Spousal Violence and Help-Seeking Behaviour among Women in Yenagoa City, Bayelsa State: Patterns, Causes, and Support Systems

Iteimowei Major, PhD

Department of Sociology, Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State, Nigeria
drmajor2014@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates spousal violence and help-seeking behaviour among 138 women in Yenagoa City, Bayelsa state. The major objectives were to find out the major forms of violence, their causes and the formal and informal means of seeking help among women. The study which mainly utilises the quantitative approach of data collection (questionnaire), made use of two theories namely; the resource perspective and the survival approach. The study found that control, behaviour, physical violence, economic, and sexual spousal violence, were the most prevailing forms of violence experienced by the respondents. For controlling behaviour, insisting on knowing respondents' movements at all times and ignoring/treating respondents indifferently were the most prevalent forms of controlling behaviour experienced by respondents. In finding out the reason for spousal violence, the study indicated that verbal abuse and money problems were the major causes of spousal violence. Regarding help-seeking behaviour, most respondents indicated that they primarily seek assistance from their own relatives when experiencing abuse. However, they formally turn to gender centres for support. Therefore, it was recommended that the factors influencing women's help-seeking decisions in such situations should be identified. Additionally, policy initiatives should aim to strengthen both formal and informal support systems to promote a more equitable society for women. Lastly, efforts should be made to enhance education and expand economic opportunities for women.

Introduction

Research on family violence has gained increasing significance in recent times due to the rising number of fatalities caused by spousal abuse. Globally, it has been reported that more than one in six households has witnessed an incident in which one spouse physically assaulted the other (Straus, 2011). This raises the question: is spousal violence a pressing issue in society today, or has it been exaggerated and sensationalised by the media? According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2014), the lifetime prevalence of physical violence by a spouse was estimated at 31.5% among women. Furthermore, approximately 22.3% of women have experienced at least one instance of severe physical violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime, while an estimated 47.1% have encountered at least one act of psychological aggression from an intimate partner (Breiding et al., 2014). These statistics highlight the widespread nature of spousal violence, emphasising its severity, particularly given that nearly half of all women experience some form of abuse in their lifetime.

When exploring the origins of family violence, particularly against women, it is essential to consider historical attitudes towards women in society. In the late 1960s, the U.S. Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence conducted a national survey on violence in the United States and found that one-quarter of men and one in six women believed there were circumstances in which it would be acceptable for a husband to strike his wife (Straus, 2011). Legal frameworks have historically reflected such attitudes. For example, the traditional "rule of thumb" under common law permitted a husband to strike his wife with a switch, provided it was no wider than his thumb. While courts did address cases of domestic abuse, it was not widely recognised as a significant social issue until the mid-1970s (Straus, 2011). The increasing awareness of wife abuse as a societal problem can be attributed to two key factors. Firstly, the women's movement played a crucial role in bringing domestic violence to public attention. Secondly, the issue surfaced among groups of women who gathered in the late 1960s to discuss women's issues, where they "accidentally" discovered a shared experience of domestic violence. Many of these women had previously believed they were suffering alone and that such treatment was justified (Straus, 2011).

With these considerations in mind, an important question arises: are families today more violent than they were in the 1930s, 1950s, 1980s, or early 2000s? This question does not have a straightforward answer. The first large-scale study on family violence in the United States was conducted in 1976 by Straus et al. (2014), involving 2,143 families who provided accounts of domestic violence within their households. The sample closely mirrored the demographic characteristics of the U.S. population at the time, enhancing the study's generalisability. As research on family violence continues to evolve, it remains crucial to examine how women in abusive relationships cope with violence and the factors influencing their decisions to seek assistance.

Studies suggest that women are more likely to seek help when domestic violence is chronic and severe, whereas they are less inclined to do so when the violence is perceived as less serious (Nurius et al., 2011). Help-seeking behaviours can take various forms, encompassing both formal and informal support systems. Formal services may include domestic violence support organisations, counselling, legal assistance, or medical care, while informal support may come from family, friends, neighbours, or colleagues (Stephens-Lewis et al., 2021).

When a woman chooses to leave an abusive relationship, she enters a recovery phase, often after seeking support from multiple sources. During this period, she may experience emotional exhaustion as she seeks to justify her decision to others. According to Landenburger (1998), the recovery process should focus on helping survivors regain control over their lives. Recognising that they are not alone in their experiences and reframing their abusive relationships within a broader context can aid this transition. Empowering survivors to believe in their ability to be self-reliant is also a key aspect of recovery.

