

Marital Factors and Domestic Abuse among Married Female Secondary School Teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated the influence of marital factors on domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State. The study was guided by three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses, and it employed an experimental research design. The target population consisted of 3,132 married female teachers for the 2024/2025 academic session, selected from a total of 7,026 teachers across 274 public secondary schools in the state. A sample of 346 married female teachers was determined using the Research Advisors sample size determination table and selected through a stratified random sampling technique. Data were gathered using a structured instrument titled Marital Factors and Domestic Abuse among Married Female Teachers Questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed using simple linear regression, and all hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The results indicated that marital factors have a significant influence on the incidence of domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State. It was concluded that married female teachers who exhibit positive marital factors, such as self-control, mutual respect and integrity, are more likely to maintain peaceful and domestic abuse-free marital relationships. Consequently, fostering these qualities can contribute to their emotional stability and overall well-being, which in turn may enhance their professional effectiveness. Recommendations were made that every relationship requires the ability to manage certain situations either good or bad and spouse should have proper self-control; respect for each other is not an option but necessary conditions for social existence, and integrity is needed for marital stability since family stability could predict societal stability.

INTRODUCTION

Domestic abuse is any form of abusive behavior whether physical, emotional, sexual, psychological, or economic, perpetrated by one partner to control or dominate the other within an intimate relationship (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021). It is not only a violation of human rights but also a serious social and public health issue that undermines the wellbeing, productivity, and dignity of victims. According to UN Women (2023), nearly one-third of women globally have experienced physical and/or sexual domestic abuse from their partners, and the majority of these cases remain underreported. The effects of domestic abuse extend beyond the victims to their families, workplaces, and communities, creating ripple effects that hinder social cohesion and economic productivity.

In educational settings, especially among married female secondary school teachers, such domestic abuse can lead to absenteeism, poor classroom engagement, diminished motivation, and long-term psychological trauma. Marital factors play a critical role in shaping the quality and stability of marital relationships. These characteristics are the behavioral and psychological attributes that define how individuals interact, communicate, and resolve conflicts in marriage. Scholars have observed that traits such as self-control, mutual respect and integrity contribute to mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence between couples (Okon & Essien, 2023; Udo & Bassey, 2022).

Self-control in marriage refers to a person's ability to regulate their emotions, actions and impulses during an argument in order to maintain peaceful co-existence especially in moments of anger or frustration. A spouse with good self-controls is less likely to react impulsively or resort to domestic abuse. Self-control is a necessary characteristic in any successful relationship. It helps individuals to resist their impulses and prevents them from

making decisions or taking actions that would bring regret afterward. Self-control in marital relationship is necessary because it keeps relationship strong in the face of challenges. When feelings and romantic desire are involved, couples may act rashly and do things that could hurt one another. Jacobson (2023) argued that during moments of frustration, anger or hurt, self-control can help a spouse to control his or her emotions without rendering violent attack on the other partner.

Arinze and Obunadike (2021) studied forgiveness and self-control as predictors of marital satisfaction and violent-free relationship in colleges of education in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research. The population of the stud comprised of nine hundred married academic staff of the Federal College Education, Umunze. Purpose sampling technique was used to sample 300 respondents. The questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection and it was validated by three experts in Home Economics and Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.87. Data was analyzed using mean and standard deviations. One of the study findings revealed that self-control significantly predict violent-free relationship among spouses.

Cheung, Chiu and Choi (2022) investigated couples' self-control and marital conflict in Hong Kong, China: Does similarity, complementarity, or totality matter more? Three research hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance. The study adopted a descriptive research design while the study population comprised all the eight hundred and seventy-one (871) couples in northwestern district in the study area. A sample size of 89 spouses (male and female) was selected for the study using random sampling method. The participants were selected for face-to-face interviews in cases of more than one couple living at the same address. Men and women were interviewed separately in different timeslots or rooms so that their partners did not know what questions were asked or what answers were given. Response surface analysis method was used for data analysis and the findings showed that self-control significantly predict marital stability.

