An-Nisa' Journal of Gender Studies

OPEN ACCESS

ISSN 2086-0749 (p) 2654-4784 (e)

https://annisa.uinkhas.ac.id DOI: 10.35719/annisa.v18i1.313 Vol 18, No 1, (2025), pp. 1-14

Gender-based violence against women and girls in Katsina State, Nigeria: Survivors' experiences, associated conditions, and protection responses

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Article Information

Submitted: 2024-10-27
Revised: 2025-05-09
Published: 2025-06-05

Keywords:
Gender-Based Violence; Survivors' Experiences; Protection Services; Forced Marriage; Displacement.

Abstract:

Gender-based violence (GBV) in Katsina State, Nigeria, must be understood alongside family power relations, livelihood needs, displacement caused by insecurity, and protection responses. This study examines conditions associated with survivors' experiences, forms, and social consequences of violence, and responses described by GBV Center officials and experienced by survivors. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 survivors and two officials. Transcripts were analyzed thematically and interpreted through Heise's ecological framework. Credibility was supported through comparison of interview sources, member checking, peer debriefing, reflexive notes, and an audit trail. Three findings emerged. First, survivors' experiences were associated with family power relations, difficulty meeting basic needs, and displacement. Second, survivors described forced marriage, sexual violence at school, physical violence and coercion by fathers, and husbands' neglect of family needs. Several linked sexual relationships were undertaken to obtain money for daily needs. In one case, a mother and her five children lost food and shelter; another survivor described expulsion from her village. Third, officials described referrals, mental health and psychosocial support, transitional shelter, and case management. One survivor reported receiving basic assistance and being enrolled in skills training; another account described reduced stigma from some residents. The study concludes that experiences are associated with family power relations, livelihood conditions, and displacement, but does not establish the prevalence of GBV across Katsina. Its contribution lies in distinguishing resource constraints from a family member's failure to meet a survivor's needs in one case, and in distinguishing officials' service descriptions from survivors' assistance, thereby informing survivor-inclusive monitoring.

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To cite this article (APA Style):
Maigari, M. A., Dansabo, M. T., Abubakar, A. I., & Lama, A. V. (2025). Gender-based violence against women and girls in Katsina State, Nigeria: Survivors' experiences, associated conditions, and protection responses. *An-Nisa' Journal of Gender Studies, 18(1)*, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.35719/annisa.v18i1.313

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INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to harmful acts directed at individuals on the basis of gender and is embedded in unequal power relations. Such violence may take physical, sexual, psychological, and economic forms (Akter & Deeba, 2022; Fawole, 2008). These forms of violence must be considered in relation to social circumstances in which people live. Research on migrants' experiences indicates that social and economic conditions can influence vulnerability to GBV as well as opportunities to obtain protection (Tan & Kuschminder, 2022). In Nigeria, scholarship has examined the relationship between armed conflict and intimate partner violence (Ekhator-Mobayode et al., 2022). Displacement is relevant in Katsina State, where armed conflict and banditry have forced residents from their homes, contributing to internal displacement (Muhammad & Abdullahi, 2022; Ojo et al., 2023; Targba, 2022). Against this background, examining survivors' experiences of shelter insecurity, livelihood difficulties, and access to assistance is important for understanding their circumstances.

Previous research on GBV in conflict settings has focused on three areas. First, studies have shown that conflict increases sexual, physical, and psychological violence, as well as intimate partner violence (IPV), with physical, psychological, and social consequences for women (Ekhator-Mobayode et al., 2022; Ellsberg et al., 2021; Tewabe et al., 2024). Second, survivors face stigma, limited access, costs, distance, and weak legal protection. Addressing these barriers requires coordination among health, psychosocial, police, legal, protection, and community services (Adejumo et al., 2022; John et al., 2023; Vidale-Plaza & Djangala Fall, 2023). Third, socioeconomic conditions, dependence on livelihoods, limited resources, conflict, and insecurity constrain women's ability to leave violent situations (Barbosa et al., 2023; Fawole, 2008; Le & Nguyen, 2022). These studies tend to examine forms of violence, barriers to services, and economic vulnerability separately. In Katsina, the connections among survivors' circumstances, the forms and social consequences of GBV, and the protection responses described by service officials require integrated examination. This study addresses that descriptive and analytical gap by examining survivors' accounts alongside local GBV Center officials' descriptions of protection services, without assuming that reported service availability demonstrates access or effectiveness.

