

Factors Influencing Access to Justice for Victims of Domestic Violence in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State Nigeria

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Abstract—This study examines the factors influencing access to justice for victims of domestic violence in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. Using a survey research design, 378 adult respondents were sampled from a population of approximately 306,716 using Krejcie and Morgan's sample size determination, with data collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study was anchored on Feminist Theory. Findings reveal that physical violence (32.8%) is the most common form of domestic violence, followed by emotional violence (22.8%). Fear of stigma (27.0%) constitutes the major barrier preventing victims from seeking justice, with financial constraints (23.3%) and lack of trust in law enforcement (19.6%) also significant. The majority of respondents rated the response of justice institutions as ineffective (29.6%) or very ineffective (19.1%), while delay in court processes (25.4%) and fear of retaliation from perpetrators (22.8%) emerged as the greatest challenges victims face when seeking justice. The study concludes that domestic violence remains a serious social problem in Jos South, and access to justice is severely constrained by sociocultural stigma, economic dependency, weak institutional responses, and procedural delays. Recommendations include strengthening public enlightenment campaigns to reduce stigma, improving law enforcement training and victim-friendly mechanisms, providing accessible legal aid and economic empowerment programs, and introducing faster judicial procedures for domestic violence cases.

Index Terms—Domestic violence, Access to justice, Victims, and Barriers

I. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Domestic violence continues to be one of the most persistent social problems in families and communities around the world. The phenomenon consists of

physical, emotional, psychological, sexual and economic abuse exercised on a person in intimate or domestic relations. It is a universal phenomenon transcending cultural, religious, class, ethnic and geographical boundaries. According to World Health Organization, domestic violence constitutes a major violation of human rights and poses serious threats to the physical, emotional, and social wellbeing of victims, particularly women and children. Accordingly, Sardinha et al. (2022), García Moreno et al. (2021), and UN Women (2023) further revealed that violence against women remains widespread globally despite increasing advocacy and legal interventions aimed at reducing gender-based violence. These scholars maintained that unequal gender relations, patriarchal cultural systems, and weak institutional protection continue to expose many women to abuse within intimate relationships. Similarly, Krug et al. (2022) argued that domestic violence should not be viewed merely as a private family issue but as a serious social and public health concern with long term consequences on victims and society. In the same vein, Devries et al. (2023) observed that victims of domestic violence often experience physical injuries, emotional trauma, depression, anxiety, social isolation, and economic hardship, which may affect their ability to participate effectively in social and economic life. Although men can also become victims, women remain disproportionately affected because of prevailing patriarchal structures and unequal power relations within many societies. Contemporary feminist scholars such as Flood and Pease (2021) emphasized that gender inequality and male dominance remain major factors sustaining domestic violence across both developed and developing societies. In African

societies, including Nigeria, domestic violence is further reinforced by cultural beliefs, social norms, and economic dependency that discourage victims from reporting abuse or seeking justice. Additionally, Ajayi et al. (2023) and Obi and Ozumba (2022) noted that many victims in Nigeria continue to endure violence silently because of fear of stigma, family pressure, poverty, and lack of confidence in legal institutions. This situation has continued to undermine efforts aimed at protecting victims and promoting access to justice. In Plateau State, and particularly in Jos South Local Government Area, the issue of domestic violence cannot be separated from the broader realities of social instability, economic hardship, and recurring communal conflicts that have affected the region for decades Oosterom and Sha (2019). Jos and its surrounding areas have experienced repeated episodes of ethno religious and communal violence, leading to displacement, insecurity, and weakened social institutions. Scholars such as Osaretin and Akov (2013) noted that the persistent conflicts in Jos have negatively affected governance, social cohesion, and institutional effectiveness. Similarly, Madueke (2019) argued that the prolonged violence in Jos created deep divisions within communities and weakened citizens' confidence in state institutions. These conditions may indirectly affect the ability of domestic violence victims to access justice because institutions responsible for protection and legal enforcement may already be overstretched or distrusted.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Domestic violence has continued to constitute a major social and human rights problem in Nigeria, particularly among vulnerable women and children who often experience physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and economic abuse within intimate relationships. In Plateau State, especially in Jos South Local Government Area, incidents of domestic violence have increasingly become a source of concern due to their adverse effects on victims, families, and the wider society. Despite the existence of legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms such as the police, courts, and human rights agencies established to protect victims and ensure justice, many victims of domestic violence still face difficulties in accessing justice and obtaining adequate protection.

