses have a reduced risk of GBV. Many people in Nigeria share this belief that women's economic empowerment will protect them from domestic violence (Igbolekwu et al., 2021). In Uganda, women who were economically dependent on their husbands shared a similar belief (Anena &

Ibrahim, 2020). However, existing studies exploring this relationship show contradictory results. Dalal (2011) study in the Indian context showed that economic empowerment did not protect women from intimate partner violence (IPV) and that although working women were more likely to seek help, IPV was higher among working women than non-working women. A study in Kenya similarly found that women's economic empowerment did not reduce gender-based violence (Bannister & Moyi, 2019). In Uganda, it instead increased women's exposure to GBV where additional forms of violence were reported by economically independent women, such as women's spouses fighting to control women's economic advancement and neglecting to provide for the household as a strategy of controlling women's income (Anena & Ibrahim, 2020). Some other studies in Bangladesh, South Africa, and Latin America indicated that women's economic empowerment via increasing women's access to microfinancing and employment outside the home reduced their risk of domestic violence (Hughes et al., 2015). Slegh and colleagues (2013) suggest that engaging men in women's economic empowerment programs could reduce women's risk of GBV. If gender equality goals are to be realized, more studies are needed to clear the contradictions in existing studies on how women's education and economic empowerment impact gender-based violence against women in varying contexts. This study is much needed in the Nigerian context where little information exists on the relationship between women's education, economic empowerment, and GBV against women.

### **Research Questions and Methods**

This study examines the relationship between women's education and economic empowerment and exposure to domestic violence in the Nigerian context using national cross-sectional data. Based on the theoretical framing of the study and the reviewed literature, I hypothesized that women's education and economic empowerment will reduce women's exposure to domestic violence. The study specifically sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Does women's education reduce women's exposure to domestic gender-based violence?
2. What is the relationship between women's economic empowerment and women's exposure to domestic gender-based violence?

The design of this study was descriptive, drawing from quantitative national survey's secondary data to source various information from a cross section of never-married and ever-married women in Nigeria. This includes information on the level of women's education, economic empowerment, and exposure to GBV, particularly intimate partner (married or unmarried) violence in Nigeria. Specifically, the secondary data for this study was sourced and derived from 2008, 2013, and 2018 Nigeria demographic and health surveys (NDHS) (National Population Commission (NPC), 2009, 2014, 2019). Participants of the surveys included women aged 15-49 years. The total national representative sample was 21,468 in 2008, 27,634 in 2013, and 10,678 in 2018 (NPC, 2009, 2014, 2019; See Table 1 for participants' profiles). The surveys collected data from ever-married and never-married women on violence committed against them by their spouses, boyfriends, or other men from the age 15 up until the last 12 months before the study. Data on the education and economic empowerment level of ever-married women (and that of their spouses) exposed to domestic violence were also reported in the NDHS report and considered in answering the specific research questions of this study.

**Table 1: Participants' Demographic Information**

Variables	Categories	Number of Surveyed Women		
		2008	2013	2018
	Total	21,468	27,634	10,678
Education	No Education	8,033	10,479	3,660
	Primary Education	4,308	4,809	1,584
	Secondary Education	7,268	9,841	4,344
	Higher Education	1,858	2,505	1,090
Spousal education difference (includes only currently married women)	Husband better educated	5,756	7,271	2,880
	Wife better educated	2,271	2,763	970
	Both equally educated	2,667	3,520	1,670
	Neither spouse educated	5,692	7,369	2,155
	Don't know/Missing	377	272	171
Wealth quintile	Lowest	4,177	5,069	1,726
	Second	4,123	5,275	2,010
	Middle	4,075	5,301	2,160
	Fourth	4,361	5,683	2,324
	Highest	4,732	6,307	10,678
Employment in the past 12 months	Not Employed	7,726	10,038	3,206
	Employed for income	10,938	15,921	6,110
	Employed for no income	2,752	1,612	1,355
	Missing	52	–	–

The education variable was measured by asking participants their highest level of educational qualification while economic empowerment was measured by asking participants their employment and wealth status (NPC, 2009, 2014, 2019). Intimate partner physical violence was measured by whether women's husbands/partners have ever pushed them, twisted their arm, slapped them, pulled their hair, punched them with their fist or hurtful item, and/or dragged them. Sexual violence was measured by whether their husbands/partners have ever physically forced them to have sexual intercourse or perform any form of sexual act they did not consent to. Percentage scores for these components were provided in the surveys' reports. To get the total score of women's exposure to intimate partner or domestic GBV, the author summed and averaged the physical and sexual violence percentage scores for each reported year. Bar charts for this study were plotted from the NDHS data. The bar charts were used for drawing inferences on the relationship between women's education and economic empowerment and women's exposure to domestic GBV.

