



## **Spatial Distribution of Domestic Violence in Yenagoa City, Bayelsa State**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study aims to understand the spatial distribution of domestic violence in Yenagoa City, Bayelsa State. Domestic violence, defined as intentional abuse within intimate relationships, spans physical, sexual, and psychological maltreatment, infringing on fundamental human rights. Globally pervasive, it affects families across various backgrounds, with significant underreporting, particularly in male and rural victims. Yenagoa's informal settlements, plagued by poor living conditions and limited access to services, are susceptible to high domestic violence rates. Poverty, unemployment, and inadequate infrastructure exacerbate these issues, necessitating targeted research. Utilizing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for spatial analysis, the study revealed clusters of domestic violence in specific neighborhoods, highlighting areas requiring urgent intervention. Key findings indicate Yenizue Epe and Kpansia have the highest reported cases, suggesting a strong correlation between socioeconomic factors and domestic violence prevalence. The study underscores the need for comprehensive strategies, combining socio-economic improvements with legal and psychological support, to effectively address domestic violence in Yenagoa and similar urban slums. By mapping these patterns, the research provides a foundation for informed policy-making and resource allocation to mitigate domestic violence's impact on vulnerable populations.

**Keywords:** domestic violence, spatial distribution, Yenagoa City, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), socioeconomic factors.

### **1.0 Introduction**

Domestic violence is the intentional and continuous abuse of individuals within the home, resulting in pain, distress, or injury. The American Psychological Association (1996) defines domestic violence as a pattern of abusive behavior involving physical, sexual, and psychological maltreatment by one individual in an intimate relationship against another, aim at unfairly gaining power or maintaining control and authority over the victim. It includes various abusive behaviors from one family member to another, infringing on fundamental human rights. This can involve intimate partner battering, child sexual abuse, marital rape, and harmful traditional practices, including female genital mutilation.

On a global scale, the issue of domestic violence affects families across different social, racial, economic, educational, and religious backgrounds. Its impact is widespread, crossing geographical and cultural boundaries, as highlighted by Dahlberg and Krug (2002) and UNICEF (2005).

In the United States, women experience approximately 4.8 million intimate partner-related physical assaults and rapes annually, while men are victims of about 2.9 million such assaults (Djaden & Thoennes, 2002). In parts of the third world, particularly West Africa, domestic violence is prevalent and often justified by cultural norms (Akinleke, 2018).

Domestic violence against men is also prevalent but under reported due to its sensitive nature. A study at the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital found that only 10.4% of domestic violence victims were male (Dienye & Gbeneol, 2009). Children often experience domestic violence before reaching adulthood, with links to increasing poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, and traditional and religious laws permitting physical discipline by men (Abdullahi, Cusairi & Abdullah, 2017). Only four states in Nigeria, including Lagos, have enacted laws against domestic violence, highlighting an urgent need for nationwide legislation.

