

A Correlational Study of Intimate Partner Violence among Nigerian Couples: The Role of Age and Employment Status

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ABSTRACT

The general purpose of this study was to determine whether age and employment status predict intimate partner violence among a sample of Nigerian couples. A correlational survey design was adopted for the study. The population was made up of 8,800 couples in Enugu North Senatorial Zone, Enugu State Nigeria. The sample consisted of 868 respondents drawn using multi-stage sampling procedure. Intimate Partner Violence Questionnaire (IPVQ) was used as the instrument for data collection and was subjected to face validation by three experts. The internal reliabilities was determined using Cronbach Alpha with a reliability coefficient of 0.80. Pearson Product Moment correlation and regression statistics were used. The results obtained indicated that there exists a strong relationship between the age of the couples and intimate partner violence. Employment status significantly predicted intimate partner violence among couples. Thus, organizations confirming marriages such as families, religious groups, hospitals, and law courts should ensure that their clients pass through marital counselling with professional marriage counsellors.

Keywords: Employment Status; Age; Intimate Partner Violence; Couples

I. INTRODUCTION

An intimate relationship is not always mutual and peaceful as there are shreds of evidence that a considerable percentage of people experience violence each year by a current or former intimate partner (Breiding, et al., 2014; Archer, 2000; Garcia-Moreno, et al., 2006). Intimate partner relationships include spouses (married spouses), boyfriends/girlfriends dating partners and sexual partners. An intimate partner is a person with whom one has a close personal relationship that may be characterized by the partners' emotional connectedness, regular contact, ongoing physical contact and sexual behaviour, identity as a couple, and

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familiarity and knowledge about each other's lives (Breiding, et al., 2015). In the context of this study, 'intimate partner' refers to heterosexual married spouse. Some intimate relationships are characterized by violence.

The term violence is a concept that has attracted the attention of various scholars. Consequently, violence as a concept has been viewed in several dimensions by various scholars. Violence includes any condition or act that creates a climate in which the individual feels fear or intimidation in addition to being victims of assault. (Aluede, 2011). According to World Health Organization (2002), violence is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation. This implies that it involves the intentionality with the committing of the act itself, irrespective of the outcome it produces. The researchers define violence as any condition involving intentional behaviour towards another person that exposes such a person to severe harm.

Violence can be named according to the goal and manner of the act or behaviour. For example, if it is perpetrated by a spouse against the partner it is termed Intimate partner violence.

Intimate partner violence encompasses physical, sexual and psychological violence, or any combination of these acts (Krantz & Garcia-Moreno, 2005). Basile, Hertz and Back (2007) defined intimate partner violence as actual or threatened physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, or stalking abuse by an intimate partner. Intimate Partner Violence according to World Health Organization (2010) is behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including acts of physical violence, sexual violence, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviours. In the context of this study, intimate partner violence could be seen as a pattern of behaviour with which one intimate partner assaults or harms the other intimate partner.

There are two types of intimate partner violence; physical violence, sexual violence and psychological abuse. Physical violence involves forceful physical contact that may vary from light pushes, shoves, scratches, grabs, chokes, shakes, use of restraints or one's body, size, or strength against another person and slaps to severe beatings and lethal violence. Sexual violence refers to a sexual act that is attempted or committed by someone against another without freely given consent of the victim. It includes coercive and physical behaviours such as trying to persuade someone to perform a sexual act against his or her will, ignoring "no" responses and forcing one to engage in sexual acts. Psychological abuse on the other hand refers to acting in a degrading manner towards another. This includes the use of coercive control against another, threats, exploitation of victim's vulnerability ridicule, restrictions and withholding affection.

Intimate partner violence is associated with a broad range of physical and psychological consequences such as Post Traumatic Stress (Hines & Douglas 2011), depression and poorer cognitive functioning (Lawrence, Oringo and Brock (2012), difficulty with daily activities, memory loss, stress, suicidal thoughts or attempts, and even suicide (Daniels, 2005). It also has serious adverse effects on children's well-being including psychological, emotional and behavioural problems. Children who witness intimate partner violence are fearful and inhibited and show more anxiety and depression than other children who do not witness intimate partner violence (Maxwell & Garner, (2012). Witnessing intimate partner violence also increases the tendency for a child to be aggressive, socially withdrawn, develop poor social competence, experience problematic peer relationships and, increases the likelihood that the child will perpetrate IPV in adulthood (Katz, Hessler, &

Annest, 2007; Margolin, 2005). Children exposed to IPV experience loss of concentration, loss of self-confidence, school absenteeism and consequent poor academic performance (Umana, Fawole, and Adeoye 2014).