## Findings

### *Does Women's Education Reduce Women's Exposure to Gender-based Violence?*

This section presents findings on the relationship between women's education and women's exposure to GBV against women.

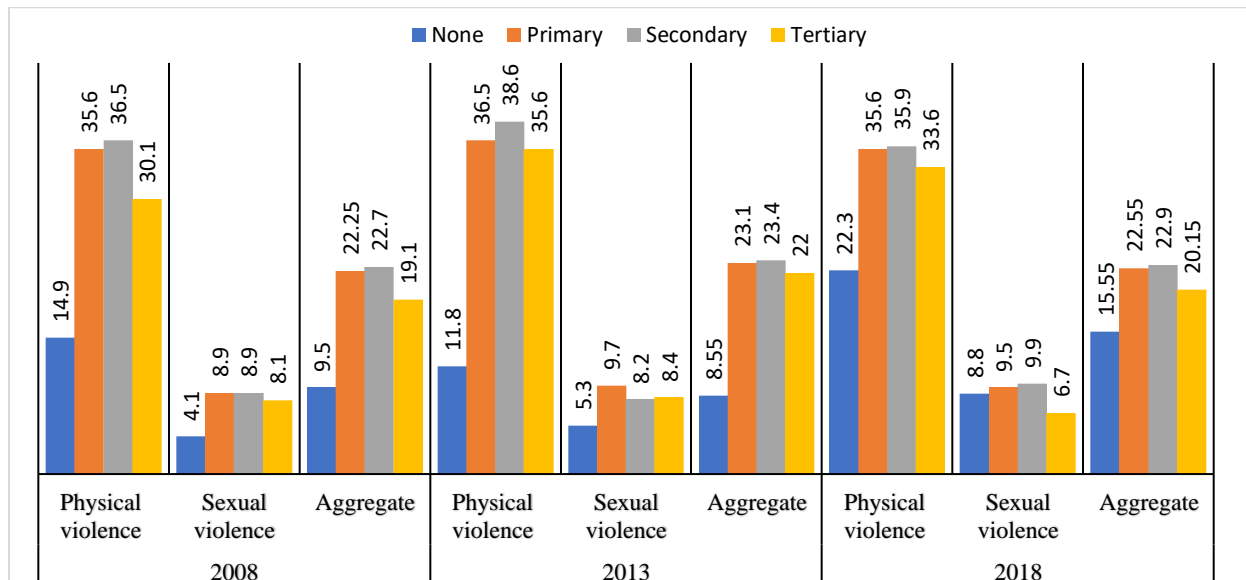
**Figure 1: Education Status of Women Victims of Domestic Violence**

Figure 1 shows that women with no education were the least exposed to physical, sexual, and aggregate (domestic gender-based) violence followed by women with higher education. Secondary education recipients experienced the highest direct exposure to all measured violence followed by women whose highest qualification was primary education. The difference in the percentage of domestic violence victimization was greatest between women who received no education and women who received education at any level. The difference between the domestic violence victimization percentage scores of secondary education and higher education holders was very small. This indicates a negative relationship between women's education and exposure to domestic GBV violence. In other words, women's education has little or no positive impact on the reduction of women's exposure to domestic gender-based violence in Nigeria.

