

FORMS AND CORRELATES OF VIOLENCE AMONG COUPLES IN IMO STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR MARITAL COUNSELLING

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Abstract

The study investigated forms and correlates of violence among couples in Imo State: Implications for marital counselling. Three research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study consisted of 6788 registered couples in four Local Government Areas in the State. A sample of 391 couples was drawn from the population using purposive and accidental sampling techniques. An instrument titled “Couples Violence Questionnaire” (CVQ) was used for data collection. Face and content validities of the instrument were ensured. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of (CVQ) was 0.71. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using one-way ANOVA at 0.05 Alpha level of significance. It was found that, the forms of violence experienced by married couples are physical, sexual, emotional and economic violence. It was found that levels of income significantly influenced emotional, physical, sexual and economic violence among couples independently. It was also found that religion influence emotional and economic violence among couples. It was recommended among others that; couples should have joint accounts and should be properly aware of each other’s income. They should also discuss their budget before implementation.

Keywords: Marriage, violence, marital violence and forms of marital violence

Introduction

Marriage is the coming together of a man and a woman for the purpose of sharing their lives, love, joy and at times sorrows together. The man (husband) and woman (wife) may come from two different family backgrounds, same or different ethnicity, religion, and yet they want to be one and share economic responsibilities, engage in sexual activities for pleasure or

to bear and raise children. God commanded (Adam and Eve) to go to the world, “be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen, 1:28). In some families, the husband and wife are like cat and dog, always fighting, quarrelling and abusing

each other, thus discouraging the younger ones who intend to go into marriage.

Violence is the use of force to injure people or property. Violence can also be described as an extreme form of aggression, such as assault, murder or rape. Violence may cause physical pain to those who experience it directly as well as emotional distress to those who either experience or witness it. Violence occurs always in many places such as families, schools, workplaces, communities and societies (Amoso, 2017). Violence may lead to social and health problem for those who experience it. Violence has many causes including frustration, exposure to violent media, violence at home or neighborhood and a tendency to see other people's actions as hostile even when they are not (Obilor, 2009). Violence as defined by World Health Organization (2002) is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened against another, oneself or against a group or community; that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm or deprivation.

Leo cited in Igbokwe, Ukwuma and Onugwu (2013) defined violence as the unlawful use of force or threat on fellow human beings. It is any action, behaviour, or attitude against other people based on anger and frustration, which could lead to

injury or harm. Fighting, and beating other people by any means, rioting, destruction of lives and properties, and even wars are actions that amount to violence in the society. When violence occurs between husband and wife, it is called marital violence or couple violence (Nkwocha, 2012).

Marital violence has been observed by researchers to be on the increase in the recent times. This is because of lack of family values and inability of couples to recognize the role of counsellors in their marriage. Some of the times couples forget to draw the attention of the counsellors whenever there is need to do so. The culture of violence should be eradicated among couples because, it does no good rather harm e.g. physical, sexual, economic, and emotional violence. Physical violence refers to acts that may result to bodily injury, physical pain or impairment, etc. Sexual violence is the forceful intention of sexual intercourse with an unwilling partner (Mark, 2006). He further explained emotional violence as the use of psychological means in denying a partner his or her right in marriage while, economic violence include all actions in the family that affects the economic well being of a partner negatively.

Religion at times causes violence in the family; couples most of the times are in

strong contention on whether to worship in Catholic, Pentecostal, Anglican, Traditional religion or in other orthodox places. It has been observed that some in-law's negative interference in their children's marriage may cause uncountable problems to many couples. The situation is such that some in-laws see it as their rights to visit and do anything of their choice in their brother's or sister's house, thereby causing havoc or violence to the couples.

In a country like Nigeria, Imo state to be precise, some unrecorded news relating to couple violence have been noted but not quite in full circulation. Men as well as women are victims, but women tend to suffer disproportionately. The bone of contention was house management and inadequate care of the family by the man.

Couple violence or abuse can take many forms such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, financial abuse, emotional or verbal and economic abuse (Mark, 2011). Some forms of abuse have the potential that may lead to mental illness, self harm and even attempt of committing suicide. All forms of violence that exists in the world, country, state, family or among couples have their origin in couple or domestic violence (Johnson, 2005). The US Department of Justice (2007), defined domestic violence as a

pattern of abusive behaviour in any relationship that is used by one partner; it can happen to anyone regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, religious culture or gender and it takes many forms such as physical, sexual, economic, financial, emotional/verbal violence. The definition of domestic violence by US Department of justice stands as the abuse that occurs between husband and wife in marital relationship. From this definition, violence and abuse can be used interchangeable; that is to say physical abuse is synonymous to physical violence.

