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Role of Public Relations in Promoting Gender Based Violence among Women in Ikorodu, Lagos State

Abubakar Mohammed Babale[1], Atinuke Olubukade Akintayo[2], Lois Otse Adams-Osigbemhe[3], Ogabi Dhosi Temitope[4]

[1]*Department of Mass Communication, North-Eastern University, Gombe (Formally Pen Resource University, Gombe)*

[2,4]*Department of Mass Communication, Caleb University, Imota, Lagos State, Nigeria*

[3]*Department of Broadcast, Film and Multi-media, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, University of Abuja*

Abstract

Strategic communication has been used extensively in the global and national campaigns against gender-based violence (GBV), but this scourge is one of the worst human rights and public health emergencies in Nigeria today. GBV, which takes place on the physical, psychological, and economic forms, continuously jeopardizes the safety and human rights of women. In the case of Lagos State, the gravity of this emergency is shown by the fact that more than 24,000 GBV cases have been recorded in the period from 2019 to 2023 in the Ikorodu Local Government Area (LGA). Although public relations (PR) campaigns have extensively been used by both governmental and non-governmental bodies in addressing the issue, there is tremendous challenge when it comes to structural efficiency of these strategies in tackling violence in semi-urban, culturally conservative communities. In places such as Ikorodu, deeply seated patriarchal structures and gender power relations make violence an accepted practice that becomes a personal household issue rather than a criminal one. The basic issue that the study aims to address is the significant gap that exists between public awareness created through anti-GBV PR campaigns and reporting actions. From empirical findings in the Ikorodu community, the 'reporting gap' exists in that although about sixty percent of women in the community have knowledge about anti-GBV campaigns and above seventy percent witness and experience GBV, less than twenty-three percent of the women report these acts to the relevant authorities. The 'reporting gap' is sustained by socio-cultural inhibitors that include the fear of social stigma, religious and cultural pressures to maintain family pride, and lack of trust for state law enforcement authorities. Traditional, digitized, English-speaking, and alien PR practices are not effective tools for destroying barriers since they do not incorporate into the grass-root systems which regulate the lives of the people in Ikorodu. Concerning the issue of breaking down the communication barrier, the present research will be guided by the strong theoretical foundation including Gendered Power Relations Theory, which help to reveal the causes for silencing the women and the types of communication needed to liberate them.

Keywords

Gender Based Violence; Public Relations; Social Media; Public Attitude; News reportage

I. Introduction

It has been known that gender equality is one of the driving powers of sustainable development in the world. This indicates how serious the topic of gender-based violence is

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in the entire world, as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDGs) is dedicated to eliminating any form of violence against women and girls, and GBV was covered in the ERA action 5 of the European Union with the target to achieve the goals of gender equality (Council of the European Union, 2021a). Physical or sexual violence attack has been committed against one out of three women in the world in her lifetime (WHO, 2023), thus this issue is so widespread and acute.

Gender based violence is another issue that is prevalent in Nigeria and has been experienced by individuals of varying socio economic and cultural backgrounds. Even though there are laws and policies against it, the GBV rate is on the rise and this is due to the fact that it is deeply rooted in the society (Success et al., 2026). In Nigeria, the problem of gender-based violence (GBV) is experienced by people belonging to various walks of life and cultural backgrounds. Although there are laws and policies, the rate of gender-based violence (GBV) continues to grow, primarily due to strong societal values, ineffective enforcement of laws and unresponsive victim support services (Ezeeka & Bartholomew, 2025). Gender-based violence has become a very complex and frequent issue in Nigeria that diminishes the wellbeing and rights of women in this country. The cases were increasing significantly over the last few years in Lagos state, 4,302 cases are noted in 2020, and in 2022, there are 6,389 cases with the total number of 24,000 cases since 2019 (DSVA, 2024; Akintayo & Aondover, 2025).

It was reported that Ikorodu was among the areas that had the highest cases of gender-based violence in Lagos State in 2023, and Ikorodu Local Government Area is one of the most impacted areas in the State (DSVA, 2024). The cases of domestic violence, sexual assault, and emotional abuse are common in the incidents, and in most cases, the victims of the attackers are women, who are their intimate partners.