**Figure 2: Women Victims Spousal Education Difference**

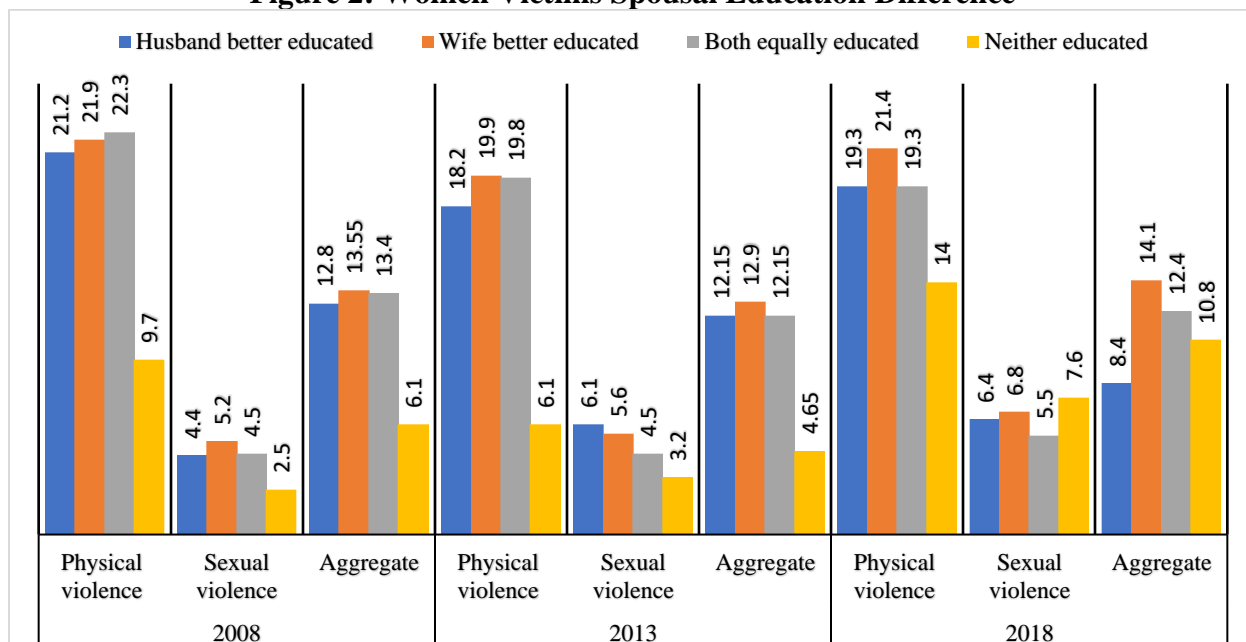


Figure 2 shows that women who are more educated than their husbands experienced more aggregate intimate partner GBV in all measured years. The chart further shows that women who are not educated and whose husbands are not educated reported the least exposure to domestic violence except in 2018 when they reported higher rates of sexual violence than women who are equally educated as their husbands. Women who are better educated than their partners consistently reported higher exposure to domestic violence than women whose husbands are better educated than they are. Although women whose partners are better educated than them encountered less sexual violence, they also reported experiencing high physical violence from their educated partner. This data suggests that mainstream education aids little in preventing men from committing violence against women. Overall, the result presented in the chart is retrogressive and indicative of a negative relationship between a spouse’s education and the perpetration of or exposure to domestic gender-based violence.

*What Is the Relationship between Women's Economic Empowerment and Women's Exposure to Gender-based Violence?*

Using the wealth or employment status of women reported by participants in the study as an indication of women's economic empowerment, this section reported findings on the relationship between women's economic empowerment and women’s exposure to domestic gender-based violence.



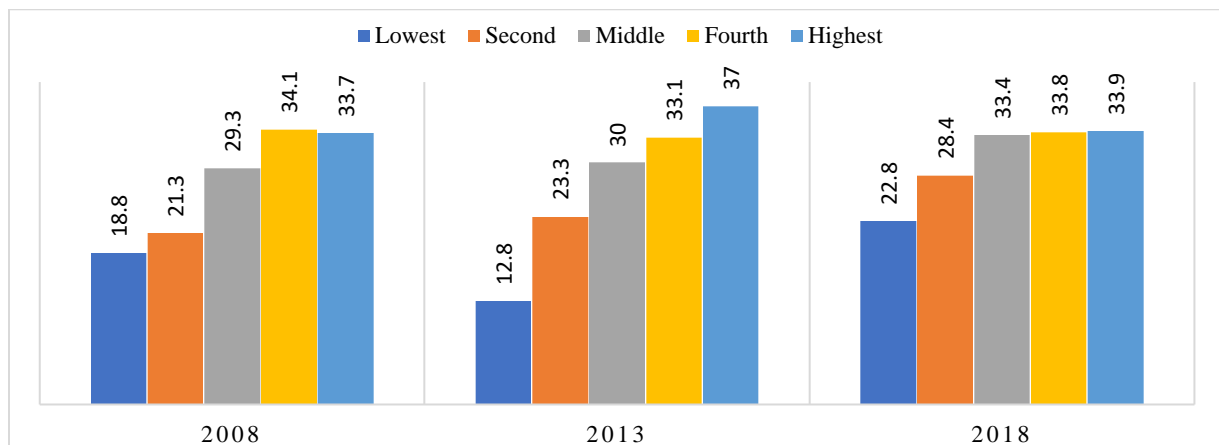
**Figure 3: Women's Exposure to Intimate Partner Physical Violence by Wealth Quintile**

