



## EVALUATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LAWS AND THEIR ENFORCEMENT IN KUJE AREA COUNCIL, FCT ABUJA

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### Abstract

This study evaluated domestic violence laws and their enforcement in Kuje Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Domestic violence remains a persistent social and public health challenge in Nigeria despite the existence of legal frameworks such as the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015. The study examined the nature and prevalence of domestic violence, assessed the effectiveness of domestic violence laws, and determined the relationship between law enforcement and the reduction of domestic violence cases in Kuje Area Council. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, and data were obtained through structured questionnaires administered to respondents within the study area. The findings revealed that domestic violence is highly prevalent in Kuje Area Council, with physical violence being the most common form, followed by emotional, economic, and sexual abuse. The study also found that while domestic violence laws exist, their effectiveness is limited by weak enforcement, low public awareness, inadequate institutional capacity, and socio-cultural acceptance of domestic abuse. Hypothesis testing further revealed that there is no significant relationship between the enforcement of domestic violence laws and the reduction of domestic violence cases in the area. The study concluded that legal frameworks alone are insufficient without effective implementation, institutional strengthening, and public sensitization. It recommended improved law enforcement training, public awareness campaigns, economic empowerment of victims, and strengthened institutional support systems.



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**Keywords:** Domestic Violence, Law Enforcement, Gender-Based Violence, Legal Framework, Victim Protection, Public Awareness, Institutional Capacity.

### 1.1 Introduction

Domestic violence has increasingly become one of the most persistent violations of human rights and one of the major public health concerns confronting Nigeria in the contemporary period. The phenomenon affects individuals across age, religion, ethnicity, educational status, and socio-economic class, although women and children remain the most vulnerable victims. Domestic

violence includes physical assault, psychological abuse, emotional intimidation, sexual coercion, verbal aggression, economic deprivation, marital rape, harmful traditional practices, and controlling behaviors occurring within domestic relationships such as marriage, cohabitation, intimate partnerships, and family settings. According to Arisukwu, Igbolekwu, and Salawu (2021), domestic violence in Nigerian communities is reinforced by long-standing patriarchal structures that encourage male dominance and female subordination within family relationships. Their study among rural women in Kuje Area Council revealed that many women perceive domestic abuse as a culturally tolerated aspect of marriage and family life. The authors observed that victims often remain silent because of fear of stigmatization, shame, divorce, religious pressure, and economic dependency on abusive spouses. Similarly, Olasupo and Yusuf (2022) argued that domestic violence has remained widespread in Nigeria because many communities continue to interpret wife battering and emotional abuse as legitimate disciplinary mechanisms within marriage. Akinlade and Eze (2023) maintained that domestic violence in Nigeria is sustained by poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, cultural inequality, and weak legal awareness among women, especially in rural and semi-urban communities. The authors explained that financial dependence on husbands often forces women to tolerate abusive relationships for survival purposes. In another study, Nwankwo and Chukwudi (2024) argued that domestic violence has serious consequences on victims, including depression, trauma, reproductive health complications, low self-esteem, emotional instability, and, in extreme situations, death. According to the researchers, children raised in violent homes are also more likely to develop aggressive behaviors and normalize violence in adulthood.

In Nigeria, the prevalence of domestic violence has remained alarming despite constitutional provisions guaranteeing the dignity of the human person and freedom from degrading treatment under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended). Several legislative measures have also been introduced to address violence against women and vulnerable persons. These include the Criminal Code, Penal Code, Child Rights Act, Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, and most importantly, the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015. The enactment of the VAPP Act represented a major legal milestone in Nigeria's effort to combat gender-based violence because it expanded the legal understanding of violence beyond physical assault to include emotional, sexual, economic, and psychological abuse. The law applies directly within the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, including Kuje Area Council. Despite these legal developments, Nigerian scholars from 2021 to 2026 have consistently argued that implementation and enforcement remain highly problematic, particularly at the grassroots level. Arowolo (2021) argued that although Nigeria has ratified several international conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), effective implementation remains weak because cultural practices and patriarchal beliefs continue to influence institutional behavior. According to her, many law enforcement officers still treat domestic violence as a private family matter that should be settled informally rather than through legal prosecution. Nnadozie and Ezeani (2022) explained that weak institutional commitment, corruption, delayed judicial processes, and inadequate training of police officers contribute significantly to poor enforcement of domestic violence laws in Nigeria. Their findings revealed that victims often encounter discouragement and

