

## **Impact of Violence on Female Students' Mental Health and Academic Performance in Social Studies in College of Education Gidan-Waya Kaduna State Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*The study investigated the impact of violence on the mental health and academic performance of female Social Studies students in NCE II in College of Education, Gidan-Waya, Kaduna State, Nigeria. Four research questions and four hypotheses were answered and tested in the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of all 840 female NCE II students and a sample of 370 students were selected using simple random sampling technique. Two structured instruments titled: The Impact of Violence on Female Students' Mental Health in Social Studies Questionnaire and Impact of Violence on Female Students' Academic Performance in Social Studies were developed on a five-point Likert scale. The validity was established through expert review and pilot testing, while reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.84. Data were collected with the assistance of trained female research assistants and analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Chi-square tests) at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that violence is significantly prevalent among female students and has a substantial negative effect on their mental health, leading to anxiety, depression, and emotional withdrawal. Academic performance was also found to be negatively affected, manifesting in absenteeism, poor concentration, and low achievement. Coping strategies ranged from adaptive mechanisms such as counseling and creative engagement to maladaptive responses such as self-isolation. The study concludes that violence against female students represents a profound educational and*

*psychological crisis that hampers their learning and well-being. It recommends the establishment of gender-sensitive support units with professional counselors, mandatory anti-violence training for staff, integration of awareness programs into NCE curricula, improved campus security measures, and the creation of peer-support networks to empower female students. These measures are essential for fostering safer, more inclusive, and academically supportive environments in Nigerian Colleges of Education.*

**Keywords:** *Violence, Female Students', Mental Health, Academic Performance, Social Studies*

## Introduction

Education is widely recognized as a vital instrument for national growth and development. It empowers individuals with cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills while instilling values, norms, and attitudes necessary for social cohesion and progress. In Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Education has consistently emphasized education as a tool for individual empowerment, economic advancement, and democratic stability (Federal Ministry of Education, 2018). Among the disciplines taught in Nigerian schools, Social Studies plays a particularly important role in promoting civic responsibility, model citizenship, and problem-solving skills to address pressing social issues such as cultism, drug abuse, corruption, and gender-based violence (Mezeobi, 2022; Kazi, 2017; Egan, 2021). Despite these aspirations, violence against female students continues to undermine educational goals. Globally, violence against women has been recognized as a widespread public health and human rights concern. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) reports that one in three women has experienced some form of physical or sexual violence, with profound consequences for their physical, psychological, and social well-being. Within educational settings, female students are increasingly vulnerable to harassment, abuse, and discrimination, which negatively affect their confidence, academic performance, and mental health (UN Women, 2023). These experiences compromise not only individual potential but also the national vision of education as a catalyst for sustainable development.

In Nigeria, the challenge is particularly acute. The Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS, 2018) indicates that 31% of women aged 15–49 have experienced physical violence, while 9% have suffered sexual violence. Many incidents remain unreported due to fear of stigma, retaliation, or weak institutional responses (Olufemi, 2021). Recent reports suggest that violence against women is on the rise. The Nigerian Femicide Observatory documented 17 women killed due to domestic violence in January 2025 alone, reflecting a sharp increase in gender-related killings (The Guardian, 2025). Female students in tertiary institutions, including teacher-training colleges, face particular risks of harassment and intimidation, both within and outside academic spaces, which further diminishes their ability to succeed academically (Afolabi & Ibrahim, 2023).

The impact of such violence on female students extends beyond physical harm. Violence inflicts psychological trauma that undermines concentration, memory retention, and motivation to learn. Survivors often report depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress, which manifest in poor classroom participation, absenteeism, and declining academic performance (Bamidele, 2022). For female students, especially those studying in rural or conflict-prone areas, these effects can be devastating, leading in some cases to school dropout. UNICEF (2023) stresses that school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) fosters an environment of fear and insecurity that prevents girls from fully engaging in the learning process. This has serious implications for higher education institutions where female students are expected to acquire professional skills that will shape their future contributions to society.

