

## Gender-based crimes against women in Katsina State, Nigeria: Patterns, determinants, and institutional responses

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### Abstract:

The main problem in this study is the increasing incidence of gender-based crimes against women in Katsina State, Nigeria. The research highlights recurring patterns of violence, examines the social, cultural, and economic causes, and assesses the effectiveness of institutional and community responses in preventing and addressing such crimes. This study aims to identify patterns of gender-based crimes against women in Katsina State, analyze the underlying causes, and evaluate the effectiveness of responses and interventions by institutions and the community. This study employed a qualitative design using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to explore participants' lived experiences. Guided by Intersectional and Feminist Theories, data were collected through in-depth interviews with survivors and key informants from the Katsina State GBV Center. This study shows that gender-based violence in Katsina is influenced by the interaction of social, economic, and cultural factors, including low education, poverty, patriarchal norms, and family neglect. Although GBV centers provide comprehensive services, their effectiveness depends on coordination between the legal, medical, and social systems. The findings emphasize the importance of a holistic approach, including education, economic empowerment, legal protection, and social support, to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to GBV. The findings emphasize the need for interventions that integrate education, economic empowerment, legal protection, and social support, as well as inter-agency coordination to prevent gender-based violence and reduce the vulnerability of women and girls.

**Keywords:** Gender-Based Violence, Cultural Belief, Vulnerability of Women and Girls,



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## INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) involves harmful acts directed at individuals because of their gender and is widely condemned by cultural norms and legal systems. Tan and Kuschminder (2022) explain that GBV stems from deep-rooted inequalities in gender power relations. In Nigeria, it is primarily reported among women, children, and the elderly, who face the highest risks. Quadri et al. (2024) note that these groups are especially vulnerable in conflict zones such as Northern Nigeria due to social and biological factors. Gonalons-Pons and Gangl (2021) highlight that the death or absence of male breadwinners leaves families in economic distress, worsened by the growing number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who face higher GBV risks in urban areas. Barbosa et al. (2023) report that women of reproductive age sometimes engage in survival sex for basic needs. Mangubhai et al. (2023) describe GBV as including physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, with threats and restrictions of freedom, rooted in systemic gender inequality. Women and marginalized groups remain most vulnerable, particularly during crises.

Research on gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigeria shows it is shaped by structural and social factors. Tewabe et al. (2024) emphasize that rising GBV cases are linked to gender inequality and unequal power relations, particularly among refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Armed conflict involving Boko Haram since 2009 has further increased the risks of abduction and forced marriage among women and girls (Nagarajan, 2024). Despite Nigeria's ratification of CEDAW (Obradovic, 2015), the Maputo Protocol (Hefez et al., 2024), and the Child Rights Act (Enemo, 2021), implementation remains limited, reflecting deep-rooted cultural resistance to gender equality (Mshelia, 2021). Ekhator-Mobayode et al. (2022) report that Boko Haram's presence intensifies intimate partner violence and controlling behaviors within households. In Katsina State, REACH (2022) documents GBV forms such as physical assault, denial of resources, and forced marriage. Poverty and patriarchal norms drive such violence (Ozaki & Otis, 2016; Mellar et al., 2024), while UNICEF (2015) notes that 43% of girls marry before 18, highlighting the urgent need to identify types, causes, and remedies for GBV.

Although numerous studies have examined gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigeria, most focus on general prevalence and national trends, providing limited insight into conflict-affected regions such as Katsina State. Existing literature emphasizes statistical data and broad socio-political explanations but offers little understanding of how GBV impacts the daily lives of women and girls under insecure conditions. The interplay of cultural beliefs, poverty, and weak legal enforcement that sustains gender-based crimes at the community level is often overlooked. Furthermore, few studies adopt intersectional or feminist frameworks to examine how structural inequality, patriarchal norms, and conflict dynamics combine to perpetuate violence. This study addresses these gaps by identifying the types and causes of GBV in conflict-affected areas, particularly Katsina State, and by exploring strategies and interventions to strengthen community and institutional responses to sexual violence, child marriage, and intimate partner violence.

