



American Journal of Development Studies (AJDS)

ISSN: 2837-6676 (ONLINE)

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 1 (2025)

PUBLISHED BY
E-PALLI PUBLISHERS, DELAWARE, USA

Economic Violence and Its Impact on the Socio-Economic Welfare of Women in Kanamkemer Ward, Kenya

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Article Information

Received: August 19, 2024

Accepted: September 23, 2024

Published: February 08, 2025

Keywords

Economic Support, Economic Violence, Perpetrator, Socio-Economic Welfare

ABSTRACT

Economic violence is an epidemic that exists globally. Economic violence silently kills the victim, tortures, and maims, hence affecting one socially, physically, economically, and psychologically. This study investigated the effect of economic violence on the socioeconomic welfare of women in Kanamkemer Ward, Turkana County, Kenya. The study was based on a descriptive cross-sectional survey of women who had experienced economic violence perpetrated on them by their intimate partners. A sample of 99 women who had met the inclusion criteria were recruited to participate in the study. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the study participants who were interviewed to collect data. Data analysis was carried out using statistical package for social sciences version 28. Univariate, bivariate and multivariate analysis were carried out to determine frequencies, establish association and quantify the nature of association. It was observed that majority of the respondents had moderate and low socio-economic welfare, n=41 (42.3%) and n=31 (32.0%) respectively. About 46 (47.4%) of the participants indicated that their partners sometimes withheld economic support when they had misunderstanding, and 30 (30.9%) always withheld the support when there is misunderstanding. Participants who were never allowed by their partners to make major decision on income or expenditure had an increased likelihood of low socio-economic welfare (95% CI: 4.2 (0.4-13.0, P = 0.00)). It was evident that economic control and the withholding of financial support by partners were detrimental to the financial autonomy and overall economic stability of women.

INTRODUCTION

Economic violence is one of major pervasive form of gender-based violence that significantly undermines the socio-economic welfare of women globally (World Health Organization, 2021). United Nations (UN) noted that this form of violence results to limitation of economic autonomy and perpetuation of dependency and abuse cycle among women attributed by restricting a woman's access to financial resources, employment opportunities, and education. World Health Organization further reported economic violence as a common occurrence alongside other forms of domestic violence, which significantly impact the physical and mental health of women (World Health Organization, 2022). Similar observations are reported by Eggers del Campo and Steinert (2022) who revealed that economic violence is a critical barrier to gender equality, and is significantly influenced by cultural, economic, and social factors. It is estimated that approximately 1 in 3 women have experienced intimate partner violence globally at some point in their lives, with about 30-40% of women, around 736 million, experiencing some form of economic abuse by their intimate partners in their lifetime (Sardinha *et al.*, 2022). However, the nature and extent of violence varies across nations. Previous studies reported that women subjected to economic violence were twice more likely to suffer from severe psychological distress compared to those who did not experience such violence (Altuzarra

et al., 2021; Türkkan & Odacı, 2024). Additionally, Ma *et al.* (2023) observed that approximately 25% of women in high-income countries faced economic violence, compared to 51% in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Previous studies reported a range of prevalence of economic violence, 20% in Sweden to 65% in India (Ahnlund *et al.*, 2020; Daruwalla *et al.*, 2020). The International Labor Organization (ILO) reported that women earn 23% less than men globally, which has significantly increased a disparity heightened by economic violence (Wang & Klugman, 2020). Similarly, a study by Gibbs *et al.* (2020) reported that 38% of women had experienced financial control imposed by their partners, affecting their employment engagement or independent management of their finances. Studies found that the disparity is regional bound. For instance, Alesina *et al.* (2021) reported a high occurrence of economic violence in Africa compared to the rest of the world. Moreover, a report by the African Union revealed that approximately 49% of women in Africa, with highest rates in East and Central Africa had experienced economic violence (African Union, 2020). A study conducted in Kenya revealed that 56% of the women faced economic violence by their partners, with rural areas reporting higher rates compared to urban centers (Winter *et al.*, 2020). However, this was significantly lower in Egypt where approximately 35% of the women faced economic abuse (Yaya *et al.*,

