

Domestic violence and women's employment in Nigeria: evidence from the 2023/2024 NDHS

Olaide Sekinat Balogun, Dorcas Ololade Adeyeye, and Bakare Afeez Olalekan

Abstract

Domestic violence remains a pervasive challenge in Nigeria, with 23% of women aged 15–49 reporting at least one form of intimate partner violence according to the 2023/2024 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS). This study examines the association between severe domestic violence and women's employment status in Nigeria, while assessing the moderating role of key socioeconomic factors. Using a sample of 23,566 ever-married women from the 2023/2024 NDHS, the study employs survey-adjusted logistic regression to estimate the association between severe domestic violence and employment status, controlling for Education, wealth, age, residence, region, religion, and marital status. An adjusted Wald test confirms that interaction terms between domestic violence and socioeconomic moderators are jointly significant ($F(7, 1299) = 2.97, p = 0.004$). The main effects model shows that severe domestic violence is negatively associated with employment but is only marginally significant at the 10% level ($OR = 0.876, p = 0.072$), indicating limited direct evidence of association. The moderation analysis reveals more nuanced findings: wealth significantly buffers the negative association between violence and employment ($p = 0.001$), while secondary Education ($p = 0.039$), rural residence ($p = 0.037$), and other Christian affiliation ($p = 0.029$) are associated with stronger employment penalties among violence-exposed women. Education, wealth, region, religion, and marital status emerge as the strongest and most consistent predictors of employment overall. Multicollinearity diagnostics confirm no problematic collinearity among predictors (mean VIF = 1.99), and the overall model is jointly significant ($F(19, 1287) = 75.96, p < 0.001$). The study concludes that while the direct association between domestic violence and women's employment is weak, socioeconomic context meaningfully conditions this relationship, and structural factors remain the dominant determinants of women's employment in Nigeria. Policy interventions should prioritise expanding educational access, reducing regional inequality, and strengthening economic support for survivors of violence, particularly in Northern Nigeria.

Keywords: domestic violence, employment status, women's labour market participation, socioeconomic factors, Nigeria, NDHS

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1. Introduction

Domestic violence is also referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV). It encompasses a pattern of behaviours used by One partner to exert Power and control over another within an intimate relationship. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993) defines violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering, including threats, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. The World Health Organisation (WHO) reported in 2013 that 30% of women in the world have experienced IPV from their partner, while regional variation is high to the tune of 38%. This prevalence adversely affects women's economic activities, including their participation in the labour market. Labour market participation refers to individuals' engagement in economic activities, either through employment or active job search (International Labour Organisation, 2023). The ILO (2023) further defines the labour force participation rate as the proportion of the working-age population that is economically active. In Nigeria, domestic violence against women remains a significant problem despite increased awareness and legislative efforts. The Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of Nigeria, National Population Commission & ICF (2024) noted that in the 2023/2024 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), 23% of ever-married women aged 15–49 have experienced at least One form of intimate partner violence (IPV), with emotional violence (19%) being the most prevalent, followed by physical violence (13%) and sexual violence (4%). These statistics are particularly concerning given Nigeria's position as Africa's most populous nation and largest economy, where women constitute a substantial proportion of the workforce. Beyond its prevalence, domestic violence has significant implications for women's economic outcomes. Domestic violence is associated with constraints on labour market participation. Specifically, exposure to violence can reduce women's ability to participate in the workforce through physical injury, psychological distress, restricted mobility, and controlling behaviours by partners, all of which may limit access to employment opportunities and reduce productivity. In addition, violence may constrain women's financial autonomy, further weakening their capacity to engage in income-generating activities. Despite the prevalence of domestic violence and its potential economic consequences, there is limited empirical evidence on how different forms of domestic violence affect women's labour market participation in Nigeria. While international studies have documented associations between intimate partner violence and employment outcomes (Brown et al., 2024; Meinhart et al., 2021), these relationships may operate differently within the Nigerian context due to distinct socio-economic conditions, gender norms, and institutional constraints. Cultural expectations surrounding gender roles, the persistence of early marriage, and limited enforcement of protective legislation may shape both the experience of violence and women's access to economic opportunities. Existing research has largely focused on the health and prevalence dimensions of domestic violence, with comparatively little attention to its economic implications, particularly in relation to labour market outcomes.

This study examines the association between domestic violence and women's employment status in Nigeria using the 2023/2024 NDHS, the most recent nationally representative survey available. Rather than assuming a strong or direct relationship, the study approaches

this question empirically, recognising that the nature and strength of the association between domestic violence and women's economic participation may be shaped by broader structural and socioeconomic conditions particular to the Nigerian context. By examining domestic violence not only as a social and health concern but also as a potential constraint on women's economic participation, the study provides policy-relevant insights for interventions that combine survivor support with economic empowerment. Specifically, this study investigates how exposure to domestic violence is associated with women's likelihood of being employed, whether the severity of violence is associated with varying employment outcomes, and how socioeconomic factors such as Education, wealth, and place of residence shape these associations. By addressing these questions, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the potential economic dimensions of domestic violence in Nigeria. It provides evidence that can inform the design of integrated policy responses. In doing so, it aligns with Nigeria's commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Specifically, the study pursues three objectives: (1) to assess the association between domestic violence and the probability of employment among Nigerian women; (2) to examine how the severity of violence is associated with employment outcomes; and (3) to investigate how socioeconomic factors moderate the relationship between domestic violence and employment status.

2. Literature Review

Before presenting the theoretical framework, it is important to justify the selection of Human Capital Theory and Gender Oppression Theory over other prominent frameworks in the gender and development economics literature. Several alternative perspectives offer valuable insights into the relationship between domestic violence and women's economic outcomes; however, they are less suitable for addressing the specific objectives of this study. One such framework is Feminist Political Economy, which provides important insights into the ways capitalism and patriarchy interact to reproduce women's economic marginalisation. While this perspective is valuable for understanding broader patterns of gender inequality and structural Power relations, its emphasis is primarily at the macro level. Consequently, it offers limited analytical usefulness for examining individual-level associations between specific experiences of domestic violence and labour market participation, which constitute the central focus of this study. Feminist Political Economy is therefore more appropriate for historical, institutional, or comparative analyses than for empirical household-level investigations based on survey data. Another influential framework is the Capability Approach, developed by Sen (1999) and further advanced by Nussbaum (2011). This approach conceptualises development in terms of individuals' capabilities and freedoms, focusing on what people can do and be rather than the resources they possess. Although highly relevant to issues of women's empowerment and well-being, the Capability Approach is largely normative, emphasizing the freedoms and opportunities individuals should enjoy. It does not explicitly explain the causal mechanisms through which domestic violence affects women's labour market participation, which is the primary concern of this study. As such, the Capability Approach is better suited as a framework for evaluating welfare and