Research by Aye et al. (2024) found that nearly half of all women in the United States (47.1%, or approximately 56.8 million) had experienced at least one form of psychological aggression by an intimate partner. Of these, 39.3% reported expressive aggression (e.g., a partner displaying anger

in a threatening manner, humiliating them, or making degrading remarks), while 39.7% experienced coercive control by an intimate partner. Nearly one in four women (23.2%) had suffered severe physical violence from an intimate partner. Among women who had experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner, more than one in five (22.4%) had encountered their first instance of intimate partner violence between the ages of 11 and 17. Almost half (47.1%) were aged between 18 and 24 when they first experienced such violence (Bamiwuye & Odimegwu, 2014). Other reports indicate that 71.1% of women who have suffered sexual violence, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner first experienced some form of abuse before the age of 25. Specifically, 23.2% first encountered violence before the age of 18, including 23.1% between 11 and 17 years old, while 47.9% first experienced abuse between 18 and 24 years old (Breiding et al., 2014). It should be noted however that IPV is not always against women. It could also be perpetrated against men (Ononokpono & Uzobo, 2024).

Intimate partner violence is not limited to the United States; rather, it has significant global implications. According to the World Health Organization (2015), the worldwide prevalence of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) among women who have ever been in a relationship is 30.0%. Additionally, lifetime IPV prevalence rates vary across age groups. Among women aged 15–19, the prevalence is 29.4%, suggesting that violence often begins early in relationships. The rate increases among those aged 40–44, reaching a peak of 37.8%, before declining to 25.5% among women over 50 (WHO, 2015). Also, Uzobo and Nwanwene (2021) reported that trends in sexual violence increased during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was also reported that intimate partner violence more than doubled around the world (Uzobo & Ayinmoro, 2021). Studies have also documented the many implications of IPV among women ranging from malnutrition to emotional/psychological and physical injuries to death (Gayawan, Uzobo, Ononokpono, Aladeniyi, & Dake, 2023)

These alarming statistics, both globally and nationally, underscore the urgent need to deepen clinical understanding of a phenomenon affecting nearly half of all women worldwide, many of whom are very young (Breiding et al., 2014). While extensive research has examined the reasons why abused women choose to stay or leave (Bamiwuye et al., 2015), there remains a lack of qualitative studies exploring how women seek help and the challenges they encounter in accessing support services from their own perspectives.

Mental health professionals and educators may not fully comprehend the causes and complexities of abusive relationships. Integrating knowledge of these patterns with insights into how women seek or avoid help can contribute to the development of more effective clinical interventions. Furthermore, such findings may enhance the likelihood of victims accessing the support services they require.

1.4 Objectives of the Study
To answer the above questions formulated in the research question, the following research objectives have been formulated;

1. To determine the forms of Spousal violence women experience in Yenagoa city
2. To ascertain factors responsible for spousal violence against women in Yenagoa city.
3. To explore informal and formal sources of abused women in Yenagoa seek
4. To investigate factors that make women not to seek for help after being abused by their spouse.

Theoretical Framework: Gondolf and Fisher's Survivor Theory
The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in Gondolf and Fisher's Survivor Theory. This theory posits that women who experience violence actively seek help, although their efforts are often unsuccessful. Moreover, it suggests that as the level of danger they face increases, their attempts to seek assistance also intensify (Gondolf & Fisher, 1988). As a result, the Survivor Theory highlights the proactive nature of help-seeking behaviour among abused women. Gondolf and Fisher (1988) argued that women subjected to abuse escalate their efforts to seek help as their partner's violent behaviour worsens.

The Survivor Theory contends that women in abusive relationships do not remain in them due to passivity but because their attempts to leave have failed (Gondolf & Fisher, 1988). This challenges the assumptions of the learned helplessness perspective, developed by Walker (1984), which attributes battered women's seemingly passive responses to learned behaviour. Instead, the Survivor Theory asserts that women persistently seek help rather than withdrawing when violence escalates. Additionally, it proposes that women continuously resist their victimisation through repeated help-seeking efforts, which are often ineffective due to institutional shortcomings. According to Gondolf and Fisher, women who have access to sufficient resources and social support are more likely to leave their abusers and achieve independence. They identified several key dimensions to understand the different forms of help-seeking behaviour among women who have experienced violence. These dimensions include domestic violence (physical and verbal abuse, injury), the number of children, economic resources (such as the victim's income), other types of household violence (such as child abuse), and additional behaviours of the abuser (such as substance abuse).

Gondolf and Fisher's Survivor Theory (1988) consists of four key components. Firstly, victims develop new coping strategies and seek assistance as violence continues. These strategies may involve placating the abuser or turning to family members for support. When these measures prove ineffective, victims explore alternative sources of help and adopt different approaches to mitigate the violence. Secondly, Gondolf and Fisher argue that victims frequently encounter ineffective bureaucracies, inadequate support services, and societal barriers when seeking external assistance. The lack of available options and financial independence forces many victims to remain in abusive relationships and attempt to change their partners rather than leave or seek help elsewhere. Thirdly, the theory explains how women actively seek help from both formal and informal networks. Informal sources may include close friends, while formal sources might consist of shelters. However, the support received from these sources is often inadequate and fragmented. Lastly, Gondolf and Fisher assert that the failure of support systems to intervene effectively enables the

cycle of violence to persist. Ultimately, they emphasise that understanding whether a woman sought help and what transpired when she did so is more important than questioning why she did not leave the abusive relationship.