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2021). These reports are alarming given that economic violence suffering among the victims, results to isolation, inability to work, loss of wages, lack of participation in regular activities and limited ability to care for themselves and their children (World Health Organization, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Domestic violence has remained to be a major public health issue globally, affecting women's socio-economic welfare (Igbolekwu *et al.*, 2021). Economic violence is one of most common form of domestic violence against women contributing approximately 61% of all domestic violence cases (Postmus *et al.*, 2020). According to World Health Organization (2022), economic violence is characterized by the control of a woman's financial resources, access to employment, or the exploitation of economic dependency of the women, particularly by their partners. This remains a critical public health problem but often underexplored aspect of gender – based violence. According to a study by Jakštienė (2022), women from marginalized and impoverished regions, particularly Turkana County, are disproportionately affected with economic violence, hence significantly undermining their socio-economic welfare and general quality of life (Shanguhya, 2021). Turkana County is marked with high level of poverty, low literacy rates and limited economic opportunities, particularly to women, hence economic violence has emerged as a significant barrier to women's empowerment and economic independence (Samson & Ndefru, 2024). Duprez and Rihoux (2022) reported that the increasing prevalence of domestic violence such as economic violence in Kenya can be contributed to adverse patriarchal norms and cultural beliefs that often exclude women from decision-making processes, particularly concerning household finances. Various studies have reported that economic violence manifests in several ways such as the denial of access to money, the ownership of economic assets, the prevention or restriction of education or employment opportunities, and the control of financial resources without the woman's consent (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Krigel & Benjamin, 2021). Additionally, Johnson *et al.* (2022) observed that these forms of violence not only restrict financial autonomy of women, but also significantly contribute to a cycle of poverty and dependency hinders their ability to achieve socio-economic stability.

The impacts of economic violence on women's socio-economic welfare is a critical pressing issue, particularly in poverty rampant rural settings. Previous studies have reported the detrimental effects of economic violence on women's mental health, participation in economic activities, and their self-esteem (Yau *et al.*, 2021; Yaya *et al.*, 2021). A study by (Hui & Constantino, 2021) revealed that economic violence is significantly linked to increased rate of anxiety, depression, and lowers women's life satisfaction levels, thereby critically impacting their socio-economic vulnerabilities. Another study has reported that women who experience economic violence are less likely

to engage in income-generating activities (Miedema *et al.*, 2021). This significantly impacts economic dependence and limits their opportunities for economic advancement (Jayasinghe *et al.*, 2021). Despite the recognized significance of addressing economic violence, there are limited studies focused on its impact on women's socio-economic welfare in Turkana County. Therefore, this study aimed to fill this gap by assessing economic violence and its impacts on the socio-economic welfare of women in Kanamkemer Ward, Turkana County. Given the critical importance of addressing economic violence as a barrier to women's socio-economic welfare, this study is both timely and necessary. The study provides valuable insights into the nature of economic violence and its implications for women's economic and social wellbeing. Furthermore, the study aimed to contribute to the broader understanding of economic violence and advocate for policy and programmatic interventions that can enhance the socio-economic welfare of women in Kanamkemer Ward and similar settings.

Research Question

What is the impact of economic violence on the socio-economic welfare of women in Kanamkemer Ward, Turkana County?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Economic Violence and Its Prevalence

Domestic Violence is a serious violation of human rights, particularly against women. Domestic violence entails physical and non-physical violence such as physical, sexual, economic, or psychological abuse. Economic violence is one of the major non-physical types of violence among women (Alkan *et al.*, 2021). However, this issue has not been adequately explored globally despite its potential crucial impact on women, particularly in relation to their socio-economic welfare. Previous studies have reported the prevalence of economic violence differ across various nations. A study conducted in Tanzania reported that 56% of the women had experienced economic violence from their intimate partners (Simmons *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, approximately 54% of the women in Uganda had faced economic control which significantly impacted their financial prospects (Kawuki *et al.*, 2021). The prevalences of 61% and 64% were reported in Nigeria and South Africa, denying financial resources or access to employment opportunities by their intimate partners leading to increased gender inequalities (Nduka *et al.*, 2024; Postmus *et al.*, 2020).