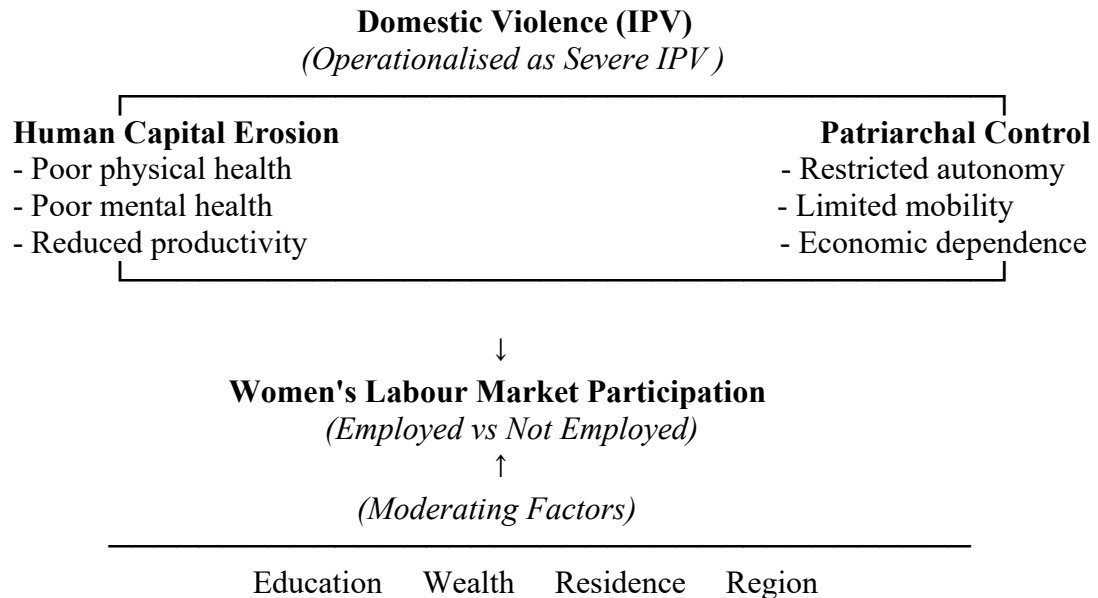
empowerment outcomes than as an explanatory theory for understanding the pathways linking domestic violence to employment.

Social Reproduction Theory (Bhattacharya, 2017) provides another relevant perspective by examining how unpaid domestic and care work contributes to the reproduction of the labour force and the functioning of capitalist economies. The theory offers valuable insights into the gendered division of labour and the unequal distribution of household responsibilities between men and women. However, its primary focus is on the role of unpaid labour rather than on domestic violence as a specific mechanism influencing women's participation in paid employment. Consequently, while Social Reproduction Theory helps explain broader patterns of gender inequality in work and family life, it does not directly address the relationship between domestic violence and labour market participation that forms the focus of this study. Similarly, Intersectionality Theory, introduced by Crenshaw (1989), emphasizes how gender intersects with other social categories, such as class, religion, ethnicity, and geography, to shape experiences of inequality and disadvantage. This perspective is particularly useful for understanding how women's experiences differ across socioeconomic and demographic groups. Although intersectionality informs this study's consideration of moderating factors such as Education, wealth, and place of residence, it functions primarily as an analytical lens rather than a causal theory. It highlights variations in experiences and outcomes but does not explicitly explain the mechanisms through which domestic violence affects employment. As a result, it is insufficient as a standalone theoretical framework for the present analysis. In contrast, Human Capital Theory and Gender Oppression Theory are selected because they provide complementary explanations of the same phenomenon while operating at different levels of analysis. Human Capital Theory focuses on the individual-level mechanisms through which violence affects women's productive capacity. In contrast, Gender Oppression Theory explains the broader structural and social conditions that create and sustain violence against women. Together, these theories offer a comprehensive framework capable of generating testable hypotheses regarding the direction, magnitude, and conditional nature of the relationship between domestic violence and women's labour market participation. Rather than treating Human Capital Theory and Gender Oppression Theory as separate or competing perspectives, this study adopts an integrated theoretical model that links the two frameworks through a common causal process. The model argues that patriarchal Power structures, defined as social systems in which men hold greater economic, social, and institutional Power than women (Walby, 1990, 2020), create the conditions that allow domestic violence to emerge and persist. Within such patriarchal arrangements, domestic violence is not viewed as random behaviour but as a mechanism through which male partners enforce traditional gender roles, discourage women's pursuit of economic independence, and maintain control over household resources (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Firestone, 1970). Once violence occurs, it acts as a direct mechanism of human capital depletion. This is where the explanatory Power of Gender Oppression Theory and Human Capital Theory converge. Physical violence can result in injuries and long-term health problems that reduce women's physical capacity to engage in paid work. Psychological abuse may lead to depression, anxiety, and emotional distress, undermining cognitive functioning, self-confidence, and decision-making abilities that are essential for labour market participation. Furthermore, the time and resources

devoted to coping with violence, including seeking medical care, legal assistance, or personal safety, reduce opportunities for skill acquisition, work experience, and other forms of human capital investment (Schultz, 1961; Grossman, 1972). The depletion of human capital ultimately affects labour market outcomes by reducing productivity, increasing absenteeism, creating employment instability, and, in severe cases, leading women to withdraw entirely from the labour market. Through this integrated framework, domestic violence is understood not only as a consequence of patriarchal structures but also as a mechanism that limits women's economic participation by weakening the resources and capacities necessary for productive employment. This study conceptualises domestic violence as simultaneously a manifestation of patriarchal Power relations and a mechanism of human capital depletion. These are not competing interpretations but sequential ones: patriarchal structures produce violence (Gender Oppression Theory), and violence produces human capital losses that constrain employment (Human Capital Theory). To privilege One explanation over the other would produce an analytically incomplete account. Specifically, Gender Oppression Theory alone would explain why violence occurs, but not through which specific mechanisms it constrains employment. Human Capital Theory alone would explain how productivity losses arise from violence but would treat violence as an exogenous shock rather than as a structurally produced phenomenon.

Conceptual Framework:

The integrated theoretical framework yields the following conceptual model:



Source: *Authors' Conceptualisation from theories, 2026*

The integrated framework treats violence as both structurally produced and mechanistically consequential, yielding a richer causal account that is also empirically tractable through the quantitative analysis employed in this study. This theoretical position also mitigates the risk

of ideological reductionism: it neither reduces domestic violence entirely to an economic productivity problem (the risk of a purely human-capital framing) nor treats it exclusively as a political phenomenon disconnected from measurable economic consequences (the risk of a purely oppression framing). Human capital theory, originally developed by Becker (1964) and further extended by Mincer (1974), Schultz (1961), and Grossman (1972), provides a foundational framework for understanding labour market outcomes. The theory holds that individuals' economic productivity and earnings are determined by their accumulation of skills, knowledge, and health, collectively termed human capital. Education, training, and experience are key investments that enhance human capital and, in turn, improve labour market prospects. The application of human capital theory to domestic violence and employment operates through the concept of human capital erosion. Domestic violence can be understood as a systematic process that reduces women's stock of human capital across multiple dimensions. Physical violence directly damages women's bodily integrity and health. Injuries, chronic pain, and disability resulting from violence reduce women's physical capacity to work. Studies indicate that 40-75% of women experiencing physical intimate partner violence sustain injuries requiring medical attention (Campbell et al., 2022), representing direct depletion of physical capital necessary for labour market productivity. Similarly, psychological abuse and the trauma associated with all forms of violence diminish cognitive functioning, concentration, and decision-making capabilities. Research demonstrates that approximately 60% of IPV victims meet diagnostic criteria for depression (Sardinha et al., 2022), representing a significant depletion of mental capital required for effective workplace performance. In addition, violence and its consequences, including medical visits, legal proceedings, and safety-seeking activities, consume time that could otherwise be invested in productive work or skill development. This represents an opportunity cost that reduces human capital accumulation. The theory predicts that domestic violence systematically diminishes multiple dimensions of human capital and will be negatively associated with labour market participation. Women experiencing violence are expected to exhibit lower employment rates and, when employed, reduced productivity compared to non-abused women, all else being equal.