Recent studies have shown that factors such as poverty, fear of stigmatization, cultural norms, lack of legal awareness, and weak institutional responses continue to discourage victims from reporting cases or pursuing legal redress (Ajayi et al., 2023; Obi & Ozumba, 2022). Although existing studies have provided important insights into the prevalence and consequences of domestic violence in Nigeria, limited attention has been given to the specific factors influencing victims' access to justice at the Local Government level, particularly in conflict sensitive areas such as Jos South. Studies by Eze-Anaba (2021) and Afolabi et al. (2022) indicate that many victims encounter insensitive attitudes from law enforcement officers, prolonged judicial procedures, financial constraints, and inadequate social support systems, which often discourage them from seeking legal intervention. While previous studies have emphasized the role of legal reforms and policy frameworks in addressing gender-based violence, there remains inadequate understanding of how sociocultural beliefs, religious influences, economic dependency, and institutional inefficiencies collectively shape victims' experiences in accessing justice. Scholars such as Flood and Pease (2021) and García Moreno et al. (2021) further argued that domestic violence is sustained by unequal gender relations and patriarchal social structures that often normalize abuse and silence victims within many developing societies. In Jos South Local Government Area, recurring social tensions, economic hardship, and weak confidence in formal institutions may further complicate victims' willingness and ability to seek justice, yet empirical evidence on these realities remains limited. Despite increasing scholarly and policy attention toward domestic violence globally and in Nigeria, research focusing specifically on access to justice for victims within Plateau State remains underrepresented. Most existing studies concentrate on the prevalence, causes, and effects of domestic violence without adequately examining the challenges victims face in navigating legal and institutional processes to obtain justice and protection (Aihie, 2009; Devries et al., 2023). Furthermore, there is limited empirical evidence on how victims in Jos South strategically respond to barriers associated with reporting abuse, accessing legal services, and obtaining institutional support within their sociocultural environment. It is against this backdrop that this study examines the factors

influencing access to justice for victims of domestic violence in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Domestic Violence

Domestic violence refers to any form of abusive behaviour that occurs within intimate, family, or domestic relationships with the intention of controlling, intimidating, or harming another person (World Health Organization, 2024). It involves a pattern of behaviour through which one partner exercises power and dominance over another through physical assault, emotional manipulation, sexual abuse, verbal intimidation, psychological oppression, or economic deprivation. Domestic violence is not limited to physical injury alone; it also includes actions that threaten the dignity, freedom, and wellbeing of victims within the household. Basile, Smith, and Friar (2025) note that intimate partner violence (IPV) and domestic violence are nearly identical in concept, with the CDC defining IPV as physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, and psychological aggression (including coercive tactics) by a current or former intimate partner. Aihie (2009) described domestic violence as violence occurring among individuals who are related through marriage, blood, cohabitation, or intimate relationships. Similarly, the World Health Organization (2024) defines intimate partner violence as behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours. A scoping review by Boxall, Morgan, and Brown (2023) found that definitions of various forms of family violence do not differ greatly in terms of the relationship between victim and perpetrator, behaviour, intention, and harm caused to the victim. In Nigeria, domestic violence cuts across social class, religion, ethnicity, and educational background. Cases of wife battery, marital rape, child abuse, and intimate partner violence are frequently reported in both rural and urban communities García Moreno et al. (2021). However, many incidents remain unreported because victims often lack confidence in the justice system or fear social discrimination. One notable example in Nigeria was the widely publicized case of gospel singer Osinachi Nwachukwu, whose death in 2022

generated national outrage after allegations emerged that she had suffered prolonged domestic abuse from her husband. The incident drew attention to the persistent culture of silence surrounding domestic violence in Nigeria, especially among women who remain in abusive marriages because of religious expectations, family pressure, or fear of social condemnation.