Mutual respect in marriage simply means exhibiting behaviours that shows appreciation, consideration and Value for one's spouse. It includes using respectful words and avoiding harsh language. When both partners respect each other's opinions, feelings, and boundaries, the risk of domestic abuse is significantly lower. Mutual respect prevents domination, control and abuse, fostering a more peaceful relationship. It also has to do with respecting the rights and dignity of other people. Spouses are expected to cultivate the habit of mutual respect so as to have a better family life that it devoid of severe conflict and domestic abuse. Spouses may have different views, ideas, and needs. Compromising with these differences makes life easier for both partners. Spouses who respect each other's differences and do not force each other to change an undesirable aspect of their personality and resort to compromise lead a better life.

Dixon et al. (2018) investigated the roles of respect for human dignity and parenting practices on and abusive behavior in United State. Three hypotheses were formulated to serve as a guide to the study. Descriptive research design was adopted while the population of the study comprised all higher-level students in the study area. A convenience sample of 133 spouses was selected for the study. Questionnaire was used for data collection while analyses of covariance and regression was used to test the null hypotheses. The result indicates that observance of individual rights and dignity by parents significantly prevents physical abuse and other abusive act in marriage.

Apeh and Bernice (2020) studied the influence of mutual respect on family domestic abuse and other maladaptive behavior of spouses in Kogi State, Nigeria. Three research questions were raised and one hypothesis formulated to guide the study. The research design adopted was a descriptive survey. The population of the study comprised all the married workers in selected parastatals in Kogi State. A sample size of 120 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling technique. A 24-item questionnaire instrument designed along a modified four-point rating scale was used for data collection. Test-retest method of reliability was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument, with a reliability co-efficient of 8.86 obtained using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The statistical tool that was used for data analysis includes mean, standard deviation and linear regression. One of the major findings revealed that mutual respect minimizes disrespectful behavior, domestic abuse and other maladaptive behavior of spouses.

Integrity in marriage is defined as daily behaviours that shows honesty, commitment and moral responsibility between partners. Integrity is simply the practice of being honest and showing a consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral and ethical principles and values in the family (Steve, 2017). In ethics, integrity is regarded as the honesty and truthfulness or accuracy of one's actions. Integrity can stand in opposition to deviant behavior, in that judging with the standards of integrity involves regarding internal consistency as a virtue, and suggests that parties holding within themselves apparently conflicting values should account for the discrepancy or alter their beliefs.

A spouse lacking these qualities may engage in infidelity, deceit, or financial irresponsibility, which can provoke tension and mistrust (Ekanem, 2022).

Tolorunleke (2014) studied causes of marital conflicts and domestic abuse amongst couples in Ijumu, Kogi State, Nigeria. Three research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The design adopted for the study was simple descriptive survey. The population for the study was made up of all married couples in the area of study. A sample size of 100 husbands and 100 wives making up total of 200 respondents were selected using purposive sampling method. An adopted structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The data were organized in tables while analysis of variance was used to test the two hypotheses postulated for the study at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that one of the causes of marital conflict and violent conduct among spouses is their lack of marital integrity.

Josiah and Nteh (2022) investigated factors and consequences of marital conflicts and domestic abuse among spouses in Rivers State, Nigeria. Four research questions were raised for the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The total population of the study comprised of couples who experienced conflict and domestic abuse in their marital home in the study area. A sample size of 120 respondents which comprised of male and female spouses was selected using simple random sampling technique. The researchers' structured questionnaire titled Factors and Consequences of Marital Conflicts and Domestic abuse among Spouses was used for data collection. The items on the questionnaire were scored and compared, using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and the reliability index of 0.73 was obtained. The findings revealed that lack of integrity and failed roles and expectations are responsible for marital conflict and domestic abuse among educated and uneducated spouses.

In Nigeria, traditional gender norms often position men as the heads of households and decision-makers, while women are expected to be submissive and tolerant, even in the face of abuse (Abasiattai & Okon, 2021). Such expectations can perpetuate domestic abuse by reinforcing male dominance and discouraging women from asserting their rights. Among married female secondary school teachers, these cultural pressures are compounded by professional demands, creating dual stressors that can affect emotional wellbeing and job performance. Teachers exposed to continuous domestic abuse may suffer anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress symptoms, which in turn affect their instructional delivery and student relationships (Okafor & Opara, 2022). Moreover, fear of stigmatization often compels victims to conceal their experiences, making it difficult for educational authorities or counseling units to offer timely support.