Socio-demographic factors are factors that are related to societal activities (socio) and the population characteristics (demographic). They include employment status and age. Employment is a relationship between two parties, usually based on a contract where work is paid for, where one party, which may be a corporation, for-profit, not-for-profit organization, co-operative or other entity is the employer and the other is the employee. John and Gordon (2009) defined employment status as the legal status and classification of someone in employment as either an employee or working on their account (self-employed). However, for this study, employment status refers to the state of the respondents when it comes to employment whether they are employed, unemployed, or self-employed. Employment status may be a significant predictor of intimate partner violence significantly. It is often believed that individuals who are employed or self-employed are less likely to be victims or perpetrators of IPV, thus presenting being employed or self-employed as a protective factor when looking at IPV. For example, Begum, Donta, Nair and Prakasam (2015) found that women who are not working are more likely to become victims of intimate partner violence. In Onuoha and Opeyemi (2014) study, intimate partner violence prevalence rates were also found comparatively higher among men with an unemployed spouse. Contrary to the above position, Rodriguez, Lasch, Chandra, and Lee (2001) found that employed persons are at significantly higher risk of experiencing IPV. Another factor which may be a significant predictor of intimate partner violence is age.

Age generally refers to how old a person is, biologically. In the literature, age has two meanings. The first connotes time. Simply put, this is the time a person has existed since birth. The second meaning refers to specific stages of life. According to Fry (2002), age is an indication of the passage of time and the length of time something has been in existence or has endured. The author went further to explain that it is the ordering and measuring of the time of life. However, for this study, age refers to the length of time that a person has lived or has existed.

Research investigating age and violence in an intimate relationship has yielded relatively consistent results. For instance, Rodriguez, Lasch, Chandra and Lee (2001) reported an inverse relationship between age and intimate partner violence. The finding suggests a decline in intimate partner violence as an individual grows older. Chang, Biing-Jiun Shen and Takeuchi (2009) found that predictors of IPV included younger age. The outcome supports an earlier finding by Kim, Laurent, Capaldi, and Feingold (2008) which found a decline in intimate partner violence with age. However, whether this claim is true or not was ascertained by this present study.

Available literature and observation point to the fact that intimate partner violence seems to be on this increase in Nigeria and especially among married couples (Ezegbe, et al., 2018). Couples are often seen to complain of physical abuse, sexual abuse and psychological abuse. One is tempted to ask if couples in Enugu North Senatorial Zone, also experience intimate partner violence. Documented media reports provide an affirmative answer to this question. In line with the above observation, media reported that a woman in Obeachara, in Nsukka Local Government Area allegedly bathed her husband with a substance said to be an acid during a scuffle which left him unconscious before he was rushed to hospital (Dede, 2014). Dachen (2015)

reported how a middle-aged man in one community in Enugu State battered his wife to death during a family squabble. Intimate partner violence is one of the most disturbing social problems of contemporary times. Available literature and observation point to the fact that intimate partner violence seems to be on the increase in Nigeria and especially among married couples. Couples are often seen to complain of physical abuse, sexual abuse and psychological abuse which are forms of intimate partner violence. It not only has adverse effects on the victims and the perpetrators but also on the child's wellbeing. The researchers are therefore worried about the level of intimate partner violence in Enugu North Senatorial Zone Enugu State, Nigeria and whether such level of violence could be as a result of employment status and age of these couples in Enugu North Senatorial Zone Enugu State, Nigeria. However, empirical studies with significant data to determine the reasons for such incidents have been lacking in Nigeria. To this end, the general purpose of this study was to determine whether age and employment status predict intimate partner violence among a sample of Nigerian couples in Enugu North Senatorial Zone Enugu State, Nigeria. Given the study objective, the question is, to what extent do employment status and age predict intimate partner violence among couples in Enugu North Senatorial Zone Enugu State, Nigeria?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to investigate age and employment status as predictors of intimate partner violence among couples in Enugu North Senatorial Zone Enugu State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the relationship between age and intimate partner violence among couples.
2. Determine the relationship between employment status and intimate partner violence among couples.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between age and intimate partner violence among couples?
2. What is the relationship between employment status and intimate partner violence among couples?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between age and intimate partner violence among couples.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between employment status and intimate partner violence among couples.

