

The Relationship between Socio Economic Status, Personality Traits and Spouse Abuse of Married Secondary School Teachers in Delta State

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between socio economic status, personality traits and spouse abuse of married secondary school teachers in Delta State. The population of the study consist of married teachers in public secondary schools in Delta Central Senatorial District of Delta State. The sample comprised of 300 married men and 300 married women, giving a total of 600 married persons. The study used simple random sampling technique to select the schools and stratified proportional sampling to draw the sample. Six research hypotheses were used for the study. The design for the study was correlational research design. The instrument for the study was a questionnaire titled Spousal Abuse Scale (SAS). The instrument was validated and had a reliability level of 0.85. Data was analysed using regression statistics. Findings revealed that traits of openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness and neuroticism has significant relationship with spouse abuse among couples. Socio-economic status and extraversion had no significant relationship with spouse abuse among couples. It was however recommended that Counselor Educators should equip those in training with relevant skills so that they can assist both abusers and victims to acquire positive behaviour and relate with each other positively. Practicing counselors can assist the victims to identify the weak behavioural pattern and strengthen same so that they can overcome the abusive behaviour of the partners. Also the Counseling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) in each State should organized seminars, conference and workshops on regular basis to keep married men and women abreast on the consequences of spouse abuse.

Keywords:

Socio economic status
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1. Introduction

Generally, spouse abuse is understood to mean any form of abusive conduct between individuals who are married, dating, or sharing same apartment or residence. It may refer to a particular instance of abuse or a pattern of repeated or cyclical abuse over time. Patterns of spousal abuse are dangerous, frightening and in some cases life threatening.

They may result in emotional, physical or psychological harm to the individual facing such situations. Spouse abuse is sometimes used interchangeably with such terms as domestic violence, domestic abuse, family violence. Domestic violence is a broader term that may include other members of the family other than husband and wife. More specifically, spouse abuse refers to violence between people who are intimate where one person dominates and exerts undue control over the other person.

Spousal abuse is a factor in the marital relationship of an individual which has a long lasting negative effect on the marital stability and satisfaction as well as the structural cognitive framework of the individual where such attitude occurs.

Spousal abuse has many names: wife abuse, marital assault, women battery, domestic violence, intimate partner violence and so on. Sometimes these terms are used interchangeably to refer to the problem while at other times a particular term is used to reflect a specific meaning, for example "woman abuse" is used to highlight the fact that most victims are women. Spousal abuse occurs in a relationship where the perpetrator and victim are known to each other. It occurs both in adult and adolescent intimate relationship. The victim

and perpetrator may be dating, cohabiting, married, divorced or separated, heterosexual gay or lesbian, they may have children in common and the relationship may be of short or long duration (Hicks et al., 2007). It is such a complex concept that it is difficult to define because it involves a set of variables that are both physical and emotional in nature. When it takes the form of emotional abuse, it is made up of verbal ridicule or putdowns that show patterns of neglect.

Physical abuse on the other hand involves the threat of physical violence and may include slapping, shoving, and deliberate physical aggression.

Spousal abuse is a pattern of behaviour that may be the result of a number of different factors. It may be a learned behaviour that a child observes occurring between parents and later repeats in his or her adult relationships. Studies show that abusers are often motivated by feelings of powerlessness and insecurity. Spouse abuse inflates the ego and provides a false sense of control. It may be the result of a misguided sense of love that results in unhealthy possessiveness and jealousy.

According to Okobiah and Okorodudu (2003) spouse abuse is a persistent negligence of marital roles or acts of verbal or non-verbal aggressive behavior capable of causing serious discomfort, anxiety and injurious pains physically, emotionally to the wife and husband living together in marriage relationship. Spouse abuse according to them has been tailored mostly to wife battering or wife abuse especially in our culture.

Spouse abuse is a very serious form of exploitation that will escalate when left untreated. There is a cycle of violence that often begins with a pattern of verbal denigration and emotional abuse and intensifies until it manifests itself as a form of physical abuse.

Verbal abuse is perhaps more sinister than overt physical abuse. Long after the black and blue bruises and broken bones from physical abuse heal, verbal abuse continues to silently erode its victim's self-worth.