The significance of examining marital factors in relation to domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State cannot be overstated. Teachers serve as role models and moral guides for students; their personal experiences, emotional health, and interpersonal relationships inevitably influence their teaching efficiency and classroom management. If a teacher's home environment is marred by domestic abuse, the stress and trauma may spill over into the school environment, affecting not only her productivity but also the emotional tone of her classroom. By investigating how specific marital factors contribute to or mitigate domestic abuse, the present study aims to generate insights that can inform counseling practices, teacher support programs, and gender-sensitive educational policies.

Understanding marital factors is therefore essential in addressing domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers. If partners possess and demonstrate positive traits, the likelihood of domestic abuse decreases, leading to stable family environments that support personal growth and professional performance. Conversely, negative marital factors increase the probability of aggression, emotional distress, and disrupted family functioning. In educational contexts, this imbalance can undermine not only the wellbeing of teachers but

also the overall effectiveness of schools in nurturing disciplined and motivated learners. Given the dual roles female teachers play as educators and family caretakers, addressing this issue is both a moral and professional imperative. Findings from this line of research can contribute to developing holistic interventions that enhance marital stability, psychological wellbeing, and professional efficiency among female teachers in Akwa Ibom State and beyond.

Statement of the Problem

Another dimension of concern relates to the implications of domestic abuse for the teaching profession and the education system at large. Teaching requires a high degree of emotional stability, patience and focus, which are qualities that may be undermined when a teacher is exposed to domestic abuse at home. Female teachers who experience marital abuse may exhibit signs of depression, anxiety, and fatigue, which could manifest in reduced concentration, absenteeism, and poor classroom engagement. In the long term, this may result in diminished academic outcomes for students and declining standards in the education sector. Teachers serve as role models and mentors to their students; hence, their psychological wellbeing directly affects how they guide, discipline, and inspire learners. A teacher battling trauma from domestic abuse may struggle to maintain the composure and emotional balance required to create a positive learning environment.

The recurring reports of domestic abuse across Nigeria highlight the urgency of addressing this issue. For instance, in 2023, a well-publicized case involved a lawyer who was arrested for violently assaulting his wife, drawing public outrage and renewed discourse on the prevalence of spousal abuse. Beyond such isolated cases, social narratives and anecdotal evidence indicate that many women, including female teachers, suffer physical injuries such as bruises and bumps, as well as emotional scars that are less visible but equally damaging. Studies have also suggested that women are disproportionately the victims of domestic abuse compared to men, reflecting deep-rooted patriarchal norms that perpetuate male dominance and control in marriage. Despite these realities, domestic abuse among female teachers has received limited academic attention, making this study particularly relevant and timely.

This research therefore sought to bridge this gap by exploring how specific marital factors such as empathy, self-control and mutual respect contribute to or mitigate the occurrence of domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing practical strategies that can promote healthier marital relationships, safeguard teachers' wellbeing, and enhance their professional efficiency. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers, school administrators, and guidance counsellors in designing intervention programs that address the root causes of domestic abuse and support affected teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between marital factors and domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, this study seeks to investigate how various marital factors influence the occurrence or absence of domestic abuse in marriage. The study aimed to:

1. Assess the influence of self-control on domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.
2. Determine the influence of mutual respect on domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.
3. Ascertain the influence of integrity on domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were posed in the study .

1. There is no significant influence of self-control on domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

2. There is no significant influence of mutual respect on domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.
3. There is no significant influence of integrity on domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study adopted the survey research design. This design was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to gather data from a subset of a population and generalize the findings to the entire population. In this approach, information is obtained from respondents through a questionnaire to describe existing conditions, opinions, or characteristics relevant to the research variables. The population for this study consisted of 3,132 married female teachers during the 2024/2025 academic session, drawn from a total of 7,026 teachers working in 254 public secondary schools. This population was deemed suitable for the study because some married female teachers may be experiencing various forms of physical domestic abuse in their homes, which can affect their emotional well-being, job performance, and social interactions within the school setting.

A total of 346 married female teachers formed the sample size for the study during the 2025/2026 academic session. The sample was selected through a stratified sampling technique, which ensured that all categories of schools within the study area were fairly represented. The sample size was determined using the Research Advisors (2006) Sample Size Determination Table, which suggests that as the population grows, the required sample size also increases but at a decreasing rate. According to the table, for populations ranging between 1,000 and 1,000,000, a sample size of about 386 is generally sufficient. A 5% level of confidence was adopted to determine the appropriate sample for this study.