Figure 3 shows that wealthier women in Nigeria consistently experienced greater intimate partner physical violence across all measured years than other women. That is, the wealthier a woman becomes the more likely she is to experience intimate partner physical violence. Women with the least wealth experienced the least intimate partner physical violence across all measured years. In other words, women's economic empowerment has little or no positive impact on the reduction of women's exposure to domestic gender-based violence. This finding violates the progressive order of development and suggests a negative relationship between women's economic empowerment and exposure to intimate violence. The subsequent section offers possible explanations for this finding.

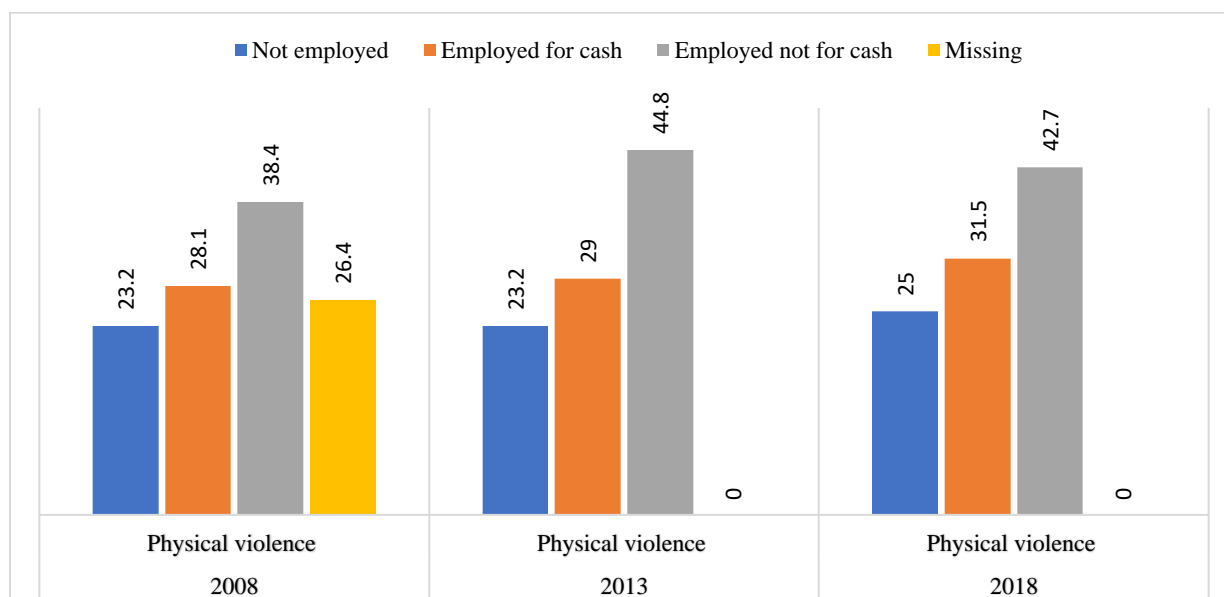
**Figure 4: Women's Exposure to Spousal Violence by Employment Status**

Figure 4 shows that unemployed women experienced the least spousal violence followed by women employed for cash while women employed without a cash income experienced the greatest spousal physical violence.