Gondolf and Fisher (1988) tested their Survivor Model in a study involving over 6,000 battered women from a shelter in Texas. Their findings indicate that women respond to increasing violence with greater efforts to seek help. They further suggest that help-seeking is not an immediate reaction to escalating violence but occurs within the broader context of the abuser's behaviour. Their model illustrates that as the abuser's antisocial behaviour intensifies, the range of help sources contacted by victims also expands. This model provides valuable insights into the help-seeking patterns of battered women, demonstrating that most make considerable efforts to cope with the violence. Overall, the Survivor Model suggests that women increase their attempts to seek help as the severity of physical violence escalates.

Despite its contributions, the Survivor Theory has certain limitations. Notably, it does not account for sexual and psychological violence. To build upon this framework, it is essential to incorporate these additional forms of abuse. Therefore, I propose that women not only increase their help-seeking efforts in response to escalating physical violence but also in reaction to heightened experiences of various forms of abuse. Consequently, exposure to physical, sexual, and psychological violence is likely to influence women's help-seeking behaviour.

Materials and Methods
This study is a cross-sectional study, also known as the one-shot study. This research design was used to investigate the prevalence and types of spousal violence found in the area of the study. The location of the study, Yenagoa L.G.A is located in Bayelsa State, South-South Nigeria. Its headquarters are in Yenagoa town. It has an area of 706km^2, and a population of 352,286 (2006 Census)/ Yenagoa L.G.A is known for its huge commercial activities as it is now the hub of activities. Yenagoa Local Government is home to diverse ethnic nationalities which are 7 in number. These ethnic groups include: Epie and Atissa, Gbaran, Ekpetiama, Okordia, Zarama/Engenni and Buseni (Biseni) (Ama-Ogbari, 2009).

The population of study for this work consists of women who are currently in one form of relationship with a man. Currently, there is no official number of women in this category. Hence the exact number of women in this category cannot be determined. Since the total target population of the study is unknown, this research work applied a statistical formula to determine the sample size. Hence, the sample size for this study was determined using the **Cochran formula** for an unknown population which yielded a total of **138** respondents**.**

The sampling technique for this study was done using a multi-stage sampling technique. In this first stage, a cluster sampling technique was used in zoning the study area into four namely: Igbogene-Amarata group, Onopa-Swali group, across the bridge communities, and Azikoro-Agbura group. In the second stage, a simple random sampling technique was used to select one community from the four groups in the city. Hence, the following communities were selected from

each group; Opolo, Swali, Ogbogoro, and Agbura. Stage three made use of the purposive sampling technique to select women with the required characteristics. In this case, the women who were currently in a relationship.

The data used for this study was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was gathered using a questionnaire structured based on the research questions, which were presented to respondents to express their views, opinions, and observations. The secondary data used to conduct this study were sourced from textbooks, journals, articles, earlier publications, encyclopaedia, and dictionaries.

Based on analysing relevant data collected from the field, this study adopted the use of quantitative tools for data analysis since the study adopted a questionnaire as the basic instrument for data collection. Thus, frequencies, percentages and graphs were relevant in analysing the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents since these data are nominal and qualitative. On the other hand, the ordinal data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. For the descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation were used, while for the inferential statistics; Chi-square cross-tabulation was adopted through the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results
Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents
Table 1 shows the socio-demographic variables of respondents. As seen in the table below, most of the respondents were between the age of 39-44 years (29.0%), then 87(63.0%) were married, and 128(92.0%) were Christians. Also, a high percentage of the respondent's educational status is secondary education 107(77.5%), whereas most of the respondents are civil servants 83(60.1). Most of the respondents' income is within the range of 16,000-30,000 with a percentage of 44.9% (62), then the form of respondents' marriage is mostly Monogamy 96(69.6) while those that were in Polygamous marriage, the position of the wife is first position 25(18.1). Most of the respondents stayed together in the same house 86(62.3), then for the number of people in the respondent's household, most of the respondents 80(58.0%) had 2-5 people in their household, most of the respondents' spouse are within the age of 50 and above 111(80.4%), while for respondent's spouse years of schooling, the highest educational level for most of the spouse are secondary education 92(66.7), for the religion of respondents spouses religion, most of them were Christians 116(84.1%). Also, most of the respondent's spouses were civil servants 114(82.6%), while most of the respondent's spouse income was 41,000 and above 75(54.3%).

