EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND EXPERIENCE OF SPOUSAL VIOLENCE BY MARRIED FEMALE SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN AKWA IBOM STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study was carried out to determine the relationship between the psychological variables of emotional intelligence and experience of spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State. The need to reduce rising cases of spousal violence prompted the desire to determine how these variables may contribute to experience of spousal violence among female secondary school teachers. The correlational design was adopted using a sample size of 409 out of the population of 4,094 married female secondary school teachers during the 2019/2020 academic session in the area. A researcher-developed instrument, Emotional Intelligence and Spousal Violence Questionnaire, was used for data collection. The instrument's internal consistency reliability coefficients using the Cronbach Alpha analysis were .79 and .82 for dependent and independent variables, respectively. The data obtained was analysed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). All the null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 alpha level, and the findings indicated significant relationship between empathy, self-regulation, self-identity, and spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in the area. On the strength of the findings, it was concluded that emotional intelligence have significant relationship with spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers. Based on this conclusion, it was recommended, among other things, that female teachers should show greater empathic accuracy and willingness to accommodate their spouses during disagreements. This could be achieved by being sensitive to the feelings and emotions of the partner.

KEYWORDS: Emotional Intelligence, Spousal Violence, Married Female Teachers, Secondary School and Akwa Ibom State

Introduction

Marriage is a sacred institution expected to enable two mature individuals of opposite sexes to live together harmoniously in a family relationship. Although these people come from different social backgrounds and cultural environments, their decision to live together in holy matrimony is thought to ensure a high level of understanding, cooperation, and esteemed harmony. Marriage is a unique commitment in the lives of men and women who are expected to enjoy mutual love, happiness, care, protection, procreation, and respect in society. This implies that one of the most important relationships between a man and a woman is marriage. It involves emotional and legal commitment, which is essential for responsible and harmonious family life. Yet, more often than not, the relationship is usually characterised by

rancour, distrust, suspicion, litigation, bitterness, disagreements, and violence that sometimes result in avoidable deaths.

There are complementary roles expected of spouses, which should enable them to live together peacefully. Many couples, however, go into marriage with all kinds of high expectations but with insufficient understanding of how their emotions and self-concept can be utilised to facilitate accommodation of their spouse's shortcomings. Some people literally live in some kind of bubble and fantasy world about marriage, expecting so much from their spouse but not willing to sacrifice for its survival. Many couples have ruined their marriages because of unrealistic expectations.

Spousal violence is a global social phenomenon reaching across national, socio-economic, cultural, racial, and class boundaries. This problem is not only widely spread geographically, but its incidence is so extensive that it makes it a typical and apparently "normal" issue. Spousal violence is commonplace, deeply ingrained and has a serious impact on family health and well-being. It costs individuals, health systems, and society enormous prices. Yet no other major problem of public health has been so widely ignored and so little understood. It appears to be a burden on the social system and, quietly, affects the healthy development of children and society. Spousal violence costs nations fortune in terms of law enforcement, health care, welfare programmes, man hours and low socio-economic development. These costs do not only affect the present generation; what begins as an assault by one person on another often reverberates through the related families and communities into future social crises.

The prevalence of spousal violence in Nigerian society appears to be ignored due to existing societal attitudes, values, and culture. The elements tend to boost gender inequality and restrain women's independence and freedom. Among the Tiv-speaking people of North Central Nigeria, for example, wife beating is believed to be a sign of affection and love (Bazza, 2017). Among the Igbos in South Eastern Nigeria, societal privileges such as traditional titles, land, wealth, and decision-making are male-centred, whereas in Akwa Ibom State in South South Nigeria, the beating of women is seen as a corrective measure for an erring wife (Nwabunike & Tenkorang, 2017).

Akwa Ibom State is one of the patriarchal societies where the prerogative of men to chastise their wives as a show of masculinity is closely associated with toughness, male honour, or dominance (Mann and Takyi, 2009). Observations by the research appear to suggest that some spouses in Akwa Ibom State still believe that wives are commodities bought with money and, as such, have limited rights. Although some men may often be abused by their wives, in Akwa Ibom State, it appears taboo for a husband to complain of being abused by his wife.

Spousal violence refers to the incidence of the use of force, threats, intimidation, battering, and assault in marital relationships, especially where there are differences among couples. Violence in the family, presumably, may be connected to poor management of emotions. The management of emotions may be a function of how a person views, understands, and controls his or her feelings intelligently. Emotional intelligence simply refers to the ability to understand one's own feelings in relation to the feelings of others (Scheff, 2015). It involves the ability to regulate one's emotions in a way that enhances satisfying relationships with others. Developing and mastering one's emotions requires being able to assess, manage, and control one's feelings and moods as well as assess, estimate, and

understand the emotions of others (Egbule, 2009). It is true that one cannot control the emotions of others, but understanding them in the light of one's own situation can help in managing relationships intelligently.

