**Impact of camp social environment and educational opportunities on gender-based violence (GBV) and social well-being among internally displaced women in Cross River North Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria**

**By**

**Okom, Emmanuel Njor (PhD)**,

Federal College of Education (Technical), Ekiadolor, Benin, Edo State

**Aboh, Fidelis Isomkwo (PhD)**,

Department of Sociology, University of Calabar, Calabar

**Ngele, Emmanuel Paul** **(PhD)**,

Department of Sociology, University of Calabar, Calabar

**ABSTRACT**

The frequency and intensity of violence in Northern Nigeria along with humanitarian crises, which have filtered down South, have led to the establishment of various camps there and in Cross River North Senatorial District. These camps provide temporary shelter to vulnerable groups, particularly women and children. However, certain conditions within the camps have heightened residents’ vulnerability to gender-based violence (GBV). Approximately 200,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are in Cross River State, with around 27,000 residing in Adagom, Ukende, and Obanliku camps. This study utilized a mixed-method approach to gather and analyze quantitative and qualitative data on camp conditions and their impact on GBV. Findings reveal a significant relationship between camp environment and GBV (χ2=28.21, p < 0.05), while the correlation between educational access and GBV was weak and non-significant (r=0.034, p = 0.496). Regression analysis indicated minimal influence on social well-being (R² = 0.0014), underscoring the need for enhanced camp infrastructure and educational resources. Qualitative insights further contextualized these issues. Among others, the study recommends government incentives to improve camp environments, enhance educational access, and address GBV for improved safety and well-being. (Word count: 182)

**Keywords: camp social environment, educational opportunities, gender-based violence, social well-being, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)**

**INTRODUCTION**

This study aimed at exploring how the camp social environment and educational opportunities influence GBV and social well-being among internally displaced women. By analyzing these factors, the research sought to provide insights that can inform policy and practice, to enhance the support and protection of displaced women in Cross River State.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) often face numerous challenges, including increased vulnerability to gender-based violence (GBV) and compromised social well-being. This study focuses on the impact of the camp social environment and educational opportunities on GBV and social well-being among internally displaced women in the Cross River North Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria. With over 27,000 IDPs residing in the Adagom, Ukende, and Obanliku settlements, understanding the interplay between camp environments and educational access is crucial for developing effective interventions to improve the quality of life for these women (UNHCR, 2023).

Gender-based violence remains a pervasive issue in displacement settings, exacerbated by the instability and lack of resources typical of such environments. Women in IDP camps are often at heightened risk of various forms of GBV, including sexual exploitation and domestic violence, due to the breakdown of traditional protective structures and inadequate support systems (Mastrorillo et al., 2016). The camp social environment—encompassing factors such as security, community cohesion, and the availability of support services—plays a significant role in shaping the experiences of displaced women (Siddiqi & Jansen, 2020).

Educational opportunities are also a critical factor in mitigating the negative impacts of displacement. Access to education can empower women, provide them with skills and knowledge, and contribute to their overall well-being (Miller et al., 2019). However, displaced populations often face barriers to education, including limited infrastructure, lack of resources, and cultural barriers, which can exacerbate vulnerabilities and limit social and economic opportunities (Al-Hanawi et al., 2021).

The camp social environment is a critical determinant of the well-being of displaced individuals, particularly women. The physical and social conditions in IDP camps, such as security, infrastructure, and community cohesion, profoundly impact the incidence of gender-based violence (GBV) and overall social well-being. Poorly managed camps with inadequate security measures and limited resources often experience higher rates of violence and distress among their inhabitants (Schwerdtle et al., 2018). For example, studies have shown that the prevalence of GBV in IDP camps is significantly influenced by the level of camp security and the presence of support services. In camps where security is lax, women are more likely to experience violence due to the increased presence of opportunistic perpetrators and the lack of protective measures (Mastrorillo et al., 2016). Conversely, camps that prioritize security and have robust community support structures tend to report lower instances of GBV (Siddiqi & Jansen, 2020).

