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**THE EFFECT OF WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT ON DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE IN GULU CITY**

A dissertation presented to

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Master of Arts in Development Studies

UGANDA MARTYRS UNIVERSITY

Uganda Martyrs University
Making a Difference

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September 2025

DECLARATION

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Master's Dissertation

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Date of submission: 22.09.2025

Submitted to the Directorate of Graduate Studies, Research and Enterprise

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**DIRECTORATE OF GRADUATE STUDIES, RESEARCH AND
ENTERPRISE**

Master's Dissertation

Approval

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Date of submission: 22.09.2025

Submitted to the Directorate of Graduate Studies, Research and Enterprise

DEDICATION

This piece of work is dedicated to all the women in Northern Uganda.

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LISTS OF ACRONYMS

ASA – Association for Social Advancement

BRAC – Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, now simply known as BRAC

CCFU- Cross-Cultural Foundation in Uganda

CCT – Conditional Cash Transfer

FGDs – Focus Group Discussions

GBV – Gender-Based Violence

IDPs – Internally Displaced Persons

IPV – Intimate Partner Violence

MGLSD – Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development

NGOs – Non-Governmental Organizations

PDM – Parish Development Model

PTSD – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

RCTs – Randomized Controlled Trials

UBOS – Uganda Bureau of Statistics

UK – United Kingdom

UMFO – Urub Wunu Mon for Cooperative Savings and Credit Society

UNFPA- United Nations Population Fund

UWEP – Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme

WEE – Women’s Economic Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the impact of women's economic empowerment on domestic violence in Gulu City, Northern Uganda, using a feminist ecological framework. It examined how participation in empowerment programmes influenced experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV), the psychological effects of such violence on women's economic engagement, and the role of social support systems in mediating these dynamics. A transformative mixed-methods design was employed, integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches to highlight diverse perspectives—ranging from survivors and local leaders to NGO staff engaged in GBV prevention. Findings revealed that while economic empowerment improved women's income, autonomy, and confidence, it had a paradoxical effect on domestic violence. In many cases, reduced financial dependency and increased assertiveness triggered backlash in patriarchal households, intensifying emotional, physical, or financial abuse. Women affected by IPV experienced trauma, social isolation, and business withdrawal. Nonetheless, some demonstrated resilience through participation in village savings groups, entrepreneurship, and peer or faith-based networks. However, limited institutional support—especially the lack of coordinated psychosocial services—continues to affect the long-term recovery of women who experience domestic violence. Many women in Gulu City still face barriers when trying to rebuild their economic lives. While some community members respect empowered women as examples of progress, others view them with suspicion, often labeling them as disobedient or disrespectful to traditional gender roles. In many households, men continue to control the finances, even when women participate in income-generating activities. A number of empowerment programmes have also been affected by issues such as poor coordination, limited follow-up, and a lack of practical skills training. One key finding of the study is that involving men in the empowerment process is essential. Activities such as couple-based trainings, community dialogues, and joint financial planning sessions helped reduce resistance and encouraged more cooperative relationships at home. The study recommends that any program promoting women's economic empowerment should also address deeply held cultural beliefs about gender. This includes incorporating education about gender roles, offering emotional support for survivors of violence, and encouraging shared decision-making between partners. Government agencies and NGOs should also work to make their programmes more accessible, provide personalized guidance, and collaborate more closely with local groups such as religious institutions and community-based organizations. Policies should reflect the realities of life in Gulu City, including legal recognition of customary marriages, protection for survivors of violence, and public awareness campaigns. Empowerment on its own is not enough, unless women are also supported emotionally and socially, and unless community norms begin to shift, domestic violence will likely persist. True change will only happen when economic support is combined with efforts to heal trauma and promote equality in both public and private life, foster resilience, reduce violence, and create pathways for lasting gender equality in Gulu City.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the study by presenting the background, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, scope, significance, and conceptual framework. It concludes with the operational definitions of key terms. Through these discussions, the chapter established the context for examining the impact of women's economic empowerment and associated experiences on domestic violence in Gulu City.

1.1 Background to the study

The background to the study has been organized into four subthemes to provide a comprehensive overview. These subthemes include the historical, theoretical, conceptual, and contextual backgrounds as detailed below.

1.1.1 Historical Background

Research by Marylène Patou-Mathis indicated that social violence began to emerge around 15,000 years ago, coinciding with the period when human groups began to settle in permanent communities. Violence, including gender-based violence (GBV), is not biologically encoded but has socio-historical roots (Kumari et al., 2024). Patriarchal societies institutionalized male dominance, legitimizing practices of control and punishment over women. Social, legal, and cultural norms restricted women's autonomy, framing them as property of male relatives and subjecting them to limited freedoms in education, careers, and personal decisions (Kamp, 2020).

Religious and cultural texts reinforced these norms, portraying women as subordinate and justifying their control through marriage and discipline. Legal systems offered little protection, with laws often permitting physical punishment of wives, while societal stigmas silenced victims

of violence (Hattab & Mahamid, 2024). This patriarchal legacy remains embedded in modern societies, influencing attitudes toward domestic violence despite advancements in women's rights (Beddows & Mishra, 2024). During the early modern period (16th–18th centuries), domestic violence was largely ignored as a private matter. However, early feminist critiques challenged gender inequities, laying the foundation for subsequent movements (Yadav & Malik, 2024). The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw suffragette movements worldwide, led by figures such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, advocating for women's political rights and equality (Davey, 2022).

Post-World War II, societal shifts accelerated with the United Nations Charter (1945), which enshrined gender equality. Feminist movements in the 1960s and 1970s expanded to issues such as reproductive rights, workplace equality, and dismantling gender stereotypes (Xie, 2023). International milestones, including the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the Sustainable Development Goals (2015), reinforced global commitments to women's empowerment and gender equality (Pierson & Higbie, 2022). The 1990s marked international recognition of violence against women, condemned at the World Conference on Human Rights (1993) and the 4th World Conference on Women (1995). The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998) classified sexual violence, including systematic rape, as a crime against humanity (Karvatska et al., 2024).

Advocates of women's rights credit legal reforms and empowerment initiatives for reducing tolerance of domestic violence and providing pathways to safety. Critics argue these advances can provoke backlash in patriarchal societies, perpetuating cycles of violence against women asserting their rights (Mahipal & Garg, 2024). Addressing domestic violence requires culturally

sensitive approaches, stronger legal protections, and efforts to dismantle systemic barriers that sustain GBV.

1.1.2 Theoretical Background

This study adopted feminist theory within the ecological model framework. The earliest proponent of feminist thought is often credited to Mary Wollstonecraft, whose 1792 work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* advocated for women's education and equality. Building on this foundation, feminist theory addresses gender-based inequalities and power dynamics. Embracing this lens, the study explored the interconnectedness of women's economic empowerment and domestic violence, focusing on societal structures, gender roles, and power dynamics (Kurebwa, 2021). The ecological model views individual behaviors as shaped by socio-cultural, economic, and environmental contexts. Through a feminist lens, it highlights how power dynamics in households, communities, and societal structures influence women's experiences. While empowerment fosters agency and reduces dependence, it can challenge patriarchal norms, eliciting resistance or backlash that complicates women's lived experiences (Pankowiaka et al., 2024).

Applying feminist theory within the ecological model enabled a holistic analysis of empowerment and domestic violence. In Gulu City, this framework examined individual-level agency, family-level power dynamics, and community-level cultural norms. It revealed how empowerment initiatives impacted women across multiple levels and identified unintended consequences, such as increased domestic violence from disruptions in entrenched gender roles (Benjamin et al., 2024).

The feminist ecological model offered valuable insights but had limitations. Its focus on systemic factors may have overlooked individual resilience and struggled to address cultural variations, as in Gulu City. Furthermore, feminist perspectives on gender equality clashed with traditional or patriarchal viewpoints, complicating intervention strategies within specific communities (Misra, 2024). Feminist theories critically analyze power dynamics in relationships and societal systems. This study investigated how economic empowerment programmes might destabilize existing power structures, potentially causing domestic violence. Examining these dynamics, the research aimed to offer actionable recommendations for designing initiatives that mitigate backlash while advancing sustainable gender equality progress (Whaley, 2024).

1.1.3 Conceptual Background

Physical violence involves actions intended to inflict harm or exert control over a partner. It includes direct acts, which include beating, kicking, burning, shoving, slapping, and biting, as well as indirect harm such as withholding medical care or coercing substance abuse. Intimidation tactics such as property destruction further reinforce control (Gulina et al., 2018). Recognizing physical violence requires identifying visible injuries, which include bruises or burns, denial of medical care, or environmental evidence such as damaged property (Paudel, 2018).

Sexual violence encompasses coercive or non-consensual sexual acts, including rape, characterized by forced penetration through physical force or threats. Such abuse undermines survivors' autonomy, causing severe physical and psychological harm (East & Hutchinson, 2022). Prevention requires raising awareness, offering survivors healthcare, counseling, and legal assistance with the strengthening legal frameworks to hold perpetrators accountable. Community engagement is vital to challenging societal norms that perpetuate sexual violence and promoting respect for consent (Addis & Snowdon, 2023).

Emotional violence involves patterns of harmful behaviors aimed at causing psychological harm, including persistent criticism, humiliation, and controlling behaviors such as isolation and financial restrictions. It intends to establish dominance, leading to significant trauma (Giri & Parveen, 2024). Addressing emotional violence necessitates developing interventions and comprehensive support systems for survivors (Penttinen, 2023).

Access to finance is essential for women's economic empowerment, promoting financial inclusion through banking, credit, and microfinance services. Research shows that greater financial access enhances labor participation, reduces inequality, and fosters economic growth (Arshad, 2023). Financial literacy complements empowerment by equipping women with skills for effective resource management. Programmes that integrate financial education with empowerment initiatives foster independence and contribute to sustainable development and gender equality (Kinyanjui & Ocholla , 2024).

Entrepreneurship skills are pivotal for women's empowerment, enabling them to overcome gender barriers and drive socio-economic progress. Economic empowerment enhances decision-making and reinforces the link between women's employment and gender equality, emphasizing the importance of economic independence for societal advancement (Thorpe et al., 2023).

Substance abuse complicates the relationship between economic empowerment and domestic violence, intensifying abuse and escalating healthcare needs. Economic empowerment may provoke male backlash, manifesting in substance abuse and aggressive behaviors, including financial control and economic abuse (Sanders, 2015). Integrated interventions addressing both substance abuse and economic empowerment are essential. These should include counseling,

financial education for couples, and initiatives to challenge harmful gender norms, ensuring holistic support for survivors (Manurung, 2024).

1.1.4 Contextual background

The pursuit of women's economic empowerment in Uganda has been deeply influenced by cultural, social, and economic factors shaping gender dynamics. While progress toward gender equality has been notable, traditional norms and patriarchal structures continue to constrain women's access to resources and opportunities. In Northern Uganda, particularly in post-conflict settings, women faced the dual challenge of navigating entrenched patriarchal expectations alongside emerging opportunities that offer alternative roles. These tensions often perpetuate cycles of dependency and heighten vulnerability to domestic violence, despite efforts to address gender inequities (Lundgren et al., 2019).

Adolescents in rural Uganda are especially influenced by gender stereotypes that restrict women's participation in economic activities (Farago et al., 2021). Deeply rooted cultural beliefs in these communities present significant barriers to achieving substantive gender equity. While community-based programmes and cooperatives have been initiated to promote empowerment, socio-cultural barriers and the prevalence of gender-based violence remain major obstacles (Nanyanzi et al., 2024). Gulu City, located in the Acholi sub-region, offered a unique lens for examining the relationship between women's economic empowerment and domestic violence. The traditional norms of the Acholi community played a central role in shaping women's experiences in economic and domestic spheres. These cultural dynamics provided critical insights into the complexities of empowerment initiatives and their unintended consequences (CCFU, 2017).

The economic environment in Gulu City was characterized by agriculture, trade, and emerging industries. Women's participation in economic activities, such as entrepreneurship and formal employment, significantly influences power dynamics within both households and communities. This study explored how these economic engagements affected broader empowerment outcomes, including changes in gender relations and access to resources (CCFU, 2017). Gender-based violence rose alarmingly in the region, with a 10.4% increase reported in 2020 (UNFPA, 2021). Empowerment initiatives, though well-intentioned, inadvertently provoked male backlash, including increased domestic violence and substance abuse, thereby complicating women's well-being. Understanding the link between women's economic empowerment and domestic violence is vital to designing interventions that avoid exacerbating harm. Government and non-governmental organizations in Gulu City have launched various initiatives to address these challenges. Programmes included education, economic support, and community development aimed at enhancing women's societal roles. However, the effectiveness of these interventions varied, with some inadvertently exacerbating domestic violence due to shifts in household power dynamics (Chikwe et al., 2024).

This study focused on Gulu City to analyze the intricate interplay of socio-cultural, economic, and gender dynamics affecting women's economic empowerment. It aimed to provide practical insights for designing strategies that empowered women while minimizing unintended consequences such as domestic violence. Findings are intended to contribute to developing targeted interventions that address the root causes of gender inequities, fostering sustainable empowerment and resilience among vulnerable populations.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a pervasive and deeply entrenched issue in Gulu City, Acholi Sub-region, with significant consequences for the safety, mental health, and socio-economic participation of women. According to data from the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2021) and Woldetsadik et al. (2022), by 2020, 78% of women in the region had experienced physical violence, 64% had been subjected to sexual violence, and 76.3% had endured emotional abuse. These figures showed minimal improvement over time. More recent statistics from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD, 2023) confirmed the continued prevalence of GBV, with physical and sexual violence rates still standing at 78% and 64%, respectively.

While various actors, including government institutions, civil society organizations, and local community policing structures, have implemented programmes aimed at reducing GBV, evidence suggests that these interventions have not yielded substantial reductions in violence. A major concern is the inadequate translation of legal and policy frameworks, such as the National Gender Policy, into enforceable and culturally sensitive community actions (MoGLSD, 2023). Women's economic empowerment initiatives, in particular, though well-intentioned, have yielded mixed results. In some cases, they have enhanced women's agency and financial independence; however, in other instances, they appear to have unintentionally triggered domestic conflict by disrupting entrenched household power structures (ActionAid, 2021).

Furthermore, the psychological toll of domestic violence on women remains understudied, particularly in relation to how trauma affects their ability to benefit from empowerment programmes. The emotional and mental health impacts of violence, including anxiety, depression, and fear, undermine women's participation in economic activities and their ability to

sustain livelihoods (WHO, 2021). The role of community support systems and social networks in enabling women to cope with the dual pressures of economic participation and domestic abuse is not clearly understood. Local cultural norms, social stigma, and weak institutional support may limit the protective capacity of these networks, further marginalizing women in abusive settings (Chikwe et al., 2024).

These persistent gaps, both structural and psychosocial, continue to entrench cycles of violence, economic dependency, and gender inequality. They also hinder the attainment of Uganda's broader development targets, including Vision 2040, the National Development Plan III, and the Parish Development Model (Matovu, 2024). Therefore, this study aimed to explore the economic empowerment programmes that women in Gulu City participate in and their potential influence on domestic violence; to examine the psychological effects of domestic violence on women's economic empowerment; and to investigate how community support systems affect the ability of economically empowered women to navigate or escape abusive environments.

By generating evidence-based insights, the study seeks to inform the design of more effective, culturally appropriate, and gender-responsive interventions to address domestic violence and advance women's empowerment in the Acholi Sub-region.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to explore the impact of women economic empowerment on domestic violence in Gulu City.

1.4 Specific Research Objectives

- i. To explore the economic empowerment programmes that women in Gulu City have participated in and their influence on domestic violence.

- ii. To explore the psychological effect of domestic violence on women in Gulu City and its implications for their economic empowerment.
- iii. To investigate how community support systems and social networks influence the ability of economically empowered women in Gulu City to cope with domestic violence.

1.5 Research Questions

- i. What economic empowerment programmes are available to women in Gulu City, and how do they influence domestic violence?
- ii. What are the psychological effects of domestic violence on women in Gulu City, and how do these effects impact their economic empowerment?
- iii. How do community support systems and social networks assist economically empowered women in Gulu City in coping with domestic violence?

1.6 Scope of the study

1.6.1 Time scope

The study was conducted within the time frame of 2020-2023, which provided a valuable window for examining the contemporary dynamics between women's economic empowerment and domestic violence in Gulu City. This period captured recent developments in the socio-economic landscape, particularly in light of evolving national and local policies aimed at gender equality and economic empowerment. Research by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2021) and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (2023) highlighted the persistence of domestic violence and the ongoing efforts to address these issues, making this time frame especially relevant for understanding the current context of women's empowerment and violence in the region.

1.6.2 Subject scope

The focus of this study was on the relationship between women's economic empowerment and its potential correlations with domestic violence within the context of Gulu City. The research explored various dimensions of economic empowerment, including education, employment, and income levels, and assessed how these factors interact with the prevalence and manifestation of domestic violence. Specifically, the study examined the economic empowerment programmes that women in Gulu City have participated in, aiming to identify their potential influence on domestic violence dynamics.

The subject scope also included an exploration of the psychological impact of domestic violence on women and its subsequent implications for their economic empowerment. This allowed the study to investigate how experiencing domestic violence affected women's ability to fully engage in or benefit from economic empowerment initiatives.

Furthermore, the research assessed the role of community support systems and social networks in helping economically empowered women in Gulu City cope with domestic violence. By focusing on the role of these support mechanisms, the study sought to understand how they help mitigate the negative effects of domestic violence and enable women to maintain or enhance their economic empowerment.

The study focused on the lived experiences of women in Gulu City, with particular emphasis on understanding the unintended consequences of empowerment initiatives. This included exploring

how economic empowerment programmes may unintentionally contribute to domestic violence or create new forms of vulnerability.

1.6.3 Geographical Scope

The study was exclusively conducted in Gulu City, located in the Acholi Sub-region of Northern Uganda. Gulu City was selected as the primary geographical focus due to its distinct socio-cultural and economic characteristics, which provided a rich context for examining the relationship between women's economic empowerment and domestic violence. This localized approach ensured an in-depth analysis of the dynamics within the region, allowing perceptions that are highly relevant to Gulu and can potentially be applied to similar areas in Northern Uganda and Uganda as a whole.

Gulu City is situated at approximately 2.7741° N latitude and 32.2960° E longitude. It lies in the northern part of Uganda, roughly 320 kilometers (200 miles) north of the capital, Kampala. The geographical position of the City played a significant role in shaping the socio-economic conditions and challenges faced by its residents, making it an ideal location for this study (Uganda Convention Bureau, 2024).