The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service in the United Kingdom in its domestic policy (2001: p.14) refers to couple violence as "a range of violence and abusive behaviour characterized by the misuse of power and control by one over another who have been in an intimate relationship." It has profound consequences on the lives of children, individual, relations, communities and the society at large. Some couples cannot ordinarily handle conflicting issues/ disagreement without resorting to use of force and abuse. In many cases for instance, couple battery goes beyond exchange of blows. Some husbands beat their wives at the slightest provocation, perhaps due to the way they present food to them or the way they reply

to some questions, in a related way some powerful and stout wives beat their feeble husbands as well. Some wives are fond of destroying family/household property in the course of fighting.

In many cases, dangerous and sophisticated weapons are freely used e.g. chemicals like acid, hot stew, hot water, knives, broken bottles, pestles, some even use gun to pursue their partners, and others even arrange to kidnap, etc. Some fighting results to the death of the spouses. A number of issues give rise to couple violence; some of these include religious belief and couples levels of income etc. Differences in Religious Beliefs: Couples having different religious beliefs usually disagree in certain issues in the family, which often includes the religion that is to be practiced by either of the spouse and the one the children should be brought up with. Even within same religious belief for example Christianity, Islam and traditional beliefs the denomination may be a bone of contention. Sabastine (2007) found in his study that there is no significant influence of religious factors on physical, sexual and verbal domestic violence among couples.

In some cases, couples with low income level always involve in marital quarrel on how to attain to their daily responsibilities. Lukeman (2011) noted that poor financial capacity of couples leads to infidelity in

marriage. Omerioha (2013) found that levels of income significantly affects marital stability among couples. This is because, extra-marital affairs may be entered into for financial gains either by husband or wife. It is against this background, that the researchers conceived ideas to investigate the forms and correlates of violence among couples in Imo State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria especially Imo State, the rate of marital violence among couples over the years is suspected to be on the increase. This problem which has eaten deep in marriages in the contemporary societies leads to marriage disharmony which in turn leads to separation, divorce, and home desertion. From personal observation; children of such affected homes are exposed to various social vices like stealing, prostitution, school dropouts, kidnapping issues amongst others. Children of such affected families observe and imitate such cruel acts from their parents. Sometimes such acts also expose the couple to infidelity as the victim may want to seek solace from the outside world. This disharmony could be associated with role conflict which is said to arise when there are incompatible role expectations between the two parties in marriage. Therefore, this study looks at the

forms and correlates of violence among couples in Imo State.

Aim and Objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to determine the forms and correlates of violence among couples in Imo State. This study is specifically designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Determine the forms of violence prevalent among couples in Imo State.
2. Find out whether the levels of income of the couples influence forms of violence among them.
3. Ascertain if religious background influence violence experienced by couples.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions.

1. What are the forms of violence prevalent among couples in Imo State?
2. To what extent do levels of income of couples influence violence among them?
3. How do religious differences influence violence experienced by couples?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses which were tested at 0.05 Alpha level of significant were used to guide the study

1. Levels of income do not significantly influence the forms of violence experienced by couples in Imo state.
2. Religious differences do not significantly influence violence among couples in Imo state.

Methodology

The research design for this study was expo-facto design. The population of this study consisted of 6,788 registered couples in the four Local Government Areas in Imo State. That is 3394 married men and 3394 married women. (Isu L.G.A (1,350) in it were 675 men and 675 women; Nkwere L.G.A (2,404) in it were 1,202 men and 1,202 women ;Njaba L.G.A (1,474) in it were 737 men and 737 women and; Nwangele L.G.A (1,560) in it were 780 men and 780 women) (Source: Imo State Ministry of Local Government Affairs record of registered couples). Registered couples were used for this study because they pass through the legitimate marital process of marriage. The sample size of this study comprised 391 married men and women in the four Local Government Areas under study. This number is made up of 198 married men