It has numerous contributors that contribute to the prevalence of gender-based violence. Patriarchal culture in many societies usually promotes amicable resolution of disputes without necessarily going through the formal legal system, and normally discourages women to voice or complain of abuse. Economic dependence is one of the greatest hiccups that prevent women from moving out of abusive conditions. The inability of women to grow and prosper is increased due to economic instability since in most cases, it brings with it gender-based violence and inequality (Airaoje et al., 2025). In the hard economic conditions, women tend to be victims through domestic abuse, trafficking, and sexual exploitation. Most of this group of women are financially reliant on their male partners, which may render them extremely difficult to get out of abusive relationships. Usual type(s) of abuse that have a significant effect on the health of women and girls; education and financial wellbeing" harmful widowhood practices, female genital mutilation, workplace, harassment and intimate partner violence (Airaoje et al., 2025; Success & Maiwada, 2026).

In the meantime, children, especially girls, tend to be trapped in the vicious circle of violence, early marriage, and other kinds of exploitation. On the one hand, gender-based violence does not only represent a critical issue facing women in Nigeria but it is also a major challenge towards the development of the country (Akintayo & Ajayi, 2024; IAWJ, 2025). Further, female violence is not easy to curb and prevent and this is due to the absence of powerful community support and poorly coordinated steps by the government and the non-governmental organizations. Community health service provision of the community through the effective operation of a community health system will empower the entire community health system and enhance communal health. Ultimately,

policymakers are advised to work together and integrate the community health system as a real platform of efficient community health service provision in all program implementation (Okuchemiya & Majority, 2025).

Police reports and survey data indicate that gender-based violence in Ikorodu is very high based on cultural practices, economic dependence and lack of a proper community support database. Indeed, a strong initiative is not quite compatible with the culture of Ikorodu, although the state of Lagos has made an initiative to establish the Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA), push through new legislation, establish support agencies to victims and initiate community outreach campaigns. The organizations like The Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centres have been using traditional rulers, Imams and pastors to advance anti gender-based messages because of the role played by religious and traditional leaders in various communities. In addition, stigma and mistrust continue to restrain women to speak out and thus many survivors remain silent over the years, and sometimes even longer, before anyone comes to their aid.

In the COVID 19 pandemic, it was only two weeks later that Nigeria registered a rise of 56% of gender-based violence cases. However, in the case of Lagos in particular, domestic and sexual violence incidents reported over the phone increased three times in only a month of lockdown (Akintaro et al., 2026).

PR is a powerful weapon of controlling the thoughts of people, shaping communal discourses, and stirring controversy around significant social matters, with gender-based violence being one. The gender aspect of PR campaigns, the media and corporate communications in contemporary Nigeria portrays the struggle of equity development and long-term cultural practices (Tanyishi, 2025). PR has assumed the role of one of the vital engines of social attitudes transformation, stereotype alteration and facilitating the reporting of GBV on the global front. PR campaigns have been found to be productive in community inequality, dismantling of damaging norms, survivor aid, and encompassing narrative (Akintayo et al., 2026). However, it has been shown that in Ikorodu these communication strategies are not applied to the extent or are not localized adequately. Most of the programs do not involve the stakeholder in the community to a greater depth or make a lasting change. Nevertheless, statistics also show that by giving voice to the underrepresented perspectives, shaping the opinion of people, and holding institutions accountable, the media can become a powerful advocacy instrument. To ensure accountability, further the cause of gender justice and encouragement of bigger policy and advocacy in the prevention of gender-based violence and sexual harassment in Nigeria, the paper will argue that gender sensitive and socially responsible reporting is necessary. (Ahoo et al., 2025).

In this case, despite the awareness campaign and gender-based violence policies, Ikorodu, Lagos state is still recording high rates of gender-based violence. This research work is aimed at realizing how the use of public relation strategies can be efficiently applied to suit local realities. This paper will aim at improving the success of the PR in fostering the issue of gender-based violence among women in the Ikorodu local government, especially in curbing gender based-violence, change of attitude, empowering the survivors and closing the gap between the national policies and the real community performance (Emmanuel et al., 2025).

