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Research Article

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

This study aims to systematically review the prevalence, drivers, impacts, and responses to domestic and family violence (DFV) in Africa, providing a comprehensive understanding of this complex social issue and informing effective interventions. Domestic and family violence remains a pervasive problem in Africa, exacerbated by entrenched gender inequalities, cultural norms, limited legal enforcement, and emerging challenges such as pandemics and climate change. Despite existing laws and programs, violence against women and vulnerable groups persists with significant health and social consequences. The review reveals high rates of DFV across African countries, driven by socio-cultural factors, economic dependence, and weak institutional responses. Legal frameworks often lack enforcement capacity, and survivors face limited access to support services, particularly in rural areas. Engaging men and boys, empowering women economically, and leveraging community leadership emerge as critical strategies for prevention. This study synthesizes recent evidence to highlight gaps in research, policy, and practice, offering a nuanced regional perspective that can guide policymakers, practitioners, and researchers toward culturally sensitive and sustainable solutions to DFV in Africa. A systematic review of peer-reviewed articles, policy documents, and reports from 2018 to 2025 was conducted, focusing on quantitative and qualitative studies across diverse African contexts to capture comprehensive insights on DFV. Addressing domestic and family violence in Africa requires integrated, multi-sectoral approaches that combine legal reform, community engagement, survivor support, and gender-transformative education. Strengthened regional collaboration and data-driven policies are essential to reduce violence and promote safer, equitable societies across the continent.

Keywords: Domestic violence, Family violence, Gender-based violence, Africa, Gender inequality ,Violence prevention, Survivor support, Legal frameworks, Cultural norms, Economic empowerment, Community engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Domestic and family violence in South Africa remains a pervasive and escalating crisis, deeply rooted in societal structures and cultural norms. Despite the implementation of progressive legislation, such as the Domestic Violence Act of 1998, and the establishment of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF), the prevalence of such violence continues to rise. Recent crime statistics from the South African Police Service (SAPS) highlight the severity of the issue. Between July and September 2024, 957 women were murdered—a staggering 8.6% increase from the same period in 2023. Additionally, 1,567 women were victims of attempted murder, and 14,366 were assaulted with the intent to cause grievous bodily harm. Alarmingly, 43% of the 10,191 reported rapes during this period were perpetrated by domestic partners (Afrobarometer+2TimesLIVE+2DemocraticAlliance+2Democratic Alliance+1AP News+1).

Children are also significantly affected. From October to December 2024, 273 child murders were reported, indicating a slight decrease compared to the same period in 2023. However, specific figures for assault with grievous bodily harm towards children during this period are not readily available (Africa Check). In response to the

escalating crisis, the South African government enacted the National Council on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Act in May 2024. This legislation aims to establish a multi-sectoral council responsible for coordinating efforts to combat gender-based violence and overseeing the implementation of the National Strategic Plan on GBVF (SONA 2025+1endgbv.africa+1endgbv.africa+1SONA 2025+1).

Despite these measures, challenges persist. Reports indicate delays in police response to domestic violence incidents, often due to resource constraints, and a shortage of shelters for abused women, particularly in rural areas . These systemic issues, coupled with societal stigma and underreporting, hinder the effectiveness of interventions and perpetuate the cycle of violence (ecoi.net). This article delves into the multifaceted nature of domestic and family violence in South Africa, examining its root causes, the impact on victims and society, the existing legal framework, and potential strategies for meaningful change.

Domestic and family violence is a widespread and deeply entrenched issue across Africa, affecting millions of women, children, and vulnerable individuals. Despite international human rights frameworks and national legislative reforms, domestic violence remains largely underreported and poorly addressed due to cultural norms, weak enforcement of laws, and systemic gender

inequality. In 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that approximately 33% of women in sub-Saharan Africa had experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner one of the highest regional prevalence rates globally (WHO, 2023).

In countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the problem has reached alarming levels. For instance, a 2023 report by the African Union and UN Women found that over 45% of Kenyan women aged 15–49 had experienced some form of domestic abuse in their lifetimes. In South Africa, police statistics from late 2024 revealed that more than 43% of reported rapes were committed by intimate partners, pointing to a significant crisis of violence within households (da.org.za, 2024).

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the situation. Lockdowns, economic strain, and isolation intensified existing tensions in households and reduced access to support services. In Uganda and Ethiopia, for example, civil society organizations reported spikes in gender-based violence during lockdown periods, with some shelters seeing double or triple their usual caseloads (UN Women Africa, 2023).

While many African countries have enacted laws to address domestic and family violence such as Ghana's Domestic Violence Act (2007), Nigeria's Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (2015), and South Africa's Domestic Violence Act (1998) implementation and enforcement remain inconsistent. Patriarchal cultural attitudes, fear of social stigma, and lack of trust in police and justice systems often deter victims from seeking help.