B. Access to Justice

Access to justice for domestic violence survivors in Nigeria remains severely constrained by a combination of legal fragmentation, institutional failures, economic dependency, and deep-rooted cultural norms, despite the existence of frameworks such as the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) (VAPP) Act (Eze-Anaba, 2021; Afolabi, Ogunwale, & Adebayo, 2022). Even in states that have domesticated the VAPP Act, enforcement remains alarmingly weak: between 2020 and 2024, over 24,009 reported gender-based violence cases in Lagos State resulted in only two convictions in National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) records (Okafor & Nnamdi, 2024), and Nigeria as a whole spent a mere ₦365.60 per woman on GBV prevention and response in 2024 (Ajayi, Okonkwo, & Uche, 2025). A decade after its passage, more than 50% of Nigerians remain unaware of the VAPP Act's existence, with awareness as low as 42.9% in rural areas (Chukwuma & Adebayo, 2023). Police officers frequently dismiss domestic abuse as a "private family matter," discouraging formal complaints, and victims often lack access to affordable legal aid or protection orders (Obi & Ozumba, 2022). A 2023 HiiL survey estimated that 15,000 domestic violence cases occur annually in Ogun State alone, yet only a fraction reach court (HiiL Nigeria, 2023).

The interaction of poverty, cultural stigma, and judicial delays creates a system where many survivors particularly those who are economically dependent on their abusers are forced to remain silent or reconcile rather than seek legal redress (Ajayi et al., 2023; Obi & Ozumba, 2022). This reality aligns with conflict theory, which argues that legal institutions reflect and perpetuate broader social inequalities, granting those with economic and political power greater access to legal resources while marginalising vulnerable populations (García-Moreno, Hegarty, & D'Oliveira, 2021). Feminist scholars further contend that

patriarchal social structures shape legal responses to domestic violence, limiting women's ability to obtain justice and perpetuating cycles of violence and impunity (Eze-Anaba, 2021; Afolabi et al., 2022). Consequently, strengthening access to justice requires not only legal reforms but also sustained investment in legal aid, police training, judicial efficiency, and community-based support services (World Health Organization, 2024; Basile, Smith, & Friar, 2025). Without these measures, the promise of legal protection will remain unfulfilled for the majority of domestic violence survivors in Nigeria.

C. Victimization and Victim Support Systems

Victimization refers to the process by which an individual suffers harm physical, psychological, sexual, or economic as a result of criminal acts, abuse of power, or systemic neglect, while victim support systems comprise the formal and informal mechanisms established to assist survivors in their recovery, pursuit of justice, and reintegration into society. Globally, the field of victimology has evolved from a peripheral concern within criminology to a central focus of human rights advocacy (Aihie, 2009; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020). In the Nigerian context, victimization is pervasive across multiple domains: intimate partner violence (IPV), sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), human trafficking, terrorism-related harm (e.g., Boko Haram insurgency), and police brutality. According to the Nigeria Police Force, over 17,415 cases of gender- and domestic-based violence were recorded in 2024 alone, while the federal Ministry of Women Affairs documented more than 30,000 GBV cases reported between 2020 and 2024 (Sulaiman-Ibrahim, 2025; Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, 2025). Every 49 hours, a woman or girl is killed in Nigeria, most often by an intimate partner or close relative (DOHS Cares Foundation, 2024). In the conflict-affected north-east, case workers from organisations such as the Child Protection and Peer Learning Initiative (CPPLI) provide psychosocial support, vocational training, and legal referrals to survivors of Boko Haram captivity, helping to rebuild lives shattered by abduction and forced association (OCHA, 2025). Despite these efforts, a 2023 study of IPV victims in Ebonyi State identified multiple barriers to support service utilisation, including cultural/religious beliefs, poverty, illiteracy, fear of stigmatisation, lack of trust

in formal services, the presence of children, and the perceived superiority of the abusive partner (Okah, Nwafor, & Onalu, 2025). Similarly, research in urban slums of Lagos and Oyo States found that female adolescent survivors of SGBV face stigmatisation, non-formalisation of police reports, ambiguous attitudes of health workers, and general unfamiliarity with available services, leading to gross inefficiency in intervention delivery (Ikuteyijo, 2022). The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) has rescued over 22,000 victims of human trafficking, yet its shelter facilities remain grossly inadequate, lacking sufficient capacity for feeding, medical support, legal assistance, psycho-social care, and long-term reintegration (Waziri-Azi, 2023). These deficits are compounded by chronic underfunding: Nigeria spent an average of only ₦365.60 per woman on GBV prevention and response in 2024 (Invictus Africa, 2025). Innovative models such as the “Ibi Isadi” (Yoruba for “place of refuge”) initiative in Ogun State integrate legal, medical, and community-based support systems through Community Justice Representatives stationed at primary health centres and an online referral portal, allowing survivors to access help via phone, online, or in person (HiiL, 2024). The Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency has opened the 30-bed “Eko Haven” shelter, providing health, psychosocial, and livelihood support to SGBV survivors (Lagos State DSVA, 2023). In the north-east, the GBV Area of Responsibility (AoR) coordinated multi-sectoral services in 26 local government areas across Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states in 2024, reaching 1.3 million individuals with clinical management of rape, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), legal aid, and dignity kits (GBV AoR, 2024). International Alert, with support from UKaid, has trained police, health workers, and community first responders in Kaduna on psychological first aid for SGBV victims, aiming to improve documentation, data protection, and survivor-centered referral (International Alert, 2023). Additionally, ARDA Development Communication Inc. launched a toll-free helpline (08000202020) in Lagos and Borno States, providing survivors with confidential access to medical care, psychosocial support, legal aid, and referral services through an interactive voice response system (ARDA-DCI, 2023). The Cece Yara Foundation, the Mirabel Centre, and other partners

