

Community-Led Interventions for Preventing Gender-Based Violence among Women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw Local Government Areas of Bayelsa State

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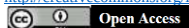
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ABSTRACT

This study examined community-led interventions for preventing gender-based violence among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw Local Government Areas of Bayelsa State. Three objectives and three research questions guided the study. The descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 1,339 respondents consisting of women from community-based women organisations and NGO staff in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs. The sample for the study was 302 respondents, consisting of 232 women from community-based women organisations and 70 NGO staff. The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, while purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the sample. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled 'Community-Led Interventions for Preventing Gender-Based Violence Questionnaire (CLIPGBVQ)'. The instrument was validated by the researcher's supervisors and two experts in Measurement and Evaluation at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. The instrument's reliability was established by the Cronbach Alpha method. Reliability coefficients of 0.77, 0.71, and 0.83 were obtained for the various sections of the instrument, respectively. Out of 302 copies of the questionnaire administered, 290 copies were retrieved and used for analysis. Mean and standard deviation statistics were used to answer the research questions. The results of the study revealed, among others, that community mobilization and awareness campaigns prevent gender-based violence among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs to a very high extent. Peer-led education and support groups, school-based programmes, legal empowerment and advocacy initiatives, and economic empowerment interventions also prevent gender-based violence among women in these LGAs to a high extent. Based on the findings, it was recommended, among others that community mobilization efforts should be intensified by relevant stakeholders and that local NGOs should expand peer-led education and support group programmes to more communities in Bayelsa State.

Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a pervasive issue in Nigeria, manifesting in various forms such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation (FGM), and human trafficking (Adebayo, 2020). Similarly, the World Health Organization in Fimie and Taylor (2025) defined Gender-based violence as a wide range of harmful acts directed at individuals based on their gender, and in the context of political participation, it is particularly detrimental to women. Forms of GBV in politics include physical assault, sexual harassment, systematic verbal abuse, political intimidation, and economic violence, all of which serve to undermine women's confidence, resources, and security.

The persistence of GBV is rooted in socio-cultural norms, economic disparities, and weak legal frameworks, which contribute to the normalization of violence against women and other vulnerable groups (UN Women, 2021). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) reports that one in three women globally experiences some form of GBV, a statistic that reflects the severity of the crisis in Nigeria as well. Despite legal instruments such as the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act of 2015, enforcement remains weak due to cultural resistance and institutional inefficiencies (Oluwale & Akinwale, 2019).

In Bayelsa State, particularly in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw Local Government Area (LGA), women face unique challenges that exacerbate their vulnerability to GBV. These challenges include limited access to education, economic dependency, and entrenched patriarchal norms that perpetuate violence.

Bayelsa State, located in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, is characterized by its rich cultural heritage and predominantly rural communities. The state's socio-cultural dynamics often contribute to the marginalization of women, making them susceptible to various forms of GBV, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and economic exploitation. In Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGA, traditional beliefs and practices further entrench gender inequalities, limiting women's autonomy and access to justice.

Community-led interventions have emerged as effective strategies in addressing GBV, particularly in resource-constrained settings. These interventions leverage local knowledge, cultural understanding, and community structures to implement sustainable solutions. For instance, community mobilization efforts in rural South-West Nigeria have demonstrated success in challenging attitudes towards intimate partner violence (Awolaran et al., 2025). Similarly, peer-led training modules have proven effective in enhancing awareness and changing attitudes towards GBV among youth in Nigeria (Okonofua, 2025). Some of these community led interventions include community mobilization and awareness campaigns, peer-led education and support groups and school-based programmes.

Community mobilization involves engaging local leaders, women's groups, and youth to raise awareness about GBV and challenge harmful gender norms. Such initiatives often include workshops, community meetings, and media campaigns tailored to local contexts. Adaramoye, Dikko, & Adaramoye (2025) conducted a study on domestic violence and marital instability among married women in Ijede Community, Nigeria. Their findings underscore the effectiveness of counseling interventions in addressing domestic violence and promoting marital stability.

Peer-led education involves training community members to educate their peers about GBV, its impacts, and available support services. Support groups provide survivors with a safe space to share experiences and receive emotional support. *Obiechina* (2025) explored the implications of widowhood practices and the rights of women in Nigeria, highlighting the need for interventions that address cultural practices contributing to GBV.

Implementing GBV prevention programmes within schools can educate young people about healthy relationships, consent, and respect. These programs often involve curriculum integration, peer education, and teacher training. Olanike, Dikko, and Adaramoye (2025) examined domestic violence as a determinant of marital instability among married women in Ijede Community, Nigeria, emphasizing the role of education in preventing GBV.