Gulu City is surrounded by several districts that significantly contribute to the region's socio-cultural and economic dynamics. To the North, Amuru District is a rural area known for its agricultural activities and its proximity to the South Sudanese border. To the West, Nwoya District is also predominantly rural, with its economy focused on agriculture and natural resource extraction. To the South lies Oyam District, which is largely agricultural and part of the broader Lango Sub-region. To the East, Pader / Omoro Districts are another agricultural area, home to a

significant number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to past conflicts. This geographical setting ensures that Gulu City's experiences with economic empowerment and domestic violence are influenced by the region's unique historical, cultural, and socio-economic circumstances (Kalyango , 2018).

The findings of this study are intended to primarily inform interventions within Gulu City but may also have valuable implications for other areas in the Acholi Sub-region and Northern Uganda, where similar socio-economic challenges and cultural dynamics exist. Moreover, the broader patterns observed could contribute to national-level insights on women's economic empowerment and domestic violence in Uganda. Focusing specifically on Gulu City, the study aimed to offer localized solutions and actionable recommendations while recognizing the potential relevance of its findings to broader contexts in Uganda and in similar global settings.

1.7 Significance of the study

The study is expected to provide valuable insights and a robust platform for key stakeholders, including policy makers, legislators, and the government of Uganda, to enhance and improve existing policies and legal frameworks on domestic violence. The findings will contribute significantly to the ongoing efforts in shaping more effective laws and policies aimed at addressing domestic violence in Uganda. By offering evidence-based recommendations, this study can support the formulation of policies that better protect victims and prevent future violence, thus benefiting the broader Ugandan population.

One of the key beneficiaries of this study is the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), which is responsible for promoting the well-being of women and addressing issues such as domestic violence in Uganda. The study has provided empirical data

on the drivers and impacts of domestic violence, enabling the ministry to make informed, action-oriented decisions. This data is critical in the efforts by the ministry to design and implement effective programmes and interventions to combat domestic violence, improve the support systems available for victims, and promote gender equality in Uganda.

The study has equally contributed to the growing body of empirical literature on domestic violence, serving as a valuable resource for other researchers and scholars interested in studying similar issues. The findings offered a detailed analysis of the drivers, impacts, and potential solutions to domestic violence, which can be referenced by academics conducting related research, particularly in the context of the social, economic, and cultural factors that contribute to domestic violence in Uganda.

The study has broader implications for other jurisdictions looking to improve their policies and legal frameworks concerning domestic violence. The lessons and experiences drawn from this study provided insights for countries or regions with similar socio-cultural contexts, offering them practical strategies and solutions to reduce domestic violence. This comparative aspect of the study could help other governments and organizations design more effective interventions and support systems for victims of domestic violence.

In terms of the target population and sampling, the study primarily focused on key stakeholders involved in the legal, social, and policy frameworks of domestic violence. This included policy makers, government officials from relevant ministries, NGOs, legal experts, victims of domestic violence, and community leaders. Engaging these groups ensured that the findings of the study were relevant and actionable for those directly involved in creating and implementing policies related to domestic violence. Through the inclusion of a diverse set of stakeholders, the study

provided a comprehensive understanding of the issue and its solutions, benefiting a wide range of individuals and organizations working toward ending domestic violence in Uganda and beyond.

1.8 Justification of the study

Domestic violence remained a pervasive issue in many communities around the world, and it continues to have detrimental effects on individuals, families, and societies at large. Despite its widespread occurrence, domestic violence is a serious societal problem that disrupts social harmony, undermines the well-being of women, and perpetuates cycles of abuse. This study was prompted by the urgent need to understand the complex interaction between women's economic empowerment and domestic violence, particularly in a specific socio-cultural and economic context. Choosing Gulu City as the case study, this research focused on a unique setting that offers valuable insights into the specific challenges women face in their pursuit of economic empowerment, as well as the potential repercussions of these challenges in the form of domestic violence.

The study addressed a critical gap in the literature by examining how women's economic empowerment initiatives, though vital for gender equality, may unintentionally intensify domestic violence. While many programs strengthen the financial independence of women, poorly designed efforts trigger household tensions, power struggles, or violent male backlash. For instance, women gaining economic autonomy may face resistance from partners who perceive it as threatening traditional roles, leading to intimate partner violence as control. These findings stress the need for empowerment initiatives that prioritize safety alongside independence.

Focusing on Gulu City, the study highlighted the localized nature of women's economic empowerment and domestic violence. The unique socio-cultural and economic features of the City, shaped by past conflicts and ongoing social challenges, influenced household power dynamics and provided critical insight into how empowerment interacts with violence. Findings generated context-specific knowledge that informed targeted interventions and policy recommendations aimed at addressing the root causes of domestic violence while simultaneously promoting women's economic independence in Gulu and other similar contexts.

Understanding the dynamics between women's economic empowerment and domestic violence is vital for strategies that promote independence without risking safety. Centered on Gulu City, the study offered insights transferable to other regions, guiding policymakers to design programs that enhance financial autonomy while integrating safeguards and support systems against potential violence. Such context-specific evidence ensures that empowerment initiatives are both transformative and protective, balancing economic progress with rights and security. These findings contribute to shaping effective, sustainable interventions across Uganda and beyond.

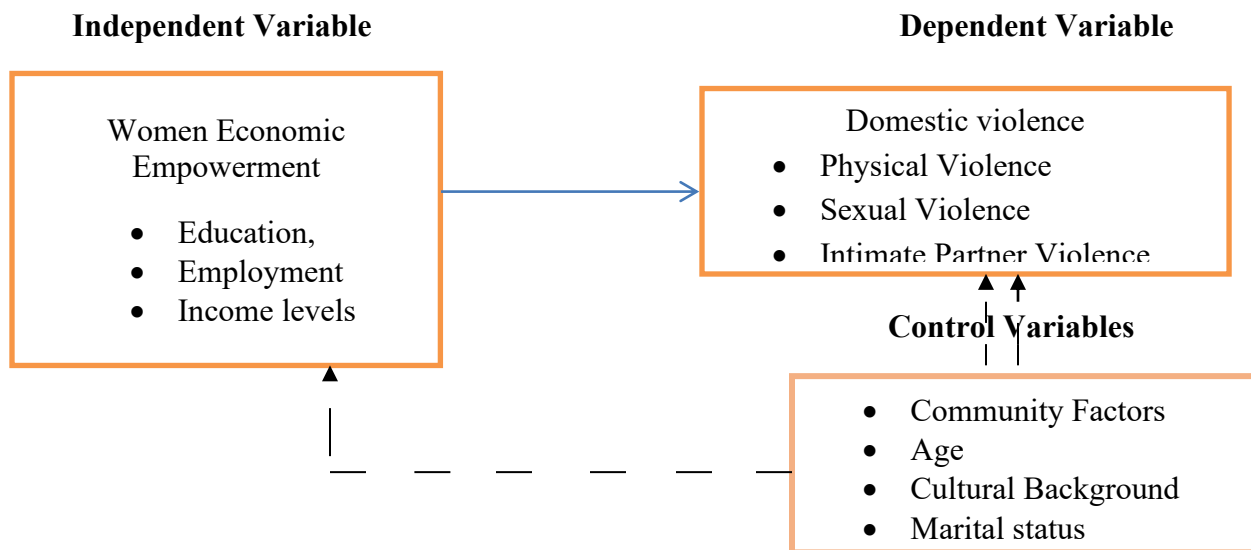
This study is important as it explores the under-examined impact of women's economic empowerment on domestic violence while offering actionable insights for policymakers, community leaders, and rights-based organizations. Without such evidence, critical dynamics between empowerment and violence may be overlooked, potentially perpetuating harm. The findings serve as a model for regions facing similar socio-cultural challenges, promoting safer empowerment strategies. Ultimately, the study underscores the need for thoughtfully designed

initiatives that advance women’s economic independence while safeguarding their overall well-being and safety.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework visually illustrated relationships among independent, control, and dependent variables, showing their interactions within the study. It served to guide analysis, clarify linkages, and demonstrate how the variables influenced each other to address research objectives (Waldt, 2020).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework showing diagrammatic relationship between women economic empowerment, control variables, and domestic violence



Source: Waldt, (2020) and moderated by the researcher in 2022

Figure 1.1 above shows factors such as Education, Employment, and Income levels as predominant factors of economic empowerment among women, and these constitute the dimensions of the independent variable (Women economic empowerment) of this study. The dependent variable was domestic violence, and during this study analysis was conducted to see

whether the identified factors have any relationship with the occurrence of domestic violence in women in Gulu City. The control variables were educational level, marital status, age, and community factors.

1.10 Operational Definition of Terms

Women Economic Empowerment (WEE): refers to the measurable improvement of women's ability to access, control, and benefit from economic resources. It encompasses increased income, better employment, entrepreneurship opportunities, and financial independence. In this study, WEE is examined in relation to domestic violence, exploring how women's economic independence may influence household dynamics. The focus is on whether initiatives such as income generation or entrepreneurship, while promoting financial autonomy, may unintentionally trigger conflict or violence within intimate relationships.

Domestic violence: For this study, domestic violence encompasses various forms of abusive behavior that occur within intimate partner relationships or family settings. This includes physical, emotional, psychological, and economic abuse, all of which occur without informed consent and are typically motivated by gender roles, expectations, privileges, and societal restrictions. Domestic violence is a key focus of the research, as the study investigates how women's economic empowerment may interact with or potentially exacerbate domestic violence. By examining the different forms of abuse, this study aims to identify how women's empowerment may influence the frequency or intensity of abuse.

These operational definitions serve as a foundation for understanding the key concepts at the heart of this study. Clearly defining WEE, domestic violence, and substance abuse, the study is positioned to explore the intricate relationships between these factors in Gulu City.

Understanding how women's economic empowerment interacts with domestic violence and whether substance abuse plays a role in these dynamics will contribute to informed, targeted interventions aimed at reducing domestic violence and enhancing women's safety and well-being in the region.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provided a comprehensive examination of the theoretical framework informing the study and synthesizes existing research on women economic empowerment and domestic violence from various scholarly sources. Utilizing electronic journals, textbooks, dissertations, reports, and newspapers, the literature is systematically reviewed, organized by specific study objectives to offer a structured and objective presentation of the available knowledge on the subject.

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was anchored on the Feminist Theory of the Ecological Model, which provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the interconnectedness of women's economic empowerment and domestic violence. The model emphasized the interplay between societal structures, gender roles, and power dynamics, offering a lens to explore how economic empowerment initiatives might inadvertently contribute to or exacerbate domestic violence (Kurebwa, 2021). Within a feminist framework, the ecological model considers the multilayered factors influencing individual and societal behaviors, including economic, cultural, and relational contexts. This perspective is particularly relevant to the socio-cultural dynamics in Gulu City, where gendered power structures significantly shape women's experiences.

The ecological model provided a comprehensive approach to understanding the relationship between individual behaviors and broader socio-cultural factors. It considers multiple levels of influence, including individual, familial, community, and societal layers. This multi-dimensional

approach makes it ideal for analyzing complex issues such as violence, where causes and outcomes are rarely confined to a single domain (Rowe et al., 2013).

Feminist theories placed a strong emphasis on structural inequalities and power imbalances, which are critical in understanding domestic violence. This focus enabled the study to explore how women's economic empowerment alters household dynamics, potentially challenging traditional gender roles and power structures. The model's adaptability to specific contexts, such as Gulu City, enhances its relevance. By incorporating the unique socio-cultural and economic factors of the area, the theory supports an analysis of how local norms and traditions interact with women's empowerment and domestic violence. By highlighting the potential unintended consequences of empowerment initiatives, such as resistance or backlash from male partners, the theory provides a basis for designing interventions that address domestic violence. This ensured that empowerment efforts are not only effective but also sensitive to the broader socio-cultural context.

While the ecological model offered a comprehensive perspective, its multi-layered approach can complicate efforts to isolate specific factors contributing to domestic violence. This complexity may pose challenges in narrowing the study's focus or drawing definitive conclusions. The emphasis of the theory on context-specific dynamics may underplay universal aspects of economic empowerment and domestic violence. As a result, findings from the study might have limited applicability to other regions or cultural settings.

Feminist theories often emphasized resistance or backlash as a response to empowerment, potentially overlooking cases where empowerment initiatives successfully reduce violence without provoking adverse reactions. This limitation could lead to an overemphasis on negative outcomes. While the theory prioritizes gendered power dynamics, it may neglect other intersecting factors such as economic class, education, or health issues that can influence domestic violence. A more intersectional approach could enhance its explanatory power.

The theory provided a structured framework for analyzing the interactions between women's economic empowerment and domestic violence. It facilitated an exploration of how individual economic empowerment interacts with familial, community, and societal structures in Gulu City. Both positive and negative outcomes of empowerment initiatives can be assessed within this framework. By emphasizing power imbalances, the theory helps to unpack resistance or backlash that may arise from shifts in household dynamics due to economic empowerment. This focus ensures that the study delves deeply into the gendered power structures influencing domestic violence.

The ecological model allowed for a deep analysis of the socio-cultural and economic factors unique to Gulu City. This ensured that the findings of the study are contextually relevant, capturing the specific challenges and opportunities associated with women's empowerment in the region. Insights derived from this theoretical framework will inform the design of targeted interventions. These interventions aimed to mitigate potential negative consequences of empowerment initiatives, such as backlash, while promoting sustainable reductions in domestic violence.

The Feminist Theory of the Ecological Model offered a robust and context-sensitive framework for exploring the complex relationship between women's economic empowerment and domestic violence in Gulu City. While it has limitations, such as its complexity and potential overemphasis on context-specific factors, its strengths lie in its holistic perspective, focus on power dynamics, and adaptability to socio-cultural settings. This theoretical foundation guided the study's design, analysis, and recommendations, ensuring a clear and comprehensive exploration of the topic.

The study was also guided by the Marital Dependency Theory, which was first conceptualized by sociologists and economists examining the dynamics of marital relationships and the interplay between dependency and power within households. The theory finds its roots in the Resource Theory of Power, introduced by Blood and Wolfe (1960), which posits that the partner who controls more resources in a relationship holds greater power (Chien & Yi, 2014).

The theory builds on the idea that economic dependency, often defined by financial reliance of one partner on the other, shapes the balance of power, decision-making, and vulnerability to exploitation or abuse within marriage. Marital dependency emphasizes the financial and emotional interdependence between partners and its implications for domestic violence (Luetke & Kristiansen, 2024).

The Marital Dependency Theory provides a foundation for understanding how women's economic empowerment affects domestic violence in Gulu City. The theory suggests that as women become economically independent, the dynamics of dependency within the household

shift, potentially altering patterns of control and power. This shift can lead to a decrease in dependency as Women's access to income and resources reduces their reliance on male partners, which can lower their tolerance for abusive behavior and increase their ability to leave toxic relationships (Eggers del Campo & Steinert, 2020).

Economic empowerment may challenge patriarchal norms, sometimes provoking conflict as men perceive a threat to their traditional dominance. Empowered women are more likely to make independent decisions, reducing the risk of abuse by exercising control over their own lives. Thus, the theory underpins the study by linking economic dependency, power imbalances, and the prevalence of domestic violence (Eggers del Campo & Steinert, 2020).

The theory effectively highlights how resource control influences power in marital relationships, providing a framework for analyzing shifts due to women's economic empowerment. The theory applies to diverse contexts, including patriarchal societies such as Gulu City, where economic dependency often reinforces gender inequality and domestic violence. It emphasizes the critical role of financial independence in mitigating domestic violence, aligning well with the study's focus on economic empowerment (Kvangraven, 2023).

Although the theory focuses on the consequences of dependency, the theory heavily focuses on financial dependency, potentially overlooking non-economic dimensions, which include emotional dependency, cultural norms, and psychological factors contributing to domestic violence. The theory also assumes uniformity in the impact of economic empowerment, which may not hold in societies where cultural or religious norms strongly influence marital dynamics.

Finally, the theory does not fully account for situations where economic empowerment triggers retaliatory violence from male partners seeking to reassert control.

Despite a few limitations, the Marital Dependency Theory will guide the study in providing a basis for hypothesizing the relationship between women's economic empowerment and domestic violence, such as whether increased economic independence reduces or exacerbates abuse. The theory will help analyze how shifts in financial dependency influence household power dynamics and conflict resolution.

The study assessed whether the theory holds in Gulu City's socio-cultural environment, where norms surrounding gender roles and economic participation may vary. Insights from the theory can inform policies and programmes aimed at reducing domestic violence through economic empowerment, focusing on mitigating potential backlash.

The Marital Dependency Theory provided a robust framework for examining the relationship between women's economic empowerment and domestic violence. While the theory has limitations, such as its focus on economic factors and contextual variations, it remains pivotal in understanding the complex interplay of power, dependency, and violence within marital relationships in Gulu City. This theoretical foundation will anchor the study's methodology, data analysis, and interpretation, ensuring a focused and relevant exploration of the topic.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

This section presents a critical review of existing studies that have employed data-driven or observational methods to examine the topic of interest. It focuses on analyzing previous research

findings, methodologies, data sources, and key results relevant to the current study. The aim was to identify patterns, gaps, and inconsistencies in the empirical evidence, providing a foundation for the current research and justifying its relevance. This review helped to position the study within the broader academic discourse and highlighted how it contributes to or advances existing knowledge.

2.2.1 Women's economic empowerment programmes and their potential influence on domestic violence

In recent discussions of the relationship between microfinance and domestic violence, a controversial issue has been whether economic empowerment alone is sufficient to reduce abuse. Strydom et al. (2024) argue that women participating in microfinance programmes experienced less domestic violence and greater household bargaining power, particularly when gender equality education was integrated. According to this view, empowerment leads to both economic and social gains. On the other hand, however, others argue that such interventions may provoke conflict by challenging entrenched gender norms, which Strydom et al. (2024) acknowledge but do not explore thoroughly. In the words of feminist scholars, economic shifts without cultural transformation may exacerbate tensions. The study's reliance on self-reported data also invites scrutiny due to potential social desirability bias. The issue, then, is whether microfinance alone can catalyze sustainable change or whether contextual and methodological gaps undermine its transformative potential. Though I concede the value of Strydom et al.'s findings, I still maintain that broader frameworks and rigorous methods are essential.

The IMAGE program in rural South Africa offers a compelling case. Ranganathan et al. (2021) reported a 55% reduction in intimate partner violence, attributing success to its integration of

microfinance, gender equity workshops, and community mobilization. According to this view, societal norms must be addressed alongside financial empowerment. However, critics argue the study lacks engagement with feminist economic and intersectionality theories that explain how race, class, and marital status shape outcomes. Although the program shows a strong correlation with reduced violence, causality remains uncertain. The absence of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) limits the strength of the findings. The issue is whether holistic programmes alone suffice or require deeper theoretical and methodological grounding.

