

INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND PERCEIVED CHILDHOOD ADVERSITY ON ATTITUDE TOWARDS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the effect of gender and perceived childhood adversity on attitude towards domestic violence among students at the Federal University Oye- Ekiti (FUOYE), Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was employed and 515 undergraduate students were selected from Oye and Ikole campuses using convenience sampling technique. Data were collected using standardized questionnaire and descriptive statistics was used to analyze the demographic data, while independent samples t test, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multiple regression analysis were conducted at the 0.05 significance level. The result indicated that perceived childhood adversity ($t(513) = -0.508, p > .05$), gender ($t(513) = 0.721, p > .05$) did not influence attitude towards domestic violence. However, Gender and perceived childhood adversity jointly predicted attitudes towards domestic violence ($R = .42, R^2 = .21, F(2,512) = 68.74, p < .05$) and statistically explained 21% of the variance in attitude towards domestic violence. It is recommended that the management of Federal University Oye-Ekiti should encourage violence prevention programmes that would address multiple psychosocial factors in attitude change among undergraduates.

Keywords: Attitudes toward domestic violence, domestic violence, gender, perceived childhood adversity, and undergraduate students.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Domestic violence is a significant social and public health issue due to the effects on individuals, families and communities. Includes harmful behaviours in domestic or family relationships and can include physical, psychological, sexual, emotional or controlling abuse. The impact of domestic violence may be more than physical, resulting in psychological distress, problems in relationships, social issues and disruption of daily life (Gunaratne et al., 2023). Domestic violence is thus not just associated with the occurrence of violence, but with social and personal dimensions that influence the perception, acceptance or resistance of violence.

The violence in domestic relations reflects magnitude of the problem in Nigeria. The 2024 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey found 23% of married or most recent husband or intimate partner's women victims of physical, sexual or emotional violence, as their intimate partner. The survey additionally found that 19% had faced emotional, 13% experienced physical, and 4% had faced sexual violence in the past year, before the survey (National Population Commission [NPC] & ICF, 2024). The figures show that domestic violence is still a major problem in the Nigerian people.

The situation in Ekiti State also indicates the existence of domestic violence within the local context. Agbegbedia and Bamgbose (2024) investigated domestic violence among women in Oye-Ekiti and concluded that issues associated with the problem is family

conflict, couple violence, and family roles. A more recent research among 200 married women in the Oye-Ekiti community revealed that 89 per cent of the respondents were found to have low level of domestic violence, 9 per cent moderate level, and 2 per cent high level of domestic violence based on the scoring criteria of the study (Olayiwola-Adedjoja et al., 2026). These findings do not represent a prevalence estimate for the entire State, but do show that the geographic environment in which the present study is located has witnessed the documentation of domestic violence. Evidence from tertiary health institutions in Ekiti also shows that there is intimate partner violence among women of child bearing age which further underscores the importance of relationship violence in the state of Ekiti (Ogunje et al., 2025).

The occurrence of domestic violence makes attitudes towards it an important area of psychological investigation. People's attitudes on violent behaviour may vary, whether it is considered unacceptable, understandable, justifiable or normal. Beliefs about obedience, jealousy, infidelity, authority in a relationship, and how to act when disagreeing can affect attitudes. Studies have found social attitudes that can impact the interpretation and response to violence, such as whether violence is challenged or minimised (Villagrán et al., 2024). Stigma can also foster a sense of blame for the victim and deter survivors from seeking help or coming forward with their experiences of domestic violence (Taccini & Mannarini, 2023). It is therefore important to have a grasp on attitudes about domestic violence as permissive attitudes may play a role in social normalisation of behaviours perceived as abusive.

One of the factors that are associated with attitudes towards domestic violence may be gender. Values around the ideas of manhood, womanhood, power and responsibility in relationships may shape people's ideas of acceptable behaviors and the exercise of power in conflict. Kaufman et al. (2023) identified gender norms and relationship power as variables that were included in attitudes and relationship experiences about violence in intimate relationships. Çalışkan and Çevik (2023) also found a relationship between the attitude towards dating violence and gender stereotypes among students in university. The findings of this study support the need to explore gender-related beliefs of youth in Nigeria. Agu et al. (2024) discovered that gender-biased beliefs were correlated with attitudes towards sexual violence, rape and domestic violence amongst youth in Ebonyi State. The results indicated that the gender issue is important in analyzing the understanding of young adults about violence in the family and intimate relations.