This study aims to understand survivors' experiences of GBV in Katsina, including the conditions associated with those experiences, the forms and social consequences of violence, and the protection services described by officials and experienced by survivors. It addresses three questions: (1) What conditions are associated with the GBV experiences described by survivors? (2) What forms of violence and social consequences emerge from the interviews? (3) What protection services and responses are described by GBV Center officials and experienced by survivors? The study draws on in-depth interviews with 12 survivors and key informant interviews with two GBV Center officials in Katsina State. Theoretically, Heise's (1998) ecological framework is used to examine connections among actions within families, livelihood conditions, social environments, and service responses. In practice, the study provides a basis for distinguishing between services reported as available and the assistance survivors report receiving, while highlighting basic needs and shelter in case management.

The study argues that survivors' accounts of GBV should be understood in relation to the circumstances surrounding their experiences and the protection responses they encounter. The interviews describe forced marriage, violence at school, coercion by fathers, and neglect by husbands in connection with difficulties meeting basic needs. Displacement caused by insecurity also appears in some survivors' accounts as a context for the loss of shelter and income. Using Heise's (1998) ecological framework, the study examines these experiences across family relationships, school and community environments, and broader social

conditions. Officials' accounts of services are compared with survivors' reported assistance to clarify the connections among contexts that emerge from the interviews. The study does not seek to establish the prevalence of violence or the effectiveness of policies across Katsina State.

METHOD

Research Approach

This study uses a qualitative approach to understand the conditions associated with experiences of gender-based violence (GBV), the range of survivors' experiences, and protection responses in Katsina State. Interviews with survivors and GBV Center officials were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and differences in participants' accounts. The findings were then interpreted using Heise's (1998) ecological framework to examine connections among family relationships, community environments, livelihood conditions, and service responses. The study seeks to understand participants' experiences, rather than estimate the prevalence of GBV across Katsina State.

Sampling and Participants

Participants were purposively selected because their experiences or roles were relevant to the study's focus (Campbell et al., 2020). Fourteen people participated: 12 GBV survivors who took part in in-depth interviews (P1–P12) and two GBV Center officials who served as key informants (P13–P14). Recruitment was conducted in collaboration with a GBV Center in Katsina State and was based on prospective participants' willingness to be interviewed. Table 1 presents all participants' ages, education, occupations, marital status, and number of children. The sampling strategy was intended to obtain relevant, detailed accounts, rather than a sample representative of the state's population.

Data Collection

A total of 14 interviews were conducted between 7 August and 10 September 2024, comprising 12 in-depth interviews (IDIs) with survivors and two key informant interviews (KIIs) with Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Center officials. The interviews followed a semi-structured guide, were conducted in Hausa, and lasted approximately 25–40 minutes. They explored survivors' experiences of violence, the circumstances surrounding these experiences, assistance received, and the services and case management provided by the center. Survivor interviews were conducted in private settings to ensure confidentiality and safety, with third parties present only when requested by participants and only then trained counselors. Interviews with officials took place in their private offices, with schedules arranged according to participants' availability.

All interviews were transcribed and translated into English by two trained bilingual research assistants, each bound by a confidentiality agreement, one of whom was a native Hausa speaker. Translation quality was assessed through back-translation of selected transcripts and review by an independent bilingual reviewer, with discrepancies resolved before analysis. Data security was maintained through encrypted, password-protected digital storage accessible only to the research team, while physical field notes were kept in locked cabinets. Participants' identities were anonymized during transcription using codes P1–P14..