intimidation when attempting to report domestic violence cases to security agencies. The researchers noted that police authorities frequently encourage reconciliation between victims and offenders instead of pursuing criminal prosecution. Obodo and Anushiem (2023) further emphasized that the major challenge confronting Nigeria is not necessarily the absence of legal frameworks but the inability of institutions to effectively implement existing laws. According to the authors, domestic violence persists because institutions responsible for enforcement, including the police, courts, and welfare agencies, often demonstrate weak commitment toward protecting victims and prosecuting offenders. They argued that institutional weaknesses create an atmosphere of impunity that encourages perpetrators to continue abusive behaviors without fear of punishment. Adeyemi and Salami (2024) observed that public awareness concerning the VAPP Act remains relatively low in many Nigerian rural communities. According to their study, many women are unaware that acts such as emotional abuse, marital rape, intimidation, forced isolation, and economic deprivation are punishable offences under Nigerian law. The researchers concluded that inadequate public sensitization significantly undermines the effectiveness of domestic violence legislation. Within Kuje Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, domestic violence has become increasingly alarming because of population expansion, rapid urbanization, poverty, unemployment, and weak institutional access to justice. Kuje consists of both rural and semi-urban settlements where traditional patriarchal norms continue to influence gender relations and family structures. Studies conducted in the area indicate that many women prefer resolving domestic disputes through informal mechanisms, such as family elders, traditional rulers, and religious leaders, rather than reporting cases to formal law enforcement institutions. According to Arisukwu et al. (2021), many women in Kuje tolerate domestic violence because cultural expectations place a high value on marital endurance and discourage separation or divorce. The authors observed that victims fear community stigmatization and economic hardship if they pursue legal action against abusive spouses. Ibrahim and Audu (2023) also found that underreporting remains one of the major obstacles to combating domestic violence within Kuje Area Council because victims lack confidence in the justice system. Their study showed that many residents perceive the police and courts as ineffective, corrupt, inaccessible, and insensitive to the plight of victims.

Musa and Danjuma (2024) explained that weak institutional presence in some communities within Kuje contributes to ineffective enforcement of domestic violence laws. According to the authors, inadequate police infrastructure, shortage of trained personnel, absence of shelters, and limited legal aid services discourage victims from seeking justice. The researchers further observed that prolonged court procedures and financial constraints compel many victims to withdraw complaints against perpetrators. The significance of evaluating domestic violence laws and their enforcement in Kuje Area Council lies in understanding the gap between legal provisions and practical realities within local communities. Although the VAPP Act criminalizes battery, harmful widowhood practices, emotional abuse, intimidation, forced isolation, and economic deprivation, many residents of Kuje remain unaware of these legal protections. Consequently, offenders often escape prosecution while victims remain trapped in repeated cycles of abuse and silence. Joseph-Asoh and Ojete (2024) noted that there is a significant disconnect between formal legal frameworks and everyday cultural practices in Nigeria's struggle against domestic violence. According to the authors, traditional beliefs and patriarchal ideologies frequently undermine the

implementation of anti-violence laws within local communities. Ogbodo and Nwachukwu (2025) further argued that many security personnel handling domestic violence cases lack specialized knowledge concerning gender-sensitive investigation procedures. The authors observed that victims are frequently subjected to victim-blaming attitudes and hostile questioning by law enforcement officials, thereby discouraging future reporting. Similarly, Umeh and Chisom (2025) explained that social welfare institutions in Nigeria remain underfunded and poorly equipped to provide rehabilitation services, shelters, counseling, and legal support for survivors of domestic violence. Community-based studies within Kuje also indicate that weak trust in security institutions contributes significantly to underreporting of domestic violence cases. According to Bello and Okafor (2024), many residents rely more on informal community intervention mechanisms than formal policing because they perceive legal institutions as slow, corrupt, and ineffective. The researchers concluded that a lack of confidence in state institutions weakens enforcement efforts and perpetuates domestic violence within the area. Domestic violence, therefore, remains a major socio-legal challenge in Nigeria because the existence of laws alone cannot effectively eliminate deeply rooted patriarchal traditions, economic inequality, and institutional weaknesses. The persistence of abuse within the Kuje Area Council underscores the gap between legislative reforms and practical realities at the grassroots level. Consequently, evaluating domestic violence laws and their enforcement mechanisms within Kuje Area Council is essential for assessing the effectiveness of legal frameworks, identifying barriers to implementation, improving institutional accountability, and enhancing protection for victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence refers to any abusive or violent conduct used by one partner, spouse, or family member to exercise power and control over another individual within a domestic relationship. It includes physical assault, emotional intimidation, verbal abuse, psychological manipulation, economic deprivation, sexual violence, coercion, threats, isolation, and harmful traditional practices. Nigerian scholars between 2021 and 2026 have emphasized that domestic violence extends beyond physical injury to include non-physical acts capable of causing emotional trauma, psychological instability, and social deprivation. According to Akinlade and Eze (2022), domestic violence involves intentional acts aimed at inflicting pain, fear, humiliation, or suffering on intimate partners and family members. The authors explained that domestic violence in Nigeria is often linked to patriarchal ideologies that reinforce unequal power relations between men and women. Similarly, Nwafor and Okechukwu (2023) argued that domestic violence constitutes a violation of fundamental human rights because it undermines personal dignity, security, equality, and freedom within family relationships.