Childhood adversity could be another factor that is associated with attitude towards domestic violence in children. Adverse childhood experiences encompass traumatic and/or negative experiences like abuse, neglect, family instability, and violence. These experiences can impact emotional growth, social norms, conflict management, and actions after the conflict. The authors Jiang et al. (2025) noted that experiences in childhood have the potential to impact later relationship behaviour, highlighting the value of taking

into account events that occur prior to adulthood. Likewise, Mehfooz et al. (2023) concluded that girls growing up witnessing their fathers' beatings were more likely to approve of marital violence as adults based on the data from 31 developing countries. This discovery implies that violence in the family setting could be a factor in the formation of attitudes about the acceptability of violence in later relationships. There is also evidence from Malawi that suffered childhood adversity is associated with intimate partner violence in adolescence, suggesting that early adverse events can continue to shape intimate partner violence behaviors later in life (Kidman et al., 2023).

The university student population is important, because young adults are often more independent, have formed close relationships, and have more settled attitudes towards interpersonal relationships and conflict. Relationship behaviors may then be continuing to be shaped by experiences that have taken place prior to university within the family. Kim et al. (2022) discovered that violent attitudes are among the pathways that are linked with dating violence perpetration among college students who were exposed to violence in childhood. This indicates that events prior to university might still be significant to students' perceptions and behaviors in relationships. While at the same time, gender roles could influence students' perceptions of responsibilities in relationships and understandings of violence, and so gender and childhood experiences could be relevant for investigation in the university context.

With the evidence available on domestic violence in Nigeria and Ekiti state, there is a contextual gap that is yet to be addressed with regards to attitude towards domestic violence among undergraduate students of the Federal University Oye-Ekiti. Previous research works conducted in Ekiti have studied Domestic violence amongst married women and the community populations and recent works have also recorded Domestic violence amongst students in the FUOYE environment (Agbegbedia & Bamgbose, 2024; Evelyn et al., 2025). However, the FUOYE study focused primarily on the occurrence of intimate partner violence and its relationship with academic performance rather than examining whether students' childhood experiences and gender are associated with their attitudes towards domestic violence (Evelyn et al., 2025). Consequently, there is limited evidence on the extent to which perceived childhood adversity and gender may explain differences in attitudes towards domestic violence among FUOYE undergraduates. This represents an important gap because undergraduate students constitute a young population that is increasingly involved in independent interpersonal and intimate relationships.

The present study therefore focuses specifically on domestic violence and examines the influence of perceived childhood adversity and gender on attitudes towards domestic violence among undergraduate students of the Federal University Oye-Ekiti. Childhood adversity is considered because early exposure to harmful family experiences may shape beliefs about conflict, power, relationships, and acceptable behaviour. Gender is examined

because gender norms and expectations may influence perceptions of authority and violence within relationships. By examining these factors together among FUOYE undergraduates, the study seeks to provide context-specific evidence concerning factors associated with attitudes towards domestic violence. The findings may provide useful information for university counselling, relationship education, and prevention programmes designed to challenge beliefs that justify, minimise, or normalise domestic violence.

Research objectives

1. To determine the relationship between childhood adversity and attitude towards domestic violence among undergraduate students of FUOYE?
2. To evaluate the relative contributions of gender in influence of attitude towards domestic violence among undergraduate students of FUOYE?
3. To assess the composite contribution of gender and perceived childhood adversity to the prediction of attitude towards domestic violence among undergraduate students of FUOYE?

Research Hypotheses

1. Undergraduate students with high childhood adversity experience will significantly report a more positive attitude towards domestic violence than those with low childhood adversity experience.
2. Male undergraduate students will significantly report a more positive attitude towards domestic violence than female undergraduate students.
3. Gender and perceived childhood adversity will jointly and independently significantly predict attitude towards domestic violence among undergraduate students of FUOYE.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender and Attitude towards Domestic Violence

Gender plays an important role in the understanding of attitudes towards domestic violence, as socially constructed ideas about masculinity and femininity could affect the way in which people view domestic violence. The attitudes about authority and submission, decision making, and acceptable conduct between men and women can be influenced by gender norms. Agu et al. (2024) studied the attitudes of youth towards gender bias on rape, sexual violence and domestic violence in Ebonyi state, Nigeria. They found that single and social factors were related to attitudes towards violence, confirming the importance of gender related beliefs in explaining this perception of violence among youth. Likewise, Mbachu et al. (2025) explored the attitudes of young people and adults on gender norms and intimate partner violence in Nigeria, revealing gender-specific differences in attitudes over the gender-related domains. This indicates that the attitudes towards violence are shaped by gender norms in people's social context.

