

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND MARITAL STABILITY AMONG MARRIED WOMEN IN THE SERVICES OF CROSS RIVER STATE JUDICIARY.

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Abstract

This study adopted ex-post facto research design to examine whether domestic violence predicts marital stability among women in the services of Cross River State Judiciary. Three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The selection was carried out using census sampling technique. A questionnaire titled “Domestic violence and marital stability questionnaire” (DVMSQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face validity by experts in Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability estimate of the instrument was established through Cronbach Alpha and the reliability coefficients ranged from .72 and 0.80. Simple regression analysis was adopted to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The result of the analysis revealed that, physical, psychological and sexual violence all significantly predict marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River state. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended, among others, that Counsellors should provide the Judiciary staff with information on how to develop the right attitude towards managing abusive behaviour.

Keywords: Domestic, violence, Marital, Stability, Judiciary



Introduction

Marriage is the most essential and fundamental human relationship, it provides the basic structure that establishes a family relationship and raises the next generation. Marriage is defined in this study as a close and intimate relationship between the man and woman to transform to husband and wife. A good and stable marriage is a marital relationship based on love, mutual respect and the couple’s satisfaction with the relationship. Healthy living is achieved due to stability in marriage. A Stable marriage is thus one of the preconditions necessary for having and nurturing responsible children.

According to Abidogun (2021), marriage is a union between an adult male and adult female. Marital conflicts come in different forms like spouse battering, spousal abuse, sexual abuse, marital irresponsibility, incest, rape, subtle struggle for control between the couple and other abusive behaviours. There is concern about the rising rate of unresolved marital conflicts, which often lead to marital instability, further leading to divorce, desertion, single-parent hood and legal separation. Thus, unresolved marital conflicts oftentimes lead to failed marriages. Marital conflicts are caused by childlessness, forced marriage, incompatibility, communication gap, interference by in-law, finances, infidelity, sex of children, and lack of appreciation. Therefore, when marital conflicts occur regularly, it may have adverse effects on psycho-social well-being of adolescents who are product of marriages.

Marital stability is a situation where there is mutual understanding, love, care, fair treatment and fidelity among couples (Metuwo, 2020, Ihekoronye et al., 2020). Family stability is the backbone to societal peace and harmony, this is because when the home is at peace the society itself will be at peace, secured, united and develops mutual understanding. Marital and family stability enhance interpersonal relationship among couples through development of spirit of tolerance, love, care and consideration.

Domestic violence or abuse is a global issue. Domestic violence or domestic “abuse” or “intimate partner violence” can be defined as a pattern of behaviour in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. It could take the forms of emotional abuse, that is, undermining a person’s sense of self-worth through constant criticism, name calling, preventing partners from seeing friends or mandate or to see a particular one, etc (Ngwu, & Uche, 2018).

Psychological violence is displayed through intimidation, fear, threatening physical harm to self, partner, or children, destruction of pets and property, “mind games, financial or economic abuse manifests in attempts to make a person financially dependent by maintaining total control over financial resources, withholding access to money, and/or forbidding attendance at school or employment. Physical violence is displayed by kicking, hitting, beating, and so on. Sexual abuse occurs when a partner is forced to take part in any forms of sex act or pleasuring when the partner does not consent and stalking, it could also be any pattern of behaviour that serves no legitimate purpose and is intended to harass, annoy, or terrorize the victim.

The impact of domestic violence is severe. It affects individually as well as collectively. It has effects on women, children, and the whole family from many dimensions. The abused family members of the domestic violence suffer numerous mental and physical problems. The fear of isolation and other negative impacts may prevail among the victims of domestic violence. Medical implications are also included in the impacts of domestic violence. The psychological as well as emotional impacts of domestic violence are more effective than the effects of physical abuse. The affected victims of domestic violence utilize further violence for the resolution of their problems when they become young. As violence affects children’s health and personality both. The most significant impact of domestic violence on children is that they personally witness such conflicts taking place at their homes (Van der Kolk, 2017, Opara et al., 2020).

According to Ngwu, and Uche (2017). The devastating effect of domestic violence can last a life time and can affect anyone irrespective of gender, age, race, culture, socio-economic status, rural and urban women, married and single, educated and uneducated. It is important to note that domestic violence does not only manifest in physical abuse but emotional, psychological, economic, spiritual and social abuse.