The World Health Organization defines domestic violence as any behavior within intimate relationships that causes physical, psychological, or sexual harm to victims. In Nigeria, domestic violence extends beyond intimate partner abuse to include widowhood maltreatment, child abuse, denial of inheritance rights, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and economic deprivation. According to Egbunike and Chukwuemeka (2024), many harmful traditional practices continue to persist in Nigerian communities because they are culturally normalized and institutionally tolerated. Arisukwu *et al.*, (2021) explained that domestic violence in rural Nigerian communities frequently manifests through wife battering, denial of financial support, emotional humiliation, forced sexual intercourse, intimidation, and restriction of women's movement. Their study in Kuje

Area Council revealed that victims often endure prolonged abuse because of fear of social rejection and financial insecurity. Domestic violence may therefore be categorized into physical violence involving beating, slapping, assault, and bodily injury; psychological violence involving threats, intimidation, fear, and emotional manipulation; sexual violence involving forced intercourse and marital rape; economic violence involving denial of financial resources and employment opportunities; and emotional abuse involving insults, humiliation, isolation, and verbal degradation. Domestic violence laws refer to legal provisions designed to prevent violence, protect victims, punish offenders, and provide remedies for survivors of abuse within domestic settings. In Nigeria, the principal legislation addressing domestic violence is the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015. According to Arowolo (2021), the VAPP Act significantly expanded Nigeria's legal response to domestic violence by recognizing emotional, economic, psychological, and sexual abuse as punishable offences. The VAPP Act introduced protective measures, including restraining orders, compensation for victims, rehabilitation support, and penalties for harmful traditional practices. The law criminalizes physical abuse, emotional abuse, female genital mutilation, harmful widowhood practices, abandonment of spouses and children, forced isolation, and spousal battery. Since the law applies directly within the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, it remains highly relevant to addressing domestic violence within Kuje Area Council. Oluyemi and Hassan (2022) argued that the VAPP Act represents a transition from traditional criminal law approaches toward a victim-centered legal framework in Nigeria. However, the authors maintained that poor domestication of the law across several Nigerian states limits its nationwide effectiveness. Similarly, Ezeani and Okonkwo (2024) observed that weak institutional capacity, corruption, delayed justice, and poor police training undermine the effective implementation of domestic violence laws. Law enforcement refers to the activities of institutions responsible for enforcing laws through investigation, arrest, prosecution, adjudication, and punishment of offenders. In domestic violence matters, enforcement institutions include the Nigeria Police Force, courts, the Ministry of Women Affairs, the National Human Rights Commission, legal aid agencies, and civil society organizations. According to Yusuf and Adewale (2023), effective enforcement of domestic violence laws requires prompt investigation, protection of victims, access to justice, adequate prosecution, public sensitization, and institutional accountability. The authors argued that legal reforms cannot achieve a meaningful impact without effective enforcement structures. However, Nigerian scholars continue to maintain that law enforcement agencies often trivialize domestic violence by treating it as a private family issue. Ojo and Nnamdi (2024) found that many police officers prefer reconciliation between victims and offenders instead of criminal prosecution. According to the authors, such practices discourage victims from seeking justice and contribute to persistent underreporting of domestic violence cases in Nigeria.

Okorie and Danladi (2025) also observed that inadequate training, corruption, weak logistics, and the absence of gender-sensitive institutional frameworks weaken the capacity of law enforcement agencies to effectively address domestic violence. The researchers concluded that unless institutional reforms are strengthened, domestic violence laws may continue to exist largely in theory rather than in practical enforcement realities. Arisukwu *et al.*, conducted a study among rural women in Kuje Area Council and found that domestic violence remains prevalent despite increasing awareness campaigns and legal reforms. The researchers established that poverty,

patriarchal traditions, fear of divorce, economic dependency, and cultural expectations significantly contribute to women's silence regarding abusive relationships. Their findings further revealed that many victims avoid reporting violence because of fear of stigmatization, shame, and community rejection. Arowolo (2021) examined legislative responses to violence against women in Nigeria and concluded that legal reforms alone cannot effectively combat domestic violence without strong institutional enforcement. The author argued that discriminatory customs, patriarchal ideologies, and weak state institutions continue to obstruct the implementation of anti-violence laws across Nigeria. Obodo and Anushiem (2023) also found that domestic violence laws in Nigeria suffer from enforcement challenges arising from corruption, weak judicial systems, poor police response, and cultural interference. According to the authors, police officers frequently encourage reconciliation rather than prosecution, thereby weakening deterrence against offenders. Joseph-Asoh and Ojete (2024) observed that institutional frameworks for combating domestic violence remain ineffective because of poor coordination among stakeholders, inadequate public sensitization, and weak welfare support systems for victims. Similarly, Bello and Okafor (2025) found that residents of Kuje Area Council place greater trust in informal community mechanisms than in formal legal institutions.

This study is principally anchored on Feminist Theory, which originated from feminist intellectual movements in Europe and North America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and later developed extensively in the 1960s and 1970s through radical feminist scholars such as Kate Millett (1970), Simone de Beauvoir (1949), Betty Friedan (1963), and Shulamith Firestone (1970). Feminist Theory explains domestic violence as a consequence of patriarchal social structures that institutionalize male dominance and female subordination within society. The theory argues that violence against women is sustained by unequal power relations embedded in cultural, religious, political, and economic systems that favor men while limiting women's autonomy and rights. Radical feminists specifically maintain that patriarchy legitimizes male control over women and normalizes abusive practices within family relationships. According to the theory, domestic violence is not merely an individual problem but a structural manifestation of gender inequality and systemic oppression against women. The assumptions of Feminist Theory are highly relevant to the Nigerian context, where patriarchal traditions continue to influence family relations, marriage systems, inheritance practices, and social expectations concerning women. Nigerian scholars between 2021 and 2026 strongly align with the feminist perspective in explaining the persistence of domestic violence within communities. Ogadimma Arisukwu and colleagues (2021) argued that many women in Kuje Area Council tolerate domestic abuse because cultural beliefs encourage female submission and endurance in marriage. Their findings revealed that women often remain in abusive relationships because of fear of stigmatization, divorce, and economic hardship. Similarly, Arowolo (2021) maintained that patriarchal ideologies and discriminatory customs weaken the enforcement of domestic violence laws in Nigeria because many institutions still perceive male dominance as culturally legitimate. Nwafor and Okechukwu (2023) also explained that domestic violence persists in Nigeria because gender inequality places women in vulnerable socio-economic positions where they depend heavily on male partners for survival. According to the authors, unequal power relations contribute significantly to victim silence, underreporting, and weak legal resistance against abuse. Adeyemi and Salami (2024)