and 193 married women. The sampling techniques adopted stratified and purposive sampling techniques. Couple Violence Questionnaire (CVQ) was used for data collection. The Couple Violence Questionnaire (CVQ) is divided into two sections A and B. Section A contains personal information of the respondents such as, levels of income and religious background. Section B contains four (4) sub sections of forms of couple violence namely B1- Physical violence. B2-Sexual violence. B3- Emotional Violence. B4- Economic Violence with 52 items in all on a 5- point likert scale with response

options of A- Always; V O- very often : S- sometimes: R- rarely: and N –Never. The Couple Violence Questionnaire (CVQ) was validated based on face and content validities by three experts, one in counseling and two others in measurement and evaluation. Cronbach Alphas reliability statistic was used to compute the general reliability coefficient of couple violence questionnaire (CVQ) to be 0.71. Research questions 1, 2 and 3 were answered using mean and standard deviation. While One Way of Analysis of Variance was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level.

Data Analysis

The results of the study are presented as shown below.

Research Question One: What are the forms of violence prevalent among couples in Imo State?

Mean and standard deviation scores were used to answer the research question one to find out the prevalence of violence among couples in Imo State.

Table 1: Weighted mean and standard deviation scores on the forms of violence prevalent among couples in Imo State.

Types of couple violence	Mean	Sd	N
Physical violence	3.20	0.65	391
Sexual violence	3.01	0.71	391
Emotional violence	3.39	0.33	391
Economic violence	3.23	0.60	391
Grand mean and standard deviation	3.21	0.7	391

Table 1 revealed that the four forms of couple violence are physical, sexual,

emotional and economic violence are prevalent among couples in Imo State with

their various mean values of 3.20, 3.01, 3.39 and 3.23 which are above the criterion mean value of 3.0.

However the most experienced violence among the couples was emotional violence (\bar{x} =3.39), followed by economic violence

(\bar{x} =3.23), physical violence (\bar{x} =3.20) and least sexual violence (\bar{x} =3.01).

Research Question Two: To what extent do levels of income of couples influence violence among them?

Mean and standard deviation were used to provide answers on the influence of levels of income on violence among couples in Imo State.

Table 2: mean and standard deviation scores on the influence of levels of income on violence among couples

Violence	Levels of income	n	Mean	Sd
Physical violence	#50,000 and below (LIL)	204	16.4853	9.65997
	#51,000-100,000 (MIL)	118	15.2034	7.11872
	#101,000 and above (HIL)	69	22.4493	12.49416
Sexual violence	#50,000 and below (LIL)	204	22.8333	11.03919
	#51,000-100,000 (MIL)	118	21.4068	10.04880
	#101,000 and above (HIL)	69	27.6957	13.12755
Emotional violence	#50,000 and below (LIL)	204	21.5294	11.67559
	#51,000-100,000 (MIL)	118	21.6780	8.92886
	#101,000 and above (HIL)	69	27.2029	10.65168
Economic violence	#50,000 and below (LIL)	204	22.2696	10.90898
	#51,000-100,000 (MIL)	118	20.5678	10.74608
	#101,000 and above (HIL)	69	25.0725	11.55335

Table 2 revealed that couples who earn #101,000 and above experience more of physical, sexual, emotional, and economic violence followed by couples who earn #50,000 and below and finally, couples who earn #51,000 to #100,000 experience

least of physical, sexual, emotional and economic violence in Imo State as shown by their mean values respectively.

N.B. L.I.L- Low Income Level

M.I.L- Medium Income Level

H.I.L- High Income Level.

Research Question Three: How do religious differences influence violence experienced by couples?

Table 3: mean and standard deviation scores of the influence of religious differences on violence among couples

Violence	Religious Diff	N	Mean	Sd
Physical violence	Christianity	311	17.5338	10.27860
	Islam	22	13.2273	1.79767
	Traditional	18	15.4444	6.85327
Sexual violence	Others	7	13.7143	1.60357
	Christianity	311	23.8778	11.55064
	Islam	22	19.2727	6.54786
Emotional violence	Traditional	18	24.2778	16.82717
	Others	7	14.5714	.53452
	Christianity	311	23.2990	11.44541
Economic violence	Islam	22	15.6818	4.58139
	Traditional	18	23.7222	10.72000
	Others	7	14.7143	2.13809
	Christianity	311	23.0547	11.41449
	Islam	22	14.7273	1.75070
	Traditional	18	19.3889	8.02305
	Others	7	20.7143	5.87975

Table 3 revealed that physical, sexual and emotional violence are experienced most by Traditionals, Christians, Islams and others apart from economic violence that

was experienced most by Christians, others and traditionals respectively as shown by their various mean values.