Attention to the problem of domestic violence in Africa is comparatively recent with studies about partner abuse beginning to appear more in the late twentieth century (Watts and Zimmerman, 2018). Though this global phenomenon seems to be commonplace in developing countries and third world where poverty manifests, the cases in sub-Saharan Africa remain pervasive with the overall past-year prevalence of 36% exceeding the global average 30% (Cited in McCloskey, Boonzaier, Steinbrenner and Hunter, 2016: 278). More women in Africa are subject to lifetime partner violence (45.6%) and sexual assault (11.9%) than women anywhere in the world, with the notable exception of high-income countries in the case of rape (12.6%) (Cited in McCloskey et al., 2016).

Nearly 3 out of 10 Nigerian women experience physical violence by age 15. Six out of every 10 Nigerian children experience some form of physical, emotional, and sexual violence before the age of 18 and that two-thirds of children who are victims of violence and

abuse never speak out, while only 4 out of 100 receive any form of support (UKAID & PERL, 2020). There is a probability that these figures may have become obsolete as a preliminary investigation shows that 8 out of 10 teenage girls experience physical and sexual violence before age 18 in a university community in Abeokuta, Ogun State. Many factors have been identified as the causes of domestic violence. This ranges from poverty, drinking, a past history of child abuse or posttraumatic stress disorder, culture, physical factors, sociocultural and political factors, judicial barriers, individual barriers and humanitarian programming obstacles, sex role socialization, highly traditional gender role beliefs, as well as low education (Ogunode et al., 2024, Osiwa, 2020).

The age of a woman could determine the extent she can endure a toxic relationship. Sometimes older women may not likely desire to start a new relationship but would rather hope that the man would change. This might make her tend to tolerate toxic relationship compared to a younger woman who could easily walk away and start all over, because she has enough time on her side. There is a reason that older women have traditionally accepted abuse within their romantic relationships; we as a society have taught them to do so (McCloskey et al., 2016). The older women tend to have more patience.

When some women are emotionally attached to their partners, despite the abuse or threat, they tend to ignore or turn blind eyes and deaf ears to whatever they are going through with their abusive partners, because they are so much in love, which in most cases are one side. The fear of being alone and the need to always please the partner tend to lower self-esteem and increase emotional dependency which often lead to abuse. (Urbiola, Rodriguez, Castillo, Navas, Cuadrado, 2017; Paul et. Al (2019).

Some religions and cultures place lots of restrictions on marital relationships, divorce or separation is frowned at, and not allowed. Aside that, individuals are encouraged to endure their marital challenges and carry them as their cross to bear, some are even encouraged to fast and pray about their challenges and hope that they will go away, while some culture encourage the woman to endure violent men as it has always been. Perhaps, this is the mindset Osinachi Nwachukwu of the Dunamis Church Abuja, which went viral, had, until it led to her death (Vanguard, 2022 & Ogunode et al., 2024).

The family is an important constituent of the society, its stability therefore determines to a large extent the advancement of the society. Unfortunately, most families are witnessing more and more trauma and challenges; and this has affected the stability of the society. Today, we live in a very conservative, complex and perverse society. We can no longer deny the fact that many Nigerian families are troubled. A lot of families (husbands, wives and children) can best be described as neighbours as they merely live under the same roof, without familiar interpersonal interaction. It has become very necessary to talk about possible ways of helping families to live aright, and enjoy their relationships for a healthy society to emerge. It is against this backdrop that the researcher is keen on finding out the influence of Domestic violence on the marital stability among women in the services of Cross River State Judiciary, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Domestic violence has a significant effect on women's reproductive, physical, and mental health, and it is a significant threat to everyone's health, so that, it could sometimes lead women to commit suicide. In recent time, there has been high incidence of various forms of spousal abuse, like sexual violence, rape, courtship violence, acquaintance violence and spousal rape, wife battering, sexual harassment, verbal violence, emotional and psychological violence, economic deprivation, wife abandonment, acid baths, widow dehumanization and bride price-related violence.