Gender oppression theory provides the structural framework explaining why domestic violence occurs and why it is systematically directed at women's economic autonomy. This perspective, articulated by scholars including Walby (1990, 2020), Dobash and Dobash (1979), and Firestone (1970), explains that women's subordinate social position stems from patriarchal systems that systematically privilege men's Power and control across institutional domains including the household, labour market, and state. Within this framework, domestic violence is not an individual pathology but a structural phenomenon: a mechanism through which patriarchal household arrangements are enforced and reproduced. Employment represents a potential source of economic independence and autonomy for women, which may directly threaten men's patriarchal authority within households. Violence and controlling behaviours, therefore, function as instruments for suppressing women's economic agency. Furthermore, by restricting women's labour market participation, perpetrators deepen women's economic dependence, which in turn reduces their capacity to exit violent relationships. This generates a self-reinforcing cycle: patriarchal structures produce violence, violence constrains employment, constrained employment deepens dependence, and

deepened dependence perpetuates exposure to violence. This cycle connects directly to the human capital depletion mechanisms described above, showing how structural oppression and individual-level productivity losses are analytically inseparable. In patriarchal societies, traditional gender norms prescribe women's primary role as domestic caregivers rather than economic actors. Violence functions as an enforcement mechanism for these norms, punishing women who transgress by seeking employment or economic independence. This has a direct implication for labour market participation: even women who are physically able to work may be prevented from doing so by partner control, monitoring, or explicit prohibition of employment. The key analytical contribution of this framework is the identification of two distinct but sequentially connected causal pathways through which patriarchal structures ultimately reduce women's labour market participation. Pathway 1, referred to as the Capacity Pathway under Human Capital Theory, suggests that patriarchal violence reduces women's physical and mental health capital, thereby diminishing their objective capacity to engage in paid employment. Through its effects on health, well-being, and productivity, violence limits women's ability to work even when they have the opportunity and freedom to participate in the labour market. In this pathway, violence primarily constrains women's capacity to work. Pathway 2, known as the Autonomy Pathway under Gender Oppression Theory, argues that patriarchal control behaviours restrict women's freedom to enter, remain in, and actively participate in the labour market, regardless of their physical or mental ability to work. Even when women are healthy and able to work, controlling behaviours may limit their mobility, decision-making Power, and access to economic opportunities. In this pathway, violence primarily constrains women's freedom to work rather than their capacity. Not all evidence, however, supports a straightforward negative association between domestic violence and employment. A competing strand of literature suggests that women's employment may itself provoke violence in contexts where male partners perceive economic independence as threatening to patriarchal authority. Heath (2014), examining Bangladeshi women, and Gage and Thomas (2017), using Nigerian data, both document higher violence risk among employed women in certain contexts. This backlash hypothesis is consistent with gender oppression theory's prediction that patriarchal enforcement mechanisms intensify when women transgress prescribed roles. The existence of this competing dynamic implies that cross-sectional associations between violence and employment may be attenuated or even reversed depending on which force dominates.

The Nigerian labour market further complicates this relationship. With over 92% of employed persons in the informal sector as of 2023 (NBS, 2023), standard employment measures may fail to capture meaningful variation in women's economic participation. Informal employment, while providing income, is associated with greater precarity, lower earnings, and weaker legal protections, conditions that may simultaneously increase vulnerability to domestic violence and reduce the protective potential of economic participation (Kabeer, 2016). The gendered segmentation of Nigeria's labour market, in which women are disproportionately concentrated in low-earning informal activities, means that employment status alone may be an insufficient measure of economic empowerment. Empirical evidence on the relationship between domestic violence and women's labour market participation suggests that women who experience different forms of intimate partner violence are more likely to withdraw from the labour market or face constraints in sustaining

employment. In addition to this association, a range of socioeconomic and contextual factors have been identified as shaping the nature and extent of this relationship. Recent studies have established substantial evidence linking domestic violence to adverse labour market outcomes across diverse contexts. For instance, Brown et al. (2024) conducted a comprehensive analysis using the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey. They found that women who experienced physical, emotional, or any form of intimate partner violence had significantly increased odds of withdrawing from the labour market. Specifically, they estimated a 4.14% average reduction in the likelihood of working among violence-affected women, translating to approximately \$3.0 billion USD in lost productivity annually, representing nearly 1% of Nigeria's GDP. Corroborating evidence from the South West comes from Ahmed et al. (2024), whose study of women in Abeokuta documented the prevalence, patterns, and consequences of intimate partner violence in that locality, further affirming that IPV remains a significant constraint on women's wellbeing and economic functioning in urban southwestern Nigeria. Gage and Thomas (2017) examined the relationship between women's work, gender roles, and intimate partner violence in Nigeria using 2013 NDHS data. Their findings revealed complex patterns: employed women faced higher odds of physical IPV in some regions, suggesting that employment may threaten traditional gender hierarchies and provoke violence. However, they also found that women's employment was associated with lower acceptance of violence justifications, indicating that economic participation may gradually shift norms.

A study by Tandrayen-Ragoobur (2020) examined intimate partner violence and women's labour force participation across multiple Sub-Saharan African countries, including Nigeria. Using harmonised DHS data, the study found that experiencing IPV was associated with a 12–18% reduction in the probability of formal-sector employment, with informal-sector work showing smaller but still significant associations. The study identified wealth and Education as important moderators, with violence effects on employment being strongest among less educated and poorer women. Similar patterns have been documented across low- and middle-income countries. Meyer et al. (2024) conducted a systematic review of 89 studies examining the economic dimensions of intimate partner violence, finding consistent evidence that IPV is associated with reduced employment probability, lower earnings, and increased job instability. Their analysis demonstrated that economic theories, including human capital frameworks, provide robust explanations for these associations, with violence depleting women's productive capacity through health deterioration and time constraints. A 2022 multi-country analysis examining domestic violence and employment across 19 developing countries found that IPV exposure was associated with 15–30% higher odds of unemployment, with effects varying by violence type and country context (Zafar et al., 2022). Physical violence showed the strongest associations with employment constraints in most contexts, though psychological violence effects were substantial when controlling for physical violence. Regional analyses within Nigeria have revealed substantial geographical heterogeneity. Research using 2018 NDHS data found that Southern regions exhibited higher reported rates of certain forms of IPV but also higher female labour force participation, creating complex patterns that suggest context-specific relationships (Haaga et al., 2015). Spatial analysis of the 2018 NDHS by Bolarinwa et al. (2022) further mapped the geographic distribution of IPV across Nigeria, identifying significant regional clustering and revealing sociodemographic predictors that vary across zones. Northern regions, particularly the North

West and North East, showed lower female employment alongside different patterns of violence, partially reflecting the Boko Haram insurgency's impacts on women's security and mobility.