The awareness and policy discussions have been significant because of PR campaigns like Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency annual ‘Turn Lagos Purple Campaign, which combines advocacy walks, community sensitisation projects and partnerships with private organisations to raise public awareness during its Domestic and Sexual Violence Awareness Month. Investigative journalism, a case in point is the BBC

Africa Eye documentary Sex for Grades, has served to name and shame the offenders and drive the legal reforms (Msughter, 2022). Although these positive measures have been taken, there are still a few challenges that persist such as sensationalism in the media and victim blaming stories and the inaccessibility to the digital advocacy tools in rural areas.

1.1 Research Objective

Gender-based violence remains a pressing issue in Ikorodu affecting the safety and wellbeing of many women.

1. To examine the kind of gender-based violence in Ikorodu?
2. To examine the role of public relations in fighting gender-based violence in Ikorodu?
3. To explore how public relation strategies influence the report of gender-based violence incidents in Ikorodu?
4. To examine how effective PR strategies are changing public attitudes towards GBV in Ikorodu?

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC)

Social and behaviour has become one of the most widely used large-scale approaches for preventing gender-based violence and promoting gender equitable norms in low- and middle-income countries. Adegbite, (2020), stated that, multilevel behaviour change communication is essential because gender-based violence in Nigerian households is sustained by entrenched sociocultural attitudes. These Nigerian results support evidence from around the world that SBCC interventions produce more sustainable behaviour change, when they incorporate mass media campaigns, community discussions, interpersonal communication and digital engagement (Success et al., 2026). This is due to the fact that multi-channel communication simultaneously challenges the broader social and cultural structures that normalise GBV, changes interpersonal relationships, and addresses individual attitudes (Airaoje et al., 2025).

Unlike traditional information, education and communication behaviour change communication strategies with the primary aim to increase individual knowledge and behavioural change, SBCC adopts a socio-ecological approach that implements the intervention at various levels, which include individual, Interpersonal, community and society level (UNICEF,2023, WHO,2024).

UNICEF defined SBCC as a research-informed participatory process that uses dialogue-based communication. These addresses evidence-based design, formative research, human centred engagement and channel and convergence. SBCC has be implemented in major gender-based violence prevention programmes, including Stop Violence Against Children launch with support from UNICEF, USAID breakthrough action project and community outreach programs launched by Lagos state Domestic & Sexual Violence Agency. Such projects usually include radio drama, community theatre, lessons within schools and involvement of religious leaders.

One of the ways in which social and behaviour change communication effort in Nigeria appear to always fall short in terms of their design and focus on elites in big cities where they are often conceptualized or pre tested for validity, often using either English or Nigerian pidgin as main communication languages (Hile et al., 2022). This often makes them inaccessible or irrelevant to large numbers of citizens in other areas, who are statistically at higher risk of gender-based violence. Afolabi and Ilesanmi (2022) found that

rural communities had lower understanding of campaign messages than urban participant, mainly because they lacked access to familiarity with common communication channels (Awofadeju & Akintayo, 2023).

Maiwada et al. (2026) also demonstrated that the public health information system in many rural areas was inadequately utilized and mainly depended on either online or official media communication that rural residents cannot access easily (Akintayo et al., 2026). In a related developmet, Cislaghi & Heise (2020) stated that gender-based norms and values are deeply embedded in society and its structures, therefore their promotion and continuation occur as part of ongoing social processes, in their analysis they argued that in order to improve gender norms related to harmful practices such as child marriage and intimate violence by partners, continuous institutional dialogue is needed rather that one off interventions like workshops (Akintaro et al., 2026). The findings of Okoror and Okekwibe suggest that one way communication is ineffective in the case of intimate partner violence since rather institutional support, norm challenging discourse and community involvement are required to alter attitudes and reduce the level of violence

Community Engagement and Participatory Public Relations

Awolaran and Olaolorun (2025) confirmed that a strategy of involving community members in designing and implementing interventions can successfully transform attitudinal levels on intimate partner violence, which implies that participatory approaches in a community level are effective in challenging the destructive social norms and influencing the positive social change. Participatory PR is meant to assist the communities in thinking and reflecting about the established norms, experiment with other behaviour and jointly developing solutions to social issues (Akamike et al.,2019). Awolaran and Olaolorun (2025) undertook a randomised community trail in rural southwest Nigeria, which aimed at changing the attitudes towards intimate partner violence.

