

# Assessment of Domestic Violence and its associated factors among ever-married reproductive age Women in Cameroon: A cross-sectional survey

Bezawit Mulat (✉ [mulatbezawit@gmail.com](mailto:mulatbezawit@gmail.com))

University of Gondar

Menen Tsegaw

Ambo University

Dagmawi Chilot

University of Gondar

Kegnie Shitu

University of Gondar

---

## Research Article

**Keywords:** Cameroon, domestic violence, ever-married women

**Posted Date:** March 29th, 2022

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-1447675/v1>

**License:** © ⓘ This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

[Read Full License](#)

---

# Abstract

## Background

Domestic violence (DV) against women is a global issue that affects women in all countries and is a significant contributor to their poor health. Women who have experienced DV, in particular, suffer from the gynecological, nervous system, and stress-related issues. Despite such devastating implications, there is a paucity of data on the prevalence of DV and its associated factors among married reproductive-age women in Cameroon.

## Method

A community-based cross-sectional demographic and health survey was conducted in Cameroon in 2018. The participants were chosen using a two-stage stratified selection procedure. To find factors linked to domestic violence, we employed multivariable logistic regression analysis. Statistical significance was determined using a p-value of less than 0.05 and a 95 % confidence range.

## Result

A total of 4,903 ever-married women were included in the study. The mean age of the participants was 31.3 ( $\pm$  8.4) years with an age range of 15-49 years. The prevalence of domestic violence among ever-married Cameroonian women was 30.5% with 95%CI (29.3%, 31.8%). women's educational attainment (higher education) (AOR=0.57, 95% CI (0.36, 1.04)), Husband education (husbands who attended primary educational level (AOR=1.29, 95% CI (1.00, 1.66)). Plus to the above factors women whose husband alcohol (AOR= 3.00, 95% CI (2.56, 3.52)), and the region where the women reside in (center without Yaoundé (AOR= 2.54, 95% CI (1.79, 3.60)), west (AOR=1.54, 95% CI (1.09, 2.19)), South (AOR=1.99, 95% CI (1.18, 2.50)), and Yaoundé (AOR=1.72. 95% CI(1.18,2.50) were significantly associated with women's domestic violence by their partner in the past 12 months.

## Conclusion

The present study revealed that the prevalence of domestic violence among ever-married women in Cameroon is high. Women's education, husband education, husband alcohol drinking, and the region where the women reside in the country are factors significantly associated with domestic violence.

## Introduction

Domestic violence (DV) is defined as the intentional use of physical force or power, whether threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or a group or community, which results in or has a high potential of resulting in injury or death (1). DV is the intentional and frequently repeated physical, sexual, psychological, or financial abuse. The most common type of domestic violence is that which is perpetrated against women by their intimate partners (2). DV against women is a worldwide problem that affects women in all countries and is a major contributor to their poorer health (3). Unintended pregnancy,

induced abortion, hemorrhage, HIV, and other sexually transmitted infections have all been linked to DV(4). Despite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognizes all persons regardless of their age, gender, race, color, language, religion, or any other element, women continue to face domestic abuse and discrimination in their homes (5).

According to a WHO study on DV, intimate partner violence (IPV) is the most common form of violence in women's lives, and women are more likely to be harmed at home than on the streets, with serious health effects (1). Women who have been sexually and physically abused by intimate partners are more likely to suffer gynecological, nervous system, and stress-related problems (6).

Domestic violence occurs in all countries but its prevalence varies greatly across the world and even within sub-Saharan Africa (6, 7). For instance, it is 28.8% and 15% in Bangladesh and Thailand respectively (8)(9). Moreover, in Africa 78.0% in somewhere in Ethiopia(10), 42.7% in Zimbabwe(11), 67.2% in north-central Nigeria (12)and 76.92% in Senegal (13). Studies showed that sociodemographic factors like age, educational status of the women, educational status of the husband, husband drinking alcohol, wealth index of the women are identified as factors that have a significant association with domestic violence (10, 11).

Domestic violence is not recognized as a specific crime in Cameroon and they don't have a legal definition of domestic violence (14). Moreover, there are no studies conducted on the assessment of domestic violence in Cameroon. Therefore, the present study is aimed to assess the prevalence and associated factors of domestic violence among ever-married reproductive age Cameroonian women.