The instrument used for data collection was titled “Marital factors and Domestic Abuse among Married Female Teachers Questionnaire.” It consisted of 35 items structured to obtain responses from married female teachers. Specifically, 15 items (five items each) were used to measure marital factors such as self-control, mutual respect and integrity, while 20 items measured domestic abuse among married female teachers. The response format was based on a 4-point rating scale. Items on marital factors were rated as very high extent, high extent, low extent, and very low extent, while items on domestic abuse were rated as strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Respondents were instructed to tick the option that best reflected their opinion.

To ensure that the questionnaire measured the intended constructs, it was subjected to validation by two experts in educational research and measurement. Their reviews confirmed that the instrument covered the relevant content areas and was appropriate for the study population. The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach’s Alpha method to determine internal consistency. The questionnaire was administered to 30 married female teachers who were not part of the main study sample but shared similar characteristics with those selected for the study. The analysis yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.80, indicating that the instrument was consistent and dependable for data collection.

The researcher, assisted by two trained research assistants, administered the questionnaire to the respondents. The assistants were adequately briefed on how to guide respondents and ensure accurate responses. Out of 346 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 341 were correctly filled and returned, resulting in a 98.6% return rate. The administration and retrieval process lasted for a period of three weeks. The data obtained from the respondents were coded and analyzed using simple linear regression analysis. This statistical technique was appropriate for determining the influence of marital factors on domestic abuse among married female teachers. The hypotheses of the study were tested at the 0.05 level of significance, which served as the benchmark for accepting or rejecting each null hypothesis.

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant influence of self-control on domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 1: Summary of simple regression of the influence of self-control on domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers (N=341)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8603.79	1	8603.79	81.28	.00
	Residual	35882.55	339	105.85		
	Total	44486.34	340			
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	12.17	2.09		5.84	.00
	Self-control	-3.07	-.13	.79	24.00	.00

Significant at $p < .05$

The result in Table 1 shows the F-ratio of 97.71 with the corresponding probability level of significance of .00 alpha at 1 and 339 degrees of freedom. This level of significance is less than .05 in which the decision is based. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result in Table 1 also shows an unstandardized coefficient (B) of -3.07, which indicates that for every unit rise in self-control, domestic abuse decreases by -3.07. Furthermore, the result in Table 1 shows the t-value of 24.00, with its corresponding probability level of significance of .00 alpha. This level of significance is less than .05 in which the decision is based. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This result implies that there is significant influence of self-control on domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant influence of mutual respect on domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 2: Summary of simple regression of the influence of mutual respect on domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers (N=341)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9365.66	1	9365.66	90.40	.00
	Residual	35120.68	339	103.60		
	Total	44486.34	340			
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.12	2.06		3.46	.00
	Mutual respect	-3.70	-.13	.83	27.72	.00

Significant at $p < .05$

The result in Table 2 shows the F-ratio of 90.40 with the corresponding probability level of significance of .00 alpha at 1 and 339 degrees of freedom. This level of significance is less than .05 in which the decision is based. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result in Table 4.15 also shows an unstandardized coefficient (B) of -3.70, which indicates that for every unit rise in mutual respect, domestic abuse decreases by -3.70. Furthermore, the result in Table 2 shows the t-value of 27.72 with its corresponding probability level of significance of .00 alpha. This level of significance is less than .05 in which the decision is based. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This result implies that there is significant influence of mutual respect on domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant influence of integrity on domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 3: Summary of simple regression of the influence of integrity on domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers (N=341)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6079.91	1	6079.91	53.67	.00
	Residual	38406.43	339	113.29		
	Total	44486.34	340			
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	8.23	2.13		3.86	.00
	Integrity	-2.25	-.13	.81	17.30	.00