further observed that patriarchal attitudes influence the behavior of law enforcement agencies, courts, and community leaders, thereby contributing to poor implementation of domestic violence laws. The authors argued that many victims encounter victim-blaming attitudes from police officers and community members who perceive domestic violence as a private family issue rather than a criminal offence. The Feminist Theory is therefore relevant to this study because it explains how gender inequality contributes to underreporting of domestic violence, weak institutional protection for women, victim blaming, cultural acceptance of wife discipline, and societal pressure against divorce or separation. The theory also helps to explain why enforcement of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act remains weak in some communities despite the existence of legal protections for victims. Within Kuje Area Council, patriarchal beliefs and traditional cultural expectations continue to influence attitudes toward domestic violence, thereby undermining legal enforcement mechanisms and discouraging victims from seeking justice.

This study is also supported by Social Learning Theory, developed by Albert Bandura in 1977, which focuses on observational learning and behavioral imitation. The theory originated in psychological and behavioral studies that argued that human behavior is learned through observation, imitation, modeling, and reinforcement within social environments. According to Bandura, individuals learn violent behavior by observing the actions of others, especially within family and community settings. The theory posits that children exposed to violence in homes are more likely to reproduce similar aggressive behaviors during adulthood because violence becomes normalized through repeated exposure and reinforcement. Arisukwu et al. (2021) observed that many individuals raised in violent households often perceive abuse as a normal aspect of marital relationships. According to the researchers, repeated exposure to wife battering and verbal abuse during childhood contributes to the normalization of violence within adult relationships. Yusuf and Adewale (2023) argued that violent behavior in many Nigerian homes is socially reinforced through cultural acceptance of male aggression and disciplinary authority over women. The authors maintained that communities where domestic violence is tolerated indirectly encourage future generations to reproduce similar abusive behaviors. Ojo and Nnamdi (2024) further explained that children who witness domestic violence are more likely to internalize aggression as an acceptable means of conflict resolution. According to the authors, intergenerational transmission of violence contributes significantly to the persistence of domestic abuse in rural and semi-urban communities such as Kuje Area Council. Umeh and Chisom (2025) also noted that societal tolerance of domestic violence through silence, informal reconciliation, and weak punishment of offenders reinforces abusive conduct within families. The authors argued that when perpetrators are not held accountable, violence becomes socially normalized and repeatedly reproduced across generations. The theory, therefore, explains how violence becomes socially accepted, how abuse is learned through observation and imitation, and how cultural environments sustain domestic violence through continuous reinforcement. The relevance of Social Learning Theory to this study lies in its ability to explain why domestic violence persists despite legal reforms and awareness campaigns. In Kuje Area Council, exposure to intergenerational violence, cultural normalization of wife beating, and weak enforcement of domestic violence laws may encourage individuals to perceive abuse as legitimate behavior within family relationships.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Domestic violence has continued to constitute a major social, legal, and human rights challenge in Nigeria despite the existence of various constitutional protections and legislative measures aimed at safeguarding vulnerable individuals, particularly women and children. In recent years, cases of wife battering, emotional abuse, marital rape, economic deprivation, intimidation, and other forms of gender-based violence have remained prevalent across both urban and rural communities in the country. The enactment of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015 was intended to strengthen legal protection against domestic violence, especially within the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, where the law directly applies. However, the persistence of domestic violence cases within communities such as Kuje Area Council raises concerns regarding the effectiveness of these laws and the capacity of enforcement institutions to implement them adequately. In Kuje Area Council, domestic violence has increasingly become a disturbing social problem due to rapid population growth, poverty, unemployment, cultural practices, and weak institutional response mechanisms. Although legal provisions criminalize physical assault, emotional abuse, harmful widowhood practices, and economic violence, many victims continue to experience abuse without seeking formal legal protection. Reports from previous studies indicate that several victims prefer informal settlement through family elders, religious leaders, or traditional rulers rather than reporting cases to the police or courts. This situation contributes significantly to underreporting and weak prosecution of offenders.