Spousal abuse occurs across the world in various cultures and affects people (spouse) across the society irrespective of educational qualification, religion, age, gender and economic status. Hicks and Li (2003) spousal abuse has received much attention by family researchers and clinicians perhaps due to its high prevalence rate.

Traditionally, in Nigeria as in many other African countries, the beating of wives and children is widely sanctioned as a form of discipline (Unicef, 2001) therefore in beating their children parents believe they are instilling discipline in them, much the same way as in husbands beating their wives who are regarded like children to be prone to indiscipline which must be curbed.

This is especially so when the woman is economically dependent on the man. Amnesty International Report (2005) reported that on a daily basis, spouse (women) are beaten and ill-treated for supposed transgressions, raped and even murdered by members of their family. In some cases, vicious acid attacks leave them with horrific disfigurements.

Such violence in our respective communities and families seems horrible enough, is in fact more worrisome. The family is perhaps the most violent social group in our communities today and the home the most violent social setting, a person is more likely to be killed, physically assaulted, hit, beaten up, slapped or spanked in their own homes by other family members than anywhere else or by anyone else in our society (Hicks & Li, 2003).

The Domestic Violence Prevention Centre (2017) identified various forms of spouse abuse. These include intimidation, verbal, physical, emotional, social, financial, sexual, controlling behaviour, spiritual abuse, and stalking.

Intimidation includes smashing things, destroying properties, handling of guns or other weapons, using intimidating body language (angry looks, raised voice), hostile questioning of the victim or reckless driving of vehicle with the victim in the car. It may also include harassing the victim at her workplace either by making persistent phone calls or sending text messages or emails, following her to and from work or loitering near her workplace. Verbal abuse is using words as a weapon to cause significant damage.

This may include screaming, shouting, put-downs, name-calling, swearing, using sarcasm or ridiculing her for her religious beliefs or ethnic background. Verbal abuse may be a precursor to physical violence. Despite being the most common form of abuse, verbal abuse is generally not taken as seriously as other forms because there is no visible proof and the abuser may have a "perfect" personality around others (Evan, 2002).

Physical abuse means behaviour such as pushing, shoving, hitting, slapping, attempted strangulation, hair-pulling, punching etc. and may or may not involve the use of weapons. It could also be threats to destroy or actually destroying her prized possessions.

It can range from a lack of consideration for her physical comfort to causing permanent injury or even death. Bradbury, Fincham, and Beach (2000) indicated that men overwhelmingly perpetuate this violence and that when women do engage in this level of violence, it is most likely to be self-defense against a violent male partner.

Emotional abuse describes behaviours that deliberately undermines her confidence leading her to believe she is stupid or that she is 'a bad mother' or useless or even to believe she is going crazy or is insane. This type of abuse humiliates, degrades and demeans the victim.

The perpetrator may make threats to harm the victim, her friends or family members or to take her children or to commit suicide. The perpetrator may use silence and withdrawal as a means to abuse.

Social abuse means isolating the victim from her social networks and supports either by preventing her from having contact with her family or friends or by verbally or physically abusing her in public or in front of others. It may involve continually putting friends and family down so she is slowly disconnected from her support network.

Financial abuse implies a situation where the perpetrator takes full control of all the finances, spending and decisions about money so the victim is financially dependent on her partner. Also denying her access to money, including her own, and forcing her and her children to live on inadequate resources and demanding she accounts for every cent spent.

This type of abuse is often a contributing factor for women becoming 'trapped' in violent relationships. Economic abuse can be very subtle, telling you what you can and cannot buy or requiring you to share control of your bank accounts (Charles & Stephens, 2004).

Sexual abuse is any unwanted sexual behaviours. This may include forced sexual contact, rape, forcing her to perform sexual acts that cause pain or humiliation, forcing her to have sex with others or causing injury to her sexual organs.

Sexual abuse may also refer to any form of sexual interaction devoid of consent which may include but not limited to unwanted touching, forced sexual encounters which may be oral, anal or vaginal, pressuring someone to engage in sexual activities which may be unpleasant and expressing values that are below the dignity of the human person.