This study aims to identify the types of gender-based violence (GBV) occurring in conflict-affected regions of Nigeria, particularly Katsina State. It also examines the root causes of sex-based crimes, including sexual violence, child marriage, and intimate partner violence, and explores strategies and interventions to address these issues. The research focuses on how poverty, insecurity, cultural beliefs, and weak legal enforcement contribute to the persistence of GBV in affected communities. Theoretically, it contributes to the literature on GBV in conflict zones, especially in developing countries like Nigeria. Practically, the findings are expected to inform policy formulation, strengthen legal frameworks,

promote public awareness, and guide humanitarian organizations and policymakers in designing effective interventions to protect women and girls from gender-based violence in conflict-affected regions.

This study concludes that gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigeria, particularly Katsina State, is a complex issue driven by poverty, armed conflict, and weak law enforcement. Patriarchal values and discriminatory cultural norms reinforce gender inequality, while local implementation of policies and victim protection services remains suboptimal. Based on these conditions, the research addresses three key questions: (1) What are the main causes of GBV in Katsina State? (2) What are the patterns and prevalence of GBV crimes in the region? (3) How effective are the protection services and policies for GBV survivors? By answering these questions, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of GBV's root causes and to explore effective intervention strategies to strengthen community and institutional responses in conflict-affected areas of Nigeria.

## **METHOD**

### *Research Approach*

This study uses Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a qualitative approach that is effective for understanding how individuals interpret personal experiences in complex and sensitive contexts such as gender-based violence (GBV). Smith and Osborn (2015) emphasize that IPA focuses on the subjective reality of participants and their life experiences, allowing exploration not only of what is experienced, but how that experience is interpreted in social and emotional contexts. This approach is relevant for examining how victims of gender-based crimes in Katsina State cope with trauma, stigma, and the recovery process. IPA, as described by Hartman and Squires (2024), encourages deep reflective engagement with participants, suitable for exploring the psychological and emotional dimensions of life experiences. This method also amplifies the voices of victims in areas with low reporting rates, maintaining the safety and agency of participants.

### *Sampling Techniques and Participants*

The study used purposive sampling, in accordance with the principles of natural science, which emphasize depth of exploration rather than broad generalization. Campbell et al. (2020) state that purposive sampling is effective for obtaining direct insights from individuals with relevant experiences. A total of 12 GBV survivors were selected in collaboration with the GBV Center in Katsina State, both those who were registered and those who were active in support programs. The inclusion criteria focused on direct experiences of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), without demographic restrictions. Sovacool et al. (2018) emphasized that purposive sampling is appropriate when ethical considerations and access are important factors. Participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to engage in reflective dialogue, ensuring that the data was relevant and meaningful.

### *Data Collection*

Data was collected through In-Depth Interviews (IDI) with victims and Key Informant Interviews (KII) with GBV Center staff. A total of 14 interviews were conducted from August 7 to September 10, 2024, using the Hausa language to maintain comfort and cultural sensitivity. The interviews were then transcribed and translated into English. IDIs allowed participants to recount their experiences safely, while KIIs provided systemic context regarding support, challenges, and trends. Semi-structured instruments were used for

flexibility, while remaining focused on key themes such as types of GBV, coping mechanisms, and institutional responses.

#### *Data Analysis*

Data was analyzed using a Matrix Table, aligning responses with research objectives. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify patterns and differences in narratives, while maintaining the unique perspective of each participant. Analysis included triangulation between IDI and KII to strengthen data credibility. An audit trail was used to document the decision-making process during analysis, ensuring transparency.

#### *Data Validity*

Data validity was ensured through several strategies. Source triangulation was conducted between interviews with victims and key informants to verify the consistency of information. Member checking was applied by asking participants to review summaries of findings to ensure that the researchers' interpretations were consistent with their experiences. Peer debriefing was conducted with fellow researchers to reduce subjective bias. Researchers also apply reflexivity, noting the potential influence of personal perspectives on data interpretation. These strategies are in line with IPA principles and qualitative research standards to enhance credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

#### *Ethical Considerations*

The study ensured anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent. Names and identifying information were removed from transcripts. Participants were given complete information about the purpose of the study and were interviewed only with their voluntary consent. Given the sensitivity of GBV and the security situation in Katsina, extra measures were taken to prevent psychological or social risks. The study also obtained approval from the Ethics Committee and provided counseling referrals for participants when necessary.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

#### **Sociodemographic characteristics of the participants**

The data presentation and analysis are based on fourteen interviews conducted in Katsina State during fieldwork, comprising twelve in-depth interviews (IDIs) with survivors of gender-based violence and two key informant interviews (KII) with officials from the GBV Centre. These interviews provided rich qualitative insights into participants' experiences and the broader social context of GBV.