## Discussion

This study investigates the relationship between women's education and economic empowerment and women's exposure to domestic gender-based violence using data from Nigeria Demographic and Health Surveys. The earlier hypothesis that women's education and empowerment will reduce women's empowerment was not met. The result in the presented charts suggests that women's education and economic empowerment do not reduce the level of women's exposure to intimate partner or domestic GBV in Nigeria, but rather they exacerbate it. Contrary to the belief shared by many Nigerians that economic independence of women from men reduces domestic violence against women (Igbolekwu et al., 2021), the result of the NDHS study showed a negative relationship between women's education and economic empowerment and women's exposure to intimate partner or domestic GBV. This section compares this finding with the findings of previous literature on both interpersonal and institutional GBV and further discusses the finding from patriarchal, sociocultural, media, hidden curriculum, and religious perspectives.

This study echoes other studies that found that women with higher education reported higher exposure to intimate partner violence in southeast Nigeria (Aguocha et al., 2017; Obi & Ozumba, 2007). Chisamya and colleagues (2012) had similar findings, in Bangladesh and Malawi contexts, which showed that educated women did not experience transformation of the inequitable gender relations they face since gender-based violence is still high despite a high level of educational equality in these contexts. The finding that women's economic empowerment does not reduce their exposure to gender-based violence compares with the findings of similar studies in Uganda, Kenya, and India (Anena & Ibrahim, 2020; Bannister & Moyi, 2019; Dalal, 2011). In the Nigerian context, increased access to education and economic empowerment does not reduce women's vulnerability to intimate partner or domestic gender-based violence (i.e., greater women's domestic GBV victimization). Perhaps women's education does not protect women from gender violence because mainstream formal education does not emphasize self-protection against gender-based violence. Jewkes et al.'s 2008 study found that the exposure of women to intervention programs (e.g., training on gender equality, hegemonic masculinity topics, and women's economic empowerment) did not reduce women's vulnerability to intimate partner violence; however, engaging men in such programs was what reduced men's perpetration of intimate partner violence (Jewkes et al., 2008; Slegh et al., 2013). The education of girl-children and women's economic empowerment do not reduce domestic GBV without more actions such as gender norms reorientation and engagement of men in gender initiatives. The perspectives from which this finding is explained are individually discussed below.

### *Patriarchy and Sociocultural Factors as Explanatory Factors for Domestic GBV in Nigeria*

The finding of higher domestic gender-based violence against women with higher education and higher income could be associated with patriarchal beliefs and the fragile hegemonic identity of men who are threatened by women's enlightenment and empowerment in Nigeria. Of course, hegemonic masculinity stifles the agency and autonomy of women as educated women with agency are discriminated against and treated with hostility (Rudman & Glick, 2001). Patriarchy—an ideology and practice that assumes and treats men as superior to women—dictates roles and expectations for both men and women with the affairs of women subordinated and

controlled. In a patriarchal system, people associate women with characteristics such as being emotional, irrational, passionate, and therefore unable to apply standards of justice, whereas men are associated with rationality and an ability to apply dispassionate reason and standards of justice (Lister, 1997). Also, young men in patriarchal contexts believe that further education is not appropriate for women and that their role as men includes asserting authority over women (York, 2014). Obi and Ozumba (2007) further noted that high-class educated Nigerian wives would want to assert their rights in the family and this assertion of women's rights brings the traditional authority and dominance of the man into question leading to his frustration and use of violence to satisfy societal expectations of his dominance. These patriarchal dictates and beliefs documented in previous studies are a potential explanation for why wealthier and more educated women experience greater intimate partner or domestic violence in Nigeria.

Sociocultural factors contribute to the negative relationship between women's education and their exposure to GBV. As assumed by sociocultural theory propounded by Lev Vygotsky (1978), an individual's behavior and perceptions are influenced by contextual culture, institutions, and history. Higher gender-based violence reported by wealthier and more educated women in Nigeria can be explained by the sociocultural ascription of subordinate career roles to women. These roles and expectations are sometimes disrupted by women's access to higher education and wealth. A disruption like this could threaten vulnerable men's power and lead them to perpetrating violence against women as a way of asserting their expected control and power.

