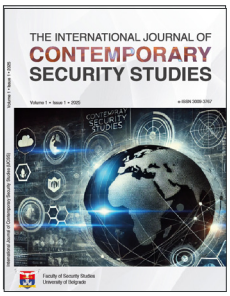
Volume 2 • Issue 2 • 2026

Faculty of Security Studies, University of Belgrade

International Journal of Contemporary Security Studies (IJCSS)



Article

Domestic Violence and Academic Performance among Senior Secondary School Students in Surulere Local Government of Lagos State, Nigeria

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Received: 3 May 2026; Revised: 16 July 2026; Accepted: 20 July 2026; Published: 24 August 2026.

ABSTRACT

This study examined domestic violence and academic performance among senior secondary school students in Surulere Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, using two instruments: a self-designed questionnaire titled "Domestic Violence and Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire (DVSAPQ)" and a 20-item achievement test on English Language to measure academic performance. The instrument had a reliability coefficient of 0.76 when tested during the pilot study. One hundred and twenty (120) students were selected as the sample size using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation statistical tool was used to test the hypotheses. Findings from the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between domestic violence and academic performance among senior secondary school students, a significant relationship between domestic violence and students' school attendance, and a significant relationship between parental motivation and academic performance among senior secondary school students. It should be noted, however, that the relationship between domestic violence and academic performance yielded a positive correlation coefficient, which is contrary to theoretical expectations and should be interpreted with caution. Based on the findings, the study recommended, among others, that teachers should be equipped with the skills to identify and manage students who are emotionally, cognitively, and socially affected by domestic violence, and that the government should enact laws and empower courts to address cases of domestic violence and punish offenders.

KEYWORDS

Academic performance; domestic violence; parental motivation; physical abuse.

ONLINE FIRST

Academic Editor:
Prof. Dr. Vladimir M. Cvetković
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Lawal , K. K. ., Isiaka, G., & Olubolalade, G. H. (2026). Domestic Violence and Academic Performance among Senior Secondary School Students in Surulere Local Government of Lagos State, Nigeria. *In-ternational Journal of Contemporary Security Studies*, 2(2), 23-32.

1. Introduction

Domestic violence remains one of the most pervasive social problems affecting families worldwide, with far-reaching consequences for children's psychosocial development and academic life (Kalanj, 2025). It refers to a pattern of abusive behavior that is physical, emotional, sexual, or economic, used by one member of a household to gain or maintain control over another (Carlson, 2000). Children who grow up in homes characterized by domestic violence are frequently exposed to chronic stress, fear, and instability, conditions that are widely reported to compromise their cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, and, ultimately, their performance in school (Coyne et al., 2000; Wolfe et al., 1985).

In the Nigerian context, domestic violence continues to occur across social and economic strata (Aihie, 2009), often shielded by cultural norms that treat it as a private family matter, in ways that echo patterns of partner violence documented elsewhere on the continent (Garba & Akaan, 2025; Izugbara et al., 2008). Children exposed to such violence, whether directly as victims or indirectly as witnesses, often internalize the trauma in ways that manifest in the classroom, through poor concentration, absenteeism, aggressive behavior, or withdrawal (Joe, Kpolovie, Osonwa & Iderima, 2018).

Academic performance, the primary outcome of interest in this study, is shaped by a constellation of factors that extend beyond the school environment. Family circumstances, including the quality of parental relationships, the level of parental motivation and involvement, and the presence or absence of domestic conflict, exert a powerful influence on a child's disposition towards learning.

A supportive home environment, in which parents actively motivate and encourage their children, has consistently been linked to improved academic outcomes (Cvetković & Filipović, 2018). Conversely, a hostile or violent home undermines the sense of security a child needs to engage meaningfully with schoolwork (Metić, 2025; Onimisi, 2025).

It is against this background that this study examined domestic violence and academic performance among senior secondary school students in Surulere Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria, with particular attention to the relationship between domestic violence and school attendance, and the role of parental motivation in shaping academic outcomes.

The following hypotheses were postulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between domestic violence and academic performance among senior secondary school students in Surulere Local Government of Lagos State.
2. There is no significant relationship between domestic violence and students' school attendance in senior secondary schools in Surulere Local Government of Lagos State.
3. There is no significant relationship between parental motivation and academic performance among senior secondary school students in Surulere Local Government of Lagos State.

2. Methods

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. This design was considered appropriate because it involves the collection of data from members of a population to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables, and it allows respondents' opinions and attitudes to be surveyed directly.

The study was carried out in Surulere Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria, which is one of the twenty Local Government Areas in the state and among its most densely populated. Surulere is bounded to the north by Mushin Local Government Area and to the east by Mainland Local Government Area.