Many residents of Kuje Area Council appear to have limited awareness of the provisions and protections guaranteed under the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act. As a result, victims often remain trapped in abusive relationships because of fear of stigmatization, economic dependency, cultural expectations, and lack of confidence in the justice system. In many instances, law enforcement agencies are accused of treating domestic violence as a private family matter instead of a criminal offence requiring immediate legal intervention. Delayed judicial processes, corruption, inadequate police training, poor victim support services, and insufficient public sensitization have also weakened the effectiveness of domestic violence laws within the area. Despite increasing scholarly attention on domestic violence in Nigeria, limited empirical studies have specifically examined the effectiveness of domestic violence laws and their enforcement within Kuje Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory. Most existing studies focus broadly on violence against women at the national level without adequately assessing how legal frameworks operate within local communities. Consequently, there remains insufficient understanding of the extent to which domestic violence laws are enforced in Kuje, the challenges confronting enforcement agencies, and the factors responsible for the persistence of domestic violence within the area. It is against this background that this study seeks to evaluate domestic violence laws and their enforcement in Kuje Area Council, FCT Abuja. The study intends to examine the effectiveness of existing legal frameworks, identify barriers affecting enforcement, assess public awareness of domestic violence laws, and determine the extent to which enforcement institutions protect victims and prosecute offenders within the area.

### 1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to evaluate domestic violence laws and their enforcement in Kuje Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. examine the nature and prevalence of domestic violence in Kuje Area Council, FCT, Abuja;
2. assess the effectiveness of domestic violence laws, particularly the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, in addressing domestic violence cases within Kuje Area Council.

### 1.4 Research Questions

The study provided answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the nature and prevalence of domestic violence in Kuje Area Council, FCT Abuja?
2. How effective are domestic violence laws, particularly the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, in addressing domestic violence cases within Kuje Area Council.

### 1.5 Hypothesis

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the enforcement of domestic violence laws and the reduction of domestic violence cases in Kuje Area Council, FCT Abuja.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between the enforcement of domestic violence laws and the reduction of domestic violence cases in Kuje Area Council, FCT Abuja.

## 2. Methodology

This study adopted a comprehensive research methodology to examine the effectiveness of domestic violence laws and their enforcement in Kuje Area Council, Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The methodology provides the systematic procedures for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to achieve the study's objectives and answer the research questions. The methodology was structured to ensure reliability, validity, objectivity, and accuracy in evaluating domestic violence laws and institutional enforcement mechanisms within the study area. The study adopts the descriptive survey research design. The descriptive survey design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to obtain detailed information from respondents concerning their opinions, experiences, attitudes, and perceptions regarding domestic violence laws and their enforcement in Kuje Area Council. The design also allowed the researcher to describe existing conditions, examine relationships among variables, and analyze enforcement challenges affecting the implementation of domestic violence laws within the area. The descriptive approach was particularly suitable because the study sought to evaluate current realities regarding domestic violence, public awareness of legal provisions, institutional responses, and socio-cultural barriers to enforcement. The study area was Kuje Area Council in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Kuje Area Council is one of the six Area Councils in the FCT and comprises both urban and rural settlements. The area has experienced significant population growth due to urban expansion and rural-urban migration. Kuje is characterized by cultural diversity, agricultural activities, trading, civil service employment, and increasing residential development. The area was selected because domestic violence cases have continued to generate concern among residents, civil society organizations, and law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, the applicability of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act within the FCT makes Kuje Area Council an important

location for assessing the implementation and enforcement of domestic violence laws at the grassroots level.

The population of the study consisted of residents of Kuje Area Council, law enforcement officers, legal practitioners, officials of the Ministry of Women Affairs, community leaders, civil society organizations, and victims or survivors of domestic violence in the area. The target population included adult men and women who possess knowledge or experience relating to domestic violence and the enforcement of domestic violence laws. The inclusion of different categories of respondents ensures balanced perspectives concerning legal awareness, institutional practices, and enforcement challenges. A sample size of respondents was selected from the target population using appropriate sampling techniques. The study used both purposive and simple random sampling techniques. The purposive sampling technique was used to select key informants, including police officers, legal practitioners, traditional leaders, and officials from relevant institutions, due to their specialized knowledge of domestic violence and law enforcement. Simple random sampling is used to select residents of Kuje Area Council in order to provide equal opportunity for participation and minimize sampling bias. The combination of these sampling techniques enhances the representativeness and credibility of the findings. The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaire contained both closed-ended and open-ended questions, structured to align with the study's objectives and research questions. The questionnaire was divided into sections covering demographic information, prevalence of domestic violence, awareness of domestic violence laws, effectiveness of enforcement agencies, socio-cultural factors affecting enforcement, and challenges confronting victims in accessing justice. Closed-ended questions provided measurable responses suitable for quantitative analysis, while open-ended questions allowed respondents to express detailed opinions and experiences regarding domestic violence and law enforcement within Kuje Area Council. In addition to questionnaires, the study used interviews as a data-collection method. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with selected law enforcement officers, legal practitioners, traditional rulers, officials of women's affairs agencies, and representatives of civil society organizations. The interview method was used to obtain in-depth information on institutional practices, enforcement procedures, legal challenges, and the practical realities associated with domestic violence cases in Kuje Area Council. Interviews also enabled the researcher to gather expert opinions and clarify issues that may not be adequately captured through questionnaires alone. Secondary sources of data were also utilized in the study. These include textbooks, journal articles, government publications, conference papers, newspapers, legal documents, policy reports, and online academic materials relating to domestic violence laws and enforcement in Nigeria. Relevant legal instruments, such as the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015, the Child Rights Act, the Penal Code, and the Criminal Code, are reviewed to provide a legal and conceptual understanding of domestic violence regulation in Nigeria. To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the questionnaire and interview guide were reviewed by specialists in law, criminology, sociology, and social research methodology. Their observations and recommendations helped clarify ambiguities, improve clarity, and ensure the instrument adequately measures the variables under investigation. Reliability of the instrument was achieved

through a pilot study conducted among selected respondents outside the main study area. Responses obtained during the pilot test helped to determine the instrument's consistency and suitability before final administration.