This article explores the scale, causes, legal responses, and socio-cultural dynamics of domestic and family violence across Africa. It emphasizes the urgent need for a coordinated, multisectoral approach that combines legal reform, public education, victim support services, and community-level interventions to end this pervasive violation of human rights.

Domestic and family violence remains a pervasive and escalating crisis across Africa, deeply rooted in systemic gender inequality, harmful cultural norms, and socio-economic challenges. Despite legislative reforms and international commitments, millions of women and children continue to face violence within their homes and communities. Recent data underscores the severity of the issue:

- ✓ In sub-Saharan Africa, over 79 million girls and women—more than one in five—have experienced rape or sexual assault before the age of 18, according to UNICEF's 2024 report. UNICEF
- ✓ The United Nations reported that in 2023, Africa had the highest rates of intimate partner femicide globally, with 21,700 women killed by partners or family members. The Guardian
- ✓ In Southern Africa, approximately 17% of girls and women have experienced forced sex in their lifetime, and 80% of children have faced violent discipline at home, as highlighted by a 2023 UNICEF and SADC report. UNICEF

Conflict zones exacerbate the crisis. In Sudan, the ongoing conflict has led to a 288% increase in demand for gender-based violence services within a year, with documented cases of mass and systemic rape used as weapons of war. Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, sexual violence remains rampant amidst ongoing unrest (WSJUN Women+2UN Women+2UN Women Africa+2).

These alarming statistics highlight the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address domestic and family violence in Africa. This article delves into the root causes, impacts, legal frameworks, and potential solutions to this pressing issue.

BACKGROUND

Domestic and family violence remains a pervasive and deeply rooted issue across Africa, affecting millions of women, children, and marginalized groups. Despite legislative reforms and international commitments, the prevalence of such violence continues to rise, driven by entrenched gender inequalities, cultural norms, and socio-economic challenges.

Recent data underscores the severity of the problem:

- ✓ In sub-Saharan Africa, approximately 33% of women have experienced intimate partner violence or sexual violence in their lifetime, with rates reaching 44% in certain regions (UN Women).
- ✓ A 2024 report by UN Women and UNODC revealed that Africa had the highest rates of intimate partner femicide globally, with 21,700 women killed by partners or family members in 2023 (UN Women).

Several factors contribute to the persistence of domestic and family violence in Africa:

- ✓ **Cultural Norms and Patriarchy:** Deep-seated patriarchal beliefs and traditional practices often perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes, condoning violence within households (ScienceDirect).
- ✓ **Socio-Economic Challenges:** Poverty, unemployment, and lack of education can exacerbate domestic tensions, leading to increased instances of violence .
- ✓ **Conflict and Displacement:** In regions affected by conflict, such as the Central African Republic, gender-based violence has reached alarming levels, driven by socio-cultural norms unfavorable to women and girls (OCHA).

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the crisis. Lockdowns and economic strain have led to increased domestic tensions and reduced access to support services, resulting in spikes in gender-based violence across the continent.

While many African countries have enacted laws to address domestic and family violence, implementation and enforcement remain inconsistent. Patriarchal cultural attitudes, fear of social stigma, and lack of trust in police and justice systems often deter victims from seeking help.

Addressing domestic and family violence in Africa requires a multifaceted approach that includes legal reform, public education, victim support services, and community-level interventions. Empowering women and challenging harmful cultural norms are essential steps toward creating safer and more equitable societies.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite legal reforms and growing awareness, domestic and family violence continues to be a major human rights and public health crisis across Africa. Women, children, and vulnerable individuals face persistent threats of physical, sexual, emotional, and economic

abuse within the home and family structures. The situation is worsened by deeply entrenched patriarchal norms, inadequate enforcement of protective laws, widespread poverty, and societal stigma that discourages reporting.

Recent statistics show alarming trends. UN Women and UNODC reported in 2024 that Africa has the highest rate of intimate partner and family-related femicides globally, with over 21,700 women killed by intimate partners or relatives in 2023 alone. UNICEF (2024) further highlighted that over 79 million girls and women in sub-Saharan Africa have been subjected to rape or sexual assault before the age of 18. Yet, most victims lack access to justice, medical support, or psychosocial services.

The legal and policy frameworks that exist in many African countries are not effectively implemented due to limited resources, lack of training among law enforcement officials, and weak institutional accountability. In conflict-affected areas, the breakdown of social services has created an environment where sexual and domestic violence are used as tools of coercion and control.

This crisis calls for urgent, coordinated action. Without substantial efforts to strengthen prevention, protection, and prosecution mechanisms, and to transform social norms that legitimize abuse, domestic and family violence will continue to undermine human rights, public health, and socio-economic development across the continent.

AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aims to comprehensively examine the prevalence, determinants, and consequences of domestic and family violence across Africa, with a particular focus on recent trends and emerging challenges. By analyzing current data and scholarly research, the study seeks to:

- ✓ Assess the Current Prevalence: Evaluate the extent of domestic and family violence in various African regions, considering factors such as age, socio-economic status, and displacement.
- ✓ Identify Contributing Factors: Investigate the socio-cultural, economic, and environmental factors that contribute to the persistence of domestic and family violence, including the impact of climate change, as highlighted by UNFPA's 2024 report projecting a potential tripling of intimate partner violence in sub-Saharan Africa by 2060 due to extreme heat and stalled development (United Nations Population Fund).
- ✓ Evaluate Legal and Policy Frameworks: Analyze the effectiveness of existing laws and policies aimed at preventing and addressing domestic and family violence, identifying gaps and areas for improvement.
- ✓ Explore Support Systems: Examine the availability and accessibility of support services for survivors, including shelters, counseling, and legal assistance, particularly in conflict-affected and resource-limited settings.
- ✓ Provide Recommendations: Offer evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders to enhance prevention strategies, legal protections, and support mechanisms for victims of domestic and family violence.

By achieving these objectives, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of domestic and family violence in Africa

and to inform the development of more effective interventions and policies to combat this pervasive issue.

OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To address the complex and multifaceted nature of domestic and family violence in Africa, this study is guided by specific objectives and corresponding research questions. These are designed to ensure a structured and focused investigation:

Objective 1:

To assess the prevalence and patterns of domestic and family violence across different African regions.

Research Question 1:

What is the current extent and demographic distribution of domestic and family violence in Africa, and how does it vary by region, age, and socio-economic status?

Objective 2:

To examine the socio-cultural, economic, and political factors contributing to domestic and family violence.

Research Question 2:

What are the main cultural, economic, and political drivers that sustain or escalate domestic and family violence in African communities?

Objective 3:

To evaluate the effectiveness of existing legal and policy frameworks in addressing domestic and family violence.

Research Question 3:

How effective are current laws and policies in protecting victims and prosecuting perpetrators of domestic and family violence in African countries?

Objective 4:

To explore the accessibility and impact of victim support services, including shelters, counseling, and legal aid.

Research Question 4:

What support systems are available to survivors of domestic and family violence, and how accessible and effective are they in meeting victims' needs?

Objective 5:

To develop recommendations for improving prevention strategies, legal enforcement, and victim support mechanisms.

Research Question 5:

What evidence-based strategies can be proposed to strengthen prevention, improve legal responses, and enhance victim support systems for domestic and family violence across Africa?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant for several reasons, as it addresses a critical human rights and public health issue that has far-reaching social, economic, and psychological consequences across the African continent. Domestic and family violence not only affects

individual victims but also undermines social cohesion, public safety, and national development.

Firstly, the study contributes to the body of knowledge by providing updated insights into the scope, causes, and impacts of domestic and family violence in Africa, supported by recent data. This is crucial for informing evidence-based policy formulation and programmatic responses.

Secondly, the study highlights gaps in the implementation of legal frameworks and social protection systems, emphasizing the need for stronger enforcement, better resourcing, and culturally sensitive interventions. In doing so, it serves as a practical tool for policymakers, law enforcement agencies, healthcare professionals, and social workers seeking to improve prevention and response mechanisms.

Thirdly, the research supports gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives by shedding light on how domestic violence perpetuates structural gender discrimination. By emphasizing the role of societal norms, traditions, and conflict in fueling violence, the study encourages a broader discourse on transforming harmful beliefs and practices.

Finally, this study is particularly important in the post-COVID-19 context and amidst ongoing conflict and climate-related displacement, where domestic violence risks are increasing. It provides timely and actionable recommendations that can help mitigate these emerging threats and promote resilience and safety among vulnerable populations.

In sum, this study not only seeks to advance academic understanding but also to influence practice and policy aimed at creating safer, more just, and more equitable societies across Africa.

GAPS IN THE STUDY

Despite growing research and policy efforts addressing domestic and family violence in Africa, several critical gaps remain:

- ✓ **Limited Comprehensive Data:**
- ✓ Many countries lack reliable, up-to-date, and disaggregated data on domestic violence, especially in rural and conflict-affected areas. This limits the ability to fully understand the scope, trends, and specific vulnerabilities of different groups.
- ✓ **Insufficient Focus on Male and LGBTQ+ Victims:**
- ✓ Most studies and policies focus predominantly on women and children as victims, with minimal attention to men, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other marginalized groups who also experience domestic abuse but remain largely invisible in research and service provision.
- ✓ **Underexplored Intersectionality:**
- ✓ There is a shortage of research examining how intersecting factors such as ethnicity, disability, age, and displacement compound risks and shape experiences of domestic violence.
- ✓ **Inadequate Evaluation of Legal and Social Interventions:**
- ✓ Few studies critically assess the effectiveness and implementation challenges of existing legal frameworks, law enforcement practices, and social support services in different African contexts.
- ✓ **Neglect of Prevention and Community Engagement:**

- ✓ Much of the literature focuses on response rather than prevention, with limited exploration of culturally sensitive, community-driven approaches that challenge harmful gender norms and promote lasting behavioral change.
- ✓ **Impact of Emerging Challenges:**
- ✓ There is a gap in understanding how recent crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and ongoing conflicts uniquely affect domestic and family violence dynamics in Africa.

