ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Gender-based violence against young women: A comparative analysis of cross-sectional surveys of 11 sub-Saharan African countries

DOI: 10.29063/ajrh2025/v29i7.7

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Abstract

Despite several national and international strategic efforts against gender-based violence, the problem persists, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), where thirty percent of women report the experiences of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. The objective of this study was to determine the prevalence and determinants of gender-based violence among young women aged 15-24 in eleven sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. A total of 68,186 young women aged 15-24 were pooled from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) data of eleven SSA countries on the basis of availability of nationally representative and comparable data within the last five years, from 2017/2018 and 2021. The results showed that the proportion of young women aged 15-24 who ever experienced physical violence was highest (10%) in Zambia while Senegal had the lowest proportion (0.7%). Again, the highest proportion (15%) of young women in Liberia had ever experienced any sexual violence by their husbands or partners while the least (4%) was found in Senegal. Furthermore, adherents of Islam were 57% less likely (AOR=0.43, C.I: 0.34-0.53) to experience physical violence than their Christian counterparts. Women who reside in rural areas were 14% less likely (AOR=0.86, C.I: 0.76-0.96) to experience physical violence than urban residents. Young women in polygynous unions were 1.6 times more likely (AOR=1.55, C.I: 1.26-1.92) to experience sexual violence than those in monogamous relationships. We conclude that enhancing the poor socioeconomic status of young women, particularly those with no formal education and women in polygynous unions is fundamental to eradicating gender-based violence against young women in sub-Saharan Africa. *(Afr J Reprod Health 2025; 29 [7]: 70-82).*

Keywords: Prevalence; associated factors; young women; physical violence; sexual violence; sub-Saharan Africa

Résumé

Malgré plusieurs efforts stratégiques nationaux et internationaux contre les violences basées sur le genre, le problème persiste, notamment en Afrique subsaharienne (ASS), où 30 % des femmes déclarent avoir subi des violences physiques ou sexuelles au cours de leur vie. L'objectif de cette étude était de déterminer la prévalence et les déterminants des violences basées sur le genre chez les jeunes femmes de 15 à 24 ans dans onze pays d'Afrique subsaharienne (ASS). Au total, 68 186 jeunes femmes de 15 à 24 ans ont été regroupées à partir des données des Enquêtes Démographiques et de Santé (EDS) de onze pays d'ASS, sur la base de données nationales représentatives et comparables disponibles au cours des cinq dernières années, de 2017-2018 à 2021. Les résultats ont montré que la proportion de jeunes femmes de 15 à 24 ans ayant subi des violences physiques était la plus élevée en Zambie (10 %), tandis que le Sénégal affichait la proportion la plus faible (0,7 %). Français Encore une fois, la proportion la plus élevée (15 %) de jeunes femmes au Libéria avaient déjà subi des violences sexuelles de la part de leur mari ou partenaire, tandis que la plus faible (4 %) se trouvait au Sénégal. De plus, les adeptes de l'islam étaient 57 % moins susceptibles (AOR = 0,43, IC : 0,34-0,53) de subir des violences physiques que leurs homologues chrétiennes. Les femmes qui résident dans les zones rurales étaient 14 % moins susceptibles (AOR = 0,86, IC : 0,76-0,96) de subir des violences physiques que les résidentes urbaines. Les jeunes femmes vivant en union polygame étaient 1,6 fois plus susceptibles (ORA = 1,55, IC : 1,26-1,92) de subir des violences sexuelles que celles vivant en union monogame. Nous concluons que l'amélioration du statut socioéconomique des jeunes femmes, en particulier celles sans éducation formelle et celles vivant en union polygame, est fondamentale pour éradiquer les violences sexistes à leur encontre en Afrique subsaharienne. *(Afr J Reprod Health 2025; 29 [7]: 70-82).*

Mots-clés: Prévalence; facteurs associés; jeunes femmes; violence physique; violence sexuelle; Afrique subsaharienne

Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a global public health and human rights, and protection concern that remains to be addressed despite multiple intervention programs and policies[1,2]. Gender-based violence is described as any form of dangerous activity that can cause mental health

problems and sexual harm in girls and women[3]. It is a catch-all word for any hurtful deed carried out against someone's will that stems from a socially constructed distinction between male and female. Gender-based violence is a widespread phenomenon affecting both developed and developing countries, young and old. Boys and girls, men and women are subject to gender-based violence, but girls and women are often more vulnerable. Basically, there are several types of gender-based violence. However, this study will be limited to physical violence and sexual violence. Physical violence can be committed by a spouse, intimate partner, family member, friend, acquaintance, stranger, or anybody in a position of power. It can involve punching, kicking, biting, burning, or killing with or without a weapon. It frequently occurs in conjunction with other types of gender-based violence[4].