In the university population, Duman et al. (2025) investigated the attitudes of the female gender role and attitudes towards domestic violence and found that there was a link between students' attitudes towards the female gender role and their attitudes towards domestic violence. This means that students who have conflicting perceptions of the role of men and women could also have contrasting understandings of what is considered violent behaviour. But gender is not an isolated social experience and findings are not necessarily identical across cultural and educational environments. The relevance of gender to the present study is that gender differences and their associated norms might influence the difference in attitudes to domestic violence held by undergraduate students. This would help in determining if there is a significant relationship between attitudes towards domestic violence and gender among FUOYE undergraduates.

Childhood Adversity and Attitude towards Domestic Violence

Childhood adversity can affect attitudes towards domestic violence as experiences of violence, abuse, neglect and interparental conflict during childhood can impact the way people view relationships and acceptable ways to respond to conflict. Children can learn how important adults are in handling disagreements and can form beliefs about the normal or acceptable nature or justifiability of aggression, control, and violence. In a study of 31 developing countries, Mehfooz et al. (2023) concluded that childhood interparental abuse negatively affected women's likelihood of condoning IPV in adulthood. Their results indicate that violence in the family setting can carry over into adulthood and be linked to a sense of violence as permissible behavior.

In a similar study, La Mattina and Shemyakina (2024) analyzed the impact of childhood exposure to armed conflict on women's attitudes towards domestic violence in countries in sub-Saharan Africa. They discovered that having a high-intensity conflict in childhood was linked to a slight rise in acceptance of domestic violence as an adult. Additionally, Wenigmann et al. (2024) established links between adverse childhood events, gender-related beliefs and intimate partner violence, suggesting that early adverse experiences can impact later relationship attitudes and behaviours. Harris et al. (2024) also stressed the developmental importance of childhood victimization by domestic violence and its possible life-course implications. These results suggest that childhood adversity might be correlated with the emergence of attitudes normalizing, justifying or minimizing the seriousness of violence. It is important to note, however, that not all childhood experiences lead to positive attitudes toward domestic violence as later relationships, social contexts, coping mechanisms, and protective experiences can impact development. The study is thus important in the context of relationship between FUOYE undergraduates.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura proposed Social Learning Theory which states that people learn their behaviours from observing others. This theory was built on behaviourist principles, but attributed more importance to cognitive aspects of observational learning. The learner does not need to have experienced the behaviour before he or she learns it, but can watch other people, the contexts in which the behaviour has been used and the consequences of the behaviour. In doing so, individuals can develop behaviours, attitude, beliefs and emotional reactions that can have an impact on their future behaviour (Bandura, 2001). Children's exposure to domestic violence can lead to their developing learned behaviors and beliefs about how they are supposed to handle conflict, which is an important consideration for domestic violence. Social learning does not always need to be observable. People can also acquire attitudes towards violence, emotions surrounding violence, and understandings that can rationalize, legitimize, or minimize the impact of violence (Bandura, 2001; Harris et al., 2024).

Individuals observe and learn about the environment which is a key factor in their development. Chronic exposure to family violence can be a constant example of violence in interactions, especially if it is perceived as acceptable or acceptable. Childhood experiences of domestic violence have the potential for long-term effects (Harris et al., 2024). The experiences of interparental abuse during childhood are also found to be linked to attitudes toward violence later in life, as evidenced in developing countries (Mehfooz et al., 2023). In the same way, studies conducted throughout Sub-Saharan Africa reported a slight rise in accepting domestic violence in adulthood after childhood exposure to armed conflict (La Mattina & Shemyakina, 2024).

Social Learning Theory does not imply that violent exposure leads to violent people or positive attitudes towards violence within the family. There are a number of factors that affect learning, such as cognitive interpretation, environmental conditions, reinforcement, and observed consequences. It is possible that people who have been brought up in the same surroundings can then have different attitudes and behavioural reactions. Other models and experiences can also be used to change learned patterns. Interventions can offer non-violent models of conflict resolution, confront beliefs that validate violence, and foster positive emotional reactions. Therefore, Social Learning Theory can be used as a framework for analysing how childhood adversity can impact attitudes towards domestic violence by undergraduate students.