The data collection method involved the direct administration of questionnaires by the researcher and trained research assistants. Respondents were approached respectfully and informed of the study's purpose. Sufficient time was provided for completing the questionnaires, while confidentiality and anonymity were assured to encourage honest responses. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and responses are carefully documented for analysis. The data analysis method involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data from questionnaires are analyzed using descriptive statistical tools, such as frequency distributions, percentages, and simple averages. These statistical methods helped summarize respondents' views on domestic violence prevalence, legal awareness, and the effectiveness of enforcement agencies. Qualitative data obtained from interviews and open-ended responses are analyzed using content analysis. This involved identifying recurring themes, patterns, and explanations relevant to domestic violence laws and enforcement within Kuje Area Council. The study's hypothesis was tested using the Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistical test. The Chi-square method is considered appropriate because it measures the relationship between categorical variables and determines whether a significant association exists between the enforcement of domestic violence laws and the reduction of domestic violence cases in Kuje Area Council. The level of significance for hypothesis testing is set at 0.05.

### 3. Results

**Research Question 1:** What is the nature and prevalence of domestic violence in Kuje Area Council, FCT Abuja?

**Table 1:** Nature and Prevalence of Domestic Violence in Kuje Area Council, FCT Abuja

S/N	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Physical violence is common in Kuje Area Council	52	34.7
2	Emotional and psychological abuse is common	38	25.3
3	Economic deprivation and financial control occur frequently	27	18.0
4	Sexual violence and marital rape exist in some homes	18	12.0
5	Domestic violence is not common	15	10.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above indicates that 52 respondents representing 34.7% agreed that physical violence is the most common form of domestic violence in Kuje Area Council. Furthermore, 38 respondents representing 25.3% identified emotional and psychological abuse as prevalent within the area. Economic deprivation and financial control were identified by 27 respondents representing 18.0%, while 18 respondents representing 12.0% acknowledged the existence of sexual violence and marital rape within some households. However, 15 respondents representing 10.0% believed that

domestic violence is not common within the area. The findings suggest that domestic violence is prevalent in Kuje Area Council, with physical violence emerging as the most common form experienced by victims. Emotional abuse, economic deprivation, and sexual violence also constitute significant dimensions of domestic violence within the area. The result further indicates that domestic violence remains a serious social problem affecting family stability and community wellbeing in Kuje Area Council, FCT Abuja.

**Research Question 2:** How effective are domestic violence laws, particularly the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, in addressing domestic violence cases within Kuje Area Council?

**Table 2:** Effectiveness of Domestic Violence Laws in Kuje Area Council

S/N	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Laws are highly effective in addressing domestic violence	24	16.0
2	Laws are moderately effective	41	27.3
3	Laws are ineffective because enforcement is weak	56	37.3
4	Many residents are unaware of the laws	20	13.3
5	No response	9	6.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above reveals that 24 respondents representing 16.0% believed that domestic violence laws are highly effective in addressing domestic violence cases within Kuje Area Council. Additionally, 41 respondents representing 27.3% considered the laws moderately effective. However, the majority of respondents, 56 representing 37.3%, stated that the laws are ineffective because enforcement mechanisms remain weak. Furthermore, 20 respondents representing 13.3% indicated that many residents are unaware of the provisions of domestic violence laws such as the VAPP Act, while 9 respondents representing 6.0% did not provide any response. The findings indicate that although domestic violence laws exist within the Federal Capital Territory, their effectiveness in Kuje Area Council is limited by weak enforcement, inadequate public awareness, and institutional challenges. The result suggests that legal frameworks alone are insufficient without proper implementation, effective policing, public sensitization, and institutional support for victims.

**Test of Hypothesis**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between the enforcement of domestic violence laws and the reduction of domestic violence cases in Kuje Area Council, FCT Abuja.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant relationship between the enforcement of domestic violence laws and the reduction of domestic violence cases in Kuje Area Council, FCT Abuja.

The hypothesis was tested using the Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistical method at 0.05 level of significance.

