

**Spousal Abuse and Married Teachers' Aggressiveness in Onitsha
Education Zone of Anambra State, Nigeria.**

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Abstract

The issue of marital problems such as spousal abuse is worldwide, and affects the relationship between spouses as well as the physical, cognitive and psychosocial aspect of individuals involved - particularly the victims. It also leads to the manifestation of some behavioral problems such as aggression that affects the individual's professionalism in their workplace, which in this research pertains to the teachers. The study therefore investigated the relationship between spousal abuse and married teachers' aggressiveness. A correlational research design was employed with three research questions and hypotheses guiding the study. A sample size of 298 married teachers in secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra state was purposively selected for the study. Researcher-made instruments titled Spousal Abuse Scale (SAS) and Aggression scale (AS) were utilized for the study after being validated by specialists in Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation. Their reliabilities were ascertained using Cronbach Alpha method to determine their internal consistencies which yielded .79 and .81 for SAS and AS respectively. Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer research questions while hypotheses were tested using t-test at .05 level of significance. The result of the study showed a significant relationship between spousal abuse and married teachers' aggressiveness, a significant gender difference in spousal abuse with female teachers experiencing spousal abuse than the males; a significant gender difference in married teachers' aggressiveness with female teachers being more aggressive than the male teachers. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that Teachers with marital problems should enroll for therapy to help them deal with emotional problems that may emanate from such marital issue, so as not to interfere with their job.

Keywords: Aggression, Married Teachers, Spousal Abuse

Introduction

Marriage in its general context involves the union between a man and a woman for the purpose of companionship and raising a family. The union is expected to remove fear, threat, anxiety, and provide love, care, support and encouragement. This however is not the case in the present society or perhaps the

issue of marital misconduct is as old as marriage itself. This comes from the early establishment of unequal rights in marriage with the wife seen as the man's property and recognition of wife beating as an accepted norm in a traditional society which sees it as a form of discipline. Spousal abuse, a term which connotes all form of marital misconduct and an infringement of human right can be viewed as a sub-category of domestic violence. This is because this form of violence is exclusive to married couples with the exception of other members of the household such as children as direct victims.

The issue of abuse between married persons is prevalent in the country Nigeria and other countries in the world as spousal abuse is perceived as a global problem. Black *et al.* (2011) reported that an average of 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States. During one year, this equates to more than 10 million women and men. Adebayo *et al.* (2021) in Nigeria noted that cases of domestic violence are on a high rate, especially the physical aspect of it; at least once a week, there's a case of a man beating, maiming or killing his wife and in some very rare cases a woman dealing with her husband in like manner. The National Human Rights Commission, NHRC said it received 282 complaints about domestic violence in Kaduna in 2022; noting that the number was higher than 214 received by the Commission in 2021, with forceful marriage, abandonment of wife/family, custody/access to children among others being the main complaint (People's Gazette, 2023). Likewise Project Alert and NOIPolls as cited in Ibegbulam *et al.* (2022) study on domestic violence in Nigeria revealed that 78% of the participants were of the view that there is an increasing prevalence of domestic violence in Nigeria with 54% of women, 16% of children and 9% of men reporting that they had personally experienced acts of domestic violence.

Spousal abuse exists in various forms as The Domestic Violence Prevention Center as cited in Obiunu (2018) clearly identified, which includes intimidation,

verbal, physical, emotional, social, financial, sexual, controlling behavior, spiritual abuse and stalking.

Physical abuse is the most prevalent form of spousal abuse and deemed the most dangerous due to its potential to lead to serious injuries or loss of life. The incidence of physical abuse between married couples involves actions such as slapping, hitting, strangling, kicking of one's spouse. It is an impulsive abuse which occurs without much consideration of its adverse outcome. Victims of physical abuse sustain physical injuries from fights with their spouses or when beaten up by their spouses who leave long-lasting marks on their body and in extreme cases disfigure them. Relating to its dangerous nature, This Day as cited in Ibegbulam *et al.* (2022) documented the killing of Titilayo Omozoje by her husband at their residence in Isolo Lagos State on June 24, 2011, and of Seun Mojiyagbe who was stabbed to death by her husband with a pair of scissors in Ogun State on November 3, 2021.