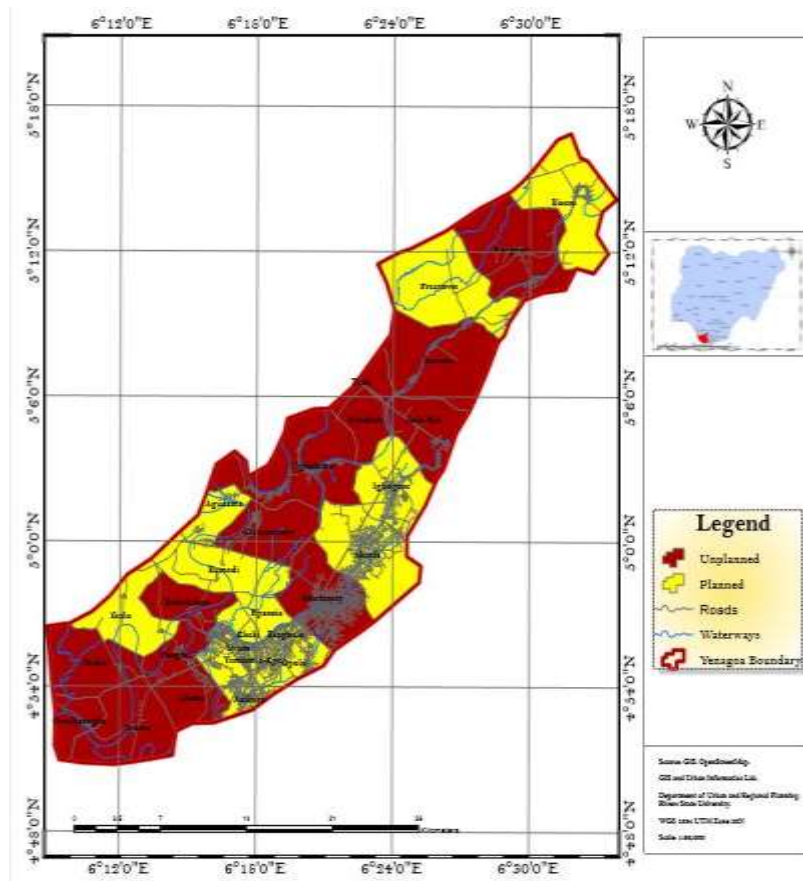
In Nigeria and particularly in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, domestic violence is a significant issue, traumatizing many couples (Teibowei, 2018). It persists due to the abuser's power and control, and the victim's fear, intimidation, and humiliation. Marriage, the oldest and most prevalent institution globally, is central to this issue, with domestic violence drawing attention from various disciplines, governments, religious groups, and professional associations (Wallace, Roberson & Globokar, 2019).

Spousal roles in family relationships are crucial but can lead to abuse in various forms, including sexual, financial, and communicative abuse, affecting family dynamics (Ajayi, 2019). Domestic violence occurs in both traditional heterosexual marriages and other intimate relationships, characterized by intimidation, humiliation, and physical injury.

Informal urban settlements, or urban slums, often exhibit higher levels of domestic violence (UN-Habitat, 2012). In Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, slum communities such as Swali, Igbogene, Yenizue-Epe, and Biogbolo are hotspots for domestic violence. These areas face limited access to formal

healthcare, education, and social services, contributing to elevated rates of domestic violence. Poverty, deprivation, and frustration in slums create breeding grounds for criminal activities and domestic violence. Children in slums are exposed to high rates of domestic violence and crime, negatively impacting youth development, including depression, poor academic performance, post-traumatic stress symptoms, delinquency, and aggression (Aina-Pelemo, Olujobi & Yebisi, 2023). Unplanned areas often foster domestic violence, with over 60-70% of Yenagoa's population living in unplanned or slum-like conditions. Many slum dwellers are unemployed rural-urban migrants seeking better opportunities, often living in inadequate housing conditions (Sommer, Ferron, Cavill & House, 2015).

Domestic violence victims are often dependent on their abusers, whether financially, emotionally, or physically. This study aims to assess the spatial distribution of domestic violence in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, and provide planning measures to address this significant problem.



**Fig 1: Map of the Study Area**

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2023.

## 1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Domestic violence is a really big problem in Nigeria. It is one of the most serious issues our society faces today. Shockingly, this kind of violence affects women more than things like cancer, car accidents, war, or even malaria (World Bank Group, 2019). Beyond hurting people physically, domestic violence violates human rights, disturbing lives and stopping people from working well. It hurts communities too, leading to fewer women being part of the workforce and raising costs for health care and disabilities (Gedikli, Popli & Yilmaz, 2023).

In Yenagoa city, which is in Bayelsa State, different kinds of domestic violence have been seen all around, both in planned areas and areas that are not so organized. This includes scary acts like intimidation, torture, child labor, rape, and more. All of this creates a constant feeling of fear and worry. The people who go through domestic violence are becoming more vulnerable over time. This makes them feel more anxious and creates a really unstable environment. Victims suffer not just from physical harm but also from psychological issues like trauma and depression. The rising cases of domestic violence in this area are concerning because they impact our societal values.

Another worrying point is how children raised in violent homes are affected. They are more likely to show aggressive behavior as they get older. Being exposed to this kind of violence can lead to these kids feeling different from others, making it hard for them to socialize. This can push them towards criminal activities as well. Domestic violence therefore is seen to create a risk for society and affects the mental health of younger kids as they grow up. Because of these important issues, the researchers feels motivated to study domestic violence in Yenagoa city, Bayelsa State, with a specific focus on understanding its spatial distribution within the study area.