II. METHOD

Design of the Study

The researchers adopted a correlational research design. Correlational design according to Ali (2006) is the relationship between two variables (dependent and independent variables). Nworgu (2015) also refers to a correlational research design as the type of study which seeks to establish the relationship that exists between two or more variables. The design was considered appropriate for this study because the researchers will make use of data collected from a sample population to examine and establish the relationship which employment status and age have with intimate partner violence among couples in Enugu North Senatorial Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprises all the registered couples in Enugu North Senatorial Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria from 2013-2017. This was estimated to be 8,800 couples (Marriage Registry, Enugu North Senatorial Zone, Nsukka, Annex Office, 2017). The choice of couples was because there are a lot of cases of intimate partner violence among couples in Enugu North Senatorial Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample size of the study was 868 respondents (i.e. 434 couples) from the three chosen Local Government Areas in the Zone. The sample was selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure (a two-stage sample). First, the researchers used a simple random procedure to select three local government areas from the zone being studied. In the second stage, the researchers used 10 percent of the population of the three local government areas selected.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire entitled: Intimate Partner Violence Questionnaire (IPVQ). The questionnaire was developed by the researchers through literature review and per the objectives of the study. The questionnaire consisted of two sections namely: section A and Section B. Section A comprised general information regarding demographic data of the respondents. Section B contained 25 items soliciting information on the couple's intimate partner violence. A four-point rating scale was provided for the respondents to indicate the weight of the response modes. The response options were: Always, Sometimes, Occasionally and Never. The instrument was face validated by one expert in Guidance and Counselling, one in Educational Psychology, and one in Measurement and Evaluation all in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Based on their comments and suggestions, the instrument was modified to suit the study. In order to ascertain the reliability of the instrument, a trial test was conducted using couples in Enugu East Senatorial Zone, in which 40 copies of the questionnaires were administered to 20 couples (husband and wife equal two respondents). Cronbach alpha method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The Intimate Partner Violence Questionnaire (IPVQ) yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.80.

Method of Data Collection

The data for the study was collected through direct delivery and retrieval of the questionnaire to 868 respondents in the zone studied. The questionnaire was distributed to and retrieved from the couples in the three selected local governments in Enugu North Senatorial Zone by the researchers with the help of two research assistants who were educated by the researchers on the purpose of the study and how to administer the questionnaire. 868 copies of the questionnaire were administered for the study.

Method of Data Analysis

Pearson product-moment correlation was used to answer the research questions, while regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule for testing the hypotheses was: reject the null hypotheses if the exact probability value (p-value) is less than the '*prior*' probability value (that is, the level of significance); otherwise do not reject.

III. RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between age and intimate partner violence among couples?

Table 1: Pearson Correlation showing the relationship between age and intimate partner violence among couples

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	r	Decision
Intimate Partner Violence		83.7	6.42		
	868			0.190	
Age		2.74	1.04		

From table 1, it is observed that the couples had a mean score of 83.71 with a standard deviation of 6.42 in the intimate partner violence, and mean score of 2.74 with a standard deviation of 1.04 in age. The value of the correlation coefficient (r), which is 0.19, indicates that the relationship between age and intimate partner violence among the couples is low.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between employment status and intimate partner violence among couples?

Table 2: Pearson Correlation showing the relationship between employment status and intimate partner violence among couples

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	r	Decision
Intimate Partner Violence		83.71			
	868	6.42		-	
Employment status				.071	
		1.45			
		0.80			

From table 2, it is observed that the couples had a mean score of 83.71 with a standard deviation of 6.42 in the intimate partner violence, and mean score of 1.45 with a standard deviation of 0.80 in employment. The value of the correlation coefficient (r), which is -0.07 , indicates that the relationship between employment status and intimate partner violence among the couples is low.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between age and intimate partner violence among couples.

Table 3: Summary of regression analysis for the relationship between age and intimate violence among couples

Variables	N	F	R^2	B	Sig.	Decision
Intimate Partner Violence	868	32.58	0.036	0.190	.000	Rejected
Age						

a. Dependent Variable: intimate partner violence; b. Predictors: (Constant), Age; df: 1,866; $p < .05$

The results in Table 6 show that age significantly predicts intimate partner violence among couples, $R^2 = .036$, $F(1, 866) = 32.58$, $\beta = .190$, $p < .05$. Since the exact probability value (.000) is less than the a priori probability value (0.05), the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between age and intimate partner violence among couples is rejected. The R^2 value of .036 shows that age accounts for 4% of the variance in intimate partner violence. The Beta (β) weighting of .19 indicates that for every standard deviation unit change in age, intimate partner violence will rise by .19(19%) among the couples.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between employment status and intimate partner violence among couples.

