

## Personal, Situational and Socio-Cultural Factors as Correlates of Intimates Partner Abuse in Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT** This study investigated the relationships among personal, situational, and socio-cultural factors and intimate partner abuse among couples. A multiple regression statistical procedure was employed in analyzing the data collected from 200 participants randomly selected from five ministries in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Results obtained indicated that the three variables when combined effectively predicted intimate partner abuse. Taken separately, situational and socio-cultural factors did not. On the basis of these findings it was suggested that counseling psychologists should design intervention strategies to promote life-skills training in schools and out-of-school settings. These include age-appropriate content on sexuality, conflict resolution, building healthy relationships and personal safety. Also it was suggested that couples should be educated on the long-term health and social consequences of physical and sexual abuse.

### INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, one of the most common forms of violence against woman is abuse by their husbands or other intimate male partners. Partner violence occurs in all countries and transcends social, economic, religious and cultural groups. Although women can also economic, religious and cultural groups. Although women can also be violent and abuse exists in some same-sex relationships, the vast majority of partner abuse is perpetuated by men against their female partners (Mooney, 1993). While research into intimate partner abuse is in its early stages, there is growing agreement about its nature and the various factors that cause it. Often referred to as “wife-beating”, “battering”, or “domestic violence”, intimate partner abuse is generally part of a pattern of abusive behaviour and control rather than an isolated act of physical aggression. Partner abuse can take a variety of forms including physical assault such as hits, slaps, kicks, and beatings; psychological abuse, such as constant belittling, intimidation, and humiliation; and coercive sex. It frequency includes controlling behaviours such as isolating a woman from family and friends, monitoring her movements, and restricting her access to resources. It is in the opinion of the researcher therefore that, effective communication; marriage counseling and

sexuality education is introduced to reduce the menace.

### Review of Related Literature

Physical violence in intimate relationships almost always is accompanied by psychological abuse and, in one-third to over one-half of cases, by sexual abuse (Campbell and Soekan, 1999; Centre for Health and Gender Equity, 1999; Ellsberg et al., 1999; Leibrich et al., 1995; Koss et al., 1994). For example, among 613 abused women in Japan, 57% has suffered all the three types of abuse-physical, psychological and sexual. Only 80% had experienced physical abuse alone (Yoshihama and Sorenson, 1994). In Monterrey, Mexico, 52% of physically abused women had also been sexually abused by their partners (Granados-Shiroma, 1996). In Leon, Nicaragua, among 100 women who were physically abused by their partners, only 5 were not also abused sexually, psychologically or both (Ellsberg et al., 1999).

Most women who suffer any physical aggression generally experience multiple acts over time. In the Leon Study, for example 60% of woman abused in the previous year were abused more than once, and 20% experienced severe violence more than six times. Among women reporting any physical aggression, 70% reported severe abuse

(Ellsberg et al., 1999). The average number of physical assaults in the previous year among currently abused women surveyed in London was seven (Mooney, 1993); in the United States in 1997, three (Tjaden and Thoennes, 1998).

Many cultures hold that man has the right to control their wives behaviour and that women who challenge that right—even by asking for household money or by expressing the needs of the children – may be punished. In countries as different as Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua, New Guinea, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe, studies find that violence is frequently viewed as physical chastisement – the husbands right to “correct” an erring wife (Counts et al., 1999; Armstrong, 1998; Gonzalez-Montes, 1998; Jejbhoy, 1998; Michau, 1998; Osakue and Hilber, 1998; Schuler et al., 1996; Hassan, 1995; Zimmerman, 1995). As one husband said in a focus-group discussion in Tamil Nadu, India, “If it is a great mistake, then the husband is justified in beating his wife. Why not? A cow will not be obedient without beating (Jejbhoy, 1998).

Justification for violence frequently evolves from gender norms – that is, social norms about the proper roles and responsibilities of men and women (Counts, Brown and Campbell, 1999). Typically, men are given relatively free reign as long as they provide financially for the family. Women are expected to tend to house and mind the children and to show their husbands obedience and respect. If a man perceives that his wife has somehow failed in her role, stepped beyond her bounds or challenged his rights, then he may react violently.

