

# Couples' Socio-Demographic Variables as Correlates of Intimate Partner Violence

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## ABSTRACT

**Background/Aim:** This study aimed at finding out couple's socio-demographic variables as correlates of intimate partner violence in Enugu North Senatorial Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria.

**Method:** In pursuance of the aforementioned aim, two research questions were posed and two hypotheses were postulated. Out of the population, 868 respondents were used as sample size. IPVQ was used as the instrument for data collection with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient value of 0.80. Person Product Moment correlation and regression statistics were used.

**Results:** The results obtained indicated that the relationship between gender and intimate partner violence among couples is very low. Again, that gender does not significantly correlate with intimate partner violence among couples. It was also revealed that educational status does not significantly predict intimate partner violence among couples.

**Recommendation:** Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommended among others that organization confirming marriages such as families, religious groups, hospitals, courts among others should ensure that their clients pass through marital counselling with professional marriage counsellors.

## KEY WORDS

intimate partner violence, gender, educational status, couples

## INTRODUCTION

Intimate partners may experience violence in their relationships. A large body of evidence suggests that a substantial percentage of people experience violent acts from their intimate partner at least once in their lifetime (Archer, 2000; Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Heise, Ellsberg & Watts, 2006). The situation may be worse than statistics have revealed since many incidents go unreported. An intimate partner is a person with whom one has a close personal relationship that may be characterized by the partner's emotional connectedness, regular contact, ongoing physical contact and sexual behaviour, and familiarity and knowledge about each other's lives (Breiding, Basile, Smith & Mahendra, 2015). It may also include people in dating relationships, same-sex spouses and those who are engaged to be married, betrothed or 'promised' under traditional cultural practices. However, in this study, the term 'intimate partner' is used in reference to heterosexual married spouse.

Violence refers to the intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing death, disability, injury, or harm (Saltzman, Fanslow, McMahon, & Shelley, 2002). Violence, as defined by the World Health Organization (2002), is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation. This implies that it involves the intentionality with the committing of the act itself, irrespective of the outcome it produces. Operationally, any behaviour that is exerted in an injurious, hurtful or damaging way (by a person and against a person) is described as violence.

Intimate Partner Violence on the other hand, according to World

Health Organization (2010), is behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including acts of physical violence, sexual violence, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours. Intimate partner violence is defined as a pattern of physical, psychological abuse and/or sexual assault (and threats thereof) from a current or former intimate partner within a context of coercive control (Breiding *et al.*, 2015). Intimate partner violence as a working definition here, is a pattern of behaviour where one intimate partner coerces, dominates, assaults, intimates or harms the other intimate partner.

Intimate partner violence produces physical, mental, and social harm to its victims and perpetrators. It is associated with a broad range of physical and psychological consequences (Wingood, 2000), depression, Lipsky, Caetano, Field & Bazargan 2005), Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (Twamley, Allard, Thorp, & Berardi, 2009), difficulty with daily activities, memory loss, stress, suicidal thoughts or attempts, and even suicide (Daniels, 2005). It also has serious adverse effects on children's well-being. Witnessing intimate partner violence increases the tendency for a child to be aggressive, socially withdrawn, develop poor social competence, experience problematic peer relationships and, increases the likelihood that the child will perpetrate IPV in adulthood (Katz, Hessler, & Anest, 2007; Margolin, 2005).

Socio-demographic variables are variables that are related to societal activities (socio) and the population characteristics (demographic). They include employment status and educational status. Educational status is a term commonly used by statisticians to refer to the highest degree of education an individual has completed. Educational status may be a significant predictor of intimate partner violence significantly. It is often believed that individuals with higher education are less likely to be victims or perpetrators of IPV, thus presenting educational attainment or achievement as a protective factor when looking at IPV. For

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**Table 1: Pearson Correlation showing the relationship between educational status and intimate partner violence among couples**

Variables	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	r	Decision
Intimate partner violence	868	83.71	6.42	.040	Very low Relationship
Educational Status		2.25			

**Table 3: Summary of regression analysis for the relationship between educational status and intimate violence among couples**

Variables	n	F	R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	Sig.	Decision
Intimate partner violence	868					Accepted
Educational status		1.41	0.002	0.040	.235	

a. Dependent Variable: Intimate partner violence; b. Predictors: (Constant), educational status; df: 1,866; p < .05

example, Whiting, Simmons, Havens, Smith, and Oka (2009) found that uneducated men are more likely to engage in intimate partner violence. In Dinesh, Raj, Sharma, and Ravleen (2015) study, IPV prevalence rates were also found comparatively higher among uneducated women. Other related study reported that IPV is highly associated with both men and women who are educationally backward (Niloufer, Farzana & Khuwaja (2014). Literature found that about 1.3% of families are living with physical IPV annually, and about 0.3% of women get affected (Hellemans, Buysse, Smet & Wietzker, 2014).

The term gender refers to the socially given attributes, roles, activities, responsibilities and needs connected to being men (masculine) and women (feminine) in a given society at a given time, and as a member of a specific community within that society (Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2005). According to UNESCO (2003), gender refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in families, societies and cultures. The concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviours of both women and men. In the context of this research work, gender is defined in terms of femininity and masculinity of a person that is socially determined. Based on the review, one can infer that gender is a socio-cultural construct, an acquired identity and personal orientation towards maleness or femaleness.