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## 2.0 Literature Review

Spatial distribution of domestic violence refers to the geographic pattern and arrangement of incidents of domestic violence within a specific location. It entails examining the concentration, dispersion, and clustering of domestic violence cases in different geographic locations. The spatial distribution of reported domestic violence cases varies by locality, with studies often revealing clusters in specific neighborhoods or regions, indicating higher prevalence and highlighting areas that require increased intervention and support services (Bonomi, 2010; Global Report on Human Settlements, 2003).

Domestic violence is more prevalent in low-income neighbourhoods, as well as communities with high levels of poverty and unemployment. Domestic abuse is much more prevalent in rural regions than in cities. This is most likely due to rural communities being more isolated and having fewer access to services, making it more difficult for victims to flee their abusers (Peek-Asa, 2011).

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are also used to study the spatial distribution of domestic violence, allowing for the mapping and analysis of domestic violence incidents in relation to various spatial factors such as neighbourhood characteristics, socio-economic factors, and access to support services. To discover spatial patterns and disparities, these studies look at factors such as neighbourhood characteristics, socio-economic status, access to support services, and demographic data (Welsh, 2002). Researchers and policy makers can get insights into the underlying reasons and identify locations with higher prevalence risk factors by evaluating spatial patterns (Capellan & Fyfe, 2013).

Presented below are some instances illustrating the spatial distribution of reported domestic violence cases:

A study published in the journal 'Domestic against people' in 2017 by Havilland evaluated the occurrence of domestic violence across different regions of the United States. The data for the study came from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS). Domestic abuse was shown to be more widespread in the southern states than in the northern states. Notably, Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana had the greatest rates of domestic violence, whilst Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine had the lowest rates.

According to a study published in 'The British Journal of Criminology', Awan (2016) revealed that domestic violence is more common in the Midlands and the North of England than in the south. He further examined the geographic patterns of domestic violence in the United Kingdom using data from the Crime Survey from England and Wales. His findings was that the midlands and the North of England has the highest prevalence of domestic violence, including areas such as the West Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber, and North West England. The South of England, which encompasses South East England and South West England, has the lowest prevalence of domestic violence.

Felson (2017) opined that the spatial pattern of reported domestic violence cases can be used to identify locations where domestic violence is more prevalent and to prioritise interventions and preventive measures to these areas.

Research on domestic violence has increasingly incorporated geospatial analysis to uncover patterns and risk factors associated with such incidents. Holt (2014) conducted a study focusing on domestic violence in Lawrence Township, NJ, using dispatch data from the local police department to assess risk factors statistically. This empirical investigation aimed to determine whether factors identified in prior research, such as age, gender, renter status, history of domestic violence, and noise complaint calls, were significant predictors of domestic violence in this specific location. The study's findings challenge some established risk factors. For example, although age and gender have been highlighted as critical variables in previous literature, Holt's research found that these factors did not consistently align with domestic violence cases in Lawrence Township. Similarly, renter status, often associated with increased domestic violence risk, showed a minimal impact in this context when considered individually.

Despite these findings, the research suggests that the cumulative effect of risk factors might yield a more robust explanation for domestic violence patterns. This aligns with prior studies emphasizing the complexity of domestic violence, where multiple interrelated factors are likely at play. The minimal influence of isolated risk factors indicates a potential gap in the existing understanding, emphasizing the need to explore additional variables and employ holistic analytical frameworks. Holt (2014) concludes that future research should expand beyond conventional risk factors to include broader social, economic, and environmental influences.

Bhandari (2019) opined that the spatial pattern of reported domestic violence incidents can vary depending on a variety of factors, including cultural norms, socio-economic situations and geographical location. He further said that it is essential to point out that recorded cases of domestic violence may not accurately reflect the scope of domestic violence because many incidents go unreported owing to factors such as fear, stigma, or a lack of awareness.