Addressing these gaps is essential to develop targeted, inclusive, and effective strategies to combat domestic and family violence continent-wide.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Understanding domestic and family violence in Africa requires a multidimensional approach that considers individual, relational, community, and societal factors. Several theoretical frameworks have been applied to analyze the complexities of this issue:

Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory posits that human development is influenced by multiple environmental systems. This framework has been utilized to examine how individual, relational, community, and societal factors interact to influence domestic violence dynamics. A 2023 study developed a conceptual framework of gender-based violence and femicide drivers in South Africa using this theory, identifying 20 indicators across various systems (AcademiaAcademia+3ssbfnet.com+3ResearchGate+3).

Intergenerational Transmission of Violence

This concept explores how experiences of violence in childhood can increase the likelihood of experiencing or perpetrating violence in adulthood. A 2023 study protocol in Southern Africa aims to develop a theoretical framework for understanding the intergenerational transmission of violence, focusing on young people of reproductive age (BioMed Central).

Culture of Violence Theory

This theory suggests that violence becomes normalized within a society, leading to its perpetuation across generations. In the context of Africa, historical factors such as colonialism have contributed to the entrenchment of patriarchal norms and the normalization of violence. A 2023 study highlights how colonial legacies have shaped contemporary gender inequalities in Africa (WikipediaWikipedia).
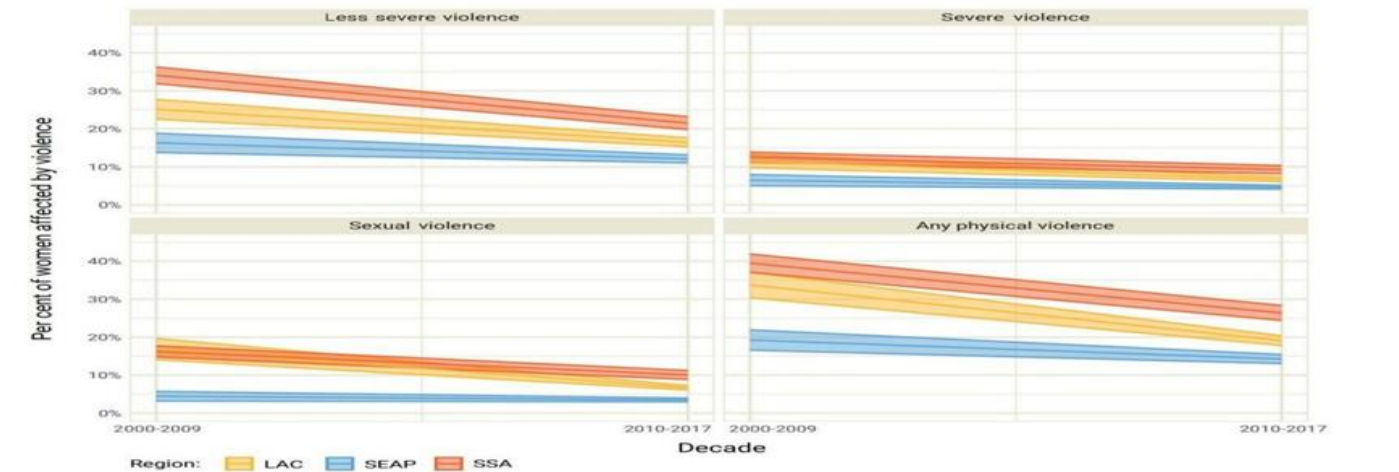
Power and Control Framework

This feminist-based framework, exemplified by the Duluth Model, views domestic violence as a means for perpetrators to exert power and control over victims. It emphasizes the need for interventions that address the underlying power imbalances in relationships (Wikipedia).