In Nigeria, the situation is pathetic, considering the size of the country and the vast population of women, an average of 300 to 350 are reportedly killed every year by their husbands, former partners, in-laws or male relations. Most times, the incidences are considered as family feuds, which should be within the family. Most reports made to the police have been rejected and victims are advised to go back and settle the family matter. Part of the issues faced by women willing to report cases of abuse is lack of evidence, most victims do not have any evidence to support their stand while making their police report. The victims must provide strong evidence to lodge a report regarding the violence (United Nations, 2022). Another is difficulty getting emergency help and shelter from the related authorities: The victims do not save any emergency contact numbers that can help during critical times. This will lead to a dangerous situation where the victims cannot contact any emergency number to seek help (United Nations, 2022).

The lead researcher being a Judiciary staff has first-hand knowledge and has observed with dismay what women face in the hands of their spouses and how battered women tend to tolerate the violence confronting them on a daily basis. It is worthy of note, that some of these cases of Domestic violence goes unreported, which is an indication that women tend to tolerate these physical, emotional, psychological, verbal and sexual abuses. So, one begins to wonder what it is that make these women keep running back to these toxic relationships? Given the foregoing, the researchers are interested in finding out the influence of Domestic violence on marital stability among Married Judiciary Staff in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study is to determine the influence of Domestic Violence on marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, this study sought to:

- i. Ascertain the influence of physical violence on marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River state.
- ii. Determine the influence of psychological violence on marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River state.
- iii. Determine the influence of sexual violence on marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River state.

Research questions

The following research questions were developed to guide the study;

- i. How does physical violence influence marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River state?
- ii. What is the influence of psychological violence on marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River state?
- iii. To what extent does sexual violence influence marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River state?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were stated to guide the study:

- Ho1:** There is no significant influence of physical violence on marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River state.
- Ho2:** Psychological violence has no significant influence on marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River state.
- Ho3:** Sexual violence does not significantly influence marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River state.

Methodology

The study adopted the ex-post facto research design. The population for this study consisted of 483 women, all judiciary staff in Cross River State. Census sampling technique was used for this study. A sample size for this study was made up of 483 women, (all judiciary staff) in Cross River State which represents 100% of the population. A questionnaire titled ““Domestic Violence and marital stability questionnaire” (DVMSQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three Measurement and Evaluation experts in the Faculty of Educational Foundation Studies, University of Calabar, Calabar. Cronbach Alpha Reliability technique was used for estimating the degree of consistency of the sub scales and the coefficients ranging from .72 and 0.80 were obtained; the instrument was adjudged as reliable. The instrument was divided into three sections, Sections A, and B. Section A was designed with items to elicit information on the demographics of the respondents which include gender, age, and educational qualification. Section B was designed to elicit information on the independent variable. The independent variable is made up of three sub-variables each of which six (6) items were used in measuring; this implies eighteen (18) items in this section. The items in Section B of the instrument were structured using modified Likert scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD). Data collected were analyzed using Simple regression analysis.

Presentation of results

Ho1: There is no significant influence of physical violence on marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River State.

Table 1

Simple regression analysis of the relationship between Physical violence and marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River state

Model	$\sum X^2$	df	X^2	f	Sig
Regression	11216.71	1	11216.71	882.35	.000
Residual	6114.62	481	12.71		
Total	17331.33	482			
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	10.02	.47		21.55	.000
Physical violence	.96	.03	.804	29.70	.000

$P < 0.5$, $r = .804$, $r^2 = .647$, Adjust $r^2 = .646$

The result of simple regression analysis in table one on the relationship between Physical violence and marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross-River State. Produced an adjusted r^2 of .646. This result implies that only 64.6 percentage of the variance can be predicted from the independent variable (Physical violence) in predicting marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross-River State. The f-value of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was $f = 882.35$ having a p-value .000 with 1 and 481 degrees of freedom at .05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was rejected. This result therefore signifies that Physical violence significantly predicted marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River State by 64.6 percent, and the identified equation to understand this relationship was that marital stability among married Judiciary staff = $10.02 + .955$ (Physical violence)

Ho2: Psychological violence has no significant influence on marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River state.

