

# Frequency and Factors Associated with Gender-Based Violence in the Northern Region of Benin from 2016 to 2022

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Gender-based violence constitutes a public health problem. The objective of this study is to determine the frequency and factors associated with gender-based violence. **Study Framework and Method:** This was a retrospective, descriptive, cross-sectional study with an analytical aim over the period from January 2016 to December 2022. The study took place in the Integrated Support Center for Victims and Survivors of Gender-Based Violence located in the Departmental University Hospital Center of Borgou and Alibori. The study population consisted of people who were victims of gender-based violence in the northern region of Benin, regardless of their age and gender. **Results:** The study population consisted of 1198 subjects. The average age of the victims was  $21.76 \pm 10.02$ ; female victims represented 96.4%, with a sex ratio equal to 0.037 (43/1155). Sexual violence was the most represented (50.25%), followed by psychological (29.30%), physical (24.37%), economic (13.77%) and property (2%). The factors associated with violence were married people and monthly income (physical violence), minors, female gender and single people (sexual violence), polygamous households and monthly income (economic violence), the absence of children burden, married people and monthly income (psychological violence), married people (property violence). **Conclusion:** Gender-based violence is frequent in the North of Benin and is dominated by sexual violence. The victims are mainly female.

## Keywords

Frequency, Gender-Based Violence, North Benin

## 1. Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) is major issue of public health, affecting millions

of people. Such phenomenon sources derive from the inequality and inequity between men and women, the abuse of power and the norms that apply to men and women within a community [1]-[3]. These violences affect people without distinction of sex or age.

Aggression can come from both women and men, but generally, women and girls are the most exposed [4]. Such violence, very frequent and of a variety of severity, appears in various forms and types. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one out of three women in the world have been or will be victims of sexual and/or physical violence during their lifetime. The United Nations estimates that, worldwide, between 20% and 50% of women have at some point been victims of physical violence from their partner. South Sahara countries are the most affected, with a frequency of GBV of 65.64% [5]. The consequences of GBV are multiple and include murder, suicide, HIV infection, alcohol/drug dependence, miscarriage, unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, victim blaming/survivor, anxiety, fear, self-hatred and self-denial... [6]. Benin, like other countries in the world/sub-region, is unfortunately not immune to this alarming phenomenon. According to the results of the survey carried out to evaluate the implementation of the multi-sectoral action plan on violence against women and girls, 34.6% of women declared having suffered beatings and injuries within the breast and in their household and 16.8% of girls and women revealed having been victims of attempted rape between 2011 and 2015 [7].

From statistics, Benin Government has worked to pursue a national policy to combat the scourge as evidenced by Decree No. 2011-26 of January 9, 2012, on the prevention and repression of violence against women. This decree ratified the creation of Integrated Support Centers for Victims and Survivors of Gender-Based Violence (CIPeC-VBG), including that of Parakou. The CIPeC-VBG of Parakou is a medico-legal and medico-social Unit intended to welcome and support victims and survivors of GBV throughout the northern region of Benin. In this highly cultural region of the country, specific information on the extent of GBV remains limited. However, it is essential to know them for greater effectiveness in the fight. This is why this preliminary study was initiated to take stock of gender-based violence in the northern region of Benin.

## 2. Study Framework and Methods

**Study setting:** the study took place in the Integrated Support Center for Victims and Survivors of Gender-Based Violence located in the Departmental University Hospital Center of Borgou and Alibori.

**Type and period of data collection:** this was a retrospective, cross-sectional, descriptive and analytical study. Data collection took place over the period from January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2022.

**Study population:** it consists of all victims and survivors of GBV in the 4 departments of Northern Benin, namely Atacora, Borgou, Alibori and Donga, received in the center. All victims of all genders and ages were included in the study. Victims who did not have a medical file or had an unusable file were not

included in the study.

**Sampling:** an exhaustive census of all victims received in the center during the study period was carried out.

**Data collection technique and tool:** data collection was carried out by analyzing victims' files. A counting sheet was developed for this purpose.