Controlling behaviours involves dictating what the other person does, who is seen and spoken to, where one goes, keeping the person from making any friends or from talking to family members. This can include preventing such a person from going to work, not allowing them to express their own feelings or thoughts or to make decisions for themselves and not allowing them any privacy or forcing them to go without food or water.

Spiritual abuse is ridiculing or putting down her beliefs and culture, preventing her from belonging to or taking part in a group that is important to her spiritual beliefs or practicing one's religion. Stalking describes a situation where the victim is stalked by the perpetrator either before or after separation.

Stalking includes loitering around places she is known to frequent, watching her, following her, making persistent telephone calls and sending mail including unwanted love letters, cards and gifts although the relationship has ended. Stalking is a criminal offence. Under the stalking legislation more than one type of behaviour has to occur or the same type of behaviour has to occur on more than one occasion (The Domestic Violence Prevention Centre, 2017).

Socio economic status indicates one's access to collectively desired resources, be they materials, goods, money, power, friendship networks, healthcare, leisure time, or educational opportunities and it is access to such resources that enables individuals and/or groups to prosper in the social world (Goldsmith, 2013). Santrock (2004) defines it as the grouping of people with similar occupational, educational and economic characteristics.

Also, Ovute (2009) described socio economic status as a classification of individual, household or family according to occupation, income, education or some other indicators of social status. Bradley and Corwyn (2002) observe that three quantitative indicators provide reasonably good coverage of the domains of interest: income, education and occupational status.

Bradbury et al. (2000) noted that socio economic factor is one of the important factors in determining spouse's marital satisfaction.

It is crucial and important for the survival of the family life as financial problem can shake even the strongest and happiest couples. Most contemporary investigators agree that three quantitative indicators provide reasonably good coverage of the domains of interest: income, education and occupational status (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002).

Despite the fact that these indicators of social position are positively correlated, Duncan and Magnuson (2003) suggested that each of these markers of social status demonstrates different levels of stability across time and differentially predicts family processes and child adjustment.

Similarly a number of reports have shown that greater income and financial resources are positively associated with marital stability (Benner & Mistry, 2007; Orbach, Veroff, Hassan, & Horrocks, 2002; Popenoe, 2007). Benner and Mistry (2007) pointed that socio economic status has a contributing factor to marital adjustment.

They believe that there is an inverse relationship between divorce, spousal abuse and income. Thus, the higher the income, the lesser the chances of spousal abuse and subsequent divorce.

Social position influences families across times and socio economic disadvantage has negative consequences on spouse marital relationship (McGlade, 2008).

In addition, a number of reports have shown that low income, financial instability or economic problems are associated with lower levels of marital quality (Amato, Booth, Johnson, & Rogers, 2000; Karney & Bradbury, 2005). The “Family Stress Model (FSM)” which was first proposed by Conger, Rueter, and Elder (1999) predicts that economic problems will lead to deterioration in marital relationship and increase the risk for marital instability.

Personality includes stable and enduring traits that reveal themselves in various situations. In recent time, the most generally accepted way of classifying personality is the five factor model, this model defines the key personality characteristics without overlapping and about half of the variance appears to be attributable to a person’s genetic rather than the effects of one’s environment (Briley & Tucker-Drob, 2014).

These “Big Five” are: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. Acronyms commonly used to refer to the five traits collectively are” OCEAN, NEOAC, or CANOE (Briley & Tucker-Drob, 2014).

There is accumulated research that these five best predict stability in marriage (Amiri, Farhoodi, Abdolvand, & Bidakhavidi, 2011).

The real value of the five factor traits to human attitude is that it does bring back the importance of predispositional traits (Letzring & Nofle, 2010) and these traits have been clearly shown to relate to marital stability (Decuyper, De Bolle, & De Fruyt, 2012).

People with high openness are characterized by intelligence, unconventionality imagination, curiosity, creativity and originality (Barelds, 2005).