Nduka et al. (2023) examined economic empowerment programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa, revealing both benefits and challenges. While women gained financial independence, some faced increased domestic violence, often linked to male partners feeling threatened by shifting gender roles. According to this view, male exclusion from these programmes may fuel resistance. On the other hand, critics argue that such outcomes reveal deeper issues tied to hegemonic masculinity and household power dynamics, which the study underexplores. Moreover, it fails to consider regional variations in male responses, limiting the applicability of its findings. The issue is whether empowering women alone is sufficient or if inclusive, gender-sensitive approaches are essential. Though I concede the value of women's economic autonomy, I maintain that future interventions must engage men and explore local contexts to foster more sustainable and equitable gender relations.

Chaudhuri and Morash (2019) explored how women's participation in self-help groups in India influences domestic violence, finding outcomes shaped by cultural context. In gender-equitable communities, violence declined, while in patriarchal settings, it increased as men felt their dominance was threatened. According to this view, economic empowerment must be paired with

efforts to shift cultural norms. On the other hand, the study overlooks how different group types, financially focused versus activist-oriented, might produce different effects. It also fails to examine how background, religion, and socioeconomic status mediate these outcomes. Though I concede the study highlights key cultural dynamics, I maintain that intersectional analysis and comparative group evaluation are essential for understanding when and how self-help groups effectively reduce domestic violence.

Borraz and Munyo (2020) examined how conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes affect intimate partner violence (IPV), finding that financial support can reduce women's dependence on abusive partners, thus lowering IPV. However, in the short term, IPV sometimes increased, likely due to male backlash. According to this view, economic empowerment can provoke unintended resistance. On the other hand, critics argue that the study narrowly focuses on cash transfers, ignoring broader initiatives like vocational training or asset ownership. Methodologically, it uses a quasi-experimental design but lacks an analysis of how age, marital status, or education mediate outcomes. Though it is conceded that economic bargaining models offer useful insight, it is maintained that intersectional feminist theories are fundamental for capturing the complex socio-cultural forces shaping IPV. The issue is whether financial aid alone is enough, or if diverse empowerment strategies and theoretical lenses are needed for lasting change.

Parwez and Patel (2022), in a systematic review and meta-analysis of microfinance and employment programmes, found that economic empowerment has dual effects on intimate partner violence (IPV). Financial independence can help some women exit abusive relationships,

yet others face increased violence as male partners react to shifting power dynamics. According to this view, empowerment is a double-edged sword. On the other hand, the study overlooks important variations in program design—such as individual versus group lending—that may influence outcomes. Methodologically, it lacks longitudinal data to assess long-term effects. Theoretically, it fails to apply a gender-norms framework that could explain how masculinity, control, and social expectations shape IPV. Though I concede the study offers useful general patterns, I maintain that nuanced, gender-informed, and long-term analyses are essential for fully understanding when and how empowerment reduces IPV. The issue is whether economic support alone can drive social change without accompanying cultural transformation.

Bagga (2024) explores how employment guarantees under MGNREGA affect women's autonomy and experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV). According to this view, formal employment enhances financial security and decision-making power. However, in some cases, it provokes increased IPV as male partners seek to reassert control. On the other hand, the study overlooks informal work and entrepreneurship, which are key income sources for many women in developing regions. Methodologically, it lacks qualitative data, limiting insight into women's lived experiences and coping strategies. Though I concede that economic empowerment is critical, I maintain that framing empowerment solely in financial terms ignores psychological and social factors. The issue is whether employment alone is sufficient to transform gender relations, or if broader approaches integrating emotional, cultural, and social empowerment are needed to reduce IPV sustainably.

While existing literature highlights the potential of economic empowerment programmes to reduce domestic violence, key gaps remain. Most studies emphasize short-term effects, offering limited insight into the long-term sustainability of these outcomes. Without longitudinal data, it is unclear whether initial gains in women's agency and safety endure over time. Methodologically, many studies rely heavily on self-reported data and lack rigorous designs such as randomized controlled trials, making causal claims difficult to substantiate. Furthermore, theoretical frameworks are often underdeveloped. Most research draws from economic models while neglecting feminist and intersectional perspectives that could better explain how power, patriarchy, and identity intersect to influence women's experiences of violence.

This review reveals that microfinance and employment initiatives show promise but are not universally effective. Their impact depends heavily on cultural norms, male engagement, and program design. Economic support alone may not counteract deeply rooted gender dynamics. Future research must adopt interdisciplinary approaches that combine development economics with gender studies to better understand these complexities. Integrating theories of masculinity, intersectionality, and social empowerment is essential. Addressing these evidence, methodological, and theoretical gaps can lead to more sustainable, context-sensitive interventions that not only enhance women's economic status but also meaningfully reduce domestic violence.

2.2.2 The psychological impact of domestic violence and its implications for their economic empowerment

Domestic violence has profound psychological effects that can significantly hinder women's ability to fully participate in and benefit from economic empowerment programmes. Women

who experience intimate partner violence (IPV) often suffer from depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which limit their capacity for stable employment, financial independence, and long-term economic growth. Despite growing recognition of this issue, many economic empowerment initiatives fail to integrate adequate mental health support, leaving survivors vulnerable to cycles of abuse and financial instability.

There have been some discussions on economic empowerment and domestic violence, raising controversial issues about whether these programmes can succeed without addressing survivors' psychological trauma. Karakurt et al. (2014) argue that depression, anxiety, and PTSD significantly limit IPV survivors' capacity for stable employment. From this perspective, mental health support is essential for economic resilience. On the other hand, however, authors like Tolman and Rosen (2001) suggest that economic empowerment itself may enhance psychological well-being, creating a positive feedback loop. Although Karakurt et al. emphasize mental health outcomes, they do not explore how these affect behaviors like entrepreneurship. Methodologically, their cross-sectional design limits causal insight. The issue is whether economic agency can develop without parallel mental health interventions. My view is that an integrated approach is necessary to break the cycle of abuse and foster sustainable empowerment.

The debate on domestic violence recovery, as a key issue, has been whether psychological support should accompany economic empowerment. Colasito and Agnes (2024) argue that survivors who receive both counseling and employment support are more likely to regain financial independence. According to this view, mental health is foundational to economic

resilience. On the other hand, some scholars, like Goodman et al. (2009), suggest that economic empowerment itself may reduce psychological distress by enhancing agency and self-worth. While Colasito and Agnes provide strong evidence, their study lacks comparison between types of psychological interventions—raising the question: which forms are most effective? Methodologically, their short-term focus limits insight into lasting financial stability. In sum, the issue is whether mental health drives empowerment, or vice versa. My own view is that mutual reinforcement between the two is key to sustainable recovery for IPV survivors.

The intersection of psychological trauma and economic empowerment, a key issue, is whether mental health interventions are essential to sustaining women's economic recovery after IPV. Talukdar (2024) argues that trauma from domestic violence leads to job loss and absenteeism, undermining economic stability. Similarly, Willie et al. (2023) demonstrate that PTSD and emotional distress impair women's financial autonomy, particularly through mechanisms like financial control. These views converge on the idea that unaddressed psychological trauma severely restricts survivors' participation in formal employment.

On the other hand, Cameranesi and Piotrowski (2024) emphasize the buffering role of emotional support, suggesting that peer and familial encouragement enhances psychological resilience and enables survivors to reengage economically. This aligns with Silima et al. (2024), who show that self-efficacy and emotional well-being significantly affect women's confidence in pursuing financial independence. Yet, both studies underexplore how formal systems—like mental health policy or workplace protections—might reinforce or hinder economic recovery.

Despite these contributions, key gaps remain. Many studies focus on employment outcomes but neglect alternatives such as entrepreneurship or informal work, raising the question: are we

limiting empowerment to narrow economic definitions? Methodologically, the over-reliance on self-reported or cross-sectional data obscures long-term trajectories of trauma recovery. Theoretically, few scholars integrate intersectionality or resilience frameworks that account for how class, race, or immigration status shape both trauma and recovery.

In the link between IPV-related depression and economic empowerment, a key controversy has been whether psychological distress solely accounts for reduced work productivity. Zhang et al. (2024) argue that PTSD and chronic stress from IPV lower women's job performance and increase absenteeism, thereby weakening their economic mobility. From this perspective, addressing mental health is vital for economic resilience. On the other hand, some scholars emphasize the buffering role of social support in enhancing survivors' work stability, an angle that Zhang et al. overlook. Although the study highlights important psychological impacts, it fails to explore long-term economic trajectories or how empowerment theories might explain survivors' recovery. In sum, the issue is whether treating mental health alone can sustain economic empowerment without broader systemic support..

The reviewed literature demonstrates that the psychological impact of IPV, manifesting as depression, anxiety, PTSD, and diminished self-efficacy, acts as a major barrier to women's economic empowerment. However, significant gaps remain. Empirical research should explore broader economic opportunities beyond traditional employment, adopt longitudinal designs to track survivors' long-term financial recovery, and incorporate intersectional analyses to understand diverse experiences. Additionally, future studies should integrate resilience and empowerment frameworks to explore how psychological interventions might enable IPV survivors to regain financial independence. Addressing these gaps will enhance our

understanding of the interplay between domestic violence, mental health, and economic empowerment.

2.2.3 Community support systems and social networks which influences the ability of economically empowered women to cope with domestic violence

Community support systems and social networks are essential in helping economically empowered women cope with domestic violence. These support structures not only provide practical assistance but also foster emotional resilience, offering a vital source of strength for survivors. As evidenced by a variety of studies, community networks play a transformative role in the lives of women, enabling them to seek help, challenge abusive behaviors, and regain control over their lives. However, despite the valuable insights provided by existing research, there are several key gaps in the literature that warrant further attention.

Menon and Allen, (2024) investigated the impact of self-help groups in India, focusing on their role in addressing domestic violence. The study finds that women involved in these groups were not only more likely to report incidents of domestic violence but also more likely to actively seek help to address these issues. These self-help groups created collective spaces for sharing experiences and coping strategies. Additionally, they offered emotional solidarity, empowering women to challenge abusive behaviors and advocate for their rights. While this study provides valuable insights into the potential of self-help groups, there are evidence gaps regarding the long-term impact of participation in these groups. The study primarily focuses on immediate coping mechanisms but does not examine whether the benefits of these networks are sustained over time. Methodologically, the study relies on cross-sectional data, which limits understanding of how self-help group participation influences women's economic empowerment in the long

run. Moreover, the theoretical gap lies in the lack of a comprehensive framework for understanding the intersectionality of factors such as caste, class, and rural/urban divides that might affect women's experiences within these groups.

In Uganda, Tanya Abramsky, et al., (2014) examined the impact of community-based interventions, such as group discussions and awareness campaigns, in reducing domestic violence. The study finds that these interventions create safe spaces where women can share experiences and access critical information about their rights and available support. Women who participated in these programmes reported feeling a stronger sense of community support and were better equipped to recognize and address abusive situations. These interventions empowered women with the tools and confidence to challenge violence and advocate for change. However, this study presents an evidence gap in its focus on general community interventions without exploring the specific types of interventions (Awareness campaigns versus legal literacy programmes) that might be most effective. On top of this, methodological gaps are present as the research lacks a longitudinal approach to understanding whether the empowerment generated by these programmes translates into sustained changes in women's economic stability and decision-making power. From a theoretical perspective, the study could benefit from incorporating empowerment and social capital theories to explore how community support networks influence women's broader social and economic outcomes.

Davies et al., (2024) explore the role of peer support networks in empowering survivors of domestic violence. The study demonstrates that women with access to strong peer support networks were more likely to utilize legal and financial resources, significantly aiding them in

coping with domestic violence. These peer networks provided both practical support and emotional encouragement, helping women navigate challenges more effectively and take steps toward achieving safety and independence. One of the evidence gaps in this study is its lack of exploration into the types of peer networks that are most beneficial for women, such as those formed within formal organizations versus informal, community-driven groups. The methodological gap stems from the reliance of the study on a small sample size and a lack of comparative analysis between women who have access to peer networks and those who do not. Furthermore, while the study emphasizes emotional support, it does not address how the financial independence of women within these networks can be strengthened. A theoretical gap exists in the limited application of social support theory to frame how peer support directly influences women's economic empowerment and long-term recovery.

Research conducted in Kenya by Machariah and Simiyu, (2023) highlights the significant role of faith-based organizations in supporting survivors of domestic violence. These organizations provide a range of services, including shelter, counseling, and advocacy, which enhance the well-being and recovery of survivors. By addressing both practical and emotional needs, these organizations foster resilience and empower women to rebuild their lives. Furthermore, the support from these organizations enables women to participate more actively in economic activities, creating opportunities for financial independence and long-term stability. Despite the promising findings, an evidence gap remains regarding the long-term impact of faith-based interventions on women's economic autonomy. The study focuses on immediate outcomes but does not examine whether these interventions result in sustained economic empowerment. A methodological gap in this research is the lack of data on how different faith-based organizations

(Christians, Muslims, or interfaith groups) may vary in their support structures and effectiveness. The theoretical gap is the absence of a feminist or intersectional analysis to explore how women's experiences with faith-based organizations are shaped by socio-cultural factors, such as religion, class, and gender norms.

Mughal and Arnaul, (2024) examine how social networks, particularly family, friends, and community organizations, impact the ability of immigrant women in South Asia to escape and recover from domestic violence. The study finds that women with strong community ties and access to culturally relevant support services are more likely to leave abusive relationships and regain financial stability. Furthermore, social networks provide crucial emotional and financial support that helps survivors sustain economic independence despite IPV-related trauma. A key evidence gap in this study is its narrow focus on immigrant women, limiting generalizability to other populations. Additionally, the study does not consider how digital or online support networks influence economic recovery. From a methodological standpoint, it relies primarily on qualitative interviews, which, while insightful, may not provide a broad statistical picture of the relationship between social networks and economic coping mechanisms. The theoretical limitation is the lack of intersectionality, as factors such as education level and employment status may affect how women leverage community support.

Williams et al., (2023) investigate the effectiveness of community-based advocacy programmes in assisting domestic violence survivors to secure economic stability. Their longitudinal study finds that women who receive sustained support from community advocates, including legal aid, job training, and housing assistance, are more likely to achieve long-term financial independence and remain free from abusive relationships. The study underscores the importance of integrated

social support systems in mitigating the economic consequences of IPV. One evidence gap in this research is that it focuses primarily on formal advocacy services and does not consider the role of informal social networks, such as peer support groups or faith-based organizations. In terms of methodology, while the longitudinal approach strengthens causal claims, the study does not explore differences in outcomes based on race, socio-economic status, or geographical location. The theoretical limitation lies in the emphasis on individual agency without fully addressing structural barriers, such as gender norms and systemic discrimination, that influence the economic resilience of IPV survivors.

Panda, (2014) analyzes the role of microfinance groups in creating social networks that help women cope with domestic violence. Their study finds that women engaged in microfinance programmes develop strong peer networks, which provide emotional support, financial assistance, and shared strategies for dealing with IPV. Furthermore, participation in these groups enhances women's self-efficacy and negotiation skills, making them more likely to assert economic and personal autonomy. A significant evidence gap in this study is that it focuses mainly on rural communities, leaving questions about whether similar dynamics exist in urban settings. The study does not explore the long-term psychological effects of IPV on the ability of women to fully utilize social networks for economic stability. From a methodological perspective, the study primarily employs survey data but lacks qualitative insights into the lived experiences of women who rely on microfinance groups. The theoretical gap is the absence of a feminist lens that could further explain how patriarchal structures shape women's access to and utilization of social support.

While the literature highlights the importance of community support systems in helping economically empowered women cope with domestic violence, significant gaps remain. Research should focus on the long-term effects of community-based interventions on economic stability, explore different types of support systems (e.g., peer networks, faith-based organizations), and integrate theoretical frameworks like social capital, empowerment, and intersectionality. Addressing these gaps will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how community support systems contribute to the long-term empowerment of women affected by domestic violence.

2.2.4 Level of Domestic Violence

Recent empirical evidence from global syntheses and national/population studies indicates that intimate partner violence (IPV) / domestic violence (DV) remains highly prevalent worldwide, with substantial variation by region, measurement approach, and period (including pandemic-related changes).

The WHO's 2021 global report produced comparable, population-based estimates of intimate-partner violence and non-partner sexual violence using data from many countries and established a global baseline that about one in three women experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. The report synthesizes survey data across regions, stresses the sensitivity of estimates to instrument wording and timeframes (lifetime vs past-year), and emphasizes youth (ages 15–24) as especially vulnerable. The WHO product is a major reference point for prevalence benchmarking and for SDG indicator 5.2.1, but its composite nature means country estimates depend on the underlying survey quality and years of data included (WHO, 2021).

A major 2021 Lancet analysis provided global, regional, and country baseline estimates of physical and/or sexual partner violence against women, using standardized criteria to harmonize

many population surveys. This study produced point estimates and uncertainty intervals across geographies and highlighted the large burden of IPV as a global public-health problem while documenting considerable between-country heterogeneity. Its strengths are the scope (many countries) and the transparent modeling approach; limitations include dependence on available survey years (so estimates reflect past data windows) and residual heterogeneity from different survey instruments and data collection modes (Sardinha et al., 2022).

Because the COVID-19 pandemic altered household dynamics and service access, several recent systematic reviews quantified IPV levels during pandemic periods. A 2024 BMC Public Health systematic review and meta-analysis pooled studies from multiple countries to estimate recent (pandemic-era) prevalence. Their pooled estimates showed nontrivial prevalence of physical and sexual IPV during the pandemic, but also large heterogeneity across studies (different populations, online vs household sampling, and variable time windows). The review demonstrates how crisis periods may shift measured levels (and reporting) and underscores the importance of noting sampling frame and administration mode when interpreting “levels” reported in pandemic-era studies (Costa et al., 2024).

Recent country-level analyses using Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) or national survey data continue to generate updated prevalence and risk-factor evidence. A 2024 multilevel analysis of Kenya, for instance, estimated IPV prevalence and examined individual and community correlates among reproductive-age women, highlighting national estimates and local heterogeneity. Such studies inform policy with country-specific evidence, subnational variation, and covariate links, though limited by cross-sectional design, item phrasing, and recall windows (Melkam, et al., 2024).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The methods and techniques employed in the study are presented in this chapter. In a chronological order, it covered the following areas: research design; study population; sample size determination; sampling techniques and procedures; quality control; data analysis; measurement of variables; and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

Research design refers to the overall strategy that connects research components coherently and logically to effectively address the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study employed a transformative mixed methods design, which was particularly appropriate because it integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches within a framework that prioritizes social change, equity, and the reduction of power imbalances (Nelson, 2009). Such a design aligns directly with the focus of this study on women's empowerment and domestic violence, both of which are deeply rooted in gendered inequalities.

Within this transformative design, qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently but analyzed separately, allowing each to retain its methodological integrity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The qualitative strand explored the lived experiences of women in relation to economic empowerment and domestic violence, drawing on phenomenology and symbolic interactionism to provide rich, contextualized insights into meaning-making processes. The quantitative strand, on the other hand, utilized structured questionnaires and statistical analyses to measure prevalence, trends, and associations between women's economic empowerment and domestic violence.