Trauma-Informed Care

This approach recognizes the widespread impact of trauma and seeks to create environments that promote healing and recovery. In the context of domestic violence, trauma-informed care emphasizes safety, trustworthiness, peer support, and empowerment (Wikipedia).
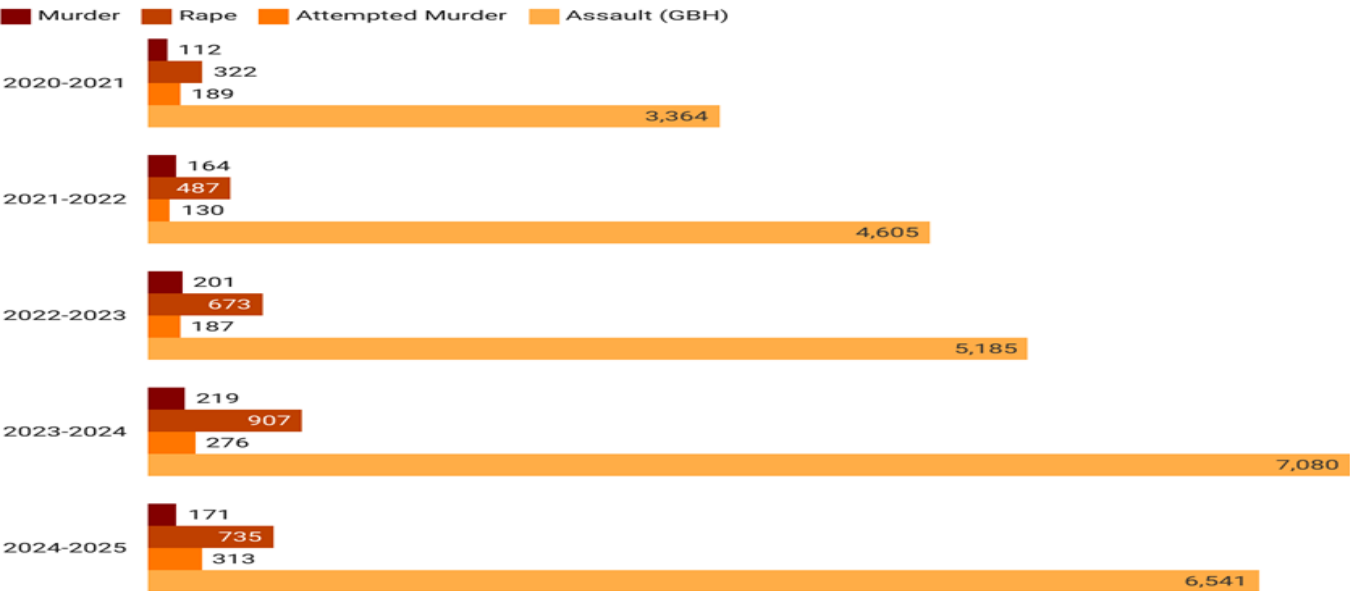
By integrating these frameworks, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of domestic and family violence in Africa, considering the interplay of individual experiences, relational dynamics, cultural norms, and historical contexts.

Domestic violence-related crimes in South Africa
Number of crimes reported to police in Q1 (April-June)

■ Murder　■ Rape　■ Attempted Murder　■ Assault (GBH)

2020-2021
- 112
- 322
- 189
- 3,364

2021-2022
- 164
- 487
- 130
- 4,605

2022-2023
- 201
- 673
- 187
- 5,185

2023-2024
- 219
- 907
- 276
- 7,080

2024-2025
- 171
- 735
- 313
- 6,541

Assault GBH refers to the crime category "Assault with the intent to cause grievous bodily harm"
Source: Quarterly Crime Statistics (SAPS) · Created with Datawrapper

LITERATURE REVIEW: DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE IN AFRICA

Prevalence and Trends

Domestic and family violence (DFV) remains a significant public health and human rights issue across Africa. Studies indicate that intimate partner violence (IPV) is prevalent in many African countries, with varying rates and forms of abuse. For instance, a study conducted in Uganda found that 56% of ever-married women and 44% of ever-married men experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence by their current or most recent spouse/partner. Additionally, 39% of women and 21% of men sustained some form of injury due to spousal violence (domesticviolenceintervention.net).

In Kenya, a multilevel analysis using the 2022 Demographic and Health Survey data revealed that 41.1% of reproductive-age women experienced IPV. Factors such as male-headed households, low wealth status, partner alcohol use, and low education levels were significantly associated with increased IPV prevalence (BioMed Central+1BioMed Central+1).

Sub-Saharan Africa faces alarming projections regarding IPV. According to a 2024 UNFPA report, if current trends continue, the number of women experiencing IPV in sub-Saharan Africa could triple by 2060 due to factors like extreme heat, epidemics, and stalled development (UN Women Africa+7The Lancet+7United Nations Population Fund+7United Nations Population Fund).

Determinants and Risk Factors

The determinants of DFV in Africa are multifaceted, encompassing individual, relational, community, and societal factors. Socioeconomic disparities, gender inequality, and cultural norms that condone violence contribute significantly to the perpetuation of DFV. A study in East Africa identified determinants such as low wealth status, partner alcohol use, and low education levels as significant risk factors for IPV (BioMed Central).

Conflict and displacement exacerbate DFV. In Sudan, for example, the ongoing conflict has led to widespread sexual violence, with over 200 children reported raped since the beginning of 2024. The conflict has displaced millions, creating environments where DFV is prevalent and underreported (AP News).