In Bayelsa State, organizations such as the Integrated Women and Youth Empowerment Centre (IWAYEC) have been instrumental in empowering women and youth through vocational training, capacity building, and advocacy against GBV (IWAYEC, 2025). These grassroots initiatives not only provide immediate support to survivors but also contribute to long-term cultural and behavioral change within communities.

Effective communication strategies play a crucial role in preventing and addressing GBV. Media campaigns, digital activism, and community radio programs have been utilized to raise awareness, challenge harmful gender norms, and promote supportive behaviors. Ezeaka and Bartholomew (2025) emphasize the importance of communication in shaping public perception and influencing policy implementation regarding GBV in Nigeria.

While existing studies provide valuable insights into GBV prevention, there is a paucity of research focusing on the specific contexts of Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGA. Understanding the unique cultural, economic, and social factors influencing GBV in these areas is essential for designing targeted interventions. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the effectiveness of community-led initiatives in preventing GBV among women in these localities.

Addressing GBV in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGA requires a multifaceted approach that combines legal frameworks, community engagement, and effective communication strategies. By focusing on community-led interventions, this study seeks to contribute to the development of

sustainable solutions that empower women, challenge harmful norms, and create safer environments for all.

Statement of the Problem

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a significant socio-cultural challenge in Nigeria, with devastating consequences for the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of women. Despite the implementation of national laws and policies aimed at preventing GBV, the prevalence of violence against women continues to rise, particularly in rural areas where traditional norms and cultural practices often perpetuate gender inequality. In Bayelsa State, specifically in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw Local Government Areas (LGAs), the persistence of GBV can be attributed to factors such as economic dependency, limited access to education, and deeply entrenched patriarchal beliefs that restrict women's autonomy and contribute to their vulnerability to violence.

Community-led interventions have shown promise as an effective approach to addressing GBV, particularly in resource-constrained environments like those found in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs. However, there is a dearth of localized research that evaluates the effectiveness of such interventions in these areas. While community-based programmes that focus on raising awareness, changing attitudes, and empowering women have been implemented in various parts of Nigeria, their success and sustainability in Bayelsa State remain unclear. The existing literature primarily focuses on urban centers or broader regional perspectives, leaving a gap in understanding the unique challenges and opportunities within these specific LGAs.

This study, therefore, sought to assess the effectiveness of community-led interventions such as community awareness campaign, peer-led education and school-based programmes interventions in preventing GBV among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs of Bayelsa State.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined community-led interventions for preventing gender based violence among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. determine the extent to which community awareness campaigns prevent gender-based violence (GBV) among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs of Bayelsa State.
2. examine the extent to which peer-led education and support groups prevent gender-based violence (GBV) among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs of Bayelsa State.
3. ascertain the extent to which school-based programmes prevent GBV among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs of Bayelsa State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do community mobilization and awareness campaigns prevent gender-based violence (GBV) among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs of Bayelsa State?
2. To what extent do peer-led education and support groups prevent gender-based violence (GBV) among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs of Bayelsa State?
3. To what extent does school-based programmes prevent GBV among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs of Bayelsa State?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 1,339 respondents consisting of women from community-based women organisations and NGO staff in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs. The sample for the study was 302 respondents, consisting of 232 women from community-based women organisations and 70 NGO staff. The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, while purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the sample. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled 'Community-Led Interventions for Preventing Gender-Based Violence Questionnaire (CLIPGBVQ)'. The instrument was validated by the researcher's supervisors and two experts in Measurement and Evaluation at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. The instrument's reliability was established by the Cronbach Alpha method. Reliability coefficients of 0.77, 0.71, and 0.83 were obtained for the various sections of the instrument, respectively. Out of 302 copies of the questionnaire administered, 290 copies were retrieved and used for analysis. Mean and standard deviation statistics were used to answer the research questions.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent do community awareness campaigns prevent gender-based violence (GBV) among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs of Bayelsa State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Women and NGO Staff on the Extent Community Awareness Campaigns Prevent Gender-Based Violence among Women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs

S/N	Items	Mean	S.D	Remarks	Mean	S.D	Remarks
1	Community awareness campaigns have led to increased public knowledge about the consequences of GBV.	3.62	0.61	VHE	3.55	0.71	VHE
2	Regular awareness programmes have helped change harmful cultural norms that promote GBV.	3.48	0.67	HE	3.41	0.73	HE
3	Community-based advocacy has reduced tolerance of domestic violence among residents.	3.53	0.64	VHE	3.49	0.68	HE
4	Sensitisation efforts by local organisations have improved willingness of victims to report GBV.	3.39	0.72	HE	3.36	0.77	HE
5	Religious and traditional leaders' involvement in awareness campaigns has contributed to reduction of GBV.	3.57	0.59	VHE	3.50	0.69	VHE
6	Community outreach programmes have educated young people about respectful and non-violent relationships.	3.44	0.68	HE	3.38	0.74	HE
7	Awareness campaigns have empowered women and girls to resist and speak out against GBV.	3.61	0.62	VHE	3.53	0.70	VHE
Grand Mean		3.52		VHE	3.46		HE