Ghazvineh et al. (2018) conducted a study on the spatial distribution of domestic violence in Kermanshah City, Iran, and their study observed that domestic violence exhibits the highest prevalence in the impoverished and slum areas of the city. Their study adopted a resident-centric approach to examining instances of domestic violence. Employing lived experiences, Ghazvineh et al. (2018) utilized the Delphi method to gather expert opinions on the nature of marriage prevalent in the region and its perceived obsolescence. Domestic violence was assessed across psychological, verbal, and physical dimensions through survey methodologies. The researchers selected 90 locations through random sampling techniques, employing balanced acceptance, clustering, and inverse sampling methods. Twenty-five residential areas were designated for questionnaire distribution, while non-residential zones were excluded from the study. Each location involved the completion of between 15 and 20 questionnaire items, yielding a total of 433 fully completed questionnaires. The study by Ghazvineh et al. (2018) not only sheds light on the spatial distribution of domestic violence but also provides valuable insights into methodological approaches for studying such complex social phenomena. Their study revealed that the poor and slum neighborhoods of the city have the highest occurrence of domestic violence, which was as a result of factors such as economic hardship, migration, and marginalization, high rates of unemployment and low income, all of which are common in poor neighborhoods. Their study therefore recommends that planning to create jobs

is first and foremost crucial for reducing domestic violence. It is useless to make judgments solely on counseling and teaching without considering the fundamental causes of domestic violence.

Tunde, Okunade, and Omojola (2021) conducted a comprehensive investigation into domestic violence against women in the rural areas of Ido-Osi Local Government Area, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study aimed to identify prevalent types and perpetrators of domestic violence, explore the underlying causes, assess the impact on women's well-being and health, and highlight the obstacles victims face in seeking help. The researchers utilized a sample size of 399 women, collecting data through questionnaires, supplemented by Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with men to provide a broader perspective on domestic violence. The findings revealed that a significant majority of the respondents (89.2%) were aged 30 years and above, 64.3% were married, and 53.4% had no formal education. Sexual assault emerged as the most frequently reported form of domestic violence, with a mean score of 3.62. The study identified intolerance on the part of partners as a major cause of violence, with a mean score of 3.52, and confirmed that men were typically the primary perpetrators. Notably, the impact of domestic violence was substantial, as assaults influenced how spouses were treated within their relationships, reflected by a mean score of 3.41. Furthermore, some men disclosed that they experienced dual roles as both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. One of the most significant challenges for victims was the sense of shame and stigma, which often prevented them from seeking help. The study underscores that rural women in Nigeria are particularly vulnerable to domestic violence, exacerbated by economic and educational disadvantages. The authors advocate for initiatives aimed at economically and educationally empowering rural women to mitigate the prevalence and impact of domestic violence.

Several empirical studies have been reviewed in this study. These studies concentrated on domestic violence in general without looking at the spatiality of domestic violence and in Yenegoa city. This current study therefore seeks to fill in gap by examining the spatial distribution of domestic violence in Yenegoa City.

### 3.0 Methodology

Data was collected from key informant (The Bayelsa State Ministry of Justice) and the information provided was used to deduce the spatial pattern of domestic violence in the study area. Extensive literature on the subject was sourced from accredited online journals to supplement the study's materials. A base map depicting the various neighborhoods of Bayelsa City was utilized to illustrate the spatial distribution of domestic violence in Yenegoa City. This map provided valuable geographical information essential for analyzing the distribution patterns of domestic violence incidents within the study area. Geographic Information System (GIS) technology was leveraged to visualize the spatial distribution of domestic violence within both planned and unplanned neighborhoods of the study area. This approach facilitated the mapping and exploration of patterns in domestic violence occurrence across different geographical areas, providing valuable insights into its spatial dynamics (Longley, Goodchild, Maguire & Rhind, 2015).

### 4.0 Result of the Study

#### 4.1 Spatial Pattern of Reported Cases of Domestic Violence in Yenegoa City

Interactions with officials from the Ministry of Justice unveiled the spatial distribution of reported cases of domestic violence in the study area. As depicted in Table 1, Yenizue Eple (12) and Kpansia (10) exhibit the highest reported incidences of domestic violence, followed by Etegewe (8) and Yenegwe (7). Conversely, Biogbolo (1), Onupa (1), Tombia (1), Kalapa (1), Opalo (1), Edepie-Epie (1), and Akanpa-Epie (1) recorded the lowest occurrences of domestic violence.