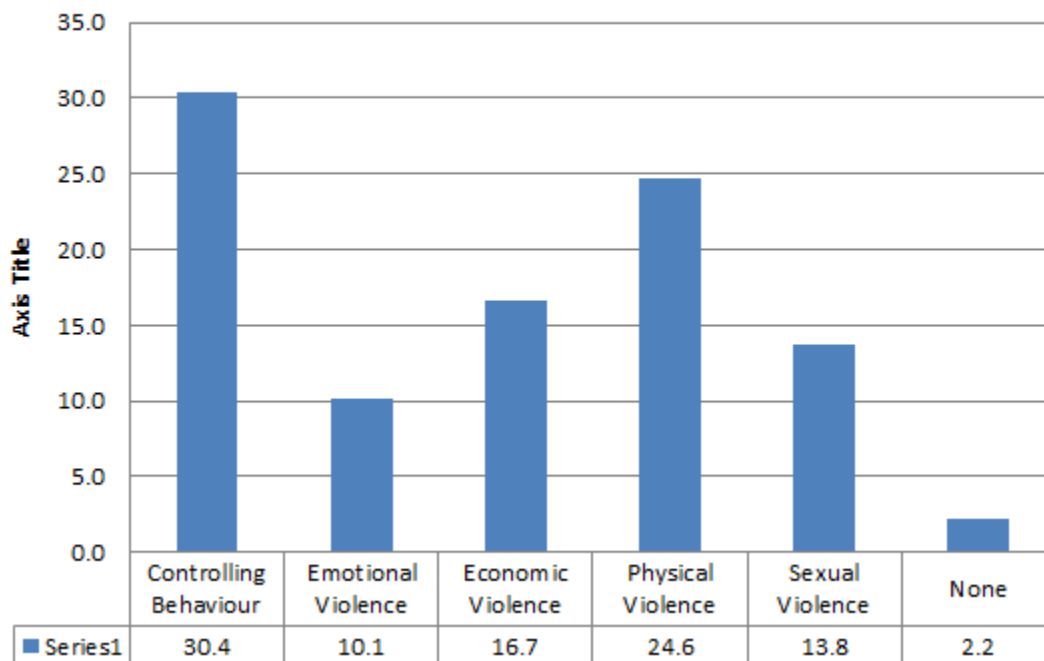**Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents**

Socio demographics	N= 138 (%)
Age	
21-26	14 (10.1)
27-32	27 (19.6)
33-38	34 (24.6)
39-44	40 (29.0)

45 and above	23 (16.7)
Marital Status	
Cohabiting	14 (10.1)
Married	87 (63.0)
Divorced	32 (23.2)
Widowed	5 (3.6)
Religion	
Christianity	128 (92.8)
African Traditional	10 (7.2)
Educational Status	
No formal education	10 (7.2)
Primary education	16 (11.6)
Secondary education	107 (77.5)
Tertiary education	5 (3.6)
Employment Status	
Self-employed	34 (24.6)
Unemployed	21 (15.2)
Civil Servant	83 (60.1)
Average source of income	
Less than 5,000	19 (13.8)
5,000-15,000	6 (4.3)
16,000-30,000	62 (44.9)
31,000-50,000	40 (29.0)
51,000 and above	7 (5.1)
No regular source of income	4 (2.9)
Form of respondent's marriage	
Monogamy	96 (69.6)
Polygamy	42 (30.4)
Respondent's wife position	
First wife	25 (18.1)
Second wife	24 (17.4)
Third wife	6 (4.3)
Fourth wife and above	8 (5.8)
Respondent's stay in the same house with spouse	
Yes	86 (62.3)
No	52 (37.7)
Number of people in respondent's household	
2-5	80 (58.0)
6-9	43 (31.2)
10 and Above	15 (10.9)

Age of respondent's spouse	
26-35	6 (4.3)
36-49	21 (15.2)
50 and Above	111 (80.4)
Respondent's spouse's years of schooling	
No formal education	8 (5.8)
Primary education	32 (23.2)
Secondary education	92 (66.7)
Tertiary education	6 (4.3)
Respondent's spouse's religion	
Christianity	116 (84.1)
African traditional religion	22 (15.9)
Respondent's spouse's employment status	
Self-employed	18 (13.0)
Unemployed	6 (4.3)
Civil servant	114 (82.6)
Respondent's spouse's income	
Less than 10,000	6 (4.3)
11,000-25,000	11 (8.0)
26,000-40,000	46 (33.3)
41,000 and above	75 (54.3)

Figure 4.1: Forms of violence experienced

Forms of voilence expereinced

	Controlling Behaviour	Emotional Violence	Economic Violence	Physical Violence	Sexual Violence	None
■ Series1	30.4	10.1	16.7	24.6	13.8	2.2

The chart above depicts forms of violence experienced by respondents, from the chart, it is seen that 30.4% of the respondents experience controlling behaviour from their spouses, followed by physical violence which is 24.6%, that is closely followed by economic violence 16.7%, then 13.8% of the respondents experience sexual violence and 10.1% experience emotional violence while 2.2% have not experienced any form of violence.