Integration occurred during the interpretation phase, where findings from both strands were merged to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. As emphasized by Greene, 2007), such integration enhances the validity of conclusions by drawing from the strengths of multiple paradigms. This approach not only generated empirical data but also amplified the voices of women, consistent with the commitment of the transformative paradigm to equity, justice, and social action (Mertens, 2010).

3.3 Study Population

The study population is the entire set of elements that share observable traits or patterns from which the researcher hopes to conclude (Kothari, 2014). The study population totaled 140, comprised of women aged 18 to 49, along with local council members, religious leaders and NGO staff, and community development officers actively involved in gender-based violence (GBV) initiatives. This diverse population was selected to ensure that various perspectives, ranging from survivors to policymakers and service providers, are included in the research.

The selection of this population was based on their direct or indirect experiences with economic empowerment and domestic violence. Women in the target age group provide firsthand accounts of their lived realities, while local, religious leaders, and NGO staff contributed insights into broader structural and policy dimensions of the issue. By incorporating multiple viewpoints, the study ensured that it did not focus solely on survivors but also examined the roles of key community actors in addressing GBV. A holistic approach to population selection is necessary to provide a well-rounded perspective on economic empowerment and domestic violence. This

enabled a more inclusive and intersectional analysis that considered both grassroots experiences and institutional interventions

3.4 Sample Size Determination

In order to conclude the entire population, sampling involved taking data from a small portion of a larger group or population. Therefore, the goal of sampling was to obtain a sample that accurately reflected the population and closely replicated the key characteristics of the group being studied (Creswell, 2012). Techniques for probability and purposeful sampling were applied. To choose the samples from the population of men and women in the study area, simple random sampling, which allowed for the equal selection of every available sample, was used. However, purposive sampling was employed because there aren't many local council officials, religious leaders, or NGO employees who work in GBV-affected areas.

3.4.1 Sample Size Selection

To ensure the study was representative and inclusive of key stakeholders, both probability and purposive sampling techniques were used. This mixed sampling approach balanced random selection for generalizability with purposive selection to include critical informants who had specialized knowledge on GBV-related issues.

A simple random sampling technique was employed to select 80 women from the target community, ensuring that every eligible individual had an equal chance of participation. Additionally, purposive sampling was applied to recruit 8 local council members, 5 religious leaders, and 10 NGO staff, as their expertise and involvement in GBV initiatives provided essential context to the study. The total sample size of 104 respondents was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's sample size calculation table (Amin, 2005).

This sampling approach ensured that the study captured a balanced mix of community perspectives and expert insights. By including both statistical representation and targeted expertise, the study aimed to produce a good and multi-dimensional understanding of the relationship between women's economic empowerment and domestic violence. This ultimately contributed to evidence-based policy recommendations and targeted intervention strategies.

The sample size for this study was determined using a standard sample size calculation formula. A total of 100 women, who constituted the target population, were selected through probability sampling techniques. The formula used to arrive at this sample size is presented below.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where, N = Target population

n = the sample size

e= the level of precision of measurement (acceptable error margin)

From Gulu City, the target population of (N= 100) and error margin will be considered at a level e= 0.05

$$\text{Thus, } n = \frac{100}{1 + 100(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 80$$

The eighty respondents from the target population of 100 were arrived at using a table developed by RV Krejcie and Morgan as cited by (Amin, 2005). The selected sample was distributed as shown below.

Table 1: Population sample, sample size, and sampling techniques

Category	Population	Sample Size	Sampling Technique
Women	100	80	Simple Random sampling
LCI Chairpersons	12	08	Purposive Sampling
Religious Leaders	10	05	Purposive Sampling
NGO Staff	15	10	Purposive Sampling
Community Development officers	3	3	Purposive Sampling
Total	140	106	

Source: Primary Data (2024)

3.5 Data sources

To ensure a comprehensive and multidimensional understanding of the relationship between women’s economic empowerment and domestic violence, this study utilized only primary data. Primary data were gathered directly from respondents, providing firsthand insights into lived experiences and intervention strategies. Primary data collection involved structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions, allowing for the integration of quantitative (statistical analysis) and qualitative (narratives, lived experiences) data. The structured questionnaire generated statistical perceptions into the prevalence and effect of economic empowerment and domestic violence, while interviews and focus group discussions provided in-depth personal accounts and contextual perspectives.

3.5.1 Primary data

According to (Galvan, 2013), Primary data refers to first-hand information collected directly from individuals who are actively involved in or affected by women’s economic empowerment and domestic violence. This data is crucial for understanding real-life experiences, intervention effectiveness, and community perceptions.

For this study, data were collected from women aged 18 to 49, as well as religious leaders, local council chairs, NGO staff, and Community Development Officers engaged in gender-based violence (GBV) initiatives. Structured questionnaires were used to capture statistical evidence on trends, prevalence, and the effect of economic empowerment on domestic violence. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore lived experiences, cultural perceptions, and the effectiveness of existing interventions. This mixed-method approach ensured that the study captured both objective data and subjective experiences, allowing for a well-rounded and inclusive analysis. It ensured that the voices of affected individuals were heard while also incorporating expert insights from professionals involved in GBV-related work.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to data collection, integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques to comprehensively examine women's economic empowerment and the associated experiences of domestic violence in Gulu City. The adoption of multiple data collection methods ensures triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings.

3.6.1 Questionnaires

Structured questionnaires were administered to a representative sample of women in Gulu City. The questionnaires captured quantitative data on economic empowerment indicators, such as income levels, access to financial services, ownership of assets, and participation in economic activities. Additionally, the questionnaires included sections addressing experiences of domestic violence, including physical, emotional, and economic abuse. The standardized nature of the

questionnaires facilitated statistical analysis and comparison across various socio-economic groups.

3.6.2 Interviews

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including economically empowered women, survivors of domestic violence, community leaders, and representatives from organizations addressing gender-based violence. These interviews provided rich, qualitative insights into the lived experiences of women, exploring how economic empowerment influences their vulnerability or resilience to domestic violence. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility, enabling the exploration of emerging themes and individual narratives that may not have been captured through quantitative methods.

3.6.3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

FGDs were organized with groups of women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. These discussions encouraged participants to share their collective experiences, perceptions, and coping strategies related to economic empowerment and domestic violence. FGDs were particularly valuable for understanding community norms, gender relations, and the socio-cultural dynamics that influence women's economic roles and exposure to domestic violence. The interactive nature of FGDs uncovered shared experiences and differences across demographic groups.

By employing these three complementary data collection methods, the study generated a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between women's economic empowerment and domestic violence in Gulu City. The mixed-methods approach facilitated a good analysis, ensuring that both statistical trends and personal experiences are adequately represented in the research findings.

3.7 Data Collection Tools/ Instruments

To systematically collect data, the study employed two key research instruments: questionnaires (quantitative) and interviews (qualitative). These tools aligned with the transformative mixed-methods design, ensuring a balance between statistical analysis and in-depth exploration of lived experiences. Questionnaires were used to collect structured, quantitative data from respondents, focusing on prevalence, trends, and relationships between economic empowerment and domestic violence. Interviews provided qualitative insights, allowing respondents to share their personal experiences and perspectives on the issue.

Data were collected concurrently but analyzed separately, with findings integrated during the interpretation phase. This ensured a comprehensive understanding of the issue by combining empirical data and personal narratives, leading to a richer and more meaningful analysis. Using both instruments allowed the study to capture the complexity of women's economic empowerment and domestic violence. While quantitative data provided generalizable patterns, qualitative data contextualize these patterns with real-life narratives. This approach enhanced the validity of findings and ensured that policy recommendations are grounded in both data-driven evidence and human experiences.

3.3.7 Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a structured tool consisting of a series of pre-determined questions that respondents answer in writing. It is an effective method for collecting large-scale quantitative data efficiently and systematically (Kothari, 2014). For this study, semi-structured, self-administered questionnaires were distributed to women aged 15-49. The questionnaires included questions focused on economic empowerment indicators, experiences of domestic violence, and

community perceptions of intervention programmes. Once collected, the responses were coded and analyzed statistically to identify patterns, trends, and the effect of economic empowerment on domestic violence. This method ensured that the study captured broad, measurable insights that contributed to understanding the scale and impact of the issue. Questionnaires are an efficient tool for gathering wide-ranging, standardized data from a large number of respondents. This allowed for quantitative validation of the study's hypotheses and facilitated comparative analysis across different demographic groups (Kothari, 2014).

3.7.2 Interview Guide

An interview is a qualitative data collection technique involving direct conversations with respondents to explore their personal experiences, beliefs, and perspectives on a particular issue (Creswell, 2012). Interviews allowed for a deeper understanding of social dynamics and intervention effectiveness.

In this study, structured and semi-structured interviews were conducted with local council leaders, religious leaders, and NGO staff working on gender-based violence initiatives. These interviews explored social and institutional responses to domestic violence and assessed the perceived impact of economic empowerment programmes in reducing such violence.

The collected responses were thematically analyzed to identify emerging patterns, narratives, and policy implications. This method ensured that the study captured better perspectives that cannot be fully understood through quantitative data alone. Interviews are particularly valuable for exploring personal experiences and social structures that influence domestic violence. This method aligned with the transformative mixed-methods design by amplifying the voices of those

often marginalized in research and policymaking. It ensured that the study got rooted in lived realities, making its findings more impactful and actionable.

3.7.3 Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted to gain collective insights and understand group dynamics related to women's economic empowerment and domestic violence. FGDs allowed participants to discuss their experiences, perceptions, and beliefs, providing rich qualitative data that highlighted community norms and shared challenges. These discussions were guided by a semi-structured question outline with women. FGDs complemented individual interviews by revealing how community interactions influence economic empowerment and domestic violence.

3.8 Data quality control

The reliability and validity of a research instrument are important in ensuring the quality and accuracy of data collection. The primary objective of instrument development and validation is to minimize measurement errors. This study adopted a transformative research design, which prioritizes the inclusion of marginalized voices and sought to bring about social change. As such, the validity and reliability of the instruments were carefully evaluated to ensure that they accurately reflected the lived experiences of participants (Rhai, 2017).

Before doing the primary study, the pre-test allowed the researcher to practice conducting research in a real-world setting and become comfortable using the research instrument, according to Creswell (2012). A pre-test was conducted to guarantee the validity and reliability of the research instrument and methodologies that were employed.

3.3.7 Validity of instruments

Validity refers to the extent to which a test, tool, or research study accurately measures what it is intended to measure. Validity comes in two primary flavors: internal and external. While external validity refers to the capacity to extrapolate the results to the intended audience, internal validity refers to the measurement and test's inherent validity. When assessing the suitability, significance, and utility of a research study, both are critical. To establish validity, the research instruments were reviewed by experts, and pilot testing was done. The instruments were presented to a panel of experts, including the research supervisor, to assess their relevance, clarity, and appropriateness in capturing the study variables. Construct validity was ensured by aligning the instrument with the theoretical framework of the study (Creswell, 2012).

Ensuring validity is essential to avoid biased interpretations and misrepresentations of the data. By incorporating expert recommendations, the research instruments were refined to enhance their accuracy and applicability to the research context.

3.8.2 Reliability of instruments

The consistency, stability, and reproducibility of research findings are referred to as reliability. A research finding is deemed trustworthy if it can consistently be acquired under similar but distinct conditions. The reliability of the instruments was assessed through a pre-test involving a small sample of participants with similar characteristics to the main study population. The pre- and post-testing of the field interview guide helped determine the dependability. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to measure internal consistency, while test-retest reliability was applied to assess the stability of the responses over time (Kothari, 2014). Establishing reliability ensured that the research findings were consistent and reproducible, reducing potential biases and errors in data collection and interpretation.

3.9 Data processing and analysis

Data processing and analysis are fundamental to deriving meaningful insights from the collected information. Given the transformative research design, both qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed to provide a holistic understanding of the research problem.

3.3.7 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis involved the use of statistical techniques to examine numerical data collected through questionnaires. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 23) was used to code and enter the quantitative data. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to summarize the data. Employing quantitative analysis helped in identifying patterns and relationships within the data, allowing for objective interpretation and generalizability of findings.

3.9.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis involved interpreting non-numerical data collected through interviews and focus group discussions. Thematic analysis was used to categorize and interpret the data. Transcriptions of narrative responses were coded based on the primary themes derived from the research objectives. NVivo software was used to assist in organizing and analyzing qualitative data. This approach allowed for a deeper exploration of the lived experiences and perspectives of participants, which aligned with the transformative research design by emphasizing social change and empowerment.

3.10 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are fundamental in ensuring that research is conducted responsibly, respecting the rights and dignity of participants. This study adhered to key ethical principles, including justice, beneficence, non-maleficence, and informed consent to protect participants and

uphold research integrity. These principles were operationalized through fair participant selection, maximizing benefits, minimizing harm, securing informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and obtaining the necessary ethical approvals and permissions.

Justice in research ensures the fair and equitable selection of participants without discrimination. In this study, participants were selected based on relevant criteria to ensure representation across diverse demographics within Gulu City. This approach prevented exploitation and ensured that the benefits and burdens of the research were fairly distributed. By promoting inclusivity, the study sought to reflect the perspectives of all relevant community segments, thereby enhancing the validity and relevance of the findings.

Beneficence focuses on maximizing the potential benefits of the research while contributing positively to the community. The research aimed to generate insights that inform policy and improve community development initiatives in Gulu City. By aligning the research outcomes with community needs, the study ensured that its findings had meaningful impacts, benefiting both the participants and the broader society. This principle guided the research design to prioritize activities that yielded constructive and applicable results.

Non-maleficence emphasized minimizing risks and preventing harm to participants. To operationalize this principle, participants received comprehensive information about any potential risks associated with the study. The research design incorporated measures to mitigate these risks, including secure data handling protocols and ethical interviewing practices. These steps were vital for safeguarding participants from physical, psychological, and social harm, ensuring their well-being throughout the research process.

Informed consent is essential to respect the autonomy of participants. The study provided participants with detailed information sheets outlining the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study. Signed consent forms were obtained before participation, and participants retained the right to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. This process ensured that participation was entirely voluntary and based on a thorough understanding of the research, thereby promoting transparency and trust between researchers and participants.

Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained to protect the privacy of participants. Data collected was securely stored, with coded identifiers used instead of personal information. Access to the data was limited to authorized personnel only. These measures prevented unauthorized disclosure of sensitive information and protected participant identities, thereby fostering a secure research environment where participants felt safe to share their insights.

Finally, the study sought ethical approvals and permissions to ensure compliance with institutional and local standards. Ethical approval was obtained from Uganda Martyrs University, while permission to collect data was sought from the Town Clerk of Gulu City Council. These formal approvals demonstrated the commitment to adhering to ethical research practices, ensuring accountability and integrity throughout the research process.

The operationalization of these ethical principles allowed for the protection of participants from harm, ensured voluntary and informed participation, and maintained the integrity and credibility of the research process. Each ethical principle was thoughtfully integrated into the research design to uphold the highest standards of ethical research conduct.

3.11 Limitations of the study and delimitations

This study encountered several limitations that may have influenced its scope and outcomes. One of the primary challenges was financial constraint, as the research was conducted with limited funding. To manage this, the researcher sought and received financial support from friends and family, which enabled the completion of key research activities.

Another limitation involved the availability of respondents. Due to their busy schedules, securing adequate participation was difficult. However, through persistent follow-ups and flexible scheduling, the study achieved a satisfactory response rate of approximately 70%.

Additionally, some participants were hesitant to disclose sensitive information, likely due to concerns over social stigma or familial repercussions. This issue was mitigated by ensuring strict confidentiality and conducting interviews in private, safe settings, which helped foster trust and openness among respondents.

The delimitations of the study ensured a focused scope by centering on women in Gulu City, Acholi Sub-region, and examining the link between economic empowerment and domestic violence. These boundaries enabled a deeper, context-specific analysis, while recognizing and defining such limitations strengthened the credibility, reliability, and relevance of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings, analysis, and discussions of the study results. It begins with the demographic profile of the respondents, which is summarized using frequencies, percentages, and graphical representations. Following the demographic analysis, the chapter proceeds to explore the relationships among the study variables through correlation and regression analyses.

4.2 Response Rate

The study targeted a total sample of 107 respondents. Out of these, 85 completed and returned the questionnaires, resulting in a response rate of 79.4%. This response rate is considered adequate for statistical analysis and meets the threshold commonly accepted in social science research. A high response rate enhances the reliability and validity of the study findings by reducing the potential for non-response bias.

Background characteristics of study participants

4.3 Results on background characteristics of Respondents

4.3.1 Age of Respondents

Out of the 85 participants surveyed, the age distribution revealed a predominantly mature demographic. The largest proportion of respondents (29.4%) fell within the 39–45 age range. This was closely followed by those aged 25–31 years (25.9%) and 32–38 years (24.7%). Respondents aged 46 and above constituted 16.5%, while the youngest cohort, aged 18–24 years, made up only 3.5% of the sample.

This age distribution is significant in the context of the study, which examines the influence of women’s economic empowerment and associated experiences on domestic violence in Gulu City. The concentration of respondents in the 25–45 age range suggests that most participants are likely to be economically active and possibly engaged in familial or domestic relationships. These factors are critical for exploring the intersections between economic empowerment, relationship dynamics, and experiences of domestic violence. The underrepresentation of younger women (18–24) may reflect either limited economic engagement, delayed engagement in marital affairs, or lower reporting of domestic experiences among this group.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
18-24	3	3.5%	3.5%	3.5%
25-31	22	25.9%	25.9%	29.4%
32-38	21	24.7%	24.7%	54.1%
39-45	25	29.4%	29.4%	83.5%
46 and above	14	16.5%	16.5%	100.0%
Total	85	100.0%	100.0%	—

Source: Primary Data (2025)

4.3.2: Marital Status

The descriptive statistics on marital status reveal that out of the 85 respondents, the majority were married (50.6%), while 37.6% reported cohabiting. The remainder were separated (8.2%), divorced (2.4%), or widowed (1.2%). This indicates that a significant proportion of participants (88.2%) were in or had recently been in intimate partnerships, either through marriage or cohabitation.

This marital status distribution is particularly relevant to the focus of the study on women’s economic empowerment and its relationship with domestic violence in Gulu City. Being in a marital or cohabiting union often creates a context where power dynamics, economic

dependence or independence, and household roles become highly influential. The high percentage of respondents in intimate partnerships provides a strong foundation for examining how economic empowerment may either mitigate or exacerbate experiences of domestic violence, depending on the nature of the relationship and associated gender norms.

