

## **MALE DOMINANCE AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN BENUE STATE NIGERIA**

**Terfa Matthew Ahingir<sup>1\*</sup> & Chijioke Chinwokwu Eke<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup>Department of Sociology, Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

\*terfraahingi@gmail.com

**ABSTRACT:** Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is a global issue with severe consequences on an individual's physical, mental, sexual and social well-being. Despite the fact that it affects individuals across races, religions, and social classes, it is often condoned in most societies. The continuous incidences of violence against women have affected their health and their ability to be productive in the family and community. This situation thrives due to socio-cultural norms that tolerate and entrench violence against women. The study examined how male dominance engendered intimate partner violence against women. Specifically, the study explored male control and household decision-making and IPV in Benue State, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design with a sample size of 660 was utilised. Data was collected through Structured Questionnaires and a Key Informant Interviews Guide. Quantitative data was processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23, and qualitative data was transcribed and thematically organised. The study found that male dominance influences intimate partner violence against women due to its entrenched patriarchal power imbalances, control and household decision-making. The study recommended that traditional leaders should lead the charge in transforming cultural beliefs such as male dominance that perpetuate inequality; by fostering a culture of mutual respect, collaborative decision-making and equal opportunities for all. Also, joint decision-making must be promoted by involving women in household decision-making processes

**Keywords:** Male Dominance, Decision Making, Control of Intimate Partners, Violence Against Women

### **INTRODUCTION**

Intimate partner violence refers to any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological, sexual and economic harm to those in the relationship. It commonly occurs against girls within child marriages and early/forced marriages. Among romantically involved but unmarried adolescents it is sometimes called "dating violence. That is to say, both genders could be victims of this intimate partner violence (Ahinkorah & Dickson, 2020). Such acts could be in the form of hitting, kicking and beating, sexual harassment, economic exploitation, verbal assault and emotional abuse, among others (Moorer, 2021). According to World Health Organization (2021), approximately 30% of women worldwide have experienced one form of violence or another from their intimate partners. The lifetime incidence of intimate partner violence among spouses ranges from 15% to 71%, with nearly one out of three women experiencing physical aggression, sexual abuse and emotional abuse globally (Mukorera, et al., 2022).

In Europe, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA, 2021) reports that more than 22% of women in EU have faced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner since the age of 15. In countries like Spain, Sweden, and Italy, around 12% of women indicated they had experienced severe forms of IPV, while Romania reported a concerning lifetime prevalence rate of IPV at 37% (FRA, 2021). This susceptibility to violence is compounded by factors such as entrenched machismo, social stigma, alcohol and substance abuse, economic dependence, mental health challenges, trauma from past experiences, and inadequate access to support services.

In South America, almost 29% of women have indicated that they have suffered some form of violence from their partners at some point in their lives, with socioeconomic factors and concepts of masculinity significantly contributing to this violence (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2018). In North America, the incidence of intimate partner violence (IPV) varies, with around 25% of women in the United States experiencing severe physical violence from an intimate partner (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). In Australia, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016) indicates that 1 in 6 women has faced physical or sexual violence from a current or former partner since the age of 15. Similarly, in New Zealand, the New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse (2019) reveals that 1 in 3 women experience intimate partner violence (IPV), with Māori women particularly affected due to factors such as historical trauma and socioeconomic inequalities. In Asia, two out of three women from countries such as India, China, Bangladesh, and Indonesia have reported experiencing physical, sexual, or emotional violence from their husbands.