Worldwide, studies identify a consistent list of event(s) that are said to “trigger” violence. These include: not obeying her husband, talking back not having food ready on time, failing to care adequately for the children of home, questioning him about money or girlfriends, going somewhere without his permission, refusing him sex, or expressing suspicious of infidelity (Armstrong, 1999; Visaria, 1999; Gonzalez-Montes, 1998; Jejbhoy, 1998; Michau, 1998; Osakue and Hilber, 1998; Schuler et al., 1996; Hassan, 1995; Zimmerman, 1995). All of these constitute transgression of gender norms. Even where culture itself grants men substantial control over female behaviour, abusive men generally exceed the norm (Rosales-Ortiz et al., 1999; Johnson, 1996; Romero, 1994). For example, data from the Nicaragua Demographic and Health

Survey (DHS) show that, among women who were abused physically, 32% had husbands who scored high on a scale of marital control compared with only Understanding the interplay of personal, situational, and socio-cultural factors that combine to cause abuse would involve using ecological framework (Heise, 1998; Dutton, 1995). This framework results from the interaction of factors at different levels of the social environment. A wide range of studies agrees on several factors at each of these levels that increase the likelihood that a man will abuse his partner.

- 1 At the personal or individual level these include being abused as a child or witnessing marital violence at home (Moreno, 1999; Hotaling and Sugarman, 1986), having an absent or rejecting father (Dutton, 1995), and frequent use of alcohol (Moreno-Martin, 1999; Kyriacou et al., 1998; Oropesa, 1997; Parry et al., 1996; McCauley et al., 1995; Bertrand et al., 1992).
- 2 At the level of the family relationship, cross-cultural studies have cited male control of wealth and decision-making within the family (Levinson, 1988; Oropesa, 1997); and marital conflict as strong predictors of abuse (Hoffman et al., 1994; Hotaling and Sugarman, 1990).
- 3 At the community level women’s isolation and lack of social support, together with male peer groups that condone and legitimize men’s violence, predict higher rates of violence (Fournier et al., 1999; Koenig et al., 1999; Oropesa, 1997).
- 4 At the societal level studies around the world have found that violence against women is most common where gender roles are rigidly defined and enforced (Heise, 1998) and where the concept of masculinity is linked to toughness, male honour, or dominance (Counts et al., 1995; Sanday, 1981). Other cultural norms associated with abuse include tolerance of physical punishment of women and children, acceptance of violence as a means of settle interpersonal disputes and the perception that men have “ownership” of women (Moreno-Martin, 1999; Orpinas, 1999; Heise, 1998; Levinson, 1989).

Most studies on domestic violence and marital abuse in particular focused on perception, attitudes, and practices. It is not to the knowledge of the researcher therefore that studies linking the interaction of personal, situational and socio-

cultural factors as predictors of intimate partner abuse has been done. It is against this background that this study becomes relevant in filling such missing gaps in our knowledge in the issue of personal, situational, and socio-cultural factors and intimate partner abuse among couples in Nigeria.

### Purpose of this Study

This study examined the relationship among personal situational and socio-cultural factors and intimate partner abuse among couples in Nigeria.

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, the following research questions were answered:

1. To what extent would personal, situational and socio-cultural factors when combined predict intimate partner abuse in Nigeria?
2. What is the relative contribution of the factors to the prediction of intimate partner abuse in Nigeria?

### METHODOLOGY

**Design:** This study employed a descriptive research design in which data were collected through questionnaire from the respondents on the variables studied.

**Participants:** A total of two hundred (200) participants were randomly drawn from five Ministries in Oyo State. They included ministry of Education – fifty (20 males 10%); 30 females 11%, 18 males 09%), Ministry of Health-50 (16 males 08%; 24 females 12%), Ministry of Women Affairs – (50 females 12%), Ministry of Justice –fifty (28 females 14%; 12 males 06%). The range of participants' age was between 30 and 46 with a mean of 38.0 and standard deviation of 11.3. All the participants were literates, married for a minimum of 5 years and with a minimum qualification of School Certificate Education to University Education.

**Instrumentation:** The four instruments used to collect data for the study were:

(i) Personal Factors Scale (PFS); (ii) Situational Factor Scale (SFS); Socio-cultural Factor Scale (SFS) and Marital Conflict Tactics Scale (MCTS) by Dobash and Dobash (1992). The first three instruments were author-constructed.