have also strengthened support for child sexual abuse survivors, with the Salama Sexual Assault Referral Centre in Kaduna recording 3,977 SGBV cases between 2019 and 2024 and offering free medical treatment, psychosocial counselling, and optional legal intervention (Abbin, 2024). Nevertheless, structural limitations persist: primary health centres often lack counselling services, rehabilitation centres, and trained personnel; police attitudes remain inconsistent; and a 2024 study found that only 34 per cent of medical doctors support the integration of traditional medicine into modern healthcare for holistic victim recovery (Nwokocha, 2019). Furthermore, a report by the National Human Rights Commission (2023) documented persistent compensation gaps for victims of police brutality, highlighting systemic impunity. To build a truly effective victim support system, Nigeria must urgently increase budgetary allocations to GBV response, mandate survivor-centered policing and prosecutorial training, expand Sexual Assault Referral Centres to all local government areas, and integrate mental health and traditional healing pathways into a coherent national framework that respects cultural diversity while upholding human rights standards (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, 2025; Partners West Africa Nigeria, 2022).

3.1 Empirical review

Aihie (2009) conducted an empirical study on the prevalence of domestic violence in Nigeria and its implications for counselling and social intervention. The study examined the different forms of domestic violence experienced by women within intimate relationships and explored the social and cultural factors responsible for the persistence of abuse in Nigerian society. The research also aimed at understanding how victims respond to violence and the implications for social support and counselling services. The study adopted a survey research design. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews administered to married women and victims of domestic violence within selected communities in Nigeria. The researcher utilized descriptive statistical methods in analyzing the responses obtained from participants. The study focused on respondents' experiences of physical, emotional, psychological, and verbal abuse within domestic relationships. The findings revealed that

domestic violence was highly prevalent among married couples in Nigeria, particularly against women. The study found that many women experienced physical assault, emotional abuse, intimidation, and economic deprivation from their spouses. The research further revealed that cultural beliefs, patriarchal social structures, economic dependency, and fear of stigmatization contributed significantly to the persistence of domestic violence and the unwillingness of victims to report abuse. The study also showed that many victims preferred enduring violence silently rather than seeking legal or institutional intervention because of fear of family breakdown and social condemnation. The study concluded that domestic violence remains a serious social problem in Nigeria with severe consequences on victims' physical and psychological wellbeing. Aihie (2009) emphasized the need for effective counselling services, public enlightenment campaigns, legal protection, and institutional support systems to assist victims of domestic violence.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

This study anchored on Feminist theory:

Feminist Theory

Feminist Theory is one of the most relevant sociological theories used in explaining domestic violence and the challenges victims encounter in accessing justice. The theory emerged from feminist movements that sought to challenge gender inequality, patriarchy, and the systematic oppression of women within society. The intellectual foundation of Feminist Theory can be traced to the works of early feminist scholars such as Mary Wollstonecraft in the eighteenth century, who advocated for women's rights and equality. However, the theory became more prominent during the second wave feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s through the contributions of scholars such as Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, and Kate Millett. These scholars argued that society is structured in ways that systematically favour men while subordinating women socially, economically, politically, and culturally. Feminist Theory is primarily based on the assumption that gender inequality is deeply embedded within social institutions, family structures, cultural beliefs, and legal systems. The theory argues that men generally occupy dominant positions in society, while women are often placed in subordinate roles. According to