These interventions involve the local involvement and creation of awareness in the form of discussions and workshops, followed by surveying (Emmanuel et al., 2025). Findings showed that supportive attitudes towards intimate partner violence reduced measurably. Akamike et al (2019) identified the Quasi-experimental community mobilisation intervention in the form of awareness, approval and uptake of family planning to rural women (Ebonyi state) which involved community sensitization, household visit and participatory information education communication activities. This paper was dedicated to reproductive health; this organized community activity and participatory communication may be applied to other social problems such as prevention of gender-based violence (Aliyu et al., 2023; Airaoje et al., 2025).

Based on covid 19 pandemic data, Idowu et al. (2023) showed how this type of crisis increases the susceptibility to gender-based violence, particularly in the rural setting in which social support is undermined. In this regard, community-based interventions that are long-term are likely to be more effective in curbing community-based violence against communities, which may view societies in crisis (Msughter, 2022). Community involvement aims at securing the women and other vulnerable people and empowering them to manage the situation in the event that systems of the society are upset.

The effectiveness of participatory PR in challenging destructive norms and encouraging social change alongside systematic interventions can be seen in real-world mobilization efforts in Nigeria. Ademuson (2025) documented that community-based awareness campaigns in Lagos during the awareness campaign of covid-19 pandemic significantly reduced support of intimate partner violence in rural and semi urban areas where social support networks were disturbed. The implication of local participation in activities like youth associations and women organizations made programs against gender

violence on gender more acceptable and more effective in reaching more people (Msughter et al., 2022).

2.2 Role of Public Relations in Social Change

Public relation has in the long run become recognised in Nigeria, it is not only a corporate image promoter, but also a tool in altering and reshifting social norms. Excellently developed PR campaigns can help to create awareness, open up dialogue to the public and instill desirable behavioural change that can serve the communities and lead to social development which is a must.

Radio campaign advocated among female civil servants in south west region of Nigeria, created awareness about sexual harassment and sensitized people about sexual harassment and gender inequality (Adekoya, Oyewo & Omole, 2025). Tanyishi (2025) claims that PR campaigns strongly affected the discourse and gender presentation, particularly those campaigns that challenged other stereotypes instead of strengthening them. Other than creating awareness, PR assists in changing conflicts and encouraging peace. Research conducted by Kalu, Igyuve and Akase (2024) shows that community engagement, meditation programs and dialogue approach assisted in reducing political tensions during election periods in Nigeria. The high-capacity by Saadudeen, Olohungbebe and Ibraheem 2024) to build relationships significantly improved the ability of PR practitioners in building relationships by ensuring two-way communication involved in shaping opinion and behaviour of the population.

According to Umeh (2025), the effective change in the attitudes in Igboland occurred because of the combination of traditional leaders, women organisations and the local media, created symmetrical dialogue against cultural norms and this community co design model with the resultant change in attitudes (Hile et al., 2022; Aliyu et al., 2023). Ajayi Ayodele and Oguntomisin (2024) concluded that Facebook activist groups increased the awareness of women about the procedure of reporting by 42 points, which supports the idea that social media allows transforming awareness into action.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Gendered Power Relations Theory. Gendered power relations theory provides a critical framework for explaining how gendered power imbalances fits into GBV. It contends that GBV emerges from systematic male dominance and female subordination taught and reinforced through cultural values, social roles and institutional structures across African societies. This theory highlights that violence against women is not an individual act of abuse but can be linked to larger patterns of gender inequality and control, which are perpetuated through social expectations and normative behaviours.

This theory emphasizes the transformative function of public relations as a tool for social change, instead of strictly organisational image management. The application of public relations in development and advocacy efforts holds strong capabilities to shape public opinion and bring about changes in social attitudes towards new understanding and approaches to gender and power dynamics (Msughter, 2022).