Impact on Health and Well-being

DFV has profound implications for the health and well-being of individuals and communities. Exposure to IPV is associated with adverse physical, mental, and reproductive health outcomes. A study published in The Lancet found that maternal exposure to IPV in sub-Saharan Africa is linked to adverse childhood health outcomes, including increased morbidity and mortality (BioMed CentralThe Lancet).

Furthermore, DFV contributes to broader societal challenges, including economic instability and reduced productivity. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reports that an increase in violence against women by 1 percentage point is associated with a 9% decrease in economic activity, highlighting the economic burden of DFV (IMF).

Legal Frameworks and Policy Responses

Many African countries have enacted laws and policies to address DFV. For instance, South Africa introduced the National Council on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Bill in 2024, aiming to strengthen the legal framework for protecting women and children from abuse (SONA 2025).

However, challenges remain in the implementation and enforcement of these laws. A report by Human Rights Watch in 2024 emphasized that despite robust legal frameworks, DFV persists due to deep-rooted societal norms and inadequate enforcement mechanisms (Human Rights Watch).

The literature underscores that DFV in Africa is a complex issue influenced by a myriad of factors, including socioeconomic conditions, cultural norms, conflict, and legal frameworks. While progress has been made in addressing DFV, significant challenges persist. Comprehensive strategies that encompass legal reform, societal change, and support services are essential to combat DFV effectively in Africa.

THEMES OF THE STUDY

1. Prevalence and Disparities in Domestic Violence

Domestic violence remains a pervasive issue across Africa, with significant variations in prevalence and forms of abuse. For instance, a study in Uganda found that 56% of ever-married women and 44% of ever-married men experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence by their current or most recent spouse/partner, with 39% of women and 21% of men sustaining some form of injury due to spousal violence . In Kenya, a multilevel analysis using the 2022 Demographic and Health Survey data revealed that 41.1% of reproductive-age women experienced intimate partner violence, with factors such as male-headed households, low wealth status, partner alcohol use, and low education levels significantly associated with increased IPV prevalence .domesticviolenceintervention.net

2. Socio-Cultural and Structural Determinants

The persistence of domestic violence in Africa is influenced by a complex interplay of cultural norms, socioeconomic factors, and legal frameworks. A study published in ScienceDirect highlighted that the lack of specific domestic violence laws is related to the social and cultural environment in many African countries, where cultural norms and traditional practices may perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes and condone violence within households . Additionally, the Africa Shared Research Agenda for Ending Gender-Based Violence emphasizes the need for research on harmful practices, monitoring and evaluation, and political violence to address the root causes of gender-based violence (ScienceDirectUN Women Africa+1UN Women Africa+1).

3. Impact on Health and Well-being

Domestic violence has profound implications for the health and well-being of individuals and communities. A study published in The Lancet found a strong link between maternal exposure to intimate partner violence and adverse health outcomes for children under five years in sub-Saharan Africa, indicating the transgenerational impact of domestic violence . Furthermore, a study in Libya revealed that low educational levels of both husbands and wives were significantly associated with increased rates of domestic violence, highlighting the role of education in mitigating abuse (The LancetMathews Open Access Journals).

4. Legal Frameworks and Policy Responses

The effectiveness of legal frameworks and policies in addressing domestic violence varies across African countries. A study on the enforcement of gender-based violence legislation in South Africa highlighted the need for a paradigm shift to ensure the effective implementation of laws and policies aimed at combating domestic violence . Additionally, a study published in Reproductive Health examined the impact of domestic violence laws on women's unmet need for family planning, finding that such laws reduced the probability of unmet need by 6.2 percentage points overall, indicating the broader benefits of legal protections (ResearchGateBioMed Central).

5.   Emerging Challenges and Future Directions

Emerging challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, have exacerbated the prevalence and impact of domestic violence in Africa. The UNFPA's 2024 report projected that the number of people experiencing intimate partner violence in sub-Saharan Africa could almost triple by 2060 due to factors like extreme heat, epidemics, and stalled development . These projections underscore the need for comprehensive strategies that encompass legal reform, societal change, and support services to combat domestic violence effectively in Africa.

These themes provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of domestic and family violence in Africa, highlighting the interplay of prevalence, socio-cultural determinants, health impacts, legal responses, and emerging challenges.

IMPACT OF THE STUDY

This study aims to contribute significantly to the understanding and mitigation of domestic and family violence (DFV) in Africa by:

- ✓ Informing Policy and Legislation:
  By identifying the key drivers and contextual factors of DFV, the study will provide evidence-based recommendations to policymakers for strengthening and effectively implementing laws and policies tailored to African socio-cultural realities.
- ✓ Enhancing Prevention and Intervention Strategies:
  The study's insights will aid NGOs, social workers, and health practitioners in designing culturally sensitive prevention programs and victim support services, improving early intervention and reducing the incidence of violence.
- ✓ Addressing Data and Research Gaps:
  By highlighting under-researched areas such as the experiences of marginalized groups and the impact of emerging challenges (e.g., COVID-19, climate change), the study will guide future research priorities and funding.
- ✓ Promoting Community Awareness and Engagement:
  The findings can be used to develop community awareness campaigns that challenge harmful gender norms and encourage public participation in violence prevention efforts.
- ✓ Supporting Victims and Survivors:
  The study underscores the importance of trauma-informed care and integrated support systems, helping service providers to improve the holistic well-being of survivors.
- ✓ Contributing to Academic Knowledge:

By synthesizing recent data and theoretical insights, the study enriches the academic discourse on domestic violence in Africa, providing a foundation for comparative studies and cross-regional learning.

