

# Socio-Economic Factors and Domestic Violence Against Women in Ondo State, Nigeria

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/ij sar.15/vol12n1110>

Published April 08, 2026

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**Citation:** Luyi E.O., Emua C.I., Ogunbayo O., Awosusi K.O. (2026) Socio-Economic Factors and Domestic Violence Against Women in Ondo State, Nigeria, *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Research*, 12 (1) 1-10

**Abstract:** *Domestic violence against women remains a persistent public health and socio-developmental challenge in Nigeria, particularly within intimate and marital relationships. This study examined the relationship between socio-economic factors and domestic violence against women in Ondo State, Nigeria, with specific emphasis on income level. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised married women residing in Ondo metropolis, Ondo State, Nigeria, drawn from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. A purposive sample of 1,200 married women aged 18 years and above, and married for at least two years, participated in the study. Data were collected using a self-designed instrument titled the Domestic Violence Questionnaire (DVQ), which demonstrated good reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.89). Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, and mean) were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that socio-economic factors including cultural norms (80.0%), financial dependency (77.5%), income level (76.5%), educational attainment (73.0%), employment status (71.3%), and social support networks (67.0%) were strongly associated with domestic violence against women. A moderate and statistically significant relationship was found between socio-economic factors and domestic violence ( $r =$*

*0.56,  $p < 0.001$ ), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Similarly, income level showed a significant moderate relationship with domestic violence ( $r = 0.52, p < 0.001$ ). The study concluded that socio-economic conditions, particularly income dynamics and financial dependency, play a crucial role in shaping women's vulnerability to domestic violence. It therefore recommends integrated interventions that combine women's economic empowerment, educational advancement, cultural reorientation, strengthened social support systems, and effective policy implementation to reduce domestic violence in Ondo State, Nigeria.*

**Keyword:** socio-economic, domestic violence, women

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## INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence against women is widely recognized as a major public health, human rights, and socio-developmental concern worldwide. According to the World Health Organization (2021), domestic violence refers to a pattern of abusive behaviour within intimate relationships that leads to physical, sexual, psychological, or economic harm. Similarly, the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (2000) defines violence against women as any gender-based act that causes or is likely to cause harm or suffering, whether occurring in public or private life. These definitions emphasize that domestic violence should not be viewed merely as a private family matter but as a structural social problem rooted in unequal power relations and gender inequality. Across many societies, particularly in patriarchal contexts, women are disproportionately affected by abuse within marital and intimate relationships, reflecting broader systemic inequalities in power, access to resources, and social protection.

In Nigeria, domestic violence remains a pervasive problem despite the existence of legal and policy frameworks aimed at protecting women. Evidence from the National Population Commission of Nigeria (2019) indicates that a significant proportion of Nigerian women have experienced physical or emotional abuse from intimate partners. In Ondo State specifically, research suggests that intimate partner violence occurs across both rural and urban communities, demonstrating that the problem cuts across educational levels, social class, and geographic location. Domestic violence manifests in various forms including physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, and economic abuse and its persistence is closely tied to socio-economic conditions. Factors such as income level, employment status, educational attainment, financial dependence, and access to social support networks influence women's vulnerability to abuse and their capacity to respond to or escape violent relationships.

Among these socio-economic factors, income level plays a particularly complex role in shaping domestic violence dynamics. On one hand, financial independence can empower women by increasing their autonomy and providing the resources necessary to resist or leave abusive relationships. On the other hand, shifts in economic power within households may challenge traditional gender roles in patriarchal societies, sometimes triggering conflict or resistance from

male partners who perceive women's economic advancement as a threat to established norms of male authority. Cultural beliefs that position men as household heads and women as subordinate partners often reinforce these tensions. In communities where divorce carries strong social stigma and family reputation is highly valued, women may feel pressured to tolerate abuse in silence. Consequently, although education and employment are commonly viewed as protective factors, their effectiveness may be limited by deeply rooted socio-cultural norms that sustain gender inequality.

The consequences of domestic violence are severe and far-reaching, affecting individuals, families, and society as a whole. Victims frequently experience physical injuries, psychological trauma, depression, anxiety, and, in extreme cases, death. Beyond the direct impact on victims, domestic violence destabilizes family structures, imposes economic burdens through healthcare and legal costs, and negatively affects children exposed to violent environments, often leading to emotional, behavioural, and developmental difficulties. At the societal level, the persistence of domestic violence undermines social cohesion, reduces economic productivity, and limits women's participation in social and economic development. Although existing literature has explored the prevalence and consequences of domestic violence in Nigeria, there remains limited comprehensive research examining how multiple socio-economic factors particularly income level interact to influence domestic violence against women in Ondo State. This gap underscores the importance of investigating the statistical relationship between socio-economic variables and domestic violence to inform more effective policy and intervention strategies.