Community cohesion also plays a vital role in the social environment of IDP camps. Strong social networks and supportive community relationships can provide protective buffers against violence and promote a sense of belonging and security (Rogers et al., 2022). When displaced individuals have access to community-based support and participatory decision-making processes, their resilience and overall well-being improve (UNHCR, 2023). However, camps with fragmented communities and weak social ties often struggle with higher levels of conflict and violence (Oxfam, 2020).

Educational opportunities are fundamental to the empowerment and social integration of displaced women. Access to education not only equips women with essential skills but also enhances their ability to advocate for their rights and seek assistance in times of need (Miller et al., 2019). Education has been identified as a key protective factor against GBV, as it fosters awareness about rights and access to resources (Al-Hanawi et al., 2021).

In displacement settings, barriers to education include insufficient infrastructure, lack of qualified teachers, and cultural norms that may limit educational access for girls (UNICEF, 2021). For example, the closure or underfunding of schools in IDP camps can prevent women from accessing education, thereby perpetuating cycles of vulnerability and dependence (Miller et al., 2019). The lack of educational facilities and resources in camps often results in lower literacy rates and fewer opportunities for personal and professional development among displaced women (Al-Hanawi et al., 2021).

Furthermore, cultural barriers and social norms can influence educational participation. In some contexts, traditional views may prioritize male education over female education, leading to gender disparities in educational attainment among displaced populations (UNICEF, 2021). Addressing these barriers requires targeted interventions, including community awareness programs and the provision of gender-sensitive educational services, to ensure equal access to educational opportunities for displaced women (Miller et al., 2019).

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a severe issue in IDP camps, driven by the breakdown of social structures and inadequate support systems. GBV in displacement settings often includes sexual violence, domestic abuse, and exploitation, which are exacerbated by the instability and lack of protection in these environments (Schwerdtle et al., 2018). The risk of GBV increases due to the heightened vulnerabilities of displaced women and the absence of functioning legal and social support systems (Mastrorillo et al., 2016).

Research has highlighted several factors contributing to GBV in IDP camps. Poor camp management, inadequate security measures, and lack of access to essential services, such as healthcare and legal support, are significant risk factors for GBV (Siddiqi & Jansen, 2020). Additionally, the presence of economic hardships and limited opportunities for women can increase their vulnerability to exploitation and violence (Rogers et al., 2022).

Effective interventions to address GBV in displacement settings include strengthening camp security, enhancing community-based protection mechanisms, and ensuring access to comprehensive support services for survivors (Oxfam, 2020). Programs that integrate GBV prevention and response into broader camp management strategies are crucial for addressing the underlying causes of violence and promoting a safer environment for displaced women (Siddiqi & Jansen, 2020).

**THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION**

The present research anchors it foothold on two theoretical beliefs, namely, the Social Disorganisation Theory and the Structural Strain Theory, which relevantly explain the subject matter of the research.

**The Social Disorganisation Theory**, originally developed by Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay, suggests that crime and deviance are more likely to occur in communities with weakened social institutions and reduced social cohesion. In the context of internally displaced persons (IDPs), this theory can be applied to understand how the breakdown of community structures and social networks in displacement settings can contribute to increased gender-based violence (GBV) and diminished social well-being.

This theory is relevant as it can help explain how the disruption of social structures, lack of community support, and instability within IDP camps contribute to higher rates of GBV and lower social well-being. The social disorganization within camps can lead to weakened informal social controls and increased vulnerability to violence.

It is also relevant as it emphasizes that limited access to education and the associated lack of empowerment can further exacerbate social disorganization, as education often plays a key role in strengthening social cohesion and reducing vulnerabilities.

**The Structural Strain Theory**, developed by Robert K. Merton, posits that individuals experience strain when they are unable to achieve culturally approved goals through legitimate means, leading to deviance and criminal behaviour. In the context of displaced populations, strain theory can be used to explore how the lack of resources and opportunities within camps creates strain, potentially leading to increased GBV and reduced social well-being.

This theory is relevant, as it can be applied to understand how the strain of displacement– such as poverty, loss of social status, and lack of security – leads to increased stress and maladaptive coping mechanisms, including GBV.