Significant at $p < .05$

The result in Table 3 shows the F-ratio of 53.67 with the corresponding probability level of significance of .00 alpha at 1 and 339 degrees of freedom. This level of significance is less than .05 in which the decision is based. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result in Table 3 also shows an unstandardized coefficient (B) of -2.25, which indicates that for every unit rise in integrity, domestic abuse decreases by -2.25. Furthermore, the result in Table 3 shows the t-value of 17.30, with its corresponding probability level of significance of .00 alpha. This level of significance is less than .05 in which the decision is based. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This result implies that there is significant influence of integrity on domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of hypothesis one indicated that there is significant influence of self-control on domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State. The finding is in line with Fincham and Beach (2018) who viewed self-control as those processes, internal or transactional, that enable an individual to guide one's goal-directed activities over time and across changing circumstances. This implies that, self-control inhibits unwanted impulses and response in a goal-directed manner. High self-control helps in maintaining satisfactory intimate relationships through emotional support while discouraging spousal violent. Bornstein et al. (2017) perceived that poor self-control can lead to intimate domestic abuse, including physical and psychological aggression. Compared with people who have high levels of self-control, the authors found that people with low self-control are less able to inhibit their desire to criticize, withdraw, and respond aggressively during relationship conflicts, and are less likely to compromise, accommodate their partner's destructive behaviours, and prioritize long-term relationship goals. This therefore implies that self-control might be reliability for relationship functioning and quality.

The result of hypothesis two showed that there is significant influence of mutual respect on domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State. The findings agreed with the position of Bugh (2019) that, mutual respect is important in marital relationship because it creates a foundation of trust and understanding that allows romantic relationship to grow and flourish. If spouses have mutual respect, Haris and Kumar (2018) maintained that their marital union will be stronger leaving no space for misunderstanding that could result in physical domestic abuse. If spouses fail to communicate their feelings, desires, problems and expectations effectively, their relationship may adversely be affected. That is, if there is mutual mistrust, problems including physical domestic abuse could set probably destroy the relationship. Murray et al. (2020) stated that when partners are willing to compromise and find solutions that work for both of them without shifting blames in times of conflict, it show that they respect each other. The authors added that admitting mistakes and making amends to repair trust is an indication of mutual respect. Esere *et al* (2011) found that, marriage depends on many different things to be successful, which include trust, love, time, friendship, understanding, honesty, loyalty, sincerity and above all effective communication. Khan (2019) noted that a person who chooses to have an internal locus of control will not shift blame or hold other people responsible for their actions; rather a person with an external locus of control chooses to blame and make scope-goats of their love ones for their own unhappiness and failures

The result of hypothesis three showed that there is significant influence of integrity on domestic abuse among married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State was accepted. This means integrity has the capacity tackle physical domestic abuse and it is one of the positive characteristics that every spouse should covet. The finding is in agreement with Ogoto (2015) who stated that integrity is the quality of being truthful, sincere and straightforward in one's dealings with others. This implies that, if couples are truthful, sincere and straightforward, unnecessary struggle may not be seen among couples. Pace (2022) accepted that, spouses who have integrity always tell the truth even when it requires them to face the anger of the opposite person especially when mistake occur. Matsumura (2019) found that integrity builds trust and fosters healthy communication. The authors added that when spouses ensure that their actions align with their words, it demonstrate reliability and honesty, which fosters trust. Tolorunleke (2014) found that one of the causes of marital conflict and violent conduct among spouses is their lack of marital integrity. Ross (2023) observed that a spouse with high integrity would completely do away with violent actions that would cause emotional harm to one another in a romantic union. Hence, spouse who are still living in the environment of physical domestic abuse may not have practiced integrity in their lives as couples. Afu and Nteh (2020) found that many marital relationships suffer physical, emotional and other forms of domestic abuse due to poor practice of integrity or honesty. Josiah and Nteh (2022) found that lack of integrity and failed roles and expectations are responsible for marital conflict and domestic abuse among educated and uneducated spouses. Therefore, to do away with some inconveniences in marriage spouse should embrace this characteristic called integrity.

CONCLUSION

The outcome of the study holds important implications for the educational setting. It suggests that married female teachers who exhibit positive marital factors, such as self-control, mutual respect and integrity, are more likely to maintain peaceful and domestic abuse-free marital relationships. Consequently, fostering these qualities can contribute to their emotional stability and overall well-being, which in turn may enhance their professional effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. That every relationship requires the ability to manage certain situations either good or bad and spouse should have proper self-control.
2. That respect for each other is not an option but necessary conditions for social existence.
3. That integrity is needed for marital stability since family stability could predict societal stability.

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