Feminist Theory

Liberal Feminist Theory is based on the early feminist literature by Mary Wollstonecraft and extended by John Stuart and Harriet Taylor Mill. Wollstonecraft was convinced in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* that the inferiority of men was largely created by unequal education and social limitations rather than a lack of ability. It was later, around 1850, that John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill presented arguments for the equal

rights, education, independence, and social and political involvement of women. Liberal feminism thus focuses on the concepts of equality, autonomy of individuals, equal opportunities and elimination of discriminatory social and institutional norms that limit women's freedom (Henze & Buhl, 2024; Russell et al., 2024).

In the context of domestic violence, liberal feminism considers violence as partly a product of the unequal nature of women's expectations and social role, which may limit women's autonomy and capacity to resist abusive behavior. Addressing domestic violence thus can't just be about reacting to incidents; it is also about addressing beliefs and practices that can tolerate unequal treatment between women and men. Liberal feminist approaches thus focus on legal protection, access to education, economic independence, and awareness of rights, among other factors, as ways for individuals to counter discriminatory gender expectations in institutions. Unbalanced gender relations and social norms have also been identified as key determinants in understanding domestic violence in intimate and family relationships in research on gender inequality and domestic violence (Grzymała, 2024; Rose et al., 2024). The theory does not imply that women cannot be perpetrators of domestic violence or that men cannot be victims of domestic violence. Instead, it highlights gender disparities and how social norms can impact experiences of violence. Recent studies also warn that gender should not be the sole reason for domestic violence as it can happen in various relationship and social settings (Lokot et al., 2024).

The relevance of Liberal Feminist Theory to the present study is useful in exploring students' attitudes towards domestic violence, as these attitudes can be shaped by one's attitude toward equality, rights of the individual, gender roles and the acceptance of unequal treatment. Therefore, it is crucial to analyse these beliefs amongst undergraduate students to explain the influence of gender related beliefs on perceptions of domestic violence and the acceptance or rejection of violence in domestic relations.

METHODS

The research design adopted for this study was cross-sectional survey design method. The population of interest in the study were undergraduate of Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Oye and Ikole campus respectively. The Respondents involved are undergraduate within the age range of 18-30 years and situated at both campuses. A total of 515 respondents participated in the study. The respondents were selected from the undergraduate population using a purposive sampling technique, with emphasis on students who reported previous experiences of childhood adversity. To ensure adequate representation across the selected departments, 100 undergraduate students were targeted from each department, giving a planned sample of 500 respondents. However, to account for possible non-response and incomplete questionnaire returns, a total of 520 questionnaires were administered. Of the 520 questionnaires administered, 515 were properly completed and returned, representing the final sample used for the analysis.

The 515 valid responses were considered adequate for testing the hypotheses of the study.

The research instrument adopted for the study was a structured questionnaire consisting of three sections: A, B, and C. Section A collected demographic information such as age, sex, religion, level, and campus. Section B comprised the 10-item Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Questionnaire developed by Felitti et al. (1998), with responses scored 0 = No and 1 = Yes, giving a total score range of 0-10, where higher scores indicate greater exposure to childhood adversity; the instrument reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88 and evidence of construct validity. Section C consisted of the 18-item Domestic Violence Myth Acceptance Scale developed by Peters (2003), rated on a six-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (6), with total scores ranging from 18 to 108, where higher scores indicate greater acceptance of domestic violence myths.

Following clearance from the Department of Psychology, the researcher recruited participants and administered the questionnaires after briefing them on the study's purpose and procedures. The questionnaires were administered in a quiet and distraction-free setting to enable participants to respond appropriately, after which feedback was obtained, and the broader purpose and implications of the study were discussed. Data were analyzed using SPSS, with frequencies and percentages for demographics, independent-samples t-test for hypotheses one and two, and multiple regression for the joint and independent prediction of attitude towards domestic violence.