Table 3: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Married	43	50.6	50.6	50.6
Divorced	2	2.4	2.4	52.9
Widowed	1	1.2	1.2	54.1
Cohabiting	32	37.6	37.6	91.8
Separated	7	8.2	8.2	100.0

Source: Primary Data (2025)

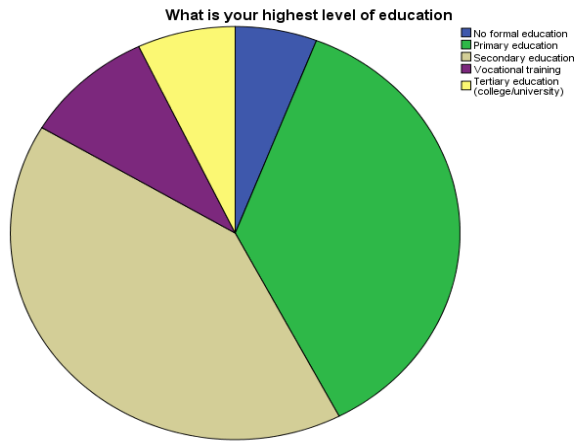
4.3.3: Highest Level of Education

An analysis of the educational background of respondents reveals that the majority had completed secondary education (41.2%), followed by 36.5% who had attained primary education. A smaller proportion had acquired vocational training (9.4%) or tertiary education (7.1%). Only 5.9% of the participants reported having no formal education.

This educational profile is significant in understanding the influence of women’s economic empowerment on domestic violence. Education is a key enabler of economic opportunities and access to information, both of which can affect the ability of a woman to attain financial independence and negotiate power dynamics within intimate relationships. The fact that most respondents had some level of formal education, particularly at the secondary level, suggests a potential capacity for economic engagement. However, disparities in education levels may also

influence vulnerability to domestic violence, especially where lower education correlates with limited employment options and economic dependence.

Figure 4: Level of Education



Source: Primary Data, (2025)

4.3.4 Employment Status of Respondents

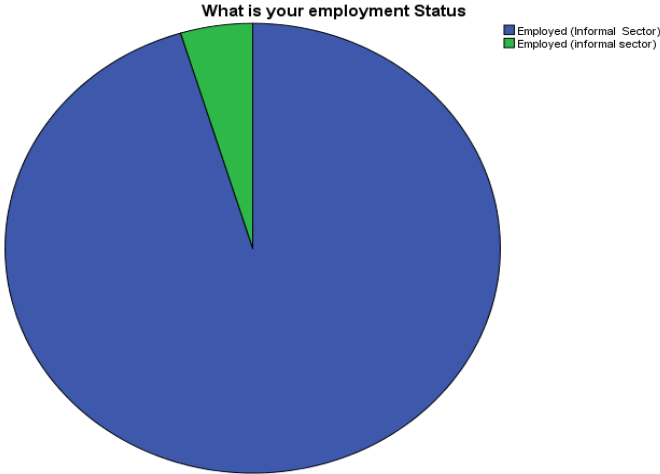
The data indicate that the overwhelming majority of respondents (95.3%) were employed within the informal sector, while a small proportion (4.7%) fell into another category—likely unemployed or engaged in irregular or unclear forms of work. Notably, none of the respondents reported formal sector employment.

This employment pattern is significant in the context of the study, which focuses on women’s economic empowerment and its relationship to domestic violence. The dominance of informal sector employment highlights the limited access women have to stable, well-paying jobs with legal protections. Informal work, while offering some income, is often characterized by low wages, job insecurity, lack of benefits, and minimal protection against exploitation—all of which can undermine the economic autonomy that is crucial to empowerment.

Furthermore, the absence of formal employment among respondents suggests systemic barriers to women’s entry into more secure and better-compensated labor markets. This lack of access to formal work opportunities may exacerbate economic dependency on male partners, reducing women’s capacity to negotiate fair treatment within the household or to exit abusive relationships.

These findings reinforce the need for targeted interventions that expand women’s access to dignified, stable, and well-regulated employment. Such efforts are essential not only for promoting economic empowerment but also as a strategic approach to reducing women’s vulnerability to domestic violence in Gulu City and similar contexts..

Figure 5: Employment Status



Source: Primary Data, (2025)

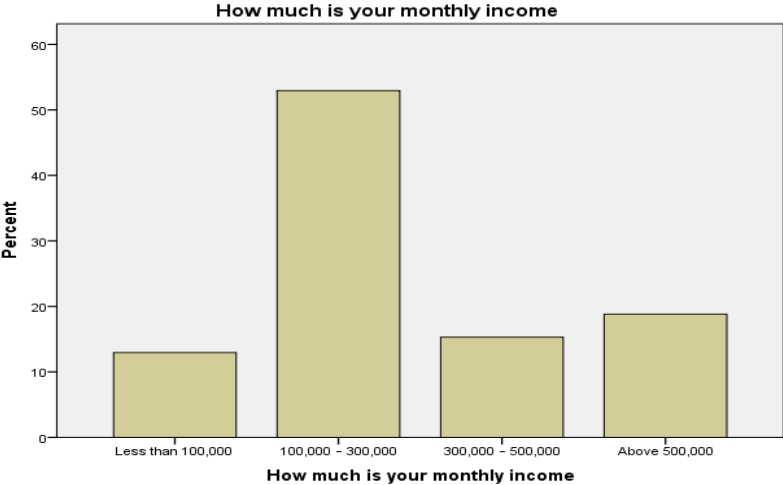
4.3.5 Monthly Income of Respondents

The analysis of the monthly income of respondents shows that the largest proportion (52.9%) earned between UGX 100,000 and 300,000. This was followed by 18.8% who earned above UGX 500,000, 15.3% who earned between UGX 300,000 and 500,000, and 12.9% earned less than UGX 100,000 per month. This income distribution has important implications for the

influence of women’s economic empowerment on domestic violence in Gulu City. While just over half of the respondents fall within the lower-income bracket (UGX 100,000–300,000), a significant portion earns less than UGX 100,000 or is clustered in other modest income ranges. These figures suggest that although some women have access to financial resources, many are still operating within economically vulnerable conditions.

Low income levels severely limit the ability of women to assert independence within relationships, access legal or psychological support, or exit abusive environments, all of which are essential components of both empowerment and protection from domestic violence. Even among those earning more than UGX 500,000 (18.8%), the question remains whether income alone translates into decision-making power or protection against abuse, especially in patriarchal settings where economic success might trigger resistance or aggression from male partners. These results point to the complexity of economic empowerment: while income is a key dimension, it must be accompanied by changes in household power relations, access to resources, and legal protections to truly reduce domestic violence risks.

Figure 6: Bar Chart Showing Monthly income of respondents



4.3.6 Primary Breadwinner in the Household

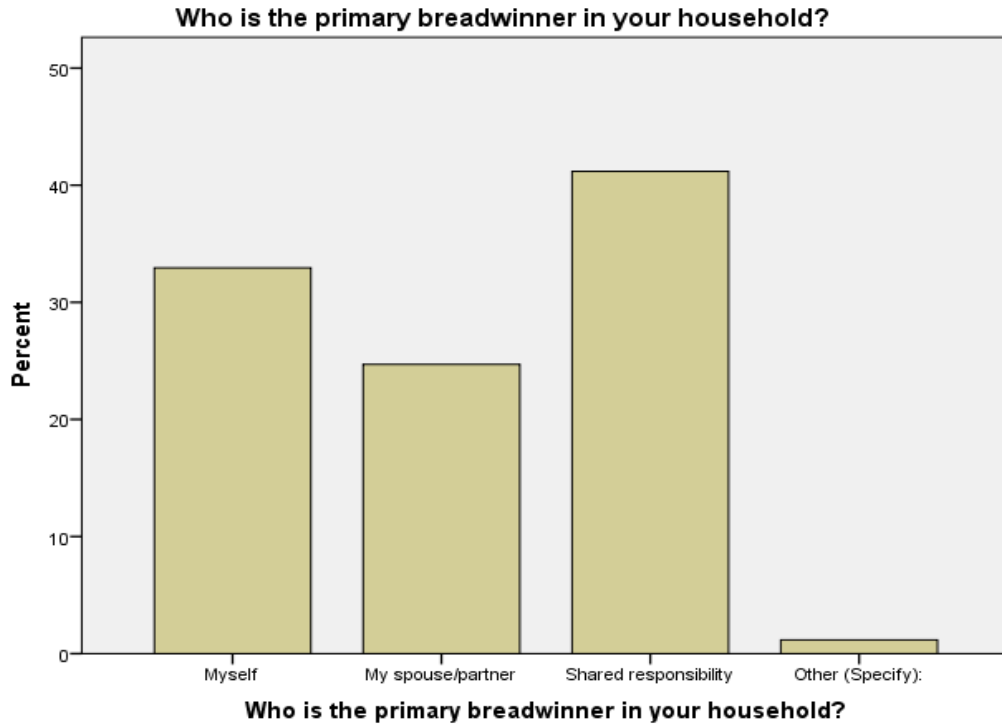
The data on household breadwinners reveals that 41.2% of respondents reported shared financial responsibility between themselves and their partners. Additionally, 32.9% identified themselves as the primary breadwinners, while 24.7% indicated that their spouse or partner was the main income earner. Only 1.2% attributed this role to another household member. This distribution provides a valuable lens for understanding the relationship between women's economic empowerment and domestic violence. The fact that nearly one-third of women are the primary breadwinners reflects a growing shift in gender roles and economic agency among women in Gulu City. This economic empowerment, however, may have complex social consequences. In contexts where traditional gender norms dominate, the role of a woman as the main or equal provider may disrupt power hierarchies within the household, potentially leading to tension or conflict that manifests as domestic violence.

The 41.2% of households reporting shared financial responsibility suggests that more equal financial relationships are emerging. This could potentially foster mutual respect and reduce economically related conflicts, a key aspect in reducing domestic violence. However, the 24.7% of households where men remain the sole breadwinners still represent a traditional dynamic, which may reinforce male dominance and increase the risk of control-based abuse, particularly if women lack financial independence.

These findings highlight that economic empowerment, when coupled with equitable household dynamics, may serve as a protective factor against domestic violence. However, in settings

where empowerment challenges traditional power structures without accompanying shifts in attitudes and gender norms, it may also act as a trigger for conflict.

Figure 7: Bar Chart Showing Primary Breadwinner in a household



Source: Primary Data, (2025)

4.3.7 Control Over Household Financial Decisions

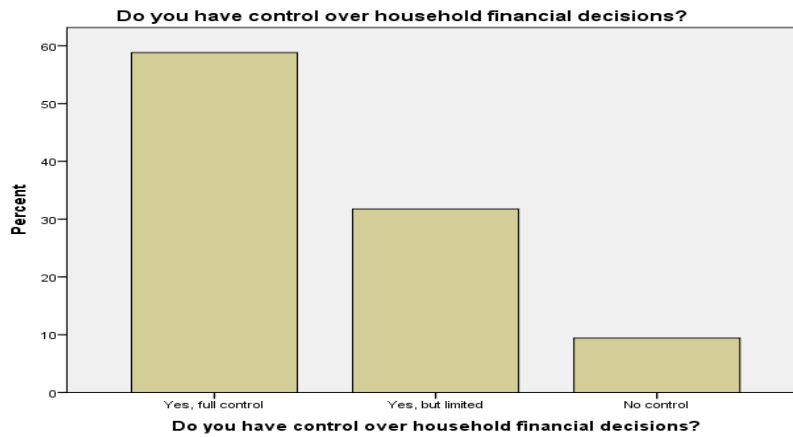
The results show that a majority of respondents (58.8%) reported having full control over household financial decisions. Another 31.8% indicated having limited control, while 9.4% stated they had no control at all. These findings are central to understanding the influence of women’s economic empowerment on domestic violence. Control over financial decision-making is a critical indicator of economic empowerment. The fact that nearly 60% of women reported full control suggests that a significant portion of respondents exercise financial agency within their households. This level of autonomy contributes to the ability of women to negotiate power

within relationships, potentially reducing their vulnerability to financial abuse or other forms of domestic violence.

However, the 31.8% with limited control and the 9.4% with no control at all highlight the persistent constraints faced by a considerable segment of women. Limited or no control over household finances may reflect unequal power dynamics, economic dependence on partners, or socio-cultural norms that restrict decision-making authority among women. Such conditions often place women at a higher risk of experiencing domestic violence, particularly financial, emotional, and psychological abuse.

Moreover, even among women who are breadwinners or contribute significantly to household income, a lack of decision-making power indicates that economic empowerment alone does not automatically translate into equality or safety. Empowerment must therefore be multidimensional, combining income generation with strengthened rights, household negotiation capacity, and protection from coercion. These results affirm the need to address not just access to income by women but also their control over how financial resources are used as a vital strategy for reducing domestic violence in Gulu City.

Figure 8: Bar Chart showing control over household Financial Decisions



Source: Primary Data, (2025)

4.4 Descriptive Results on research variables

The main purpose of the study was to explore the influence of women economic empowerment and associated experiences on domestic violence in Gulu City. Three research questions were framed to answer the research objectives. Questionnaires were designed and dispensed to respondents, interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in the main areas of study, and these included economic empowerment programmes and their influence on domestic violence, psychological effects of domestic violence on women and implications for economic empowerment, and influence of community support systems and social networks. Each dimension had several components tested in order to answer the objectives of the study. Analysis of the Means and Standard deviations was done to present the descriptive results of the variables studied.

4.4.1 Descriptive results on economic empowerment programmes and their influence on domestic violence

Table 4: Descriptive results on the Economic Empowerment program and their influence on domestic violence

Economic empowerment programmes and their influence on domestic violence	Mean	Std. Deviation
I have participated in one or more economic empowerment programmes (e.g., vocational training, microfinance, business mentorship) in Gulu City	3.78	1.148
The empowerment programmes I participated in have improved my financial independence.	3.84	.884
I have experienced more respect from my partner and family since I became economically empowered.	2.38	.723
My economic empowerment has reduced the frequency or severity of domestic violence in my relationship.	2.52	.881
Economic empowerment has given me the confidence to confront or report domestic violence.	3.78	1.148
My economic progress has caused increased tension or backlash from my spouse or intimate partner.	3.84	.88435
Aggregate mean and standard deviation	3.36	0.94

Source: Primary Data, (2025)

LEGEND TABLE

The Likert scale had the highest value of five, and one being the lowest. As such, the scale for rating mean was seven, and it was calculated as below

$$= (5-1)/7 = 0.571$$

As such, the first scale, which is the lowest, took the value of 1 to 1+ 0.571, and the values were added and rated until the last value of 4.48 to 5.0

Legend table for the interpretation of the Mean

Extremely Low	Very Low	Low	Moderately Low	High	Very High	Extremely High
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1-1.57	1.58-2.15	2.16-2.73	2.74-3.31	3.32-3.89	3.90-4.47	4.48-5.0
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The aggregate mean score for all items was 3.36 (SD = 0.94), which falls within the “high” category according to the interpretation scale (3.32–3.89). This suggests that, overall, respondents moderately agreed that economic empowerment programmes had some influence on their financial, social, and relational circumstances, although the nature of this influence varied across different dimensions.

The findings revealed a substantial level of participation in economic empowerment programmes among respondents in Gulu City. With a mean score of 3.78 (SD = 1.148), participants generally agreed that they had engaged in one or more initiatives such as vocational training, microfinance schemes, or business mentorship. This suggests a relatively wide reach and accessibility of these programmes within the community.

In terms of financial outcomes, the data indicate that the programmes have had a notably positive impact on participants’ economic well-being. The statement, “The empowerment programmes I participated in have improved my financial independence,” recorded the highest mean score of 3.84 (SD = 0.884). This reflects a strong and consistent perception among respondents that these initiatives have enhanced their capacity for financial self-reliance.

However, when examining the social and relational effects of economic empowerment, the results become more nuanced. Participants reported lower agreement with the statement regarding increased respect from their partners or families following empowerment (Mean =

2.38, SD = 0.723). This suggests that economic gains may not necessarily translate into greater recognition or improved treatment within intimate or familial relationships.

Similarly, the impact of economic empowerment on reducing domestic violence appears to be limited. The mean score for the statement, “My economic empowerment has reduced the frequency or severity of domestic violence in my relationship,” was 2.52 (SD = 0.881). While some participants may have experienced improvements, the overall response leans toward neutrality or mild disagreement, indicating that financial empowerment alone may not be sufficient to significantly deter abusive behavior.

On a more positive note, participants expressed greater confidence in their ability to confront or report domestic violence as a result of their empowerment. This item also recorded a mean of 3.78 (SD = 1.148), suggesting that while empowerment might not always prevent violence, it can empower individuals to take action when it occurs. This reflects a shift in personal agency and readiness to challenge harmful dynamics.

Conversely, a concerning trend emerges regarding the unintended negative consequences of empowerment. The highest mean score (3.84, SD = 0.884) was also observed for the statement, “My economic progress has caused increased tension or backlash from my spouse or intimate partner.” This points to a potential backlash effect, where shifts in economic power dynamics may provoke resistance or conflict within households, particularly from partners who may feel threatened by changes in traditional roles.

4.4.2 Descriptive results on Psychological Effects of Domestic Violence on Women and Implications for Economic Empowerment

Table 5: Descriptive results on Psychological Effects of Domestic Violence on Women and Implications for Economic Empowerment

Psychological Effects of Domestic Violence on Women and Implications for Economic Empowerment	Mean	Std. Deviation
I frequently feel anxious, fearful, or emotionally distressed due to experiences of domestic violence.	2.3765	.72336
Domestic violence has negatively affected my ability to focus or participate in economic activities.	3.4706	1.12956
I sometimes feel unworthy or incapable of achieving economic independence because of past abuse.	3.5412	1.13968
I have experienced emotional trauma or symptoms of depression (e.g., sadness, insomnia, hopelessness) related to domestic violence.	3.7765	1.14825
The psychological effects of domestic violence have discouraged me from joining or completing economic empowerment programmes.	3.8353	.88435
Access to counseling or psychosocial support services has helped me maintain or regain economic productivity.	3.0353	1.11747
Aggregate mean and standard deviation	3.3392	1.0238

Source: Primary Data, (2025)

The study explored the psychological effects of domestic violence on women and their implications for economic empowerment. Results revealed varied experiences among respondents, reflecting both emotional and economic dimensions of the impact. The descriptive statistics showed an aggregate mean of 3.34 (SD = 1.02), suggesting that, on average, women in the study experienced moderate psychological effects of domestic violence with noticeable variation among respondents. This indicates that while some women reported relatively mild impacts, others experienced more severe effects, particularly with regard to emotional well-being and economic participation.

A relatively low mean score of 2.38 (SD = 0.72) was reported for the item, “I frequently feel anxious, fearful, or emotionally distressed due to experiences of domestic violence,” suggesting

that while some women continue to experience emotional distress, it is not a frequent or intense feeling for the majority of respondents. Conversely, there was stronger agreement on the economic impact of abuse. The statement “Domestic violence has negatively affected my ability to focus or participate in economic activities” had a mean of 3.47 (SD = 1.13), indicating that many women acknowledge a moderate to high level of disruption in their economic engagement due to their experiences.

