



CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE ON MEN IN BOKI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This study investigated the mitigation strategies and contributory factors of gender-based violence (GBV) against men in Boki Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. The objectives were to describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, assess strategies adopted for mitigating GBV, and examine factors that enhance or contribute to GBV against men. A representative sample of 248 men was drawn from 12 villages using stratified random and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that men in the study area experienced multiple forms of GBV, with verbal and emotional abuse being the most commonly reported, while sexual violence and stalking were less frequent. Socio-economic characteristics indicated that a large proportion of respondents were aged 31–40 years and above, had secondary or tertiary education, and were married. Major factors contributing to GBV included societal expectations of masculinity, stigma surrounding male victimhood, lack of reporting mechanisms, and cultural norms that perpetuate abuse. Strategies identified to mitigate GBV included raising awareness, providing support services, creating safe spaces, and developing protective laws. Figures illustrating the frequency of abuse types and preferred mitigation strategies highlighted that verbal abuse and awareness campaigns were most significant. Based on these findings, the study recommends the establishment of male-inclusive support services and community awareness programs to reduce stigma and encourage reporting of GBV against men.

Keywords: Men, mitigation strategies, contributory factors, Cross River State

1.0 Introduction

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) has become a critical issue of global concern, cutting across cultures, socio-economic classes, and

genders. Traditionally, discourse on GBV has focused largely on women as victims, often neglecting the fact that men also experience multiple forms of violence within intimate

and domestic settings. GBV encompasses physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, and psychological abuses, all of which have severe consequences on victims' physical, emotional, and social well-being. However, male victimization is less recognized in both academic discourse and public policy due to entrenched gender norms, stigma, and the perception that men should embody resilience and strength (Olatunji, Entonu, and Ojedokun, 2023). Addressing GBV against men is thus essential for a holistic understanding of the phenomenon and for promoting equitable human rights protections.

Empirical studies from different regions of the world have highlighted the prevalence of GBV against men. In developed countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, population-based surveys indicate that men suffer various forms of intimate partner violence (IPV), particularly psychological and emotional abuse, although at lower rates than women. The World Health Organization (WHO) also acknowledges the growing evidence of male victimization, stressing the need for inclusive research and interventions (World Health Organization, 2021). Despite this, many cases of GBV against men remain hidden due to social stigmatization, lack of support structures, and underreporting, leaving a significant gap in policy responses. In Nigeria, several studies have begun to shed light on the often-overlooked experiences of male victims of GBV. For instance, Adejimi, Fawole, Sekoni, and Kyriacou (2014), in a study among male civil servants in Ibadan, reported that 31.2% of respondents experienced psychological abuse, 23.0% reported sexual abuse, and

11.7% experienced physical abuse within the previous year. These findings reveal that while men face all forms of GBV, psychological and emotional abuses are more frequently reported compared to physical violence. This aligns with international evidence and points to the silent yet damaging nature of psychological abuse against men.

Similarly, Idowu, Aderonke, Aremu, Funmito, and Popoola (2021) found that 67.2% of men in rural Oyo State who experienced IPV reported psychological abuse, while a smaller proportion experienced physical and sexual violence. In Edo State, Oseni, Salam, Ilori, and Momoh (2022) documented that 61.7% of men reported verbal or emotional abuse, compared to fewer cases of physical IPV. These studies consistently highlight psychological and emotional abuse as the predominant form of GBV against men in Nigeria. Yet, the silence surrounding male victimization continues to perpetuate a culture where men's experiences of violence are minimized or dismissed. The challenge of underreporting remains a critical barrier in addressing GBV against men in Nigeria. Olatunji et al., (2023) found that men are less likely to report abuse due to fear of shame, ridicule, or being perceived as weak. Ogunyemi and Aborisade (2023) further emphasized that cultural expectations of masculinity, coupled with the lack of recognition by law enforcement and social services, exacerbate men's reluctance to seek help. These socio-cultural barriers not only silence male victims but also hinder the provision of adequate support systems and policy interventions.