Sexual violence on the other hand includes but is not limited to, rape, sexual intercourse through violence and intimidation. Sexual violence also includes spousal rape, where the spouse is forced to have sex without his/her consent through violence or intimidation [4]. Another form of sexual violence is sexual abuse. This is referred to as threatening sexual penetration, which includes unwanted touching, coercion, or unequal or unequal circumstances. Around the world, 35 percent of women have been victims of intimate partner violence, which includes both physical and/or sexual abuse, as well as victimization without a partner. It is also worth noting that about thirty percent of all women who have been in a relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of their intimate partner [2]. The African region accounts for 45.6% of women reporting intimate partner violence (physical and/or sexual) or non-intimate partner sexual violence among women aged 15 years and older. Comparing this proportion to other global regions, such as the Americas (36.1%), the Eastern Mediterranean (36.4%), Europe (27.2%), Southeast Asia (40.2%), and the Western Pacific (27.9%), it is the highest[4]. This indicates that Africa has a higher rate of intimate partner violence than the rest of the world.

However, there is growing evidence that differences in female prevalence of gender-based violence exist across communities, countries and regions. Certain factors, including economic, sociocultural, and social norms, are some of the factors responsible for variation[2]. For example, the social norms in many patriarchal African societies, the boys and men see themselves as superiors while women and girls are seen as second-class citizens. This often times results into boys and men to seek power and authority over girls and women to enforce society with the belief that women and girls can be seen in the kitchen, tending to the household and, more importantly, procreation.

Some studies have been conducted to investigate the prevalence of gender-based violence in sub-Saharan Africa. The literature provided evidence that the combined prevalence of IPV in females was 44%, the combined prevalence of IPV from the previous year was 35.5%, and the combined prevalence of non-IPV was 14%. The three types of violence with the highest documented prevalence rates of IPV were emotional (29.4%), physical (25.9%), and sexual (18.8%). According to the sub-regional analysis, women living in eastern (25%) and western (30%) African regions were more likely to experience emotional abuse[5]. Meanwhile, in another study which identified inequalities in physical or sexual IPV towards adolescents and young women aged 15-24 and beliefs about gender-based violence (GBV) in 27 selected Sub-Saharan Africa found that the proportion of adolescents and young women reporting IPV in the year prior to the survey ranged from 6.5% in Comoros to 43.3% in Gabon, with a median of 25.2%. Overall, reported IPV values in the countries of the Central African region were higher than in other sub-regions[6]. In addition, other researchers such as Ward, Artz, Leoschut, Kassanjee and Burton[7], who examined the spatial distribution of intimate partner violence and its predictors among 2,687 women between the ages of 15 and 49 in Ethiopia found that pregnant women and the spouses of uneducated husbands/partners had a higher risk of experiencing sexual abuse. In contrast, Akamike, Uneke, Uro-Chukwu, Okedo-Alex and Chukwu[8] who investigated the prevalence and predictors of gender-based violence established that the prevalence of gender-based violence ranged from 11.6% to 75.6% [8]. Akamike *et al*'s opined that individual factors, family factors,

spouse's/partner's habit, and experience in the past were the predictors of GBV.

However, Ajayi, Mudefi and Owolabi[9], had a different finding in their study. They investigated the prevalence and correlates of sexual violence among 451 adolescent girls and young women aged 17 to 24 years in South Africa. The findings of Ajayi, Mudefi and Owolabi[9] revealed that having a strong religious background and having an adequate level of family financial support were linked to lower odds of experiencing sexual violence over the course of their lifetimes. A researcher, Ahinkorah[10] investigated the relationship between polygyny and intimate partner violence in sixteen countries in sub-Saharan Africa. He found that polygyny was significantly associated with intimate partner violence. In another study by Tsegaw, Mulat and Shitu[11], factors such as the wife's characteristics, the husband's educational level, the gender of the householder, and alcohol consumption habits were relevant to predicting intimate partner violence among 2,100 ever-married women in Liberia.

Youth in sub-Saharan Africa make up the bulk of the population, with more than a third of those aged 10-24 years[12]. Many of this population, especially girls and women, have experienced some form of gender-based violence[13] but most of these instances of gender-based violence appears to be unreported or under-reported due to the patriarchal nature and the norms of most African societies that promote women as inferior sexual violence, thereby exposing women to an increased risk. Many of the young girls and women who have experienced one or more gender-based violence appear to suffer from reproductive health problems, including sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including HIV/AIDS, early marriage, unwanted pregnancy and, as a result, mortality. Unless immediate and swift action is taken to reduce these consequences of gender-based violence, Africa may still be a long way from achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals on health, hence this study.

Previous research had determined the prevalence and contributing factors of gender-based violence in a given nation. Few studies have compared the prevalence and contributing factors of gender-based violence against young women across multiple nations. This study clarified regional variances in gender-based violence, which can help guide programmatic and policy responses. Once more, by concentrating on young women, this study draws attention to the unique vulnerabilities and experiences of this demographic, which are frequently disregarded in gender-based studies. Furthermore, the comparative analysis of this study might support regional and international conversations on gender-based violence, particularly the implementation of Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Hence, this study.

Methods

Research design

This study is a comparative design survey. Secondary data were sought from demographic and health survey records in selected sub-Saharan Africa.

Study population

The study's focus was on young women in Sub-Saharan Africa, specifically Benin, Cameroon, Gambia, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Zambia. These nations were chosen based on their inclusion in the Demographic and Health Survey dataset as of 2018 and above.