In Africa, countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, IPV remain a serious concern, where over 30% of women, and in some cases as many as two-thirds, women encountering physical or sexual abuse from their partners (Aji, Sababa & Kefas, 2022; Oseni, et al., 2022). This alarming incidence is largely attributed to deep-seated socio-cultural factors, including gender inequality, societal norms that condone violence, traditional norms, power imbalances, dowry-related issues, alcohol consumption, marital dissatisfaction, male dominance, child sex preference, jealousy, income status and inadequate access to legal protections and supportive resources for victims (Ahmad & Yusuf, 2022; Johnson & Terao, 2019). In Nigeria, 31% to 61% of women have experienced emotional violence, 20% to 31% for sexual violence and 7% to 31% for physical violence (Aji, et al., 2022). A study by Oseni, et al. (2022) in Southern Nigeria reports that 79.7% of women experienced IPV while only 20.3% of victims were men. Almost one in four women in Nigeria experienced intimate partner violence with a connection to cultural beliefs (Aji, et al., 2022). Balogun, et al. (2013) found that the prevalence of emotional violence in 12 months preceded to 34.3%; physical violence, 28.0%; and 10.7% experienced sexual violence. In Benue State, statistics have shown that 3 out of 12 families experience IPV (Aye, et al., 2018). Two-thirds of women are subjected to physical, sexual, and psychological violence perpetrated by men (husbands, partners and fathers). While Girls are often forced into early marriage and are at risk of punishment if they attempt to escape from their husbands. The birth of male children generally attracts praises and encomiums from friends, while that of female children causes pains to women in their matrimony home.

Despite its severe consequences, IPV remains shrouded in silence, stigma, and shame, making it difficult for victims to seek help and for perpetrators to be held accountable. Despite these negative consequences, many cultural and social norms in Nigeria largely favour men and this serves as a breeding ground for violence against women. However, several measures have been taken by national and international organisations to combat this issue. In developed countries such as the United States, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) provides funding for services and programmes for IPV victims. The European Union's (EU) Strategy on Gender Equality, the Australian Government's National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, and the UK's Domestic Abuse Bill aimed to strengthen laws and protect IPV victims. The execution of IPV prevention programmes in these developed nations has resulted in a noticeable, albeit modest, decrease in intimate partner violence against women.

In developing societies, some of the policies and programmes such as the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (2015) in Nigeria, criminalises IPV and provide support for victims. The Protection Against Domestic Violence Law 2015 (PADVL) is a law which was enacted by the Lagos State House of Assembly on the 18th of May 2007 to provide protection for victims of domestic violence within the state. The law is not only to protect women who are most times the target of domestic violence, but also to safeguard the interests of men, children, servants/maids, and everyone who may be victims of domestic violence (DSVRT, 2016). The Benue State Gender-Based Violence (Prohibition) Law (2019) specifically targets IPV and other forms of gender-based violence in Benue State. All those laws have not yielded the expected result as intimate partner violence still persists. This may be due to poor policy implementation, deep-seated cultural and traditional beliefs that perpetuate male dominance and control over women, where IPV is seen as a private matter or a necessary means of discipline. This has led to an increase cases of intimate partner violence against women in the country.

This scenario is applicable in Benue State where beating of wives or female partners is one of the common forms of violence against women by husbands or other intimate male partners (Tersoo & Terzungwe, 2023). In South Senatorial District, low level of education among women and the prevalence of alcohol abuse among men are significant factors contributing to intimate partner violence, as substance use is associated with increased aggression and abusive behaviour (Adoga & Onazi, 2021). In the Benue North-East and North-West senatorial District, cultural beliefs and practices that uphold male superiority and female submissiveness contribute to high rates of intimate partner violence (Ikyase & Orshi, 2023).

Several scholars have carried out research on violence against women in Benue state. For instance, Benebo, Schumann and Vaezghasemi (2018); and Tersoo and Terzungwe (2023) have differently worked on the effect of women's status, displacement and gender-based violence in the Benue State, as it affects the physical, social, emotional and economic status of women in the state. However, none of the above studies focused on male dominance and intimate partner violence against women in Benue State. Abdullahi, Abdulkarim and Akaayar (2018), and Adebayo, Chukwu and Mensah (2022) cross-examined the causes of domestic violence against women, but none had explored male control and household decision-making in the state. This study is therefore, a deviation from those above as it explores male dominance and intimate partner

violence against women in Benue State. Specifically, the objectives of this study are to assess the following:

1. Assess how male control engenders intimate partner violence against women in Benue State, Nigeria.
2. Determine the nexus between household decision-making and intimate partner violence against women in Benue State, Nigeria.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. A cross-sectional study is suitable for population-based surveys, offering advantages such as direct observation by the researcher, efficient data collection without the need for participant follow-up, and quicker, cost-effective results compared to other designs. The study area was Benue State, Nigeria. Benue State is one of the thirty-six (36) states in Nigeria with a projected population of 7,083,548 as of 2023. Its geographical coordinates are longitude 7° 47' and 10° 0' East and latitude 6° 25' and 8° 8' North. Benue State shares boundaries with five other states, namely: Nasarawa State to the north, Taraba State to the east, Cross-River State to the south, Enugu State to the southwest, and Kogi State to the west.

Benue State also shares a common boundary with the Republic of Cameroon to the South-East. Benue State occupies a landmass of 34,059 square Kilometres. Makurdi town, which is the capital of the state, is located along the bank of River Benue, from which the state derived its name. The state is further divided into three (3) geo-political zones known as senatorial districts comprising Benue North-East (Zone A), Benue North-West (Zone B), and Benue South (Zone C) (Yina, 2007). There are 23 local government areas in Benue State. Benue State is home to diverse ethnic groups, including the Tiv, Idoma, Igede, Etulo, Abakpa, Jukun, Nyifon, and Akweya, contributing to its rich cultural landscape. Benue State embraces diverse cultural practices that contribute to high intimate partner violence rates. These practices encompass male dominance in decision-making, the perception of children as social security in old age, patriarchal and lineage systems, polygyny, a preference for sons, age at marriage, the extended family structure, the prevailing economic system, a preference for larger family sizes, education level and women are not heard but only to be seen among others.

The choice of this location was influenced by cultural practices and the prevalence of intimate partner violence against women in the area. These prevailing socio-cultural practices which determine the behaviour may likely be associated with the high rate of intimate partner violence in the state where male children hold immense value primarily due to their roles. Serving as a means of intergenerational wealth transfer, they act as social security for parents and lineage, ensuring family continuity, safeguarding assets, and providing crucial social support. The population of the study include all adult females, who are 18 years and above and who have ever experienced intimate partner violence in Benue State. The projected population of Benue State as of 2023 is 7,083,548. The figure is projected from the National Population Commission (2006) census figures using the exponential method, which is expressed as  $P_n = P_0 e^{rt}$

The population was projected using the exponential method, which is expressed as

Projected population from 2006-2023(17 years growth rate)

$$P_n = P_o^{em}$$

Where;

$P_n$  = required population as at mid-year 2023

$P_o$  = initial population (2006)

$e$  = experimental growth rate (given as a constant) =2.71828

$r$  = annual growth rate (3%)

$n$  = time interval between 2006-2023=17 years

Given  $P_o = 4253,641$  as at 2006

$$P_n = 4253,641 \times 2.71828^{3 \div 100 \times 17}$$

$$= 4253,641 \times 2.71828$$

$$= 4253,641 \times 2.71828^{0.03 \times 17}$$

$$= 4253,641 \times 2.71828^{0.51}$$

$$= 4253,641 \times 1.665290625$$

$$= 7,083,548.47$$

Approximately, 7,083,548.

Therefore, the population of Benue State as of 2023 = 7,083,548.

Since the population of those who have ever experienced intimate partner violence is infinite, the Cochran's (1977) formula for the determination of sample sizes of unknown populations was adopted to select the samples. The formula is given as;

$$no = \frac{(Z^2) Pq}{e^2}$$

Where;

No= Sample size required

$Z^2$ = the desired confidence level (95% was selected; i.e. 1.96 in Z-score).