**Variables:** The dependent variable was GBV. It can be sexual, psychological, physical, economic or financial. Sexual violence is any act that has the effect of degrading or causing damage to the body and/or sexuality of the victim and which, consequently, violates their freedom, dignity and physical integrity. Physical violence is any act resulting in non-accidental harm through the use of physical force or any type of weapon that may cause or not internal or external injury, or to some extent both. Psychological or moral violence is any act or negligence detrimental to psychological stability, abandonment, repeated carelessness, excessive jealousy, insults and humiliation, devaluation, lack of affection, marginalization, indifference, unfaithfulness, destructive comparisons, rejection, restriction of self-determination and threats; so many situations that can lead the victim to sink into depression, isolate themselves, lose self-esteem, or even commit suicide. Economic violence is the act of using one's means to slow down or prevent the economic or financial development of any person or the fact of preventing any person from enjoying their socio-economic rights. Property violence is any act or negligence affecting the survival of the victim and consisting of transforming, subtracting, destroying, retaining or misappropriating objects, personal documents, goods and values, property rights or economic resources intended to cover their needs, and which may be extended to damage caused to the victim's common or personal property. The independent variables relate to socio-demographic and clinical data, the victims' histories and the course of the attack.

**Data processing and analysis:** The data collected were recorded and processed via the medium of EPI INFO software (Version 3.5.1). Microsoft Word 2013 software was used for entering the thesis and Excel 2010 for organizing data in the form of tables and graphs (**Tables 1-3**). Data were processed and analyzed using Epi-Info7.1.14 software. A p-value less than 0.05 was considered significant.

**Ethical considerations:** Before carrying out this work, a joint agreement was obtained from the Director of CHUD-BA and the head of the CIPeC/VBG department of the hospital. Medical confidentiality was respected throughout the study. Finally, the protocol was submitted to the local ethics committee for biomedical research of the University of Parakou, which gave favorable consent with reference to CLERB-UP043/202.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Victim

The study population consisted of 1198 victims of GBV. The average age was  $21.76 \pm 10.02$  years, with extremes of 1 year and 65 years. Minor victims under the age of 18 represented 47.9%, with a female predominance. Females repre-

sented (1155) 96.4% of all victims, with a sex ratio equal to 0.037. The victims most often lived in a monogamous household (93.1%) and mainly (84.0%) came from an urban environment. Single victims represented 67.9%, those uneducated 41.5%, and the presence of at least one dependent child 64.4%.

**Table 1.** Sociodemographic characteristics of victims of gender-based violence in northern Benin from 2016-2022 (N = 1198).

	N	%
<b>Genre</b>		
Male	43	3.6
Female	1155	96.4
<b>Age</b>		
< 18 years	574	47.9
≥ 18 years	624	52.1
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	385	32.1
Single	813	67.9
<b>Level of education</b>		
None	498	41.5
Instructed	197	16.5
Primary	198	16.6
Secondary	266	22.2
Higher education	39	3.2
<b>Location</b>		
Urban	1007	84
Rural	191	16
<b>Monthly income</b>		
No	687	57.3
Yes	511	42.7
<b>Type of household (N = 451)</b>		
Monogamic	420	93.1
Polygamic	31	6.9
<b>Child at charge (N = 451)</b>		
No	160	35.5
Yes	291	64.5

**Table 2.** Sociodemographic characteristics of perpetrators of gender-based violence in northern Benin from 2016-2022 (N = 1198).

	N	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	1102	92
Female	96	8
<b>Age</b>		
< 18 years	0	0
≥ 18 years	1198	100
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	534	44.6
Single	664	55.4
<b>Author known by the victim</b>		
Yes	1071	89.4
No	127	10.6
<b>Filiation with the victim (N = 1071)</b>		
Husband/Spouse	283	26.4
Friend	450	42.0
Family members	86	8
No filiation	225	21.0
Others	27	2.6

**Table 3.** Types of gender-based violence in northern Benin from 2016-2022 (N = 1198).

	N	%
Sexual	602	50.3
Psychological	351	29.3
Physical	292	24.4
Economical	165	13.8
Parenthood	24	2.0

### 3.2. Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Perpetrators

The perpetrators were mostly male (92%), all adults and single in 55.4% of cases. Among them, 89.4% were known as victims and were either a friend or husband/wife in 42% and 26.4% of cases, respectively.