When most people think of domestic violence, images of battered women or abused children come to their mind, but there is another side to this issue that is not familiar to most people - the abuse of men. Because of society's perceptions and gender roles in our societies, there is a lack of adequate recognition that men are also victims of GBV. Men are often silent victims at the hands of their partners because they do not seek help or report the abuse to the relevant institutions (e.g. the police). Research suggest that abused men (heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual) are men and boys who are being abused physically, emotionally, financially and mentally by their partners in their intimate relationships (Turchik and Edwards, 2022). Scholars also point to contributory factors such as economic stress, substance abuse, marital instability, and exposure to family violence in childhood as drivers of GBV against men. Adejimi et al., (2014) noted that alcohol use and prior exposure to inter-parental violence significantly predicted IPV among men. Oseni et al., (2022) also reported that education level, marital status, and socio-economic challenges influenced the likelihood of male victimization. These findings highlight that GBV against men is a multi-dimensional problem, shaped by both structural and interpersonal dynamics.

Despite the growing body of evidence, there is still limited attention to GBV against men in Nigeria's rural areas, particularly in communities like Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State. Most studies have focused on urban centers or specific occupational groups, leaving rural populations understudied. This creates a

research gap, as cultural practices, economic conditions, and social relations in rural areas may produce unique patterns of male victimization. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining the contributory factors and mitigation strategies of GBV against men in Boki Local Government Area, Cross River State. Findings from this research will not only enrich the discourse on GBV in Nigeria but also provide evidence-based recommendations for interventions that recognize and address men's victimization.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to investigate the mitigation strategies and contributory factors of gender-based violence (GBV) against men in Boki Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. To describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents;
2. To assess the strategies adopted for mitigating gender-based violence on men; and
3. To investigate the factor that enhance or contribute to gender-based violence on men.

2.0 Research Methodology

Study Area: This study was conducted in Boki Local Government Area (LGA) of Cross River State, Nigeria. Boki is one of the 18 Local Government Areas in the state and is located in the Central part of Cross River State. The LGA shares boundaries with Obudu and Obanliku LGAs to the north, Ikom LGA to the west, Ogoja LGA to the northwest, and the Republic of Cameroon to

the east. Its administrative headquarters is located in Boje. Boki covers an estimated land area of about 2,873 square kilometers and has a projected population of 358,795 people based on the Cross River State Population by Local Government Area (2025). The area is predominantly rural, with dispersed settlements and communities. The inhabitants are largely of the Boki ethnic group, with farming as their major occupation. The fertile soil and favorable climate support the cultivation of crops such as cocoa, yam, cassava, plantain, banana, and palm produce. Culturally, the people of Boki maintain traditional institutions and practices, with a strong patriarchal system that influences family and gender relations. Christianity and indigenous religious practices are both present. Education and health facilities are available but remain underdeveloped compared to urban centers in the state.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size: A stratified random sampling technique was employed in the selection of villages that constitute the study area. The strata were formed based on common characteristics observed in the population data, such as geographical distribution and community size. From each stratum, a representative number of villages was randomly selected to ensure adequate coverage of the study area

and to minimize sampling bias. Within each selected village, a purposive sampling technique was adopted to identify respondents for the study. This approach was necessary because not all men in the communities had directly experienced or were willing to discuss issues related to gender-based violence. Therefore, purposive sampling allowed the researcher to deliberately select respondents who possessed the relevant characteristics and experiences required to provide valid and reliable information for the study. This combination of stratified random sampling and purposive sampling ensured that the sample was both representative of the population and relevant to the objectives of the research.

A representative sample of 248 men was used for the study. The sample was drawn from the 12 villages that make up the study area, representing 33.7% of the study population. The villages include: Okundi, Bansan, Iso Bendeghe, Wula, Kayang, Bashua, Boje, Mfon Osokom, Abu, Orimekpang, Okwabang, Ntamante. The choice of this sample size was considered adequate for ensuring reliable statistical analysis, prior contact, limited resources and time, and comparative scope, while maintaining feasibility within the scope of the study.

3.0 Results and Discussions

3.1 Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1: Distribution of the Respondents by Socio-economic Characteristics

Variables	Frequency (n=248)	Percentage
Age (in years)		
<20	31	12.50
20-30	52	20.97
31-40	73	29.93
41 and above	92	37.10
Total	248	100.0
Level of education		
No education	25	10.08
Primary education	35	14.11
Secondary education	81	32.67
Tertiary education	90	36.29
Others	17	6.85
Total	248	100.0
Marital status		
Married	164	66.13
Single	52	20.97
Divorced	28	11.29
Widower	4	1.61
Total	248	100.0
Occupation		
Farmers	80	32.26
Traders	74	29.84
Artisans	56	22.58
Civil Servants	28	11.29
Others	10	4.03
Total	248	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The result of the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents as presented in Table 1 indicates considerable variation across age, education, marital status, and occupation. With respect to age distribution, 31 respondents (12.50%) were