P = Estimate proportion of the population that was aware of intimate partner violence (50% is assumed).

q = (1-p) estimated proportion of the population that was not aware of the intimate partner violence (50% is assumed).

e = the desired level of precision (sample error) (we select 4%).

Therefore, substituting these in the formula,

In this study, we assumed that:

$$\begin{aligned} no &= \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.5)(0.5)}{(0.04)^2} \\ &= \frac{(3.8416)(0.25)}{0.0016} \\ &= \frac{0.9604}{0.0016} \end{aligned}$$

$$= 600.25$$

$$= 600$$

Therefore, to create room for questionnaires that were not returned or wrongly completed, 10% of the sample size (60) was added. This gave a sample size of 600 + 60 = 660. The sample size for quantitative data in this study was 660. This study employed Questionnaire and Key Informant Interview (KII) guide as its data collection tools. Data in this study was collected by the researcher with support from six selected and trained research assistants. This study utilised both quantitative and qualitative data and employed descriptive and inferential statistical tools along with manual content analysis. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to process the data. The analysis was done at the following levels: univariate analysis involved frequency distribution tables, mean and standard deviation. Responses were presented in counts and percentages. Bivariate analysis was done using Pearson's R. The bivariate analysis was used to explain the association between male dominance and intimate partner violence. Respondents were adequately informed that they had the right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any time they desired. Respondents were further informed that there were no penalties or loss of benefit for refusal to participate in the study or withdraw from it. Participation in the study was voluntary. Some of the major problems that were encountered in this study included limited sample size.

However, the cost of holistically studying such a large population was beyond the resources of the researcher. To overcome this challenge, a scientific technique of sample size determination using the ideas of Cochran was used to select the respondents.

## **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

A total of 660 questionnaires were distributed, and 612 completed responses were returned. The analysis was based on the copies of questionnaires returned.

**Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents by socio-demographic characteristics**

<b>Socio-demographics</b>	<b>Frequency(F)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Age</b>		
18-22	177	28.9
23-27	157	25.7
28-32	104	17.0
33-37	75	12.3
38 years and above	99	16.2
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	151	24.7
Female	461	75.3
<b>Educational level</b>		
Informal	220	35.9
Primary	199	32.5
Secondary	117	19.1
Tertiary	76	12.4
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	51	8.3
Married	345	56.4
Separated	95	15.5
Divorce	84	13.7
Widowed	37	6.0
<b>Occupation</b>		
Farming	479	78.3
Civil servant	34	5.6
Trading	62	10.1
Self-employed	42	6.0
<b>Income per month</b>		
Less than 50,000	170	27.8
50,000-99,999	98	16.0
100,000-199,999	162	26.6
200,000-499,999	132	21.6
500,000 and above	50	8.2

*Source: Field Survey, 2025*

The data for the age distribution of respondents, as shown in table 1, indicated that 28.9% were between 18-22 years; 25.7% were between 23-27 years; 17.0% were between 28-32 years; and



12.3% were between 33-37 years. The rest (16.2%) were from the age bracket of 38 years and above. The demographic implication of the data is that the population of the study area was generally youths. The findings of the study showed that 75.3% of the respondents were females and 24.7% were males. This shows that more women participated in the study than men. This finding implies that women are highly involved in intimate partner violence in the area. The finding further reflected the significance of women in the area of violence and their challenges in abusive relationships. Similarly, Table 1 shows that 35.9% of respondents had no formal education, 32.5% had primary education, 19.1% had secondary education, and 12.4% of the respondents attained tertiary education. The data showed that respondents who obtained primary school education and above constitute the majority of respondents. This implies that the majority of partners who experienced abuse embraced formal education. This further suggests that the population was knowledgeable about the subject matter investigated could provide informed responses that were sought.