### 3.3. Characteristics Relating to Gender-Based Violence

- Sexual violence: the frequency of sexual violence was 50.2%; more than half (52.66%) of sexual violence concerned victims aged under 16; almost all of the victims were women (99.5%); rapes were observed in 46.51% of cases.

- Psychological violence: the frequency of psychological violence was 29.3%. The husband is the perpetrator in 34.8% of cases.
- Physical violence: the frequency of physical violence was 24.4%; it took place at the home of the aggressor or the victim in 33.2% and 25.3%, respectively; the perpetrator was either the husband in 33.9% of cases or the neighbor in 20.9%. Punching or kicking was the technique used in most cases (81.8%).
- Economic violence: the frequency of economic violence was 13.8%. The perpetrator was the husband in 66.1% of cases.
- Property violence: the frequency of property violence was 2%; the perpetrators of the attack were either the husband (41.7%) or a family member (25%).

## 4. Discussion

This study addressed a taboo subject in Africa that constitutes GBV. This is one of the rare studies to have addressed this theme in Benin, particularly in its northern region. From this study, we note that GBV mainly concerns female subjects with an average age of  $(21.76 \pm 10.02)$  years; the perpetrators were mostly male and all adults; sexual violence was the most represented (50.25%), followed by psychological (29.30%), physical (24.37%), economic (13.77%) and property (2%). The factors associated with GBV were married and monthly income (physical violence), minors, female gender and single (sexual violence), polygamous households and monthly income (economic violence), absence of children burden, married people and monthly income (psychological violence), married people (property violence). Several authors had already reported results similar to those of the present study. Female predominance was reported by Chime *et al.* [5] in Nigeria (89.9%) and Kebede *et al.* [8] in Ethiopia (53.8%). The youth of GBV victims was reported by Uro-Chukwu *et al.* [9] in Nigeria (18.33 years), Worke *et al.* [10] in Ethiopia (22.07 years) and Dahie *et al.* [11] in Somalia. (23.9 years). Concerning the type of GBV, sexual violence was reported by Workye *et al.*, [12] Chime *et al.* [4] and Tantu *et al.* [13] with a frequency of 47.0%, 56.8% and 63.2%, respectively; the psychological one reported by Pisoh *et al.* (30.3%) [14]; the physical one reported by Workie *et al.* (29.1%) [15]. The factors associated with GBV were female gender in the study by Bali *et al.* in India, young age in the study by Debel *et al.* [16] in Ethiopia, and low level of education according to Pisoh *et al.* [14]. in Cameroon. Tesfaye *et al.* [17] in Ethiopia reported that low education and married women were associated with physical violence.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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## Annex

### Inquiry Sheet

Epidemiology of Gender-Based Violence in the Northern Region from 2016 to 2022

Date of collection: / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ /      Inclusion number: / \_\_\_\_ /

#### I. Sociodemographic and socio-economic characteristics

01	Nationality	1) Beninese 2) Foreigner (To be mentioned)	/ ____ /
02	Age (years)	To be mentioned	/ ____ /
03	Gender	1) Male 2) Female	/ ____ /
04	Marital Status	1) Minor 2) Married 3) Single 4) Divorced 5) Widow/Widow 6) Other	/ ____ /
05	Religion	1) Islam 2) Christian 3) Endogeneous 4) Atheist	/ ____ /
06	Ethnic group	1) Bariba 2) Fon and cognate or related 3) Dendi 4) Yorouba and cognate or related 5) Fulani 6) Ditammari 7) Other (To be mentioned)	/ ____ /
07	Education level	1) Not educated 2) Literate 3) Primary level 4) Secondary level 5) Higher education level	/ ____ /
08	Residence	1) Urban residence 2) Rural residence	/ ____ /
09	Occupation	1) Student 2) Apprentice 3) sellers 4) Farmer/craftsman 5) Housewife 6) Others	/ ____ /
10	Monthly income	1) < 52,000 Franc CFA 2) [52,000 - 100,000] Franc CFA 3) > 100,000 Franc CFA	/ ____ /
11	Type of household	1) Monogamous 2) Polygamous	/ ____ /