There has been an ongoing debate regarding who predominates when it comes to perpetration and victimization of IPV (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Woodin, Sotskov, & O'Leary, 2013). When it comes to empirical research findings, mixed results are found in terms of gender. Some studies report higher physical victimization rates for women, some report similar rates for women and men and some report higher physical victimization rates for men (Krahe, Bieneck & Moller, 2005). The idea of gender symmetry and asymmetry in the violence literature can be situated in two theoretical perspectives that have debated the aetiology of IPV, namely the 'feminist perspective' and the 'family violence perspective' (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). The feminist perspective, men are predominantly the perpetrators and women the victims of IPV. According to the family violence perspective, women are just as likely as men to be perpetrators or victims of IPV (Prospero, 2008a). Whether these claims are true or not, was ascertained by this current study.

Available literature and observation point to the fact that intimate partner violence seems to be on this increase in Nigeria and especially among married couples (Ezegbe, et al., 2018). Couples are often seen to complain of physical abuse, sexual abuse and psychological abuse. One is tempted to ask if couples in Enugu North Senatorial Zone, also experience intimate partner violence. Documented media reports provide an affirmative answer to this question. In line with the above observation, media reported that a woman in Obeachara, in Nsukka Local Government Area allegedly bathed her husband with a substance said to be an acid during a scuffle which left him unconscious before he was rushed to hospital (Dede, 2014). Dachen (2015) reported how a middle-aged man at Aku Community in Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area of Enugu State, beat his wife to death during a family quarrel. However,

**Table 2: Pearson Correlation showing the relationship between gender and intimate partner violence among couples**

Variables	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	r	Decision
Intimate partner violence	868	83.71	6.42	-.060	Very low Relationship
Gender		1.50			

**Table 4: Summary of regression analysis for the relationship between gender and intimate violence among couples**

Variables	n	F	R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	Sig.	Decision
Intimate partner violence	868	3.179		-	.075 <sup>a</sup>	
Gender			.004	.060		

a. Dependent Variable: Intimate partner violence; b. Predictors: (Constant), educational status; df: 1,866; p < .05

empirical studies suggesting concrete and significant data to determine the reasons for such incidents have been insufficient in Nigeria. To this end, the present study sought to ascertain if socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, educational status and employment status are related to intimate partner violence among in Enugu North Senatorial Zone-school of Enugu State, Nigeria.

Intimate partner violence is one of the most disturbing social problems of contemporary times. Available literature and observation point to the fact that intimate partner violence seems to be on the increase in Nigeria and especially among married couples. Couples are often seen to complain of physical abuse, sexual abuse and psychological abuse which are forms of intimate partner violence. Considering the adverse effects of this menace on the child's wellbeing, there is a need to examine possible socio-demographic factors which can influence intimate partner violence. Therefore, the problem of this study was to ascertain if couples' socio-demographic factors such as educational status and gender are related to intimate partner violence in Enugu North Senatorial Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The general purpose of the study was to establish the correlation between couples' socio-demographic variables such as educational status, gender and intimate partner violence in Enugu North Senatorial Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria.

Specifically, the study sought to determine;

1. The relationship between educational status and intimate partner violence among couples.
2. The relationship between gender and intimate partner violence among couples.

## Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the relationship between educational status and intimate partner violence among couples?
2. What is the relationship between gender and intimate partner violence among couples?

## Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses for this study were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between educational status and intimate partner violence among couples.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between gender and intimate partner violence among couples.

## METHODS

### Design of the Study

Correlation design was used for this study. According to Nworgu (2015), correlation design seeks to establish what relationship exists between two or more variables. The variables are measured without manipulating them, thereafter; the data is analyzed to see whether the variables are related. Therefore, the researchers used this research design because it helped to determine whether socio-demographic variables such as the level of educational attainment and gender relates to intimate partner violence among couples.

### Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Enugu North Senatorial Zone of Enugu State.

### Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all the registered couples in Enugu North Senatorial Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria from 2013-2017. Records available at the Marriage Registry, Enugu North Senatorial Zone, Nsukka Annex Office (2017) showed that there were a total of 8,800 registered couples from 2013-2017.

### Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample of the study was 868 respondents (i.e. 434 couples) from the three chosen Local Government Areas in the Zone. The sample was selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure. First, the researchers used a simple random procedure to select three local government areas from the zone being studied. The researchers used 10% of the population of the three local government areas selected.

### Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire entitled: Intimate Partner Violence Questionnaire (IPVQ). The questionnaire was developed by the researchers through literature review and per the objectives of the study. The questionnaire consisted of two sections namely: section A and Section B. Section A comprised general information regarding demographic data of the respondents. Section B contained 25 items soliciting information on the couple's intimate partner violence. A four-point rating scale was provided for the respondents to indicate the weight of the response modes. The response options were: Always, Sometimes, Occasionally and Never. The instrument was face validated by one expert in Guidance and Counselling, one in Educational Psychology, and one in Measurement and Evaluation all in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Based on their comments and suggestions, the instrument was modified to suit the study. In order to ascertain the reliability of the instrument, a trial test was conducted using couples in Enugu East Senatorial Zone, in which 40 copies of the questionnaires were administered to 20 couples (husband and wife equal two respondents). Cronbach alpha method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The Intimate Partner Violence Questionnaire (IPVQ) yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.80.

