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INFLUENCE OF INFIDELITY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the influence of infidelity and socio-economic status on domestic violence among married persons. The participants were selected from students and staff in the faculties of management and social sciences of Nnamdi Azikiwe University. They comprised of 208 staff (academic and non academic) and students selected through stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Their age ranged from 20 years to 51 years with a mean age of 33.7. They were 57 (27.4%) males and 151 (72.1%). A cross sectional survey design with two independent variables having 2 levels each was employed in the study. Correspondingly, two way analysis of variance statistics was used to test the data generated. The result showed a significant main effect for infidelity at $F(1,203) = 13.539, < P.05$ level of significance, with couples high on infidelity measures having more tendency to domestic violence than couples low on infidelity measures. However, the result further indicated no significant influence for socio-economic status at $F(1,203) = 321, P > .05$. Based on the findings, the researchers recommended the establishment of psychological counseling units in all the communities to address the challenges of domestic violence.

Keywords: *infidelity, socio-economic, status, domestic, violence, couples.*

Introduction

In Nigeria today and all over the world, cases of domestic violence have been reported by the media and other communication outlets. The phenomenon seems ubiquitous, and prevalent, particularly among married couples, dating partners, and live-in-lovers. It is a cancer-worm that has eaten deep into all facets of human society and has drawn unprecedented global attention according to the American Medical Association report which states that about 2 million spouses are abused by their current partners annually. According to United Nations 1994, the issue of violence against women has become a primary concern of most nations around the world. Despite the fact that the phenomenon of domestic violence is seriously addressed by the United Nations and some countries through laws that protect the rights of women, the issue seems unabated.

In the views of Morgan and Chadwick (2009), domestic violence is traditionally associated with cases of physical violence occurring within intimate relationship and in a domestic setting. Domestic violence according to Day et al., (2010), is a term that is widely used to refer to the systematic abuse of power in an intimate relationship, where one partner is controlling and the other partner is intimidated and lives in fear. Domestic violence is widely recognized as a major social and psychological problem. Although it is mostly perpetrated by a male against a female, the reverse could be the case on occasional basis; men are also victims. The fact remains that women are the highest victims of domestic violence, particularly in Nigeria. About 10% of women are assaulted by their husbands while 7% are assaulted regularly, yet only 1% report to the police (WHO, 2011). Observation showed that some police divisions in Nigeria hardly allow officers to arrest couples because of domestic conflicts. In Nigeria, domestic violence is seen to be a family affair and should be treated as such (Adewale, 2007). This state of affair has definitely affected the maintenance of adequate statistics on cases of domestic violence in Nigeria.

Domestic violence is not limited to physical violence alone. It involves a range of different forms of abuse including physical and sexual abuse, threats and intimidation,

psychological and emotional abuse, and social and economic deprivation (Morgan & Chadwick, 2009). Domestic violence in Nigeria has received little attention due to legal, cultural and misinterpreted religious endorsement of it. While the level of violence against women remains poorly mapped, studies suggests that it is shockingly high (Eze-Abana, 2005). In a report, more than two-fifths of women (43%) and almost one-third of men agreed that a husband is justified to beat his wife for certain reasons. Nigerian women are faced with a male dominated power structure that upholds and entrenches male authority in homes.

Historically, domestic violence has been understood mainly as women issue, but men are increasingly becoming victims as well. Domestic violence may impact negatively on the victims, the population and societal institutions. Observation suggests that infidelity is a factor in domestic violence. Infidelity (also known as cheating or adultery) is a feeling, that one's partner has violated the set rules and relationship norms and this violation resulted in sexual jealousy and rivalry (Lecker & Carlozzi, 2012). Infidelity also is a violation of couples assumed or stated contract regarding emotional and or sexual activity (Weeks, 2003). Infidelity strongly impacts on a relationship functioning and stability (Drigotas, Safstrom & Gentiles 1999). Infidelity can quickly lead to violence since it is highly volatile where people's emotions are involved (Hauston, 2011). According to Blow and Hartnett (2005), even a suspicion of infidelity is capable of triggering acts of violence. The use of violence is frequently seen as a way of restoring a man's honour which believed to be lost as a result of a female partners' infidelity (Vandello & Cohen, 2003).

Observation showed that socio-economic status is a potent predictor of domestic violence. A series of studies have found strong association between socio-economic status and domestic violence with indicators of household wealth or education of the male partners significantly inversely associated with risk of violence (Babcock, Waltz, Jacobson & Gottman, 1993; Koenig, Ahmed, Hossain & Khorshed, 2003; Ribeiro, et al, 2017). In recent years, women have sought for ambiguous career choice and have attained educational cadre that puts them at par with their male counterparts. The implication is that women will become increasingly less dependent on their male

partners financially and more likely to challenge and/or undermine the traditionally male dominated power structure. This could be a potential reason for domestic violence.