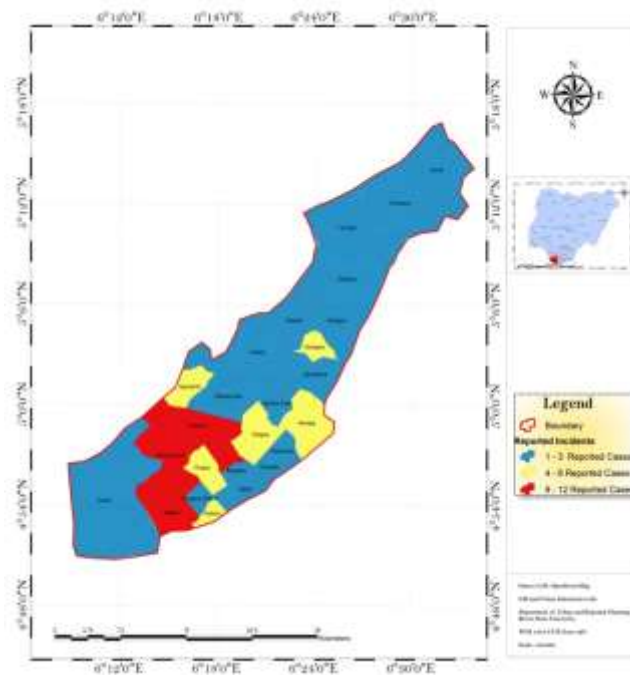
Additionally, law cases related to domestic violence were reported in certain unplanned settlements, with Polaku (2), Sampon (2), Loroame (2), and Yeneghe Gbenet (3) presenting such instances. Notably, the data in Table 1 highlights that unplanned areas of Yenegoa City, specifically Yenizue Eple and Kpansia, along with Akinpa and Yenegwe, reported the highest cases of domestic violence. Moreover, planned areas like Azikoro and Agudama also reported significant incidences of domestic violence.

**Table 1: Reported Cases of Domestic Violence in Yenegoa City from 2022 – 2023**

S/No	Neighbourhood Communities	Report cases
1	Igboghene	3
2	Yenegwe	7
3	Agudama	5
4	Akenpa-Epie	1
5	Edepie-Epie	1
6	Azikoro	6
7	Akenpa	8
8	Etegewe	4

9	Okasukutu	3
10	Opolo	1
11	Biogbolo	1
12	Yenegne Gbene	3
13	Yenagne	2
14	Kpansia	10
15	Yenizne Epie	12
16	Okaka	3
17	Amarata	4
18	Onopa	2
19	Ovum	1
20	Sorali	1
21	Koroama	2
22	Tombia	1
23	Sampon	2
24	Kalapa	1
25	Polaku	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>

Source: Ministry of Justice, 2023.



**Fig 2: Spatial Distributions of Domestic Violence Cases in the Study Area.**

Source: (Bayelsa State Ministry of Justice, 2023; Researcher’s Survey, 2023).