### Method of Data Collection

The data for the study was collected through direct delivery and retrieval of the questionnaire to 868 respondents in the zone studied. The questionnaire was distributed to and retrieved from the couples in the three selected local governments in Enugu North Senatorial Zone by the researchers with the help of two research assistants who were educated by the researchers on the purpose of the study and how to administer the questionnaire. 868 copies of the questionnaire were administered for the study.

### Method of Data Analysis

Pearson product-moment correlation was used to answer the research questions, while regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule for testing the hypotheses was: reject the null hypotheses if the exact probability value

(p-value) is less than the 'prior' probability value (that is, the level of significance); otherwise do not reject.

## RESULTS

**Research Question 1:** What is the relationship between educational status and intimate partner violence among couples?

From table 1, it is observed that the couples had mean score of 83.71 with standard deviation of 6.42 in the intimate violence, and mean score of 2.25 with standard deviation of 0.69 in educational status. The value of the correlation coefficient partner violence among the couples is very low.

**Research Q question 4:** What is the relationship between gender and intimate partner violence among couples?

From table 2, it is observed that the couples had mean score of 83.71 with standard deviation of 0.50 in gender. The value of the correlation coefficient (r), which is -0.06, indicates that the relationship between gender and intimate partner violence among the couples is very low.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between educational status and intimate partner violence among couples.

The result in Table 3 show that educational status does not significantly predicts intimate partner violence among couples,  $R^2 = .002$ ,  $F(1,866) = 1.41$ ,  $\beta = .040$ ,  $P < .05$ . Since the exact probability value (.235) is greater than a priori probability value (0.05), the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between educational status and intimate partner violence among couples is not rejected.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between gender and intimate partner violence among couples.

The results in Table 4 show that gender does not significantly predicts intimate partner violence among couples,  $R^2 = .004$ ,  $F(1, 866) = 3.179$ ,  $\beta = -.060$ ,  $p < .05$ . Since the exact probability value (.075) is greater than the priori probability value (0.05), the null hypothesis which tests that there is no significant relationship between gender and intimate partner violence among couples is not rejected.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study revealed that the relationship between educational status and intimate partner violence among the couples is very low. It was further revealed that there was no significant relationship between educational status and intimate violence among couples. The finding does not support Niloufer, Farzana and Khuwaja (2014) who observed that experiences of violence were independently associated with women's illiteracy and husband's illiteracy. Again, the finding does not support Whiting, Simmons, Havens, Smith, and Oka (2009) who found that uneducated men are more likely to engage in intimate partner violence. Also, the finding was not in agreement with Dinesh, Raj, Sharma, and Ravleen (2015) who posited that IPV prevalence rates were comparatively higher among uneducated women and that education of spouses played a significant positive role in the reduction of IPV. The differences between the previous studies and the current finding could be due to dissimilarities in terms of area of the study, methods, sample, design and statistics.

The relationship between gender and intimate partner violence among the couples is very low. Furthermore, it was found that there is no significant relationship between gender and intimate partner violence. This finding does not support Archer (2000) who found a gender difference in physical IPV among community couples. The study supports Prospero (2008a) who found that women are just as likely as men to be perpetrators or victims of IPV. The finding also supports Hellemans, Buysse, Smet and Wietzker (2014) who found men and women were not different in terms of IPV prevalence and that psychological victimization was associated with a diminished level of relationship quality with no gender differences.

## CONCLUSION

The increasing rate of intimate partner violence in Nigeria has ignited researches that geared toward finding out the possible correlates of the menace. Unfortunately, the researches recorded so far have inconsis-

tent and varying results. However, the current study showed that gender and educational status did not correlate with intimate partner violence significantly.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The finding that there was no significant relationship between educational status and intimate partner violence among couples implies that marriage generally is not based on educational qualification. The couples can succeed in their marriages irrespective of their education status. Therefore, it is not necessary to perpetrate violence just because the other couple's status of education is high or low.

The finding that there is no significant relationship between gender and intimate partner violence among couples implies that though being male or female does not directly predict IPV, if couples are not defining and performing their gender roles accurately they are likely to experience intimate partner violence.

Based on the conclusion and the implications, the following recommendations were made;

- Couples should upgrade each partner's educational status instead of criticizing it. They should not allow low or high statuses of education to cripple their marriages since educational status does not correlate with intimate partner violence.
- The role of each gender in marriage should be specified clearly and followed. This is because, even though gender does not correlate significantly with IPV, there might be a tendency that if the couples are not performing their roles effectively they will experience the menace.
- Every organization that confirms marriages such as families, religious groups, hospitals, courts etc. should ensure that their clients pass through marital counselling with professional marriage counsellors.

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