Data Analysis

The 14 interview transcripts were analyzed thematically around three areas: (1) conditions and circumstances surrounding reported experiences, (2) reported forms and social consequences of GBV, and (3) protection responses. The findings were organized in a matrix recording thematic summaries and interview source types. When participants discussed similar cases or services, survivors' and officials' accounts were compared, keeping reported receipt of

assistance distinct from descriptions of service availability. The themes were then interpreted through Heise's (1998) ecological framework. Ambiguous accounts, including statements about food exchanges among displaced people, were not assigned a definitive form of exploitation. The interpretation remains descriptive and case-based rather than causal or representative of Katsina State.

Trustworthiness

The credibility of the findings was strengthened by comparing in-depth interview (IDI) and key informant interview (KII) accounts on shared themes. Member checking involved two stages: confirming interview summaries with each participant and obtaining verbal feedback on thematic summaries from eight available participants, which informed interpretive revisions. Peer debriefing was conducted over four sessions, with two supervisors uninvolved in data collection, to review initial codes, discuss alternative interpretations, and refine the coding framework as necessary. Reflexive notes were maintained in a dated journal to document the researcher's assumptions, emotional responses, and positionality, informing theme development. An audit trail comprising dated folders of audio recordings, verbatim and translated transcripts, codebooks, coding reports, and analytical memos ensured the traceability of interpretive decisions to supporting data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Sociodemographic characteristics of participants

Data were collected through 14 interviews in Katsina State: 12 in-depth interviews (IDIs) with survivors of gender-based violence and two key informant interviews (KIIs) with GBV Center officials. Table 1 summarizes participants' ages, educational backgrounds, employment status, marital status, and number of children. These characteristics help situate the accounts presented in the interviews and clarify the different perspectives of survivors and officials that inform the study's subsequent qualitative analysis.

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of study participants

Participant	Age	Recorded education	Employment status	Marital status	Number of children
P1	56	Qur'anic school	Unemployed	Married	6
P2	29	Primary school	Unemployed	Married	5
P3	14	Junior secondary school	Student	Unmarried	0
P4	17	Primary school	Unemployed	Unmarried	1
P5	23	Qur'anic school	Unemployed	Married	0
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	Unmarried	0

Note: P1–P12 were survivors interviewed through IDIs; P13–P14 were GBV Center officials interviewed through KIIs.

As shown in Table 1, participants ranged in age from 14 to 56 years. Four had attended Qur'anic school, three had attended primary school, one had attended junior secondary school, and four had attended secondary school. The remaining two had attended a College of Education (NCE) and a university, respectively. Eleven participants were unemployed, two were employed, and one was a student.

Eleven participants were married, and three were unmarried. The number of children ranged from 0 to 6; among married participants, the mean was 3 children. P4, who was unmarried, had one child. These differences in age, education, employment, and family circumstances provide context for the analysis. Their relationship to participants' experiences of GBV is examined further through the interview findings.

Conditions associated with GBV experiences in Katsina State

The interviews identified four contextual patterns associated with participants' accounts of GBV: gendered family authority, difficulty meeting basic needs, withdrawal of household support, and displacement caused by insecurity. These patterns describe circumstances accompanying the reported experiences, rather than independent risk factors established by this study. Two GBV Center officials provided further information on the service response to a reported case of household neglect.