#### *Religion as a Factor behind Rising Domestic GBV*

Religious teaching, albeit biased teaching about women's and men's expectations and roles, is another factor promoting hegemonic masculinity and gender-based violence, especially domestic violence, against women in Nigeria. Male headship is central to Christian and Muslim teachings especially among Pentecostal Christians in the global south (Christian Aid, Voice4Change, & Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2015; van Klinken, 2011). In Nigeria, women and girls develop gendered ideas about their roles, expectations, and worth through religious indoctrination, and sometimes they understand their roles to include enduring domestic violence (Para-Mallam, 2006). Although there are instances where male headship has been approached from liberal and agency perspectives whereby men are encouraged to be responsible in their family life and avoid extramarital affairs (Christian Aid, Voice4Change, & Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2015; van Klinken, 2011), hegemonic masculinity is mostly promoted by popular Islam, Pentecostal churches, and other religions in Nigeria.

One factor exacerbating the situation is the radicalization of Nigerian young men and the fostering of hostility against educated and successful women by religious organizations (Islamic Boko Haram) that preach hegemonic masculinity. For example, many Pentecostal pastors with largest followership shares in Nigeria share teachings that the husband is the wife's master, present contemporary educated and economically empowered women in a bad light, and teach that women's behavior resulting from their enlightenment is the reason for men's misbehavior (Aworinde & Alagbe, 2019; Akinkuotu, 2020). This is in contrast with the Pentecostal pastor analyzed in van Klinken's study (2011) who held men responsible and accountable for their irresponsibility and misbehavior. The consequence of this Pentecostal preaching in Nigeria could be contributing to the rise in intimate partner violence against women, especially those who are educated and successful. This is also evident in a study conducted by Aguocha and colleagues (2017) which shows that Pentecostal educated Christian women reported greater experience of intimate partner violence than their orthodox Christian counterparts.

### *Hidden Curriculum Promoting Gender Stereotype as a Factor behind Rising GBV*

As Connell argues, “The hidden curriculum in sexual politics is more powerful than the explicit curriculum” (Connell, 1989, p. 300). Women's subjugation which is a common practice in Nigerian society is reinforced in Nigerian schools. Topics such as gender discrimination, inequality, and harmful traditions like widowhood practices and female genital mutilation are introduced into Nigerian primary and junior secondary social studies education curriculum (Obiagu & Nwaubani, 2020) as well as higher institution curricula. Even with the presence of these topics in the classroom, it has been shown that recommended textbooks used in Nigeria largely discriminate against women by associating women mainly with subordinate and gender stereotypical roles like homemaking and men with economically well-paid works (Mustapha, 2012). Teacher education programs in Nigeria give little attention to gender (ActionAid, 2013) and no attention to school-related gender-based violence (British Council & Institute of Education, 2014). Moreover, teaching in Nigeria is dominated by teacher-centered methods that do not challenge the status quo (Obiagu, 2019), and Nigerian teachers hold gender stereotypical views and reflect them in their teaching practices (Ifegbesan, 2010). The current education system impedes the realization of the aims, including to eliminate GBV, behind the introduction of gender-based topics in Nigerian schools. The introduced gender-related topics are insufficient to address the bifurcation of public and private spheres of lives along gender lines or the gendered ideology of space that enable GBV. This limited inclusion, presentation, and implementation of gender-related topics in Nigerian schools further explains the situation whereby educated Nigerians condone GBV and educated men still perpetrate intimate partner gender-based violence against women.

### *Media and Ignorance as Contributory Factors in Rising Domestic GBV*

The media is another major source promoting gender-based violence against educated and successful women in Nigeria. Media content often normalizes, banalizes, reinforces, and reproduces sexual assaults, rape, and other forms of gender violence and inequalities through various means including the commodification of women's bodies (Montiel, 2014). Educated and successful career women are often represented as disloyal to their husbands in Nigerian movies (Adewoye et al., 2014). This leads some men and women to close their minds to feminism, while putting pressure on educated women to prove their innocence to society. As shown by Connell (1989), men who engage in counter-sexist politics and adopt some feminist principles have almost all read feminist books. For men who have not moved towards feminism, mass media is seemingly their main source of information about gender issues. A recent study found that men in the southeast of Nigeria are ignorant of what constitutes gender-based violence but understood physical violence against women as a correctional measure (Agbawodikeizu et al., 2019). With increased ignorance and misinformation about feminism and women's empowerment, affected men become apprehensive of educated women and seek to assert control and perpetrate violence on educated women to prevent the scenarios depicted by the media from occurring in their homes. As argued elsewhere, “female liberation is widely perceived by some as western cultural imperialism,” and GBV against women is a subtle way of resisting women's liberation and empowerment in Nigeria (Para-Mallam, 2006, p. 409).