feminist scholars, domestic violence is not simply a personal or family problem but a manifestation of unequal power relations between men and women within patriarchal societies. Dobash and Dobash (1979) argued that violence against women is often used as a mechanism through which men maintain control and authority over women in intimate relationships. Similarly, Flood and Pease (2021) maintained that patriarchal norms and traditional gender expectations continue to legitimize violence against women in many societies. Additionally, the Theory assume that societal institutions such as religion, law, culture, and family often reinforce women's oppression by normalizing male dominance and female submissiveness. In many African societies, including Nigeria, women are socialized to tolerate hardship and remain submissive within marriage, while men are culturally granted authority and control within the household. This unequal power structure often makes women more vulnerable to domestic violence and discourages them from seeking justice when abuse occurs. Feminist theorists further argue that victims of domestic violence frequently encounter discrimination and insensitivity within legal and institutional systems because those systems are also influenced by patriarchal ideologies.

The relevance of Feminist Theory to this study lies in its ability to explain the structural and cultural factors influencing access to justice for victims of domestic violence in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State. The theory helps in understanding how patriarchal traditions, gender inequality, economic dependency, and cultural expectations contribute to the victimization of women and limit their ability to seek justice. In many Nigerian communities, domestic violence is often treated as a private family matter, thereby discouraging victims from reporting abuse to law enforcement agencies. Feminist Theory explains that such societal attitudes are products of patriarchal social systems that prioritize family reputation and male authority over women's rights and safety. Furthermore, the theory is significant to this study because it highlights the institutional barriers faced by victims in accessing justice. Victims of domestic violence often encounter victim blaming, intimidation, delays in judicial processes, and lack of adequate protection from security agencies. Feminist Theory argues that these barriers are connected to broader gender inequalities within society and state

institutions. The theory therefore provides a useful framework for examining how social structures and institutional practices shape victims' experiences in seeking justice and protection.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study adopted the survey research design. The survey design was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to obtain information directly from respondents regarding their experiences, perceptions, and opinions on the factors influencing access to justice for victims of domestic violence in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. The design also allows for the collection of quantitative data from a relatively large population within a limited period. According to Creswell (2018), survey research design is suitable for studies that seek to describe attitudes, behaviors, and social conditions within a population. The design was therefore appropriate for examining the social, cultural, economic, and institutional factors affecting victims' access to justice.

B. Study Area

The study was conducted in Jos South Local Government Area. Jos South is one of the seventeen Local Government Areas in Plateau State and is located within the North Central region of Nigeria. The Local Government Area shares boundaries with Jos North, Barkin Ladi, Riyom, and parts of Kaduna State. The administrative headquarters is situated in Bukuru. Jos South is characterized by ethnic and cultural diversity with major ethnic groups including Berom, Hausa, Fulani, Igbo, and other minority groups. The area experiences both urban and semi urban settlement patterns and engages predominantly in civil service activities, trading, farming, mining, and small-scale businesses. Jos South has witnessed several social and communal conflicts over the years, which have affected social relationships and institutional effectiveness within the area. Cases of domestic violence have also been reported within the Local Government Area, making it suitable for this study on access to justice for victims of domestic violence.

C. Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised adult residents of Jos South Local Government Area, particularly men and women aged eighteen years and above, including victims of domestic violence, community members, social workers, legal practitioners, and law enforcement officers. According to the National Population Commission projection (2023), Jos South Local Government Area has an estimated adult population of approximately 306,716 people.

D. Sample Size

Due to the large population of the study, the researcher utilized the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination method to obtain an appropriate sample size for the study. According to Morgan's table, a population above 300,000 requires a sample size of 384 respondents for effective representation. Therefore, the sample size for this study consisted of 384 respondents selected from different communities within Jos South Local Government Area.

E. Sampling Technique

The study employed a multistage sampling technique. The first stage, simple random sampling technique was used to select wards within Jos South Local Government Area. The second stage, purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting respondents who possessed adequate knowledge and experience relating to domestic violence and access to justice. This included victims, community members, social workers, and security personnel. Finally, accidental sampling technique was used in administering questionnaires to available and willing respondents within the selected communities. The combination of these sampling techniques ensured fairness, representativeness, and the inclusion of respondents with relevant information for the study.