Several theories have been put forward by scholars to explain the phenomenon of domestic violence. According to control theory, many family conflicts result from an individual's need to obtain and maintain power and control within a relationship. The motivation underlying the abuser's behavior is the power and control he or she is able to exert over the other partner. The more powerful partner often uses threat or violence to obtain compliance from the less powerful partner (Goode, 1971). In the views of social-learning theory (Bandura 1977, 1989), individuals learn social behavior by observing and initiating others. The theorists are of the view that individuals become aggressive towards family members because his aggressive behavior is learnt through operant conditioning and observing behavior of role models. Further, Nolem and Tracy (2012) opine that children who grow up in violence families may learn violence behaviour consequently; men who observed their own father abusing their mother when they were children are at an increased risk of abusing their own wives. Accordingly, the behavioural genetic theory posits that genetic factors may be implicated in aggressive behaviour. A review of the behavioural genetics literature demonstrated that the characteristics of aggression and anti-social behavior seem to be genetically influenced (Hines & Saudina, 2002). But, Nolan and Tracy (2012) added that although individuals may have genetic predisposition towards engaging in aggressive behavior, the form of aggression they engage in will vary based on differences in non-shared environmental influences such as stress and exposure to violence.

Moreover, Adult attachment theory, Bowlby (1980) argues that close physical contact is the basis upon which human attachment is formed. The theory is of the opinion that it is the same process that fosters enduring emotional bonds between adults. They observed that significant difference in emotions, behaviour and cognitive processing could influence attachment style (Collins & Read, 1994).

Various, studies have been carried out on the variable of domestic violence. Ashimolowo and Otufale (2002) studied the assessment of domestic violence among

women in Ogun State, Nigeria. Data were collected from 220 participants through structured questionnaire. Analysis of data using descriptive statistics showed that the mean age of the participants was 48.73, 41% of the participants were Christians and that, 30% were into farming. Further findings shows that 18% of the participants experienced verbal abuse, and 49.2% agreed that the domineering attitude of men promote domestic violence. Koenig Lutato, Zhao and Nalugoda (2003) studied domestic violence in rural Uganda. The study was done with 5109 women of reproductive age in the Rakai district of Uganda. 30% of the women had experienced physical abuse or physical threats from their current partners and 20% during the year before the survey. The result showed that male partner's alcohol consumption and perceived immune deficiency virus (HIV) risk played a pivotal role in increasing the risk of male against female domestic violence. Furthermore, most respondents (90%) of women viewed beating of wife or female partners as justifiable in some circumstances.

Kristen, Erick and Robin (2011) examined the relative importance of demographic, interpersonal and personality- related predictors of extra dyadic sex. Results showed that out of the 506 men who participated in the study one-third (23.2%) indicated that they have cheated during their current relationship. Among men, a logistic regression analysis, explaining 17% of their variance revealed that a higher proper of sexual excitation and sexual inhibition due to the threat of performance consequences and an increased tendency to engage in regret for sexual behavior during negative affective states, were all significant predictors of infidelity.

However, one of the major draw backs of these studies on domestic violence is that they focused heavily on violence against women. Recent statistics however reveals that women have become abusive themselves, thereby making men victims of domestic violence. This study will close that existing lacuna. More so, the previous studies in Nigeria have shown that there are few report of domestic violence.

Statement of the problem

In Nigeria, many women are violently treated by their partner while they suffer in silence (Alokam, 2013). It is estimated that one in every five women faces some forms of domestic violence during their lifetime (Himanshu & Panda, 2007). Observation has also shown that cases of homicide from domestic violence are high.

Purpose of the study

This study is aimed at examining the influence of infidelity and social economic status on domestic violence among married persons in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Nigeria. Therefore, in specific terms the study will identify the influence of each variable on domestic violence among the respondents.

Hypotheses

Based on the foregoing the following hypotheses will be tested in this study.

- a. Respondents who score high on infidelity measure will have greater tendency to engage in domestic violence than respondents who score low on infidelity measure.
- b. Respondents of low socio-economic status will have greater tendency to engage in domestic violence than respondents of high socio-economic status.
- c. There will be a significant positive interaction between infidelity and socio-economic status on tendency to engage in domestic violence.

Method

Statistics

The study was a survey research that employed a 2x2 factorial design. Two-way ANOVA was used to test the three hypotheses.

Two hundred and eight (208) married persons (both staff and students) in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria were selected through stratified and simple random

sampling from different departments in the faculties selected. They comprised of 57(27.4%) males and 151(72.1%) females, aged from 20-51years, with a mean age of 33.7 and a standard deviation of 6.51. In selecting the participants, the university population was divided into subgroups. Then each subgroups was randomly but proportionately sampled to reflect the proportion from the total population. From the two faculties selected (Social sciences and Management sciences), the participants were further sampled from the following departments: Psychology (43), Sociology (57), Mass communication (36), Accountant (41), and Public administration (31), respectively.