Salahyan (2010) posits that men and women who know what duties they have with regard to their spouses and properly undertake them can provide for the stabilisation of family relations and prevent the emergence of spousal violence. It is important to know when, where, and how one should apologise to his or her spouse and accommodate their shortcomings. To have qualities like patience and getting along with problems of anger requires skills including self-regulation, empathy, and understanding of the needs and emotions of others (Extremera & Fernandez, 2006). These skills constitute the domains of emotional intelligence (Samouei, Kamali, Alavi, and Yazdi, 2011). Understanding one's self also requires skills and self-identity, which constitute the domain of self-concept.

Baumeister (2005) argues that self-regulation is so important to social functioning that it evolved primarily to help humans maintain important relationships with one another and preserve social order. Self-regulation is the process by which one alters his or her own thoughts, feelings, and behaviour in a goal-directed manner in close relationships. It is an essential quality in the marriage relationship. People who can regulate emotions possess a clear understanding of their feelings and can take charge of their moods before much damage can be done when relating with others, especially their spouses (Ciarrochi, Chan & Caputi, 2000).

Empathy is the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from within his or her frame of reference. This can apply even in a marriage relationship where a spouse tries to appreciate the inner feelings of his/her partner. Being empathetic can help one to have social skills that can help to enrich an enduring spousal affinity. Empathy is also seen as an ingredient that helps to sustain spousal relationships and limits spousal violence among spouses.

Violence in marriages may also be connected to self-identity, which is in the domain of self-concept. Self-identity is the understanding a person has of himself or herself. It is expected that in every marital relationship, spouses should have self-identity in order to know how to manage their differences for an effective relationship. Self-identity helps in the transformation of couples into intimate partners. Where there is self-identity transformation by virtue of agreement, there is a satisfying relationship among spouses.

Theoretically, this study considered crisis theory originated from Hill's (1949) explanations of how families react to stressful events and has since been used in relation to marital outcomes. Hill proposed the ABCX model, which states that families have differing levels of resources (B) when dealing with stressful events (A), which are likely to be defined differently as a function of the familial context (C). According to Hill, the nature and outcome of the crisis (X) is determined by whether the available resources of the family (B) are adequate for the stressful event (A) as defined by the family (C). Theoretically, the probability of negative outcomes increases as the stress surrounding the event increases.

This theory has importance to the present study, as it shows that the way couples handle their grievances determines the extent to which their marriage succeeds. When related to the marital relationship, satisfaction and stability are as a result of a couple's ability to recover from crises. This theory also emphasises that the availability of self-regulation could

reduce family crises, while lack of self-regulation and empathy could trigger or increase family crises. In other words, the level of family crisis is determined by the availability or unavailability of self-regulation, empathy, and self-identity in a particular family. This theory could also be linked to the adequacy of communication between couples. The implication is that where there is adequate and effective self-regulation, empathy, and self-identity crisis are reduced.

Problem of the Study

In Akwa Ibom, Nigeria, many couples experience crises in their marital relationship. Spousal violence is a violation of human rights and a public health problem that is associated with emotional, psychological, and social deficits. It can lead to serious psychological scars, physical injuries, violent deaths, dysfunctional family relationships, and poor performance at work. It can also lead to a variety of social and health challenges, such as stress, depression, induced physiological changes, substance use, and loss of personal autonomy. Spousal violence can also contribute to low efficiency at work as a result of poor concentration, emotional instability, strained relationships with colleagues, and non-conformity to rules and regulations. Individuals who experience intense spousal violence tend to have a higher probability of suffering from mental disorders such as anxiety, depression, nervousness, apprehension, insomnia, and eating disorders. The resultant effect is poor social adjustment and low performance, especially at the work place. Female secondary school teachers who have been subjected to spousal violence may develop cognitive deficits, which can lead to poor relationships with students and poor performance in routine responsibilities.

Spousal violence is a burden on the social system and can quietly affect the development of family members. It costs fortunes in terms of law enforcement, health care, welfare programmes, loss of man-hours and low socio-economic development. This incidence has a way of affecting the productivity and careers of married female secondary school teachers. When married women are not emotionally stable, their marital relationship and productivity may be adversely affected.