**Table 1**

*Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants*

Participant	Age	Level of Education Completed	Employment Status	Marital Status	No. of Children
P1	56	Qur'anic School	Unemployed	Married	6
P2	29	Primary School	Unemployed	Married	5
P3	14	Junior Secondary School	Student	Single	NIL
P4	17	Primary School	Unemployed	Single	1
P5	23	Qur'anic School	Unemployed	Married	NIL
P6	20	Secondary School	Unemployed	Married	2
P7	23	Qur'anic School	Unemployed	Married	3
P8	45	Qur'anic School	Unemployed	Married	2
P9	36	Secondary School	Unemployed	Married	5
P10	27	Secondary School	Unemployed	Married	3

P11	19	Secondary School	Unemployed	Married	1
P12	21	Primary School	Unemployed	Married	2
P13	48	University	Employed	Married	4
P14	33	College of Education (NCE)	Employed	Single	NIL

The participants' ages ranged from 14 to 56 years, with the majority falling within the productive age group (20–45 years). Educational attainment was generally low; most participants completed Qur'anic, primary, or secondary education, while only two had higher education (university or NCE). Economic vulnerability was evident, as most participants were unemployed, suggesting that limited financial resources may increase exposure to GBV. The majority were married with children, though single participants were also affected, highlighting that GBV transcends marital status. Male victims and other socioeconomic groups were not represented, limiting generalizability.

Katsina State hosts a dedicated GBV Centre within the Multipurpose Centre in Filin Samji, which provides temporary shelter and essential support services for displaced women and girls. Despite these interventions, GBV remains pervasive, reflecting entrenched socio-cultural and structural vulnerabilities. Collaborative efforts from organizations such as WRAPA, UNICEF, and the Ford Foundation aim to improve case reporting, raise community awareness, and enhance survivor protection. These initiatives seek to strengthen access to justice and establish sustainable support systems for women and girls affected by GBV in Katsina State.

### **Causes of gender-based violence in Katsina State**

The causes of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Katsina State are complex and interconnected. They stem from entrenched cultural norms that reinforce gender inequality, economic hardships that increase vulnerability, and limited access to education and legal protections. Additionally, insecurity and the presence of armed groups exacerbate the situation, making women and girls more susceptible to violence. These factors combine to sustain and perpetuate GBV within the state.

**Table 2**  
*Causes of Gender-Based Violence*

No	Causes	Description
1.	Culture	Forced marriages by some parents under the pretext of Islam push survivors into prostitution. Resource denial by parents, husbands, or guardians is also a key factor driving GBV in Katsina State.
2.	Poverty	Families unable to provide food resort to begging, exposing women and girls to sex for money and human trafficking.
3.	Resource Denial	Husbands often refuse to provide shelter, food, and medical care for their wives and children, forcing them into begging and exposing them to sexual violence.
4.	Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)	Insecurity causes migration to Katsina city; displaced women and girls become vulnerable to rape or resort to prostitution for survival. Some men exploit their poverty and IDP status by exchanging food or money for sex.
5.	Age	Women and girls under 30 years old are the most vulnerable group and the majority of survivors of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the State.

The Matrix Table identifies four major crimes against women and girls in Katsina State, revealing that forced marriage remains a significant driver of gender-based vulnerability. Cultural pressure from parents to marry off their daughters often forces young women to flee their homes, leading some into commercial sex work for survival. One participant

recounted being forced into marriage, later escaping to Abuja, where she became involved in prostitution and contracted a sexually transmitted infection and mental disorder. The data suggest a cycle linking lack of education, unemployment, and poverty factors that push women into transactional sex as a survival strategy.