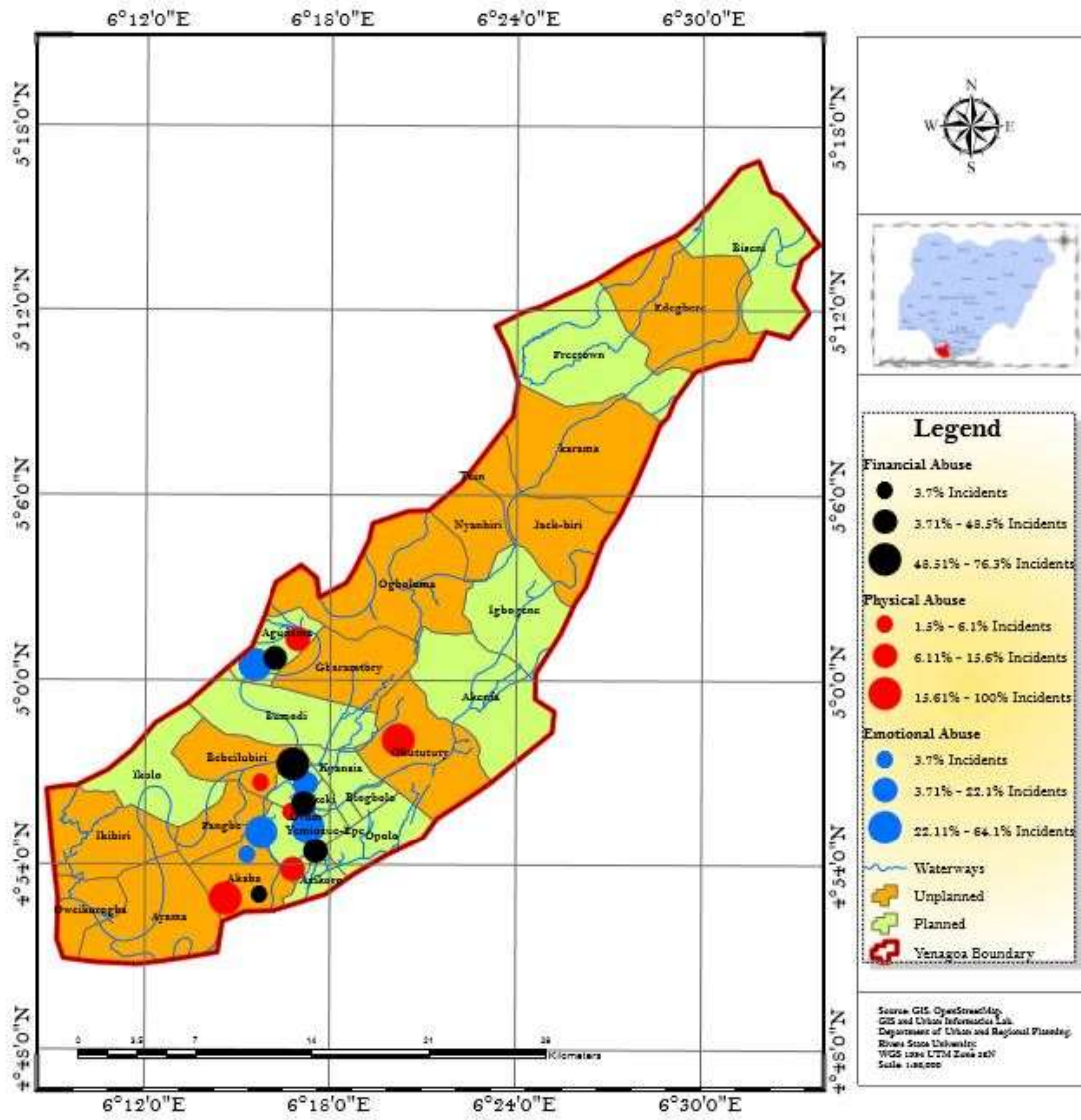