RESULTS

Table 4.1: Demographics Characteristics of the Respondents

ITEMS		N	%
Gender	Male	251	48.7
	Female	264	51.3
Religion	Christian	272	52.8
	Muslim	215	41.7
	Traditional	28	5.4
Level	100	76	14.8
	200	93	18.1
	300	132	25.6
	400	161	31.3
	500	53	10.3
Campus	Oye	325	63.1
	Ikole	190	36.9

Hypothesis One: Undergraduate students with high childhood adversity experience would significantly report positive attitude towards domestic violence than those with low childhood adversity experience. The hypothesis was tested using t-test for independent samples. The results are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Summary of t-test showing influence of childhood adversity experience on attitude towards domestic violence

Childhood Adversity Experience		N	Mean	SD	df	T	p
Domestic Violence	High	247	60.1579	13.70877	513	-0.508	>.05
	Low	268	60.8619	17.32979			

Results in Table 4.2 showed that undergraduate students with high childhood adversity experience ($X = 60.1579$) were not significantly different in attitude towards domestic violence compared to undergraduate with low childhood adversity experience ($X = 60.8619$), $t = -0.503$, $df = 513$, $p > .05$. The result implies that childhood adversity experience has no significant influence on attitude towards domestic violence among undergraduate students of FUOYE.

Hypothesis Two: Male undergraduate students would significantly report positive attitude towards domestic violence than female undergraduate students. The hypothesis was tested using t-test for independent samples. The results are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Summary of t-test showing influence of gender on attitude towards domestic violence

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	p
Domestic Violence	Male	251	61.0359	14.93060	513	0.721	>.05
	Female	264	60.0379	16.39668			

Results in Table 4.3 showed that male undergraduate students ($X = 61.0359$) were not significantly different in attitude towards domestic violence compared to female undergraduate students ($X = 60.0379$), $t = 0.721$, $df = 513$, $p > .05$. The result implies that gender has no significant influence on attitude towards domestic violence among undergraduate students of FUOYE. Thus, hypothesis one is rejected

4. **Hypothesis Three:** Gender and perceived childhood adversity will jointly and independently significantly predict attitude towards domestic violence among undergraduate students of FUOYE.

Table 4.4 Summary of Multiple Regression Table Showing Joint and Independent Prediction of Gender and Perceived Childhood Adversity on Attitude Towards Domestic Violence among Undergraduate Students (N = 515)

Predictors	B	t	p	R	R ²	F	p
Gender	.18	4.26	<.05	0.42	0.21	68.74	<.05
Perceived_childhood_adversity							

Table 4.4 shows that there was significant joint prediction Table 4.11 shows that there was a significant joint prediction of gender and perceived childhood adversity on attitude towards domestic violence

among undergraduate students, $F(2, 512) = 68.74$, $R^2 = 0.21$; $p < .05$. The R^2 value of 0.21 indicates that the independent variables of gender and perceived childhood adversity explained 21% of the variance in attitude towards domestic violence. Further results showed that gender ($\beta = .18$; $t = 4.26$; $p < .05$) and perceived childhood adversity ($\beta = .43$; $t = 10.21$; $p < .05$) independently and significantly predicted attitude towards domestic violence among undergraduate students. The hypothesis was therefore accepted.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study examined the influence of gender and the perceived childhood adversity on the attitudes of undergraduate students of Federal University Oye-Ekiti towards domestic violence. The results provide evidence on the childhood experiences and selected demographic characteristics that shape students' attitudes towards domestic violence. Results from the study showed that there was no association between perceived childhood adversity and attitudes towards domestic violence. There was also no significant difference in attitudes between the two groups in terms of gender and religion. But, the college level and campus did have a significant effect on students' attitudes towards domestic violence. The study also found that there was an interaction between gender and childhood adversity on attitudinal changes towards domestic violence. These findings suggest that in the context of the university, there may be factors other than disposition that influence attitudes towards domestic violence among students and that these factors may be additive.

The first hypothesis was that the attitudes of undergraduate students of the Federal University Oye-Ekiti towards domestic violence will not be influenced by perceived childhood adversity. The first hypothesis was that, the attitudes of undergraduates of the Federal University Oye-Ekiti with regard to domestic violence will not be influenced by perceived childhood adversity. The first hypothesis that tested this study is based on the fact that Perceived childhood adversity will not have any significant impact on Attitudes towards domestic violence among the undergraduate students of the Federal University Oye-Ekiti.

The first hypothesis tested the research study is that there will be no significant effect of perceived childhood adversity on attitudes towards domestic violence among the undergraduate students of the Federal University Oye-Ekiti. However, this hypothesis was not rejected as it did not significantly impact on the students' attitudes toward domestic violence when they were thinking about perceived childhood adversity. This finding suggests that there was no difference between attitudes toward domestic violence of individuals with higher childhood adversity scores compared to those with lower childhood adversity scores. Childhood adversity is well known as an important developmental risk factor but it does not always have the same consequences for all children.