University of Michigan health system as cited in Adebayo *et al* (2021) posited that many people are of the opinion that physical abuse forms the most abuse experienced in relationships. However demeaning words used against a spouse by their partner can invoke the same emotional hurt as physical abuse. Verbal abuse between spouses though not evident like the physical aspect, constitutes psychological and emotional harm. This involves the use of words to insult, provoke and instill shame on a spouse with the aim of making them feel bad. Verbal abuse between spouses can be seen as mostly inevitable as some words can hurt with or without the abuser's knowledge. The hallmark of verbal violence is emotional distress while in extreme cases it can lead to physical violence. This occurs where the spouse has been abused beyond endurance and they are prompted to attack the abuser which further escalates to fight between the spouses that can lead to sustenance of injuries.

Spiritual abuse refers to the use of ones' religious belief to dominate and control another. Spouses may abuse each other this way by not valuing one

another's religion or their religious activities. This sort of abuse may arise in African nations where married women are obliged by tradition and not choice to join their husband's religion and when this isn't the case lead to abuses. According to Oakley (2018) this type of emotional and psychological abuse is characterized by a consistent pattern of coercive and controlling behavior within a religious or spiritual context. It involves ridiculing and undermining a person's religion, isolating a person from communal worship, forcing a person join a religion, using religious practices to justify abuses (Bagwell-Gray *et al.*, 2021; Chowdhury, 2023).

Financial abuse is a subtle kind of abuse whereby a spouse controls the financial benefits and earnings of their partner in a domineering manner. Given that African culture places the woman beneath the man as the submissive one in marriage, the woman is perceived as being under the control of the man which gives the man right to determine her fate including her earnings. In some homes, the money is handled and distributed by the head of the family which culture (African) has bequest on the man even if the woman makes the money. In this scenario, the woman has no right to her money and hands over her earnings to the man to decide how and where it would be spent. Property acquired with the woman's income bears the man's name and the woman is hidden the way society expects her to be.

Financial abuse and Economic abuse have been used interchangeably though Sharp-Jeffs (2015) asserted that the distinction between economic and financial abuse is that financial abuse is a sub-category of economic abuse and includes similar behaviors; however, financial abuse focuses specifically on individual money and finances and not economic resources (e.g., transportation, a place to live, employment, and education). Financial abuse can also occur when a spouse intentionally withhold financial aid from their partner and refuses to acknowledge their responsibility towards their partner or commit to the financial demands of the home. It also constitutes stealing from ones' spouse or taking advantage of a

vulnerable spouse to financial benefit from them. According to Sabastine as cited in Njoku & Ekeh (2019) it is reported that marriage victims face financial difficulties during the period of violence especially, when they don't have personal source of income.

These abuses occur irrespective of gender though women are asserted as the most victims. Chinweta-Oduah *et al* (2020) posited that despite the alarming rate of spousal abuse in Nigerian marriages that occasionally results to death of one spouse, a good number of victims are reluctant about reporting these abuses and perpetrators of these acts to the rightful authorities. They further asserted that most persons end up reporting but conceal their identities; these reluctances, have made it a herculean task for one to easily enumerate the number of spousal abuses in the country. In situations of marital abuse both the abuser and the victim suffer from psychological problems and might display these problems through being aggressive. This aggressive display can extend to their work place and might be transferred to the people at the work place as weaker targets especially in a situation where the abuser is physically stronger and therefore is not challenged.

Aggression is also a prevalent problem in the society. It is a behavioral problem which its effect is harmful. It is an impulsive act which is exhibited in response to a situation which is the instigator. This explains that aggression don't just occur, rather there is an inherent cause to ones exhibition of aggression. Nevertheless, the researcher defines aggression as an impulsive behavior which is exhibited in response to an inherent psychological problem and has the potentiality of being violent.

Teachers' aggression has been a topic with little prominence in Nigeria as not much attention has been paid to behavioral problems of teachers. It has been already established that aggression is a behavior which its intent is to cause harm, therefore it is necessary to ascertain how teachers could be perpetrators of such behavior knowing fully well the nature of their job. There exist the need to

investigate if inherent problems at home such as spousal abuse could lead to aggression.