Related Studies

Okoiye, Duru, and Nwaoga (2016) investigated emotional intelligence and self-esteem as correlates of domestic violence against married women in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria and found that low emotional intelligence and low self-esteem negatively correlated with expressed domestic violence against married women. Zadding (2012) found that there is significant relationship between violence against women and family relationships. On the prevalence of physical and sexual violence, Akinsanya, Odusina, and Babatunde (2012) found spousal violence rate of 47.3 percent for those who had ever experienced it and 32 percent prevalence in the 12 months preceding the survey in the South West of Nigeria.

Ifeanyi-obi, Agumagu and Iromuanya (2017) found the major causes of domestic violence to be respondents' age, duration of marriage, educational status, religion, household size and number of wives. These are variables that would influence the emotional intelligence of the partners in marriage. Ajaz and Majeed (2017) found that women were more vulnerable than men to domestic violence in Asian societies and that emotional intelligence moderated the impact of violence on women's health status. Dim and Olayinka (2019) analysed the 2008 and 2013 Nigerian Demographic Health Surveys (NDHS) and found that the perpetration of violence was significantly associated with a woman's victimisation experience. This would

suggest that violence itself was capable of adversely impacting on a person's emotional intelligence and self-concept. Tsirigotis and Luczak (2016) conducted a study on emotional intelligence of women who experienced domestic violence in Trybunaslski, Poland, and found that their emotional intelligence was lower than that of women who did not experience it. Finkel, DeWall, Slotter, and Foshee (2009) found that self-regulatory failure was an important predictor of intimate partner violence (IPV). Eze and Mba (2018) studied emotional intelligence and self-esteem as predictors of marital satisfaction of married couples in Assemblies of God Church in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria, and found that these variables positively predicted marital satisfaction. High emotional intelligence would promote marital harmony and satisfaction and thereby minimise spousal violence.

Purpose of the Study

This study was undertaken to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence, self-concept and spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study sought to determine the relationship between:

1) Empathy and spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

2) Self-regulation and spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

3) Self-concept and spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the objectives above, the following hypotheses were raised to provide statistical direction for the study:

The null hypotheses stated below were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Empathy does not have significant relationship with experience of spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

2. There is no significant relationship between self-regulation and experience of spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

3. There is no significant relationship between self-concept and experience of spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational design. The population of the study consisted of all the 4,094 married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State. (Field information from Akwa Ibom State Secondary Education Board (AKSSEB), 2020). The choice of married female secondary school teachers in the study area was considered appropriate for the study because it was expected that, being literate role models, they were aware of marital challenges experienced by married women and would be able to read, understand, and respond appropriately to the items in the instrument used to obtain data for the study.

The sample for the study consisted of 409 married female secondary school teachers. The sampling technique adopted in this study was the multi-stage sampling procedure involving random selection of local government areas, public secondary schools, and married female teachers from the selected schools. The choice of this sample size was guided by the use of the Yamane (1967) formula for the determination of sample size, which is 10 percent of the population.

A researcher - developed instrument called *Emotional Intelligence and Spousal Violence Questionnaire* was used for data collection. All the items were scored on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point. The reliability of the instrument was determined by analysing the data obtained from the trial-testing of the instrument on 30 respondents using the Cronbach Alpha statistic. This process produced reliability estimates of .79 and .82 for the independent and dependent variables respectively.

Results

The research hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistic. The results are as shown in the tables below.

Hypothesis 1: Empathy does not have significant relationship with experience of spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

This hypothesis was formulated to determine how empathy, as a variable of emotional intelligence, related with experience of spousal violence experienced by married female secondary school teachers. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation statistic was used in analysing the relationship. The result is as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: **Summary of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) Analysis of the relationship between empathy and experience of spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State**

Variables	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r-cal	r-crit	Decision
Empathy (X)	4305	55136				
			72253	0.56*	0.08	Rejected
Spousal Violence (Y)	6298	88617				

*Significant at 0.05 alpha level; df = 407; n = 409.

The result of the PPMC analysis as shown in Table 1 indicates that the calculated r-value is 0.56. The analysis shows that the calculated r-value of 0.56 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.08 at 0.05 alpha level of significance with 407 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis that empathy does not have significant relationship with spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State was rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between empathy and experience of spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in the area.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between self-regulation and experience of spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

The hypothesis was formulated to test how self-regulation, as a variable of emotional intelligence, related with experience of spousal violence of married female secondary school

teachers in the area. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was used to test the hypothesis. The result is as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) Analysis of the relationship between self-regulation and spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers

Variables	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r-cal	r-crit	Decision
Self-Regulation (X)	4275	54390				
			71156	0.64*	0.08	Rejected
Spousal Violence (Y)	6298	88617				

*Significant at 0.05 alpha level; df = 407; n = 409.