In contrary, a study conducted in the United States found that 17% of women who experienced intimate partner violence such as physical sexual or psychological abuse from their intimate partners had faced economic violence (Tripathi & Azhar, 2022). Similarly, a study conducted in Poland reported that approximately 9% of the women faced economic violence (Grzyb, 2020). Furthermore, studies conducted in Italy, Croatia, and Kyrgyzstan found that 19%, 20%, and 89% of the women had experienced

economic abuse (Akisheva, 2023; Alkan *et al.*, 2021). It was found also that 11.4% and 24.3% of the women in a study conducted in Spain and Ethiopia had been exposed to economic violence (Angaw *et al.*, 2021; Vives-Cases *et al.*, 2021). According to Postmus *et al.* (2022), approximately 2.1% of the women experienced income control by their intimate partner or were (women) forced to work and approximately 6.9% lost their employment or income sources as a result of their partners. Similarly, according to Morgan and Boxall (2022) more than 12% of the women in Australia faced economic violence over their lives. A study by Alkan *et al.* (2021) in Peru revealed that approximately 23% of the women who engaged in micro-entrepreneur had been exposed to economic violence over their lifetime, and about 26% were forced by their intimate partners to take bank loans against their will.

Impacts of Economic Violence

Previous studies have reported that exposure to economic violence by women are significantly associated with various factors. Study by Izugbara *et al.* (2020) revealed that women who had low educational level were more than twice likely to experience economic violence compared to their counterparts with higher levels of education. However, these studies were inconsistent with a study that reported that women who had higher education levels were more likely to face economic abuse compared to those who lower level of education (Eggers del Campo & Steinert, 2022). Woman's and partner's differences in level of education between them is significantly associated with economic violence. Various previous studies have found that low income have significant association with economic violence (Ahmadabadi *et al.*, 2020; Cardenas *et al.*, 2021; Postmus *et al.*, 2020). Women from families with higher household monthly income are less likely to face economic abuse and overall domestic violence compared to their counterparts from low monthly income (Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2020). Study conducted by John (2020) among women who experienced economic violence perpetrated by their intimate partners reported these women to have lower household monthly income and not working compared to those who had never experienced economic violence. Another study revealed that women who face economic violence are more likely to face financial stress and financial resilience (Purdam & Prattley, 2021). Similarly, a study reported that women who have experienced economic abuse were more likely to suffer from psychological problems and other forms of violence (Davila *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, according to Coll *et al.* (2020) significant differences between income of the woman and her partner have strong link with economic violence. A study by Eriksson and Ulmestig (2021) reported that women subjected to economic violence often experience direct control over their finances, with abusers frequently restricting their access to money, employment opportunities, or assets, with some forced to surrender their earnings. This results to significant reduction in incomes of the women. This dependency

has significantly hindered their financial independence and makes them trapped to abusive relationships, hence perpetuating them in a cycle of poverty and vulnerability. Women subjected to economic violence may be denied the financial means to pursue education or access healthcare services, which are critical for their personal development and well-being (Krigel & Benjamin, 2021). This deprivation severely limits women's ability to escape abusive environments and rebuild their lives. According to Sinha *et al.* (2021) economic violence has significant long-term impacts on socio-economic welfare of the women, as it contributes to inequality and hinder development. Women who have been economically abused often face challenges in achieving economic stability, even after leaving abusive relationships.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design and Area

Descriptive cross-sectional design was used in the current study as described by (Anino & Sanga, 2024; Anino *et al.*, 2023). A total of 99 women who had experienced economic violence residing in Kanamkemer Ward in Turkana Central Sub County were included in the study. The inclusion criteria for the study participants included having lived in the area of study for at least six months prior to the onset of the study. This was considered necessary to ensure that the participants had sufficient experience of the local context and any related socioeconomic conditions. On the other hand, women who had met the inclusion criteria but had their cases before the court of law were not included in the current study.

Sampling Procedure

The study adopted simple random sampling technique to select the study participants. A list of the women who had experienced any form of domestic violence was obtained from the area chief and sub chief offices as well as from the health facilities within the study area. A master list comprising of all the names of the victims of domestic violence was generated from the mini lists. The master list was used as the sampling frame. A table of computer-generated numbers was thereafter used to select the 99 participants who were thereafter invited to participate in the study.