Teachers aside from the parents are guardians of the students within the school environment and are expected to be of utmost good character and strict discipline in order to be good models to the learners through good relationship with the learners and their colleagues as well. Ivaniushina & Alexandrov (2022) posited that teachers play a key role in every aspect of school life, and the relationship between students and teachers affect the students' academic, social, and behavioral outcomes. In same line, Farmer, *et al.* (2011) metaphorically described the teacher as an "invisible hand" that influences school social dynamics: first, the teacher can directly observe and manage the peer interactions in the classroom; second, trustful and supportive relations with the teacher are beneficial for peer relations; and third, competent leadership encourages positive classroom behavior. According to Hart *et al.* (2017) teachers serve as important socializing agents whose responsibility include fulfilling basic socio-emotional needs, such as belongingness and esteem needs of students. Most times, some teachers fall short of these characteristics and rather deviate from the established norm.

Teachers' aggression is exhibited mostly towards the students and sometimes towards their colleagues. These aggressive acts directed towards the students most times are disguised as discipline. In Nigeria, the unrestricted use of physical punishment on students have empowered the teachers to maltreat students on slight provocation and sometimes these punishments could be an expression of aggression. According to Kanwal *et al.* (2022) aggression which is the attitude one possesses due to a concrete reason of depression (another mental disorder) can become harmful for the individuals embedded in the character of a teacher, who holds a huge responsibility to deliver to their students some positive vibes rather than negative in the form of adopting aggressive behaviors towards students. They further posited that children being great imitators should be given

support and example to imitate; watching the teacher shouting and insulting students may provide wrong directions and signals to the students, which may retard and exhaust their mental development and affect their overall personality in later life.

Married teachers facing marital problems are likely to aggress on students after facing an episode of violence at home. This occurs mostly in cases where the teacher could not challenge their spouse and then takes up their frustration on an erring student as a weaker target (displaced aggression). The aggression can be physical where the student is caned by the teacher or verbal where abusive words are used on the student, most times to the amusement of the other students. Such situation would constitute physical injuries or emotional problems for the student. According to Bukhari & Rashid (2021) aggressive teacher can injure and destroy to self-advantage regardless of whether the victim likes it or not. This explains the notion that when married teachers vent their marital problems on students through their aggression, they tend to feel better about themselves and their problems while the victim which could be a student or colleague suffers emotional harm.

Limited studies exist in the area of spousal abuse and married teachers' aggressiveness, however taking the effect of teachers' aggression on students into consideration, Geiger (2017) study showed that teachers' verbal aggressive behavior increased students' aggressive behavior, their tendency to withdraw from class participation, and ignoring their teachers. In same line, Brendgen *et al.* as cited in Suryaningrat *et al.* (2020) study showed that teachers' verbal aggression has long-term effect. Specifically, they found that experiencing teachers' verbally aggressive behavior during childhood, increased the emergence of problematic behaviors, barriers to continue education to a higher level, especially when the children become young adults. Bukhari & Rashid (2021) investigation of the causes of teachers' aggressive behavior at secondary school level was conducted on 600 secondary school teachers and 150 head

teachers in Punjab. The result revealed among other things that teachers (90.3%) and head teachers (87.4%) agreed that disputes of the home make the teacher psychological ill.

Relating the adverse effect of marital problems on teachers' job performance, Iheka (2020) opined that when aggression is too frequent in marital relationship, it could lead to the termination of the marriage and this situation will distract the teacher from performing their assigned roles. When a teacher is aggressive in class, Kanwal *et al.* (2022) opined that it creates a negative image of teachers in the students and they start accepting instructions for the sake of staying in the class and not being punished rather than to learn something that can add knowledge to their understanding. They likewise opined that this aggressive behavior where a teacher burst out at students and force them to obedience would ultimately result in creating stubborn behavior in students.

Pertaining to gender, Karim *et al.* (2021) study examined the gender difference in marital violence among Bengali, Garo and Santal communities in rural Bangladesh revealed that women were more exposed to various types of marital violence compared to men. Specifically the research showed that 95.6% of women experienced emotional abuse, 63.5% experienced physical abuse, 71.4% experienced sexual abuse, and 50.6% experienced poly-victimization, whereas the men had low rates of these abuses with emotional abuse - 9.7%, physical abuse - 0.7% and sexual abuse - 0.1%. There was no report of poly-victimization among men. Ezelote *et al.* (2021) investigated on domestic violence among women in Nigeria. The result of the research showed that 92% of victims of domestic violence were female partners while 8% of the victims were male.