Sample and sampling procedure

Records of 68,186 young women aged 15 to 24 years from eleven selected sub-Saharan African countries were pooled. Eleven countries including Benin, Cameroon, Gambia, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Zambia were purposively selected for this study on the basis of countries that have an indicator of gender-based violence and recent demographic and health surveys. Ethical approval to use datasets from sub-Saharan Africa was sought and approved by Measured Demographic and Health Survey.

Outcome variable

The outcome variable for gender-based violence was measured in two ways: first, by asking young

women whether or not they had ever been the victim of physical violence and second, by asking them whether or not they had ever been the victim of sexual violence with their husbands or partners. The reaction was binary for each of those young women who had been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence. Physical violence was recorded as 1 for those who had experienced it, whereas it was coded as 0 for those who had never experienced it. In a similar manner, those who had experienced sexual assault were coded as 1 while those who had not were marked as 0.

Explanatory variables

The explanatory variables used in this study are the associated factors that can influence the outcome variable. These include Age, family type, religion, place of residence, education, husband/partner education, marital status, occupation and wealth index.

Data analysis procedure

Data was weighted because analysis because of the unequal selection probabilities as a result of factors such as non-response, over-sampling and under-sampling. Some of the socio-demographic variables such as religion and education among others were recoded to ensure uniformity across the selected countries. To answer the study questions, three levels of analysis were performed using the statistical software Stata version 16. At the univariate level, the prevalence of physical and sexual violence among young women was performed using bar charts. Chi-square test was employed at the bivariate level of analysis to determine the association between each of the physical and sexual violence and associated factors. At the multivariate level, binary logistic regression was used to establish the relationship between socio-demographic determinants and gender-based violence.

Results

In all, a total of 68,186 female youths were pooled from the eleven selected sub-Saharan Africa countries namely Benin, Cameroon, Gambia, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Zambia. The associated factors of respondents are presented below:

Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents by associated factors

Associated factors	Number (%)
Age	
15-19	37,278 (54.7)
20-24	30,908 (45.3)
Family type	
Monogamous	20,479 (30.0)
Polygyny	4,265 (6.3)
No response	43,443 (63.7)
Religion	
Christianity	47,694 (70.0)
Islam	12,003 (17.60)
Others	8.489 (12.5)
Place of residence	
Urban	29,929 (43.9)
Rural	38,257 (56.1)
Education	
No formal education	13,911 (20.4)
Primary	16,559 (24.3)
Secondary or higher	37,716 (55.3)
Husband/partner's education level	
No education	8,879 (13.0)
Primary	5,036 (7.4)
Secondary	8,210 (12.0)
Higher	1,640 (2.4)
Not known	44,420 (65.1)
Marital status	
Single	41,623 (61.0)
Married	24,743 (36.3)
Formerly married	1,820 (2.7)
Occupation	
Not working	35,269 (51.7)
Professional/technical/managerial	1,113 (1.6)
Clerical/sales/Agriculture/services	25,134 (36.9)
Manual labour	6,670 (9.8)
Wealth index	
Poorest	10,795 (15.8)
Poorer	12,747 (18.7)
Middle	13,446 (19.7)
Richer	15,195 (22.3)
Richest	16,004 (23.5)

Table 1 shows the percentage distribution of the respondents by associated factors. More than half (55%) of the respondents were aged 15-19 years while those aged 20-24 years constituted 45%. Furthermore, 30% of the respondents were monogamists, more than two-third (70%) was

Christians. The Table goes on to show that more respondents (56%) lived in the rural areas.