Despite the recognition of socio-economic influences in existing literature, there remains limited empirical evidence clearly establishing the nature and strength of the relationship between these factors and domestic violence against women in Ondo State Nigeria. While prior studies have examined prevalence rates and associated variables (Okedare & Fawole, 2023; Sanni et al., 2025), few have systematically tested whether socio-economic factors collectively have a statistically significant relationship with domestic violence, or whether income level independently predicts such violence within the regional context. This gap underscores the need for a systematic investigation into the socio-economic factors responsible for domestic violence against women in Ondo State Nigeria; whether a significant relationship exists between socio-economic factors and domestic violence; and whether income level significantly influences domestic violence against women.

Addressing these issues will contribute to a clearer understanding of the structural determinants of domestic violence and provide a foundation for targeted socio-economic and policy interventions aimed at protecting women and promoting sustainable social development in Ondo State Nigeria. This study examined the relationship between socio-economic factors and domestic violence against women in Ondo metropolis in Ondo State, Nigeria. Specifically, this study:

- i. determined the prevalence of domestic violence against women in Ondo State, Nigeria;

- ii. determined the relationship between economic factors (income levels, employment status, financial dependency) and domestic violence against women

### **Research Question**

1. What are the socio-economic factors responsible for domestic violence against women in Ondo State Nigeria?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following research hypotheses were formulated for this study:

1. There is no significant relationship between socio-economic factors and domestic violence against women
2. There is no significant relationship between income levels and domestic violence against women.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted for this study. The population of this study comprised all married women residing in Ondo metropolis within Ondo State, Nigeria. This includes women across various socio-economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. The population encompassed a diverse demographic range in terms of age, income, employment, family size, and access to social support networks. The sample for this study consisted of 1200 married women purposively selected. The purposive sampling method focused on selecting married women who meet specific criteria relevant to the study. These criteria included women who were 18 years and above, women who have been married for at least two years, and women who are willing to participate in the study. The decision to target women who have been married for at least two years ensures that the respondents have sufficient experience and understanding of marriage dynamics and the potential for domestic violence.

A self-designed research instrument tagged 'Domestic Violence Questionnaire (DVQ)' was used to collect data for this study. The questionnaire was divided into sections A and B. Section A elicited information about the demographic characteristics of the respondents (Age, Educational Level, Employment Status, Income level and Marital Duration). The responses were rated on 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) –4, Agree (A) –3, Disagree (D) –2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) –1.

The validity of the Domestic Violence Questionnaire (DVQ) was ensured through both face and content validity. The reliability of the Domestic Violence Questionnaire (DVQ) was determined using Cronbach's Alpha, a statistical measure used to assess the internal consistency of the instrument. This was done by administering the instrument on 20 women who were not part of the sample used for the study. Data obtained were subjected to reliability check with the use of Cronbach's Alpha, and a reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained. This value was deemed high enough for the instrument to be used for the study. The administration of the research instrument

was carried out by the researcher with the assistance of four trained research assistants. The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Research questions 1 - 3 were answered using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages and mean for the research question while Inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS

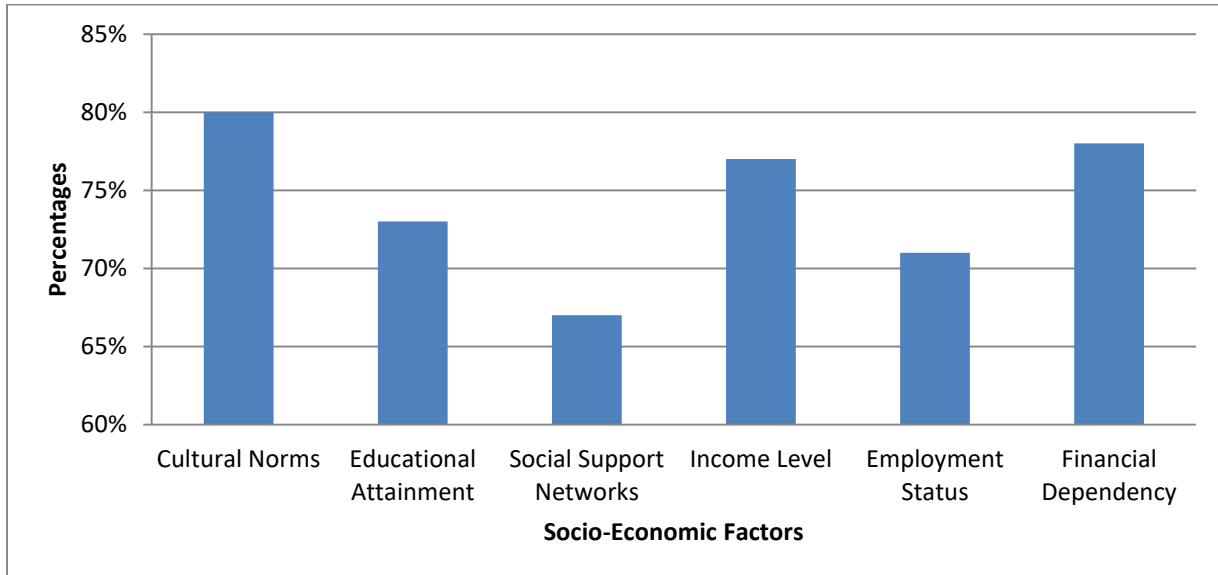
**Research Question 1:** What are the socio-economic factors responsible for domestic violence against women?

To determine the prevalence of domestic violence against women in Ondo State Nigeria (low, moderate, or very high), scores of items on physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and economic violence were subjected to statistical analysis involving frequency count, percentage, and mean rating. The low prevalence was determined by scores below the mean cut-off point ( $x < 2.50$  i.e.  $x = 1.00-2.49$ ), the moderate prevalence was determined by the mean cut-off point ( $x = 2.50-3.49$ ), while the very high prevalence was determined by scores above the mean cut-off point ( $x \geq 3.50$  i.e.  $x = 3.50-4.00$ ). The result is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Socio-economic factors responsible for Domestic Violence against Women (N = 1,200)**

Factor	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Cultural Norms	960	80.0
Educational Attainment	876	73.0
Social Support Networks	804	67.0
Income Level	918	76.5
Employment Status	855	71.3
Financial Dependency	930	77.5

Table 1 showed the socio-economic factors responsible for domestic violence against women. The result revealed that all identified socioeconomic factors were high and could be responsible for domestic violence against women. Cultural norms were reported by 960 women (80.0%), making it the most influential factor, followed by financial dependency affecting 930 women (77.5%) and income level influencing 918 women (76.5%), highlighting the impact of economic power dynamics. Educational attainment was cited by 876 women (73.0%) and employment status by 855 women (71.3%), indicating that limited education and restricted employment opportunities increase vulnerability. Social support networks were identified by 804 women (67.0%), showing that access to family and community support affects women's experiences of domestic violence. The findings reveal that socioeconomic factors responsible for domestic violence against women include cultural norms, educational attainment, social support networks, income level, employment status and financial dependency as also illustrated in Figure v.



**Figure v:** Bar Chart showing socio-economic factors responsible for Domestic Violence against Women

**Hypotheses 1:** There is no significant relationship between socio-economic factors and domestic violence against women.

To test this hypothesis, scores on socio-economic factors and domestic violence against women were collated and subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The result is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Correlation analysis showing the relationship between socio-economic factors and domestic violence against women

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	r-cal	p
Socio-economic factors	1200	3.00	0.45	1198	0.56	0.001**
Domestic Violence	1200	2.90	0.50			

*p*<0.05 (Significant)

Table 2 showed that socio-economic factors have a moderate and statistically significant association with domestic violence ( $r = 0.56$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $N = 1,200$ ,  $df = 1,198$ ). The mean score for socio-economic factors was 3.00 with a standard deviation of 0.45, while domestic violence had a mean of 2.90 and a standard deviation of 0.50. This implied that variations in socio-economic conditions such as cultural norms, educational attainment, income level, employment status, financial dependency, and social support are closely related to the incidence of domestic violence against women. Hence, the hypothesis is rejected, confirming that socio-economic factors play a crucial role in influencing domestic violence.