Through sustained communication campaigns, media advocacy, social mobilization and stakeholders' engagement, public relations can challenge the narrative about women's subordinate and perithecial dominance. Across several African cultures, including Nigeria, gender equality and performance have been constructed from early childhood to result in submission and emotional endurance for women, while encouraging authority and control for men. Many families continue to be organized around cultural values of males being unmistakable leaders of their households and sources of discipline in society, while females must be submissive and reliant. The result is normalization of violence such as

wife abuse, rape in marriage, financial domination, and diminishing women's voices in society. The viewpoint that such abuse constitutes a private domain issue instead of human rights abuse leads to abuse being perpetrated unchecked from generation to generation.

Okenwa-Emegwa et al. (2022) investigate healthcare responses to domestic violence in Enugu, southeastern Nigeria, interrogating how institutions sustain inequitable outcomes. Their research involving 420 expectant mothers demonstrated evidence of systemic failures that advantage perpetrators over victims. Officers often ignore complaints, saying they are private disputes. Almost half (45.7%) of the people who reported such violence said it was because they didn't have enough support. Instead of getting help, women are sometimes sent back to danger right away after asking for it. The infrequent arrival of help lets harm continue in communities without any problems. This theoretical framework is especially is especially useful for comprehending why some Nigerian women actively support submissive behaviours, such as policing ither women's actions to fit submissive norms or justifying wife beating as a husband's right.

III. Research Methods

The research design adopted in this study, is the quantitative approach, to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the contribution that public relations make to foster equality among women in Ikorodu. By using structures instruments such as surveys or questionnaire, the researcher can get a systematic measure of the number of women who have been exposed to public relations initiatives, the percentage who internalized gender-based violence messages and the extent to which exposure correlates with reported changes in knowledge, attitudes or behaviours (Badiora,Adeoye & Oladipo, 2025). Ojo and Fadeyi (2021) discovered that women interpret messages of gender-based violence through the lens of cultural beliefs, personal experiences.

This study uses a convenience sampling, which is a non-probability sampling approach in which the subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility as well as their proximity to the researcher(Golzar et al., 2022),due to the limitations imposed by conducting field research in Ikorodu Local Government Area, Lagos State, convenience sampling was found to be the most suitable technique for this study as it enables the researcher reach participants without making cumbersome logistical arrangements necessary for probability-based selection.

The reason for using this procedure is based on both the characteristics of the population to be studied and data collection. This method was justified because of the research population and means of data collection. The method will involve administering questionnaires to literate women of at least 18 years of age residing in the Ikorodu community via accessible channels such as local WhatsApp groups, community associations, and personal networks within the study area.

The data for this study was collected through a structured questionnaire, which provides quantitative and insight required in this study. The questionnaire was used on 400 women with convenience sampling and will feature closed ended items to measure the women's exposure to public relations campaigns, their understanding of gender-based violence messages and the behavioural responses from such campaigns. Using a questionnaire enables the researcher to collect uniform numerical data that can be analysed systematically. a procedure considered essential for community level social research in Nigeria (Eleojo & Adekeye, 2019).

The data collected within this study was analysed through quantitative procedures. Quantitative data gathered together was analysed using simple descriptive statistics such as

frequencies, percentages and tables. Adegboye (2020) stated that descriptive statistics helps in drawing a clear and understandable picture of data. Quantitative method was interpreted together to provide a complete understanding of how the role of public relations in addressing gender-based violence among women in Ikorodu, Lagos.

Section A: Demographic Information

Table 4.1: *Age Distribution of Respondents*

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18 – 24 years	187	48.1%
25 – 34 years	131	33.7%
35 – 44 years	49	12.6%
45 years and above	22	5.7%
Total	**389**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.1 demonstrates that majority of people surveyed fall into the 18–25-year-old category 48.1%, 25-34 years old at 33.7%, 35-44 years at 12.6% and 45+ years old at 5.7%. This high proportion of younger females corresponds to a common characteristic of the convenience sample employed this research via participation from WhatsApp groups and local community organisations. These types of groups and organisations typically include a higher number of younger, socially connected individuals. The demographics of the survey are important due to the fact that they demonstrate that younger women in Ikorodu are also among the most likely to be influenced by social media based public relations campaigns for gender equality and among the most susceptible to the patriarchal social norms that are identified in the society norms identified in this research as the principal factors responsible for the occurrence of gendered based violence. In addition, as previously established by Ajayi, Chantler and Radford (2021), gender-based violence is frequently legitimized by socialization processes that occur during an individual's early years adulthood, making this demographic the most important audiences for PR campaigns that seek to change minds.