## **Methods**

### **Study setting, data source, and study design**

Cameroon is a country in western Africa that borders Central Africa. Cameroon is a triangular-shaped country bordered on the northwest by Nigeria, on the northeast by Chad, on the east by the Central African Republic, on the southeast by the Republic of Congo, on the south by Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, and on the southwest by the Atlantic Ocean (15). Cameroon's population is currently projected to be 27,656,531(16).

This analysis employed based on the data from the 2018 Demographic and Health Survey (C-DHS) of Cameroon. The research participants are chosen using a two-stage stratified sampling technique. This data set (IR file) is consist of information collected from all eligible women aged 15-49 years and the current study excludes unmarried women and employed with a total weighted sample of 4,903 ever-married reproductive-age women. An authorization letter for the use of this data was obtained from the DHS program and the dataset was downloaded from the DHS website [www.measuredhs.com](http://www.measuredhs.com)

### **Study variables**

#### **Dependent variable**

The study's outcome variable was the assessment of Domestic violence among married reproductive-age women in Cameroon. The variable was categorized into two categories: 1 = “experienced domestic violence” and 0 = “never experience domestic violence”. Physical violence plus emotional violence plus sexual violence constituted Domestic Violence.

### **Independent variables**

In this study, the independent variables included were age, religion, residence, educational status of women, educational status of the husband, current working (employment) status, wealth index, media exposure, and behavioral factors such as husbands’ alcohol drinking behavior.

### **Operational definitions**

**Domestic violence:** is defined as the presence of physical, emotional, or sexual violence, or a combination of all three.

**Physical violence** was defined as one or more intentional acts of physical aggression such as: pushing, slapping, throwing, hair pulling, punching, hitting, kicking, or burning, perpetrated with the potential to cause harm, injury, or death (17).

**Psychological /emotional violence** was defined as one or more acts, or threats of acts, including shouting, controlling, intimidating, humiliating, and threatening the victim (17).

**Sexual violence** is defined as the use of force, coercion, or psychological intimidation to force the woman to engage in a sex act against her will, whether or not it is completed (17).

## **Data processing and Analysis**

Individual records (IR) files were used to extract data, which was then coded and transformed using STATA version 14 statistical software. To account for the differential chance of selection and non-response in the original survey, weighted samples were used for analysis. The presence of statistical significance was determined using multivariable logistic regression analysis. It was fitted after the model's fitness was evaluated using the Hosmer and Lemeshow goodness of fit test. The variance inflation factor (VIF) was also used to analyze multicollinearity across the explanatory components, and it was found to be within an acceptable range (1-4)(18). The presence of a meaningful effect or relationship between independent factors and the outcome variable is evaluated using a p-value less than 0.05.

## **Result**

A total of 4,903 ever-married women were included in the study. The mean age of the participants was 31.3 ( $\pm$  8.4) years with an age range of 15-49 years.

Table 1 Sociodemographic characteristics of married women in Cameroon (n = 4,903)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
<b>Age</b> (in years)	15-24	1,126	23.0
	25-34	2,152	44.0
	35-49	1,625	33.0
Residence	Rural	2,429	49.5
	Urban	2,474	50.5
Religion	Christian	3,302	67.4
	Muslim	1,406	28.6
	Other	195	4.0
Educational status of respondents	No formal education	1,330	27.0
	Primary	1,552	31.7
	Secondary	1,760	36.0
	Higher	262	5.3
Educational status of the husband	No formal education	905	18.4
	Primary	1,327	27.0
	Secondary	1,511	31.0
	Higher	394	8.0
	Don't know	765	15.5
Wealth index	Poor	2,037	41.5
	Middle	948	19.3
	Rich	1,918	39.2
Current working status	Currently working	3,478	29.1
	Currently not working	1,426	70.9
Mass media exposure	Yes	2,804	57.8
	No	2,099	42.8
Husband drinks alcohol	Yes	2,253	46.0
	No	2,650	54.0
Region where respondent's reside	Adamawa	265	5.4

Centre without Yaoundé	402	8.2
Douala	553	11.3
East	318	6.5
Far north	929	19
Littoral(without Yaoundé)	171	3.5
North	699	14.3
North west	335	6.9
West	468	9.6
South	179	3.7
South west	92	1.9
Yaoundé	492	10.0

**Note: other (Animist, no religion and other)**

### **Prevalence of domestic violence**

Established on this study the prevalence of domestic violence among ever-married Cameroonian women was 30.5% with 95%CI (29.3%, 31.8%). The proportion of domestic violence was higher among age groups of women from 25-34(32.7%) and 35-49(30.3) as compared to women found in the age groups of 18-24. Plus the above proportion of domestic violence was higher among women whose husband drinks alcohol (43.2%).