More so, the marital status of respondents showed that 56.4% were married, 15.5% were separated, 13.7% were divorced, 8.3% were singled, and 6.0% were widowed. The finding revealed that those who are married constituted the majority of the respondents. It was inferred from the finding that there were fewer people who were widowed within the population because married people constituted the majority in the population of the study area. The finding further reflects the fact that married persons have greater chances of experiencing intimate partner violence. In terms of occupation, farming constituted the primary source of living of the respondents with 78.3%; followed by trading 10.1%; self-employment in private establishments 6.0%; while 5.6% of the respondents were civil servants. This means that the larger proportion of the respondents in Benue State are farmers who eke out a living from agriculture. The inability of governments over the years to employ citizens in the formal sector of the economy and the low level of education have pushed many into the informal sector where employment opportunities exist. The estimated income of the respondents per month showed a majority earned less than N50,000 per month. This showed the low financial status of respondents in the study area. This implies the probability of a high level of violence against women in the area due to total dependence on men for everything.

**Table 2: Male control and intimate partner violence against women**

Statements	SA	A	UN	D	SD	Mean	STD
My partner always insists on things being done his way	176(28.8)	313(51.1)	39(6.4)	54(8.8)	30(4.9)	3.90	1.066
If things are not done his way, he becomes aggressive	292(47.7)	224(36.6)	44(7.5)	25(4.1)	25(4.1)	4.20	1.023
He wants everything in the home for himself	241(39.4)	251(41.0)	21(3.4)	66(10.8)	33(5.4)	3.98	1.160
He controls all decisions in the home without my input	247(40.4)	241(39.4)	36(5.9)	67(10.9)	21(3.4)	4.02	1.100



He disregards my opinions in family matters	146(23.9)	308(50.3)	29(4.7)	66(10.8)	63(10.3)	3.67	1.239
He monitors and controls my interactions with people	165(27.0)	318(52.0)	23(3.8)	64(10.5)	42(6.9)	3.82	1.145
He demands complete obedience from me in all situations.	284(46.4)	227(37.1)	19(3.1)	58(9.5)	24(3.9)	4.13	1.101
He uses financial control to make me dependent on him	192(31.4)	266(43.5)	19(3.)	84(13.7)	51(8.3)	3.76	1.260
He has the right to punish me when I disobey him	360(58.8)	160(26.1)	29(4.7)	36(5.9)	27(4.4)	4.29	1.089
He uses verbal insults to enforce his authority over me	367(60.0)	137(22.4)	35(5.7)	39(6.4)	34(5.6)	4.15	1.204
Women should listen to their husbands, which can lead to abuse	367(60.0)	137(22.4)	35(5.7)	39(6.4)	34(5.6)	4.25	1.163
He becomes violent when I challenge his authority	376(61.4)	182(29.7)	16(2.6)	24(3.9)	14(2.3)	4.44	.900
Showing love is needless because he is the head	111(18.1)	165(27.0)	18(2.9)	265(43.3)	53(8.7)	3.03	1.333
He sees my role as taking care of children	147(24.0)	371(60.6)	9(1.5)	75(12.3)	10(1.6)	3.93	.943
He has the right to beat me	57(9.3)	316(51.6)	30(4.9)	175(28.6)	34(5.6)	3.31	1.143

**Source:** Field Survey, 2025; **Key:** SA= Strongly Agree; A= Agree; UN=Undecided; D= Disagree; SD=Strongly Disagree

Data in Table 2 revealed that respondents overwhelmingly agreed that male partners exhibit controlling behaviours, such as insisting on getting their way, becoming aggressive, and controlling household decisions, which can lead to intimate partner violence. Husbands were also reported to disregard their wives' opinions, monitor interactions, demand obedience, and use financial control, verbal insults, and limitations on women's roles. Many respondents believed that husbands have the right to punish and beat their wives. However, a significant proportion of respondents disagreed that male control is universal, highlighting the complexity of the issue and variations in relationships and individuals, with some women experiencing more autonomy and others facing severe control and abuse.