Self-perception and confidence in achieving economic independence also appeared to be affected. The item “I sometimes feel unworthy or incapable of achieving economic independence because of past abuse” yielded a mean of 3.54 (SD = 1.14), suggesting that feelings of diminished self-worth are a common consequence of abuse among the participants.

Emotional trauma was one of the most prominent themes, with the statement “I have experienced emotional trauma or symptoms of depression (e.g., sadness, insomnia, hopelessness) related to domestic violence” receiving a high mean score of 3.78 (SD = 1.15). This indicates a strong prevalence of mental health challenges among the respondents, likely linked to their abusive experiences.

Furthermore, the psychological impact of domestic violence appears to influence participation in recovery or empowerment initiatives. The item “The psychological effects of domestic violence have discouraged me from joining or completing economic empowerment programmes” recorded the highest mean of 3.84 (SD = 0.88), emphasizing how these effects can deter women from pursuing opportunities meant to foster economic independence.

On a more hopeful note, the role of support services was moderately acknowledged. The statement “Access to counseling or psychosocial support services has helped me maintain or regain economic productivity” had a mean score of 3.04 (SD = 1.12). This suggests that while such services are beneficial for some, their effectiveness may not be universally experienced, potentially due to differences in accessibility, quality, or individual readiness for support.

Overall, the findings highlight the significant psychological toll domestic violence imposes on women and the clear need for trauma-informed approaches in economic empowerment programmes.

4.4.3 Descriptive results for Influence of Community Support Systems and Social Networks

Table 6: Descriptive results on the Influence of Community Support Systems and Social Networks

Influence of Community Support Systems and Social Networks	Mean	Std. Deviation
I have access to a trusted social network (family, friends, peers) that supports me emotionally when I face domestic violence.	2.52	.881
Local women’s groups or community-based organizations have offered meaningful support when I experienced domestic violence.	1.88	.359
I feel comfortable discussing experiences of domestic violence with community leaders or local authorities.	3.7765	1.14825
Community support has helped me continue my economic activities during or after abusive experiences.	3.8353	.88435
My community encourages women to report domestic violence and seek justice or support.	2.3765	.72336
Social stigma or fear of judgment prevents many women in my community from reporting domestic violence.	2.69	1.069
Aggregate mean and standard deviation	2.8464	0.8442

Source: Primary Data, (2025)

The analysis explored perceptions of respondents on community support systems and social networks in the context of domestic violence, using a Likert-scale survey. Results are presented in terms of means and standard deviations (SD), with higher means indicating stronger agreement with each statement. The results showed an aggregate mean of 2.85 (SD = 0.84), indicating that, overall, community support systems and social networks are perceived as moderately influential in addressing domestic violence and its economic implications. This suggests that while some forms of support are available and helpful, many gaps remain in terms of accessibility, effectiveness, and community encouragement.

Respondents reported moderate access to emotional support from trusted social networks such as family, friends, or peers, with a mean of 2.52 (SD = 0.88). This suggests that while some women may receive emotional backing during abusive experiences, reliable social support is not universally accessible.

Support from local women's groups and community-based organizations was notably low (Mean = 1.88, SD = 0.36), indicating a general absence or ineffectiveness of formal community support structures. The low standard deviation further highlights consistent perceptions among participants regarding the limited utility of these organizations.

In contrast, respondents expressed a relatively high level of comfort in discussing domestic violence with community leaders or local authorities, with a mean of 3.78 (SD = 1.15). Despite the overall positivity, the large standard deviation reflects significant variation in individual comfort levels, possibly influenced by differing community dynamics or past experiences.

Community support was also seen as a key factor in helping survivors sustain economic activities, as reflected in a high mean of 3.84 (SD = 0.88). This finding underscores the practical value of communal support in enhancing survivors’ resilience and independence. However, the findings revealed limited encouragement from communities to report domestic violence, with a mean score of 2.38 (SD = 0.72). This suggests that social or institutional reinforcement to seek justice or assistance remains weak in many communities.

Finally, social stigma and fear of judgment were identified as moderate barriers to reporting abuse (Mean = 2.69, SD = 1.07). The variability in responses indicates that while some women may face significant stigma, others may feel more secure or supported in disclosing abuse.

4.4.4 Level of Domestic Violence in Gulu City

Table 10: Domestic Violence Experiences

Domestic Violence Experiences	Mean	Std. Deviation
I have experienced at least one form of domestic violence (emotional, physical, sexual, or economic) in the last 12 months.	3.99	1.190
Domestic violence in my household occurs frequently (e.g., more than once a month).	3.08	1.373
I have experienced emotional violence (e.g., insults, threats, humiliation) from a partner.	2.15	.919
I have experienced physical violence (e.g., slapping, hitting, beating) from a partner.	3.78	1.148
I have experienced economic violence (e.g., being denied access to household finances or earnings).	3.84	.884
I have experienced sexual violence (e.g., forced sex or sexual coercion) in my relationship.	2.78	1.117
Aggregate mean and standard deviation	3.2700	1.1052

Source: Primary Data, (2025)

To answer objective four on the level of domestic violence, descriptive analysis was done, and the result presents an overview of participants' reported experiences with domestic violence over the past 12 months. Responses were collected using a five-point Likert scale, where higher values reflect stronger agreement with statements regarding the presence and frequency of various forms of abuse. The analysis offers findings on both the prevalence and patterns of domestic violence in the sampled population. The results indicate an aggregate mean of 3.27 (SD = 1.11), showing that, on average, women in the study moderately agreed with statements about experiencing domestic violence. This suggests that exposure to various forms of abuse is widespread, though with notable variation across respondents.

A significant majority of respondents indicated they had experienced at least one form of domestic violence, whether emotional, physical, sexual, or economic, within the past year. This is evidenced by a high mean score of 3.99 (SD = 1.19), highlighting the widespread nature of domestic abuse in this context. The finding points to the critical need for holistic interventions that address the spectrum of abuse types.

In terms of frequency, respondents reported a moderate level of agreement with the statement that domestic violence occurs often in their households, with a mean of 3.08 (SD = 1.37). While this average suggests that recurrent abuse is a reality for many, the relatively large standard deviation indicates varied experiences; some respondents face frequent violence, while others may experience it sporadically.

Disaggregating the data by specific types of violence provides a clearer picture of the forms of abuse experienced. Emotional violence, such as insults, threats, and humiliation, had a relatively

low mean of 2.15 (SD = 0.92). Although lower compared to other forms, this suggests that psychological abuse is still present in a meaningful number of relationships. Its subtler nature may also lead to underreporting or normalization.

Physical violence was reported at a much higher rate, with a mean of 3.78 (SD = 1.15), indicating that many women have endured acts such as slapping, hitting, or beating. This high level of reported physical abuse is alarming and reflects the ongoing physical danger many women face within intimate relationships.

Similarly, economic violence, such as being denied access to financial resources or earnings, was among the most prevalent, with a mean of 3.84 (SD = 0.88). This underscores the widespread control and dependency issues present in abusive relationships, and highlights how financial disempowerment often accompanies other forms of abuse.

Sexual violence, involving coerced or forced sexual activity, had a moderate mean of 2.78 (SD = 1.12). While lower than physical and economic violence, this still represents a substantial portion of respondents who face sexual abuse within their relationships, pointing to the need for trauma-informed services and legal protections.

The findings demonstrate the multidimensional and deeply entrenched nature of domestic violence experienced by women in the study. The particularly high levels of physical and economic abuse suggest these are dominant forms of control and harm, demanding immediate attention from policymakers, service providers, and community stakeholders. Emotional and

sexual violence, while less frequently reported, remains a significant concerns due to its long-term psychological and physical consequences. Collectively, these results reinforce the need for comprehensive and context-sensitive strategies to prevent domestic violence and support survivors.

4.5 Results on economic empowerment programmes that women in Gulu City have participated in and their potential influence on domestic violence

4.5.1 Regression Analysis

Linear regression was done in order to determine the explanatory power of economic empowerment programmes in predicting their influence on domestic violence. This analysis helped in examining the influence of economic empowerment programmes on domestic violence.

4.5.2 Model Summary

The model summary shows an R value of .528, indicating a moderate positive correlation between economic empowerment programmes and domestic violence experiences. The R Square value (.279) reveals that approximately 27.9% of the variance in domestic violence experiences among women can be explained by their participation in economic empowerment programmes. While this is a meaningful proportion, it also suggests that other factors (72.1%) contribute to domestic violence and need consideration in a broader analysis.

Table 7: Regression Model table on economic empowerment programmes that women in Gulu City have participated in and their potential influence on domestic violence

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.528 ^a	.279	.270	2.69298

a. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Empowerment Programmes

4.5.3 ANOVA

The ANOVA results test the statistical significance of the regression model. The F-statistic is 32.043 with a p-value of .000, which is highly significant ($p < .001$). This means that the regression model is statistically significant and that economic empowerment programmes significantly predict variations in domestic violence experiences among women in Gulu City.

Table 8: ANOVA table on economic empowerment programmes that women in Gulu City have participated in and their potential influence on domestic violence

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	232.379	1	232.379	32.043	.000 ^b
	Residual	601.927	83	7.252		
	Total	834.306	84			

a. Dependent Variable: Domestic Violence experiences

b. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Empowerment Programmes

4.5.4 Model Coefficients

The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.558$) means that for every one-unit increase in participation or exposure to economic empowerment programmes, the domestic violence score increases by 0.558 units. The t-value (5.661) and the p-value (.000) again confirm that this relationship is statistically significant. The positive beta value (.528) suggests a positive relationship, suggesting increased participation in economic empowerment programmes is associated with higher reported experiences of domestic violence.

Table 9: Model Coefficients table on economic empowerment programmes that women in Gulu City have participated in, and their potential influence on domestic violence

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Beta		
	Std. Error			

1	(Constant)	6.919	2.004	3.453	.001
	Economic Empowerment Programmes	.558	.099	.528	5.661
					.000

a. Dependent Variable: Domestic Violence experiences

4.6 How community support systems and social networks influence the ability of economically empowered women in Gulu City to cope with domestic violence.

4.6.1 Regression Analysis

A linear regression analysis was conducted to explore the extent to which community support systems and social networks influence the coping ability of economically empowered women in Gulu City when faced with domestic violence. This statistical approach provided insights into how these social structures contribute to enhancing women's resilience and ability to manage domestic abuse.

4.6.2 Model Summary

The model summary provides an overview of how well community support systems and social networks explain the variation in the ability of economically empowered women in Gulu City to cope with domestic violence. The correlation coefficient (R) is 0.560, indicating a moderate positive relationship between community support systems/social networks and women's coping ability. This suggests that as the strength or accessibility of community support systems increases, so does the capacity of women to effectively manage or cope with domestic violence situations.

The R Square value is 0.314, which means that 31.4% of the variation in women's coping ability can be explained by the presence and effectiveness of community support systems and social

networks. This shows that these social structures play a significant role in influencing how women respond to domestic violence, though other factors may also be at play.

The Adjusted R Square is 0.306, which takes into account the number of predictors and the sample size. This slightly lower value compared to the R Square suggests that the model remains fairly reliable and generalizable beyond the sample, avoiding overestimation of its explanatory power.

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.560 ^a	.314	.306	2.62600	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Community support systems and social networks

4.6.3 ANOVA

The F-statistic is 37.986 is significant at $p = .000$, meaning the regression model significantly predicts the dependent variable. This confirms that community support systems and social networks have a statistically significant impact on women's ability to cope with domestic violence.

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	261.948	1	261.948	37.986	.000 ^b
	Residual	572.358	83	6.896		
	Total	834.306	84			

a. Dependent Variable: Domestic Violence

b. Predictors: (Constant), Community support systems, and social networks

4.6.4 Model Coefficient

The model coefficient provides a deeper understanding of the strength and direction of the relationship between community support systems/social networks and the ability of economically empowered women in Gulu City to cope with domestic violence.

The unstandardized coefficient (B) is 0.834, which means that for every one-unit increase in the effectiveness or availability of community support systems and social networks, the coping ability of women improves by 0.834 units. This assumes that the scale used to measure coping is coded such that higher values indicate better coping. This result highlights the practical importance of community support, showing that stronger social networks are associated with better coping mechanisms among women experiencing domestic violence.

The standardized beta coefficient is 0.560, which reflects the strength of this relationship in standardized units. A beta value of 0.560 suggests a strong positive influence, confirming that community support systems and social networks are a key predictor of how well women can manage and respond to domestic violence, relative to other possible influences.

Finally, the p-value is 0.000, which indicates that the relationship between community support systems/social networks and coping ability is highly statistically significant. In practical terms, this means that the observed relationship is not due to random chance, and there is strong evidence to support the conclusion that enhanced community support contributes meaningfully to better coping outcomes.

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std.	Beta		

		3.891	2.330	1.6	.099
1	(Constant)				
	Community support systems and social networks	.834	.135	.560	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Domestic Violence

Presentation of Qualitative Findings

4.7 Results on economic empowerment programmes that women in Gulu City have participated in and their potential influence on domestic violence

Women in Gulu City have participated in a range of economic empowerment programmes, including Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLAs), microfinance institutions such as ASA, UMFO, and BRAC, as well as government initiatives such as the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Program (UWEP) and the Parish Development Model (PDM). Additional support has come from start-up grant schemes such as Kalulu and Bayankole, and cooperative initiatives under NUSAF. These programmes have improved women’s access to savings, loans, and revolving funds, enabling them to start or expand small businesses and gain financial independence. One participant noted, *“Through our savings group, I have been able to restock my shop without asking my husband for help,”* illustrating how these initiatives can reduce financial dependency on male partners. This economic independence has the potential to influence domestic violence dynamics in complex ways. On one hand, it can empower women to negotiate more equitable relationships or exit abusive ones. On the other hand, it may provoke backlash from partners who feel threatened by the shift in traditional power structures. Therefore, while economic empowerment is crucial, it should be accompanied by interventions

such as gender sensitization, conflict resolution, and community dialogue to ensure it contributes positively to household dynamics and reduces the risk of domestic violence.

Economic empowerment programmes have had a notably positive impact on the lives of women in Gulu City, particularly in enhancing their household roles, autonomy, and overall resilience. Many women reported that increased income from participation in initiatives such as VSLAs, microfinance, and government schemes enabled them to better support their families and contribute to essential household needs. This financial contribution translated into greater decision-making power and a reduction in economic dependence on their male partners. As one woman expressed, *“Now I can buy food for the children even when my husband is away. I don’t have to beg,”* reflecting a shift toward independence and dignity. In addition to financial benefits, these programmes also fostered confidence, social solidarity, and emotional support among women. The sense of community and shared purpose helped reduce feelings of isolation and built resilience, which are critical in addressing and potentially reducing the risk or severity of domestic violence.

However, these gains were sometimes accompanied by tension at home. Some men reportedly felt threatened by their wives’ economic success, interpreting it as a loss of control. Emotional abuse, resentment, and attempts to restrict women’s access to funds were common. One woman reflected, *“Violence increased because I started earning more. He said I was undermining him.”* Another added, *“Men say empowered women become big-headed and stop listening.”* These narratives suggest that while empowerment promotes independence, it may also challenge entrenched gender norms, leading to backlash.

Although economic empowerment initiatives in Gulu City have significantly improved women's livelihoods, they have also exposed deep-rooted gender tensions. These findings highlight the need for integrated programming that includes male engagement and community sensitization to mitigate relational conflict. Without addressing these social dynamics, economic interventions alone may risk intensifying domestic violence, even as they aim to reduce financial vulnerability.

4.8 The psychological effect of domestic violence on women in Gulu City and its implications for their economic empowerment

To address the objective of examining the psychological effects of domestic violence on women in Gulu City and its implications for their economic empowerment, the following research question was formulated: What are the psychological effects of domestic violence on women in Gulu City, and how do these effects impact their economic empowerment? This question was explored using qualitative methods, including key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and thematic analysis.

Domestic violence has severe psychological effects on women in Gulu City, which significantly hinder their ability to engage in economic empowerment. Many women who have experienced abuse report persistent emotional and mental health challenges such as chronic stress, unexplained physical symptoms such as headaches, and deep feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and isolation. These emotional struggles often intensify following separation from abusive partners, as women are left to shoulder the full burden of parenting and household responsibilities alone. This psychological toll not only affects their well-being but also leads to social withdrawal and reluctance to participate in community activities, including income-generating programmes. As one woman shared, *"I don't go to meetings anymore. People look at*

me like I failed, like I couldn't keep my home together.” Such emotional isolation and reduced public engagement directly undermine their ability to build economic independence, making it clear that addressing mental health is essential to supporting women's economic empowerment in contexts affected by domestic violence.

A major psychological effect of domestic violence is a diminished sense of agency and motivation. Women report loss of interest in self-care, such as eating or maintaining hygiene, which is often linked to emotional abuse and verbal degradation by partners. This loss of personal agency contributes to self-isolation and social invisibility, further complicating efforts to access community resources or participate in empowerment programmes. The cumulative impact of psychological withdrawal significantly hampers women's ability to maintain employment, operate small businesses, or contribute economically to their households.

“...There are days I just stay in bed... no appetite, no strength to even comb my hair...”

“...He used to say I was useless, even in front of our children. I started to believe it...”

“...I wanted to join a group, but I felt too ashamed to face others. Like everyone knew what I went through...”

Psychological trauma following domestic violence deeply affects women's economic engagement. Withdrawal from business activities is common, especially when stress and depression become unmanageable. The added burden of childcare after separation further diminishes their capacity to focus on entrepreneurial ventures. Women also face stigma from the community, which may discourage them from seeking help or joining empowerment programmes. Fear of judgment, coupled with mental exhaustion, leads many to avoid financial

risk-taking or collaboration, limiting their participation in economic activities critical for achieving independence.

Excerpts

“...I left my business; I couldn't focus... Every time a customer came, my mind went blank...”

“...People whisper when I pass... They say I am a failure because I couldn't hold my marriage...”

“...Starting anything new feels risky... What if I fail again? What if people laugh?”

Despite these challenges, some women demonstrate remarkable resilience, using their adverse experiences as a catalyst for personal and economic transformation. Several respondents indicated that the hardship of violence pushed them to seek alternatives such as joining VSLA groups, starting small-scale businesses, or engaging in manual labor such as quarry work. These actions, driven by a desire to support their children and regain dignity, underscore the complex role of psychological trauma it can both hinder and inspire. Many women develop stronger decision-making abilities and a deeper sense of accountability as a result.

Excerpts

“...I had no one else, so I started selling vegetables... At least I can buy books for my children...”

“...Joining the women's group helped me see I wasn't alone... Now I'm saving money...”