Study Tool and Data Collection

Data was collected using research administered questionnaires from October 2023 to end of December of the same year. Validity of the data collection instrument was ensured at different levels. Content validity was ensured by aligning the questionnaire items with the study's objective based on previous reports which enabled comprehensive coverage of the research constructs. Construct validity was ensured by confirming that the items within the questionnaire appropriately reflected the theoretical concepts being studied. On the other hand, criterion-related validity was established by correlating

the instruments' scores with established benchmarks in related studies, confirming the instruments' ability to predict outcomes accurately. Additionally, the study tool was subjected before a panel of experts from the host university to ensure that all the facets of validity were addressed.

To ensure the reliability of the research instruments, the test-retest method was employed. Twenty participants from the pilot study in Kalokol Ward completed the questionnaire twice, with a one-week interval between administrations. The reliability of the instruments was quantified using Cronbach alpha test, which yielded a value of 0.87, indicating a high level of consistency and stability in the responses over time. This high reliability coefficient demonstrates that the instruments produced consistent and reproducible results.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28.0. Descriptive statistics were conducted on all the variables and were summarized using percentages and frequencies. Chi-Square analysis was done to examine the relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable. The women's socio-economic factors such as employment status, personal income, family income, security, and educational level were scored into a single variable, women's socio-economic status, with three answer categories: low, moderate, and high (Nyaranga *et al.*, 2021). Multinomial logistic regression was used to quantify the association between the economic violence and the socio-economic welfare of the respondents. This was summarized using

odds ratios (OR), 95% confidence interval (CI) and p-value. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$ and 95% CI.

Ethical Considerations

The Catholic University of Eastern Africa Research Ethics Committee reviewed and approved the study, approval reference CUEA/DVC-ACAD/FOE/PGSE/NACOSTI/3-3/2023. Further approval was also sought from National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation, approval reference NACOSTI/P/23/25439. Permission was also sought from Sub County commissioner, the area chief and all relevant community leaders. The guidelines required that informed consent is obtained from all study participants or their legal guardians. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and the potential risks and benefits of participation. Privacy and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study. Participants' personal information, such as names and addresses, were kept confidential and was only accessible to the research team, instead unique codes were used as the identification of the study participants. Data was stored securely and only used for the purpose of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Economic Welfare

Socio-economic welfare of women was assessed by computing a single variable from the socio-economic variables as shown in Figure 1. Majority of the respondents had moderate and low socio-economic welfare, $n=41$ (42.3%) and $n=31$ (32.0%) respectively.