The context of Gidan-Waya, in southern Kaduna State, reflects these challenges. The College of Education Gidan-Waya serves students from diverse backgrounds, many of whom face socio-economic hardship, insecurity from communal clashes and banditry, and entrenched cultural norms that reinforce gender inequality (Aliyu, 2023). Female students in this institution are therefore not only exposed to harassment and discrimination but also to broader structural challenges that negatively impact their mental health and academic progress. These realities highlight the urgent need to investigate how violence affects female students' experiences, particularly within the Social Studies programme that is designed to equip learners with civic and problem-solving skills. While previous studies have examined gender-based violence in Nigeria (Olufemi, 2021; Nnadi, 2022), few have focused on its direct impact on female students' mental health and academic performance within Colleges of Education. Most existing research concentrates on domestic settings, workplace environments, or secondary schools, leaving a significant gap in understanding how teacher-training institutions are affected, especially in rural and conflict-affected regions. Addressing this gap is critical, as these colleges are central to preparing future educators who will in turn shape the values and learning experiences of future generations.

The aim of this study is therefore to examine the impact of violence on female students' mental health and academic performance in Social Studies in the College of Education Gidan-Waya, Kaduna State. By focusing on this population, the study seeks to generate empirical evidence that will inform institutional policies, support services, and interventions to safeguard students and enhance their academic success. In doing so, it contributes to broader efforts toward achieving gender equality, protecting student well-being, and strengthening the role of education as a tool for national development.

### Research Questions

1. What is the prevalence of violence against female Social Studies students in NCE II College of Education Gidan-Waya Kaduna State?
2. How does violence impact the mental health of female Social Studies students in NCE II Gidan-Waya Kaduna State?
3. What is the impact of violence on the academic performance of female Social Studies students in NCE II Gidan-Waya Kaduna State?
4. What coping strategies are employed by female Social Studies students in NCE II who have experienced violence in Gidan-Waya Kaduna State?

### Hypotheses

The following hypotheses will be tested at .05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant prevalence of violence against female Social Studies students in NCE II at the College of Education, Gidan-Waya, Kaduna State.
2. There is no significant relationship between exposure to violence and the mental health of female Social Studies students in NCE II at the College of Education, Gidan-Waya, Kaduna State.
3. There is no significant relationship between exposure to violence and the academic performance of female Social Studies students in NCE II at the College of Education, Gidan-Waya, Kaduna State.

4. There is no significant relationship between the coping strategies employed and the experiences of violence among female Social Studies students in NCE II at the College of Education, Gidan-Waya, Kaduna State.

### **Theoretical/ Conceptual Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in Ecological Systems Theory, propounded by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979, and the Feminist Theory of Gender-Based Violence, which evolved from the broader feminist theoretical movement initiated during the second-wave feminism of the 1960s and 1970s, with foundational contributions from scholars like Bell Hooks, Andrea Dworkin, and Judith Butler. These theories offer valuable lenses through which to explore and understand the complex interaction between violence, mental health, and educational outcomes among female students in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Together, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and the Feminist Theory of Gender-Based Violence provide a robust conceptual foundation for this study. They enable a holistic exploration of how external environments and gendered power structures intersect to impact female students' mental health and academic performance in the context of Gidan-Waya, Kaduna State. These theories support the argument that tackling Violence against female students in educational institutions requires both systemic change and contextual understanding of students lived realities.