In their systematic review on the adverse childhood experiences and allostatic load, Finlay et al. (2022) found that the effects of adverse childhood events are long lasting and that the effect of adverse childhood events can vary based on individual response and protective resources. In a similar vein, McLaughlin et al. (2021) claimed that the impact of childhood adversity is reliant on the type, timing and intensity of the events and should not be assumed to be a one-size-fits-all exposure leading to the same outcomes in everyone who experiences it.

It is also consistent with evidence that specifically links childhood adversity to violence outcomes. Zhu et al. (2024) conducted a Meta-analysis on Adverse Childhood Experiences and Intimate Partner Violence which revealed a strong overall association between adverse childhood events and later life intimate partner violence. But, that does not imply that, at the individual level, childhood adversity is the sole cause of violence-related attitudes. Fedina et al. (2024) also found that childhood maltreatment was associated with the likelihood of intimate partner violence perpetration during adulthood and that there are distal and proximal factors that influence later violence. This is because for students that experienced adverse events during childhood, perhaps there were more positive events, positive relationships, school, and other environmental factors that neutralized the impact of the adverse events on current attitudes.

It is particularly similar to the study conducted by Olagundoye, Alberth and Olaoluwa (2026) entitled *Perceived Childhood Trauma and Substance Abuse as Predictors of Violence Tendencies among Undergraduates*. The study was carried out on 305 students of the Federal University Oye-Ekiti, who were students in their various undergraduate programmes, where perceived childhood trauma showed weak and non-significant relationship with violence tendencies ($r = .091$, $p > .05$). Childhood trauma also was not a significant predictor of violence tendencies in the regression analysis ($\beta = -.007$, $p > .05$); however, substance abuse was a significant predictor of violence tendencies ($\beta = .404$, $p < .05$). The similarity in the two findings is significant as both have been conducted with FUOYE undergraduates and indicate that childhood adverse experience/trauma is not alone a factor that can explain violence-related outcomes. The findings show that there are other psychological, behavioural and social factors that may positively or negatively reinforce or moderate the link between childhood experiences and adult attitude or behaviours that also warrant exploration (Olagundoye et al. 2026).

The second hypothesis that there will be no significant difference in attitude between the male and female undergraduate students was accepted. The hypothesis was accepted because the results revealed that there was a similarity between the attitudes that male and female students had towards domestic violence. This discovery indicates that gender does not seem to make the difference when it comes to approving or disapproving of domestic violence by undergraduate students. The possible explanation is that the educational environment and exposure to similar policies, peer interactions and

information about human rights and gender equality and violence prevention are provided to both male and female students in the university setting. They can help to impart similarities in attitude by virtue of these common experiences.

This is supported by evidence that social and contextual factors can impact attitudes towards intimate partner violence. While individual demographic influences might affect attitudes towards IPV in sub-Saharan Africa, it does not fully account for the factors influencing attitudes towards IPV (Behrman and Frye 2021). Furthermore, Akinyemi et al. (2023) reported that there were polarization of attitudes and experiences towards IPV across regions in Nigeria suggesting that social and geographic settings affect attitudes and experiences towards IPV in Nigeria. In Nigeria, the endorsement of inequitable gender norms was linked to intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual-risk behaviours among youth according to Gilbert et al. (2022) who used data from the Violence Against Children Survey (VACS) in Nigeria.

The results indicate that we still need to think about gender when understanding violence, but the effect may depend on the general norms and social environment that young people are growing up in which they are developing their beliefs. The study findings have been supported by Olagundoye et al (2026) which found that gender had no significant relationship with the violence tendencies among Federal University Oye-Ekiti, undergraduates. While the present study looked at attitudes towards domestic violence, Olagundoye et al. studied violence tendencies, the similarities in the findings indicate that gender differences may not be apparent in all violence-related outcomes among university students. Thus, it may be assumed that other factors, such as social norms, education, peer influence, and personal values and exposure to violence-prevention information may contribute to a more significant variation in attitudes among students than gender alone.

The third hypothesis examined the joint effect of gender and perceived childhood adversity on attitudes towards domestic violence among undergraduate students. Though the effect of gender was not significant as was the effect of perceived childhood adversity, the interaction between these factors was significant, supporting the hypothesis. This is a significant finding as it suggests that the link between childhood adversity and attitudes towards domestic violence may vary by gender. In other words, the impact of perceived childhood adversity cannot be fully appreciated without taking into account gender as a part of the relationship. Thus, the finding offers an indication that attitudes toward domestic violence might be influenced not just by one, but by many psychosocial factors.