Alawode et al. (2023) extend this structural analysis by examining whether intimate partner violence is vertically transmitted across generations of women in sub-Saharan Africa, finding evidence that exposure to violence in One generation elevates risk in the next. This intergenerational dimension underscores the entrenched, self-perpetuating nature of gender-based violence and its long-run implications for women's economic trajectories. Research examining specific mechanisms has demonstrated multiple pathways. Duvvury et al. (2022) developed and validated the Lost Days of Labour Productivity Scale, documenting that IPV results in substantial absenteeism and reduced workplace performance. Their findings across multiple countries showed that women experiencing IPV lose an average of 5–10 working days annually due to violence-related consequences, not including reduced productivity while at work.

Earlier studies also show that domestic violence affects women's employment stability and earnings through workplace disruption and absenteeism (Swanberg et al., 2005; Lloyd & Taluc, 1999). Studies such as Meyer et al. (2024) and Tandrayen-Ragoobur (2020) show that analyses of socioeconomic moderators have increasingly moved beyond simple additive models toward interaction effects. Higher Education generally buffers against unemployment risk overall, but may not fully protect against the employment impacts of domestic violence. For instance, Meyer et al. (2024) find that the effects of violence on employment are often similar across Education levels, while Tandrayen-Ragoobur (2020) reports stronger negative effects among less educated women who have fewer alternative employment opportunities. Household wealth has also been identified as an important moderating factor. Evidence from Tandrayen-Ragoobur (2020) suggests that wealthier women may have greater resources to mitigate the economic consequences of domestic violence while maintaining employment. In addition, the place of residence plays a significant role. Gage and Thomas (2017) highlight that urban residence is associated with greater access to formal employment opportunities and support services for survivors of violence. However, urban environments may also present distinct economic pressures and risks.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional research design using secondary survey data. The analysis examines associations between domestic violence and labour market participation among a nationally representative sample of Nigerian women aged 15–49. The cross-sectional design is appropriate for identifying correlational relationships among variables measured within the same survey period. However, it does not permit causal inference due to the lack of temporal ordering. While cross-sectional data limit causal inference because they cannot definitively establish temporal precedence, this design offers several advantages. It provides a current snapshot of domestic violence and employment patterns across Nigeria, allows simultaneous examination of multiple variables, enables

analysis of subgroup differences with adequate statistical power, and is cost-effective compared with longitudinal approaches.

3.2 Data Source

This study uses data from the 2023/2024 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), the most recent nationally representative household survey implemented by the National Population Commission with technical assistance from ICF through the DHS Program. Data collection occurred from December 2023 to May 2024 across all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of Nigeria, National Population Commission & ICF, 2024). The 2023/2024 NDHS employed a layered two-stage cluster sampling design. In the first stage, 1,400 enumeration areas were selected with probability proportional to size. In the second stage, a systematic sample of households was selected from each cluster. The survey achieved interviews with 39,050 women aged 15–49, representing a 99% response rate. For the domestic violence module, one woman per eligible household was randomly selected for an interview, in accordance with WHO ethical and safety guidelines. Questions were administered only when complete privacy could be assured. This resulted in approximately 23,566 women completing the domestic violence module. The current analysis is restricted to women who have ever been married or in a union and have complete data on key variables, yielding an analytical sample of 23,566 women. This restriction, combined with the specific operationalisation of violence indicators used in the regression models (d107), accounts for the difference between the 23% prevalence figure reported in the broader NDHS and the 12.29% observed in the analytical sample. As described in Section 2, domestic violence operates through two pathways. First, through human capital erosion, domestic violence reduces women's physical and mental health, thereby limiting their productivity and capacity to work. Second, through patriarchal control, domestic violence restricts women's autonomy, mobility, and access to economic resources. These relationships are further shaped by socioeconomic factors such as education, wealth, place of residence, and region, which may influence the extent to which domestic violence constrains women's economic participation. Domestic violence is conceptualised as intimate partner violence (IPV) and, for empirical analysis, it is operationalised using severity-based measures rather than distinct forms of abuse. Specifically, severe domestic violence reflects more extreme forms, including physical assault and sexual violence.

Table 1: Variables and Measurement

Variable Type	Variable	Operationalisation	Measurement
Dependent Variable	Labour market participation	Current employment status, including respondents currently working (v714)	Binary (1 = working, 0 = not working)
Independent Variable	Severe domestic violence	Experience of severe acts, including physical assault, threats with weapons, or sexual violence (DHS composite from selected IPV items)	Binary (1 = yes, 0 = no) (d107)
Moderating Variable	Education	Highest level attained	Categorical (v106)
Moderating Variable	Wealth	DHS wealth index	Quintiles (v190)
Moderating Variable	Residence	Urban/rural	Binary (v025)
Moderating Variable	Region	Geopolitical zones	6 categories (v024)
Control Variable	Age	Respondent age	continuous only (v012)
Control Variable	Marital status	Current union status	categorical (i.v501)
Control Variable	Religion	Religious affiliation	Categorical

The dependent variable in this study is labour market participation, measured as whether a respondent was employed in the 12 months before the survey. This captures engagement in both formal and informal economic activities, consistent with standard labour force definitions. The key independent variable is domestic violence, measured using the DHS domestic violence module based on the Conflict Tactics Scale. Domestic violence is operationalised using a composite severity indicator instead of individual acts. Specifically, severe domestic violence (d107) captures more extreme forms of physical or sexual violence.

The decision to focus on severe domestic violence (d107) rather than all forms of IPV reflects both theoretical and empirical considerations. Theoretically, severe violence (which covers physical assault, weapon threats, and sexual coercion) represents the most direct form of human capital depletion through physical injury and incapacitation, making it the most proximate mechanism through which the capacity pathway operates. Empirically, the composite nature of d107 captures the forms of violence most likely to produce observable employment effects in the short term. The more prevalent emotional violence (19% prevalence in the 2023-24 NDHS) operates through slower, more diffuse psychological pathways that may be less detectable in cross-sectional binary employment measures. While labour force participation technically encompasses both employed individuals and those actively seeking work, the variable v714, which captures whether a respondent was engaged in any economic activity in the preceding 12 months, is used as the primary measure of labour market engagement in this study. This operationalisation is consistent with standard practice in DHS-based labour market research in sub-Saharan Africa (Brown et al., 2024; Tandrayen-Ragoobur, 2020), where the binary employment indicator is widely used as a proxy for women's economic participation, given the limitations of survey-based measures of unemployment in informal labour markets. The moderating variables include Education, wealth, place of residence, and region. Education is included as a proxy for human capital and potential labour market opportunities, while wealth captures household economic resources that may influence both exposures to violence and employment decisions. Residence accounts for structural differences in labour markets between urban and rural areas, and region captures geographical variation in economic opportunities and social norms across Nigeria. Control variables include age, marital status, and religion. Age is included to account for life-cycle effects on employment, while marital status captures differences in economic dependency and household structure. Religion is included due to its potential influence on gender norms and labour market participation. These controls help isolate the relationship between domestic violence and labour market participation by reducing omitted variable bias.