### **Concept Of Violence Against Female Students**

Violence against female students is a multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses physical, sexual, psychological, economic, and cultural forms of abuse, all of which undermine women's dignity, safety, and well-being. The World Health Organization (2020) and the United Nations (2019) emphasize that such violence extends beyond physical harm to include emotional trauma, coercion, and systemic practices that perpetuate gender inequality. The forms of gender-based violence (GBV) commonly experienced by female students include: physical violence such as assault, beating, or other bodily harm; sexual violence including harassment, rape, and exploitation; psychological or emotional abuse manifested through intimidation, humiliation, or threats; economic violence such as deprivation of financial resources or opportunities; and cultural violence, which is often embedded in harmful traditional practices like female genital mutilation, child marriage, and trafficking (Eze, 2020; Okoye, 2021; Adeyemi & Oloruntoba, 2022; Tella & Nwogwugwu, 2022). These acts not only violate human rights but also have long-term consequences on victims' mental health, educational attainment, and socio-economic opportunities. In many contexts, cultural norms and institutional weaknesses normalize such violence, making it difficult for survivors to seek justice. Addressing violence against female students therefore requires a holistic, intersectional approach that combines legal reforms, education, economic empowerment, awareness campaigns, and community engagement to break the cycle of abuse and promote gender equality.

### **Mental Health**

Mental health is a dynamic state of emotional, psychological, social, and sometimes spiritual well-being that shapes how individuals think, feel, and behave in daily life. It determines their ability to cope with stress, maintain relationships, make decisions, and contribute productively to society (WHO, 2021). Good mental health is not merely the absence of illness but also includes positive qualities such as resilience, self-esteem, and emotional regulation (Keyes,

2021). It is influenced by an interplay of biological, psychological, and environmental factors, including genetic predisposition, life experiences, and socio-economic conditions (Barker, 2021).

The dynamic nature of mental health means it can fluctuate across the lifespan depending on internal and external circumstances. While supportive relationships, access to healthcare, and stable living conditions enhance mental well-being, adverse experiences such as trauma, violence, poverty, or social isolation can increase vulnerability to conditions like anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Jorm, 2020; Tiwari, 2020). For female students, especially those exposed to violence, these challenges can significantly undermine academic performance and social functioning, underscoring the importance of targeted support systems and trauma-informed interventions.

### **Academic Performance**

Academic performance reflects the knowledge, skills, and competencies students acquire through formal and informal learning, typically measured by grades, participation, and overall educational attainment. For female students, however, exposure to violence whether physical, sexual, emotional, or psychological seriously undermines this performance. Such violence often results in absenteeism, poor concentration, low self-esteem, and limited access to learning resources, all of which hinder academic achievement. Beyond the immediate effects, the trauma and social isolation associated with violence can lead to withdrawal from class activities, reduced motivation, and in some cases, school dropout. Thus, violence against female students not only affects their individual success but also perpetuates broader educational inequalities, making the creation of supportive, gender-sensitive learning environments essential for their academic progress.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the impact of violence on female students' mental health and academic performance in Social Studies at the College of Education, Gidan-Waya, Kaduna State. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the collection of data from a representative sample and allowed the researcher to identify patterns, relationships, and variations in experiences of violence. The target population comprised all female NCE students in the institution, totaling 3,010 across different levels, out of which a sample of 370 students was determined using the Yamane (1967) formula. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were employed to ensure fair representation across levels and age groups, thereby enhancing the validity and generalizability of the findings.

Data were collected using two self-constructed questionnaires designed to capture the psychological and academic effects of violence on female students. The instruments, developed through a rigorous review of literature and validated by experts in education and psychology, consisted of 28 items each, structured on a five-point Likert scale. A pilot test conducted with 30 students produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.84, confirming reliability. Ethical procedures were strictly observed: participants were briefed on the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality and voluntary participation, and guided in completing the questionnaires. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, employing descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations) and inferential tests (Pearson correlation and regression analyses) to determine the relationship between violence, mental health, and academic performance at a 0.05 significance level.



## Results

**Research Question One:** What is the prevalence of violence against female Social Studies students in NCE II College of Education Gidan-Waya Kaduna State?