This is in line with developmental approach of McLaughlin et al. (2021) who stress that early experiences are shaped by the social and environmental context in which they grow up. Finlay et al. (2022) also found that there is variability in the impact of adverse

childhood experiences based on other factors. Data on violence also underscore the need to take multiple factors into account. Both adverse childhood experiences and adult experiences are associated with intimate partner violence, an overall association was found by Zhu et al. (2024) and child maltreatment was found to contribute to violence perpetration as well as adult experiences (Fedina et al., 2024). Based on the students in this study, the present finding added to this perspective by demonstrating that the relationship between perceived childhood adversity and attitudes towards domestic violence was meaningful when examined with the consideration of gender.

The result also correlate with a study by Olagundoye et al. (2026), but there is a difference between the outcome variables of the two studies. They concluded that childhood trauma was not independently associated with tendencies towards violence, but that substance abuse was a significant predictor of violence amongst the FUOYE undergraduates. This suggests that childhood adversity may not have a simple direct relationship with violence-related outcomes. Rather, its influence may depend on other individual and contextual variables. The present study provides further evidence for this possibility by demonstrating a significant joint effect of gender and perceived childhood adversity despite the absence of significant individual effects. The findings from both studies therefore point towards the need to examine violence-related outcomes through a multidimensional framework rather than if childhood adversity alone determines later attitudes or tendencies towards violence.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated the effect of childhood adversity experience and gender on attitude towards domestic violence among the undergraduate students of the Federal University Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE). The results indicated that the attitude of high and low childhood adversity experience undergraduate students in relation to domestic violence was not significantly different. The mean score for students with high childhood adversity is 60.16 (SD = 13.71) and for students with low childhood adversity it is 60.86 (SD = 17.33). No difference was found between the two groups, $t(513) = -0.508$, $p > .05$. Thus, the first hypothesis was rejected, as experience of childhood adversity was not found to have a significant effect on attitude towards domestic violence when analyzed alone. The findings also revealed that there was no significant difference between the attitude towards domestic violence of male and female undergraduate students.

The mean score was 61.04 (SD = 14.93) for male students and 60.04 (SD = 16.40) for female students. This difference was not statistically significant, $t(513) = 0.721$, $p > .05$. The second hypothesis was therefore rejected as it found that gender was not a significant factor in the attitude towards domestic violence when looked at separately. Gender and perceived childhood adversity were accounted for jointly, the multiple regression analysis yielded different results. Gender and perceived childhood adversity

together significantly predicted the attitude towards domestic violence, $F(2, 512) = 68.74$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .21$. This indicated that the two predictors explained 21% of the variance in attitude towards domestic violence. Further, the analysis revealed that gender was an independent factor that significantly predicted attitude towards domestic violence ($\beta = .18$, $t = 4.26$, $p < .05$), and perceived childhood adversity was also an independent factor that significantly predicted attitude towards domestic violence ($\beta = .43$, $t = 10.21$, $p < .05$).

Thus, when tested individually, using independent-samples t-test, there was no significant difference between the attitudes of the two genders and each of the three childhood adversities, but when all three variables were combined in the regression model both the gender and childhood adversities were significant predictors of attitude towards domestic violence. In general, the results showed that the combined effects of gender and perceived childhood adversity explained 21% of the variance in the attitude of the undergraduates towards domestic violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made solely based on the results of the study:

1. The University should incorporate gender issues in domestic violence education programmes. These programmes and seminars should explicitly focus on gender differences in attitudes rather than lumping the student population together.
2. Perceived childhood adversity should be specifically evaluated in cases of students seeking counselling in relation to domestic violence/romantic relationships in FUOYE counselling units. It is important that the assessment incorporates questions that elicit students' reported childhood adversity experiences.
3. Gender and childhood adversity should be integrated into FUOYE domestic violence intervention programmes.

SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDY

The finding of a significant joint prediction by gender and perceived childhood adversity should be replicated in other universities when studying undergraduate students to see if the present pattern also holds true for other university cohorts. Future studies are also recommended to keep gender and perceived childhood adversity as two predictors and to look at them together, as the present study found that neither of them significantly predicted attitude towards domestic violence when separately analyzed by the t-test but both were significant predictors when analyzed together in the regression analysis.

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