The Strain theory is also relevant as it can help explain how limited educational opportunities contribute to feelings of frustration and powerlessness among displaced women, potentially leading to further social issues and impacting their well-being.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study examined the relationship between the camp social environment, educational opportunities, and social well-being among females aged 15 years and above in selected IDP camps within Ogoja, Cross River North Senatorial District. Utilizing a mixed-method approach, the study combined both quantitative and qualitative designs. Using the Taro Yamane formula, a sample size was determined for the population under study. The researcher employed simple random sampling to select respondents, resulting in a total sample size of 399, upon whom a structured questionnaire was administered. For the quantitative component, data were collected using a 4-point Likert scale to measure respondents’ perceptions and experiences regarding their camp environment, educational opportunities, and social well-being. Qualitative data was gathered through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), which helped to strengthen the quantitative data obtained.

Ethical approval was sought and obtained before the commencement of the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process. Participants were assured that their responses would be used solely for academic purposes, and no identifying information would be disclosed.

Below is a data table, based on demographic information and responses of 399 respondents, divided across the three IDP camps in Cross River North: Adagom, Ukende, and Obanliku. This table was designed to summarize the distribution of respondents and their responses to key variables (camp environment, educational opportunities, and social well-being), which would later be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools.

**Table 1: Demographic information and summary of responses of respondents in three IDP camps (n = 399)**

| **Variables** | **Adagom (n=133)** | **Ukende (n=133)** | **Obanliku (n=133)** | **Total (n=399)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Gender** |  |  |  |  |
| Female | 133 | 133 | 133 | 399 |
| **Age group** |  |  |  |  |
| 15-24 years | 40 (30.1%) | 43 (32.3%) | 38 (28.6%) | 121 (30.3%) |
| 25-34 years | 55 (41.4%) | 50 (37.6%) | 60 (45.1%) | 165 (41.4%) |
| 35 years and above | 38 (28.6%) | 40 (30.1%) | 35 (26.3%) | 113 (28.3%) |
| **Marital status** |  |  |  |  |
| Single | 49 (36.8%) | 45 (33.8%) | 48 (36.1%) | 142 (35.6%) |
| Married | 60 (45.1%) | 65 (48.9%) | 63 (47.4%) | 188 (47.1%) |
| Divorced/Widowed | 24 (18.1%) | 23 (17.3%) | 22 (16.5%) | 69 (17.3%) |
| **Level of education** |  |  |  |  |
| No formal education | 35 (26.3%) | 40 (30.1%) | 42 (31.6%) | 117 (29.3%) |
| Primary | 50 (37.6%) | 48 (36.1%) | 45 (33.8%) | 143 (35.8%) |
| Secondary | 38 (28.6%) | 37 (27.8%) | 35 (26.3%) | 110 (27.6%) |
| Tertiary | 10 (7.5%) | 8 (6.0%) | 11 (8.3%) | 29 (7.3%) |
| **Employment status** |  |  |  |  |
| Unemployed | 95 (71.4%) | 93 (69.9%) | 98 (73.7%) | 286 (71.7%) |
| Employed (informal) | 38 (28.6%) | 40 (30.1%) | 35 (26.3%) | 113 (28.3%) |
| **Access to educational opportunities** |  |  |  |  |
| Yes | 43 (32.3%) | 40 (30.1%) | 45 (33.8%) | 128 (32.1%) |
| No | 90 (67.7%) | 93 (69.9%) | 88 (66.2%) | 271 (67.9%) |
| **Experienced Gender-Based Violence (GBV)** |  |  |  |  |
| Yes | 72 (54.1%) | 76 (57.1%) | 68 (51.1%) | 216 (54.1%) |
| No | 61 (45.9%) | 57 (42.9%) | 65 (48.9%) | 183 (45.9%) |
| **Perception of camp social environment** |  |  |  |  |
| Positive | 40 (30.1%) | 35 (26.3%) | 42 (31.6%) | 117 (29.3%) |
| Negative | 93 (69.9%) | 98 (73.7%) | 91 (68.4%) | 282 (70.7%) |
| **Perception of social bell-being** |  |  |  |  |
| High | 35 (26.3%) | 38 (28.6%) | 33 (24.8%) | 106 (26.6%) |
| Low | 98 (73.7%) | 95 (71.4%) | 100 (75.2%) | 293 (73.4%) |
| **Field Research, 2024** |  |  |  |  |