### **Conclusion: Gender Education Intervention Programs for Men and Women**

Gender equality educational policies and practices should consider the adoption and application of the following suggestions. There is a need for a gender education intervention program that will challenge the patriarchal ideals of some men who are threatened by women's

success and prevent the development of such beliefs in growing boys. The gender education intervention program for GBV reduction through education should focus more on training the boys and men to view girls and women not as subordinates but as people who should have equal rights and opportunities as them. Gender education interventions for men should further target reorienting men's understanding of control and power in their relationships with women. The program should also help men unlearn the idea that women are inferior and to learn to appreciate women's values. African *Ubuntu* philosophy which preaches love, care, humanism, respect, and inclusion should be drawn on to promote gender equality and respect for women as human beings. This approach is reliable given the findings of York (2014) and Jewkes et al. (2008), in the South African context, that gender-education intervention programs targeted at exposing men to training about masculinity, gender inequality, gender violence, and HIV/AIDS changed their hegemonic masculine worldviews, promoted their positive perception of women as independent beings, and reduced their perpetration of GBV.

More proactively, ideas about equal citizenship and human rights introduced into school subjects in Nigeria will be more effective at reducing gender-based violence if approached from a critical feminist stance that challenges patriarchal and sociocultural factors that subjugate women or oppress women or men. For example, citizenship lessons addressed from a feminist perspective would normally recognize the traditional bifurcation of the private and public spheres along gendered lines. Programs need to incorporate discussions that challenge this bifurcation in order to empower both men and women to unlearn systemic gender discrimination and encourage more women's representation and participation in the civic and public arena.

There is significant value in approaching this content from a feminist perspective since a study by Connell (1989) showed that men who read feminist books viewed women with more respect. Notably, the growing miseducation about gender equality and feminism sold through the media—especially social media by extremists and sociopathic individuals—increases the mistrust and hostility of men towards women in Nigeria. This calls for the adoption of an additional feminist approach to civic, human rights, and gender-related topics in Nigeria. This approach is important if the miseducation received through the media about gender equality and feminism, which contributes to growing gender-based violence, is to be tackled in Nigeria. In this digital age, failure to teach about feminism and gender equality in schools is dangerous as young people draw information about feminism from inaccurate people on social media.

It is not enough to empower women with educational qualifications and economic skills that increase their employability and economic wellbeing. More should be done to intentionally empower them to challenge and escape gender-based violence (especially domestic violence) and systemic discrimination against women. As shown in this study, education and wealth have failed to shield women from domestic gender-based violence, just as exposure of women to training on gender-based violence is shown to be ineffective in reducing their victimization (Jewkes et al., 2008). Gender scholars need to begin exploring better approaches to empowering women to be free from gender-based violence through understanding the obstacles and facilitating factors that contribute to GBV. Such obstacles include the African conception that family stability is in the best interest of the child, which leads to family stability being valued above women's safety and discourages women from seeking help (Rasool, 2016). A suggestion would be to adopt a gender-education intervention program for young women and girls which equips them with a worldview that disrupts their traditional perceptions of women as men's subordinate. It is also important to disrupt the troubling perception of women's traditional gender roles as including enduring domestic violence and to promote women's perception of self as men's equal partners from a

young age. This disruptive worldview is more likely to position them for both socioeconomic and mental independence as well as to deter them from partnering with men with hegemonic patriarchal attitudes. Their early development of independence and a critical feminist worldview will reduce their tendency of succumbing to social pressures that promote patriarchal dictates. Such hegemonic men are scared of going into intimate partnership with self-identifying feminists (Obiagu, 2021). Possessing a disruptive but *Ubuntu* worldview will reduce women's chances of partnering with men who violate their rights and perpetrate domestic gender-based violence against them. It is important that initiatives and programs aimed at promoting gender equality be mindful of these recommendations.

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