Hypothesis One: Levels of income do not significantly influence the forms of violence experienced by couples in Imo state.

Table 4: One Way Analysis of Variance on the influence of levels in income on forms of violence among couples.

Violence	Levels of income	N	mean	Sd	Df	F	Sig	Remarks
Physical violence	#50,000 and below	204	16.4853	9.65997	2	13.530	.000	Significant
	#51,000-100,000	118	15.2034	7.11872	38			
	#101,000 and above	69	22.4493	12.49416				
Sexual violence	#50,000 and below	204	22.8333	11.03919	2	7.234	.001	Significant
	#51,000-100,000	118	21.4068	10.04880	389			
	#101,000 and above	69	27.6957	13.12755				
Emotional violence	#50,000 and below	204	21.5294	11.67559	2	7.791	.000	Significant
	#51,000-100,000	118	21.6780	8.92886	389			
	#101,000 and above	69	27.2029	10.65168				
Economic violence	#50,000 and below	204	22.2696	10.90898	2	3.667	.026	Significant
	#51,000-100,000	118	20.5678	10.74608	389			
	#101,000 and above	69	25.0725	11.55335				

Table 4 revealed that with degrees of freedom of 2 and 389, the F and sig. values for physical, sexual, emotional and economic violence of 13.53 at 0.00, 7.23 at 0.00, 7.79 at 0.00 and 3.667 at 0.03 which are below the criterion mean probability

value of 0.05 therefore, the null hypothesis was reject. By implication, Levels of income significantly influenced the forms of violence experienced by couples in Imo State.

Table 5: Post Hoc mean comparison of levels of income on the forms of violence

(I) levels of income	(J) levels of income	Physical abuse Sig.	Sexual abuse Sig.	Emotional abuse Sig.	Economic abuse Sig.
fifty thousand below	fifty one thousand to one hundred thousand	.247	.269	.905	.181
	one hundred and one thousand and above	.000	.002	.000	.067
fifty one thousand to one hundred thousand	fifty thousand below	.247	.269	.905	.181
	one hundred and one thousand and above	.000	.000	.001	.007
one hundred and one thousand and above	fifty thousand below	.000	.002	.000	.067
	fifty one thousand to one hundred thousand	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.07

Table 5 showed that couple who have income level between 51,000-below and 101,000 differ significantly in their physical abuse, those with income level of 51,000-100,000 and 101,000-above differ significantly, 101,000-above and 51,000-below, 101,000-above and 51,000-101,000 differ significantly in their physical abuse.

Couple with income level of 51,000-above and 101,000-above, 51,000-101,000 and 101,000-above, and 51,000-above showed that the mean comparison of the groups differ significantly in their sexual abuse.

The mean comparison between the income levels showed that income earners of 51,000-above and 101,000-above, 51,000-100,000 and 101,000-above, 101,000-above and 51,000 below and 101,000 above and 51,000 to 100,000 differ significantly in their emotional abuse. It was found that the mean comparison of 51,000 to 101,000 and 101,000-above differ significantly in their economic abuse.

Hypothesis Two: Religious differences do not significantly influence violence among married couples in Imo State.

Table 6: One Way Analysis of Variance on the influence of religious differences on forms of violence

Violence	Religious diff	n	mean	Sd	Df	F	sig	Remarks
Physical violence	Christianity	311	17.5338	10.27860	4	1.377	.241	Not significant
	Islam	22	13.2273	1.79767	387			
	Traditional	51	16.6313	8.87137				
	Others	7	13.7143	1.60357				
Sexual violence	Christianity	311	23.8778	11.55064	4	2.229	.065	Not significant
	Islam	22	19.2727	6.54786	387			
	Traditional	51	23.0855	12.23597				
	Others	7	14.5714	.53452				
Emotional violence	Christianity	311	23.2990	11.44541	4	3.685	.006	Significant
	Islam	22	15.6818	4.58139	387			
	Traditional	51	22.5580	9.0784				
	Others	7	14.7143	2.13809				
Economic violence	Christianity	311	23.0547	11.41449	4	3.409	.009	Significant
	Islam	22	14.7273	1.75070	387			
	Traditional	18	19.3889	8.02305				
	Others	7	20.7143	5.87975				

Table 6: showed that physical and sexual violence were not significantly influenced by religious differences while emotional

and economic violence were significantly influenced by religious differences.