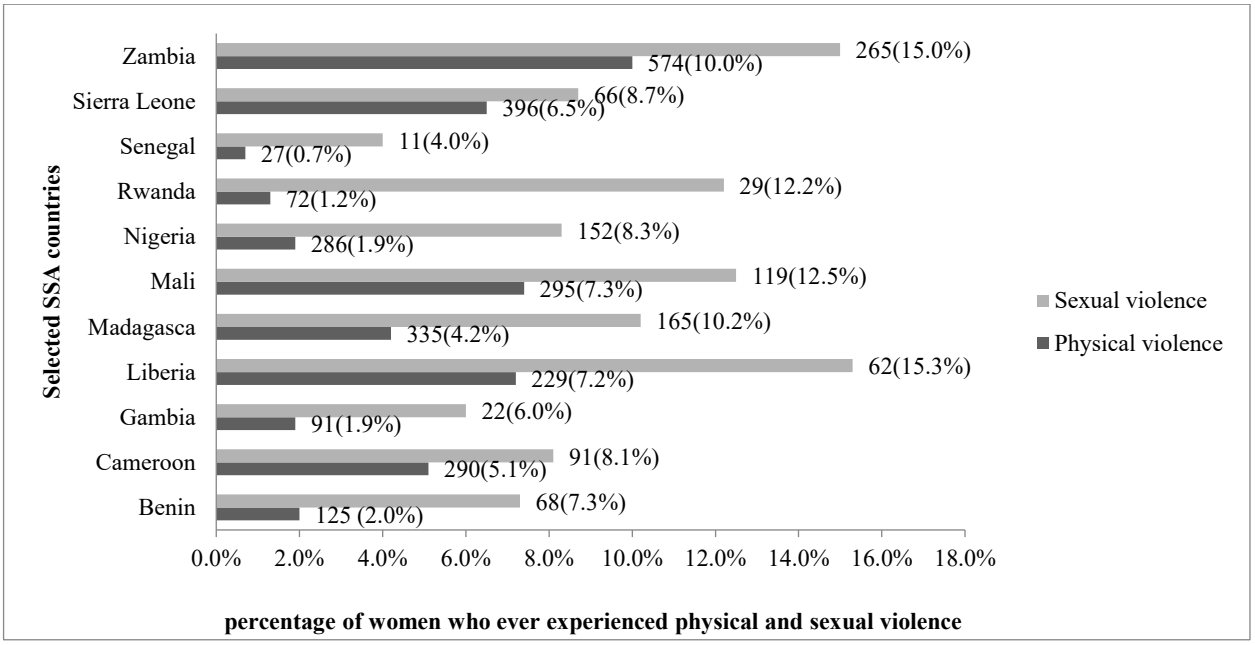

Figure 1a: Prevalence of Gender-based Violence among female youths by selected SSA countries

Source: Demographic and Health Surveys of 11 SSA countries

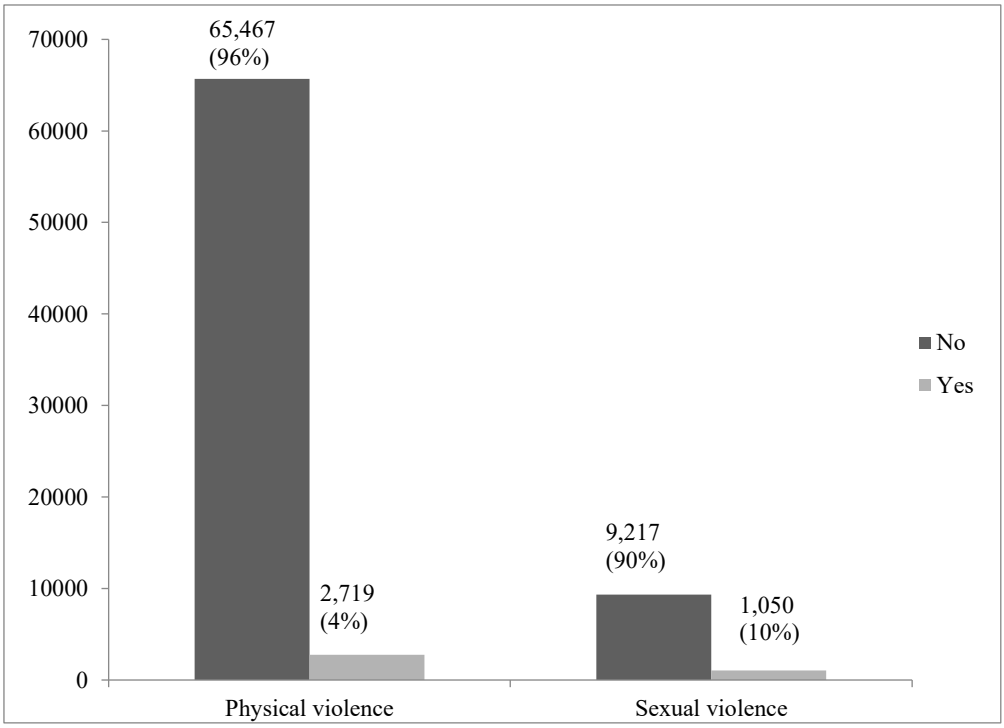

Figure 1b: Prevalence of Gender-based Violence among female youths in selected SSA countries

Source: Demographic and Health Surveys of 11 SSA countries

Table 2: Cross-tabulation showing the association between associated factors and physical violence

Associated factors	Physical Violence			
	No (N=65,467)	Yes (N=2,719)	χ^2	P value
Age				
15-19	36,662 (56.0%)	616 (22.7%)	1174.5579	0.000
20-24	28,805 (44.0%)	2,103 (77.3%)		
Family type				
Monogamous	18,364 (28.1%)	2,114 (77.7%)	3589.1754	0.000
Polygamous	3,936 (6.0%)	329 (12.1%)		
No response	43,167 (65.9%)	276 (10.2%)		
Religion				
Christian	45,463 (69.4%)	2,231 (82.1%)	241.5362	0.000
Islam	11,808 (18.1%)	195 (7.2%)		
Others	8,196 (12.5%)	293 (10.7%)		
Place of residence				
Urban	29,004 (44.3%)	926 (34.1%)	111.8925	0.000
Rural	36,463 (55.7%)	1,793 (65.9%)		
Highest education				
No education	13,195 (20.2%)	715 (26.3%)	298.3863	0.000
Primary	15,626 (23.9%)	934 (34.4%)		
Secondary or higher	36,646 (55.9%)	1,070 (39.4%)		
Husband/partner's education				
No education	8,288 (12.7%)	591 (21.7%)	3685.7972	0.000
Primary	4,466 (6.8%)	570 (21.0%)		
Secondary	7,177 (11.0%)	1,033 (38.0%)		
Higher	1,502 (2.3%)	139 (5.1%)		
Not known	44,034 (67.2%)	386 (14.2%)		
Marital status				
Single	41,623 (63.6%)	0 (0.0%)	4577.8409	0.000
Married	22,300 (34.1%)	2,443 (89.8%)		
Formerly	1,544 (2.3%)	276 (10.2%)		
Occupation				
Not working	34,319 (52.4%)	950 (34.9%)	401.8997	0.000
Working (professional, clerical, manual)	31,148 (47.6%)	1769 (65.1%)		
Wealth index				
Poorest	10,200 (15.6%)	594 (21.8%)	274.0120	0.000
Poorer	12,090 (18.5%)	656 (24.1%)		
Middle	12,851 (19.6%)	595 (21.9%)		
Richer	14,659 (22.4%)	537 (19.7%)		
Richest	15,667 (23.9%)	337 (12.4%)		