Table 4.2: *Educational Qualification of Respondents*

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage
No formal education	14	3.6%
Primary school	38	9.8%
Secondary school	152	39.1%
Tertiary education (OND/HND/Bachelor's or above)	185	47.6%
Total	**389**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.2 also indicates that nearly half of those surveyed hold tertiary qualifications, while 39.1% had completed secondary school, 9.8% completed primary school, and 3.6% have no formal education. The concentration of well-educated survey respondents mirrors

the findings on methodology used to sample this group, because this research relies on social media messaging through WhatsApp to reach potential subjects, which naturally privileges literate, digitally connected participants. This finding has important implications for interpreting the study's results: educated women may demonstrate higher awareness of PR campaigns and gender rights, but as Odini et al. (2024) established in their Abia State study education s insufficient to prevent domestic violence against women. Furthermore, completing college will not ensure women's protection from intimate partner violence. The 13.4% of respondents had either primary level education or less, as such this demographic may be a particular vulnerable subset of society that is currently being inadequate served by most PR campaigns, many of which are designed and tested primarily for literate, English speaking urban audiences (Afolabi & Ilesanmi, 2022).

Table 4.3: *Marital Status of Respondents*

Marital Status	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Single	204	52.4%
Married	148	38.0%
Divorced/Separated/Widow	37	9.5%
Total	**389**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.3 shows that 52.4% of respondents are single, 38.0% are married and 9.5% are divorced, separated or widowed, The high percentage of married women in the sample in the sample is particularly relevant to this study investigation into domestic violence, intimate partner violence and the barriers to GBV reporting in Ikorodu, women are the most vulnerable to intimate partner violence, financial abuse and harmful widowerhood practices statistically discussed in the literature (Ogunwale & Afolsbi,22; Adedara, 2023). The 9.5% that are divorced, separated or widowed could be survivors of gender-based violence who have tried to escape abusive situations or women who have experienced harmful widowhood practices that are described in the literature as a specific dimension of GBV in Nigerian communities (Andrew & Ashibi, 2023).

Table 4.4: *Employment Status of Respondents*

Employment Status	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Employed (full-time or part-time)	141	36.2%
Self-employed/Trader	163	41.9%
Unemployed/Student	85	21.9%
Total	**389**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.4 shows that 41.9% of the respondents are self employed or traders, 36.2% are formally employed and 21.9% are unemployed or students. The high prevalence of self employed women and trading women is a reflection of the economic realities in Ikorodu, a highly populated area where informal sector commerce is a major source of livelihood for

a significant proportion of women, This occupational profile id directly relevant to the analysis of the study as economic dependence has been identified in the literature as one of the most significant structural enablers o gender based violence in Ikorodu and Nigeria as a whole. Women's financial reliance on male partners presents a significant barrier to leaving abusive relationships and financial autonomy is an important protective factor (Johnson et al., 2022; IAWJ, 2025). Conversely, the high number of self-employed women signifies a level of financial independence that can make them more open to PR campaigns advocating gender equality and GBV reporting.

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1 Section B: Awareness and Types Of Gender-Based Violence

Table 4.6: *Personal Experience or Witnessing of GBV*

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	274	70.4%
No	115	29.6%
Total	**389**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.6 shows, 70.4% of respondents say they have personally gone through or actually witnessed some form of gender-based violence, while 29.6% say they have not. This kind of very high prevalence value is consistent with the empirical evidence reported in the literature review of the study. The DSVA (2024) reported that 8692 cases of domestic and sexual violence happened in Lagos state by itself in 2024, and Ikorodu was flagged as one of the Local Government Areas with the highest number of cases, also the World Health Organisation's (2023) global finding that one in three worldwide have endured physical or sexual violence, might be understating what is really going on in place like Ikorodu, where patriarchal cultural norms economic reliance, and under reporting together can hide the true magnitude of the problem. So, the fact that 70.4% of the women in this sample have direct of visible experience of GBV makes the urgency pr

Table 4.7: *Most Common Forms of GBV in Respondents' Communities (Multiple Responses)*