F. Method of Data Collection

The study utilized primary data as the major source of information. Primary data were collected through the administration of structured questionnaires to respondents within the study area. The questionnaire contained both closed ended and open-ended questions designed to obtain information on the causes of domestic violence, barriers to access to justice, institutional responses, and victims' experiences in seeking justice. The researcher personally

administered the questionnaires with the assistance of trained research assistants to ensure proper distribution and retrieval of the instruments. Secondary data were also obtained from textbooks, journal articles, government publications, conference papers, and internet materials related to domestic violence and access to justice.

G. Method of Data Analysis

Data collected from the field were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Responses obtained through questionnaires were coded and presented in frequency tables and simple percentages for easy interpretation and analysis. The descriptive method was considered suitable because it enables the researcher to summarize and explain respondents' views clearly and systematically.

Table 1 Socio-demographics profiles:

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentages (%)
Sex:		
Male	162	42.9%
Female	216	57.1%
Age:		
18–27 years	104	27.5%
28–37 years	128	33.9%
38–47 years	89	23.5%
48 years and above	57	15.1%
Marital Status:		
Single	102	27.0%
Marriage	214	56.6%
Divorce	34	9.0%
Widow	28	7.4%
Educational Qualification:		
Primary Education	76	20.1%
Secondary Education	124	32.8%
Tertiary Education	148	39.2%
No Formal Education	30	7.9%
Occupation:		
Civil Servant	118	31.2%
Business Farmer	146	38.6%
Length of Residence in Jos South:		
Less than 5 years	114	30.2%
5–10 years	68	18.0%
11–15 years	104	27.5%
Above 15 years	97	25.7%
Total	109	28.8%
	378	100.0%

Source: Field Work, 2026

Table 1 presents the socio demographic characteristics of the respondents involved in the study on factors influencing access to justice for victims of domestic violence in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. The table reveals that out of the total 378 respondents sampled for the study, 216 respondents representing 57.1 percent were female, while 162 respondents representing 42.9 percent were male. This indicates that females constituted the majority of the respondents in the study. The implication of this finding may be connected to the fact that women are more frequently affected by domestic violence and therefore possess greater familiarity and experience regarding issues relating to access to justice in cases of domestic abuse.

The table further shows the age distribution of the respondents. Respondents within the age bracket of 28–37 years recorded the highest frequency with 128 respondents representing 33.9 percent. This was followed by respondents aged 18–27 years with 104 respondents representing 27.5 percent. Those within the age category of 38–47 years constituted 89 respondents representing 23.5 percent, while respondents aged 48 years and above recorded the least frequency with 57 respondents representing 15.1 percent. This finding suggests that the majority of the respondents were within the active and economically productive age group, indicating that participants were mature enough to provide informed responses concerning domestic violence and access to justice within the study area.

In terms of marital status, the findings indicate that married respondents formed the majority with 214 respondents representing 56.6 percent of the total population sampled. Single respondents accounted for 102 respondents representing 27.0 percent, while divorced respondents constituted 34 respondents representing 9.0 percent. Widowed respondents recorded the least percentage with 28 respondents representing 7.4 percent. The dominance of married respondents in the study may be associated with the fact that domestic violence is more commonly experienced within marital and intimate relationships, thereby making married individuals more relevant to the subject matter of the study.

Regarding educational qualification, the table reveals that respondents with tertiary education constituted the highest category with 148 respondents representing 39.2 percent. This was followed by respondents with

secondary education who accounted for 124 respondents representing 32.8 percent. Respondents with primary education recorded 76 respondents representing 20.1 percent, while those without formal education constituted the least category with 30 respondents representing 7.9 percent. This finding implies that a significant proportion of the respondents possessed formal educational background, which may have enhanced their understanding of domestic violence issues, legal rights, and access to justice mechanisms.

The occupational distribution of respondents indicates that business operators constituted the majority with 146 respondents representing 38.6 percent. Civil servants accounted for 118 respondents representing 31.2 percent, while farmers recorded 114 respondents representing 30.2 percent. The relatively balanced distribution across occupational categories suggests that the issue of domestic violence and access to justice affects individuals across different economic and occupational groups within Jos South Local Government Area. Finally, the table presents the respondents' length of residence in Jos South Local Government Area. Respondents who had lived in the area for above 15 years constituted the highest proportion with 109 respondents representing 28.8 percent. Those who had resided in the area between 5–10 years accounted for 104 respondents representing 27.5 percent, while respondents who had spent between 11–15 years in the area constituted 97 respondents representing 25.7 percent. Respondents who had lived in the area for less than 5 years recorded the least percentage with 68 respondents representing 18.0 percent. This finding indicates that the majority of the respondents had stayed in the study area long enough to possess adequate knowledge and understanding of the social realities, institutional structures, and justice related challenges associated with domestic violence in Jos South Local Government Area.