The result of the analysis as shown in Table 2 indicates that the calculated r-value is 0.64. When compared with the critical r-value of .08 at .05 level of significance with 407 degrees of freedom, it was found to be greater. The r-value therefore indicates significant relationship between self-regulation and experience of spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State. The null hypothesis of no significant relationship between self-regulation and experience of spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between self-regulation and experience of spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers. This finding suggests that appropriate self-regulation by the female teachers tended to reduce the rate of spousal violence experienced by them in the area.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between self-concept and spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

This hypothesis was formulated to statistically test the relationship between self-concept and experience of spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in the study area. The PPMC statistic was used in analysing the data obtained for the study. The result is as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Analysis of the relationship between self-concept and spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers

Variables	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r-cal	r-crit	Decision
Self-concept (X)	4596	57240				
			68985	0.71*	0.08	Rejected
Spousal Violence (Y)	6298	88617				

*Significant at 0.05 alpha level; df = 407; n = 409.

The result as shown in Table 3 indicates that the calculated r-value of 0.71 is greater than the critical r-value of .08 when compared at .05 confidence level with 407 degrees of freedom. This finding suggests a significant relationship between self-concept and level of spousal violence experienced by married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State. The null hypothesis of no significant relationship between self-concept and experience of spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State was rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between self-concept and experience of spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in the area. Thus, lower self-concept

appears to have increased the level of spousal violence experienced by married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study showed that there is a significant relationship between empathy and spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State and that significant high and positive relationship existed between empathy and spousal violence experienced by married female secondary school teachers. This could be attributed to the fact that empathy between couples enhances their ability to feel and understand the thoughts and emotions of each other partner. Thus, listening and relating to the partner's feelings with some levels of adjustment can help to avoid or minimise spousal violence. This result agrees with the earlier findings of made by Tsirigotis and Luczak (2016), who found that the emotional intelligence of women who experienced spousal violence was lower than that of women who did not experience it. Okoiye, Duru and Nwaoga (2016) investigated emotional intelligence and self-esteem and also found that low emotional intelligence and low self-esteem negatively correlated with expressed domestic violence against married women. Spousal violence would likely increase where the spouses have little or no empathy towards each other, especially where there is misunderstanding.

The finding that there is significant relationship between self-regulation and spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State tends to agree with Finkel *et. al*. (2009) who found that self-regulatory failure was an important predictor of intimate partner violence (IPV). This finding suggests existence of high and positive relationship between self-regulation and spousal violence. Self-regulation helps individuals to refrain from displaying violent behaviours even when they are provoked. Such restraint would help in effective management of spousal crisis that can result to violence. According to Finkel *et. al*. (2009), the power of incorporating self-regulation dynamics into predictive models of IPV perpetration reduces spousal violence. This implies that violent impulse toward a romantic partner could be regulated and put under control during spousal crisis.

The finding of this study also showed significant relationship between self-identity and spousal violence of married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State. This could be attributed to the fact that self-identity is the understanding a person has of his or herself and consists of the permanent self-assessment and self-control which can influence tendency to violent reactions when couples experience disagreements. This result agrees with the earlier findings made by Stets and Burke (2005) that self-identity theory explain spousal violence by showing how a lack of identity confirmation at the individual level is tied to the control process and aggression at the interactive level. This implies that self-identity offers a control measure for violence elimination among couples.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that emotional intelligence and self-concept significantly relate to spousal violence experienced by married female secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom State. In view of this, emotional intelligence and self-concept may be viewed as variables that should be critically considered when analysing and evaluating reasons for spousal conflicts and what should be done during counselling therapies.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. Married female teachers should be encouraged to learn how to develop empathic skills that would help them to accommodate their spouses during conflict situations. This could be achieved by psychologically identifying with the sensitivities, feelings, thoughts, and emotions of their partners during face-offs. The ability to be empathic requires a mental schema that embraces the knowledge of how the other party feels or sees himself in his experiences.

2. Female teachers and indeed, married persons need to adopt self-regulatory strategies in the management of their relationships. They need to exercise self-control and restraint when they are provoked or feel insulted by their spouses instead of reacting impulsively to exaggerate their differences and thereby create room for violent responses.

3. Female teachers and couples in general should accurately appraise themselves in a given aspect of situation, functioning, or performance, or of the resulting implications by any action. This would help curtail any provocative situation that could lead to violence.

4. Counsellors have to realize the relevance of emotional intelligence to marital harmony and encourage clients to develop their capacities in this direction to assist them in the management of their spousal relationships.

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