### **Prevalence of different forms of violence**

Out of 4,903 women involved in the study, 21.87 %, 18.7%, and 6.5% of the participants experienced emotional, physical violence and sexual violence by any partner in the past 12 months respectively.

### **Factors associated with domestic violence**

Based on the output of multivariable binary logistic regression analysis the following explanatory variables had a statistically significant association with domestic violence among ever-married reproductive age women: womens' educational attainment (AOR=0.57, 95% CI (0.36, 1.04)), Husband education (husbands who attended primary educational level (AOR=1.29, 95% CI (1.00, 1.66)). Plus to the above factors women whose husband alcohol (AOR= 3.00, 95% CI (2.56, 3.52)), and the region where the women reside in (center without Yaoundé (AOR= 2.54, 95% CI (1.79, 3.60), west (AOR=1.54, 95% CI (1.09, 2.19), South (AOR=1.99, 95% CI (1.18, 2.50), and Yaoundé (AOR=1.72. 95% CI(1.18,2.50) were significantly associated with womens' domestic violence by their partner in the past 12 months.

The odds of domestic violence among married women was decreased by 43% among women who had a higher level of educational attainment. The age of the mother increased by a year. The odds of domestic violence was increased by 29% among women whose husband's education is a primary level. (Table 2)

Table 2 Factors associated with domestic violence among married women in Cameroon, (n=4,903).

Variable	Domestic violence		p- value	AOR
	Yes (n=1,496)	No(n=3,407)		
	Frequency (30.5%)	Frequency (69.5%)		
Age <sup>c</sup>	31.3(±8.1) <sup>μ</sup>	31.2(±8.1) <sup>μ</sup>	0.058	0.99(0.98, 1.00)
<b>Residence</b>				
Urban	724(29.3%)	1,750(70.7%)		1
Rural	772(31.8%)	1,657(68.2%)	0.52	1.07(0.88 ,1.29)
<b>Religion</b>				
Catholic	1,139(34.5%)	2,163(65.5%)		1
Muslim	302(21.5%)	1,103(78.5%)	0.49	1.07(0.87, 1.33)
Other	55(28.1%)	140(71.9%)	0.79	1.05(0.73, 1.50)
<b>Women educational level</b>				
No formal education	301(22.6%)	1,029(77.4%)		1
Primary	525(33.9%)	1,026(66.1%)	0.82	0.97(0.77, 1.22)
Secondary	625(35.5%)	1,135(64.5%)	0.56	1.08(0.80,1.40)
<b>Higher</b>	45(17.3%)	217(82.7%)	0.02	0.57(0.36, 0.91)
<b>Current working status</b>				
Currently working	1,125(32.3%)	2,353(67.7%)	0.07	1.16(0.98, 1.36)*
Currently not working	371(26.0%)	1,054(74.0%)		1
<b>Husband education</b>				
No formal education	177(19.6%)	727(80.4%)		1
<b>Primary education</b>	456(34.4%)	871(65.6%)	0.047	1.28(1.00, 1.65)
Secondary education	534(35.3%)	979(64.7%)	0.18	1.19(0.92, 1.57)
Higher	87(22.2%)	307(77.8%)	0.19	0.77(0.53, 1.13)
Don't know	242(31.6%)	523(68.4%)	0.30	1.16(0.87,1.52)
<b>Wealth index</b>				
Poor	615(30.2%)	1,422(69.8%)		1
Medium	290(30.5%)	658(69.5%)	0.24	0.88(0.72, 1.08)
Rich	592(30.8%)	1,327(69.2%)	0.15	0.83(0.64, 1.07)