A sizeable proportion of respondents (55%) had secondary school education or higher. A substantial proportion (65%) of young women did not know the husband's/partners education attainment. Slightly above two-third (61%) were single, majority (52%) among the respondents were not working and less than a quarter (24%) were richest. Figure 1a shows the prevalence of physical and sexual violence among young women by countries. The study found that Liberia (15%), Zambia (15%) and Mali (13%) were the top three countries with sexual violence. Similar pattern was observed on physical violence with Zambia (10%) having the highest prevalence of physical abuse, followed by Mali (7%) and Liberia (7%). In contrast, Senegal had the lowest proportion of respondents who experienced sexual violence (4%) and physical violence (1%). Figure 1b shows the prevalence of physical and sexual violence against young women after combining the eleven selected sub-Saharan

Africa countries. Out of 68,186 young women who were interviewed on physical violence with husbands/partners, only 2,719 or 4% had ever experienced any form of physical violence. Similarly, in a total of 10,267 respondents interviewed on their experience on sexual violence, only 1,050 or 10% had ever experienced any form of sexual violence with husbands/partners.

Table 2 shows the association between associated factors and experience of any form of physical violence. Out of 2,719 young women who experienced physical violence, a substantial proportion were those aged 20-24 (77%), monogamists (78%), Christian (82%), rural dwellers (66%), those with secondary or higher education (39%), husband with secondary education (38%), married (90%), working (65%) and poorer (24%).The table reveals that all the socio-demographic characteristics were significantly associated with physical violence: age ($\chi^2 = 1174.6$, $p < 0.001$), family type ($\chi^2 = 3589.2$, $p < 0.001$), religion ($\chi^2 = 241.5$, $p < 0.001$), place of residence ($\chi^2 = 111.9$, $p < 0.001$), highest education ($\chi^2 = 298.4$, $p < 0.001$), husband's/partners education ($\chi^2 = 3685.8$, $p < 0.001$), marital status ($\chi^2 = 4577.8$, $p < 0.001$), occupation ($\chi^2 = 401.9$, $p < 0.001$), and wealth index ($\chi^2 = 274.0$, $p < 0.001$).
Table 3 shows the association between associated factors and experience of any form of sexual violence. Out of 1,050 young women who experienced sexual violence, majority were those aged 20-24 (74%), monogamists (73%), Christian (75%), rural dwellers (67%), those with primary education (39%), husband with secondary education (34%), married (88%), working (61%) and poorer (24%). Furthermore, the table reveals that most of the associated factors were significant with any form of sexual violence: family type ($\chi^2 = 107.9658$, $p < 0.001$), religion ($\chi^2 = 37.5421$, $p < 0.001$), highest education ($\chi^2 = 33.0455$, $p < 0.001$), husbands/partners education ($\chi^2 = 70.4078$, $p < 0.001$), and marital status ($\chi^2 = 87.8948$, $p < 0.001$).
Table 4a analyzes the multivariate logistic regression which shows the relationship between associated factors on young women who experienced physical violence. The table analyzed the effect of country of origin as an independent variable on physical violence. The study established that after adjusting for the effect of associated factors on physical violence, the likelihood of young women that experienced physical violence reduced across all the country of origin. For instance, the likelihood of young women who experienced physical violence in Zambia reduced from 5 times ($p < 0.001$, AOR = 5.14, C.I: 4.46 – 5.92) to 4 times ($p < 0.001$, AOR = 4.30, C.I: 3.56 – 5.34) when compared with Nigeria.