1. *Personal factor Scale (PFS):* The scale measures the level of abuse on the child, having a rejected father, and frequent use of drugs and alcohol. It is made up of 10 items rated on a 5-point likert-type scale. The

respondents are to indicate their degree of agreement with each item by ticking Strongly Disagree (SD) =1; Disagree (D) =2; Neutral (N) = 3; Agree (A) =4; and Strongly Agree (SA) = 5. It has 0.75 and 0.78 as the internal constituency and revalidation reliability respectively.

2. *Situational Factor Scale (SFS):* The scale measures male control of wealth, decision-making within the family and marital conflict. It has 10 items with true and false response format. It has 0.80 as the internal consistency and a test-retest reliability of 0.85.
3. *Socio-cultural Factor Scale (SFS):* The scale has 10 items to which respondents are to circle either (1) partly true, (2) mostly true, (3) partly untrue, (4) mostly untrue and (5) very untrue as the item applies to them. The scale measures women's isolation, lack of social supports and perception that men have "ownership" of women. The test-retest reliability of the scale was found to be 0.84 and 0.86 respectively.
4. *Marital Conflict Tactics Scale (MCTS):* by Dobash and Dobash (1992). The scale measures the nature, pattern and prevalence of family violence. It is made up of 20 items rated on a 4-point likert-type scale. The respondents are to indicate their agreement with each item by ticking Very True = (4); True (t) = (3); Hardly True (HT) = (2); and Not True (NT) = 1. The internal consistency of the scale as reported by Dobash and Dobash (1992) was 0.79, while the test-retest reliability of the scale (MCTS) among 50 Nigerian samples was 0.84.

All the four instruments were considered valid through the favourable comments of experts in psychometrics on the suitability of the items.

**Procedure:** The participants for the study were administered the four questionnaire namely; personal Factor scale, situational factor Scale, Socio-cultural factor Scale and Marital Conflicts Tactics Scale and Marital Conflicts Tactics Scale in their respective ministries. The collected questionnaires were scored and the data obtained from them were analysed to answer the research questions.

**Data Analysis:** Data Analysis involved using multiple Regression analysis procedure to examine the relationship between Intimate Partner Abuse (dependent variable) and personal, situational and socio-cultural factors (independent variables).

## RESULTS

**Research Questions:** Using a combination of the independent variables to predict intimate partner abuse.

Table 1 shows that the combination of the three independent variables (personal factor, situational factor and socio-cultural factors) in predicting intimate partner abuse gave a coefficient of multiple regression  $R^2$  of 0.258 and a multiple R-square (R2) of 0.066 accounting for 6.6% of the variance in intimate partner abuse. The table also shows that the analysis produced the Fishers value F-ratio of 5.756 significant at 0.05 alpha level.

**Research Question 2:** Relative contribution of independent variables to the prediction of intimate partner abuse.

The results on Table 2 indicate that the standardized regression coefficients (Beta) ranged from 0.111 to 0.146, unstandardised regression coefficient ranged (B) from 0.278 to 0.103, standard error of estimate ranged from 0.163 to 0.045, t-ratios ranged from 1.705 to 2.284 and that two variables situational and socio-cultural factors were significant at 0.05 alpha level while personal factors was not significant.

## DISCUSSION

The results obtained from this study indicated that the three independent variables (Personal,

Situation and Socio-cultural factors) when taken together were effective in the prediction of intimate partner abuse among couples. The observed F-ratio of 5.756, significant at 0.05 alpha level is an evidence that the effectiveness of a combination of the independent variables in the prediction of intimate partner abuse could not have occurred by chance. Furthermore, the coefficient of multiple correlation of 0.258 and a multiple R-square of 0.66 showed the magnitude of the relationship between intimate partner abuse and the combination of the independent variables. The results indicated that a linear relationship of the independent variables accounted for only 6.66% of the total variance in intimate partner abuse among couples.

The result on Table 2 revealed that the contribution made by each independent variable to the prediction of intimate partner abuse are shown on the table. The t-ratio values associated with each independent variable showed that situational factors contributed significantly to the prediction while personal factors did not.

Based on the above result situational factors are the most important predictor of intimate partner abuse. The results agree with the findings reported by Oropesa (1997), Hotaling and Sugarman (1990), Levison (1989). These findings suggest that violence frequently evolve from gender norms, that is, social norms about the proper roles and responsibilities of man and woman (Counts et al., 1999).