Media exposure				
Exposed	911(32.5%)	1,893(67.5%)	0.18	0.88(0.73,1.06)
Non exposed	586(27.9%)	1,514(72.1%)		1
Husband drinks alcohol				
yes	973(43.2%)	1,280(56.8%)	0.000	3.00(2.56, 3.52)
No	524(19.7%)	2,127(80.3)		1
Region				
Adamawa	48(18.4%)	217(81.6%)		1
Center without Yaoundé	197(49.0%)	205(51.0%)	0.000	2.54(1.78, 3.60)
Douala	164(29.8%)	388(70.2%)	0.28	1.24(0.84,1.84)
East	112(35.1%)	206(64.9%)	0.087	1.36(0.96, 1.92)
Far-north	177(19.0%)	752(81.0%)	0.314	0.84(0.60, 1.17)
Littoral(without Douala)	39(23.3%)	131(76.7%)	0.36	0.83(0.55,1.24)
North	208(29.7%)	491(70.3%)	0.09	1.3(0.96,1.8)
North -west	122(36.6%)	213(63.4%)	0.05	1.45(0.79,2.14)
west	176(37.7%)	292(62.3%)	0.02	1.54(1.08,2.20)
South	67(37.4%)	112(62.6%)	0.000	1.90(1.38, 2.88)
South west	25(26.8%)	67(73.2%)	0.28	1.34(0.79,2.23)
Yaoundé	159(32.4%)	333(67.6%)	0.005	1.72(1.18,2.50)

## Discussion

By examining Cameroon's most recent DHS data, this study investigated the prevalence and associated factors of domestic violence among ever-married women in the last 12 months. The prevalence of domestic violence among ever-married Cameroonian women was 30.5% with 95%CI (29.3%, 31.8%). And womens' educational status, husband educational status, husband drinking alcohol, and the region where the women reside were factors that had a statistically significant association with domestic violence among ever-married women in Cameroon.

The current study's findings are lower than those of a previous study in Fagitalekoma Woreda, Awi zone, Ethiopia, which found 78.0% (10), Zimbabwe (42.7%) (11), Nigeria (67.2%) (12), and Senegal (56.92%) (13). this disparity could be attributed to socio-demographic characteristics in those countries that support wife-beating behavior. Furthermore, a Zimbabwean study assesses domestic abuse that occurred during the women's lifespan. However, the results of the present study are higher than the study

conducted in rural Nepal which is 23.1% (17). This difference is possibly due to differences in sociodemographic characteristics of the population.

Domestic violence among ever-married women was affected by different socio-demographic and characteristics of both the women and their husbands. In the current study, domestic violence among ever-married women was significantly associated with a higher educational status of women, which is supported by studies conducted in Saudi Arabia (19) and Kenya(20). According to Chenna Kal, education may help people overcome ignorance, develop moral ideas, and improve their character. She went on to argue that education is a tool that improves people's thinking and their judgment of what is right and wrong, which encourages women to fight violence. She went on to say that educated women are more suited to tolerate such abuse and so limit its occurrence. (21). Moreover, the results of the present study stated that women who had husbands with a primary level of education had a higher risk for domestic violence than husbands with a higher level of education. This outcome is in harmony with studies done in Nigeria, Nepal and Turkey respectively (22–24). Domestic violence among married women has also had a significant association with their husband's alcohol drinking behavior. This result is supported by a study done in Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and Nepal (10, 11, 23). Finally, the present study also revealed that the region where the women reside in the country is also another factor that was significantly associated with domestic violence.

## **Conclusion And Recommendations**

The present study revealed that the prevalence of domestic violence among ever-married women in Cameroon is high. Womens' education, husband education, husband alcohol drinking, and the region where the women reside in the country are factors significantly associated with domestic violence. As a result, the government should devise a comprehensive program to minimize domestic violence, taking into consideration the study's findings and enabling women to protect their legal rights.

## **List Of Abbreviations**

AOR  
Adjusted Odds Ratio  
CI  
Confidence Interval  
and DV  
Domestic Violence  
DHS  
Demographic Health Survey

## **Declarations**

**Ethics approval and consent to participate**

The research was carried out following the Helsinki Declaration. The authors were asked to obtain a permission letter to download and utilize the data files for the current study because it was based on secondary data (DHS data).

### **Consent for publication**

Not applicable.

### **Availability of data and materials**

All result-based data are available within the manuscript and anyone can access the data set online from [www.measuredhs.com](http://www.measuredhs.com)

### **Competing interests**

The authors declare that they have no competing interests

### **Funding**

No, any funding was received from any organization.

### **Authors' contributions**

All authors made substantial contributions to conception, acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data; took part in drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content; agreed to submit to the current journal; gave final approval of the version to be published; and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

### **Acknowledgments**

We would like to acknowledge the MEASURE DHS program for permitting us to obtain and use recent DHS data sets of Cameroon.