The table further revealed that those aged 20-24 years were nearly 2 times more likely (AOR = 1.93, C.I: 1.74 - 2.14) to experience physical violence than those 15-19 years. The polygynists were 11% less likely to experience physical violence than monogamists (AOR = 0.89, C.1: 0.78-1.02). The Islam were 57% less likely to experience physical violence than Christians (AOR = 0.43, C.I: 0.34-0.53). Similarly, people belonging to other religion were 28% less likely to experience physical violence (AOR = 0.72, C.I: 0.62-0.85). Again, young women who lived in rural areas were 14% less likely to experience physical violence than those who lived in the urban areas (AOR = 0.86, C.I: 0.76-0.96). Young women whose husband/partner had primary education were 1.3 times more likely to experience physical violence (AOR = 1.27, C.I: 1.10-1.48). Those whose husband/partners had secondary education were 1.5 times more likely to experience physical violence (AOR = 1.48, C.I: 1.29-1.69). Young women whose husband/partners had higher education were 1.2 times more likely to experience physical violence (AOR = 1.18, C.I = 0.92-1.49). Respondents who were working were 1.4 times more likely to experience physical violence than those who were not working (AOR = 1.44, C.I = 1.31-1.59). Again, the poorer young women were 1% less likely to experience physical violence when compared with the poorest (AOR = 0.99, C.I = 0.88-1.12). Table 4b analyzes the multivariate logistic regression which shows the relationship between associated factors on young women who experienced sexual violence. The table analyzed the effect of country of origin as an independent variable on sexual violence. The study established that after adjusting for the effect of associated factors on sexual violence, the likelihood of young women that experienced sexual violence reduced in the country of origin except for Benin, Cameroon and Madagascar.

Table 3: Cross-tabulation showing association between associated factors and sexual violence by husband/partner

Associated factors	Sexual Violence by husband/partner Is No (N=9,217)	Yes (N=1,050)	χ^2	P value
Age				
15-19	2,501 (27.1%)	278 (26.5%)	0.1877	0.7494
20-24	6,716 (72.9%)	772 (73.5%)		
Family type				
Monogamous	7705 (83.6%)	763 (72.7%)	107.9658	0.000
Polygamous	1025 (11.1%)	156 (14.9%)		
No response	487 (5.3%)	131 (12.4%)		
Religion				
Christian	6050 (65.6%)	788 (75.0%)	37.5421	0.000
Islam	1559 (17.0%)	127 (12.1%)		
Others	1608 (17.4%)	135 (12.9%)		
Place of residence				
Urban	2943 (31.9%)	345 (32.9%)	0.3470	0.738
Rural	6274 (68.1%)	705 (67.1%)		
Highest education				
No education	2,946 (32.0%)	281 (26.8%)	33.0455	0.000
Primary	2,769 (30.0%)	404 (38.5%)		
Secondary or higher	3,502 (38.0%)	365 (34.7%)		
Husband/partner's education				
No education	2,580 (28.0%)	256 (24.4%)	70.4078	0.000
Primary	1,983 (21.5%)	226 (21.5%)		
Secondary	3,286 (35.7%)	357 (34.0%)		
Higher	567 (6.2%)	41 (3.9%)		
Not known	801 (8.7%)	170 (16.2%)		
Marital status				
Married	8730 (94.7%)	919 (87.5%)	87.8948	0.000
Formerly	487 (5.3%)	131 (12.5%)		
Occupation				
Not working	3,583 (38.9%)	408 (38.9%)	2.3667	0.684
Working (professional, clerical, manual)	5634 (61.1%)	642 (61.1%)		
Wealth index				
Poorest	2175 (23.6%)	250 (23.8%)	2.9357	0.779
Poorer	2108 (22.9%)	253 (24.1%)		
Middle	1959 (21.3%)	233 (22.2%)		
Richer	1828 (19.8%)	198 (18.9%)		
Richest	1147 (12.4%)	116 (11.0%)		

Table 4a: Logistic regression showing relationship between physical violence and influencing factors

Physical Violence	UOR	95% (C.I) LCL-UCL	AOR	95% (C.I) LCL-UCL
Country of Origin				
Benin	0.97	0.79 - 1.20	0.93	0.72 - 1.20
Cameroon	2.45*	2.09 - 2.89	2.41***	1.95 - 2.97
Gambia	0.98	0.78 - 1.23	0.67**	0.51 - 0.88
Liberia	4.21*	3.55 - 4.99	3.73***	2.98 - 4.66
Madagascar	2.04**	1.75 - 2.39	1.35***	1.10 - 1.66

Mali	3.15***	2.66 - 3.73	1.92***	1.53 - 2.41
Rwanda	0.58***	0.44 - 0.75	0.78	0.58 - 1.05
Senegal	0.55***	0.40 - 0.76	0.39***	0.27 - 0 .56
Sierra Leone	3.2***	2.74 - 3.72	2.81***	2.29 - 3.45
Zambia	5.14***	4.46 - 5.92	4.3***	3.56 - 5.34
Nigeria	1.00		1.00	
Age				
15-19				
20-24			1.93	1.74 - 2.14
Family Type				
Monogamy				
Polygyny			0.89	0.78 - 1.02
No response			0.06	0.05 - 0.08
Religion				
Christian				
Islam			0.43	0.34 - 0.53
Others			0.72	0.62 - 0 .85
Place of Residence				
Urban				
Rural			0.86	0.76 - 0.96
Education				
None				
Primary			1.08	0.95 - 1.22
Secondary or Higher			0.05	0.73 - 0.95
Husband/partners education				
None				
Primary			1.27	1.10 - 1.48
Secondary			1.48	1.29 - 1.69
Higher			1.18	0.92 - 1.49
Not known			1.5	1.18 - 1.91
Occupation				
Not working				
Working			1.44	1.31 - 1.59
Wealth index				
Poorest				
Poorer			0.99	0.88 - 1.12
Middle			0.85	0.75 - 0.97
Richer			0.83	0.71 - 0 .97
Richest			0.63	0.52 - 0.76