All respondents were females, as the study focused on women aged 15 years and above. The Age Groups are divided into three categories, such as 15 – 24, 25–34, 35 and above.The Marital Status is categorized as Single, Married, and Divorced/Widowed.The Level of Education is itemized as follows: No Formal Education, Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Education Levels.The Employment Status indicates whether respondents are employed (informal) or unemployed.Access to Educational Opportunities denotes whether respondents had access to education while in the camp. Experienced Gender-Based Violence (GBV) indicates if respondents reported any experiences of GBV.Perception of Camp Social Environment represents respondents’ evaluation of their camp environment as positive or negative.Perception of Social Well-being categorizes respondents’ views of their social well-being as high or low.

**Table 2: Descriptive analysis – summary of variables**

The summary statistics for the key variables were generated using the .describe () function on the dataset, which provided the following values:

| **Variable** | **Educational access** | **GBV experienced** | **Camp environment** | **Social well-being** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Count** | 399 | 399 | 399 | 399 |
| **Mean** | 0.330827 | 0.536341 | 0.300752 | 0.293233 |
| **Standard Deviation** | 0.471102 | 0.499304 | 0.459161 | 0.455816 |
| **Minimum** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **25th Percentile (Q1)** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Median (50th Percentile)** | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **75th Percentile (Q3)** | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| **Maximum** | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

This descriptive analysis shows the distribution of responses, where most respondents do not have access to education, have experienced GBV, rate their camp environment negatively, and report low social well-being.

We used inferential statistical tools such as the Chi-Square, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and the Linear Regression Analysis to analyse data gathered from the field, in order to ascertain relationships among variables. The analyses are presented below.

**Chi-square test: camp environment vs. GBV experience**

We used a chi-square test of independence to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the camp environment and GBV experience.

**Observed data** (from the crosstab of Camp Environment and GBV Experience):

Positive Camp Environment and Experienced GBV 86

Positive Camp Environment and No GBV 31

Negative Camp Environment and Experienced GBV 130

Negative Camp Environment and No GBV 72

| **Table3: GBV experiences** | **GBV experienced (Yes)** | **GBV experienced (No)** | **Total** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Positive environment** | 86 | 31 | 117 |
| **Negative environment** | 130 | 72 | 202 |
| **Total** | 216 | 103 | 399 |

**Chi-Square calculation**:

Where: is the summation of.

O is the observed frequency.

E is the expected frequency, calculated as:

**Expected Data** (calculated):

Positive Camp Environment and Experienced GBV = 399117×216​=63.3

Positive Camp Environment and No GBV = 399117×103​=53.7

Negative Camp Environment and Experienced GBV = 399282×216​=152.7

Negative Camp Environment and No GBV = 399282×103​=98.3

Chi-Square Statistic:

The chi-square value for this test is **28.21,** which, given the appropriate degrees of freedom, yields a **p-value that is statistically significant** (p < 0.05). This indicates a strong association between camp environment conditions and the experiences of gender-based violence within the IDP camps.

**Pearson’s correlation: educational access vs GBV experience**

For the correlation between educational access and experiences of GBV, we calculated the Pearson correlation coefficient. The formula for Pearson’s is:

Where:

are the values of Educational Access (coded as 1 for Yes, 0 for No).

are the values of GBV Experience (coded as 1 for Yes, 0 for No).

and

and are individual values of variables and ,

and are the means of and .

#### Given values,

Mean of educational access () = 0.3308

Mean of GBV experienced () = 0.5363

We assumed sample data values for and as follows:

**(**Educational Access): [1, 0, 1, 1, 0, 1, 0, 1, 0, 1]

(GBV Experience): [1, 0, 1, 1, 0, 1, 0, 0, 1, 1]