They tend to think and act in individualistic and nonconforming ways (Briley & Tucker-Drob, 2014; Letzring & Nofle, 2010). Conscientiousness is the personality traits of being thorough, careful or vigilant, efficient, organized, exhibit a tendency to show self-discipline, dutiful, aim for achievement, they display planned rather than spontaneous behavior, dependable, hardworking and reliable (Carter, Guan, Mapples, Williamson, & Miller, 2015; De young et al., 2002; Ozer & Benet-Martinez, 2006; Thompson, 2008). Extroversion personality trait tend to be gregarious, outgoing, assertive, talkative and active, it tends to gain more strength when around with friends they are usually enthusiastic and animated. They often need to talk in order to think and they enjoy the limelight (Letzring & Nofle, 2010).

Agreeableness is the tendency to be compassionate and cooperative towards others rather than suspicious and antagonistic, friendly, tactful, have an optimistic view, trustful and linked to altruism (Gleason, Jensen-Campbell, & South Richardson, 2004; Jensen-Campbell et al., 2002; Judge & Bono, 2000).

Neuroticism is the trait is characterized by anxiety, fear moodiness, worry, envy, frustration, Jealousy and Loneliness. They respond more poorly to stressor and are more likely to interpret ordinary situations as threatening and minor frustrations as hopelessly difficult (Hetteema, Neale, Myers, Prescott, & Kendler, 2006; Ormel et al., 2013).

1.1. Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between socio-economic status and spousal abuse
2. There is no significant relationship between traits of openness and spousal abuse.
3. There is no significant relationship between traits of conscientiousness and spousal abuse.
4. There is no significant relationship between traits of extraversion and spousal abuse.
5. There is no significant relationship between traits of agreeableness and spousal abuse.
6. There is no significant relationship between traits of neuroticism and spousal abuse.

1.1. Method of Study

The study adopted the correlational design method. The population of the study will consist of married teachers in public secondary schools in Delta Central Senatorial District of Delta State. Delta Central Senatorial District is made up of eight (8) local government areas namely: Ethiope East, Ethiope West, Okpe, Sapele, Udu, Ughelli South, Ughelli North and Uvwie, with a total population of one hundred and eighty (180) secondary schools. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 600 respondents from 60 secondary schools. It is worthy to note that the researcher randomly selected respondents for the study from each of the selected school in the Senatorial District. The sample comprised of 300 married men and 300 married women. The instrument for the study was a questionnaire titled Spousal Abuse Scale (SAS). This was designed, validated and had a reliability level of 0.85. Data was collected and analysed using regression statistics.

2. Presentation and Discussion of Results

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between socio-economic status and spouse abuse.

Table-1. Regression Analysis of socio-economic status and spouse abuse.

Model Summary					
R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimation		
0.035	0.001	0.000	3.2186		
Anova					
	Sum of Square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	7.427	1	7.427	0.717	0.397
Residual	6193.238	598	10.357		
Total	6200.665	599			

Table 1 showed that in the regression output, there is a linear relationship between socio-economic status and spouse abuse. This is indicated in the computed F value of 0.717 and a P-value of 0.397 where the P-value of 0.397 was greater than the alpha level of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between socio-economic status and spouse abuse was accepted (retained). The R² adjusted value of 0.000 showed that 0% of variance of spouse abuse was accounted for by socio-economic status.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between traits of openness and spouse abuse.

Table-2. Regression Analysis of traits of openness and spouse abuse.

Model Summary					
R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimation		
0.153	0.023	0.022	3.18205		
Anova					
	Sum of Square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	145.658	1	145.658	14.385	0.000
Residual	6055.007	598	10.125		
Total	6200.665	599			

Table 2 indicated that in the regression output there is linear relationship between traits of openness and spouse abuse. This is indicated in the computed F-value of 14.385 and a P-value of 0.000 at an alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there was no significant relationship between traits of openness and spouse abuse was rejected. This implied that there was significant relationship between traits of openness and spouse abuse. The R² adjusted value of 0.022 showed that 2.2% of variance spouse abuse was accounted for by traits of openness.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between traits of conscientiousness and spouse abuse.

Table-3. Regression Analysis of traits of conscientiousness and spouse abuse.