## **References**

1. Krug EG, Mercy JA, Dahlberg LL et. al. World report on violence and health - World Health Organization. *Lancet*. 2002;360:1083–8.
2. World Development Indicators 2014 [Internet]. World Development Indicators 2014. 2014. Available from: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/18237>
3. World Health Organisation. Strengthening the role of the health system in addressing violence, in particular against women and girls, and against children. 67th World Heal Assem. 2014;(May):1–6.
4. Buntin JT. Intimate Partner Violence. *Int Encycl Soc Behav Sci Second Ed*. 2015;685–8.

5. Buckley R. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. US-Japan Human Rights Diplomacy Post 1945. 2022. 266–282 p.
6. Garcia-Moreno C, Jansen HAFM, Ellsberg M, Heise L, Watts C. WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women: Report on the First Results. World Heal Organ. 2005;55–89.
7. Andersson N, Ho-Foster A, Mitchell S, Scheepers E, Goldstein S. Risk factors for domestic physical violence: National cross-sectional household surveys in eight southern African countries. BMC Womens Health. 2007;7.
8. Stake S, Ahmed S, Tol W, Ahmed S, Begum N, Khanam R, et al. Prevalence, associated factors, and disclosure of intimate partner violence among mothers in rural Bangladesh. J Heal Popul Nutr. 2020;39(1):1–11.
9. Chuemchit M, Chernkwanma S, Rugkua R, Daengthern L, Abdullakasim P, Wieringa SE. Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence in Thailand. J Fam Violence. 2018;33(5):315–23.
10. Semahegn A, Belachew T, Abdulahi M. Domestic violence and its predictors among married women in reproductive age in Fagitalekoma Woreda, Awi zone, Amhara regional state, North Western Ethiopia. Reprod Health. 2013;10(1):1–9.
11. Lasong J, Zhang Y, Muyayalo KP, Njiri OA, Gebremedhin SA, Abaidoo CS, et al. Domestic violence among married women of reproductive age in Zimbabwe: A cross sectional study. BMC Public Health. 2020;20(1):1–11.
12. Audu O, Bako IA, Jogo AA, Ojabo CO, Ogbeyi GO, O. OA, et al. Prevalence of Domestic Violence against Married Women: A Case Study of Oiji Ward, A Rural Setting in North Central Nigeria. J Community Med Prim Heal Care. 2015;27(2):20–9.
13. Soumah MM, Diop O. Domestic violence in Dakar. Forensic Sci Int Reports [Internet]. 2020;2(April):100109. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fsir.2020.100109>
14. Refworld \_ Cameroon\_ Domestic violence, including legislation, availability of state protection and support services for victims [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5729a55e4.html>
15. Benneh G. Cameroon | Culture, History, & People | Britannica [Internet]. Britannica. 2020. Available from: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Cameroon>
16. Worldometer. Cameroon Population (2021) - Worldometer [Internet]. Worldometer. 2021. Available from: <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/cameroon-population/>
17. Sapkota D, Bhattarai S, Baral D, Pokharel PK. Domestic violence and its associated factors among married women of a village development committee of rural Nepal. BMC Res Notes. 2016;9(1):1–9.
18. Choueiry G. What is an Acceptable Value for VIF? (With References) – Quantifying Health [Internet]. 2020. Available from: <https://quantifyinghealth.com/vif-threshold/>
19. Shiraz MS. The impact of education and occupation on domestic violence in Saudi Arabia. Int J Soc Welf. 2016;25(4):339–46.

20. Simister JG. Domestic violence and female genital mutilation in kenya: Effects of ethnicity and education. *J Fam Violence*. 2010;25(3):247–57.
21. Is Education System Able to Minimize The Domestic Violence - Marriage [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.sooperarticles.com/relationship-articles/marriage-articles/education-system-able-minimize-domestic-violence-1097978.html>
22. Benebo FO, Schumann B, Vaezghasemi M. Intimate partner violence against women in Nigeria: A multilevel study investigating the effect of women’s status and community norms. *BMC Womens Health*. 2018;18(1):1–17.
23. Gautam S, Jeong HS. Intimate partner violence in relation to husband characteristics and women empowerment: Evidence from Nepal. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2019;16(5).
24. Ozer M, Fidrmuc J. Male Education and Domestic Violence in Turkey: Evidence from a Natural Experiment. *SSRN Electron J*. 2021;