**Table 3: Household decision making and intimate partner violence against women**

Statements	SA	A	UN	D	SD	Mean	STD
In my family, only my husband makes decisions	89(14.5)	319(52.1)	21(3.4)	144(23.5)	39(6.4)	3.45	1.180
My husband usually makes decisions without consulting me	111(18.1)	401(65.5)	21(3.4)	62(10.1)	17(2.8)	3.86	.924
My husband becomes angry or dismissive when I express my opinions	273(44.6)	259(42.3)	16(2.6)	46(7.5)	8(2.9)	4.18	1.003
If I disagree with my husband's decisions, he becomes abusive	173(28.3)	153(25.0)	16(2.6)	259(42.3)	11(1.8)	3.36	1.324
I have experienced physical and emotional harm when I try to assert my opinions against my husband's	140(22.9)	361(59.0)	10(1.6)	75(12.3)	26(4.2)	3.84	1.046
My husband punishes me or withholds affection when I don't comply with his decisions	168(27.5)	341(55.7)	26(4.2)	51(8.3)	26(4.2)	3.94	1.015
Lack of involvement in decision-making makes me feel helpless.	74(12.1)	385(62.9)	3(2.1)	68(11.1)	72(11.8)	3.52	1.192
I feel weak because my husband controls all financial decisions in the home	162(26.5)	287(46.9)	-	136(22.2)	27(4.4)	3.69	1.206
Being excluded from decision-making in my home negatively affects my mental and physical well-being	167(27.3)	298(48.7)	19(3.1)	106(17.3)	22(3.6)	3.79	1.130
I fear expressing my views on household decisions because of potential repercussions from my husband	124(20.3)	412(67.3)	-	69(11.3)	7(1.1)	3.94	.869

**Source:** Field Survey, 2025; **Key:** SA= Strongly Agree; A= Agree; UN=Undecided; D= Disagree; SD=Strongly Disagree

Data in Table 3 shows male partners dominate decision-making in households, often making decisions without consulting their wives, leading to feelings of powerlessness and resentment among wives. Wives who disagree with their husband's decisions or try to assert their opinions may face abuse, physical and emotional harm, or punishment, including withholding affection. Husbands' control over financial decisions and exclusion of wives from decision-making processes also negatively impact women's mental and physical well-being. While some women reported having autonomy in decision-making, a significant number experienced restrictions and abuse, highlighting the persistence of patriarchal norms and intimate partner violence.

These findings suggest that household decision making perpetuates intimate partner violence by disenfranchising women and creating a culture of fear and silence. The results from the KII corroborated the findings from the quantitative data. An informant had this to say:

I have been with my husband for seven years now, but he makes decisions about all the money I make on my farm. He dictates how the money should be spent, and when I try to do otherwise, to get a few personal things and he discovers, he beats and threatens to send me back to my parents (KII/Female/IkuravTiev/ Katsina-Ala/2025).

Many other Key informants agreed to the assertion that household decision have increased the level of abuse against women. To this effect, a 32-year-old mother of two children in Ofoke had this to say:

As a person, my husband sees me as his property, he sees me as not equal to him in terms of decision-making, even when it comes to my health. I was pregnant with our second child; my husband insisted that I should go to farm and do most of the home chores. when I refused, he beat me. This has led to complications that my baby survived narrowly and up till now, I feel pains and frustrated (KII/Female/32yrs/Ofoke/Apa/2025).

Again, an informant said:

In my culture, men are seen as the head of the household and women are expected to be submissive. When I disagreed with my husband, he beat me, saying I was being disobedient and needed to be corrected. He believes that as the man of the house, he has the right to discipline me and make decisions on my behalf (KII/Female/18yrs/Tiir-Tongov/Katsina Ala/2025).