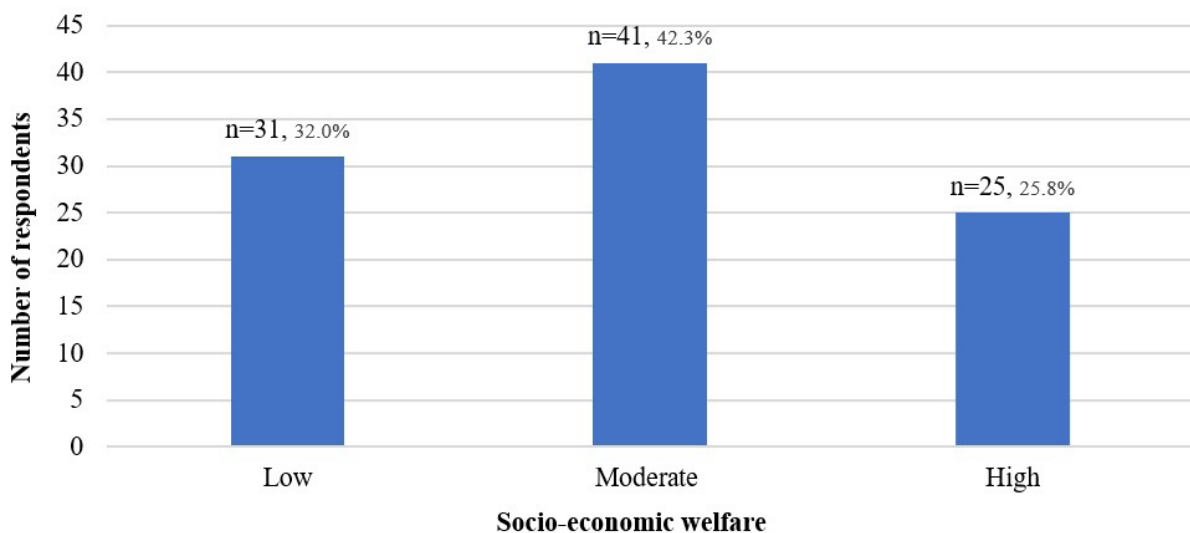


Figure 1: Socio-economic welfare of women

Socio-economic welfare serves as a crucial indicator of individuals' ability to access resources, meet basic needs, and achieve a satisfactory standard of living. The study found a concerning pattern where a significant proportion of respondents had moderate to low levels of socio-economic welfare. These results revealed a mixed

picture with the existing literature. A study by Chaurasia *et al.* (2021) revealed high prevalence of economic disparities and socio-economic inequalities among those experiencing intimate partner violence (Mthembu *et al.*, 2021). The current study aligns with these findings by establishing that a substantial number of women face

challenges in attaining economic security and well-being within intimate relationships (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020; Prime *et al.*, 2020).

Moreover, the distribution of socio-economic welfare observed in the study echoes broader patterns of socio-economic inequality documented in global and regional contexts. Research has consistently shown that women experiencing intimate partner violence are disproportionately affected by poverty, lack of access to education and employment opportunities, and limited financial resources (Adams *et al.*, 2021; Anino *et al.*, 2018; Spencer *et al.*, 2020). These structural inequalities contribute to the perpetuation of gender-based violence and hinder efforts to achieve gender equality and sustainable development. Economic abuse, alongside other forms of intimate partner violence, can exacerbate socio-economic disparities and limit survivors' ability to achieve economic independence and security (Cardenas *et al.*, 2021; Haifley, 2021).

Economic Violence

Information on economic violence among the respondents is reported in Table 1. Majority of respondents (n=54, 55.7%) reported that their partners were always supportive of them when employed. A good proportion of the respondents were always (n=53, 54.6%) and sometimes (n=37, 38.1%) allowed by their partners to make major decision on income or expenditure. Both the respondents and their partners were mostly the bread winners for their households (n=63, 64.9%). Partners of the respondents were always (n=60, 61.9%) and sometimes (n=29, 29.9%) supporting respondents economically. About half of the respondents (n=49, 50.5%) reported that their partners were able to satisfactorily provide their basic needs and economic support. However, 46 (47.4%) indicated that their partners sometimes withheld economic support when they had misunderstanding, and 30 (30.9%) always withheld the support when there is misunderstanding. Additionally, 46 (47.4%) and 33 (34.0%) had autonomy of accessing partners money at will.

Table 1: Information on economic violence

Variables	N (97)	% (100)
Partner supportive of employed respondent		
Never	4	4.1
Sometimes	39	40.2
Always	54	55.7
Partner allows spouse to make major decision on income or expenditure		
Never	7	7.2
Sometimes	37	38.1
Always	53	54.6
Family bread winner		
Respondent	5	5.2
Partner	29	29.9
Both respondent and partner	63	64.9
Frequency of economic support from partner		
Never	8	8.2
Sometimes	29	29.9
Always	60	61.9
Able to satisfactorily provide basic needs from partners economic support		
Never	6	6.2
Sometimes	42	43.3
Always	49	50.5
Intimate partner withholds economic support whenever there is misunderstanding		
Never	21	21.6
Sometimes	46	47.4
Always	30	30.9
Autonomy of accessing partners money at will		
Never	18	18.6
Sometimes	33	34.0
Always	46	47.4

Association between Economic Violence and Socio-Economic Welfare of the Participants

The results of bivariate analysis are presented in Table 2. Two variables were significantly associated with the socio-economic welfare of the respondents. These variables were partner allowing respondent to make

major decision on income and expenditure ($X^2 = 13.3$, $df = 6$, $p = 0.04$) and ability to satisfactorily provide basic needs from partners' economic support ($X^2 = 17.0$, $df = 6$, $p = 0.01$). All the other variables were not statistically associated with the socio-economic welfare of the respondents.