**Table 1: Summary of regression analysis on sample**

| Source of variation | SS        | Df  | MS       | F     | P    | T    |
|---------------------|-----------|-----|----------|-------|------|------|
| Regression          | 6151.269  | 3   | 2050.423 | 5.756 | 0.05 | Sig. |
| Residual            | 86556.772 | 196 | 356.201  |       |      |      |
| Total               | 92708.040 | 199 |          |       |      |      |

Multiple R = 0.258

Multiple R- Square = 0.066

Standard Error of Estimate = 18.87

Analysis of Variance

**Table 2: Testing the significance of relative contribution to the prediction of regression weights of independents variables.**

| Variable description   | Unstandardised coefficients |            | Standardized coefficients | F     | P    | T    |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|------|
|                        | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |       |      |      |
| Personal factors       | 0.278                       | 0.163      | 0.111                     | 1.705 | 0.05 | NS   |
| Situational factors    | 0.811                       | 0.135      | 0.135                     | 2.46  |      | Sig. |
| Socio-cultural factors | 0.103                       | 0.146      | 0.146                     | 1.184 |      | Sig. |
| constant               | 40.904                      |            |                           | 5.385 |      | .000 |

Another finding from this study revealed worldwide, studies identify a consistent list of events that are said to “trigger” violence. These include” not obeying her husband, talking back, not having food ready on time, failing to care adequately for the children, or home, questioning him about money or girlfriends, going somewhere with out his permission, refusing him sex or expressing suspicious of infidelity (Visaria, 1999; Michau, 1998; Osakue and Hilber, 1998; Schuler et al., 1996; Hassan, 1995; Zimmerman, 1995 and Jehoy, 1990).

### Implications for Counselling

Although personal factors was not found to significantly predict intimate partner abuse in the samples involved in this study, attention of the Guidance Counsellors, should be directed to personal factors of the couples because they are part of the situational factors that are antecedent to intimate partner abuse attempts. Related to this is the point of view of Moreno-Martin (1999); Orpinas (1999); Heise (1998) and Levison (1989) that intimate abuse is a reflection of more permanent inability to form a partner decision, rooted in a personality disorder including personal factors.

The findings from the study have implications for Guidance Counsellors, Psychologists, Social Workers officers and Welfare and others in the helping profession among couples and social relationships. First, there is need for the professional helpers mentioned above to identify the variables such as personal, situational and socio-cultural factors among couples because these variables relates to intimate partner abuse. Once these variables are identified through assessment and personal counselling giving appropriate intervention assistance to couples having partnership problems will be possible.

Secondly, couples and those within the reproductive age should be made to participate in individual and group counselling experience to foster their interpersonal maturity involving tolerance, trust, intimacy, and co-operative interdependence without loosing their autonomy.

Finally, further interventions for marital conflicts should take into consideration the psychological and social resources that the couples and those of reproductive age often face, survey there preferred channels of information and communication and thereafter provide ample

dissemination strategies that would foster positive change.

### RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The following recommendations may go a long way to address intimate partner abuse among couples in Nigeria.

- 4 Workshops and campaigns should be organized to de-legitimise violence as a way to resolve conflict or to “discipline” women or children.
- 5 Highlight the prevalence of abuse and its cost to families and society (e.g. impact of witnessing violence in childhood)
- 6 The civic society, religious bodies, and concerned citizen should promote supportive responses (not blaming) to victims of physical or sexual abuse, using street theatre, alternative media, and public education campaigns.
- 7 The Government, Non-Governmental Organisational, the civic society should promote human rights, education and other ways to empower women.
- 8 The Government and the Educators should provide comprehensive sexuality education including exercises that examine gender norms, double standards for male and female sexual behaviour; role-playing on resisting pressure to engage in unwanted sexual behaviour.
- 9 Enable boys and girls (first separately, then in mixed groups) to discuss relationships, love, anger, jealousy, and abuse. Educate young women about their rights.
- 10 Promote an ethic of care so that couples see themselves as responsible for the whole person, not just the person’s symptoms.
- 11 Promote life-skills training in schools and out-of-school settings; include age-appropriate content on sexuality, conflict resolution, building healthy relationships and personal safety.

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