The population of the study comprised all students in public senior secondary schools located in Surulere Local Government Area. The target population was narrowed to SS II students, who were considered most appropriate because they were in the second terminal class of senior school,

preparing towards their senior secondary school certificate examination, and were not yet burdened with the pressure of external examinations.

Four schools were selected from the thirteen communities in Surulere, Alaka, Iponri, Ishaga, Idi-Araba, Aguda, Lawanson, Animashaun Estate, Itire, Ijeshatedo, Aiyetoro, Coker, Ikate, and Surulere — through a stratified sampling technique, with the communities divided into four strata. One hundred and twenty (120) students were then selected as the sample size using simple random sampling (a balloting method) within the four selected schools, with thirty (30) students drawn from each school.

Two research instruments were used: a self-designed questionnaire and an achievement test in English Language. The questionnaire, titled "Domestic Violence and Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire (DVSAPQ)", contained two sections. Section A captured respondents' bio-data (gender, age, and class), while Section B measured the study variables using a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1). For the domestic violence subscale, higher aggregate scores indicate greater reported exposure to domestic violence, while lower scores indicate lower exposure; this scoring direction is important for interpreting the correlation results reported below.

The achievement test in English Language, also researcher-designed, measured the dependent variable (academic performance). It consisted of 20 multiple-choice items drawn from the SS II English Language curriculum, covering grammar, comprehension, and vocabulary, with each correct item scored 1 and each incorrect item scored 0 (maximum score of 20). Items were selected to reflect a range of difficulty levels and were reviewed for curriculum relevance during instrument validation.

Instrument validity was established through expert review by specialists in Measurement and Evaluation, who assessed face and content validity. Reliability was established through a test–retest pilot study involving 20 SS II students in a school in Somolu Local Government Area (not part of the main study). The same instruments were re-administered to the same group after two weeks, and the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to compute reliability, yielding a composite coefficient of 0.76 for both instruments.

Descriptive statistics (frequency counts and percentages) were used to analyze demographic data. In contrast, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation statistic was used to test the three hypotheses, all at the 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive Analysis of Demographic Data

Table 1 shows that 54 (45%) of the participants were male while 66 (55%) were female; thus, both genders were represented in the study, though more females participated. The table also indicates that 14 (11.7%) of the participants were within the age bracket of 14–15 years, 85 (70.8%) were within the 16–17-year bracket, and 21 (17.5%) were 18 years and above. Table 1 further shows that 31 (25.8%) of the participants were science students, 44 (36.7%) were commercial students, and 45 (37.5%) were arts/humanities students.

Table 1. Demographic distribution of the participants.

Demographic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	54	45
	Female	66	55
	Total	**120**	**100**
Age	14–15 years	14	11.7
	16–17 years	85	70.8
	18 and above	21	17.5
	Total	**120**	**100**
Class	Science	31	25.8
	Commercial	44	36.7
	Arts/Humanities	45	37.5
	Total	120	100

3.2. Hypotheses Testing

The three hypotheses formulated for the study were tested using the Pearson Product–Moment Correlation Coefficient at the 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule was to reject the null hypothesis when the calculated correlation coefficient exceeded the critical value and the corresponding probability value was lower than 0.05. The results are presented in Tables 2–4.

Hypothesis One

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between domestic violence and academic performance among senior secondary school students in Surulere Local Government Area of Lagos State.

Table 2. Relationship between domestic violence and academic performance.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	r	r-crit	Sig.	Decision
Domestic Violence	120	13.48	3.62	118	0.66	0.195	0.001	H01 rejected
Academic Performance	120	13.00	3.28					

As shown in Table 2, the mean domestic violence score was 13.48 (SD = 3.62), while the mean academic performance score was 13.00 (SD = 3.28). The Pearson correlation analysis produced a coefficient of r = 0.66 with 118 degrees of freedom. This coefficient indicates a strong positive relationship between the two variables.

The calculated correlation coefficient of 0.66 was greater than the critical value of 0.195. In addition, the p-value of 0.001 was lower than the predetermined significance level of 0.05. The result was therefore statistically significant, and the null hypothesis was rejected. This finding indicates that domestic violence and academic performance were significantly associated among the students included in the study.

However, the positive direction of the coefficient requires careful interpretation. Based on the stated scoring procedure, higher domestic violence scores represent greater exposure to domestic violence. The positive coefficient would therefore suggest that higher domestic violence scores were associated with higher academic performance scores. This direction is contrary to the relationship generally expected on theoretical grounds and should not be interpreted as evidence that domestic violence improves academic performance. The result may reflect the coding of individual question-

naire items, response bias, the characteristics of the sample, or the influence of variables not included in the analysis. These possible explanations are considered further in the Discussion section.

Hypothesis Two

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between domestic violence and students' school attendance in senior secondary schools in Surulere Local Government Area of Lagos State.