“The pain pushed me. I decided I will not depend on any man again.”

Effective recovery from the psychological effects of domestic violence requires layered support. Respondents emphasized the importance of psychosocial counseling, peer sharing, and emotional encouragement from trusted sources. Faith-based support also plays a critical role, with religious teachings providing comfort, resilience, and a moral framework for healing. Financial assistance,

particularly through group lending models such as VSLAs, enables women to regain control over their economic lives. Interventions that integrate psychological, spiritual, and financial support create a pathway for survivors to move from trauma to empowerment.

Excerpts

“...Counseling helped me to stop blaming myself... I began to rebuild my life...”

“...The Bible gives me hope... I believe God has a plan for me after all this pain...”

“...In the savings group, we share our stories... It helps to know others understand...”

Gulu City has a range of support systems aimed at addressing domestic violence and promoting women’s recovery. These include NGOs such as GWED-G and Strong Minds, religious organizations providing spiritual counseling, and traditional structures such as clan reconciliation mechanisms. However, while these systems are acknowledged, they are often underutilized or lack sufficient training and coordination. Respondents called for strengthening community support mechanisms, including more active involvement from LC1 leaders, religious groups, and women’s associations to ensure sustained emotional recovery and reintegration into economic life.

“...We have LCs and elders, but they don’t have training to deal with such issues deeply...”

“...GWED-G talked to us about rights and healing... It was the first time I felt seen...”

“...Church leaders try, but they also need support... Sometimes they say, ‘just forgive,’ but it’s not that simple...”

Cultural norms in Gulu City present mixed perceptions of economically empowered women. While some women are celebrated as role models, others face stigma, labeled as disobedient or arrogant. These societal attitudes, coupled with controlling behavior from spouses, discourage

participation in empowerment programmes. Reports of men feeling emasculated or threatened by their partners' success highlight the need to engage both genders in empowerment initiatives. Overcoming these cultural barriers is essential to creating an inclusive environment where women thrive both psychologically and economically.

“...Some say I’m proud because I started my own shop.... But what was I supposed to do—beg?”

“...He told me to stop the business or leave... I chose to leave...”

“...One man in our village committed suicide... he couldn’t take that his wife was earning more and dressing smartly...”

The qualitative findings from Gulu City clearly demonstrate that domestic violence has severe psychological repercussions that directly inhibit the ability of women to engage in economic activities. This finding is strongly supported by Karakurt et al. (2014) and Willie et al. (2023), who report high rates of depression, PTSD, and anxiety among survivors, which impair economic functioning. The lived experiences of women in Gulu, such as *“Sometimes, I get headaches for no reason, I just sit and cry...”*, reflect the same symptoms highlighted in global literature. These mental health issues lead to social withdrawal, diminished confidence, and reduced economic participation, corroborating Silima et al. (2024), who found that self-efficacy and economic decision-making are critically undermined by IPV.

A recurring theme in both the literature and Gulu data is psychological paralysis, a sense of hopelessness that limits action. As one woman recounted: *“...There are days I just stay in bed... no appetite, no strength to even comb my hair...”* This aligns with Talukdar (2024), who found that unresolved trauma increases absenteeism and reduces job retention among IPV survivors.

These shared insights emphasize that without addressing psychological trauma, economic empowerment efforts are likely to falter.

In both contexts, economic disengagement due to fear, shame, and mental fatigue emerges as a critical obstacle. Women in Gulu reported avoiding income-generating activities due to fear of judgment—“...*Starting anything new feels risky... What if I fail again? What if people laugh?*” Similarly, Zhang et al. (2024) emphasize that IPV-induced depression decreases workplace productivity and increases job instability. Such findings point to the dual nature of psychological effects: they not only reduce the internal drive of women but also interact with social stigma to further isolate them economically.

However, the data from Gulu introduces a compelling counter-narrative of resilience and transformation. Several women reported channeling their trauma into action—“*The pain pushed me. I decided I will not depend on any man again.*” This reflects findings from Cameranesi and Piotrowski (2024), who argue that peer and emotional support build resilience and catalyzes economic recovery. Importantly, while the Gulu findings emphasize informal networks such as VSLAs and faith-based groups, the literature notes a gap in integrating formal psychosocial care into empowerment initiatives, highlighting a missed opportunity to scale up effective interventions.

The study by Colasito and Agnes (2024) further supports the importance of integrated interventions. Their research indicates that women who received both psychological counseling and employment support had better economic outcomes. This mirrors women’s testimonies in

Gulu: “...*Counseling helped me to stop blaming myself... I began to rebuild my life...*” Yet, many survivors in Gulu noted that local institutions lack the capacity to provide holistic care. “*Church leaders try, but they also need support...*” This underscores what the literature identifies as a methodological and implementation gap in coordinated service delivery.

Furthermore, the cultural challenges highlighted in Gulu, such as male backlash against women's economic success, reveal an intersectional dimension insufficiently explored in the literature. One respondent noted: “...*He told me to stop the business or leave... I chose to leave...*” These findings demand more intersectional analyses, as urged by Willie et al. (2023), to understand how gender norms, power dynamics, and societal stigma compound economic disempowerment.

The findings also suggest that economic empowerment itself may serve as a form of psychological healing, though this is under-theorized in the literature. Women who overcame trauma reported increased self-worth and purpose through work and saving groups—“...*Now I'm saving money...*” This supports the need, raised by several scholars, for empowerment and resilience-based theoretical frameworks that explain how economic agency buffers psychological distress

4.9 To investigate how community support systems and social networks influence the ability of economically empowered women in Gulu City to cope with domestic violence

Community support systems and social networks play a critical role in shaping how economically empowered women in Gulu City cope with domestic violence. The perceptions of these women within their communities are deeply divided. While some community members

admire and respect economically empowered women for their independence and resilience, viewing them as role models who manage their families without external support, others hold negative attitudes, labeling them as “proud,” “disrespectful,” or “non-submissive.” This stigmatization can lead to social isolation and reduced emotional or practical support, which undermines their ability to cope with domestic abuse. For instance, one woman shared, “...*They call us Malaya or gold diggers, just because we dress well and manage our own money...*” This contrast in community attitudes determines whether a woman feels supported or alienated, which in turn influences her mental health, confidence, and willingness to seek help. Therefore, while community support can be a protective factor, negative social perceptions can severely limit the effectiveness of economic empowerment as a tool for overcoming domestic violence.

Deep-rooted patriarchal norms continue to undermine women’s economic progress and safety. Respondents revealed that many men perceive empowered women as a threat. As one explained, “...*My husband told me I shouldn’t attend any training unless he approves it.*” Another recounted, “*He took the money I saved and said I had no right to make decisions.*” These cultural expectations not only limit women’s agency but also intensify tensions that lead to domestic violence, showing that without cultural reform, empowerment remains precarious.

Religious and community-based organizations in Gulu offer critical emotional and practical support to survivors of domestic violence. One woman explained, “*The church helped me with counseling and gave me hope to keep going.*” Others noted, “*Our local group talks to men and women together about respect and cooperation.*” These institutions bridge a vital gap by offering

spaces for reflection, peer support, and conflict resolution. However, respondents emphasized that more training and coordination are needed to maximize the impact of these interventions.

Sustainable empowerment requires both economic and social interventions. Respondents emphasized the importance of male involvement, with one noting, “...*When men are trained, they don’t feel left out or angry...*” Another participant stressed, “...*Joint financial planning has helped reduce fights in our home...*” Programmes that integrate men, encourage cooperative decision-making, and offer continuous mentorship were widely praised. These strategies not only enhance women’s independence but also reduce the backlash and emotional abuse often triggered by traditional gender role disruptions.

Many participants highlighted structural weaknesses in current empowerment programmes. One woman complained, “*They gave us money without any training, and people misused it.*” Another added, “...*UWEP asks for too much paperwork, and many women just give up...*” Respondents recommended individual rather than group funding, simplified procedures, and stronger follow-up systems. Importantly, they urged that men be included in these initiatives. “*If men are part of it,*” one stated, “*they understand better and don’t fight progress.*” This reveals a need for gender-sensitive and inclusive policymaking.

Participants overwhelmingly called for the inclusion of men in empowerment initiatives. A respondent shared, “*If only women benefit, men feel useless and angry.*” Another emphasized, “*Men also need skills and support to manage their frustrations.*” Engaging men through vocational training, cooperative savings groups, and mindset transformation programmes was

cited as essential. This dual-gender approach reduces household conflict, reinforces shared responsibility, and supports more balanced power dynamics, leading to more stable and respectful relationships.

Respondents advocated for community-informed, context-sensitive policy reforms. For example, “...*Drunkenness is the root of many fights; there should be local by-laws...*,” one elder advised. Others called for formal recognition of customary marriages to secure women’s property rights, especially in separation. “...*When my husband died, his relatives said I had no claim because we were not officially married...*,” recounted a widow. Policies that target alcohol abuse, support marital stability, and include grassroots voices can better protect women while enabling lasting empowerment.

The influence of community support systems and social networks on economically empowered women’s ability to cope with domestic violence in Gulu City is complex. On one hand, supportive CBOs and religious groups offer critical resources. On the other hand, cultural norms and social stigma often undermine women’s progress. As one respondent noted, “*Without support from both men and the community, empowerment can bring more harm than good.*” Holistic, inclusive strategies that engage all community members are essential to sustainably combat domestic violence and promote women’s agency.

4.10 Discussion of findings

4.10.1 Objective one: To explore the economic empowerment programmes that women in Gulu City have participated in and their potential influence on domestic violence

The relationship between economic empowerment and domestic violence has sparked significant debate, with some arguing that economic empowerment may influence domestic abuse. The findings from Gulu City reinforce this debate. Quantitative analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between economic empowerment and IPV experiences ($B = 0.558, p < .001$), indicating that while empowerment programmes are effective in promoting women's financial strength, they may also provoke an increase in domestic violence. This supports arguments from Nduka et al. (2023) and Parwez & Patel (2022) who note that economic autonomy, when not accompanied by cultural shifts, can lead to male backlash rooted in threatened gender norms.

The qualitative data from Gulu further triangulate and deepen this finding. Women shared that empowerment improved their ability to contribute to household expenses and enhanced their sense of independence—*“Now I can buy food for the children even when my husband is away. I don't have to beg.”* This aligns with Strydom et al. (2024), who found that microfinance programmes increased women's household bargaining power. However, the Gulu narratives also echo Bagga (2024) and Chaudhuri & Morash (2019) in revealing that economic shifts alone do not guarantee safety. Many women reported rising tensions at home, where men perceived empowerment as disobedience or defiance—*“Violence increased because I started earning more. He said I was undermining him.”* This evidences the need for cultural transformation alongside financial interventions.

The regression results—showing that 27.9% of IPV variance is explained by economic empowerment—suggest that while financial interventions are a significant factor, they are not the sole driver. This reflects Borraz & Munyo (2020) findings on cash transfers, which showed both protective and provocative effects on IPV. Women in Gulu accessed diverse schemes,

including UWEP, PDM, and VSLAs, which helped them build business continuity and peer support. Yet without male involvement or shifts in gender ideology, such gains remained fragile. One woman remarked, “*Men say empowered women become big-headed and stop listening,*” underscoring the patriarchal resistance noted in Ranganathan et al. (2021).

Theoretically, this discussion shows that economic empowerment must be framed beyond the financial domain. Parwez & Patel (2022) treat empowerment as income generation, ignoring the intersecting identities and power relations that shape outcomes. The Gulu case reveals that without community sensitization, gender norm engagement, and male inclusion, empowerment risks becoming a double-edged sword. As such, a triangulated view confirms that empowerment programmes should adopt intersectional feminist frameworks, incorporate psychosocial support, and build relational equity to reduce IPV sustainably. Empowerment divorced from sociocultural transformation may, paradoxically, expose women to new forms of vulnerability even as it promotes financial independence.

4.10.2 Objective Two: To explore the psychological effect of domestic violence on women in Gulu City and its implications for their economic empowerment

The findings from Gulu City indicate that domestic violence results in profound psychological distress, manifesting as anxiety, sadness, depression, and chronic stress. Many women reported symptoms such as persistent fatigue, unexplained headaches, and emotional breakdowns that hampered their ability to engage in any form of economic activity.

This aligns with Karakurt et al. (2014) and Willie et al. (2023), who found that PTSD, depression, and emotional fatigue are prevalent among IPV survivors and directly impair economic functioning. Talukdar (2024) similarly associates trauma with reduced job retention and absenteeism, echoing the lived experiences of women in Gulu who were forced to abandon small businesses due to emotional instability.

A loss of personal agency emerged as another dominant theme. Women expressed a diminished will to participate in group activities, pursue entrepreneurship, or even maintain basic hygiene. This aligns with Silima et al. (2024), who argue that emotional well-being and self-efficacy are fundamental to women's economic decision-making. Zhang et al. (2024) further reinforce that psychological distress reduces work productivity and increases instability in economic life. The findings confirm that without emotional healing, women may internalize abuse, leading to self-doubt and disempowerment, barriers that significantly curtail economic progress.

The role of social stigma adds another layer of psychological trauma. In Gulu, women who experienced IPV were often judged harshly by their communities, resulting in further isolation and reluctance to participate in income-generating activities. This mirrors Zhang et al. (2024) findings on the compounding effects of stigma on mental health and economic inactivity of survivors of domestic violence.

However, the Gulu findings bring greater visibility to the localized socio-cultural dynamics, which are underexplored in mainstream literature. The narrative, *"People whisper when I pass..."*

They say I am a failure...” highlights the interplay between societal judgment and internal psychological withdrawal.

While many women experienced severe trauma, others used their suffering as a catalyst for empowerment. Some joined VSLA groups, started businesses, or found strength through motherhood. These testimonies support Colasito and Agnes (2024), who argue that dual psychological and economic support systems foster resilience and independence. However, the Gulu data adds a unique perspective: resilience is often forged in informal spaces, peer networks, spiritual circles, and savings groups rather than through formal support systems. This duality of trauma as both a disabling and enabling force is under-theorized in the literature and deserves more scholarly attention.

Though support services exist in Gulu, many are fragmented or ill-equipped to handle the psychological complexities of IPV. Respondents indicated that local institutions such as churches and local councils often lack training and continuity in providing effective care. This mirrors Karakurt et al. (2014) and Talukdar (2024), who critique the inefficiency and lack of trauma-informed coordination in current service delivery models. Cameranesi and Piotrowski (2024) emphasize emotional support, but the Gulu findings show that informal systems such as VSLA groups often outperform formal interventions, suggesting a critical need for community-embedded, culturally competent models.

A unique finding in Gulu was the cultural backlash women faced after becoming economically independent. Some partners reacted with hostility or threats, while others left the relationship

entirely. One respondent shared, “He told me to stop the business or leave... I chose to leave.” This reflects an underexplored dimension in the literature: economic empowerment can challenge traditional gender hierarchies, sometimes provoking further conflict. Willie et al. (2023) call for intersectional approaches, and the Gulu data clearly demonstrates why such analysis is essential; economic and psychological empowerment cannot be divorced from cultural and gender power dynamics.

The synthesis of findings points to a key consensus: psychological recovery is foundational to sustainable economic empowerment. However, the Gulu case study emphasizes that recovery must be multidimensional. Survivors need counseling, yes, but also community belonging, spiritual resilience, and financial tools that reflect their cultural realities. This supports Colasito and Agnes (2024), who advocated for integrated interventions combining economic and psychological support. The findings from Gulu extend this by suggesting that group-based models (VSLAs) that blend emotional solidarity with financial cooperation may offer the most accessible and effective path to empowerment in post-conflict settings.

4.10.3 Objective Three: To investigate how community support systems and social networks influence the ability of economically empowered women in Gulu City to cope with domestic violence

The present study set out to investigate how community support systems and social networks influence the ability of economically empowered women in Gulu City to cope with domestic violence. Drawing on both statistical analysis and qualitative data, the findings affirm the significant role these social structures play, while also illuminating the limitations and challenges embedded within the socio-cultural context.

The regression analysis underscores the statistical importance of community support systems and social networks. With an R value of 0.560 and an R² of 0.314, approximately 31.4% of the variation in women's coping ability is explained by the presence of community support. The standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.560$, $p = 0.000$) confirms a strong and statistically significant positive relationship. This quantitative evidence aligns with existing literature, particularly the work of Williams et al. (2023), who found that sustained support from community advocates significantly contributed to economic stability and resilience against abuse.

The qualitative findings support the statistical results by highlighting how religious organizations, peer groups, and community-based organizations (CBOs) offer both emotional and material support. For instance, women cited receiving counseling, mediation services, and financial aid from churches and local groups, echoing Machariah and Simiyu (2023) findings on the role of faith-based institutions in offering multidimensional support.

Similarly, the peer support networks described by Davies et al. (2024) find resonance in the testimonies of Gulu respondents, who emphasized the power of shared experiences and emotional solidarity in coping with IPV. However, just as Davies et al. (2024), there is a need to differentiate the effectiveness of formal versus informal peer structures in future research.

Despite the presence of these support systems, many respondents in Gulu City reported being stigmatized or labeled as “disrespectful” or “Malaya” (sex worker) due to their economic independence. These narratives reflect the deep-rooted patriarchal norms that Menon and Allen

(2024) and Abramsky et al. (2014) also found to undermine empowerment efforts. In this way, community support is not universally accessible or uniformly positive; its effectiveness is moderated by cultural perceptions and gender norms.

This contradiction highlights a critical theoretical gap in much of the reviewed literature: while community support is often assumed to be beneficial, its form and reception are mediated by social expectations and the intersectionality of gender, class, and power. A feminist and intersectional framework is thus essential for understanding why some women benefit while others are ostracized.

Respondents repeatedly emphasized the importance of including men in empowerment and support programmes. This finding adds clarity to the conversation around social support systems. Where many studies, such as Panda (2014), focused solely on women's groups, including microfinance collectives, the Gulu experience suggests that shared, inclusive spaces can reduce backlash and enhance mutual respect. Programmes that involved joint financial planning and training for both genders were credited with reducing conflict findings that extend the work of Abramsky et al. (2014) on community discussions.

This perspective challenges the binary framing often found in literature and calls for a reconceptualization of empowerment programmes as inclusive, community-wide initiatives rather than gender-isolated interventions.

Participants identified key structural weaknesses, such as bureaucratic hurdles in accessing funds or lack of training, that mirror the methodological and evidence gaps highlighted across the literature. For instance, Panda (2014), pointed out that empowerment efforts without sufficient

follow-up or capacity building often fail. Moreover, local cultural practices, such as the lack of formal marriage recognition, expose women to economic vulnerability, a gap not well-addressed in previous studies but critically noted in the Gulu context. This reinforces the need for policy responses that are culturally informed and locally grounded, echoing Mughal and Arnaul (2024) call for context-sensitive interventions, especially in diverse and marginalized communities.