**Table 3:** Chi-square Analysis on Enforcement of Domestic Violence Laws and Reduction of Domestic Violence Cases

Variables	Observed Frequency (O)	Expected Frequency (E)	(O-E) <sup>2</sup> /E
Strong enforcement reduces domestic violence	60	50	2.00
Weak enforcement increases domestic violence	55	50	0.50
Public awareness improves reporting of cases	20	25	1.00
Lack of awareness contributes to prevalence	15	25	4.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>7.50</b>

The result implies that there is no statistically significant relationship between the enforcement of domestic violence laws and the reduction of domestic violence cases in Kuje Area Council at the tested significance level. This suggests that despite the existence of domestic violence laws such as the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, enforcement mechanisms alone may not be sufficient to significantly reduce domestic violence cases without complementary factors such as public awareness, cultural reorientation, economic empowerment of victims, institutional accountability, and community support systems. The finding further indicates that domestic violence in Kuje Area Council is influenced by broader socio-cultural and institutional factors beyond legal enforcement alone. Consequently, effective reduction of domestic violence requires not only strong legal frameworks but also improved public sensitization, efficient law enforcement institutions, victim support services, and societal change toward gender equality and protection of human rights.

#### 4. Discussion of Finding

The findings from the study reveal that domestic violence remains highly prevalent within Kuje Area Council, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The analysis of respondents' views showed that physical violence constitutes the most common form of abuse experienced within domestic relationships. This was evidenced by the responses of 52 respondents representing 34.7% who agreed that physical assault, including beating, slapping, and other forms of bodily harm, frequently occurs within households in the area. The high percentage recorded under physical violence indicates that many families within Kuje continue to experience direct forms of abuse that threaten the physical safety and well-being of victims, particularly women and children. The high prevalence of physical violence identified in Kuje Area Council supports the argument of Arisukwu, Igbolekwu, and Salawu (2021), who observed that "physical assault remains normalized in many Nigerian households where patriarchal authority is culturally reinforced." Their study in similar communities revealed that wife battering and physical abuse persist because they are often misinterpreted as disciplinary measures within marriage. This is further supported by Olasupo and Yusuf (2022), who maintained that domestic violence in Nigeria is sustained by entrenched gender hierarchies that legitimize male control and normalize violence against women.

The present findings, therefore, confirm that physical violence remains the most visible and socially tolerated form of domestic abuse within Kuje Area Council.

The findings also revealed that emotional and psychological abuse constitute another significant dimension of domestic violence within Kuje Area Council. A total of 38 respondents representing 25.3% identified emotional abuse, intimidation, threats, humiliation, and psychological manipulation as common experiences among victims of domestic violence. This implies that, beyond physical assault, many victims suffer emotional trauma and psychological instability resulting from persistent verbal abuse, fear, intimidation, and controlling behaviors from partners or family members. Emotional violence may not always leave visible physical injuries, yet its psychological effects often result in depression, anxiety, emotional instability, and reduced self-esteem among victims. The study also revealed significant levels of emotional, economic, and sexual violence, which aligns with the growing body of Nigerian literature emphasizing the multidimensional nature of domestic abuse. Akinlade and Eze (2023) argued that emotional and psychological violence is one of the most underestimated forms of abuse in Nigeria, noting that “psychological trauma often goes unnoticed because it leaves no physical scars, yet its effects are long-lasting and deeply damaging.” Similarly, Adeyemi and Salami (2024) explained that economic violence is frequently used as a tool of control, particularly in rural and semi-urban settings, where financial dependency limits victims’ ability to escape abusive relationships. The finding on sexual violence also corresponds with Egbunike and Chukwuemeka (2024), who stated that “marital rape remains largely hidden due to cultural silence and the perception that consent is implied within marriage.” These studies collectively support the present finding that domestic violence in Kuje Area Council is not limited to physical abuse but includes emotional, economic, and sexual dimensions that are often underreported due to cultural stigma and weak institutional response.

The result of the hypothesis testing further revealed that there is no statistically significant relationship between the enforcement of domestic violence laws and the reduction of domestic violence cases in Kuje Area Council at the tested level of significance. This implies that despite the existence and enforcement of laws such as the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, domestic violence continues to persist within the area. The finding suggests that legal enforcement alone may not automatically result in a significant reduction of domestic violence cases unless broader socio-cultural and institutional factors are addressed simultaneously. The findings on the effectiveness of domestic violence laws reflect the broader concerns raised by Nigerian legal and social scholars regarding the weak enforcement of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act. Obodo and Anushiem (2023) argued that “Nigeria’s challenge is not legislative absence but institutional failure in enforcement and implementation,” noting that police officers often treat domestic violence as a private matter rather than a criminal offence. Joseph-Asoh and Ojete (2024) similarly emphasized that poor coordination among justice institutions and inadequate public sensitization significantly weaken the impact of domestic violence laws. The present finding that most respondents perceive domestic violence laws as ineffective due to weak enforcement aligns with Bello and Okafor (2025), who observed that low public trust in law enforcement agencies discourages reporting and reduces the deterrent effect of legal frameworks.

## 5. Conclusion

The study on the evaluation of domestic violence laws and their enforcement in Kuje Area Council, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, reveals that domestic violence remains a persistent and multidimensional social problem in the area despite the existence of legal frameworks such as the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015. The findings indicate that domestic violence in Kuje Area Council manifests in various forms, including physical, emotional, psychological, economic, and sexual abuse, with physical violence being the most commonly reported. This demonstrates that domestic violence is not only widespread but also deeply embedded in family and community structures where patriarchal norms and cultural beliefs continue to influence behavior and tolerance of abuse.