Table 3. Relationship between domestic violence and students' school attendance.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	r	r-crit	Sig.	Decision
Domestic Violence	120	13.48	3.62	118	0.73	0.195	0.000	H02 rejected
School Attendance	120	14.32	3.81					

Table 3 shows that the participants had a mean domestic violence score of 13.48 (*SD* = 3.62) and a mean school-attendance score of 14.32 (*SD* = 3.81). The correlation analysis yielded a coefficient of *r* = 0.73, indicating a strong positive relationship between domestic violence scores and school-attendance scores.

The calculated value of *r* = 0.73 exceeded the critical value of 0.195. The reported significance value was below 0.001 and was therefore lower than the 0.05 criterion adopted for the study. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result demonstrates that domestic violence was significantly associated with students' school attendance in the examined sample.

Nevertheless, the substantive direction of this relationship depends on how the school-attendance variable was scored. A positive coefficient means that higher domestic violence scores were associated with higher scores on the attendance measure. If higher attendance scores represent more frequent school attendance, the result would indicate a positive association between domestic violence and attendance, which would be contrary to theoretical expectations. Conversely, if higher scores represent absenteeism, irregular attendance, or greater attendance-related difficulties, the coefficient would support the interpretation that greater exposure to domestic violence is associated with poorer school attendance. The scoring direction of the attendance measure should therefore be clearly stated and verified before drawing a directional conclusion.

Subject to this scoring clarification, the result confirms that domestic violence is an important factor associated with students' patterns of school participation. Domestic conflict may affect attendance through emotional distress, fear, family instability, caregiving responsibilities, reduced parental supervision, or other circumstances that interfere with regular participation in school activities.

Hypothesis Three

H_{03}: There is no significant relationship between parental motivation and the academic performance of senior secondary school students in Surulere Local Government Area of Lagos State.

As presented in Table 4, the mean parental motivation score was 15.21 (*SD* = 3.91), whereas the mean academic performance score was 13.00 (*SD* = 3.28). The Pearson correlation coefficient was *r* = 0.78, demonstrating a strong positive relationship between parental motivation and academic performance.

The calculated coefficient of 0.78 was substantially greater than the critical value of 0.195. The probability value was below 0.001 and therefore lower than the 0.05 level of significance. On this basis, the null hypothesis was rejected. The analysis indicates that parental motivation was significantly and positively associated with students' academic performance.

The result suggests that students who reported higher levels of parental motivation also tended to obtain higher academic performance scores. Parental encouragement, interest in school activities, provision of learning materials, monitoring of academic progress, and emotional support may contribute to students' confidence, persistence, study habits, and commitment to schoolwork. The

strength of the coefficient indicates that parental motivation was an important correlate of academic performance in the present sample.

Table 4. Relationship between parental motivation and academic performance.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	r	r-crit	Sig.	Decision
Parental Motivation	120	15.21	3.91	118	0.78	0.195	0.000	H03 rejected
Academic Performance	120	13.00	3.28					

Although the relationship was strong and statistically significant, the correlational design does not establish causation. It cannot be concluded from the analysis alone that parental motivation directly caused higher academic performance. Academic achievement may also influence parental involvement, while other factors, including socioeconomic status, teacher support, prior achievement, school quality, and access to educational resources, may affect both variables. The finding should therefore be interpreted as evidence of a strong association rather than a definitive causal effect.

3.3. Summary of Findings

1. There is a significant relationship between domestic violence and the academic performance of senior secondary school students.
2. There is a significant relationship between domestic violence and students' school attendance in senior secondary school.
3. There is a significant relationship between parental motivation and the academic performance of senior secondary school students.

4. Discussion

The results of this study are discussed below in relation to the hypotheses tested. Hypothesis one was rejected, as the findings revealed a significant relationship between domestic violence and academic performance among senior secondary school students in Lagos State. However, the result indicated a positive relationship between the variables, which appears inconsistent with the dominant findings in existing literature. Empirical studies, particularly within the Nigerian context, have consistently shown that domestic violence exerts a negative influence on students' academic performance. For instance, Daramola (2025) found that students exposed to domestic violence in Ekiti State often experience poor academic outcomes, including low grades, absenteeism, and reduced classroom participation due to trauma and stress. Similarly, Williams, Oyundoyin and Adeyemi (2024) found that domestic violence significantly compromised the academic performance of school-aged children and adolescents in Ogun State, while Efosa-Ehioghiren and Izehiuwa (2024) reported that violence exposure, alongside gender and family type, significantly influenced the academic performance of adolescents in Edo State, producing cognitive and psychological challenges that hinder effective learning.