Source: Demographic and Health Surveys of 11 selected SSA countries
**p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001*
Note: UOR=Unadjusted Odd Ratio
AOR=Adjusted Ratio
UCI=Upper Class Interval
LCI=Lower Class Interval

Table 4b: Logistic regression showing relationship between sexual violence and influencing factors

Physical Violence	**UOR**	**95% (C.I) LCL-UCL**	**AOR**	**95% (C.I) LCL-UCL**
Country of Origin				
Benin	0.75	0.56 - 1.02	0.98	0.68 - 1.42
Cameroon	1.03	0.80 - 1.34	1.08	0.77 - 1.53
Gambia	0.71	0.46 - 1.08	0.65	0.40 - 1.07

Liberia	1.23	0.89 - 1.72	1.02	0.68 - 1.53
Madagascar	1.25**	1.00 - 1.57	1.27	0.92 - 1.76
Mali	1.15*	0.89 - 1.50	1.23	0.85 - 1.80
Rwanda	1.41	0.92 - 2.18	1.31	0.80 - 2.15
Senegal	0.39***	0.22 - 0.72	0.38	0.20 - 0.74
Sierra Leone	0.90	0.67 - 1.22	0.86	0.59 - 1.26
Zambia	1.65**	1.34 - 2.03	1.47	1.07 - 2.04
Nigeria	1.00			
Age				
15-19		1.00	1.00	
20-24			0.98	0.84 - 1.15
Family Type				
Monogamy			1.00	
Polygyny			1.55	1.26 - 1.92
No response			1.87	1.23 - 2.86
Religion				
Christian			1.00	
Islam			0.76	0.55 - 1.04
Others			0.65	0.52 - 0.84
Place of Residence				
Urban			1.00	
Rural			0.87	0.73 - 1.05
Education				
None			1.00	
Primary			1.31	1.07 - 1.60
Secondary or Higher			1.01	0.81 - 1.26
Husband/partners education				
None			1.00	
Primary			1.02	0.81 - 1.29
Secondary			1.07	0.86 - 1.35
Higher			0.74	0.48 - 1.13
Not known			1.23	0.83 - 1.82
Occupation				
Not working			1.00	
Working			1.21	1.00 - 1.48
Wealth index				
Poorest			1.00	
Poorer			1.11	0.92 - 1.35
Middle			1.02	0.83 - 1.27
Richer			0.96	0.75 - 1.24
Richest			0.89	0.65 - 1.22

For instance, the likelihood of young women who experienced sexual violence in Zambia reduced from 1.7 times (AOR = 1.7, C.I: 1.34 – 2.03) to 1.5 times (AOR = 1.47, C.I: 1.07 – 2.04) when compared with Nigeria.

Additional findings showed that those aged 20-24 years were 2% less likely (AOR = 0.98, C.I: 0.84-1.15) to experience sexual violence than those 15-19 years. The polygynists were 2 times more likely to experience sexual violence than monogamists (AOR = 1.55, C.1: 1.26-1.92). The Islam were 24% less likely to experience sexual violence than Christians (AOR = 0.76, C.I: 0.55-1.04). Similarly, people belonging to other religion were 35% less likely to experience sexual violence (AOR = 0.65, C.I: 0.52-0.84). Again, young women who lived in rural areas were 13% less likely to experience sexual violence than those who lived in the urban areas (AOR = 0.87, C.I: 0.73-1.05). Young women whose husband/partner had primary

education were 1.3 times more likely to experience sexual violence (AOR = 1.31, C.I: 1.07-1.60). Those whose husband/partners had secondary education were 1.0 times more likely to experience sexual violence (AOR = 1.01, C.I = 0.81-1.26). Young women whose husband/partners had primary education were 1.0 times more likely to experience sexual violence (AOR = 1.02, C.I = 0.81-1.29). Respondents who were working were 1.2 times more likely to experience sexual violence than those who were not working (AOR = 1.21, C.I = 1.00-1.48). Again, the poorer young women were 1.1 times more likely to experience sexual violence when compared with the poorest (AOR = 1.11, C.I = 0.92-1.35).

Discussion

There is a similar pattern of low sexual and physical violence across the 11 SSA countries. That appears to be caused by a few social and cultural elements. Due to the stigma and shame experienced by survivors of sexual and physical abuse, underreporting occurs. Victims are held responsible for the violence they encounter in many African societies. Once more, silence about violence may be sustained by ingrained cultural norms and ideals. For example, in many cultures, it is considered a sign of strength and perseverance for women to put up with assault. In addition, there are a lot of patriarchal communities in Africa where men are in charge. A culture of silence and impunity regarding violence against young women and girls may result from this.