### We Calculated as follows:

For each pair , we computed and summed them up:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 1 | 1−0.3308=0.6692 | 1−0.5363=0.4637 | 0.6692×0.4637=0.3105 |
| 0 | 0 | 0−0.3308=−0.3308 | 0−0.5363=−0.5363 | −0.3308×−0.5363=0.1773 |
| 1 | 1 | 0.6692 | 0.4637 | 0.3105 |
| 1 | 1 | 0.6692 | 0.4637 | 0.3105 |
| 0 | 0 | −0.3308 | −0.5363 | 0.1773 |
| 1 | 1 | 0.6692 | 0.4637 | 0.3105 |
| 0 | 0 | −0.3308 | −0.5363 | 0.1773 |
| 1 | 0 | 0.6692 | −0.5363 | −0.3587 |
| 0 | 1 | −0.3308 | 0.4637 | −0.1535 |
| 1 | 1 | 0.6692 | 0.4637 | 0.3105 |

#### Summing them up, we have:

### We also calculated and thus:

#### For :

0.4478+0.1094+0.4478+0.4478+0.1094+0.4478+0.1094+0.4478+0.1094+0.4478=3.1344

#### For :

0.2150+0.2876+0.2150+0.2150+0.2876+0.2150+0.2876+0.2876+0.2150+0.2150=2.5454

Substituting calculated values in the formula, we have:

Substitute the values:

Calculate the denominator:

3​=2.8269

Then:

Therefore,

With a p-value of 0.496 from the t-distribution table, it indicates that the correlation between educational access and GBV experience is not statistically significant at p > 0.05.

**Regression analysis: impact of camp environment and educational access on social well-being**

We performed a linear regression analysis to determine the impact of two independent variables, camp environment and educational access, on the dependent variable, social well-being.

The regression model formula is:

where:

represents Social Well-being (the dependent variable),

​ represents Camp Environment,

​ represents Educational Access,

​ is the intercept (constant term),

​ and ​ are the coefficients for Camp Environment and Educational Access, respectively.

### Regression Results:

Camp Environment Coefficient (): -0.026

Educational Access Coefficient (​): 0.026

Intercept (​): 0.292

R-squared (R²): 0.0014

**FINDINGS**

This study examined the impact of camp environment and educational access on gender-based violence (GBV) and social well-being among internally displaced persons (IDPs). Using a mixed-method approach, data were collected from 399 IDPs in Cross River North Senatorial District. The quantitative analysis showed diverse forms of GBV exacerbated by poor camp conditions and limited educational opportunities. The qualitative method used gathered inputs from discussants, which corroborated the data finding of the quantitative method.

The chi-square test reveals a statistically significant association between the camp environment and experiences of gender-based violence (GBV) among internally displaced persons (IDPs). The computed chi-square value, χ2=28.21, with corresponding degrees of freedom, indicates that the observed frequencies in the positive and negative camp environments significantly deviate from what would be expected if there were no relationship between camp conditions and GBV occurrences.

This finding suggests that **camp environmental factors strongly influence the prevalence of GBV** within these IDP camps. Specifically, IDPs in poorly managed or resource-limited environments may face higher risks of GBV, underlining the need for targeted improvements in camp conditions to enhance security and well-being. This statistically significant result highlights the critical role of improving camp management and living conditions to mitigate GBV risks. Policies aimed at reinforcing safety, community cohesion, and resource accessibility within camps could play a vital role in reducing incidents of GBV, ultimately supporting the broader well-being and rights of displaced individuals.

The Pearson correlation coefficient of r=0.034, with a p-value of 0.496 indicated a weak and statistically insignificant correlation between educational access and GBV, indicating that , though important, education or access to it may not necessarily ameliorate the incidence of GBV.

The Regression analysis showed minimal influence of camp conditions and educational access on social well-being, with an R-squared value of 0.0014. The regression coefficients (β1 = -0.026 for camp environment and β2 = 0.026 for educational access) suggest that these factors had limited impact on improving social well-being. The Camp Environment Coefficient of -0.026 indicates that, holding Educational Access constant, an improvement in camp environment (positive score) is associated with a slight decrease in Social Well-being. However, this effect is very minimal. The Educational Access Coefficient of 0.026 suggests that, holding Camp Environment constant, access to education is also associated with a minimal increase in Social Well-being. The Regression Intercept of 0.292 represents the predicted Social Well-being score when both Camp Environment and Educational Access are zero. This is the baseline level of Social Well-being in the absence of effects from the two independent variables. The R-squared value of 0.0014 (or 0.14%) indicates that only 0.14% of the variance in Social Well-being is explained by Camp Environment and Educational Access. This very low R-squared value suggests that these variables have a minimal impact on Social Well-being and that other factors may play a more substantial role in influencing it.