According to Bjorkquist (2018) there is a gender difference in aggression; and it is well noticed that male are more aggressive than female (Ticusan, 2014) which differs from Blistein, *et al.* (2005) and Nichols *et al.* (2006) whose studies documented a steeper increase in reports of aggression in women compared to

men. However, research by Ardestani *et al.* (2022) on teacher violence revealed that men had a higher mean score for teacher violence than women.

Aggression is generally viewed as a behavioral problem that is exhibited regardless of age, sex and profession. It is a behavior that damages the personality of the aggressor and likewise cause emotional or physical harm on the victim. It is a wonder while such behavior should be exhibited by teachers in the school setting in relation to their line of work. Azeez & Omolade (2010) noted a discrepancy in teachers' attitude with some teachers being cooperative and ambient towards pupils and others prone to tantrums on the slightest provocation. It is expected for the teacher to provide sufficient care to the learners in school as well as direct their behavior properly – ensuring that rules of the school are obeyed, and where it is not discipline the student appropriately. Some teachers however do not take discipline of students for what it is and rather use it as an outlet for bottled up frustration and anger. Such anger and frustration according to this research may emanate from problems faced by the teacher in the home such as spousal abuse. It is in this regard that the teachers' aggression is investigated of having a relationship with problems in the home such as spousal abuse.

Therefore this study aimed to investigate the relationship between spousal abuse and married teachers' aggressiveness in Imo state by specifically examining the following:

1. Relationship between spousal abuse and married teachers' aggressiveness
2. Gender difference in spousal abuse among married teachers
3. Gender difference in married teachers' aggressiveness

In line with the objectives of the study, the following research questions and hypotheses guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between spousal abuse and married teachers' aggressiveness?

2. What is the mean difference in spousal abuse experienced by married teachers based on gender?
3. What is the mean difference in married teachers' aggressiveness based on gender?

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between spousal abuse and married teachers' aggressiveness

H₀₂: There is no significant mean difference in spousal abuse experienced by married teachers based on gender

H₀: There is no significant mean difference in married teachers' aggressiveness based on gender

Method

This research adopted a correlational research design which was used to ascertain the relationship between spousal abuse and married teachers' aggressiveness in Anambra state. The population of the study comprised 1,179 (male = 92, female = 1087) teachers in government owned secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone (Source: Anambra state post primary service commission Awka, 2020/2021 as cited in Akunne, Nwadinobi, Mokwelu & Ezeokafor, 2023). A sample size of 298 (80 males and 218 females) married teachers obtained through Taro Yamane formula was purposively sampled. Researcher-made instrument titled: "Spousal Abuse Scale" (SAS) and "Aggression Scale" (AS) were used for the study. The 'SAS' was a 15-item scale used to measure the spousal abuse experienced by married teachers in their home. The second scale 'AS' was a 15-item scale was used to evaluate the teachers' aggressiveness in school. Both SAS and AS were anchored with a 4-point likert scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1). The instruments were validated by specialists in Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instruments were ascertained using Cronbach's Alpha method to test its internal consistency. A reliability

coefficient for SAS and AS were 0.79 and 0.81 which were satisfactory for the study.

The instruments were administered on the respondents by the researcher in their various schools and collected same day during the period of the study which ensured a 100% return rate. The data obtained were statistically analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, Mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and hypotheses tested using t-test at .05 level of significance.

Result

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between spousal abuse and married teachers' aggressiveness

N	Pearson r.	Remark
298	.78	High Positive Relationship

Table 1 shows the relationship between spousal abuse and married teachers' aggressiveness. A Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) of .78 is an indication that there is a high positive relationship between the two variables under study. This means that increase in spousal abuse leads to an increase in married teachers' aggressiveness.

Table 2: Mean difference in spousal abuse experienced by married teachers' based on gender

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference
Males	80	29.58	8.92	21.61
Females	218	36.19	9.51	

Table 2 shows the mean difference in spousal abuse experienced by married teachers based on gender. A mean difference of 21.61 shows a discrepancy in marital abuse with the female teachers having a higher mean value (48.19) than male teachers (26.58).

Table 3: Mean difference in married teachers' aggressiveness based on gender

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference
Males	80	31.93	9.01	10.88
Females	218	38.81	10.31	

Table 3 shows the mean difference (10.88) in married teachers' aggressiveness based on gender. According to the table, female teachers with a mean value (45.81) are more aggressive than male teachers with a mean value of 34.93.