less than 20 years old, 52 respondents (20.97%) fell within the age range of 20–30 years, and 73 respondents (29.43%) were between 31–40 years. A larger proportion, 92 respondents (37.10%), were 41 years and above, suggesting that the sample comprised

predominantly middle-aged and older men. In terms of educational attainment, 25 respondents (10.08%) reported having no formal education, 35 respondents (14.11%) attained primary school level, and 81 respondents (32.67%) had secondary education. The largest proportion, 90 respondents (36.29%), possessed tertiary education, while 17 respondents (6.85%) indicated other forms of informal learning such as vocational training. This shows that the majority of the respondents had at least secondary-level education. Regarding marital status, the findings revealed that 164 respondents (66.13%) were married, 52 respondents (20.97%) were single, 28 respondents (11.29%) were divorced, while 4 respondents (1.61%) were widowers. This distribution indicates that married men constituted the majority of the sample. On occupational distribution, the results further showed that the respondents were engaged in diverse economic activities. The largest proportion, 80 respondents (32.26%), were farmers, 74 respondents (29.84%) were traders, 56 respondents (22.58%) were artisans, and 28 respondents (11.29%) were

civil servants. Only 10 respondents (4.03%) reported engagement in other occupations such as fishing. This finding reflects the predominantly agrarian and trading economy of Boki Local Government Area.

The socio-economic characteristics of respondents suggest that gender-based violence (GBV) against men in Boki Local Government Area is shaped by factors such as age, education, marital status, and occupation. The predominance of middle-aged and married men indicates that GBV often occurs within intimate and domestic relationships, while the relatively high level of education suggests that awareness does not necessarily reduce vulnerability. The high proportion of farmers and traders also points to the influence of economic pressures in shaping experiences of violence. Overall, these findings imply that interventions to mitigate GBV must be tailored to the socio-economic realities of men in the area, recognizing that experiences of violence cut across different social and occupational groups.

3.2 Strategies Adopted for Mitigating Gender-Based Violence on Men

Table 2: Distribution of Responses on Strategies for Mitigating GBV on Men in Boki Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria.

	SA	A	D	SD	N(100)
Raising awareness about GBV against men can help reduce its prevalence.	80(32.3)	75(30.2)	50(20.2)	43(17.3)	248(100)
Providing support service for men can help them recover from GBV.	72(29.1)	68(27.4)	65(26.2)	43(17.3)	248(100)
Encouraging men to speak out about their experiences can help break the silence.	82(33.1)	69(27.1)	51(20.5)	46(18.5)	248(100)
Developing laws that address GBV against men can reduce the prevalence.	78(31.4)	72(29.0)	49(19.8)	49(19.8)	248(100)
Creating safe space for men to discuss their experiences can help them heal.	80(32.3)	70(28.2)	53(21.3)	45(18.1)	248(100)

Source: Field Survey, 2025. SA-Strongly Agree; A-Agree; D-Disagree, SD-strongly Disagree.

The results in Table 2 indicate that respondents widely acknowledged the importance of multiple strategies for mitigating gender-based violence (GBV) against men in Boki Local Government Area. A majority strongly agreed or agreed that raising awareness (62.5%), providing support services (56.5%), encouraging men to speak out (60.2%), developing laws addressing male-focused GBV (60.4%), and creating safe spaces (60.5%) are effective interventions. These findings suggest that men in the study area recognize both structural (e.g., laws and policies) and psychosocial (e.g., safe spaces, support services, and awareness) strategies as critical for addressing GBV. However, the presence of a significant minority who disagreed highlights cultural silence, stigma, or limited trust in existing systems, which can hinder effective mitigation. This implies that for strategies to be effective, interventions must

not only be multi-dimensional but also culturally sensitive, ensuring that men feel safe to report violence and access support without fear of discrimination or ridicule.

Research has shown that multi-dimensional strategies such as awareness creation, support services, and legal reforms are critical in reducing GBV against men. For example, Ezumah (2019) found that cultural stigma and gender stereotypes often silence men who experience violence, but awareness campaigns and safe reporting channels increased willingness to disclose abuse in parts of Southeastern Nigeria. Similarly, Uzochukwu, Ezeanolue, and Ezumah (2021) revealed that community-based interventions, including psychosocial support and legal advocacy, significantly improved reporting rates of GBV among men in South-East Nigeria, underscoring the need for both policy-level and community-driven approaches.