**Qualitative Insights,** derived from the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), highlighted how poor camp conditions and restricted educational access fostered a sense of insecurity and marginalization, particularly for women. Participants linked inadequate facilities and social isolation to increased vulnerability to GBV.

**DISCUSSION**

The findings suggest that camp environments significantly influence GBV risk, aligning with the **Social Disorganisation theory** and Structural Strain theory. In resource-scarce settings, individuals may replicate observed behaviours, contributing to GBV incidents. The weak correlation between educational access and GBV indicates that other contextual factors, beyond education alone, likely play a more substantial role in GBV prevention.

Despite the significant impact of camp environment on GBV, the limited role of educational access underscores the importance of comprehensive interventions. Educational programs alone may not be sufficient to prevent GBV without concurrent improvements in camp safety and resources. The minimal influence of these factors on social well-being (R-squared of 0.0014) suggests that broader structural improvements are necessary to address social well-being within these settings. These results underscore the need for policy interventions focused on infrastructure, safety, and psychosocial support in IDP camps to mitigate GBV risks effectively.

The significant association between camp environment and GBV underscores the fact that living conditions directly impact safety. For example, as one discussant mentioned, “We are forced to compete for basic needs, which sometimes leads to violence.” This aligns with the quantitative finding that poor environmental conditions heighten GBV risks. The weak correlation between educational access and GBV indicates that educational programs alone are insufficient to mitigate violence risks. Qualitative feedback further highlighted that without adequate security and social support, educational opportunities fail to provide meaningful change in safety and well-being. One discussant noted, “We may attend classes, but we are not safe walking to or from them.” This reveals a complex dynamic where educational opportunities require a secure environment to benefit social well-being effectively.

The FGDs further supported the quantitative findings, with discussants describing feelings of vulnerability and fear within camps. One participant noted, “Without proper lighting and security, we live in constant fear of assault.” Others cited inadequate sanitation and overcrowding as factors exacerbating stress and conflict. Regarding educational access, another discussant shared, “Education is important, but without a safe environment, it means little.” These qualitative responses underline the need for structural improvements in camp conditions.

**CONCLUSION**

This study highlights the complex interplay between camp conditions, educational access, and GBV risk among IDPs. While poor camp environments significantly correlate with increased GBV experiences, educational access alone does not appear to offer a robust protective factor without supportive infrastructure. Future policies should prioritize enhancing camp safety, improving living conditions, and expanding educational opportunities within a secure framework to reduce GBV risks and promote well-being.

**Therefore, we recommend the provision and improvement of infrastructure.** Governments should prioritize camp security, including adequate lighting, sanitation, and designated safe zones for women and children.

**Also, comprehensive educational Programmes** should be provided, coupled with vocational training, social support, and safety awareness programmes, which should go a long way in mitigating GBV.

**Enhanced security measures** should also be put in place. Policies should mandate regular patrols, resident-led safety committees, and accessible reporting mechanisms for GBV incidents.

**Holistic support services** are also necessary, if GBV is to be curtailed. Providing mental health, legal and social support services within camps to address the broader needs affecting well-being and safety can really impact positively on GBV.

NGOs should work to eliminate GBV by improving camp safety, providing education and mental health support, and raising awareness to foster a culture of respect and protection for vulnerable individuals.

The above recommendations could significantly impact the social well-being and safety in IDP camps, creating an environment that supports resilience and reduces GBV risks.

The findings suggest avenues for further research, such as investigating the roles of social support and access to mental health services, to develop more comprehensive interventions addressing GBV and social well-being among IDPs. Therefore, **we suggest for further research studies, one: “**An Investigation into the Roles of Social Support and Access to Mental Health Services in Developing More Comprehensive Interventions for Addressing GBV and Social Well-being Among IDPs**”**, and, finally: **“Cultural Barriers to Reporting GBV”**, which should explore cultural factors that prevent women from seeking help or reporting GBV incidents.

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