Table 2: Most prevalent controlling behaviour of a spouse

PREVALENT CONTROLLING BEHAVIOR OF SPOUSE	N=138 (%)
Restricts my access to healthcare	7 (6.4)
Gets angry if she speaks with others	13 (11.9)
Insisting to know my movement at all times	35 (32.1)
Ignores me/treats me indifferently	26 (23.9)
Keeps me from seeing friends	4 (3.7)
Being suspicious that I was unfaithful	5 (4.6)
None	19 (17.4)

Table 2 reveals the most prevalent controlling behaviour of the respondent's spouse, of which the most prevalent controlling behaviour is the respondent's spouse insisting on knowing the movement of the respondent at all times with a percentage of 32.1% (35) which is closely followed by respondent being ignored/treated indifferently with a percentage of 23.9% (26). Whereas 13(11.9%) respondents confirmed that the most prevalent controlling behaviour of their spouse is

getting angry if she speaks with others, meanwhile 7(6.4%) of the respondent's spouses restrict their access to healthcare and 4(3.7%) keep them from seeing friends, while 5(4.6%) are being suspicious that they are unfaithful, then 17.4%(19) of the respondents has never experienced any controlling behaviour.

Table 3: Reason to the form of spousal violence

Reason for spousal violence	N=138 (%)
Verbal abuse	58 (43.0)
Disobedience	7 (5.2)
Money problems	29 (21.5)
No particular reason	15 (11.1)
Refuses sex	10 (7.4)
Difficulties at work	6 (4.4)
Dowry related conflict	6 (4.4)
Drunk	4 (3.0)

Table 3 shows the reasons for spousal violence among respondents. For 43.0% (58), the reason for the violence was verbal abuse, 29(21.5%) agreed that the violence was due to money problems, and 11.1% (15) of the respondents' violence was caused by no particular reason. Most of the respondent's spousal violence was caused by respondent refusing sex 10(7.4), while for 7(5.2%) respondents, it was caused by disobedience, then 4.4% (6) were caused by difficulties at work and dowry-related conflict, then 3.0% (4) were being caused by the drunkenness of spouse.

Table 4: Response to spousal violence

Response to spousal violence	N=138 (%)
Disclosed experience	23 (17.3)
Sought for help	110 (82.7)

The above table reflects the response of respondents to spousal violence, in which 110(82.7) sought help while 23(17.3) disclosed experiences.

Informal response to spousal violence

The table below depicts the cross-tabulated results of socio-demographic data with informal responses to spousal violence. The result shows that socio-demographic characteristics are significantly related to Informal responses to spousal violence. The results, show that all the socio-demographic characteristics are significantly related to informal responses to spousal violence. First, Age, Marital Status, Religion, Educational status, employment status, average income, form of marriage, the position of the wife, staying in the same house, several households, age of the spouse, educational level of a spouse, spouse's religion and spouse employment status are all significantly related to informal response to spousal violence **(p<0.000),** also, spouse average income is significantly related to informal response to spousal violence **(p<0.003)**.

Table 5: Informal response to spousal violence

Socio-demographic variables	Informal response					Test of association
	Relative from own side	**Neighbours**	**Relatives from partner's side**	**Friends**	**Religious leaders**	
Age 21-26 27-32 33-38 39-44 45 and above	0 (0.0%) 12 (8.9%) 22 (16.3%) 20 (14.8%) 3(2.2%)	6 (4.4%) 8 (5.9%) 6 (4.4%) 0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%)	6 (4.4%) 0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%) 4 (3.0%) 4 (3.0%) 6 (4.4%) 8 (5.9%)	2 (1.5%) 3 (2.2%) 2 (1.5%) 7 (5.2%) 0 (0.0%)	X^2=169.433 Df=36 **Sig=0.000**
Marital status Cohabiting Married Divorced Widowed	4 (3.0%) 35 (25.9%) 18 (13.3%) 0 (0.0%)	6 (4.4%) 14 (10.4%) 0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%) 6 (4.4%) 0 (0.0%)	4 (3.0%) 12 (8.9%) 4 (3.0%) 2 (1.5%)	0 (0.0%) 12 (8.9%) 2 (1.5%) 0 (0.0%)	X^2=62.750 Df=27 **Sig=0.000**
Religion Christianity African Traditional	55 (40.7%) 2 (1.5%)	12 (8.9%) 8 (5.9%)	6 (4.4%) 0 (0.0%)	22 (16.3%) 0 (0.0%)	14 (10.4%) 0 (0.0%)	X^2=36.879 Df=9 **Sig=0.000**
Educational status No formal education Primary education Secondary education Tertiary education	0 (0.0%) 6 (4.4%) 51 (37.8%) 0 (0.0%)	2 (1.5%) 6 (4.4%) 12 (8.9%) 0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 6 (4.4%) 0 (0.0%)	4 (3.0%) 4 (3.0%) 14 (10.4%) 0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 9 (6.7%) 5 (3.7%)	X^2=117.405 Df=27 **Sig=0.000**
Employment status Self-employed Unemployed Civil Servant	6 (4.4%) 7 (5.2%) 44 (32.6%)	8 (5.9%) 6 (4.4%) 4 (4.4%)	0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 6 (4.4%)	8 (5.9%) 8 (5.9%) 6 (4.4%)	5 (3.7%) 0 (0.0%) 9 (6.7%)	X^2=54.870 Df=18 **Sig=0.000**