Section B: Forms of domestic violence experienced by victims in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State

Table 2 Respondents View on form of domestic violence that is most common in Jos South

Forms of Domestic Violence	Frequency (n)	Percentages (%)
Physical violence	124	32.8%

Emotional violence	86	22.8%
Sexual violence	48	12.7%
Economic violence	52	13.8%
Verbal abuse	68	18.0%
TOTAL	378	100.0%

Source: Field Work, 2026

Table 2: The findings reveal that physical violence recorded the highest response with 124 respondents representing 32.8 percent of the total respondents. This suggests that physical assault such as beating, slapping, pushing, and other forms of bodily harm are widely perceived as the most prevalent forms of domestic violence within the study area. The result reflects the visible and direct nature of physical abuse, which often makes it more recognizable within families and communities. The table further indicates that emotional violence constituted the second highest response with 86 respondents representing 22.8 percent. This implies that emotional abuse such as intimidation, threats, humiliation, and psychological manipulation is also a significant form of domestic violence experienced by victims in the area. Verbal abuse followed with 68 respondents representing 18.0 percent, while economic violence recorded 52 respondents representing 13.8 percent. Sexual violence constituted the least response with 48 respondents representing 12.7 percent of the respondents. The relatively low response on sexual violence may be associated with cultural silence, stigma, and reluctance to openly discuss issues relating to sexual abuse within intimate relationships.

Section C: Factors Influencing Access to Justice for Victims of Domestic Violence in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State

Table 3 Respondents Opinion on Major Factor Preventing Victims of Domestic Violence from Seeking Justice in Jos South LGA.

Factors	Frequency (n)	Percentages (%)
Fear of stigma	102	27.0%
Financial constraints	88	23.3%
Family pressure	64	16.9%
Lack of trust in law enforcement agencies	74	19.6%
Cultural beliefs	50	13.2%
TOTAL	378	100.0%

Source: Field Work, 2026

Table 3: The findings reveal that fear of stigma recorded the highest frequency with 102 respondents representing 27.0 percent. This suggests that many victims are discouraged from reporting domestic violence because of fear of social discrimination, shame, and negative societal perceptions. In many communities, victims of domestic violence are often blamed or criticized, thereby making them reluctant to seek legal intervention. Financial constraints constituted the second major factor with 88 respondents representing 23.3 percent. This indicates that lack of financial resources limits victims' ability to pursue justice due to the costs associated with transportation, legal services, and other institutional processes. Lack of trust in law enforcement agencies accounted for 74 respondents representing 19.6 percent, suggesting that many respondents perceive security agencies as ineffective or insensitive in handling domestic violence cases. Family pressure also emerged as an important factor with 64 respondents representing 16.9 percent, while cultural beliefs recorded the least response with 50 respondents representing 13.2 percent.

Section D: Response of Justice Institutions to Cases of Domestic Violence in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State.

Table 4 Respondents' Rating of the Response of Justice Institutions to Domestic Violence Cases in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State

Response of justice Institution	Frequency (n)	Percentages (%)
Very effective	32	8.5%
Effective	64	16.9%
Fairly effective	98	25.9%
Ineffective	112	29.6%
Very ineffective	72	19.1%
TOTAL	378	100.0%

Source: Field Work, 2026

Table 4: The findings indicate that 112 respondents representing 29.6 percent rated the response of justice institutions as ineffective, making it the highest response category. Similarly, 72 respondents representing 19.1 percent rated the institutional response as very ineffective. This suggests that a significant proportion of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of justice institutions such as the police and courts in addressing

domestic violence cases. Furthermore, 98 respondents representing 25.9 percent rated the response of justice institutions as fairly effective, while 64 respondents representing 16.9 percent considered the response effective. Only 32 respondents representing 8.5 percent rated the response as very effective. The findings therefore indicate that although some respondents acknowledged moderate institutional efforts in addressing domestic violence, the majority perceived justice institutions as ineffective in providing timely protection and justice for victims.

Section E: Challenges Faced by Victims of Domestic Violence in Seeking Justice in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State.