Form of GBV	Frequency	Percentage
Physical violence (e.g., beating, slapping)	109	28.0%
Emotional/psychological abuse (e.g., threats, humiliation)	100	25.7%
Economic/financial abuse (e.g., controlling finances)	74	19.0%
Sexual violence (e.g., rape, sexual assault)	61	15.7%
Harmful traditional practices (e.g., forced marriage, widowhood rites)	42	10.8%
None of the above	3	0.8%

Form of GBV	Frequency	Percentage
Total	**389**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.7, which allowed multiple responses, shows that physical violence is the most commonly identified form of GBV in respondent's communities at 28.0%, followed by emotional/psychological abuse (25.7%), economic/financial (19.0%), sexual violence (15.7%) and harmful traditional practices (10.8%). These findings somewhat align somewhat align with the literature says about GBV prevalence in Ikorodu and Lagos State more widely. The DSVA (2024) also noted that domestic violence, sexual assault and emotional abuse makeup the bulk of the reported cases in the area, while Onyeke et al. (2024) found emotional violence as the most prevalence of economic abuse, recorded at 25.7% of respondents, suggests that women in Ikorodu are especially exposed, particularly because of their financial dependency on male partners, this kind of arrangement has been mentioned by Sarac and Odabas (2025) and Johnson et al. (2022) as a driving factor behind GBV and also as an important stumbling block for ending it.

Table 4.8: *Main Reasons Women Do Not Report GBV (Multiple Responses)*

Reason for non-reporting	Frequency	Percentage
Fear of stigma or community judgment	99	25.5%
Cultural/religious pressure to stay silent	92	23.7%
Fear of the perpetrator	86	22.1%
Lack of trust in law enforcement	80	20.6%
They do not consider it a serious offence	32	8.2%
Total	**389**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.8 shows that the most reported reason for non-reporting is fear of stigma or community judgement at 22.5% followed by cultural and religious pressure to remain silent (23.7%), fear of the perpetrator (22.1), and the lack of trust in law enforcement (20.6%). The lack of perception of GBV as a serious offence was cited by only 8.2%. The lack of perception of GBV as a serious offence was cited by only 8.2%. This suggest that nonreporting is not due to ignorance of the gravity of the issue, but rather structural and social barriers that silence survivors. These finding directly support the Social Norms Theory central proposition which holds that GBV continues not necessarily due to individual moral failure but as a result of the community social enforcement of the norms that shame survivors, shield perpetrators and treat domestic violence as a private matter not subject to redress (Ikekwuibe & Okoror, 2021; Adamoye et al., 2025). The low trust in law enforcement as noted by 20.6% of respondents is also in line with the systematic institutional failures in GBV response in Nigeria as documented by Okenwa-Emegwa et al. (2022) where 45.7% of complaints received inadequate support from authorities.

Table 4.9: *GBV is a Serious and Widespread Problem in Ikorodu*

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	218	56.0%

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	124	31.9%
Undecided	28	7.2%
Disagree	14	3.6%
Strongly Disagree	5	1.3%
Total	**389**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.9 shows that 87.9% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that gender-based violence is a serious and widespread problem especially in Ikorodu while only 4.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This finding of consensus strongly validates the empirical premise of the study, and is reflective of the lived experience of a community where, as Table 6 confirms, more that 70% of respondents have direct or observational exposure to GBV. The very low rate of disagreement suggests that even women who have not experienced violence themselves are exposed to sufficient levels of violence at the community level to recognise the magnitude of the problem. This wide recognition of GBV as a pervasive community problem provided a fertile normative base for PR campaigns, this is in line with the findings of Akpan and Lawal (2021) that communities that collectively accepted the problem are more likely to respond to organised communication interventions than communities where GBV is still normalised or denied.