Average income					
Less than 5,000	5 (3.7%)	6 (4.4%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (5.9%)	0 (0.0%)	X^2=156.178
5,000-15,000	0 (0.0%)	6 (4.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	Df=45
16,000-30,000	34 (25.2%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (4.4%)	4 (3.0%)	9 (6.7%)	**Sig=0.000**
31,000-50,000	18 (13.3%)	8 (5.9%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
51,000 and above	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.5%)	5 (3.7%)	
No regular Pattern	0(0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
Form of marriage						X^2=44.277
Monogamy	45 (33.3%)	8 (5.9%)	6 (4.4%)	16 (11.9%)	14 (10.4%)	Df=9
Polygamy	12 (8.9%)	12 (8.9%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (4.4%)	0 (0.0%)	**Sig=0.000**
Wife position						X^2=102.554
First wife	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.3%)	6 (10.0%)	12 (20.0%)	2 (3.3%)	Df=24
Second wife	10 (16.7%)	6 (10.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	**Sig=0.000**
Third wife	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)	
Fourth wife & above	2 (3.3%)	6 (10.0%)		0 (0.0%)		
Stay in the same house with spouse						X^2=39.002
Yes	46 (34.1%)	8 (5.9%)	6 (4.4%)	14 (10.4%)	8 (5.9%)	Df=9
No	11 (8.1%)	12 (8.9%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (5.9%)	6 (4.4%)	**Sig=0.000**
Number of people household						X^2=119.267
2-5	40 (29.6%)	6 (4.4%)	6 (4.4%)	12 (8.9%)	12 (8.9%)	Df=18
6-9	15 (11.1%)	14 (10.4%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (5.9%)	2 (1.5%)	**Sig=0.000**
10 and Above	2 (1.5%)	0 (0.0%)		2 (1.5%)	0 (0.0%)	
Age of spouse						X^2=162.812
26-35	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (4.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	Df=18
36-49	6 (4.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (5.9%)	7 (5.2%)	**Sig=0.000**
50 and Above	51 (37.8%)	20 (14.8%)	0 (0.0%)	14 (10.4%)	7 (5.2%)	
Educational level of Spouse						
No formal education	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.5%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.0%)	2 (1.5%)	X^2=110.746
	6 (4.4%)		6 (4.4%)	4 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)	

Primary education Secondary education Tertiary education	0 (0.0%) 51 (37.8%) 0 (0.0%)	12 (8.9%) 0 (0.0%) 6 (4.4%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (4.4%) 8 (5.9%)	0 (0.0%) 12 (8.9%)	Df=27 **Sig=0.000**
Spouse religion Christianity ATR	57 (42.2%) 0 (0.0%)	8 (5.9%) 12 (8.9%)	6 (4.4%) 0 (0.0%)	18 (13.3%) 4 (3.0%)	12 (8.9%) 2 (1.5%)	X^2=63.251 Df=9 **Sig=0.000**
Spouse employment status Self-employed Unemployed Civil servant	2 (1.5%) 0 (0.0%) 55 (40.7%)	2 (1.5%) 0 (0.0%) 18 (13.3%)	6 (4.4%) 0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%)	8 (5.9%) 4 (3.0%) 10 (7.4%)	0 (0.0%) 2 (1.5%) 12 (8.9%)	X^2=78.382 Df=18 **Sig=0.000**
Spouse income Average income (Month) Less than 10,000 11,000-25,000 26,000-40,000 41,000 and above	0 (0.0%) 5 (3.7%) 24 (17.8%) 28 (20.7%)	0 (0.0%) 2 (1.5%) 12 (8.9%) 6 (4.4%)	0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 6 (4.4%)	4 (3.0%) 4 (3.0%) 8 (5.9%) 6 (4.4%)	2 (1.5%) 0 (0.0%) 2 (1.5%) 10 (7.4%)	X^2=51.594 Df=27 **Sig=0.003**

Formal Response to spousal violence

The table below depicts the cross-tabulated results of socio-demographic data with formal responses to spousal violence. The result shows that socio-demographic characteristics are significantly related to formal response to spousal violence. From the results, it show that most of the socio-demographic characteristics are significantly related to formal response to spousal violence. Firstly, Age, Marital Status, Educational status, employment status, average income, form of marriage, position of the wife, age of the spouse, educational level of spouse, spouse's religion, spouse's average income and spouse's employment status are all significantly related to formal response to spousal violence **(p<0.000),** also, number of people in household **(p<0.001)** and Respondents living in the same house **(p<0.002)** is significantly related to formal response to spousal violence. However, one of the socio-demographic characteristics is not significantly related to formal response to spousal violence and that is religion **(p<0.515)**.