The analysed data on Table 1 above for questionnaire items 1–7 showed mean responses of respondents on the extent community mobilization and awareness campaigns prevent gender-based violence among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs. The items had mean values of 3.62, 3.48, 3.53, 3.39, 3.57, 3.44 and 3.61 for women, and 3.55, 3.41, 3.49, 3.36, 3.50, 3.38 and 3.53 for NGO staff respectively. With grand mean scores of 3.52 and 3.46 for women and NGO staff respectively, both scores fall within the high to very high extent range, indicating that community mobilization and awareness campaigns prevent gender-based violence among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs of Bayelsa State to a very high extent.

Research Question 2: To what extent do peer-led education and support groups prevent gender-based violence (GBV) among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs of Bayelsa State?

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Women and NGO Staff on the Extent Peer-Led Education and Support Groups Prevent Gender-Based Violence among Women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs

S/N	Items	Mean	S.D	Remarks	Mean	S.D	Remarks
8	You often participate in peer-led education or support group sessions that focus on GBV awareness and prevention.	3.41	0.70	HE	3.35	0.76	HE
9	Peer-led education programmes helped you understand your rights and available support services related to GBV.	3.56	0.63	VHE	3.49	0.68	HE
10	Peer-led education is effective in changing people's attitudes towards GBV in your community.	3.48	0.67	HE	3.42	0.72	HE
11	Your involvement in support groups influenced your ability to recognise and report instances of GBV.	3.38	0.71	HE	3.31	0.79	HE
12	Peer-led education has contributed to the reduction of GBV incidents among women in your local area.	3.44	0.69	HE	3.38	0.74	HE
13	Peer-led support groups provide a safe space for women to share experiences and receive emotional support regarding GBV.	3.59	0.61	VHE	3.51	0.70	VHE
14	Women in your community seek help from support groups after experiencing GBV.	3.34	0.76	HE	3.27	0.81	HE
Grand Mean		3.46		HE	3.39		HE

The analysed data on Table 2 above for questionnaire items 8–14 showed the mean responses of respondents on the extent peer-led education and support groups prevent gender-based violence among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs. The items had mean values of 3.41, 3.56, 3.48, 3.38, 3.44, 3.59 and 3.34 for women, and 3.35, 3.49, 3.42, 3.31, 3.38, 3.51 and 3.27 for NGO staff respectively. With grand mean scores of 3.46 and 3.39 for women and NGO staff respectively, both within the high extent range, the answer to research question two is that peer-led education and support groups prevent gender-based violence among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs of Bayelsa State to a high extent.

Research Question 3: To what extent do school-based programmes prevent GBV among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs of Bayelsa State?

Table 3: Mean Ratings of Women and NGO Staff on the Extent School-Based Programmes Prevent Gender-Based Violence among Women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs

S/N	Items	Mean	S.D	Remarks	Mean	S.D	Remarks
15	School-based programmes addressing GBV are frequently incorporated into the curriculum of schools in your community.	3.21	0.82	HE	3.15	0.87	HE
16	School-based programmes have increased your awareness of the different forms of GBV.	3.45	0.68	HE	3.38	0.74	HE
17	School-based programmes are effective in teaching students about respectful relationships and prevention of GBV.	3.52	0.65	VHE	3.45	0.70	HE
18	School-based programmes provide students with skills to intervene in or prevent GBV situations.	3.33	0.74	HE	3.27	0.80	HE
19	Implementation of school-based programmes reduces incidents of GBV among students and within the broader community.	3.39	0.71	HE	3.32	0.77	HE
20	Students often participate in activities or workshops focused on GBV prevention as part of school-based programmes.	3.27	0.78	HE	3.20	0.83	HE
21	School-based programmes offer adequate support and resources for students who may be experiencing GBV.	3.18	0.85	HE	3.11	0.89	HE
Grand Mean		3.34		HE	3.27		HE

The analysed data on Table 3 above for questionnaire items 15–21 showed mean responses of respondents on the extent school-based programmes prevent gender-based violence among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs. The items had mean values of 3.21, 3.45, 3.52, 3.33, 3.39, 3.27 and 3.18 for women, and 3.15, 3.38, 3.45, 3.27, 3.32, 3.20 and 3.11 for NGO staff, respectively. With grand mean scores of 3.34 and 3.27 for women and NGO staff, respectively, both within the high extent range, the answer to research question three is that school-based programmes prevent gender-based violence among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs of Bayelsa State to a high extent.