Table 4: Summary of regression analysis for the relationship between employment status and intimate violence among couples

Variables	N	F	R^2	β	Sig.	Decision
Intimate Partner Violence	868	4.408	.005	-.071	.036 ^b	
Employment Status						

a. Dependent Variable: intimate partner violence; b. Predictors: (Constant), employment status; df: 1,866; $p < .05$

The results in Table 4 show that employment status significantly predicts intimate partner violence among couples, $R^2 = .005$, $F(1, 866) = 4.41$, $\beta = -.071$, $p < .05$. Since the exact probability value (.036) is less than the a priori probability value (0.05), the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between employment status and intimate partner violence among couples is rejected. The R^2 value of .004 shows that employment status accounts for 0.4% of the variance in intimate partner violence. The Beta (β) weighting of $-.071$ indicates that for every standard deviation unit change in employment status, intimate partner violence will rise by $-.071$ (-7%) among the couples.

IV. DISCUSSION

The relationship between age and intimate partner violence among couples

The study found that the relationship between age and intimate partner violence among couples is low. It was further found the study confirmed that there is a significant relationship between age and intimate partner violence among couples. This finding, however, differed from the study carried out by Rodriguez, Lasch, Chandra and Lee (2001) who reported an inverse relationship between age and intimate partner violence. The finding also supports Bazargan-Hejazia, Medeiros, Mohammadi, Lin and Dalal (2013) who found age differences in intimate partner violence. For example, the authors noted that women ages 15 to 19 were significantly less likely to report emotional IPV, women ages 25 to 29 were significantly more likely to report being pushed or shaken, slapped or punched, and women ages 30 to 34 were significantly more likely to report sexual IPV, compared to women ages 45 to 49. The study also supports Dinesh, Raj, Sharma, and Ravleen (2015) and Chang, Biing-Jiun Shen and Takeuchi (2009) who noted that age one of the significant prevalence factors in IPV and that those suffering from IPV was more likely among women married at higher age as compared to non-victims married at lower mean marital age. Furthermore, the study support Onuoha and Opeyemi (2014) who found that age significantly associated with wife abuse.

The relationship between employment status and intimate partner violence among couples

The result showed that the relationship between employment status and intimate partner violence among couples is low. It was further confirmed that there is a significant relationship between employment status and intimate partner violence. The finding support Onuoha and Opeyemi, (2014) who found that employment status significantly influenced wife abuse. The finding does not support Rodriguez, Lasch, Chandra, and Lee (2001) who found that unemployed respondents are not at greater risk of family violence than employed respondents. It also supports Prabhu, McHome, Ostermann, Itemba, Njau and Thielman (2011) who noted that employment status was a prevalence factor in intimate partner violence.

V. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although this study was completed, it had limitations. In the area of sampling and ascertaining the representative sample, the data collected from the marriage registry, Enugu North Senatorial Zone, Nsukka Annex did not consider the couples that have separated due to death or illegal divorce. Consequently, the researchers ensured that the couples that participated in the study were still living together. Another limitation of

the study that some couples did not experience some of the items listed in the questionnaire of the study. However, the correlation design used in this study could not provide individual ratings on each item contained in the IPV based on the respective socio-demographic factors. Thus, additional research that will improve upon the limitations of this present study is necessary

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and implications of this study, the following recommendations are made.

- Age should be taken into consideration by the intending couples before they reach the final decision to marry. Intending couples should establish satisfaction with each partners' age and the satisfaction be maintained through the marriage.
- The couples should always appreciate each partner's employment status and in case of any dissatisfaction, they should work together to upgrade the status. Also, intending couples should establish satisfaction with their employment status before they reach the final decision to marry.
- Every organization that confirms marriages such as families, religious groups, hospitals, courts etc. should ensure that their clients pass through marital counselling with professional marriage counsellors.

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that the age of the couples and their employment status significantly predict intimate partner violence among couples. The finding that there is a significant relationship between age and intimate partner violence among couples implies that if age compatibility is not taken into consideration while choosing marriage partner many couples may keep suffering intimate partner violence. Another implication of the finding is that if couples are placing much value on their age, thinking that they are older or younger than each other; intimate partner violence may continue in their marriages. The finding that there is a significant relationship between employment status and intimate partner violence among couples implies that, if couples are not working or being able to generate income for the upkeep of the family, the resultant effect will be intimate partner violence among the couples. Another implication of the finding is that, if couples are not recognizing and appreciating each person's employment status they are likely to experience intimate partner violence.

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