Table 5 Respondents' Opinion on the Greatest Challenge Victim's Face When Seeking Justice for Domestic Violence

Challenges	Frequency (n)	Percentages (%)
Delay in court processes	96	25.4%
Corruption within institutions	70	18.5%
Lack of legal support	74	19.6%
Fear of retaliation from perpetrators	86	22.8%
Poor treatment from security personnel	52	13.7%
TOTAL	378	100.0%

Source: Field Work, 2026

Table 5: The findings reveal that delay in court processes constituted the highest challenge with 96 respondents representing 25.4 percent. This suggests that prolonged judicial procedures discourage many victims from pursuing domestic violence cases to completion. Delays in justice delivery may lead to frustration, withdrawal of cases, and continued victimization. Fear of retaliation from perpetrators emerged as the second highest challenge with 86 respondents representing 22.8 percent. This finding indicates that many victims are afraid of further violence, threats, or intimidation from abusive partners after reporting cases to authorities. Lack of legal support recorded 74 respondents representing 19.6 percent, while corruption within institutions accounted for 70 respondents representing 18.5 percent. Poor treatment from security personnel recorded the least

response with 52 respondents representing 13.7 percent.

4.1 Discussion of Findings

The study found that physical violence was the most common form of domestic violence experienced by victims, followed by emotional violence, verbal abuse, economic violence, and sexual violence. This finding supports the study of Aihie (2009), who observed that physical assault and emotional abuse are among the most prevalent forms of domestic violence experienced by women in Nigeria. The dominance of physical violence in the findings may be connected to the visible and direct nature of physical abuse, which often makes it more recognizable within communities. The finding also reflects the persistent influence of patriarchal structures and unequal power relations within families, where violence is sometimes used as a means of control and domination.

The study further revealed that fear of stigma constituted the major factor preventing victims of domestic violence from seeking justice in Jos South Local Government Area. This indicates that societal attitudes and fear of social condemnation continue to discourage victims from reporting abuse or seeking legal intervention. The finding agrees with the position of Obi and Ozumba (2022), who argued that victims of domestic violence in Nigeria often remain silent because of fear of shame, rejection, and family pressure. Financial constraints also emerged as a significant barrier to access to justice. This suggests that many victims lack the financial resources needed to pursue legal action or obtain professional support services.

Additionally, finding of the study also revealed that the response of justice institutions to domestic violence cases was largely perceived as ineffective by the majority of respondents. Many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the performance of institutions such as the police and courts in handling domestic violence cases. This finding is consistent with Eze-Anaba (2021), who noted that institutional weaknesses, poor law enforcement practices, and delays in judicial processes often discourage victims from pursuing justice in Nigeria. The perception of institutional ineffectiveness may also contribute to declining public confidence in the justice system and increased underreporting of domestic violence cases within the study area.

Finally, the study revealed that delay in court processes represented the greatest challenge faced by victims in seeking justice for domestic violence. Fear of retaliation from perpetrators, lack of legal support, corruption within institutions, and poor treatment from security personnel were also identified as major challenges. This finding aligns with the argument of García Moreno et al. (2021), who maintained that weak institutional structures and inadequate victim support systems continue to hinder access to justice for victims of gender-based violence globally. The fear of retaliation further indicates that many victims remain vulnerable even after reporting abuse because of insufficient protective mechanisms within the justice system.

V. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that domestic violence remains a serious social problem in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, with victims facing numerous barriers in accessing justice. The findings revealed that fear of stigma, financial constraints, weak institutional response, delay in court processes, and fear of retaliation significantly discourage victims from seeking legal protection and justice. The study further established that although justice institutions exist to address domestic violence, their responses are often perceived as ineffective by victims and community members. Therefore, improving access to justice requires stronger institutional commitment, effective law enforcement, public awareness, legal support services, and the transformation of harmful cultural beliefs that normalize violence and silence victims within society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Government and relevant stakeholders should strengthen public enlightenment campaigns on domestic violence in order to reduce stigma, encourage victims to report abuse, and promote awareness of legal rights and available support services within communities.
2. Justice institutions such as the police and courts should improve their response to domestic violence cases through regular training of personnel, prompt investigation of cases, and the

establishment of victim friendly reporting and protection mechanisms.

3. Government and non-governmental organizations should provide accessible legal aid and economic empowerment programs for victims of domestic violence to reduce financial dependency and improve their ability to seek justice independently.
4. The judicial system should introduce faster and more effective procedures for handling domestic violence cases in order to reduce delays in court processes and ensure timely justice and protection for victims.

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