A married woman with five children shared how her husband abandoned her without food or shelter after their rent expired, leaving the family homeless. With nowhere to stay, she and her children resorted to sleeping in the open space of Katsina Central Market. A staff member from the GBV Centre in Katsina recounted rescuing the family and providing temporary shelter for three months. During her stay, the woman was enrolled in vocational training to gain skills for self-reliance after completing the program. This case highlights multiple dimensions of gender-based violence economic deprivation, family neglect, and institutional weakness in addressing abandonment. The lack of legal consequences for such husbands and the community's limited informal support mechanisms exacerbate the vulnerability of women and children, threatening both their welfare and future survival.

### **Pattern/prevalence of gender-based violence crime in Katsina State**

The pattern and prevalence of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Katsina State reveal a disturbing and persistent issue affecting women and girls across the region. Various forms of violence, including physical assault, sexual abuse, and forced marriage, are widespread, often exacerbated by cultural norms, poverty, and insecurity. The increasing frequency of armed attacks and displacement further compounds the vulnerability of survivors, highlighting the urgent need for targeted interventions and comprehensive support systems.

**Table 3**  
*Pattern/Prevalence GBV Crime*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Common/Frequent</b>	<b>Less Common</b>	<b>Resource Denial</b>
KII	About 60 per cent of the cases are rape in Katsina State	Exchange of food for money among the IDPS	Husbands leave their family members without food, clothing and shelter.
IDI	I was raped by our Gateman twice in my Secondary School, in 2023 and 2024. Ran out of luck this time, he is arrested now. I am 14 years old, in Junior Secondary School 2. My father had beaten me severely because he asked me to borrow money and give him. As a result of excessive beating, I started sleeping with men to get money to give to him. In that process, I conceived a pregnancy and gave birth to a baby girl.	My father forced me to marry a man against my will. I ran away to Abuja and became a commercial sex worker. I have been suffering from depression since 2015 because it was not my plan to become a prostitute.	My husband left me and joined a gang of criminals who are into kidnapping people for ransom. He forced me to join him in their hideouts, but I refused. The people of our village unanimously decided to force us out of the village for fear of my husband.

Note: Women for Women International, 2022

Table 3 reveals that the most frequent crimes committed by men against women in Katsina State include rape, economic deprivation, and neglect. Women remain the primary victims due to cultural and biological factors that position men as providers through religious and traditional marriage systems. The data indicate that rape is the most prevalent crime, often perpetrated by acquaintances and occurring in public institutions such as schools and workplaces. Additionally, many men fail to provide basic needs for their families, leaving wives and children in destitution. This economic neglect pushes some women and girls

especially those displaced by armed conflict to engage in transactional sex for survival. Consistent with research conducted across ten Nigerian states, the most common gender-based crimes include physical assault, marital rape, sexual violence, and economic deprivation, reflecting widespread gender inequality and systemic vulnerability.

This correlates with the findings of a study conducted in Malumfashi and Matazu LGAS in Katsina State by the World Bank (2019). The findings revealed the following people affected by GBV crimes: Female children, Young boys, People with disabilities, Child street hawkers, and Female students in college or higher education. Similarly, an ActionAid study reported that male school staff seek out opportunities to obtain sexual favours, exploiting the poverty of students who struggle to pay their fees and who lack uniforms and books. Female students and their parents have complained to authorities about this occurring, but appeared powerless to stop it.

### **Protection services for the victims gender-based violence**

Protection services and gender-based violence (GBV) policies play a critical role in safeguarding the rights, dignity, and well-being of survivors. These frameworks are designed to provide immediate safety, long-term support, and access to justice for victims. Effective GBV policies integrate legal, psychological, medical, and social interventions, ensuring a coordinated response. In regions with high GBV prevalence, such services are essential to promote healing, empowerment, and reintegration into society.