Table 2: Relationship between economic violence and women socio-economic welfare

Variables	Chi square	Df	P value
Partner supportive of employed respondent	9.4	2	0.05
Partner allows spouse to make major decision on income and expenditure	13.3	6	0.04
Family bread winner	1.2	4	0.88
Frequency of economic support from partner	5.3	6	0.50
Able to satisfactorily provide basic needs from partners economic support	17.0	6	0.01
Intimate partner withholds economic support whenever there is misunderstanding	8.1	4	0.09
Autonomy of accessing partners money at will	12.6	6	0.05

Regression analysis was carried out using multinomial regression as shown in Table 3. Respondents who were never allowed by their partners to make major decision on income or expenditure had an increased likelihood of low socio-economic welfare (95% CI: 4.2 (0.4-13.0, $P = 0.00$)). The results further revealed that respondents who were allowed by partners to make major decision on income and expenditure had low likelihood of low

socio-economic welfare (95% CI: 0.5 (0.0-4.6, $P = 0.01$)). Similarly, respondents who were always able to satisfactorily provide basic needs from partners economic support had reduced likelihood of low socio-economic welfare (95% CI: 0.7 (1.0-6.9, $p = 0.04$)). However, age and type of marriage were not significantly associated with reduced or increased likelihood of any of the socio-economic welfare categories.

Table 3: Regression analysis of economic violence and women's socio-economic welfare

Variables	Women socio economic welfare	
	Low	Moderate
Partner allows spouse to make major decision on income/expenditure		
Never	4.2 (0.4-13.0)*	3.3 (0.2-9.6)
Sometimes	0.9 (0.4-5.7)	3.7 (0.2-9.0)
Always	0.5 (0.0-4.6)*	5.2 (1.3-7.2)
Able to satisfactorily provide basic needs from partners economic support		
Never	0.2 (0.0-0.8)	0.7 (0.1-2.5)
Sometimes	4.2 (0.1-12.2)	1.3 (0.1-3.7)
Always	0.7 (1.0-6.9)*	3.8 (0.4-7.4)
Age		
18 to 25 years	2.7 (0.4-7.8)	0.6 (0.2-3.6)
26 to 45 years	1.5 (0.6-4.8)	5.5 (1.6-8.3)
Above 45 years	-	-
Type of marriage		
Monogamy	0.5 (0.0-6.9)	1.8 (0.3-11.8)
Polygamy	-	-

Model adjusted for all the variables in the table, *Statistically significance, reference category was high socio-economic welfare.

Economic violence includes various forms of control and manipulation related to financial resources which infringes on survivors' autonomy, well-being, and ability to meet basic needs (Dos & Santos Da Silva, 2023). While a majority of respondents reported partners, who were

supportive and contributed financially to the household, a big proportion also experienced economic control and withholding of support, particularly during times of misunderstanding. This was similar to reports in the literature which showed pervasive economic abuse within intimate partnerships (Christy *et al.*, 2022). However, the current study delved deeper into the specific forms of control and manipulations related to financial resources

that are associated with socio-economic outcomes. Of particular significance is the association between partners allowing respondents to make major decisions on income and expenditure and the socio-economic welfare and the ability to satisfactorily provide basic needs from partners' economic support and socio-economic welfare. Interestingly, respondents who were never allowed by their partners to make major decisions on income or expenditure were more likely to have low socio-economic welfare, highlighting the detrimental impact of economic control and restriction on financial autonomy (French *et al.*, 2021). Conversely, those who had the autonomy to make such decisions were less likely to experience low socio-economic welfare which is an indication of the protective role of financial autonomy in mitigating the risk of economic hardship (Gupta *et al.*, 2022). Similarly, respondents who reported always being able to satisfactorily provide basic needs from partners' economic support had a reduced likelihood of low socio-economic welfare which is consistent with previous reports that reliable access to financial resources is the key to meeting basic needs and maintaining economic stability, particularly for vulnerable individuals in abusive relationships (Haifley, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The study examined the influence of economic violence on socio-economic welfare. It was evident that economic control and the withholding of financial support by partners were detrimental to the financial autonomy and overall economic stability of women. The findings emphasized the importance of financial independence in mitigating the risk of economic hardship among women in abusive relationships. Furthermore, the study underscored the critical role of access to financial resources in ensuring that women can meet their basic needs and maintain economic stability, particularly in the context of domestic violence.

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