Table 2

Conditions associated with participants' experiences of GBV

Theme	Interview finding	Data source
Gendered family authority	One survivor reported that her father forced her to marry a man she had not chosen. She subsequently left Katsina for Abuja and became involved in sex work in Mpape.	Survivor (IDI)
Difficulty meeting basic needs	Several survivors reported using money obtained from sexual relationships to buy food and meet daily needs.	Survivors (IDIs)
Withdrawal of household support	A survivor with five children reported that her husband left the family without food or shelter. When their tenancy ended, they slept outdoors at Katsina Central Market. A GBV Center staff member described temporary shelter and skills training provided to the woman.	Survivor (IDI) and GBV Center staff member (KII)
Displacement caused by insecurity	Several survivors linked their lack of shelter and income after displacement to their involvement in sex work. The interviews also described offers of food or money in exchange for sex.	Survivors (IDIs)

Source: Based on IDIs and KIIs conducted in Katsina State between August and September 2024.

Forced marriage and choice within the family

One survivor (IDI) reported that her father forced her to marry a man she had not chosen. She left Katsina for Abuja and subsequently became involved in sex work in Mpape. She also reported a sexually transmitted infection and mental health difficulties. Interpreted through Heise's (1998) ecological framework, this account illustrates how power within family relationships can restrict a survivor's choices. The experience of one participant cannot be generalized to all survivors of forced marriage.

Economic hardship and displacement

Several survivors (IDIs) stated that they used money obtained from sexual relationships to buy food and other necessities. In the context of displacement caused by insecurity, interviews also described women without shelter or income receiving offers of food or money in exchange for sex. Heise's (1998) framework helps illuminate the connection between livelihood conditions after displacement and dependence on resource providers. These interviews show a relationship within participants' accounts; they do not establish that poverty or displacement invariably causes sexual exploitation.

Family neglect and the GBV Center's response

A married survivor with five children (IDI) reported that her husband left the family without food or shelter. When their tenancy ended, she and her children slept outdoors at Katsina Central Market. A GBV Center staff member (KII) explained that the center provided temporary shelter for three months. The woman also attended skills training intended to help her earn an income.

Through Heise's (1998) framework, the husband's neglect can be understood in terms of family relationships, while the GBV Center's assistance represents a service response to the consequences of GBV. These data describe assistance in one case but are insufficient to assess the overall reach or effectiveness of the services.

Overall, the findings show that power relations within families, difficulty meeting basic needs, and conditions following displacement were connected in participants' experiences. This conclusion is limited to the study interviews and does not indicate the prevalence of GBV across Katsina State.

Experiences of gender-based violence and their social contexts in Katsina State

Interviews with survivors (P1–P12, IDIs) described sexual violence at school, physical violence and coercion within families, forced marriage, and neglect of family needs. Interviews with GBV Center officials (P13–P14, KIIs) provided additional accounts of cases handled by the center and the circumstances of displaced people. Table 3 presents the experiences of violence, their social consequences, and related circumstances described in the interviews. It does not rank these experiences by frequency across Katsina State.

Table 3

Interview accounts of GBV experiences, social consequences, and related circumstances

Theme	Interview finding	Data source
Sexual violence at school	A survivor who was 14 years old at the time of the interview reported that a school guard raped her twice while she was attending school, in 2023 and 2024. According to her account, the perpetrator had been arrested.	Survivor (IDI)
Physical violence and coercion within the family	A survivor reported that her father beat her and demanded that she borrow money to give to him. She subsequently obtained money through sexual relationships, became pregnant, and gave birth to a daughter.	Survivor (IDI)
Forced marriage	A survivor reported that her father forced her to marry a man she had not chosen. She went to Abuja, became involved in sex work, and stated that she had experienced depression since 2015.	Survivor (IDI)
Neglect of family needs	A key informant described a case in which a husband left his family without food, clothing, or shelter. A survivor	Key informant (KII) and survivor (IDI)

	described losing her accommodation along with her five children.	
Expulsion from the village as a social consequence	A survivor stated that her husband joined a kidnapping group to obtain ransom money. She refused his invitation to join him. According to her account, villagers subsequently expelled them because they feared her husband.	Survivor (IDI)
Circumstances of displacement	A key informant referred to exchanges involving food among internally displaced persons (IDPs). The account presented does not make clear what was exchanged or who was involved.	Key informant (KII)

Source: Based on IDIs and KIIs conducted in Katsina State in 2024.