While the statistical model used in this study provides concrete evidence of the influence of social networks, theoretical limitations remain. Most of the literature and this study focus on immediate or short-term coping. Longitudinal studies are needed to assess whether these community supports translate into lasting empowerment. Furthermore, the lack of theoretical integration, such as empowerment theory, social capital, and intersectionality, limits the explanatory power of these studies. Integrating these frameworks would allow future research to better understand how class, education, marital status, and local customs intersect to shape access to and the effectiveness of support systems.

This study affirms that community support systems and social networks significantly influence the coping capacity of economically empowered women facing domestic violence in Gulu City. However, the effectiveness of these systems is contingent upon cultural acceptance, inclusivity, and sustainability. As one respondent poignantly stated, *“Without support from both men and the community, empowerment can bring more harm than good.”* This emphasizes the need for gender-inclusive, locally grounded, and theoretically informed approaches that extend beyond economic interventions to address the deeper social dynamics at play.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussions, a summary of findings, conclusion, and recommendations for further research in the area of the subject studied.

5.1 Summary

5.1.1 Objective one: To explore the economic empowerment programmes that women in Gulu City have participated in and their potential influence on domestic violence

This study examined the economic empowerment programmes accessed by women in Gulu City and their influence on domestic violence. Quantitative findings revealed a statistically significant positive association between women's economic empowerment and experiences of intimate partner violence ($B = 0.558, p < .001$), suggesting that financial autonomy, while beneficial in strengthening women's economic positions, may also provoke domestic tensions in settings where patriarchal norms persist. This relationship reflects broader scholarly debates, which caution that income generation alone, without cultural transformation, may inadvertently escalate gender-based conflict.

Qualitative data enriched these findings by highlighting how women's improved ability to contribute to household expenses often led to male resistance, with some men perceiving their partners' independence as disobedience. Initiatives, including UWEP, PDM, and VSLAs, enhanced women's agency but also exposed them to new risks in unsensitized households. With 27.9% of IPV variance explained by empowerment factors, the study emphasizes the need for intersectional, gender-transformative frameworks that integrate male involvement, community

awareness, and normative change. Empowerment that focuses solely on economic gains, without addressing underlying social dynamics, remains insufficient and may inadvertently reinforce existing power imbalances.

5.1.2 Objective Two: To explore the psychological effect of domestic violence on women in Gulu City and its implications for their economic empowerment

The findings from Gulu City reveal that domestic violence has severe psychological repercussions for women, significantly undermining their capacity for economic empowerment. Manifestations of trauma, including depression, anxiety, chronic stress, and emotional fatigue, directly impaired women's ability to engage in income-generating activities, leading to absenteeism, withdrawal from business ventures, and reduced productivity. Many women described diminished agency, low self-worth, and reluctance to participate in social or entrepreneurial spaces. These experiences align with global literature linking IPV to compromised mental health and economic instability (Karakurt et al., 2014; Talukdar, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). Furthermore, social stigma deepened emotional distress, as survivors often faced community judgment, isolation, and internalized shame, creating further psychological and economic withdrawal.

However, the study also uncovered a dual narrative in which trauma, while debilitating, occasionally catalyzed empowerment. Some women found strength in informal peer networks, spiritual communities, and savings groups such as VSLAs—spaces that provided both emotional solidarity and economic opportunity. This finding highlights the limitations of fragmented formal support systems in Gulu and underscores the potential of culturally grounded, community-based interventions. Importantly, the study illuminates how economic empowerment can provoke

backlash in patriarchal contexts, further entrenching emotional harm. Therefore, sustainable empowerment requires integrated, intersectional approaches that address both psychological healing and structural gender norms. The Gulu experience demonstrates that economic recovery is not possible without psychosocial resilience, and that effective interventions must be culturally sensitive, trauma-informed, and relationally grounded.

5.1.3 Objective Three: To investigate how community support systems and social networks influence the ability of economically empowered women in Gulu City to cope with domestic violence

The study revealed that community support systems and social networks play a critical role in shaping the coping mechanisms of economically empowered women facing domestic violence in Gulu City. Regression analysis showed a strong and statistically significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.560$, $p = 0.000$), with community support explaining 31.4% of the variance in the ability of women to cope with IPV. Qualitative data enriched this finding by highlighting how churches, peer groups, and local organizations provide not only financial assistance but also counseling, mediation, and emotional solidarity. These networks offered a vital buffer against abuse and reinforced women's resilience. However, this support was unevenly experienced; some women faced stigma, labeled as "disrespectful" or "Malaya" for asserting economic independence, pointing to the gendered tensions that complicate access to and benefits from support systems.

These findings underscore that while social networks can empower, their effectiveness is mediated by patriarchal norms, cultural expectations, and structural limitations. The study challenges the simplistic view that community support is universally positive, instead advocating for intersectional and feminist frameworks to understand why certain women benefit while

others are excluded. Respondents emphasized the importance of male inclusion in empowerment programmes, highlighting that shared spaces for economic training and dialogue helped mitigate backlash. Moreover, systemic issues such as a lack of formal marriage recognition and bureaucratic barriers further compromised support access. Thus, effective interventions must be community-wide, culturally sensitive, and sustained through inclusive, context-specific policy frameworks. Empowerment, the study concludes, cannot be separated from the broader social and cultural ecosystem in which women live and resist.

5.2 Conclusion

5.1.1 Objective one: To explore the economic empowerment programmes that women in Gulu City have participated in and their potential influence on domestic violence

Although economic empowerment programmes such as UWEP, PDM, and VSLAs have advanced women financial support in Gulu City, this study emphasizes the complex and often paradoxical relationship between empowerment and intimate partner violence. The statistically significant link between increased economic autonomy and domestic conflict reveals that empowerment, in patriarchal settings, acts as both a liberating and destabilizing force. Qualitative findings further expose the cultural tensions that arise when traditional gender roles are challenged without adequate social sensitization. Therefore, true empowerment must transcend income generation to include deliberate, gender-transformative strategies that engage men, shift harmful norms, and foster community-wide attitudinal change. Without this holistic approach, economic gains risk exacerbating the very inequalities they aim to dismantle.

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These findings underscore that while social networks can empower, their effectiveness is mediated by patriarchal norms, cultural expectations, and structural limitations. The study challenges the simplistic view that community support is universally positive, instead advocating for intersectional and feminist frameworks to understand why certain women benefit while others are excluded. Respondents emphasized the importance of male inclusion in empowerment programmes, highlighting that shared spaces for economic training and dialogue helped mitigate backlash. Moreover, systemic issues such as a lack of formal marriage recognition and bureaucratic barriers further compromised support access. Thus, effective interventions must be community-wide, culturally sensitive, and sustained through inclusive, context-specific policy

frameworks. Empowerment, the study concludes, cannot be separated from the broader social and cultural ecosystem in which women live and resist.

While economic empowerment programmes in Gulu City significantly enhance women's financial autonomy and self-confidence, their unintended consequences must not be overlooked. The findings reveal that in environments dominated by rigid gender roles, empowerment leads to increased tension or violence. Therefore, for these programmes to be truly transformative, they must be paired with deliberate efforts to challenge patriarchal norms, promote healthy relationship dynamics, and foster safe spaces for both men and women to navigate shifting power structures.

The psychological impact of domestic violence on women in Gulu City severely limits their ability to engage in economic activities, highlighting the need for comprehensive, trauma-informed interventions. While resilience and peer support offer paths to recovery, they are insufficient without systemic investment in psychosocial services and stronger institutional support. Sustainable empowerment requires an integrated approach, one that not only provides financial tools but also prioritizes mental health, social acceptance, and gender-equitable frameworks within the community.

Community support systems and social attitudes play a key role in shaping the success or failure of women's empowerment in Gulu City. The mixed perceptions, compounded by entrenched patriarchal beliefs and weak institutional structures, often undermine the safety and progress of women. For empowerment to be sustainable and protective, policies must be inclusive, context-sensitive, and involve men as allies. Empowerment can only truly improve the well-being of

women and reduce the risk of gender-based violence when it is supported by transformed social norms and strengthened institutional systems.

5.3 Recommendations

Economic empowerment initiatives must be systematically paired with efforts to challenge and transform patriarchal norms. This includes embedding gender equality education into training sessions, facilitating community dialogues on shared power, and engaging both men and women in redefining roles. Without actively addressing harmful beliefs about gender and power, empowerment risks provoking backlash rather than fostering progress. Transformative programming should aim to shift cultural narratives while promoting respect, cooperation, and equitable household decision-making.

Government and NGOs should invest in comprehensive, trauma-informed care to support survivors of domestic violence. This involves training local counselors, establishing accessible mental health services, and integrating psychosocial support into economic programmes. Economic independence cannot thrive in the absence of emotional healing. Programmes must prioritize mental well-being, creating safe, stigma-free spaces for recovery, peer support, and counseling for women. Institutional partnerships with faith-based groups and health providers can help broaden reach and effectiveness.

Men must be deliberately involved in all stages of empowerment programming from design to implementation. This includes offering men vocational training, financial literacy, and relationship skills that promote empathy and shared responsibility. Programmes that exclude men often escalate resentment and resistance. Instead, promoting joint decision-making, couple-based interventions, and dialogue groups for men reduces conflict and builds mutual respect. Male

inclusion should not be optional but a core component of sustainable gender-based violence prevention.

Existing empowerment programmes such as UWEP must be restructured to reduce bureaucratic hurdles and improve service delivery. To effectively reach the most vulnerable women, programmes must simplify procedures, provide individual-based funding, offer ongoing mentorship, and deliver practical training. Regular monitoring, follow-up support, and coordination with grassroots organizations will ensure accountability and enhance outcomes. Institutions must also be resourced to provide effective referrals, legal aid, and protection for survivors of domestic violence to ensure economic progress is not undermined by systemic failure.

Policymakers must enact and enforce laws that reflect local realities and protect the rights of women. This includes formal recognition of customary marriages, enforcement of by-laws against alcohol abuse and domestic violence, and community-level education on legal rights. Policies should be informed by grassroots voices and implemented through inclusive, locally driven mechanisms. Structural change requires not only laws but also public awareness campaigns and institutional capacity-building to ensure women can safely pursue and sustain economic empowerment.

5.4 Suggestions of topics for further Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the influence of women's economic empowerment on domestic violence in Gulu City, it also reveals several areas that warrant deeper investigation. First, future research should explore potential topics such as;

The psychological effects of economic empowerment on survivors of domestic violence, particularly how trauma shapes their capacity to sustain financial independence.

Second, there is a need for gender-inclusive studies that examine how men perceive and respond to women's empowerment, with attention to how these attitudes influence household dynamics and conflict resolution. *Perception of men on women economic empowerment and its influence on conflict resolution.*

Furthermore, further research should assess the effectiveness of integrated empowerment models that combine financial support, psychosocial services, and community-based norm change interventions. *Effectiveness of integrated empowerment models and outcomes of domestic violence.* Comparative studies between urban and rural settings could offer broader perspectives on how context influences both empowerment outcomes and domestic violence patterns. Finally, exploring the roles of youth, religious institutions, and traditional leaders in either reinforcing or challenging patriarchal norms could help in designing culturally grounded, community-driven solutions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaires for women in Gulu City

Section A: Demographic and Socioeconomic Information

4.4.1.1.1.1.1 Age: _____

A	Marital Status	Tick Appropriately
1	Single	
2	Married	
3	Divorced	
4	Widowed	
5	Cohabiting	
6	Separated	
B	Level of Education	Tick Appropriately
1	No formal education	
2	Primary education	
3	Secondary education	
4	Vocational training	
5	Tertiary education (college/university)	
C	Employment Status	Tick Appropriately
1	Unemployed	
2	Self-employed	
3	Employed (formal sector)	
4	Employed (informal sector)	
5	Casual Laborer	
D	Monthly Household Income (UGX)	Tick Appropriately
1	Less than 100,000	
2	100,000 – 300,000	
3	300,000 – 500,000	
4	Above 500,000	

E	Who is the primary breadwinner in your household?	Tick Appropriately
1	Myself	
2	My spouse/partner	
3	Shared responsibility	
4	Other (Specify):	
F	Do you have control over household financial decisions?	Tick Appropriately
1	Yes, full control	
2	Yes, but limited	
3	No control	

Scale of measurement

1 – Strongly Disagree | 2 – Disagree | 3 – Neutral | 4 – Agree | 5 – Strongly Agree

Section B: Economic Empowerment Programmes and Their Influence on Domestic Violence

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
A1	I have participated in one or more economic empowerment programmes (e.g., vocational training, microfinance, business mentorship) in Gulu City.					
A2	The empowerment programmes I participated in have improved my financial independence.					
A3	I have experienced more respect from my partner and family since I became economically empowered.					
A4	My economic empowerment has reduced the frequency or severity of domestic violence in my relationship.					
A5	Economic empowerment has given me the confidence to confront or report domestic violence.					
A6	My economic progress has caused increased tension or backlash from my spouse or intimate partner.					

Section C: Psychological Effects of Domestic Violence on Women and Implications for Economic Empowerment

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
B1	I frequently feel anxious, fearful, or emotionally distressed due to experiences of domestic violence.					
B2	Domestic violence has negatively affected my ability to focus or					

	participate in economic activities.					
B3	I sometimes feel unworthy or incapable of achieving economic independence because of past abuse.					
B4	I have experienced emotional trauma or symptoms of depression (e.g., sadness, insomnia, hopelessness) related to domestic violence.					
B5	The psychological effects of domestic violence have discouraged me from joining or completing economic empowerment programmes.					
B6	Access to counseling or psychosocial support services has helped me maintain or regain economic productivity.					

Section D: Influence of Community Support Systems and Social Networks

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
C1	I have access to a trusted social network (family, friends, peers) that supports me emotionally when I face domestic violence.					
C2	Local women's groups or community-based organizations have offered meaningful support when I experienced domestic violence.					
C3	I feel comfortable discussing experiences of domestic violence with community leaders or local authorities.					
C4	Community support has helped me continue my economic activities during or after abusive experiences.					
C5	My community encourages women to report domestic violence and seek justice or support.					
C6	Social stigma or fear of judgment prevents many women in my community from reporting domestic violence.					

Section E: Dependent Variable – Domestic Violence Experiences

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
D1	3					
D2	Domestic violence in my household occurs frequently (e.g., more than once a month).					
D3	I have experienced emotional violence (e.g., insults, threats, humiliation) from a partner.					
D4	I have experienced physical violence (e.g., slapping, hitting, beating) from a partner.					
D5	I have experienced economic violence (e.g., being denied access to household finances or earnings).					
D6	I have experienced sexual violence (e.g., forced sex or sexual coercion) in my relationship.					

Appendix 2: Interview Guide for Key Informants

(Religious leaders, NGO representatives, local leaders, Community Development Officers, and community support groups)

A. Understanding Economic Empowerment Programmes

- i. What economic empowerment programmes exist for women in Gulu City?
- ii. How are these programmes structured to support women's financial independence?
- iii. In your view, what are the most significant barriers to women's participation in these programmes?
- iv. Have you observed any changes in women's status within households due to economic empowerment?

B. Domestic Violence and Psychological Impact

- v. Do you think economic empowerment programmes contribute to changes in domestic violence cases? Why or why not?
- vi. What are the common psychological effects of domestic violence among economically active women?
- vii. Are there existing interventions addressing the psychological impact of domestic violence in Gulu City? How effective are they?

C. Community Support and Social Networks

- viii. How do community members perceive economically empowered women? Are there cultural barriers to empowerment?
- ix. What role do religious or community-based organizations play in supporting women facing domestic violence?
- x. What strategies do you think would be effective in reducing domestic violence while promoting women's economic independence?

D. Policy Recommendations

- xi. What improvements should be made to existing economic empowerment programmes to reduce unintended negative consequences?
- xii. How can men be involved in women's economic empowerment initiatives to minimize backlash and promote gender equality?

- xiii. What policy changes do you recommend to enhance both economic empowerment and protection from domestic violence?

Appendix 3: Focus Group Discussion guide for women

The following focus group discussion (FGD) questions have been drafted based on the research objectives to guide meaningful conversations with women's groups in Gulu City:

Objective I: To explore the economic empowerment programmes that women in Gulu City have participated in and their potential influence on domestic violence.

- i. What types of economic empowerment programmes have you participated in within Gulu City?
- ii. How did you first hear about these programmes, and what motivated you to join?
- iii. In your opinion, how have these programmes impacted your economic situation?
- iv. Have these programmes influenced your relationships at home? If so, how?
- v. Have you or other women you know experienced changes in domestic violence situations after participating in these programmes? Please explain.
- vi. What challenges have you faced while participating in these economic programmes, especially regarding family relationships?
- vii. Do you think economic empowerment helps reduce domestic violence? Why or why not?

Objective II: To explore the psychological effect of domestic violence on women in Gulu City and its implications for their economic empowerment.

- viii. How does domestic violence affect the way you feel about yourself and your abilities?
- ix. In what ways has domestic violence impacted your participation in economic activities?
- x. How do you think domestic violence affects women's confidence to engage in business or employment opportunities?
- xi. What psychological challenges do women face after experiencing domestic violence?

- xii. How do these psychological effects influence your ability to achieve economic independence?
- xiii. What support do you believe would help women recover from the psychological impact of domestic violence to participate in economic programmes?

Objective III: To investigate how community support systems and social networks influence the ability of economically empowered women in Gulu City to cope with domestic violence.

- xiv. What community support systems (e.g., women's groups, religious organizations, NGOs) are available for women experiencing domestic violence in Gulu City?
- xv. How do these support systems help women who are economically empowered cope with domestic violence?
- xvi. Can you share any personal experiences where community support has made a difference in dealing with domestic violence?
- xvii. How do social networks (friends, extended family, colleagues) support women in balancing economic activities and addressing domestic violence?
- xviii. Are there any gaps in the community support systems that you think should be addressed? If so, what are they?
- xix. In your view, how can community support systems be improved to better help economically empowered women facing domestic violence?

Appendix 4: Permission for Data Collection



making a difference

Department of Development Studies
School of Arts and Social Sciences
Email: sassadmin@umu.ac.ug

Nkozi, 11th March, 2025

Your ref:
Our ref: ma pt introduction letter 24-25

Dear Sir / Madam,

Ref: Letter of Introduction.

This is to introduce to you **OKELLO David Reg. No. 2023-M092-23001** who is a postgraduate student in the Department of Development Studies at Uganda Martyrs University - Nkozi. He is required to carry out research on the topic:

"Influence of Women's Economic Empowerment and Associated Experiences on Domestic Violence in Gulu City."

This is a requirement for the award of a Master's Degree in Development Studies.

I would like to request you to render him assistance in collecting the necessary data for writing his Dissertation.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. Alkwoaku Ismael
Head of Department.