Table 7: Post Hoc mean comparison of influence of religious differences on the forms of violence

(I) religion	(J) religion	Emotional violence	Economic violence
		Sig.	Sig.
Christianity	Islam	.015	.006
	Traditional	1.000	1.000
	Others	.377	1.000
Islam	Christianity	.015	.006
	Traditional	.194	1.000
	Others	1.000	1.000
Paganism	Christianity	1.000	1.000
	Islam	.548	.232
	Traditional	1.000	1.000
Traditional	Others	1.000	1.000
	Christianity	1.000	1.000
	Islam	.194	1.000
Others	Others	.613	1.000
	Christianity	.377	1.000
	Islam	1.000	1.000
	Traditional	.613	1.000

Table 7 showed that the mean comparison between Christians and Islam differ significantly in emotional and economic violence.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of the study revealed that, the prevalent forms of violence among couples in Imo state were physical, sexual, emotional and economic. This implies that, violence among couples exists in different dimensions. This finding is in agreement

with that of Olimahali (2017) who found in his study that violence among couples could take the forms of physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, and economic violence etc. The finding is also supported by that of Amoso (2012) who found that, the primary violence in marriage are physical, psychological and sexual disagreement or confrontation between husband and wife. The findings of the study is not in agreement with that of Wagner and Mongan cited in Ozgenturk

(2015) who found that physical assault and stalking were the most frequently forms of domestic intimate violence. The difference in these findings is based on the area the studies were carried out. This present study is carried out in Nigeria while Wagner and Mongan carried-out their study in U.S.A

The finding of the study indicates that levels of income significantly influence the forms of violence experienced by couples in Imo state. This finding also shows that, income levels of couples determine the degree of violence they experience. Couples with high level of income experience more of physical, sexual, emotional and violence than others. This finding is in agreement with that of Omerioha (2013) who found that level of income significantly affects marital stability among couples. However, this finding is not in agreement with that of Alima and Jerom (2008) who found that there is no significant influence of levels of income on marital adjustment of couples. The difference in these findings is due to the sample size used. The present study used a sample size of 391 couples while, Alima and Jerom (2008) used a sample of 1,520 couples.

The finding of the study revealed that physical and sexual violence were not significantly influenced by religion while,

emotional and economic violence were significantly influenced by religion. The result also implies that, religion does not influence all aspects of marital violence the same way. There are different marital violence due to religion. This finding is in agreement with that of Amajuruonwu (2014) who found in his study that there are different patterns of domestic violence in different degrees among couples based on religion. The finding did not collaborate with that of Sabastine (2007) who found that there is no significant influence of religious factors on physical, sexual and verbal domestic violence among couples.

Conclusion

The prevalent domestic violence among couples in Imo State are; physical, sexual, emotional and economic respectively. Level of income significantly influence the forms of violence experienced by couples. Physical and sexual violence were not significantly influenced by religion while emotional and economic violence were significantly influenced by religion.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:-

- (1) Couples should always employ the services of professional marital

counselors proactively in resolving perceived marital conflicts.

- (2) Couples should have joint account and each should know each other's income. They should also discuss their budget before implementation.
- (3) Religious bodies should ensure adequate pre-marital guidance programmes in their churches / mosques before wedding take place.

Implications for Counseling

Since one of the principles of guidance and counselling is that guidance services are for every individual including married couples. The following are the counselling implications of the findings of this study:-

- (1) The finding of this study showed that there are prevalent of physical, sexual, emotional and economic violence among couples. It is imperative that guidance-counselors should strongly advocate for pre-marital counselling for intending couples with the aim of exposing the dynamics of marital violence and various pro-active solutions to them. This will help to reduce the rate and effects of marital violence among couples in the society
- (2) The findings that, levels of income significantly influence physical, sexual, emotional and economic violence among couples has

counselling implications. It is important for Guidance-counselors to always take the above factor into serious consideration especially, in dealing with marital conflicts in any given family.

- (3) Guidance-Counselors should always discourage some religious practices and believes that could instigate emotional, economic and sexual violence among couples through organizing seminars and workshops for couples in the society.

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