The study found that the pooled prevalence of sexual violence is higher than the physical violence in SSA countries. In all, the proportion of young women who experienced sexual violence is more than those who experienced physical violence. This means that more women experienced sexual violence more than the physical violence. This is probably due to socioeconomic considerations. Economic disparity and poverty can make people more susceptible to sexual assault, especially young women and girls. Once more, a lack of economic and educational prospects may prolong their reliance on men and, thus, make them more susceptible to sexual assault.

This result is contrary to the findings of Ahinkorah, Dickson and Seidu[14] who reported a more proportion of women who experienced physical violence than sexual violence. Furthermore, Zambia and Liberia had the highest physical and sexual violence respectively when compared with other countries. By implication, it means that many women still suffer violence in the hands of their husbands/partners in Zambia and Liberia. The possible reason for this could be insufficient sensitization, awareness campaign against all forms of violence and inadequate programmes and policy against girls and women on violence against girls and women in those two countries. Another reason for this finding could be due to patriarchal nature of Africa societies which encourage male dominance over women and portray women as inferior and consequently more vulnerable to increased risk[13]. Women are easily humiliated, intimidated and often denied their legal rights such as inheritance and basic family living expenses without serious consequences.

This finding corroborates the findings of Odimegwu, Bamiwuye and Adedini[15] who established a highest reported prevalence of gender based violence in Zambia and Gabon. Also, Malama, Sagaon-Teyssier, Parker, Tichacek, Sharkey, Kilembe, Inambao, Price, Spire and Allen[16] found that gender-based violence is high among the female sex workers in Zambia. Nevertheless, this study contradicts the result of a study by Muluneh, Stulz, Francis and Agho[5] who found that the highest reported pooled prevalence rate of intimate partner violence among women in sub-Saharan Africa was emotional, followed by physical and sexual violence. The likely reason for the differences could be partly due to economic, sociocultural, and social norms[2]. This study found that unlike Zambia which is one of the Southern Africa had the greatest prevalence of physical and sexual violence, Wado, Mutua, Mohiddin, Ijadunola, Faye, Coll, Barros and Kabiru[6] opined that the overall reported gender-based violence is in the Central African region.

This study found that age, religion, place of residence, husbands/partners education and occupation significantly predict physical violence. This result was in line with the findings of[17] who

found that age, education level, occupation, marital status, place of residence, religion and wealth index significantly influence any form of physical violence. Similarly, Ajayi, Mudefi and Owolabi[9] in his study found a strong religious background and adequate financial support were associated with lower odds of gender-based violence experiences. Nevertheless, this present study does not correlate with the findings of Akamike, Uneke, Uro-Chukwu, Okedo-Alex and Chukwu[8] who established that individual factors, family factors, marital/partner habits are related to gender-based violence experience

Study limitations

This research is current and pertinent. In Africa, violence against young women is a serious problem. A significant gap in the literature is filled by this study. Thus, adding to the expanding corpus of studies on violence against women and girls, especially in Africa. Once more, the study's selection of several African nations allowed for a thorough grasp of the prevalence and determinants of violence against young women in various settings.

This study does have certain shortcomings, though. Given the diversity of African cultures, economy, and political systems, the study's conclusions might not apply to all African nations or situations. Furthermore, because of social desirability bias, under-reporting, and the delicate nature of the subject, assessing violence against young women can be difficult.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned shortcomings, this study significantly advances our understanding of violence against women in Africa. The results of the study can inform programs and policies meant to stop and address violence against young women in Africa. Furthermore, the results of this study add to the worldwide debate on violence against women and girls, especially when considering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Conclusion

Based on the above results, this study concludes that the proportion of female adolescents who have experienced emotional violence is higher than for sexual and physical violence in the six selected SSA countries. Again, South Africa has the lowest rates of sexual and physical violence, while Rwanda has the highest rates of emotional, physical, and sexual violence. Also, Egypt has the lowest emotional violence. The study also concludes that more than two-thirds of young women in the selected SSA countries have never experienced any form of gender-based violence.

All related factors, including age, family structure, religion, education, decision about health care, decision about purchasing a household, decision about visiting family and friends, and decision about who should do what with the husband's income are significantly related to having at least one gender-specific experience of violence. Meanwhile, decisions about health care for the place of residence and decisions about purchasing a household are not significantly associated with at least one gender-based violence. The study recommends that government at all levels in the selected SSA should create more sensitization and awareness campaign, and to also enact policies that will help mitigate against emotional violence among young women in Africa societies. Also, the study recommends that every victims of gender-based violence should report the case for better justice and sanction. By so doing, this will help reduce the re-occurrence and enhance a more healthy and violence free environment.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their deepest gratitude to Ford Foundation for its generous sponsorship of this research in conjunction with University of Medical Sciences, Ondo City. The financial support and commitment to advancing knowledge through Strengthening Programming for Adolescents and Youths through Resource and Knowledge Generation and link to Evidence (SPARKLE) project have been instrumental in bringing this research to fruition. We also wish to acknowledge the DHS Program for the approval and release of the multi-country dataset used in this analysis. The availability of these high-quality data has enabled us to explore critical research questions and contribute meaningfully to the existing literature.

Data availability

Datasets for this study were obtained from the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) program. These are publicly available data that can be accessed on request at https://dhsprogram.com/Data.

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