3.4. Data analysis

Analysis was conducted using Stata 16.0, employing complex survey procedures (svy commands) to account for sampling weights, stratification, and clustering. Data preparation included restriction of the sample to ever-married women with complete violence module data, Creation of composite violence severity indicators, assessment of missing data patterns, and application of survey weights and design parameters. Descriptive statistics were used to characterise the sample's demographic and socioeconomic composition, the prevalence of domestic violence by severity level, and employment rates across key subgroups. The analysis was restricted to women selected for the domestic violence module and further limited to observations with complete data on all variables included in the regression models, resulting in a final analytical sample of 23,566 women. Weighted percentages and means were computed to account for the complex survey design. This study uses logistic regression to examine the relationship between domestic violence and women's labour market participation. Given that the dependent variable (employment status) is binary, logistic regression is appropriate for estimating the probability of employment conditional on domestic violence exposure and a set of covariates. The model is specified as:

$$\text{logit}(P(\text{Employed} = 1)) = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{severe DV}) + \beta_2(\text{Education}) + \beta_3(\text{wealth index}) + \beta_4(\text{residence}) + \beta_5(\text{age}) + \beta_6(\text{marital status}) + \beta_7(\text{region}) + \varepsilon$$

(1)

where domestic violence is measured using severe domestic violence. The model assesses whether exposure to severe domestic violence is associated with women's likelihood of participating in the labour force. The socioeconomic variables included in the model comprise Education (highest level attained), household wealth index, and place of residence (urban or rural). These factors cover important aspects of economic resources and human capital that affect women's work prospects. To account for individual and regional variations in labour market involvement among Nigerian women, demographic factors such as age, marital status, and geography are incorporated. To test whether the relationship between domestic violence and labour force participation varies across socioeconomic groups, a second model was estimated, including interaction terms between domestic violence and each socioeconomic moderator. The moderation model is specified as:

$$\text{logit}(P(\text{Employed} = 1)) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{DV} + \beta_2(\text{Education}) + \beta_3(\text{wealth}) + \beta_4(\text{residence}) + \beta_5(\text{religion}) + \beta_6(\text{age}) + \beta_7(\text{marital status}) + \beta_8(\text{region}) + \beta_9(\text{DV} \times \text{Education}) + \beta_{10}(\text{DV} \times \text{wealth}) + \beta_{11}(\text{DV} \times \text{residence}) + \beta_{12}(\text{DV} \times \text{religion}) + \varepsilon$$

(2)

where DV represents domestic violence, specifically severe violence. The main effects β_2 through β_5 capture the independent associations of Education, wealth, residence, and religion with labour force participation, while β_1 captures the baseline association of domestic violence with employment, holding all moderators at their reference categories. The interaction terms β_9 through β_{12} each capture whether the association between domestic violence and labour force participation differs across categories of a given socioeconomic factor. Specifically, β_9 tests whether the relationship between domestic violence and employment varies by Education level; β_{10} tests whether it varies across wealth quintiles; β_{11} tests whether it differs between urban and rural women; and β_{12} tests whether it varies across religious groups. A statistically significant interaction term shows that the impact of domestic violence on labour force participation is not consistent across all categories of that moderator; in other words, the moderating variable influences the strength of the association between violence and employment. The control variables age (β_6), marital status (β_7), and region (β_8) are included in all models to account for demographic and geographic heterogeneity in women's labour market participation across Nigeria. Their inclusion ensures that the estimated associations between domestic violence, the moderating socioeconomic factors, and employment are not confounded by these observed individual and contextual characteristics.

Standard regression diagnostics were conducted to assess model validity. Multicollinearity was examined using variance inflation factors (VIF) computed following an equivalent OLS regression. All VIF values were below 5.0, with a mean VIF of 1.99, indicating no problematic collinearity among predictors. The highest VIF recorded was 4.71 for the Islam category of religious affiliation, which remains within acceptable limits. Overall model fit was assessed using the OLS equivalent model, which yielded an R-squared of 0.172,

indicating that the model explains approximately 17.2% of the variance in women's employment status. This level of explanatory Power is consistent with cross-sectional survey-based studies of binary employment outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa, where substantial unobserved heterogeneity in labour market participation is expected (Tandrayen-Ragoobur, 2020). The overall F-statistic for the survey-adjusted logistic model is $F(19, 1287) = 75.96$ ($p < 0.001$), confirming joint statistical significance of all predictors."

4. Results and Discussion

The analytical sample consists of 23,566 women aged 15–49, representing a weighted population size of approximately 23,326 women across Nigeria. The survey design includes 74 strata and 1,379 primary sampling units, with 1,305 degrees of freedom used for estimation. Figure 1 presents the sample selection process used in this study. Starting with the total number of women interviewed in the 2023–2024 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), the sample was progressively restricted to women eligible for the domestic violence module and those with complete information on the variables included in the analysis, yielding a final analytical sample of 23,566 women.