**Hypotheses 2:** There is no significant relationship between income levels and domestic violence against women.

To test this hypothesis, scores on income level and domestic violence against women were collated and subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The result is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Correlation analysis showing the relationship between income level and domestic violence against women

<i>Group</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>r-cal</i>	<i>p</i>
Income Levels	1200	3.02	0.48	1198	0.52	<0.001 <sup>**</sup>
Domestic Violence	1200	2.90	0.50			

*p*<0.05 (Significant)

Table 3 revealed that income levels are moderately and significantly associated with domestic violence ( $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $N = 1,200$ ,  $df = 1,198$ ). The mean score for income levels was 3.02 with a standard deviation of 0.48, while domestic violence had a mean of 2.90 and a standard deviation of 0.50. These showed that variations in women's income levels whether higher, lower, or dependent on their spouse are closely linked to the occurrence of domestic violence. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected, confirming that income level is an important socio-economic factor influencing domestic violence against women.

## DISCUSSION

The finding of the study revealed that socio-economic factors, particularly cultural norms, financial dependency, and income levels, are significantly associated with domestic violence against women. This relationship can be attributed to the fact that economic hardship and financial dependence limit women's autonomy and access to resources, while entrenched cultural norms often reinforce male authority and justify abusive behavior. Women who rely heavily on their partners for financial support may feel unable to leave or challenge abusive relationships, thereby increasing their vulnerability. The implication of this finding is that interventions aimed at reducing domestic violence must address both economic empowerment and cultural change. Policies that enhance women's access to financial resources, coupled with efforts to challenge societal norms that condone abuse, can reduce women's exposure to domestic violence. This is in line with the research by Obiagu (2023), which found that women's economic empowerment and education significantly reduce their vulnerability to gender-based violence. Similarly, this finding is corroborated by the study of Oriola, Owoseni, and Olatunbosun (2022), who reported that cultural factors and financial dependency strongly influence the prevalence of domestic violence in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Furthermore, the result is consistent with the study by Omonigbe and David (2023), which emphasized that economic strain and limited access to resources increase women's susceptibility to intimate partner violence. In consonance with these findings, the work of Postmus et al. (2012) also affirmed the significant role of socio-economic factors in perpetuating domestic

violence, highlighting that addressing both financial and cultural dimensions is critical for effective interventions.

The finding of the study shows that income levels significantly influence domestic violence. This may be because women with lower income often depend financially on their partners, making it harder for them to resist or leave abusive relationships. Money problems can also create tension and stress in households, which can trigger conflicts and increase the likelihood of abuse. This means that efforts to reduce domestic violence should not only focus on laws and awareness campaigns but also on helping women become economically independent through jobs, skills training, and access to small loans or financial support. This finding is consistent with Ojo and Ibrahim (2023), who found that financial dependence and lack of resources make women more vulnerable to abuse in Ondo State Nigeria. Similarly, Olayinka and Adetunji (2023) noted that households with low income often experience higher levels of domestic violence because of financial strain, supporting the idea that money problems can worsen abuse. In line with these studies, Ojo and Ibrahim (2023) also emphasized that limited access to resources increases women's vulnerability to domestic violence. However, Okafor and Ezeokafor (2022) pointed out that domestic violence can also occur in households with moderate income, especially where cultural norms support male dominance or where partners are controlling. This shows that income level works together with cultural expectations, social support, and education in shaping the risk of domestic violence. The implication is that reducing domestic violence requires a combination of economic empowerment, education, social support, and legal protection to truly protect women from abuse.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings, it was concluded that socio-economic factors played a crucial role in shaping the experiences of domestic violence against women. It was also evident that income level, financial dependency, employment status, educational attainment, cultural norms, and social support networks collectively influenced the prevalence and intensity of abuse.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

1. Government and non-governmental organizations should implement initiatives aimed at improving women's income levels and reducing financial dependency, such as microfinance schemes, vocational training, and entrepreneurship programs. This can help reduce their vulnerability to domestic violence.
2. State ministry of women affairs should formulate policies and programmes that will enhance access to education for women, as higher educational attainment is associated with a lower risk of domestic violence. Adult education and awareness campaigns can also help empower women to recognize and resist abuse.
3. Community leaders, religious institutions, and social influencers should be engaged in campaigns to challenge harmful cultural norms and practices that perpetuate domestic

violence. Sensitization programs can help shift societal attitudes toward gender equality and respect for women.

4. The state and federal ministry of women affairs should expand and make support systems such as women's groups, family counseling services, and community-based organizations accessible to women, as strong social networks have been shown to reduce the incidence of domestic violence.

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