Table 2

Simple regression analysis of the relationship between Psychological violence and marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River state

Model	$\sum X^2$	df	X^2	f	Sig
Regression	12159.55	1	12159.55	1130.89	.000
Residual	5171.78	481	10.75		
Total	17331.33	482			
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	8.94	.44		20.19	.000
Psychological violence	1.02	.03	.838	33.63	.000

$P < 0.5$, $r = .838$, $r^2 = .702$, Adjust $r^2 = .701$...

The result of simple regression analysis in table two on the relationship between Psychological violence and marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross-River State. Produced an adjusted r^2 of .701. This result implies that only 70.1 percentage of the variance can be predicted from the independent variable (Psychological violence) in predicting marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross-River State. The f-value of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was $f = 1130.89$ having a p-value .000 with 1 and 481 degrees of freedom at .05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was rejected. This result therefore signifies that Psychological violence significantly predicted marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River State by 70.1 percent, and the identified equation to understand this relationship was that marital stability among married Judiciary staff = $8.94 + 1.02$ (Psychological violence)

Ho3: Sexual violence does not significantly influence marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River state.

Table 3

Simple regression analysis of the relationship between sexual violence and marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River state

Model	$\sum X^2$	df	X^2	f	Sig
Regression	11092.400	1	11082.400	855.19	.000
Residual	6238.93	481	12.97		
Total	17331.33	482			
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	10.80	.45		24.16	.000
Sexual Violence	.900	.03	.800	29.24	.000

$P < 0.5$, $r = .800$, $r^2 = .640$, Adjust $r^2 = .639$...

The result of simple regression analysis in table three on the relationship between sexual violence and marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross-River State. Produced an adjusted R^2 of .639. This result implies that only 63.9 percentage of the variance can be predicted from the independent variable (Sexual Violence) in predicting marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross-River State. The F-value of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was $F = 855.19$ having a p-value .000 with 1 and 481 degrees of freedom at .05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was rejected. This result therefore signifies that Sexual violence significantly predicted marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River State by 63.9 percent, and the identified equation to understand this relationship was that marital stability among married Judiciary staff = $10.799 + .900$ (sexual violence)

Discussion of findings

The results of this study in relation to the three hypotheses were discussed herein: In table 1, the result of the first hypothesis indicated that, physical violence does significantly predict marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River state. The finding is in line with the view of in a similar research, carried out by Basirat, Adaramoye and Olayiwola-Adedjoja, (2024), aimed to examine the relationship between domestic violence and marital instability in Ijede community, Lagos state. The findings shows that there is significant correlation between domestic violence and marital instability, the findings further shows a significant difference in marital instability based on age while that of academic qualification is not significant.

In table 2, the result indicate that, psychological violence does significantly predict marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River state. The finding is in line with the view of a similar research, carried out by Ademuson, Uziewi and Olayinka (2022). Examining Domestic Violence against Men in Ibadan, Nigeria, they were of the opinion that Domestic violence has been narrowed and understood exclusively as women's issue. Very interesting findings were gotten from the study and valid conclusions were reached.

The result in table 3 shows that sexual violence does significantly predict marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River state. The finding is in line with the view of a similar research, carried out by Maciver and Dimkpa, (2022) who investigated factors that influence marital stability as perceived by literate spouses in Yenagoa metropolis of Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The findings showed that in order of ranking, social behavioural, domestic, sexual, religious and financial factors influence marital stability. It further showed that, there was no significant differences among the respondents in their perception of factors influencing marital stability based on gender, religion, educational level and length of marriage. Another study carried out in Kenya by Maigallo, 2022 also highlighted the importance of sexual satisfaction in marital stability supporting Maciver and Dimkpa's research.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study it was concluded that physical violence, psychological violence and sexual violence significantly predict marital stability among married Judiciary staff in Cross River state. Thus, domestic violence in all its forms must be avoided as much as possible for couples to enjoy marital stability.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Counsellors should gain understanding that there is need for counselling outreach to Judiciary staff with the view to counsel those who are abused.

2. Counsellors should provide the Judiciary staff with information on how to develop the right attitude towards managing abusive behaviour.
3. Government through her policy makers and security agents should know, through the research findings, that the female civil servants are not immuned against abusive relationship and so encourage policy makers to further make strong policy that protect against domestic violence and also charge the security agents to be at overt to arrest and prosecute relationship abusers.

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