Findings from the key informant interviews corroborated the various ways of how household decision making processes affect intimate partner violence against women. According to the findings from KII, man`s authority is not to be questioned or challenged in his home.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The study found that women in Benue State experienced all kinds of violence from their partner. Again, the study found that husbands believed that they had the right to punish their wives. These findings tally with that of Ishola (2016) who found that the pervasive influence of patriarchal norms in African cultures, where fathers hold unquestionable authority, potentially perpetuates violence against women by placing men above women in power dynamics within families. Also, the study found that men control every decision at home, which often results in violence. These findings are in consonance with the findings of Eze (2022), who noted financial control, verbal insults, and limitations on women's roles and responsibilities are key factors contributing to intimate partner violence. Furthermore, the findings of the study show that most husbands disregard their wives' opinions. This finding is in consonance with the finding of Zainab, Khan and Suraya (2021), who found that societies with strong patriarchal norms tend to exhibit higher rates of IPV, as these norms legitimise control and aggression by men toward their partners.

Similarly, Nkosi (2021) find that patriarchal norms encourage aggressive behaviours among men and perpetuate a culture where violence is normalised. This mindset leads to the systemic discrimination of women and fosters environments where they feel unsafe. The study finding is also in agreement with Adebayo, Chukwu and Mensah (2022), who observe that communities with strong male dominance frequently experienced higher instances of domestic abuse. The authors argue that such environments often lack adequate legal protection for women, leaving them vulnerable. This corroborates the finding of Juma (2023), who submits that when women are excluded from decision-making, their safety is often not prioritised. His findings suggest that cultural rites often celebrate male supremacy, thus conditioning societal acceptance of such behaviours. On the other hand, the study found that women who made their own decisions were more likely to suffer from abuse. In agreement with this finding, Garcia (2022) observes that male dominance in financial decision-making limits women's access to and control over resources. Women with decision making power are 3 times more likely to report experiencing violence by their husband/partner in their lifetime

Also, finding of the study shows that men's exclusive control over major decisions, such as those related to healthcare or children's education, is a significant predictor. This is in agreement with previous work by Adeyemo and Afolabi (2023), who argue that when women participate equally in decision-making, rates of IPV decrease significantly. However, this contrasts with the findings of Chen, Zhang and Wang (2022), which indicated that in some cultures, women who are empowered to make decisions may still face backlash from male partners who feel their authority is being challenged. More so, the study found that women experienced abuse when they disagreed with their husbands' decisions. However, influences at the relational and societal level may differ. Men may use IPV if cultural norms at the societal level dictate men traditionally make household decisions, even if women's decision-making is not perceived as a threat at the relational level.

## **Conclusion**

Violence against women is still a major social problem in Nigeria and other developing countries and is considered one of the main causes of maternal mortality and considerable morbidity in North

Central Nigeria. Intimate partner violence covers all types of violence, such as physical violence, emotional violence, psychological violence and economic violence, that occurs within those in a relationship, such as a boyfriend and girlfriend and among couples.

The study concluded that male-centric hierarchy not only legitimises but also fosters an environment where intimate partner violence is normalised and often justified under the guise of authority and control. In terms of household decision-making, the study found that men predominantly make decisions about finances, child-rearing, and family matters, leaving women with little power to influence their lives and futures. This imbalance reinforces an environment where women are economically dependent on their partners, making them vulnerable to violence. This study concludes that male dominance significantly predicts IPV in Benue State. Policy interventions should target cultural reorientation and community-based support systems to reduce gender-based violence.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Traditional leaders should lead the charge in transforming cultural norms that perpetuate inequality; by fostering a culture of mutual respect, collaborative decision-making, and equal opportunities for all.
2. Joint decision-making must be promoted by involving women in household decision-making processes. This can be achieved by intensifying advocacy and awareness efforts among men through community meetings and sensitisation programmes, encouraging them to support and involve women in decision-making.