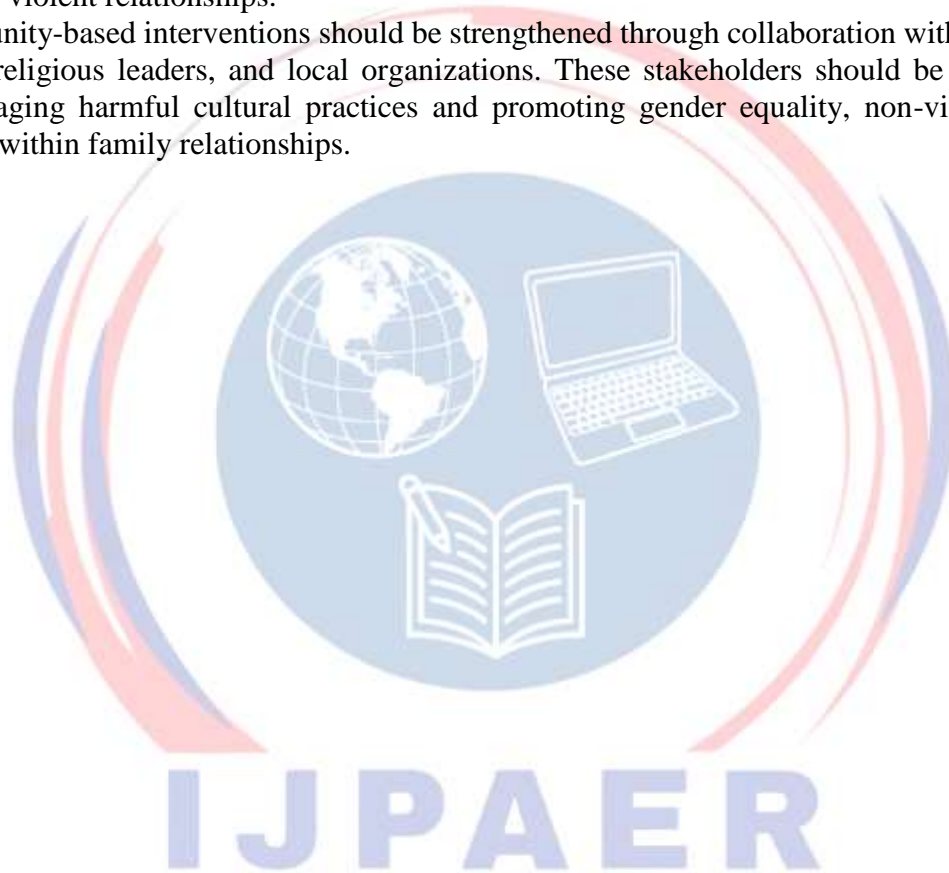
The study further concludes that although domestic violence laws exist in Nigeria, their effectiveness in Kuje Area Council is significantly limited by weak enforcement mechanisms, inadequate institutional capacity, low public awareness, and the socio-cultural acceptance of domestic violence as a private family matter. Law enforcement agencies, including the police and judicial institutions, are often perceived as ineffective or insensitive in handling domestic violence cases, leading to underreporting and lack of prosecution of offenders. Consequently, many victims remain trapped in abusive relationships due to fear, economic dependence, and lack of confidence in the justice system. The hypothesis testing also confirms that there is no significant relationship between the enforcement of domestic violence laws and the reduction of domestic violence cases in Kuje Area Council. This implies that legal frameworks alone are insufficient to curb domestic violence unless they are supported by strong institutional enforcement, public sensitization, cultural reorientation, and socio-economic empowerment of victims. Overall, the study concludes that domestic violence in Kuje Area Council persists not because of the absence of laws, but due to the gap between legal provisions and practical enforcement at the grassroots level.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made to improve the effectiveness of domestic violence laws and their enforcement in Kuje Area Council, FCT, Abuja

1. There is a need for intensified public awareness and sensitization campaigns on the provisions of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015. Government agencies, civil society organizations, and community leaders should educate residents on the legal implications of domestic violence and the rights of victims. This will help reduce ignorance of the law and encourage more reporting of abuse cases.
2. Law enforcement agencies, particularly the Nigeria Police Force, should receive specialized and continuous training on gender-sensitive handling of domestic violence cases. Officers should be trained to treat domestic violence as a criminal offence rather than a private family issue, and to ensure proper investigation, protection of victims, and prosecution of offenders without bias or compromise.
3. The government at the federal and FCT levels should strengthen institutional support systems for victims of domestic violence. This includes establishing well-equipped shelters, counseling centers, legal aid services, and emergency response units within Kuje Area Council to provide immediate protection and rehabilitation for victims.

4. There is a need for stricter enforcement of existing domestic violence laws through improved judicial processes. Courts should ensure the faster prosecution of offenders to deter, while penalties under the VAPP Act should be consistently applied without cultural or social interference.
5. Economic empowerment programs should be introduced to support women and vulnerable persons in Kuje Area Council. Providing access to education, skills acquisition, and financial independence will reduce victims' dependency on abusive partners and increase their ability to leave violent relationships.
6. Community-based interventions should be strengthened through collaboration with traditional rulers, religious leaders, and local organizations. These stakeholders should be engaged in discouraging harmful cultural practices and promoting gender equality, non-violence, and respect within family relationships.



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