The findings show that some survivors experienced violence or coercion involving people they knew: a school guard, a father, or a husband. The account involving the school guard describes sexual violence in an educational setting. The accounts of physical violence and forced marriage show how a father restricted a survivor's choices, while neglect by a husband affected a family's ability to meet its needs. These events differed in form and consequence; the interview data do not establish which occurred most frequently across Katsina State.

Survivors' experiences also extended beyond the family. One participant described being expelled from her village after refusing to join her husband, who was involved in kidnapping. She experienced the expulsion as a social consequence, but the available data are insufficient to classify it as a distinct form of GBV. Similarly, the key informant's account of exchanges involving food among IDPs cannot be interpreted as a specific form of exploitation because the nature of the exchanges and the people involved remain unclear.

Through Heise's (1998) ecological framework, coercion by fathers and neglect by husbands can be examined at the level of family relationships. Violence at school and expulsion from a village highlight the relevance of institutional and community settings to survivors' experiences. The account concerning IDPs draws attention to living conditions after displacement, subject to the interpretive limits noted above. The framework helps situate participants' experiences; these interviews were not used to measure GBV prevalence or to establish causal relationships in Katsina State.

Protection services and responses for GBV survivors in Katsina State

Interviews with survivors (P1–P12, IDIs) and GBV Center officials (P13–P14, KIIs) provided accounts of services for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), case management, information sharing, and community support. Table 4 distinguishes services described by officials from the assistance a survivor reported receiving and from changes in community attitudes she perceived.

Table 4

Protection services and responses described in the interviews

Aspect	Interview finding	Data source
GBV Center services	Officials described referral services, mental health and psychosocial support, and safe transitional accommodation.	GBV Center officials (KIIs)
Assistance received by a survivor	A survivor reported receiving soap, diapers, and an allowance since being brought to the center in June 2024. She was also enrolled at the *Women's Centre* for vocational skills training.	Survivor (IDI)

Case coordination	An official referred to the *Technical Working Group*, *Steering Committee*, *Working Group*, *Surveillance Team*, and standard operating procedures (SOPs). According to the official, reports pass from the *Surveillance Team* to the *Response Team* and then to the *Steering Committee* for follow-up.	GBV Center official (KII)
Community support	Officials described the involvement of religious and community leaders in awareness-raising activities. A survivor reported that some residents had become more sympathetic toward women who gave birth outside marriage and that she experienced less stigma than she had during her pregnancy.	GBV Center officials (KIIs) and survivor (IDI)

Source: Based on IDIs and KIIs conducted in Katsina State in 2024.

According to GBV Center officials, the center's services include referrals, mental health and psychosocial support, and safe transitional accommodation. They also described the teams, SOPs, and reporting pathway involved in case management. These accounts describe services and procedures from the officials' perspective; the interviews presented here do not show whether every survivor received each service.

One survivor provided a more specific account of the assistance she received. She reported receiving soap, diapers, and an allowance since being brought to the center in June 2024 and being enrolled at the *Women's Center* for vocational skills training. This account documents assistance and training enrollment in one case. The data presented do not show that all survivors received the same assistance, that this survivor completed the training, or that she subsequently earned an income.

The interviews also included officials' accounts of religious and community leaders' involvement in awareness-raising activities. One survivor felt that some residents had become more sympathetic toward women who gave birth outside marriage and that the stigma she experienced had lessened since her pregnancy. This is her account of a social change; the available data do not establish a change in attitudes across the entire community or show that awareness-raising activities caused it.

The study materials also mention free legal assistance, rights awareness-raising through radio, and a hotline for reporting violence against women and girls. However, the specific source of the statement about free legal assistance, as well as the interview type and the speaker behind the accounts from the radio and the hotline, cannot be established from the materials presented. These three statements need to be checked against the transcripts or other study sources before they are included as interview findings in the final table.