Table 4.10: *Cultural and Religious Norms Prevent Women from Speaking Out About GBV*

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	194	49.9%
Agree	143	36.8%
Undecided	31	8.0%
Disagree	17	4.4%
Strongly Disagree	4	1.0%
Total	**389**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.10 reveal that 5.4% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 86.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that cultural and religious norms in Ikorodu actively inhibit women from speaking out about gender-based violence. This result, which clearly validates the application of the gendered Power Relations Theory and the Social Norms Theory within the Ikorodu community context. Aliegba, Adadu and Yusuf (2024) identified patriarchal social structures as fundamental drivers of GBV in Nigeria, while Idris-Iyekolo and Akinsemoyin (2025) established that cultural norms, economic dependence and law enforcement jointly enable GBV in Kwara State in patterns very similar to those identified in Ikorodu. The near unanimous recognition that community norms actively suppress GBV disclosure us a crucial finding for PR practitioners, as it confirms that campaigns that do not directly challenge and reframe these

silencing norms are unlikely to achieve sustainable increases in reporting or changes in attitude.

Section C: Role Of Public Relations In Fighting Gbv

Table 4.11: *Awareness of PR Campaigns or Awareness Programmes on Gender Equality in Ikorodu*

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	231	59.4%
No	158	40.6%
Total	**389**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.11 indicates that 59.4% of respondents are aware of PR campaigns or awareness programs on gender equality in Ikorodu, whilst 40.6% are not. While a majority awareness rate is commendable the substantial 40.6% gap in PR campaign reach is a cause for serious worry. It suggests that, despite the recorded existence of campaigns by the DSVA, WARDC and other NGOs in the area, a significant proportion of women in the study population had not received any structured gender equality or GBV awareness communication. This reach gap is consistent with the study's literature review, which identifies the failure to adequately localize and adapt PR campaigns to the specific communicative context of communities like Ikorodu as a persistent limitation of gender focused PR in Nigeria (Asemah, Nwammuo & Olorunyomi,2019; Nwosu & Ibe, 2025). The 40.6% who claim no campaign knowledge are women who are both most in need of GBV information and systematically barred from obtaining it.

Table 4.12: *Channels Through Which Respondents Have Received GBV or Gender Equality Information (Multiple Responses)*

Channel	Frequency	Percentage
Community meetings or religious gatherings	95	24.4%
Radio or Television	86	22.1%
Social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc.)	77	19.8%
NGO outreach/visits or posters/flyers	56	14.4%
Traditional/community leaders	51	13.1%
I have not received any such information	24	6.2%
Total	**389**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.12, which allows for multiple responses, shows that community meetings and religious gatherings are the most effective channel for delivering GBV and gender equality information, with 62.0%, followed by radio and television (56.0%), social media (50.6%), NGO outreach and printed materials (36.8%) and traditional and community leaders (33.7). Only 15.9% of respondents say they received no information through any method. The dominance of community and religious meetings as method. The dominance

of community and religious meetings as key communication channels is a critical discovery that calls into question many public relations operations reliance on mass media and digital platforms. It directly confirms Ajibade and Albi's (2022) assessment that interpersonal communication, religious leaders and community meetings remain more significant to many women in semi urban locations like Ikorodu that television, radio or social media. This finding also supports the participatory and dialogic PR approach advocated by Somerville Aroussi (2023) and Akinkemi and Balogun (2021), who found that communication channels embedded in the community are more effective in generating sustained attitudinal and behavioural change, compared to mass media campaigns delivered top down, without community co-design.

V. Conclusion

The study concludes that public relations play an important but presently insufficient role in addressing gender-based violence among women in Ikorodu, Lagos State. The findings demonstrate that GBV remains widespread, with physical, emotional, economic and sexual violence constituting major forms experienced or witnessed by respondents, while cultural and religious norms, fear of stigma, fear of perpetrators and limited trust in law enforcement continue to discourage reporting. Although 59.4% of respondents are aware of PR campaigns on gender equality and GBV, the substantial proportion with limited campaign exposure indicates a significant communication and reach gap. The findings further reveal that community meetings and religious gatherings are more influential channels of GBV communication than conventional or purely digital approaches, suggesting that effective PR interventions must be localized, participatory and culturally sensitive. Therefore, PR practitioners, government agencies, NGOs, media organisations, religious institutions and community leaders should adopt sustained two-way communication strategies that challenge patriarchal norms, empower women, strengthen trust in reporting mechanisms and connect awareness campaigns with accessible support services. Ultimately, PR can contribute meaningfully to reducing GBV in Ikorodu when it moves beyond awareness creation to community engagement, behavioural change, survivor empowerment and the transformation of the social structures that sustain violence against women.

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