The findings from this study, supported by these empirical works, suggest that GBV mitigation must go beyond creating policies to actively addressing the cultural and psychosocial barriers that silence men. Without tackling stigma and societal perceptions, even well-designed laws or awareness campaigns may not achieve their intended goals. Therefore, interventions in

Boki Local Government Area should integrate legal reforms with culturally sensitive education, safe spaces, and accessible support systems to ensure that men feel safe and empowered to report cases of GBV and recover from its impacts.

3.3 Factors that Enhance or Contribute to Gender-Based Violence Against Men

Table 3: Distribution of Responses on the Factors Enhancing GBV Against Men in Boki Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria.

	SA	A	D	SD	N(100)
Societal expectations of masculinity contributes to GBV against men	112(45.2)	57(23.0)	34(13.7)	45(18.1)	248(100)
Lack of reporting and support services for victims exacerbates GBV.	100(40.3)	81(32.7)	40(16.1)	27(10.9)	248(100)
Stereotypes and stigma around male victimhood contributes to GBV.	97(39.1)	84(33.9)	42(16.9)	25(10.1)	248(100)
Cultural and traditional norms can Perpetuate GBV against men.	95(38.3)	75(30.2)	45(18.1)	33(13.4)	248(100)
Fear of ridicule or shame prevents Men from reporting GBV.	186(75.0)	40(16.1)	12(4.8)	27(10.9)	248(100).

Source: Field survey, 2025. SA-Strongly Agree; A-Agree; D-Disagree; SD-strongly Disagree.

The findings in Table 3 reveal that several sociocultural and systemic factors enhance gender-based violence (GBV) against men in Boki Local Government Area. A significant proportion of respondents (68.2%) agreed that societal expectations of masculinity contribute to the persistence of GBV, reflecting how traditional norms pressure men to remain silent or endure abuse without complaint. Similarly, 73.0% affirmed that lack of reporting mechanisms and support

services exacerbates the issue, while 73.0% also indicated that stigma and stereotypes around male victimhood reinforce silence. Furthermore, 68.5% of respondents linked cultural and traditional norms to the perpetuation of GBV, underscoring how gendered cultural practices often prioritize female protection while trivializing male suffering. Most strikingly, 91.1% of respondents identified fear of ridicule or

shame as the most influential factor preventing men from reporting GBV.

These results align with Oginni et al., (2018), who found that Nigerian men facing intimate partner violence often conceal their experiences due to ridicule and cultural silence surrounding masculinity. Similarly, Oyekanmi and Adebayo (2019) observed that men rarely report GBV cases because social institutions and the justice system are structured to primarily recognize women as victims, leaving men stigmatized and unsupported.

The implication of these findings is that GBV against men in Boki LGA is not merely a result of isolated incidents of abuse but is reinforced by deep-rooted cultural norms, gender stereotypes, and structural neglect. Without dismantling these systemic barriers particularly stigma, cultural expectations, and lack of institutional support efforts to mitigate GBV against men may remain ineffective. Addressing these issues requires both cultural reorientation and policy reform that normalizes male victimhood and creates safe, accessible reporting and support channels for men.

4.0 Conclusion

This study examined the mitigation strategies and contributory factors of gender-based violence (GBV) against men in Boki Local Government Area, Cross River State. The findings revealed that men experience various forms of GBV, yet their ability to seek redress or support is often hindered by entrenched sociocultural norms, societal expectations of masculinity, stigma, and fear of ridicule. The results further demonstrated

that the lack of institutional support services and limited awareness contribute to underreporting, thereby perpetuating the cycle of silence and vulnerability among male victims. Importantly, respondents recognized a range of effective mitigation strategies, including awareness creation, provision of support services, enactment of protective laws, and establishment of safe spaces where men can freely share their experiences. These outcomes highlight that while GBV against men is a hidden but significant social problem, it can be addressed through multi-faceted approaches that combine cultural reorientation, policy reforms, and psychosocial interventions. Therefore, the study concludes that breaking the silence and fostering supportive structures for men are critical steps toward reducing GBV and improving the overall well-being of male victims in the study area.

5.0 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings:

1. Safe spaces within communities should be developed where men can freely share their experiences and access support networks. This should be complemented by confidential reporting mechanisms and training of law enforcement officers to handle GBV cases involving men with sensitivity and seriousness.
2. Community-based awareness campaigns should be intensified to challenge harmful cultural norms and stereotypes that silence male victims of GBV. Such programs should

emphasize that GBV affects both men and women, thereby reducing stigma and encouraging men to seek help without fear of ridicule.

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