### **REFERENCES**

- Abdullahi, M., Abdulkarim, U. S., & Akaayar, P. C. (2018). Cultural practices and domestic violence against women: A managerial perspective within Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria. *Research Journal of Marketing*, 6(5), 1-7.
- Adebayo, O., Chukwu, E., & Mensah, T. (2022). Male dominance and its implications for domestic violence in urban Nigeria. *African Journal of Criminology*, 12(3), 245-260.
- Adeyemo, A. I., & Afolabi, O. M. (2023). The role of women in household decision-making and implications for intimate partner violence. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 29(4), 516-532. DOI:10.1177/0886260517719544.
- Adoga, S., & Onazi, D. (2021). Alcohol abuse and intimate partner violence in Benue North-West, Nigeria. *Addiction Research Journal*, 15(2), 67-83.
- Ahinkorah, B. O., & Dickson, K. S. (2020). Spousal physical violence in sub-Saharan Africa: Does household wealth matter? Evidence from 30 countries. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 35(11-12), 2271-2296. DOI: 10.1177/0886260517702494

- Ahmad, S., & Yusuf, R. (2022). Early marriage and intimate partner violence in North West Nigeria. *Journal of Women's Health Issues*, 30(1), 47-61.
- Aji, M. L., Sababa, L. K., & Kefas, V. A. (2022). Perceived influence of male child preference on the social adjustment of women producing only females in Jalingo local government Taraba State, Nigeria. *Integrity Journal of Education and Training*, 6(3), 63-69.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). Personal Safety Survey. Retrieved from <https://www.Australian-bureau-of-statistics.report.mln>.
- Aye, E. N., Adamu, J., Ohia, C. N., Onumonu, J. A., & Oforka, O. T. (2018). Socio-cultural factors associated with domestic violence among working couples in Benue State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Applied Engineering Research*, 13 (21), 15083- 15089.
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). Intimate partner violence surveillance: Uniform Definitions and Recommended Data Elements, Version 2.0.
- Chen, X., Zhang, L., & Wang, Y. (2022). Empowerment and backlash: Women's roles in household dynamics and IPV. *International Journal of Family Studies*, 34(2), 123-145.
- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2021). Violence against women: An EU-wide survey. Main findings. <https://doi.org/10.2837/39409>.
- Ikyase, M., & Orshi, S. (2023). Cultural practices and intimate partner violence in Benue North-East, Nigeria. *Journal of Gender and Society*, 12(1), 98-114.
- Ishola, S. A. (2016). Domestic violence: The Nigerian experience. *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission and Ministry*, 13, 3-16.
- Moorer O. (2021). Intimate partner violence vs. domestic violence–YWCA Spokane. Ywca Spokane Organization. Retrieved from <https://ywcaspokane.org/What-Is-Intimate-Partner-Domestic-Violence>
- Mukorera, O., Nyachowe, T., Dzikira, P., Mupinga, P., Zirima, H., & Chimwayi, T. (2022). triggers of intimate partner violence (TIPV). The community's perception in Peri-urban and the insight from Epmafara District Harare-Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 5(11), 621-629.
- Nkosi, M. (2021). Male dominance and intimate partner violence in South African communities. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 30(2), 123-142. DOI: 10.1080/09589236.2020.1844094.
- Oseni, T. I. A., Salam, T. O., Ilori, T., & Momoh, M. O. (2022). Prevalence and pattern of intimate partner violence among men and women in Edo State, Southern Nigeria. *African Journal of Primary Health Care & Family Medicine*, 14(1), 1-7. DOI: 10.4102/phcfm.v14i1.3396.



- Tersoo, F., & Terzungwe, A. (2023). Conflict, displacement, and gender-based violence in Benue State, Nigeria. *Journal of Conflict and Peace Studies*, 12(1), 97-115.
- World Health Organization. (2021). Violence against women prevalence estimates, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240022256>.
- Zainab, M., Khan, A., & Suraya, B. (2021). Male dominance and its correlation with intimate partner violence: A global perspective. *Journal of Social Issues*, 77(3), 533-547. DOI:10.1111/josi.12453.