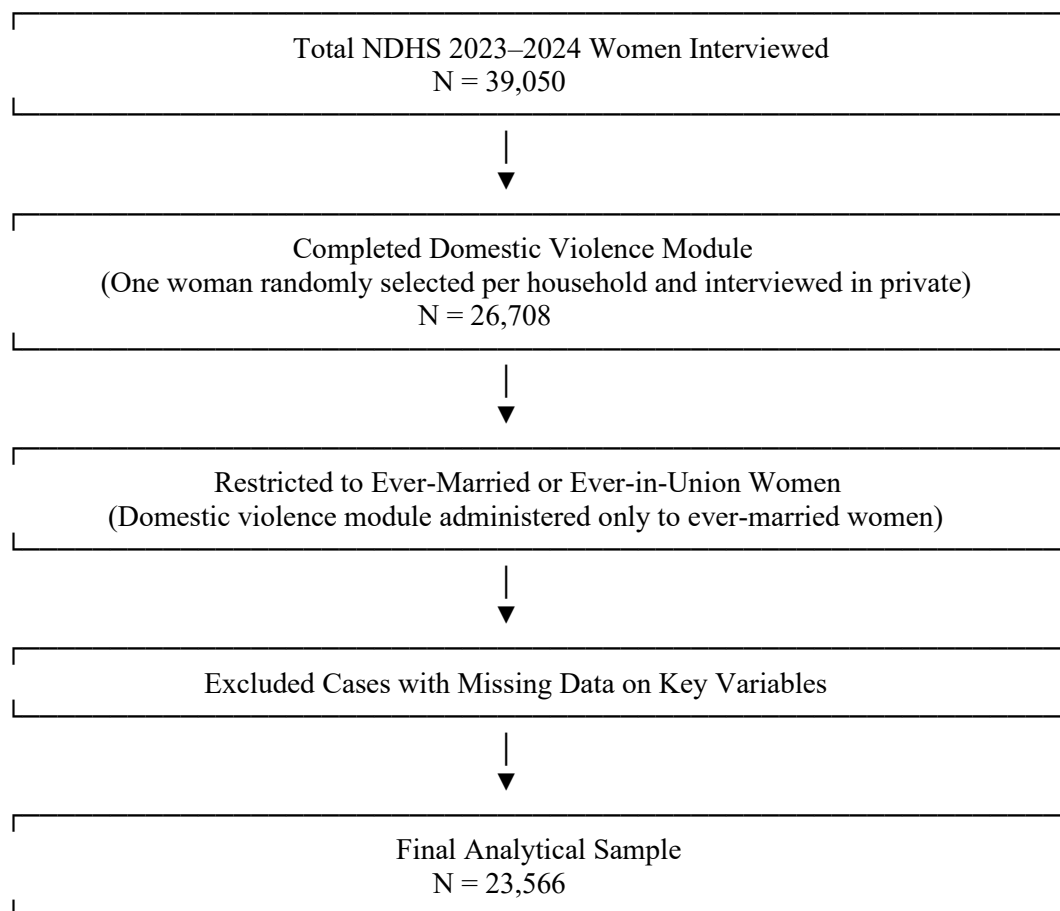


Figure 1

4.1: Demographic profile

The descriptive statistics present the distributions of key variables used to analyse domestic violence and women's labour force participation in Nigeria, based on the 2023/2024 NDHS data. The results show that 65.24% of women are currently engaged in the labour force, while 34.76% are not working, indicating that the majority of women in the sample are economically active. For domestic violence, 7.47% of respondents reported experiencing severe domestic violence, while 92.53% reported no experience of such violence. Table 2 indicates a relatively low reported prevalence of severe domestic violence within the sample. In terms of Education, 33.70% of women have no formal Education, while 11.90% have primary Education, 38.22% have secondary Education, and 16.18% have higher Education. This suggests that most women in the sample have at least secondary Education, although a substantial proportion still lack formal schooling. The wealth index distribution shows a fairly even spread across socioeconomic groups, with 19.69% of women in the poorest category, 16.66% in the poorer category, 19.03% in the middle category, 21.82% in the rich category, and 22.80% in the richest category. This shows a relatively balanced distribution across wealth quintiles. Regarding place of residence, 46.63% of women reside in urban areas while 53.37% live in rural areas, indicating a slightly higher rural representation in the sample. Regional distribution shows that the North West accounts for 23.05% of respondents, followed by the North Central (19.60%), North East (16.07%), South-South (14.63%), South West (14.15%), and South East (12.49%). Religious affiliation indicates that 48.90% of respondents are Muslim, 40.31% are Other Christians, 10.21% are Catholic. In comparison, Traditional and Other religions account for 0.55% and 0.04%, respectively, showing a strong dominance of Christianity and Islam in the sample. Marital status reveals that most respondents are married (80.02%), followed by never in union (8.79%), cohabiting (5.18%), widowed (2.79%), separated (2.03%), and divorced (1.20%), indicating that the sample is largely composed of women in marital unions. In addition, the mean age of respondents is 31.53 years with a standard deviation of 8.54, suggesting that the sample consists primarily of women in their economically active and reproductive years, with moderate variation around the mean. Overall, the descriptive statistics reflect a diverse sample of Nigerian women across socioeconomic, demographic, and geographic categories, which provides a strong basis for analysing the relationship between domestic violence and labour force participation.

Table 2: Demographic profiles

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Labour Force Participation	No	34.76
	Yes	65.24
Domestic Violence (severe or not)	No	92.53
	Yes	7.47
Education	No Education	33.70
	Primary	11.90
	Secondary	38.22
	Higher	16.18
Wealth Index	Poorest	19.69
	Poorer	16.66
	Middle	19.03
	Rich	21.82
	Richest	22.80
Residence	Urban	46.63
	Rural	53.37
Region	North West	23.05
	North East	16.07
	North Central	19.60
	South East	12.49
	South-South	14.63
	South West	14.15
Religion	Catholic	10.21
	Other Christian	40.31
	Islam	48.90
	Traditional	0.55
	Other	0.04
Marital Status	Never in the Union	8.79

	Married	80.02
	Cohabiting	5.18
	Widowed	2.79
	Divorced	1.20
	no longer living together/Separated	2.03

Source: Authors' computation from 2023/2024 NDHS data.

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age (v012)	31.52911	8.541954

Source: Authors' computation from 2023/2024 NDHS data.

4.2: Association Between Domestic Violence and Labour Force Participation

The results presented in Table 3 examine the association between domestic violence and the probability of labour market participation in Nigeria, controlling for key socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. Severe domestic violence shows an odds ratio of 0.876 with a p-value of 0.072. This shows that women who experience severe domestic violence have lower odds of participating in the labour market compared to those who do not experience such violence. However, this relationship is only weakly statistically significant at the 10% level and not significant at the 5% level. This suggests that while there is evidence of a negative association between domestic violence and labour market participation, the relationship is not strong enough to be considered statistically robust. Education emerges as a strong and consistent predictor of employment. Compared to women with no formal education, those with primary education (OR = 1.454), secondary education (OR = 1.566), and higher education (OR = 1.416) are significantly more likely to participate in the labour market. This supports the human capital theory, which argues that higher educational attainment increases labour market opportunities. The wealth index is also positively associated with employment (OR = 1.131), indicating that women from wealthier households are more likely to be economically active. Age is similarly positively associated with labour market participation (OR = 1.058), suggesting that older women have higher employment probability, possibly due to accumulated experience or increased economic responsibility. Place of residence shows that rural women are less likely to be employed compared to urban women (OR = 0.870), highlighting urban advantages in access to economic opportunities and formal employment. Marital status is a significant determinant of employment outcomes. Compared to women who have never been married, all other categories (married, cohabiting, widowed, divorced, and separated) show higher odds of employment, with separated women exhibiting the strongest association (OR = 2.470). This may reflect increased economic necessity among women who are no longer in stable partnerships.