**Table 4**  
*Protection Service for the Victims/GBV Policy*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Government</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Individual</b>
KII	Katsina State provides mental health support and safe shelter through its Sexual Assault and Referral Centre. The Ministry of Women Affairs has established several committees Technical Working Group, Steering Committee, SOP, Working Group, and Surveillance Team to address GBV. The Surveillance Team reports cases to the Response Team, which then informs the Steering Committee for action. The state has domesticated the Child Rights Act and implements all relevant treaties protecting women and girls.	Community awareness is essential to identify where violence against women and girls (VAWG) occurs. Members should remain vigilant and protect vulnerable groups. Cultural practices, such as opposite-sex relatives sharing rooms, need discouragement. Religious and community leaders urge husbands to care for their families to prevent women from turning to commercial sex work.	Guardians are not protecting their children because of their age. Even male children are sexually abused. We treated cases of homosexuality in this Centre where underage male children were raped. Parents are enjoined not to allow small children to walk alone, especially at night or in quiet places.
IDI	GBV Centre has been supporting us with soap, diapers and a stipend since I was brought here in June 2024, I have been enrolled into the Women's Centre to learn a vocational skill to become self-reliant.	People in our community are now sympathising with our situation, especially those of us who gave birth to a child out of wedlock. The stigmatisation has reduced, unlike when I was pregnant. Some people thought I would abort the pregnancy.	Radio awareness campaigns help inform people about women's rights violations, especially in rural areas influenced by religion and culture. Katsina State also provides a hotline for reporting VAWG cases.

Table 4 highlights the existing GBV-related policies and services in Katsina State. The state established a GBV Centre that provides free legal aid, psychosocial support, and vocational training for survivors, particularly women abandoned by their families. Legal provisions in both the Penal Code and Shari'a Courts criminalize violence against women, yet conviction rates remain low due to weaknesses in the justice system and poor investigations. Studies confirm that survivors often face limited access to support services and networks. Although Nigeria has enacted the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act, its protection is undermined by gaps such as the absence of marital rape recognition in the Constitution. Furthermore, only 18 of 36 states have adopted the VAPP law, resulting in inconsistent implementation and allowing sociocultural norms to override legal measures. This incomplete adoption limits the effectiveness of national GBV protection frameworks.

## Discussion

### Socio-economic portrait of survivors of gender-based violence

The findings indicate that the majority of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) survivors in Katsina State are women with low or no formal education, which limits their understanding of legal rights and their ability to recognize or report acts of violence (Ojemeiri et al., 2022). Limited education also increases economic dependence and reinforces social subordination, as noted by Wilde et al. (2023), Dalgarno et al. (2023), and Small et al. (2024). Data from the GBV Centre reveal that most rape victims are girls under 18 years old, who are highly physically vulnerable and lack legal awareness (Starke et al., 2024). Structural poverty and densely populated urban areas with weak social oversight further exacerbate women's vulnerability, as explained by Mullin and Arce (2008), Rowley et al. (2021), Dodman et al. (2017), and Gilbert and Shi (2023).

This phenomenon reflects the feminist theoretical framework, which emphasizes that GBV develops within unequal social structures where patriarchal norms normalize male dominance (Tong, 2001; Oparinde & Matsha, 2021). Violence against women represents a manifestation of institutionalized power imbalances within social systems (Willey-Sthapit et al., 2023; DeGue et al., 2023). These findings are consistent with previous studies in Kaduna State, which show that gender hierarchies and illiteracy increase the risk and prevalence of GBV in impoverished areas (Saminu & Modibbo, 2023). Conceptually, the interplay between low education, poverty, patriarchal norms, and GBV risk demonstrates that structural, social, and economic factors reinforce one another in creating women's vulnerability.

Legally, Nigeria classifies rape as a serious offense punishable by life imprisonment under Section 358 of the Criminal Code (Uhnoo et al., 2024), yet law enforcement remains weak due to limited investigations and inconsistent implementation (Rohman et al., 2024). The gap between legal provisions and field practice perpetuates impunity and diminishes survivors' trust in the justice system (Uhnoo et al., 2024). These findings underscore the importance of strengthening law enforcement, public education, and economic empowerment programs for survivors in Katsina, highlighting the critical role of social, cultural, and institutional contexts in sustaining cycles of violence against women and girls in conflict-affected areas.