Table:6 Formal response to spousal violence

Socio-demographic variables	Formal Response					Test of association
	Police	Social welfare centres	Centre of gender abuse	Legal service providers	Women organization	
Age 21-26 27-32 33-38 39-44 45 and above	8 (7.8%) 2 (1.9%) 4 (3.9%) 0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 4 (3.9%) 0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%) 11 (10.7) 18 (17.5%) 13 (12.6%) 0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 2 (1.9%) 0 (0.0%)	6 (5.8%) 4 (3.9%) 2 (1.9%) 7 (6.8%) 2 (1.9%)	X^2=84.312 Df=20 **Sig=0.000**
Marital Status Cohabiting Married Divorced Widowed	6 (5.8%) 8 (7.8%) 0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%) 4 (3.9%) 0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%) 30 (29.1%) 12 (11.7%) 0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 2 (1.9%) 0 (0.0%)	4 (3.9%) 13 (12.6%) 2 (1.9%) 2 (1.9%)	X^2=47.157 Df=15 **Sig=0.000**
Religion Christianity African Traditional	12 (11.7%) 2 (1.9%)	4 (3.9%) 0 (0.0%)	36 (35.0%) 6 (5.8%)	2 (1.9%) 0 (0.0%)	21 (20.4%) 0 (0.0%)	X^2=4.243 Df=5 Sig=0.515
Educational status No formal education Primary education	0 (0.0%) 6 (5.8%) 8 (7.8%) 0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%) 2 (1.9%) 40 (38.8%) 0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%) 4 (3.9%) 17 (16.5%)	X^2=61.638 Df=10 **Sig=0.000**

Secondary education		4 (3.9%)		2 (1.9%)		
Tertiary education		0 (0.0%)				
Employment status						X²=51.119 Df=10 **Sig=0.000**
Self-employed	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (9.7%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.9%)	
Unemployed	8 (7.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.9%)	
Civil Servant	6 (5.8%)	4 (3.9%)	32 (31.1%)	2 (1.9%)	15 (14.6%)	
Average income						X²=96.644 Df=25 **Sig=0.000**
Less than 5,000	4 (3.9%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.9%)	
5,000-15,000	6 (5.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
16,000-30,000	4 (3.9%)	4 (3.9%)	24 (23.3%)	0 (0.0%)	11 (10.7%)	
31,000-50,000	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	18 (17.5%)	2 (1.9%)	2 (1.9%)	
51,000 and above	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.9%)	
No regular source of income	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.9%)	
Form of marriage						X²=28.320 Df=5 **Sig=0.000**
Monogamy	6 (5.8%)	0 (0.0%)	34 (33.0%)	2 (1.9%)	19 (18.4%)	
Polygamy	8 (7.8%)	4 (3.9%)	8 (7.8%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.9%)	
Respondent's position						X²=81.920 Df=12 **Sig=0.000**
First wife	2 (3.6%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (18.2%)	10 (18.2%)	
Second wife	0 (0.0%)	4 (7.3%)	4 (7.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
Third wife	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.6%)	2 (3.6%)	
Fourth wife and above	8 (14.5%)	0 (0.0%)		0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	

Respondent's stay in the same house with spouse Yes No	6 (5.8%) 8 (7.8%)	4 (3.9%) 0 (0.0%)	30 (29.1%) 12 (11.7%)	2 (1.9%) 0 (0.0%)	17 (16.5%) 4 (3.9%)	X^2=19.511 Df=5 **Sig=0.002**
Number of people in respondent's household 2-5 6-9 10 and Above	4 (3.9%) 10 (9.7%) 0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%) 4 (3.9%) 0 (0.0%)	29 (28.2%) 10 (9.7%) 3 (2.9%)	0 (0.0%) 2 (1.9%) 0 (0.0%)	17 (16.5%) 2 (1.9%) 2 (1.9%)	X^2=30.029 Df=10 **Sig=0.001**
Age 26-35 36-49 50 and Above	0 (0.0%) 4 (3.9%) 10 (9.7%)	0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 4 (3.9%)	0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 42 (40.8%)	0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 2 (1.9%)	6 (5.8%) 4 (3.9%) 11 (10.7)	X^2=51.866 Df=10 **Sig=0.000**
Respondent's spouse years of schooling No formal education Primary education Secondary education Tertiary education	2 (1.9%) 8 (7.8%) 0 (0.0%) 4 (3.9%)	0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 4 (3.9%)	0 (0.0%) 6 (5.8%) 0 (0.0%) 36 (35.0%)	0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 0 (0.0%) 2 (1.9%)	0 (0.0%) 10 (9.7%) 2 (1.9%) 9 (8.7%)	X^2=59.955 Df=15 **Sig=0.000**
Respondent's spouse religion Christianity African traditional religion	6 (5.8%) 8 (7.8%)	4 (3.9%) 0 (0.0%)	36 (35.0%) 6 (5.8%)	2 (1.9%) 0 (0.0%)	21 (20.4%) 0 (0.0%)	X^2=23.394 Df=5 **Sig=0.000**