Table 4: t-test of significance of relationship between spousal abuse and married teachers' aggressiveness

N	R	Df	t _{cal}	t _{tab}	p-value	∞	Decision
298	.78	156	15.57	1.96	.00	.05	Significant

Table 4 shows the summary of t-test of significance of relationship between spousal abuse and married teachers' aggressiveness. A t_{cal} of 15.57 greater than t_{tab} of 1.96 and a p-val of .00 less than significance level of .05 shows that the relationship between the variables is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between spousal abuse and married teachers' aggressiveness is rejected. Spousal abuse has a significant relationship with married teachers' aggressiveness

Table 5: t-test of significance of mean difference in spousal abuse experienced by married teachers based on gender

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t _{cal}	df	Std. error of difference	P- val	∞	Decision
Male	80	29.58	8.92	5.40	296	1.22	.00	.05	Significant
Female	218	36.19	9.51						

Table 5 shows the summary of t-test of significance of mean difference in spousal abuse experienced by married teachers based on gender. The p-val of .00 which is less than the significance level of .05 shows that the mean difference between the variables is significant.

Table 6: t-test of significance of mean difference in married teachers' aggressiveness based on gender

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t _{cal}	df	Std. error of difference	P-val	∞	Decision
Male	80	31.93	9.01	5.27	296	1.31	.00	.05	Significant
Female	218	38.81	10.31						

Table 6 shows the summary of t-test of significance of mean difference in married teachers' aggressiveness based on gender. The p-val of .00 which is less than the significance level of .05 shows that the mean difference between the variables (male and female) is significant.

Discussion

The study set out to examine the relationship between spousal abuse and married teachers' aggressiveness. From the first finding, there is a positive high relationship between spousal abuse and married teachers' aggressiveness which on further testing of hypothesis, the relationship was discovered significant. This

finding could be attributed to the psychological problems associated with domestic violence which includes spousal abuse and the teachers' aggression being a behavioral manifestation of the psychological problems. This is in line with Bukhari & Rashid (2021) investigation of the causes of teachers' aggressive behavior at secondary school level which revealed that disputes of the home make the teacher psychological ill. Also Iheka (2020) posited that frequent marital problems leads to termination of marriage which further distracts the teacher from performing their assigned roles.

The study's second finding reveals a significant gender difference in experience of spousal abuse by married teachers. The result showed that the female teachers experience spousal abuse more than the male teachers with the mean difference between the two variables. The reason behind this isn't farfetched as women are culturally regarded as weaker humans and lower than men and therefore vulnerable to attacks by their spouses where they play the submissive role in marriage and men – the dominant role. This finding is in consonance with Karim *et al.* (2021) study examined the gender difference in marital violence among Bengali, Garo and Santal communities in rural Bangladesh revealed that women were more exposed to various types of marital violence compared to men. Likewise Ezelote *et al.* (2021) study on domestic violence among women in Nigeria which revealed that 92% of victims of domestic violence were female partners while 8% of the victims were male.

The third finding reveals a gender difference in married teachers' aggression with female married teachers being more aggressive than male teachers. The aggression being higher in females than males relates to the women being the higher victims of spousal abuse than men. This relates to the findings of Blistein *et al.* (2005) and Nichols *et al.* (2006) whose studies documented a steeper increase in reports of aggression in women compared to men. However some studies differ such as Bjorkquist (2018) which noticed that male are more aggressive than female (Ticusan, 2014) and however, research by Ardestani *et al.*

(2022) on teacher violence revealed that men had a higher mean score for teacher violence than women.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it was concluded that spousal abuse has a significant relationship with married teachers' aggressiveness. The study likewise revealed a gender difference in spousal abuse experienced by married teachers as well as exhibition of aggression by married teachers with the female teachers being the victims of spousal abuse and exhibitors of aggression more than the male teachers.

Recommendations

1. Teachers with marital problems should enroll for therapy to help them deal with emotional problems that may emanate from such marital issue so as not to interfere with their job.
2. Various media of information should be used to alert the public on the dangers of domestic violence such as spousal abuse as a strategy for curbing it.
3. Government should take the issues of marital abuse seriously and ensure that perpetrators are adequately punished and victims sufficiently cared for especially in cases of physical injury.
4. Schools should regulate the punishment of students so as to minimize possible exhibition of aggression on them by their teachers.
5. Psychologists and Guidance counsellors should be available in schools to handle behavioral problems of teachers and learners.

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