Through Heise's (1998) ecological framework, direct assistance can be understood as a response to survivors' needs, while awareness-raising and residents' attitudes relate to the community environment. Referral services and team coordination represent responses at the service-provider level. The framework helps examine connections across these levels, but the available interviews are insufficient to assess the consistency or effectiveness of all GBV services in Katsina State.

Discussion

The findings of this study, based on the interviews, indicate that GBV was described within overlapping contexts rather than as a series of isolated incidents. Reports of forced marriage and paternal coercion illustrate constrained choice within households; sexual violence at school locates harm in an institutional setting; and deprivation after displacement connects experiences to livelihood insecurity. Other accounts describe neglect of household needs and loss of shelter. The evidence of protection is uneven: officials described several institutional

mechanisms, whereas direct evidence of material assistance and vocational training enrollment was limited to one survivor's account. This comparison does not establish the reach or effectiveness of protection services, nor the prevalence of GBV in Katsina State.

These findings have broader social relevance in settings where insecurity disrupts livelihoods and places women and girls at risk of gender-based violence. In Katsina, survivors' accounts connect displacement with loss of shelter and income, while separate accounts of forced marriage, coercion, and neglect illustrate unequal power within households. Similar concerns about survival-related sexual relationships have been documented in conflict-affected northeastern Nigeria (Njoku & Akintayo, 2021), while research on displaced populations highlights the importance of livelihood support and community-based coping strategies (Ekezie, 2022). The comparison between officials' descriptions of protection mechanisms and one survivor's reported assistance raises a practical question: whether available services translate into accessible, sustained support. Studies of GBV responses in Nigeria identify coordination, funding, and shelter provision as major implementation challenges (Ikuteyijo et al., 2024). Accordingly, the Katsina accounts underscore the social importance of linking protection pathways with basic-needs assistance, without establishing service effectiveness or population-wide patterns.

Interpreted through Heise's (1998) ecological framework, the Katsina accounts situate gender-based violence within interconnected household, institutional, and socioeconomic contexts rather than a single causal pathway. Forced marriage and paternal coercion illustrate constrained choices within families, while sexual violence at school highlights harm within an institutional setting. Separately, survivors' accounts linking displacement to the loss of shelter and income suggest how insecurity can restrict livelihood options, consistent with research on sexual exploitation in conflict-affected settings (McAlpine et al., 2016). Two analytical distinctions emerge from these findings. First, broader livelihood scarcity differs from a family member's failure to meet household needs, as illustrated by one survivor's account of her husband's neglect. Second, protection mechanisms described by officials should not be equated with assistance reported by survivors, particularly when direct evidence of material support and vocational training enrollment comes from only one participant. These distinctions refine the application of the ecological framework by differentiating contexts of vulnerability from institutional responses, without establishing causal relationships or service effectiveness. Further comparative research is needed to examine whether these patterns recur across different groups and settings.

A central lesson of this study is that GBV responses must address violent acts and the circumstances constraining survivors' choices. Accounts of paternal coercion and marital neglect show how family relationships can undermine safety and access to basic needs, resonating with research on gendered bargaining (Hutson, 2001). Displacement narratives highlight the importance of livelihoods and household welfare amid insecurity, concerns that have been examined in Nigerian conflict research (Alabi, 2024; Ojeleke et al., 2024). Importantly, institutional provision must not be equated with experienced protection: officials described mechanisms, but direct evidence of material support and training enrollment came from one survivor. A separate account of reduced stigma underscores the importance of social acceptance, which is pertinent to discussions of silence surrounding sexual violence (Iloka & Eze, 2022). The lesson is to prioritize survivors' accounts and verify assistance before claiming that protection measures are effective.