Overall, the study aims to drive meaningful social change by informing effective, context-specific responses to domestic and family violence, ultimately enhancing the safety, health, and dignity of affected individuals and communities across Africa.

IMPACT OF THE STUDY FOR AFRICA

Strengthening Regional Policy Frameworks:

- ✓ Providing African governments and regional bodies with updated evidence to craft and implement more effective, culturally relevant laws and policies that address the unique social, economic, and cultural dynamics influencing DFV across the continent.
  Supporting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):
- ✓ Contributing to Africa's progress on SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by identifying actionable strategies to reduce violence against women and promote peaceful, inclusive societies.
  Enhancing Health and Social Services:
- ✓ Informing the design of healthcare and social support systems to better respond to the physical, mental, and social impacts of DFV, thereby improving survivor care and community resilience in African contexts.
  Promoting Gender Equality and Social Transformation:
- ✓ Highlighting the root causes of gender-based violence, such as entrenched patriarchal norms and economic inequalities, this study can foster transformative approaches that challenge harmful traditions and promote women's empowerment continent-wide.
- ✓ **Addressing Emerging Threats:**
  Equipping policymakers and practitioners to understand and mitigate new risks exacerbating DFV in Africa, such as conflict, displacement, climate change, and pandemics.
- ✓ **Building Community Capacity and Engagement:**
  Encouraging community-led initiatives and public awareness campaigns that resonate with local cultures and empower grassroots movements to prevent violence and support victims.
- ✓ **Enhancing Regional Collaboration:**
  Providing a common evidence base to encourage collaboration between African countries in sharing best practices, coordinating interventions, and mobilizing resources to tackle DFV collectively.

Ultimately, this study aims to catalyze meaningful social change across Africa by informing context-specific, sustainable responses to domestic and family violence, improving safety and wellbeing for millions across the continent.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

- ✓ **In-depth Qualitative Research:**
- ✓ Future studies should explore the lived experiences of survivors of domestic and family violence, particularly

among marginalized groups such as rural women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and persons with disabilities, to better understand contextual nuances and barriers to support.

- ✓ **Impact of COVID-19 and Other Crises:**
- ✓ Research is needed on how the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and ongoing conflicts influence the prevalence and dynamics of domestic violence in different African regions.
- ✓ **Effectiveness of Legal and Policy Interventions:**
- ✓ Longitudinal studies should assess the implementation and impact of existing laws and policies addressing domestic violence to identify gaps, successes, and best practices across diverse African contexts.
- ✓ **Role of Men and Boys in Prevention:**
  Investigations into engaging men and boys as allies in preventing domestic violence can provide insight into shifting harmful gender norms and fostering equitable relationships.
- ✓ **Economic Empowerment and Violence Reduction:**
  Further research could examine how economic empowerment programs for women and communities influence rates of domestic violence and overall family wellbeing.
- ✓ **Technology and Domestic Violence:**
- ✓ Studies on the use of digital platforms for reporting abuse, providing support services, and raising awareness would inform innovative approaches to tackle domestic violence in Africa's rapidly changing technological landscape.
- ✓ **Cross-Country Comparative Analyses:**
  Comparative research across African countries can shed light on how different cultural, legal, and socio-economic environments impact domestic violence prevalence and responses, informing regional cooperation and tailored interventions.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ **Strengthen Legal Enforcement:**
- ✓ Enhance the capacity of law enforcement agencies and the judiciary to effectively implement and enforce existing domestic violence laws, ensuring timely investigation, prosecution, and protection of survivors.
- ✓ **Increase Access to Support Services:**
- ✓ Expand and improve access to shelters, counseling, legal aid, and healthcare services tailored to survivors of domestic violence, especially in rural and underserved communities.
- ✓ **Community Education and Awareness:**
- ✓ Implement widespread community awareness campaigns to challenge harmful gender norms, educate about rights and available services, and promote zero tolerance for domestic violence.
- ✓ **Engage Men and Boys:**
- ✓ Develop programs that actively involve men and boys as advocates and partners in preventing domestic violence, promoting respectful relationships and gender equality.
- ✓ **Integrate Violence Prevention into Health Systems:**
- ✓ Train healthcare workers to identify signs of domestic violence and provide appropriate referrals and support as part of routine health care.
- ✓ **Economic Empowerment Initiatives:**

Support economic empowerment programs for women, such as vocational training and microfinance, to reduce dependency and vulnerability to abuse.