**Table 1: Prevalence of violence against female Social Studies students**

SN	Item	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean
1	I often feel anxious due to experiences of violence on or off campus.	112 (35.0)	172 (53.8)	-	36 (11.3)	-	4.13
2	I have experienced depression resulting from verbal or physical abuse.	144 (45.0)	140 (43.8)	-	36 (11.3)	-	4.23
3	My self-esteem has been negatively affected by violence from peers or staff.	52 (16.3)	92 (28.7)	28 (8.8)	136 (42.5)	12 (3.8)	3.11
4	I have frequent nightmares or sleep disturbances due to trauma from violence.	44 (13.8)	64 (20.0)	40 (12.5)	152 (47.5)	20 (6.3)	2.88
5	I feel emotionally unsafe on campus.	36 (11.3)	28 (8.8)	88 (27.5)	144 (45.0)	24 (7.5)	2.71

Source: Field Work (2025)

The findings in Table 1 show that violence has a strong psychological impact on female Social Studies students, with many reporting high levels of anxiety (Mean = 4.13) and depression resulting from abuse (Mean = 4.23). However, the effects on self-esteem (Mean = 3.11), sleep disturbances (Mean = 2.88), and feelings of emotional unsafety on campus (Mean = 2.71) were less strongly reported, suggesting that while violence is prevalent, its most significant consequences are linked to anxiety and depression rather than other emotional or behavioural outcomes

**Research Question Two:** How does violence impact the mental health of female Social Studies students in NCE II Gidan-Waya Kaduna State?

**Table 2: Violence impact the mental health of female Social Studies students**

SN	Item	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean
1	Violence has made it difficult for me to focus or concentrate on my studies.	44 (13.8)	72 (22.5)	28 (8.8)	172 (53.8)	4 (1.3)	2.94
2	I often skip lectures due to emotional distress caused by violence.	108 (33.8)	140 (43.8)	16 (5.0)	48 (15.0)	8 (2.5)	3.91
3	I no longer participate confidently in group activities/discussion.	36 (11.3)	56 (17.5)	56 (17.5)	152 (47.5)	20 (6.3)	2.8

4	My motivation to complete school has reduced because of violence-related stress/issues.	132 (41.3)	148 (46.3)	4 (1.3)	36 (11.3)	-	4.18
5	I have considered dropping out of college due to recurring violence and trauma.	128 (40.0)	132 (41.3)	20 (6.3)	36 (11.3)	4 (1.3)	4.08
6	I isolate myself from others because of fear of being abused again.	64 (20.0)	152 (47.5)	8 (2.5)	92 (28.7)	4 (1.3)	3.56
7	Violence has affected my ability to express myself confidently in Social Studies classes.	88 (27.5)	176 (55.0)	12 (3.8)	40 (12.5)	4 (1.3)	3.95

Source: Field Work (2025)

The results in Table 2 reveal that violence has significant adverse effects on the mental health of female Social Studies students in NCE II at Gidan-Waya. Many respondents reported reduced motivation to complete their studies (Mean = 4.18) and admitted considering dropping out due to recurring violence and trauma (Mean = 4.08). Emotional distress also led to frequent absenteeism (Mean = 3.91), while class participation and self-expression were negatively affected (Mean = 3.95). Some students isolated themselves out of fear of re-victimization (Mean = 3.56). Although the impact on focus (Mean = 2.94) and group participation (Mean = 2.80) was less pronounced, the overall results indicate that violence fosters withdrawal, emotional instability, and diminished academic engagement among female students.

**Table 3: Impact of violence on the academic performance of female Social Studies students**

SN	Item	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean
1	I believe violence has slowed my academic progress compared to my peers.	104 (32.5)	168 (52.5)	16 (5.0)	28 (8.8)	4 (1.3)	4.06
2	Academic deadlines are difficult to meet when dealing with trauma-related stress.	132 (41.3)	152 (47.5)	4 (1.3)	32 (10.0)	-	4.2
3	I sometimes forget classwork content due to emotional trauma.	116 (36.3)	156 (48.8)	12 (3.8)	28 (8.8)	8 (2.5)	4.08
4	I avoid attending lectures where the teacher is known to be verbally abusive.	124 (38.8)	140 (43.8)	-	44 (13.8)	12 (3.8)	4
5	I have received warnings for poor academic performance due to absenteeism.	104 (32.5)	168 (52.5)	-	48 (15.0)	-	4.03
6	My academic self-efficacy has declined due to unresolved abuse issues.	96 (30.0)	196 (61.3)	-	16 (5.0)	12 (3.8)	4.09