Regional differences are also substantial. Compared to the North West, women in all southern regions and the North Central zone have significantly higher odds of employment,

with the South West showing the strongest association (OR = 2.817, $p < 0.001$), followed by the South East (OR = 1.842), South-South (OR = 1.338), and North Central (OR = 1.381). In contrast, the North East shows no significant difference from the North West (OR = 1.007, $p = 0.936$). The particularly striking employment advantage among South West women reflects deep-seated structural differences between Nigeria's geopolitical zones that extend well beyond individual characteristics. The South West, dominated by Yoruba cultural traditions, has historically maintained relatively more egalitarian gender norms regarding women's economic participation, with women's trading and commercial activities forming a central feature of household livelihood strategies across generations (Oyediran & Feyisetan, 2017). Women in this region also benefit from higher educational attainment, greater urbanisation, and more developed formal and informal labour markets compared to Northern zones. In contrast, the North West, with a predominantly Muslim population and historically lower female educational attainment, exhibits structurally constrained female labour market engagement, as reflected in its role as the reference category showing the lowest employment odds. The near-zero differential between the North West and North East (OR = 1.007, $p = 0.936$) further confirms that the primary employment divide in Nigeria is a North-South One, rather than One driven by intra-regional variation within the North. These regional patterns are consistent with the gender oppression framework adopted in this study: patriarchal structures operate with differential intensity across Nigeria's regions, producing spatially heterogeneous employment outcomes that cannot be explained by domestic violence exposure alone. From a policy standpoint, these findings suggest that interventions aimed at improving women's economic participation must be regionally differentiated. Structural barriers operating in Northern Nigeria (including early marriage, limited access to secondary and higher Education, restricted female mobility, and lower female labour demand in formal markets) require targeted and context-sensitive responses that go beyond individual-level violence reduction strategies. Overall, the results suggest that while severe domestic violence is negatively associated with women's labour market participation, its effect is weak and only marginally significant. In contrast, structural factors such as Education, wealth, region, marital status, and religion are much stronger and more consistent predictors of women's employment outcomes in Nigeria.

Table 3: Survey-Adjusted Logistic Regression Results on the Association Between Domestic Violence and Labour Force Participation

Variable	OR	Std. Err.	p-value	95% CI
Domestic Violence	0.876*	0.064	0.072	[0.758, 1.012]
Education (ref: No Education)				
Primary	1.454***	0.103	<0.001	[1.265, 1.672]
Secondary	1.566***	0.105	<0.001	[1.374, 1.785]
Higher	1.416***	0.124	<0.001	[1.193, 1.681]
Wealth Index	1.131***	0.030	<0.001	[1.074, 1.191]
Residence (ref: Urban)				
Rural	0.870**	0.052	0.020	[0.773, 0.978]
Age	1.058***	0.003	<0.001	[1.053, 1.064]
Marital Status (ref: Never Married)				
Married	1.300***	0.094	<0.001	[1.127, 1.499]
Living with a Partner	1.331**	0.143	0.008	[1.078, 1.643]
Widowed	1.327*	0.190	0.049	[1.002, 1.757]
Divorced	1.740**	0.318	0.003	[1.215, 2.490]
Separated	2.470***	0.493	<0.001	[1.669, 3.653]
Region (ref: North West)				
North East	1.007	0.086	0.936	[0.851, 1.191]
North Central	1.381***	0.115	<0.001	[1.173, 1.625]
South East	1.842***	0.202	<0.001	[1.486, 2.284]
South-South	1.338**	0.145	0.007	[1.082, 1.654]
South West	2.817***	0.302	<0.001	[2.283, 3.476]
Religion (ref: Catholic)				
Other Christian	0.929	0.076	0.366	[0.792, 1.090]
Islam	0.641***	0.066	<0.001	[0.524, 0.783]

Traditionalist	0.991	0.267	0.973	[0.584, 1.682]
Other	0.622	0.578	0.609	[0.101, 3.846]

Note: $N = 23,566$; weighted population = 23,326.405; Design $df = 1,305$. Results are from survey-adjusted logistic regression (svy: logit). Standard errors are linearised. $*p < 0.1$, $**p < 0.05$, $***p < 0.01$.

Table 4: Average Marginal Effects of Domestic Violence Severity on Labour Market Participation

Variable	dy/dx	dy/dx	Std. Err.	p-value
Domestic Violence	-0.0257	0.0144	0.074	[-0.0540, 0.0025]

Note: $N = 23,566$; weighted population = 23,326.405; Design $df = 1,305$. Average marginal effects (dy/dx) estimated from survey-adjusted logistic regression (svy: logit). dy/dx represents the estimated difference in predicted probability $*p < 0.1$, $**p < 0.05$, $***p < 0.01$.

The second objective of this study examined the association between domestic violence and women's labour market participation using average marginal effects. The results show that exposure to severe domestic violence is associated with a 2.57 percentage point reduction in the probability of being employed among Nigerian women ($dy/dx = -0.0257$). This suggests that, on average, women who experience severe intimate partner violence are less likely to participate in the labour market compared to those who do not experience such violence. However, this estimated association is not statistically significant at the 5% level ($p = 0.074$), although it is marginally significant at the 10% level. In relation to the second objective, the findings suggest that while severe domestic violence is associated with lower labour market participation, the evidence is not strong enough to confirm a statistically significant effect in Nigeria. This suggests that broader structural factors, including Education, wealth, marital status, and geographic disparities, may account for a greater share of the variation in employment outcomes than the severity of violence alone. Although the direction of the relationship is still consistent with theoretical expectations from human capital and gender oppression frameworks, overall, the results offer little empirical support for a direct and statistically significant effect of domestic violence on women's labour market participation.

4.3: Moderating Effect of Socioeconomic Variables on Domestic Violence and Labour Market Participation

It should be noted that in the moderation model, the main effect of domestic violence (coef = -0.370, $p = 0.329$) represents the association for women in the reference categories across all moderators (no Education, urban residence, Catholic religion, at the lowest wealth level). The change from the main effects model in Table 4 is expected and reflects the conditional nature of the interaction specification. The moderation analysis was conducted to examine whether the association between domestic violence and women's employment status varies across key socioeconomic and demographic groups. An adjusted Wald test confirmed that