**Continued**

12	Number of children in charge of the household	1) 0 Child 2) 1 to 3 children 3) More than 3 children	/____/
<b>II. Variables related to clinical data</b>			
13	Anthropometric parameters: Weight Height BMI	1) Emaciation ( $BMI < 18 \text{ kg/m}^2$ ) 2) Normal BMI ( $18 \leq BMI \leq 24 \text{ kg/m}^2$ ) 3) Overweight ( $25 \leq BMI \leq 29 \text{ kg/m}^2$ ) 4) Obesity ( $IMC \geq 30 \text{ kg/m}^2$ )	/____/
14	Medical antecedent	1) Hypertension 2) Diabetes 3) Sickle cell disease 4) Others	/____/
15	Surgical antecedent	To be mentioned	
16	Gynecological and Obstetrical antecedent	To be mentioned	
<b>III. Experience of gender-based violence: Please indicate whether you have been a victim of any of the following forms of gender-based violence</b>			
17	Physical Violence	Have you ever been beaten up or assaulted?	/____/
18	Psychological or Moral Violence	Have you ever undergone insult and humiliation, excessive rejections, public disreputable and invective words, depreciation, marginalization, lack of affection, indifference, unfaithfulness, destructive comparisons, rejection, self-determination restriction, threats, depreciating widowhood rituals, levirate or sororate, forced companionship marriage?	/____/
19	Economical Violence	Have you been forbidden to exercise a profession or any economic activity? Or have you been confiscated your revenue or income? Do you receive money for cooking meals?	/____/
20	Sexual Violence	Did you undergo any rape, any sexual harassment very frequent dehumanizing sexual intercourse in your couple or female genital mutilations?	/____/
21	Patrimonial Violence	Has it been forbidden to you to access the heritage or any good owned by you in terms of rights?	/____/

**Continued**

22	Frequency: How frequently have you been the victim of Gender-Based Violence during the elapsed year?	1) Each day 2) Once a week 3) At least twice a week 4) Once in a month 5) At least twice per month 6) To be mentioned	/ ____/
23	Place of the violence	1) Residence of the aggressor 2) Residence of the victim 3) Common Place/Public place 4) In the household 5) Workplace 6) At school 7) At workshop 8) Others	/ ____/
24	What was the technique employed?	1) Slapping or shootings 2) Blunt tools (sticks, lanyards...) 3) Cutting tools (blade, knife, machete...) 4) Gun 5) Others	/ ____/
25	Moment of the aggression	1) In the morning 2) At midday 3) In the afternoon 4) In the evening	/ ____/

**IV. Gender-Based Violence antecedents**

26	Have you witnessed any Gender-Based Violence case during your childhood?	1) Yes 2) No	/ ____/
27	Have you been exposed to sexist attitudes and behaviors in your everyday life?	1) Yes 2) No	/ ____/
28	Have you ever undergone discriminations or inequalities due to your gender?	1) Yes 2) No	/ ____/

**V. Promoting factors**

29	Do you think that your community's cultural norms influence the attitudes towards women and men?	1) Yes 2) No	/ ____/
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**Continued**

30	Have you noticed any sexist attitudes or gender-based stereotypes in your community?	1) Yes 2) No If yes, mention it	/____/
31	According to you, do you know about any existing traditional roles assigned to women and to men?	1) Yes 2) No If yes, mention:	/____/
32	What is the quality of your relationships with your partner and within your family?	1) Dominated by excessive jealousy 2) Poor communication 3) Good quality	/____/
<b>VI. Information on the aggressor</b>			
33	Identity of the aggressor (s)	1) Known person 2) Unknown person 3) Known personnel 4) Unknown personnel	/____/
34	Link with the aggressor	1) Husband or Wife 2) Wife-in-law 3) A member of the family 4) A coworker at the workplace 5) Hierarchical superior 6) Others	/____/
35	Gender of the aggressor	1) Male 2) Female	/____/
36	Marital Status of the aggressor	1) Married 2) Single 3) Divorced 4) Widower/Widow 5) Polygamous if man	/____/
37	Occupation of the aggressor	1) Student 2) Employee 3) Unemployed 4) Community elders /customary/religious 5) Others	/____/