Three instruments were utilized for data generation. They include an 11-item infidelity measure by Fricker (2006); socio economic status scale by Gaur (2013) - a 4-scale questionnaire that assess participants' education, income, occupation and expenditures: and a 9-item Conflict Tactics Scale by Murray (1979) that measures the frequency of spouse abusive behaviours (i.e., victimization and perpetration). All the instruments were duly validated and their reliability ascertained. The face, content and construct validities of the instruments were established. Also, the Cronbach Alpha test of reliability yielded .95 for Infidelity Scale; .89 for Socioeconomic Status Scale and .87 for Conflict Tactics Scale. The items in the questionnaires were directly scored. Those respondents who scored high were considered high in the variables of interest, vice versa.

The participants responded to the questionnaires in their respective offices and classrooms. The researchers explained the procedure of completing the questionnaires to the respondents and assured them of their confidentiality. Out of the 220 questionnaires distributed 208 were correctly filled and used for the study

Results

Table 1 Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation on Infidelity and Socioeconomic Status on domestic violence.

Infidelity	socioeconomic status	M	SD	N
Low infidelity status	Low socioeconomic status	66.4815	25.94460	54
	High socioeconomic	70.7455	28.11301	55
	Total	68.6330	27.02011	109
High infidelity status	Low socioeconomic status	82.4237	23.56078	59
	High socioeconomic	82.4103	29.72481	39
	Total	82.4184	26.03959	98
Total status	Low socioeconomic	74.8053	25.88396	113
	High socioeconomic	75.5851	29.21165	94
	Total	75.1594	27.37972	207

The table above showed that there was a mean difference between respondents who scored high on infidelity measures and respondents who scored low on infidelity measures on tendency to domestic violence. It also indicated no mean difference between respondents who scored high on socioeconomic status index and those who scored low on socioeconomic status index on domestic violence.

Summary Table 2 of two-way ANOVA on infidelity and socioeconomic status on domestic violence.

Source	Sum of Square	DF	MEAN SQ	F	SIG
Infidelity	9612.110	1	9612.110	13.539	.001
Socio-economic status	227.855	1	227.855	.321	.572
Infidelity* Socio-economic status	230.753	1	230.753	.325	.569
Error	144125.761	203	709.979		
Total	1373758.000	207			

Hypothesis 1 was accepted at $F(1,203) = 13.54$, $p < .001$. The probability levels of significance in the table above indicate that Hypothesis 2 and 3 were rejected.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study tested three hypotheses. The first hypothesis was accepted in this study. This shows that infidelity was implicated in domestic violence, this particular finding was consistent with the work of Kristine, Erick and Robin (2011) who claimed that infidelity behavior is strongly correlated with domestic violence. It is also in agreement with the findings of Flicker (2006) that reactions of aggression frequently follow cases of infidelity behaviour. In the opinion of the researchers, the outcome of this study could be attributed to the fact that both perpetrators of infidelity and domestic violence have a common trait lack of self control and impulse control problems. Furthermore, it is possible that these respondents could lack adult attachment that postures emotional bonding between adults, leading to close relationship in adults. When appropriate attachment is lacking, it is thus not surprising that domestic violence and infidelity will be common among such respondents.

The second hypothesis was rejected. This shows that socio-economic status has no influence on domestic violence. This finding is not consistent with the study by Ashimolowo and Otufale (2002), who found that socio-economic status is a powerful indicator of domestic violence. Their studies revealed that women experience domestic violence more than men. In the researchers opinion, the lesser economic and social recognition of women could be implicated in the outcome of this study, furthermore, the patriarch structures that reinforces power in balance between men and women might play a role in the perpetration of domestic violence, particularly against women.

Finally, there was no interaction between infidelity and socio-economic status on tendency to domestic violence. This implies that both variables do not jointly cause domestic violence.

Conclusion

In this study, the researchers examined the phenomenon of domestic violence by testing three hypotheses , the result of the analysis showed that infidelity have a positive significant influence on domestic violence , but socio economic status have no significant influence on domestic violence. From the findings of the study infidelity behavior involving both the sexual and emotional infidelity was implicated in domestic violence. The same could not be said of socioeconomic status of the respondents, as finding showed it had no significance influence on domestic violence.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers therefore recommended that married persons should desist from engaging in infidelity behavior and imbibe the virtue of faithfulness to their partners. This will go a long way in curbing the rate and incidence of domestic violence in their relationship. Furthermore, the researchers recommended that more studies be conducted with other population in order to ascertain the predictive or causal influence of infidelity in perpetuating domestic violence in marital relationships.

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