- ✓ **Collaborate with Traditional and Religious Leaders:**
- ✓ Work with influential community leaders to address cultural practices that perpetuate violence and to promote positive social change from within communities.
- ✓ **Leverage Technology:**
- ✓ Utilize mobile apps, hotlines, and social media platforms to facilitate confidential reporting, information dissemination, and survivor support.
- ✓ **Data Collection and Monitoring:**
- ✓ Establish robust data collection systems to monitor domestic violence trends, evaluate interventions, and inform policy decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AFRICA

- ✓ **Harmonize and Strengthen Regional Legal Frameworks:**
- ✓ Encourage African Union member states to adopt and enforce comprehensive laws aligned with regional instruments like the Maputo Protocol to ensure consistent protection against domestic violence across countries.
- ✓ **Expand Access to Survivors' Services in Rural and Marginalized Areas:**
- ✓ Invest in establishing more shelters, counseling centers, and legal aid clinics, particularly in rural, peri-urban, and underserved communities where access is currently limited.
- ✓ **Promote Culturally Sensitive Awareness Campaigns:**
- ✓ Design public education programs that engage local languages, cultural norms, and community leaders to challenge harmful gender stereotypes and promote zero tolerance for violence.
- ✓ **Engage Traditional, Religious, and Community Leaders:**
- ✓ Partner with influential local figures to advocate against domestic violence and support survivors, leveraging their authority to shift social attitudes positively.
- ✓ **Empower Women Economically:**
  Support continent-wide initiatives focused on women's financial independence through vocational training, microfinance, and entrepreneurship to reduce economic vulnerabilities linked to abuse.
- ✓ **Involve Men and Boys as Change Agents:**
- ✓ Develop continent-wide programs that involve men and boys in promoting gender equality and non-violence, fostering positive masculinity norms.
- ✓ **Integrate Domestic Violence Screening into Health Services:**
- ✓ Encourage African health ministries to train healthcare workers to identify and respond to domestic violence cases within routine health service delivery.
- ✓ **Use Technology to Bridge Gaps:**
- ✓ Promote innovative use of mobile technology and social media platforms to facilitate confidential reporting, awareness raising, and remote support services, especially in remote areas.
- ✓ **Strengthen Data Collection and Research Capacity:**
- ✓ Develop continent-wide standardized data systems to better track domestic violence prevalence, risk factors,

and intervention outcomes to inform policy and program development.

- ✓ **Foster Regional Collaboration:**
- ✓ Encourage sharing of best practices, resources, and coordinated efforts among African nations through regional bodies like the African Union to create a unified front against domestic and family violence.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ **Widespread Prevalence:**
- ✓ Domestic and family violence remains a serious and widespread issue across Africa, affecting millions of individuals regardless of socioeconomic or cultural background.
- ✓ **Complex Root Causes:**
- ✓ The persistence of violence is driven by deeply embedded cultural norms, gender inequalities, economic hardships, and gaps in legal enforcement.
- ✓ **Severe Health and Social Impacts:**
- ✓ Domestic violence significantly harms survivors' physical and mental health and has far-reaching consequences for families and communities, including children's wellbeing.
- ✓ **Legal and Policy Challenges:**
- ✓ While many African countries have laws addressing domestic violence, enforcement is often weak due to limited resources, lack of training, and social stigma.
- ✓ **Role of Community and Cultural Leaders:**
- ✓ Traditional and religious leaders are critical stakeholders in changing attitudes and reducing violence within communities.
- ✓ **Importance of Survivor-Centered Services:**
- ✓ Accessible, culturally sensitive support services are essential to aid recovery and empower survivors.
- ✓ **Need for Inclusive Engagement:**
  Engaging men and boys as allies in prevention is key to transforming harmful gender norms.
- ✓ **Emerging Threats:**
  Challenges such as pandemics, climate change, and conflicts are exacerbating domestic violence, calling for adaptive strategies.
- ✓ **Data and Research Gaps:**
- ✓ Improved data collection and research are necessary to guide effective policies and interventions tailored to diverse African contexts.
- ✓ **Regional Cooperation:**
- ✓ Cross-country collaboration within Africa is vital for sharing best practices, harmonizing laws, and scaling up successful initiatives.

CONCLUSION

Domestic and family violence in Africa remains a critical public health and human rights challenge with profound social, economic, and psychological consequences. This study highlights the urgent need for context-specific, culturally sensitive approaches that address the root causes of violence while strengthening legal frameworks and support systems. By informing policymakers, practitioners, and communities, the research contributes to shaping effective interventions that promote gender equality, protect survivors, and foster safer, more resilient societies across the continent. Ultimately, this study underscores that combating domestic violence is not only essential for individual wellbeing but also pivotal for Africa's sustainable development and social transformation.

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