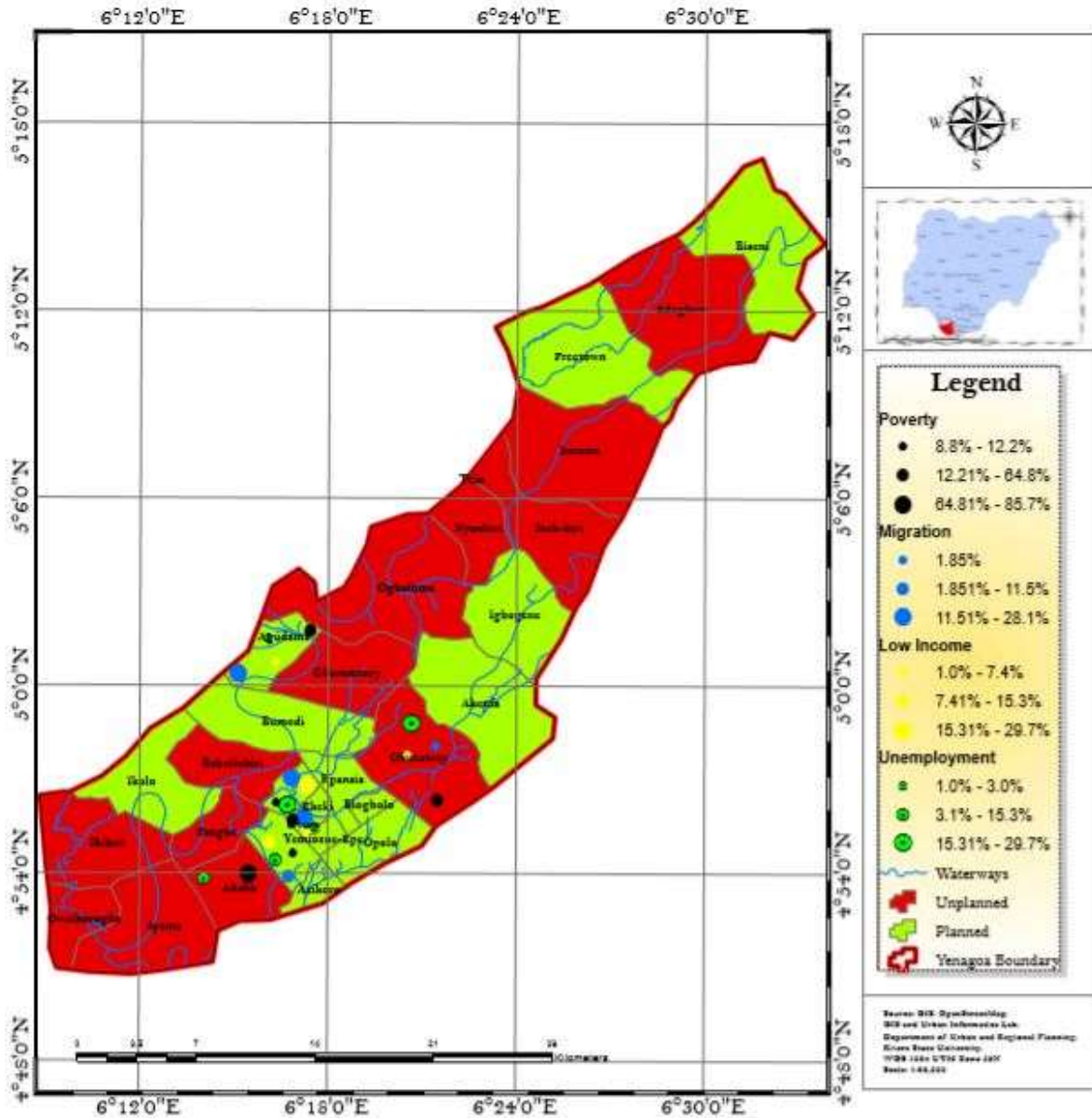