Compared with Njoku and Akintayo (2021), who link conflict-related poverty to survival sex in northeastern Nigeria, the Katsina interviews similarly connect displacement, lost livelihoods, and sexual relationships undertaken to meet basic needs. McAlpine et al. (2016)

document forced marriage and sexual exploitation across conflict settings; Katsina also records forced marriage, although its interviews cannot classify every survival-related exchange as exploitation. Kurian et al. (2024) emphasize the role of educational settings in GBV prevention and survivor wellbeing, whereas Katsina documents sexual violence within a school. Regarding protection, Okeke-Ihejirika et al. (2018) foreground contextualized support, and Michelis et al. (2024) question provider-driven responses. Unlike these broader analyses, Katsina places officials' descriptions beside one survivor's account of material assistance and training. This contribution complements Ikuteyijo et al.'s (2024) analysis of institutional implementation barriers, but does not establish service reach, effectiveness, or GBV prevalence. It thereby adds a cautious, survivor-informed perspective to institutional research.

These findings suggest three priorities for follow-up. First, GBV Center staff should monitor the continuity of food assistance, basic necessities, and temporary shelter for survivors facing family neglect or displacement. Second, case managers should follow up on vocational training enrollment to document completion and any subsequent livelihood outcomes, without assuming that enrollment produces economic independence. Third, the center should conduct a confidential review of survivors' experiences with referral pathways and compare these experiences with the procedures described by officials. Because accounts also describe violence within families and at school, future needs assessments should consider survivor-centered reporting across these settings. Proposed rural outreach, mobile services, or reporting systems should undergo feasibility and safeguarding assessments before implementation. These actions remain recommendations, not interventions validated by this study.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that experiences of gender-based violence (GBV) in Katsina State are associated with power relations within families, difficulty meeting basic needs, and displacement caused by insecurity. Survivors described forced marriage, sexual violence at school, beatings, and demands for money by fathers, and husbands' neglect of family needs. Several survivors linked sexual relationships undertaken to obtain money to their needs for food and a livelihood. In one case, a husband's departure without meeting his family's needs led to the loss of food and shelter for a mother and her five children. Another survivor described expulsion from her village as a social consequence. According to GBV Center officials, the center's services include referrals, mental health and psychosocial support, transitional shelter, and a case-management pathway. One survivor reported receiving assistance with basic needs and being enrolled in skills training; the interviews also recorded her perception of reduced stigma from some community members. These findings reflect participants' experiences at the study site and during the study period. They do not indicate the prevalence of GBV across Katsina State.

The study contributes two case-based analytical distinctions. First, resource scarcity and a family member's reported failure to meet basic household needs should not be treated as interchangeable explanations within an ecological account of GBV. Second, officials' descriptions of protection services should be distinguished from survivors' reported experiences of assistance. These distinctions may help guide future inquiry into immediate needs, shelter, referral pathways, and the outcomes of vocational training. They remain propositions grounded in a small qualitative sample, not evidence of service effectiveness or a population-level pattern.

The study is limited to 14 participants in Katsina: 12 survivors and two GBV Center officials. This sample cannot be used to estimate prevalence, compare risks across groups, or assess the effectiveness of policies and services throughout the state. The perspectives of family

members, community leaders, officials from other agencies, and survivors who did not access the center are also absent. Statements concerning legal assistance, radio, and a hotline still need to be checked against the transcripts or study documents before being presented as findings. Future research could compare several areas, examine survivors' experiences of accessing services, and follow the outcomes of assistance and training over time. A representative survey could estimate prevalence, while participatory research could help develop responses with communities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the 14 participants in Katsina State: 12 survivors of gender-based violence and two GBV Center officials. The survivors' willingness to share their experiences and the officials' accounts of services and case management made this study possible.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no competing interests related to the conduct of this study or the publication of this article.

DECLARATION OF AI USE

AI tools were used to assist with translation and language editing. The authors reviewed the resulting text and take full responsibility for the article's content, analysis, and interpretation.

FUNDING STATEMENT

This research received no external funding. All research expenses were covered by the authors.

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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