7	I have failed at least one course due to psychological distress.	100 (31.3)	180 (56.3)	-	32 (10.0)	8 (2.5)	4.04
8	My class attendance has dropped significantly in recent months due to emotional exhaustion.	100 (31.3)	188 (58.8)	-	24 (7.5)	8 (2.5)	4.09
9	Violence has made it harder for me to set academic goals.	140 (43.8)	164 (51.2)	-	12 (3.8)	4 (1.3)	4.33
10	If violence were eradicated, I would perform better academically in Social Studies.	112 (35.0)	168 (52.5)	-	32 (10.0)	8 (2.5)	4.08

Source: Field Work (2025)

The results indicate that violence severely undermines the academic performance of female Social Studies students in NCE II at Gidan-Waya. Students reported struggling to meet academic deadlines (Mean = 4.20), forgetting class content (Mean = 4.08), and failing courses (Mean = 4.04) due to trauma-related stress. Poor attendance (Mean = 4.09), avoidance of verbally abusive lectures (Mean = 4.00), and absenteeism leading to performance warnings (Mean = 4.03) were also highlighted. The most critical effect was a decline in goal-setting ability (Mean = 4.33), alongside reduced academic self-efficacy (Mean = 4.09). Collectively, the findings suggest that violence disrupts learning processes, lowers confidence, and weakens achievement, with many students believing their performance would improve in violence-free environments.

**Research Question Four:** What coping strategies are employed by female Social Studies students in NCE II who have experienced violence in Gidan-Waya Kaduna State

**Table 4: Coping strategies are employed by female Social Studies students in NCE II who have experienced violence**

SN	Item	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean
1	I use journalism or creative writing to cope with mental stress caused by violence.	116 (36.3)	140 (43.8)	-	36 (11.3)	24 (7.5)	4.41
2	I have sought help from the school counselling unit after a violent experience.	132 (41.3)	156 (48.8)	-	28 (8.8)	4 (1.3)	4.2
3	Violence has caused me to underperform in exams or assessments.	108 (34.2)	160 (50.6)	-	44 (13.9)	4 (1.3)	4.03
4	I find it hard to retain what I study due to recurring thoughts of abuse.	36 (11.8)	60 (19.7)	4 (1.3)	92 (30.3)	112 (36.8)	2.39



5	I experience emotional breakdowns during academic activities due to trauma.	76 (23.8)	108 (33.8)	12 (3.8)	92 (28.7)	32 (10.0)	3.33
6	My academic ambition has been negatively affected by the violence I've faced.	100 (31.3)	148 (46.3)	4 (1.3)	48 (15.0)	20 (6.3)	3.81

Source: Field Work (2025)

The study shows that violence profoundly impairs the academic performance of female Social Studies students in NCE II at Gidan-Waya. Respondents highlighted struggles with meeting deadlines (Mean = 4.20), remembering class content (Mean = 4.08), maintaining attendance (Mean = 4.09), and avoiding failure in courses (Mean = 4.04). Many also reported skipping verbally abusive lectures (Mean = 4.00) and receiving warnings for absenteeism-related poor performance (Mean = 4.03). Notably, violence eroded students' self-efficacy (Mean = 4.09) and posed the greatest challenge in setting academic goals (Mean = 4.33). Overall, the findings confirm that violence disrupts learning, lowers academic confidence, and weakens achievement, with students affirming they would excel in a safe, violence-free environment.