### A feminist analysis of the causative factors of violence against women

The findings indicate that violence against women in Katsina is a product of social, economic, and political structures that place women in subordinate positions. The majority of women, particularly internally displaced persons (IDPs) and young females, experience high vulnerability to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) due to poverty, hunger, and economic

inequality (Muhwezi et al., 2011; Lugova et al., 2020; Okafor et al., 2023; Lwamba et al., 2022). Women are often compelled to exchange sexual services for survival, suggesting that these patterns are consequences of systemic pressures rather than free choice. GBV is further exacerbated by the lack of support systems, such as IDP shelters, placing women and children at heightened risk of rape, sexual exploitation, and other forms of violence (Ekezie, 2022; Baynesagn & Tolla, 2022; Van Daalen et al., 2022).

Violence against women in Katsina can be understood as structural violence, where poverty, displacement, and patriarchy interact to reinforce women's subordination and perpetuate cycles of exploitation (Fotaki & Pullen, 2023; McAlpine et al., 2016; Mensah, 2024). Overlapping social and economic factors generate systemic pressures that constrain women's choices, repeatedly exposing them to GBV. From an intersectional perspective, overlapping identities such as gender, refugee status, and poverty reinforce dual structures of oppression and limit women's agency (Bastia et al., 2022; Nartey, 2023). This pattern aligns with findings from other post-conflict contexts, where poverty, displacement, and patriarchal norms collectively increase women's vulnerability to exploitation (Lugova et al., 2020; Okafor et al., 2023; Njoku & Akintayo, 2021).

These findings strengthen feminist literature that emphasizes GBV as more than an individual issue, representing institutionalized power imbalances (Tong, 2001; Oparinde & Matsha, 2021; Willey-Sthapit et al., 2023; DeGue et al., 2023). Empirical data from the Katsina GBV Centre confirm that women, particularly girls under 18, are at high risk due to a combination of social injustice, limited education, and weak legal support (Starke et al., 2024; Padavic et al., 2019). The analysis demonstrates that complex interactions among social, economic, and political factors shape patterns of gender-based violence in Katsina, underscoring the need for systemic interventions sensitive to local contexts to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls.

### **Patterns and prevalence of gender-based violence**

The findings indicate that gender-based violence (GBV) in Katsina is significantly influenced by neglect within family structures, particularly by male heads of household. Their failure or refusal to provide basic necessities such as food, shelter, and essential care increases the vulnerability of women and girls to exploitation, including being forced into transactional sex (Ndubisi, 2016; Hutson, 2001). Cultural and religious norms in Hausa society place full responsibility for family provision on men, heightening women's economic dependence and limiting their autonomy (Schildkrot, 2002). Furthermore, economic exploitation by parents or local moneylenders and restricted access to resources exacerbate women's vulnerability, particularly in conflict-affected areas (Fonjong & Gyapong, 2021; Atuoye et al., 2021; Alabi, 2024; Ojeleke, 2024).

The findings reveal interconnected mechanisms between family neglect, economic inequality, and systemic exploitation in shaping GBV patterns in Katsina. Economic neglect and parental incapacity compel women and girls to face limited choices, such as engaging in transactional sex or begging, which further increases the risk of violence and rights violations (Ndubisi, 2016; Hutson, 2001; McAlpine et al., 2016). Social and cultural pressures, including Hausa norms and religious teachings emphasizing family secrecy, limit reporting and reinforce perpetrator impunity (Bachman, 1998; Ruback & Ménard, 2001; Iloka & Eze, 2022). This creates a cycle of exploitation, where economic dependence and cultural pressures reinforce women's structural vulnerability to GBV.

These findings reinforce previous literature highlighting the links between poverty, conflict, and gendered subordination in increasing GBV risk (Ndubisi, 2016; Schildkrot,

2002; [Fonjong & Gyapong, 2021](#)). However, this study contributes new insights by demonstrating how the interaction of family neglect, economic exploitation, and the culture of silence specifically shapes patterns of violence in Hausa communities in Katsina. In the local social and cultural context, the results underscore the importance of interventions that strengthen structural protection, education, and legal awareness to reduce GBV prevalence, while highlighting the need to involve communities and local institutions in prevention and protection strategies.