Discussion of findings

The result of the finding for research question one revealed that community mobilization and awareness campaigns prevent gender-based violence among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs of Bayelsa State to a very high extent. This finding indicates that community awareness campaigns have led to increased public knowledge about the consequences of GBV, regular awareness programmes have helped change harmful cultural norms, and religious and traditional leaders' involvement in campaigns has significantly contributed to the reduction of GBV. This finding is consistent with the work of Chioma and Egwu (2022), who found that community mobilisation strategies are highly effective in addressing GBV in rural Niger Delta communities, particularly when traditional authority structures and social cohesion are leveraged to support anti-violence initiatives. Similarly, Awolaran et al. (2025) demonstrated in rural South-West Nigeria that community-based interventions significantly challenge attitudes towards intimate partner violence. The finding also aligns with the theoretical underpinning of this study the Social Ecological Theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979),

which recognises that effective interventions must address multiple ecological levels simultaneously. By engaging community leaders, religious institutions, and women's groups, awareness campaigns address factors at the mesosystem and exosystem levels, creating conditions that challenge norms and reduce the normalisation of GBV.

The result of the finding for research question two revealed that peer-led education and support groups prevent gender-based violence among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs of Bayelsa State to a high extent. This finding indicates that peer-led education has helped women understand their legal rights, changed community attitudes towards GBV, and provided safe spaces for survivors to share experiences and receive emotional support. This finding is in agreement with Okonofua (2025) who found that peer-led GBV prevention training modules are effective in enhancing awareness and changing attitudes towards GBV among Nigerian youth. Furthermore, Akuiyibo et al. (2021) confirmed that peer education significantly improves sexual health knowledge and attitude change among young people in Nigeria. The Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura (1977) supports this finding by explaining how community members observe and emulate positive behaviours modelled by respected peers, creating pathways for norm change. When peer educators drawn from the same community present alternative models of gender-respectful behaviour, they create powerful role models who trigger observational learning and attitudinal change.

The result of the finding for research question three revealed that school-based programmes prevent gender-based violence among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs of Bayelsa State to a high extent. This finding confirms that school-based programmes have increased awareness of different forms of GBV, taught students about respectful relationships, and provided skills to intervene in or prevent GBV situations. This finding is consistent with the findings of Fawole et al. (2017), who confirmed the effectiveness of school-based intervention programmes in preventing GBV among adolescents in rural Oyo State, Nigeria. Melendez-Torres et al. (2024) further confirmed in their systematic review that school-based interventions are effective in preventing dating, relationship, and gender-based violence. The Social Learning Theory of Bandura (1977) is particularly relevant here as schools serve as critical environments where young people observe, imitate, and model behaviours. School-based programmes that provide consistent positive reinforcement for gender-respectful behaviour can create new social norms that influence conduct beyond the school gates.

Conclusion

The study concluded that community-led interventions play a significant role in preventing gender-based violence among women in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw Local Government Areas of Bayelsa State. Community mobilization and awareness campaigns emerge as the most impactful intervention, operating at a very high extent to challenge harmful norms, increase public knowledge, and empower women and girls to speak out against GBV. Peer-led education and support groups and school-based programmes interventions all contribute meaningfully to GBV prevention at a high extent. Notably, there are no significant differences between the perceptions of women and NGO staff on the effectiveness of these interventions, suggesting shared consensus among key stakeholders.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Community leaders, government agencies, and NGOs should intensify community mobilization and awareness campaigns in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs. These campaigns should strategically involve religious and traditional leaders, as their involvement has been shown to significantly contribute to GBV reduction. Campaigns should be tailored to local cultural contexts, using community meetings, radio programmes, community theatre and media campaigns to reach diverse population groups.
2. Local NGOs and community development organisations should expand peer-led education and support group programmes to more communities in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw LGAs. Peer educators should be selected from within the communities, trained comprehensively, and adequately supported to sustain their activities. Support groups should be established as safe, confidential spaces where GBV survivors can share experiences, receive emotional support, and access referral services.
3. The Ministry of Education in Bayelsa State should develop a formal policy for integrating GBV prevention into school curricula across primary and secondary schools in Yenagoa and Southern Ijaw

LGAs. School-based programmes should include classroom sessions on respectful relationships, peer education clubs focused on gender equality, and training of teachers as GBV prevention champions.

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