### Testing of Hypotheses

The analysis and interpretation of the research hypotheses are presented using the Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) statistical test, as shown in Tables 9 through 14. The purpose of testing these hypotheses was to determine the statistical significance of associations and patterns within the data obtained from female Social Studies students in NCE II at the College of Education, Gidan-Waya, Kaduna State, with respect to their experiences of violence and its impact on various aspects of their lives. The null hypotheses ( $H_0$ ) for each were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

**Table 5: Summary Table for Hypotheses**

SN	N	df	LS	$X^2_{cal}$	$X^2_{crit}$	p-value	Decision
H <sub>1</sub>	320	4	0.05	14.8	9.49	0.005	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
H <sub>2</sub>	320	5	0.05	18.4	11.1	0.002	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
H <sub>3</sub>	320	4	0.05	12.6	9.49	0.014	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
H <sub>4</sub>	320	6	0.05	20.4	12.6	0.001	Reject H <sub>0</sub>

The chi-square test results presented in Table 5 reveal that all four null hypotheses were rejected at the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates a significant prevalence of violence against female Social Studies students in NCE II at the College of Education, Gidan-Waya, and establishes strong relationships between exposure to violence and both their mental health and academic performance. Furthermore, the findings show that coping strategies are significantly associated

with students' experiences of violence, underscoring the pervasive and multidimensional impact of violence on their educational and personal lives.

## Discussion

The study revealed a high prevalence of violence among female students, with emotional and psychological harm such as anxiety ( $M = 4.13$ ), depression ( $M = 4.23$ ), and reduced self-esteem ( $M = 3.11$ ) being widespread, leading to the rejection of Hypothesis One ( $X^2 = 14.8$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ). This aligns with Ibrahim, Mustapha, and Saidu (2023) as well as Kure and Ayuba (2021), who documented systemic gender-based violence in Nigerian colleges. Violence was also found to significantly affect mental health, with high levels of distress, absenteeism, and dropout intentions ( $M = 4.18$ ;  $M = 4.08$ ), supported by Hypothesis Two ( $X^2 = 18.4$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ). These results corroborate Onyemaechi, Hassan, and Musa (2021) and Okechukwu, Oladele, and Adegoke (2020), who observed that violence exposure leads to anxiety, depression, and trauma-related dysfunctions. In terms of academics, the findings showed difficulty in meeting deadlines, memory loss, and reduced self-efficacy ( $M = 4.20$ ;  $M = 4.08$ ;  $M = 4.09$ ), with Hypothesis Three rejected ( $X^2 = 12.6$ ,  $p = 0.014$ ). This supports Mohammed, Bello, and Gimba (2022) and Tanko, Agbaji, and Idoko (2023), who linked gender-based violence to poor performance and disengagement. Finally, coping strategies were significantly related to experiences of violence ( $X^2 = 20.4$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), with many students relying on creative outlets ( $M = 4.41$ ) or counseling ( $M = 4.20$ ), though maladaptive coping such as withdrawal persisted. These results are consistent with Zainab, Aliyu, and Okeke (2020) and Ahmed and Umeh (2024), highlighting the need for trauma-informed frameworks in education to promote healthier coping mechanisms.

## Conclusion

The study concludes that violence against female students in higher institutions, particularly in Social Studies at the College of Education, Gidan-Waya, is both a social and academic crisis. The findings reveal a high prevalence of emotional, verbal, and physical abuse, which significantly undermines students' mental health, leading to depression, fear, and trauma that disrupt concentration, attendance, and academic performance. The results also show that coping strategies are largely shaped by the violence experienced and the limited institutional support available, with schools failing to adequately protect victims and instead reinforcing a culture of silence. Overall, the study emphasizes that without strong, gender-sensitive policies and responsive leadership, female students' academic and psychological well-being will remain at risk, underscoring the urgent need for safer and more inclusive educational environments.

## Recommendations

Based on the study recommends that stakeholders take urgent steps to address violence against female students in higher institutions. School administrators should create gender-sensitive support units with trained counselors and confidential reporting

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