Respondent's spouse employment status						
Self-employed	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.9%)	0 (0.0%)	14 (13.6%)	X²=57.456 Df=10 **Sig=0.000**
Unemployed	2 (1.9%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
Civil servant	12 (11.7%)	0 (0.0%)	40 (38.8%)	2 (1.9%)	7 (6.8%)	
		4 (3.9%)				
Respondent's spouse income						
Less than 10,000	2 (1.9%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	X²=43.067 Df=15 **Sig=0.000**
11,000-25,000	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (4.9%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.9%)	
26,000-40,000	8 (7.8%)	4 (3.9%)	21 (20.4%)	2 (1.9%)	0 (0.0%)	
41,000 and above	4 (3.9%)	0 (0.0%)	16 (15.5%)	0 (0.0%)	17 (16.5%)	

Discussion of Findings

The findings from this study provide critical insights into the prevalence, forms, and responses to spousal violence among the respondents. The results indicate that spousal violence is a significant issue, with varying manifestations and underlying causes. The discussion is structured based on the key findings, supported by existing literature.

The study reveals that the most commonly experienced form of spousal violence among respondents is controlling behaviour (30.4%), followed by physical violence (24.6%), economic violence (16.7%), sexual violence (13.8%), and emotional violence (10.1%). Notably, only 2.2% of respondents reported not experiencing any form of spousal violence. These findings align with previous studies that have highlighted controlling behaviour as a dominant feature of intimate partner violence (IPV) (Jewkes et al., 2015; García-Moreno et al., 2013). Control over a partner's movement, social interactions, and economic independence often serve as a precursor to other forms of violence (Heise, 2012).

Further analysis of controlling behaviours indicates that the most common form is a spouse insisting on knowing the respondent's movements at all times (32.1%). This is closely followed by being ignored or treated indifferently (23.9%). Other controlling behaviours include anger when the respondent speaks with others (11.9%), restriction of access to healthcare (6.4%), preventing interaction with friends (3.7%), and suspicion of infidelity (4.6%). These findings are consistent with previous research, which suggests that coercive control tactics are frequently employed to establish dominance in intimate relationships (Stark, 2007).

The study identifies verbal abuse as the leading trigger for spousal violence (43.0%), followed by financial issues (21.5%). Other reasons include refusal of sex (7.4%), disobedience (5.2%), difficulties at work (4.4%), dowry-related conflict (4.4%), and spousal drunkenness (3.0%). The role of economic hardship in exacerbating spousal violence has been well-documented, with financial stressors often leading to increased tensions and conflicts within households (Jewkes et al., 2010). Similarly, refusal of sex as a reason for violence aligns with patriarchal norms that reinforce male entitlement over women's bodies (Koenig et al., 2006).

The study finds that 82.7% of respondents sought help, while 17.3% disclosed their experiences. Informal responses were significantly related to socio-demographic characteristics, including age, marital status, religion, educational status, employment status, income, form of marriage, and spouse-related factors (p<0.000). Previous studies have shown that individuals in different socio-demographic groups respond differently to IPV based on cultural norms, economic dependency, and perceived support systems (Ellsberg et al., 2015).

Formal responses to spousal violence were also found to be significantly associated with socio-demographic factors such as age, marital status, education, employment, income, and household composition (p<0.000 to p<0.002). However, religion was not significantly related to formal responses (p<0.515), suggesting that while faith-based institutions may play a role in providing informal support, they may not be the primary channel for formal interventions (Cantalupo, 2011).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined variations in women's help-seeking behaviour in response to violence and tried to determine the extent to which sociodemographic differences among women impacted their participation in both informal and formal help-seeking behaviours. The results of the analysis indicate that abused women actively attempt to utilize informal and formal assistance in response to violence. In the study area, informal sources are more popular than formal ones for two reasons. The cultural construct of traditional society deters women from approaching formal support systems, and at the same time, the formal support system is neither fully developed nor friendly. The study found significant variation in selecting specific sources of formal or informal support. Socio-demographic variables were found to be major determinants in using both types of support systems, namely, informal and formal.

Based on the findings in this study, it is recommended that policy initiatives should focus on augmenting both the formal and informal systems to create a more equitable society for women. Social isolation and economic marginalization may increase the vulnerability of an abused woman. Therefore, support for education and new economic opportunities should be augmented for women.

The responsibilities of families, friends and neighbours in response to domestic violence should be encouraged by promoting community-based action. Professional service providers as well as service providers from the wider community should be appropriately trained to provide safety to battered women in a supportive and non-judgemental fashion. Increased support for battered women's shelters and reforms in the criminal justice system are other important measures that

need to be adopted. These initiatives require long-term budgetary commitments as well, because poor women may not be able to purchase services for formal support. Adequate budgetary services along with an awareness campaign about such services may increase the use of formal support, which might be more effective.

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