The contradiction observed in the present study, where a positive relationship was found, may be attributed to several possible explanations. First, there may be an issue with scale coding: if some items on the domestic violence subscale are worded such that higher scores reflect lower exposure to violence, the positive correlation would be a measurement artifact rather than a substantive finding; the direction of item scoring should be carefully re-examined in future work. Second, social desirability bias may have led students to underreport their experiences of domestic violence, particularly given the stigma associated with such disclosures in Nigerian communities, thereby compressing variance in domestic violence scores. Third, the finding may partly reflect resilience: some students exposed to difficult home environments develop stronger motivation and determination, or rely on school as a safe space, in ways that support rather than undermine academic performance, a pattern consistent with the psychosocial coping mechanisms observed among Nigerian women and chil-

dren exposed to violent conflict (Zuhumben & Isiaka, 2026; Cvetković, 2023). Fourth, moderating variables not controlled for in this study, such as teacher support, peer relationships, or access to school counseling services, may have buffered the effects of domestic violence for some respondents. These explanations are speculative and require systematic investigation in future studies using validated domestic violence instruments with clear scoring directions, objective academic records, and larger, more diverse samples.

Overall, despite the unexpected direction of the relationship, the finding still aligns with the broader consensus that domestic violence significantly influences students' academic performance. It underscores the importance of a stable and supportive home environment for optimal learning outcomes. It points to a need for increased intervention through school counseling services, parental education, and policy measures aimed at reducing domestic violence and supporting affected students (Cvetković, Nikolić, & Lukić, 2024).

Hypothesis two was rejected, as the findings revealed a significant relationship between domestic violence and students' school attendance in senior secondary schools in Lagos State. This finding is in line with Daramola (2025), who found that students exposed to domestic violence in Ekiti State often exhibit increased absenteeism, reduced classroom participation, and poor engagement in school activities due to emotional trauma and psychological stress. This suggests that domestic violence disrupts students' ability to attend school regularly and participate effectively in academic activities. Related Nigerian studies have similarly shown that children from violent homes frequently experience instability, fear, and lack of motivation, which contribute to irregular school attendance and disengagement from learning. These findings reinforce the widely accepted view that a hostile home environment negatively impacts students' educational participation and overall school adjustment.

Hypothesis three was rejected, as the findings revealed a significant relationship between parental motivation and the academic performance of senior secondary school students in Lagos State. This finding is consistent with recent Nigerian studies that emphasize the importance of parental involvement and motivation in students' academic success. For instance, Angwaomaodoko (2025) found that increased parental involvement significantly enhances students' academic performance, particularly when parents actively engage in their children's learning processes and maintain communication with teachers. Likewise, Agboola (2024) reported that parental motivation and the provision of instructional support are strong predictors of students' academic success, especially in subjects such as Mathematics, while Adeyeye (2024) observed that supportive parenting practices, particularly those characterized by encouragement and structured guidance, are associated with improved academic achievement among Nigerian students. This finding also resonates with evidence that broader family stability — including marital stability — has a measurable bearing on students' academic achievement in Kwara State, Nigeria (Hammed, Isiaka & Ashara, 2018), reinforcing the view that the quality of the wider family environment, and not parental motivation alone, shapes academic outcomes.

The strong positive correlation obtained in this study ($r = 0.78$) further underscores the critical role parents play in the educational development of their children. It implies that when parents are actively involved and provide consistent motivation, students are more likely to develop positive learning attitudes, increased self-confidence, and higher academic aspirations.

5. Conclusions

Exposure of children to domestic violence can negatively influence their behavior and academic performance. Other consequences include aggressive behavior, insensitivity to the pain and suffering of others, and increased fearfulness of the world around them, all of which can disrupt academic competence and school attendance. Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn: a significant relationship exists between domestic violence and academic performance among senior secondary school students; a significant relationship exists between domestic violence and students' school attendance; and a significant relationship exists between parental motivation and academic performance among senior secondary school students.

5.1. Recommendations

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

1. Parents and guardians should be sensitized on the adverse effects of domestic violence on students' academic performance and school attendance.
2. Schools should establish and strengthen guidance and counseling units to support students affected by domestic violence.
3. Parents should be encouraged to actively motivate their children by showing interest in their academic progress, providing necessary learning materials, and offering consistent emotional support.
4. School-based reporting mechanisms, teacher training, counseling referral pathways, parental education programs, and collaboration with child protection agencies should be put in place for the benefit of all children, and particularly those affected by domestic violence.

5.2. Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should employ longitudinal designs to establish causal relationships between domestic violence and academic outcomes, use validated instruments with clearly defined scoring directions, and draw on larger and more diverse samples across multiple local government areas to improve generalisability.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, K.K.L. and G.I.; methodology, G.I.; investigation, G.I. and O.G.H.; data curation, O.G.H.; writing\draft preparation, G.I.; review and editing, K.K.L., G.I. and O.G.H.; supervision, K.K.L. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Acknowledgments: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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