the interaction terms are jointly statistically significant ($F(7, 1299) = 2.97, p = 0.004$), supporting the moderation model. The results reveal meaningful heterogeneity in how domestic violence is associated with employment across socioeconomic groups, with four interaction terms reaching statistical significance. Regarding Education, the interaction between domestic violence and secondary Education is negative and statistically significant (coef = -0.454, $p = 0.039$), while interactions with primary and higher Education are not significant. This finding suggests that secondary-educated women who experience domestic violence face a stronger employment penalty than their education level alone would predict. Rather than buffering against the effects of violence, secondary Education appears to be associated with formal or semi-formal employment arrangements, in which violence-related disruptions to work are more pronounced. This contrasts with the prediction of human capital theory that Education would shield women from the employment consequences of violence, and is more consistent with gender oppression theory's emphasis on violence as a mechanism that operates independently of individual human capital endowments. The interaction between domestic violence and rural residence is positive and statistically significant (coef = 0.341, $p = 0.037$), indicating that rural women experience a weaker negative association between violence and employment compared to urban women. This finding is somewhat counterintuitive but may reflect the structural characteristics of rural employment in Nigeria, where women's work is predominantly informal, agricultural, and household-based. In such contexts, the boundary between domestic and economic life is less distinct, and women may continue working despite experiencing violence because their economic activities are embedded within the same household environment in which violence occurs. This interpretation aligns with findings from Kishor and Johnson (2006) and the broader informal-sector literature, which note that exiting informal employment is structurally more difficult in rural areas. The interaction between domestic violence and household wealth is positive and strongly significant (coef = 0.232, $p = 0.001$), providing the clearest evidence of a buffering effect in this study. Among wealthier women, the negative association between domestic violence and employment is significantly smaller than among poorer women. This supports the economic empowerment literature's prediction that financial resources enhance women's capacity to maintain labour market engagement despite violence, potentially through access to healthcare, childcare support, transportation, or greater bargaining Power within relationships (Duvvury et al., 2013). The robustness of this finding across specifications suggests that wealth represents the most important socioeconomic moderator of the violence-employment relationship in Nigeria. Religion continues to emerge as an important moderating factor. The interaction between domestic violence and other Christian affiliations is negative and statistically significant (coef = -0.494, $p = 0.029$). In contrast, the interaction with Islam is negative and marginally significant at the 10% level (coef = -0.500, $p = 0.065$). These findings suggest that among Christian and Muslim women, the negative association between domestic violence and employment is stronger than among Catholic women. This is consistent with gender norms literature emphasising that religious doctrines and community structures shape women's responses to violence and their access to support mechanisms (Alesina & Giuliano, 2015; Heaton, 2010). Where religious norms reinforce traditional gender roles or prescribe women's domestic responsibilities, the employment consequences of domestic violence may be intensified because women have fewer socially sanctioned pathways to maintain economic participation while managing violence. Overall,

the joint significance of the interaction terms and the individual significance of four moderators indicate that socioeconomic and demographic constraints meaningfully condition the association between domestic violence and employment in Nigeria. The most robust finding is the wealth buffering effect, suggesting that economic resources provide the strongest protection against violence-related employment disruption. These results underscore that domestic violence does not operate uniformly across Nigerian women and that effective policy responses must account for the socioeconomic conditions that shape vulnerability to its economic consequences.

Table 4: Moderating Effect of Socioeconomic Variables on Domestic Violence and Labour Market Participation

Interactions (Moderation Effects)			
Interaction Term	Coefficient	p-value	Significance
DV × Primary	0.049	0.824	Not significant
DV × Secondary	-0.454	0.039	Significant at 5%
DV × Higher	-0.362	0.293	Not significant
DV × Rural	0.341	0.037	Significant at 5%
DV × Other Christian	-0.494	0.029	Significant at 5%
DV × Islam	-0.500	0.065	Marginal at 10%
DV × Wealth	0.232	0.001	Significant at 1%

Note: $N = 23,564$; weighted population = 23,324.75; Design $df = 1,305$. Survey-adjusted logistic regression (svy: logit) with linearised standard errors. The interaction term between severe domestic violence and a rare category of religion was dropped due to perfect prediction, as only two observations fell into this category, resulting in non-estimable coefficients. n . * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the association between domestic violence and women's employment status in Nigeria using the 2023/2024 NDHS, the most recent nationally representative survey available. Employing survey-adjusted logistic regression and an integrated theoretical framework that combines Human Capital Theory and Gender Oppression Theory, the analysis assessed three objectives: the direct association between severe domestic violence and employment, the marginal effect of violence severity on the probability of employment, and the moderating role of socioeconomic factors. The findings reveal a nuanced picture that advances understanding of the domestic violence-employment relationship in Nigeria in two important respects. First, severe domestic violence shows a negative but only marginally significant direct association with employment ($OR = 0.876$, $p = 0.072$), corresponding to a 2.57 percentage point reduction in the predicted probability of employment. This weak direct effect suggests that while the direction of association is consistent with theoretical expectations from both the Capacity Pathway (Human Capital Theory) and the Autonomy Pathway (Gender Oppression Theory), the relationship is not statistically robust at conventional levels when structural factors are controlled for. This finding is consistent with the possibility that bidirectional relationships between employment and violence, including the backlash hypothesis documented by Gage and Thomas (2017) and Zafar et al. (2022), may attenuate the net observed association in cross-sectional data. Second, and more substantively, the moderation analysis reveals that the association between domestic violence and employment is meaningfully conditioned by socioeconomic context. An adjusted Wald test confirms that interaction terms are jointly significant ($F(7, 1299) = 2.97$, $p = 0.004$). Household wealth provides the most robust buffering effect ($p = 0.001$), supporting the economic empowerment literature's prediction that financial resources help women maintain labour market engagement despite violence. Secondary-educated women experience a stronger employment penalty when exposed to violence ($p = 0.039$), suggesting that violence disrupts employment most where women are engaged in more structured economic activities. Rural women show a weaker violence-employment association ($p = 0.037$), likely reflecting the embeddedness of rural women's work within household environments where exit from economic activity is structurally more difficult. Religion also moderates the relationship, with other Christian women facing stronger employment reductions associated with violence ($p = 0.029$), consistent with gender norms literature on the role of religious community structures in shaping women's responses to violence. The most substantive contribution of this study lies not in confirming a large direct effect of domestic violence on employment (which proves weak and not conventionally significant) but in two complementary findings. First, socioeconomic factors meaningfully moderate the violence-employment association, with wealth emerging as the most important protective factor. Second, and most powerfully, structural and socioeconomic factors, including Education, wealth, region, religion, marital status, and age, are far stronger and more consistent determinants of women's employment in Nigeria than domestic violence exposure alone. This has important implications for policy prioritisation: while addressing domestic violence remains morally, socially, and legally imperative, interventions aimed at improving women's economic participation must primarily target structural barriers, particularly educational access, regional inequality, and wealth constraints, rather than focusing exclusively on violence reduction as a pathway to economic empowerment.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made. First, policy efforts should prioritise expanding women's access to Education, particularly at secondary and higher levels and in Northern Nigeria, as Education consistently emerges as the strongest predictor of employment. Second, regional inequalities must be directly addressed through targeted economic development strategies in Northern zones, where structural constraints on female labour market participation are most pronounced. Third, economic empowerment programmes for domestic violence survivors should be strengthened, as wealth demonstrates the most robust moderating effect in this study, suggesting that financial resources provide meaningful protection against the employment consequences of violence. Fourth, stronger enforcement of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act across all Nigerian states remains essential, alongside expanded support services for violence survivors that integrate safety, legal, and economic assistance. Fifth, future research should expand beyond binary employment measures to examine the associations between domestic violence and employment quality, earnings, job stability, and productivity, dimensions that may reveal stronger and more consistent relationships than employment status alone. Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inference, as the temporal ordering of domestic violence and employment cannot be established. Self-reported domestic violence data may be subject to underreporting due to stigma or fear of disclosure. The exclusive focus on severe and sexual violence means that the more prevalent emotional violence (19% of women in the 2023-24 NDHS) was not separately analysed; sensitivity analyses using alternative violence measures were not conducted, and future research should examine whether results differ across violence types. Finally, while the binary employment measure is consistent with standard DHS-based practice, it does not capture important variation in employment quality, earnings, or labour market stability that may be more sensitive to the effects of domestic violence.

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