Fig 3: Spatial Distribution of the Forms of Domestic Violence in the Area

Source: (Bayelsa State Ministry of Justice, 2023; Researcher's Survey, 2023).



**Fig 4: Spatial Distribution of the Causes of Domestic Violence in the Area**

Source: (Bayelsa State Ministry of Justice, 2023; Researcher’s Survey, 2023).

**4.2 Ascertain Spatial Distribution of Domestic Violence**

The study examined the spatial extent and distribution of domestic violence in both planned and unplanned neighborhoods within the study area. Findings indicated that domestic violence incidents were widespread across various neighborhoods with certain areas experiencing higher incidences than others.

Yenizue Eple and Kpansia emerged as the neighborhoods with the highest reported cases of domestic violence, recording 12 and 10 cases respectively.

Other areas with relatively high reported cases include Etegwé (8 cases), Yenegwé (7 cases), and Azikoro (6 cases).

Conversely, neighborhoods such as Biogbolo, Onupa, Tombia, Kalapa, Opalo, Edepie-Epie, and Akanpa-Epie reported the lowest number of domestic violence cases, each recording only 1 case.

Notably, unplanned settlements like Polaku, Sampon, Loroame, and Yeneghe Gbenet also reported cases of domestic violence, albeit in lower numbers.

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## 5.0 Discuss on the Spatial Distribution of Reported Cases of Domestic Violence in the Study Area

The spatial distribution of reported cases of domestic violence in Yeneagoa City's 25 neighborhoods reveals notable variations. Clusters of reported incidents are evident in neighborhoods like Yenigwe Epie, Kpansia, Akenpa, and Yenegwe, indicating a higher prevalence of domestic violence in these areas. This underscores the need for targeted domestic violence intervention and support services in these neighborhoods. These findings align with Bonomis's (2010) perspective on the spatiality of reported domestic violence cases and resonate with Bhandari's (2019) assertion that the spatial pattern of reported incidents can be influenced by cultural norms, socio-economic factors, and geographical locations.

It's important to acknowledge that recorded cases of domestic violence may not fully capture the extent of the issue, as many incidents go unreported due to factors such as fear, stigma, or lack of awareness. Additionally, the study findings reinforce Christopher's (2002) observation that domestic violence tends to be more prevalent in low-income neighborhoods and communities with high levels of poverty, unemployment, and disorganization—characteristics evident in neighborhoods like Yenigwe Epie and Kpansia.

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## 6.0 Conclusion

The study on the spatial distribution of domestic violence in Yenagoa City, Bayelsa State, reveals significant insights into the prevalence and patterns of this pervasive issue. Domestic violence, characterized by physical, sexual, and psychological abuse within intimate relationships, is alarmingly high in Yenagoa, particularly in informal settlements. The use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) has enabled a detailed analysis of the spatial distribution, highlighting neighborhoods like Yenizue Eple and Kpansia as hotspots.

The correlation between socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and inadequate infrastructure with high rates of domestic violence is evident. These findings underscore the complex interplay between social disorganization and domestic violence, necessitating multifaceted intervention strategies. The research confirms that while domestic violence is widespread, its intensity and occurrence are significantly influenced by the living conditions and socio-economic status of different neighborhoods.

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## 7.0 Recommendations

Implementing targeted socio-economic development programs in high-risk neighborhoods is crucial to address the root causes of domestic violence. These programs should focus on poverty alleviation, employment generation, and improving living conditions. By enhancing the economic stability and infrastructure of these areas, residents can experience better overall well-being, which can contribute to reducing the incidence of domestic violence.

Establishing accessible support services for domestic violence victims is essential in both planned and unplanned areas. These services should include shelters, counseling centers, and legal aid clinics to provide immediate and long-term assistance to victims. Ensuring that victims have safe places to turn to and receive comprehensive support can significantly improve their chances of escaping abusive situations and rebuilding their lives.

Conducting community education and awareness campaigns is necessary to change cultural norms that justify domestic violence. These campaigns should emphasize the rights of individuals, the importance of reporting abuse, and the availability of support services. By fostering a culture of zero tolerance towards domestic violence and empowering individuals with knowledge, communities can become safer and more supportive environments.

Strengthening the enforcement of existing domestic violence laws and advocating for comprehensive legislation in states where such laws are absent is vital. Policies should focus on protection orders, perpetrator rehabilitation programs, and stricter penalties for offenders. Effective legislation and its enforcement can act as a strong deterrent against domestic violence and provide better protection for victims.

Developing an integrated data collection and monitoring system using GIS technology will help track domestic violence incidents accurately. Regular data analysis can identify trends, evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, and inform policy decisions. A robust monitoring system ensures that interventions are data-driven and responsive to the evolving dynamics of domestic violence.

Partnering with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations is crucial for implementing and sustaining domestic violence prevention and intervention programs. These organizations often have deep community ties and can facilitate more effective grassroots efforts. Collaborative efforts can enhance the reach and impact of programs designed to combat domestic violence.

Providing specialized training for law enforcement officers and healthcare providers is essential to ensure they handle domestic violence cases sensitively and effectively. Training should cover identification, documentation, and appropriate response to domestic violence incidents. Well-trained professionals can offer better support to victims and improve the overall response to domestic violence.

Launching economic empowerment initiatives for women and other vulnerable groups can help reduce financial dependency on abusers. Programs such as vocational training, microfinance, and small business support can enhance their economic independence and resilience. By empowering individuals economically, these initiatives can play a significant role in preventing domestic violence and fostering long-term stability for victims.

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