### **Policies, interventions, and social support for victims of gender-based violence**

The findings indicate that Katsina State has adopted the Child Rights Act and the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Law and established the first Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Centre in Northern Nigeria to coordinate, manage, and monitor GBV cases across the state ([Ikuteyijo et al., 2024](#)). GBV survivors reported receiving comprehensive services, including psychosocial support, medical care, temporary shelter, legal assistance, and skills training, with support from organizations such as Safe Children and UNICEF ([2022](#)), which provide essential needs for vulnerable mothers ([Sherchan et al., 2017](#); [Pérez-Escamilla et al., 2016](#)). These findings indicate that holistic service provision enhances survivors' access to protection and risk mitigation while emphasizing the importance of formal structures for GBV response in affected areas.

Analysis of interrelated variables shows that the effectiveness of GBV response depends on coordination among medical, legal, and psychosocial services, as well as active involvement of government and communities. Challenges, such as limited community engagement and occasional non-cooperation from medical personnel, can undermine legal processes, while incomplete medical reports may result in prosecution failure ([Clark, 2022](#); [Porcedda, 2023](#); [Michelis et al., 2024](#)). This underscores the need to address structural weaknesses in the legal and health systems through coordinated strategies, including legal reforms, public education, and capacity building for law enforcement, to strengthen protection for survivors and ensure accountability for perpetrators ([Guaita-Fernández et al., 2024](#); [Capasso et al., 2022](#); [Darjee & Russell, 2012](#)).

In the literature and socio-institutional context, these findings align with previous studies emphasizing the need for integrated interventions to address GBV ([Kurian et al., 2024](#); [Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2018](#)). Continuous awareness campaigns, advocacy targeting traditional leaders, and adequate funding for survivor services are part of Nigeria's national strategy to create a unified and responsive legal framework ([Anguzu et al., 2023](#); [Upadhyay et al., 2023](#); [Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, 2021](#)). Katsina's social and cultural context, including patriarchal norms and limited community support, indicates that the success of GBV interventions relies on a holistic approach that simultaneously considers legal, social, economic, and cultural dimensions.

This study reinforces feminist theory by highlighting that gender-based violence is not merely an individual phenomenon but results from institutionalized power imbalances within social, economic, and cultural structures. It also supports the intersectionality perspective, demonstrating how overlapping identities, such as gender, refugee status, and poverty, shape women's unique experiences of violence. The findings emphasize the need for evidence-based interventions integrating comprehensive services, including medical care, psychosocial support, legal aid, skills training, economic empowerment, and improved access to education to reduce dependence and vulnerability. Strengthening law enforcement capacity, coordinating the justice system, conducting public education campaigns, and advocating with

traditional leaders and communities are necessary to reduce stigma, challenge patriarchal norms, and create safer environments for women and girls.

The study has limitations related to participant scope, as most participants were women, with limited representation from men and other socio-economic groups, so findings should be generalized with caution. The data are qualitative and contextual, and results may differ in regions with different socio-cultural conditions. Moreover, the study did not examine the long-term impacts of GBV interventions on survivors. Future research could explore men's and minority groups' perspectives, integrate quantitative methods to measure prevalence, and evaluate the effectiveness of GBV programs and policies longitudinally. Further studies could also investigate the interaction of social, economic, and legal factors across diverse cultural contexts in Northern Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION

Research findings indicate that gender-based violence in Katsina is influenced by a combination of social, economic, and cultural factors. Victims, particularly young women and girls, often have low levels of education and face structural poverty, which increases their vulnerability to exploitation and violence. Patriarchal norms, family neglect, and poor access to legal support and social services also reinforce patterns of GBV. Official institutions such as GBV centers provide comprehensive services, but their effectiveness depends on coordination between the legal, medical, and social systems, as well as community support. The findings emphasize that the complex interaction between structural, cultural, and institutional factors creates a cycle of recurring violence, highlighting the need for a holistic approach that integrates education, economic empowerment, legal protection, and social support to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to GBV.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

**Muhammad Abdullahi Maigari:** Conceptualization; Data Curation; Investigation; Methodology; Resources; Writing Original Draft. **Muhammad Tasiu Dansabo:** Conceptualization; Investigation; Methodology. **Auwal Ibrahim Abubakar:** Conceptualization; Formal Analysis; Validation. **Alma Vorfi Lama:** Supervision; Visualization; Writing Review & Editing.

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