Model Summary					
R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimation		
0.105	0.011	0.009	3.20222		
Anova					
	Sum of Square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	68.652	1	68.652	6.695	0.010
Residual	6132.013	598	10.254		
Total	6200.665	599			

The result in Table 3 showed that in the regression output there is a linear relationship between traits of conscientiousness and spouse abuse. This is indicated in the computed F-value of 6.695 and a P-value of 0.010 at an alpha level of 0.05. However, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between traits of conscientiousness and spouse abuse was rejected. This indicated that there was significant relationship between traits of conscientiousness and spouse abuse. The R² adjusted value of 0.009 revealed that 0.9% of variance of spouse abuse was accounted for by traits of conscientiousness.

Hypothesis 4

There is no significant relationship between traits of extraversion and spouse abuse.

Table-4. Regression Analysis of traits of extraversion and spouse abuse.

Model Summary					
R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimation		
0.038	0.001	0.000	3.21779		
Anova					
	Sum of Square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	8.878	1	8.878	0.857	0.355
Residual	6191.787	598	10.354		
Total	6200.665	599			

The results in Table 4 indicated in the regression output that there is a linear relationship between traits of extraversion and spouse abuse. This is shown in the computed F-value of 0.857 and a P-value of 0.05, where the P-value of 0.355 was greater than the alpha level of 0.05. However, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between traits of extraversion and spouse abuse was accepted (retained). The R² adjusted value of 0.000 showed that 0% variance of spouse abuse was accounted for by the traits of extraversion.

Hypothesis 5

There is no significant relationship between traits of agreeableness and spouse abuse

Table-5. Regression Analysis of traits of agreeableness and spouse abuse.

Model Summary					
R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimation		
0.082	0.007	0.005	3.20920		
Anova					
	Sum of Square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	41.874	1	41.874	4.066	0.044
Residual	6158.791	598	10.299		
Total	6200.665	599			

The results in Table 5, revealed in the regression output a linear relationship between traits of agreeableness and spouse abuse. This is shown in the computed F-value of 4.066 and a P-value of 0.044 at an alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between traits of agreeableness and spouse of abuse was rejected. This showed that there was significant relationship between traits of agreeableness and spouse abuse. The R² adjusted value of 0.005 revealed that 0.5% variance of traits of spouse abuse was accounted for traits of agreeableness.

Hypothesis 6

There is no significant relationship between traits of neuroticism and spouse abuse.

Table-6. Regression Analysis of traits of neuroticism and spouse abuse.

Model Summary					
R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimation		
0.186	0.035	0.033	3.16380		
Anova					
	Sum of Square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	214.912	1	214.912	21.471	0.000
Residual	5985.753	598	10.010		
Total	6200.665	599			

In Table 6, the result in the regression output reveal a linear relationship between traits of neuroticism and spouse abuse.

This is indicated in the computed F-value of 21.471 and a P-value of 0.000 at an alpha level of 0.05, where the P-value of 0.000 was less than the alpha level of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicated that there was significant relationship between traits of neuroticism and spouse abuse. The R² adjusted value of 0.033 indicated that 3.3% variance of spouse abuse was accounted for traits of neuroticism.

3. Discussion of Findings

The result in hypothesis one revealed that there was positive relationship between socio-economic status and spouse abuse. The socio-economic status of families are based on family income, parental education level, parent occupation and social status in the community. The finding is in line with [Amatoo and Previti \(2003\)](#) who stated that lower level of income, educational attainment and occupational prestige were associated with higher rates of marital problems, less marital happiness and greater instability.

The finding in hypothesis two indicated that there was positive significant relationship between traits of openness and spouse abuse. The finding showed that people who are open think and act in an individualistic manner and in a non conforming way.

This finding supports the study of [Donnellan, Conger, and Bryant \(2004\)](#) who found that independent observers judged open men and women to have less negative interactions while discussing their relationship. This finding is also in line with [Robert and Sutin \(2009\)](#) who stated that in marital home situation were both spouse tend to have different level of openness, there is every possibility that spouse abuse will be very much visible in the marital relationship because there will be conflict of interest and priority of choice where the male will want to claim dominance as the head of the home while the woman will tend to satisfy her interest as to what she feels is correct and comfortable due to the presence of openness in her personality.

The finding in hypotheses 3 revealed that there was positive significant relationship between traits of conscientiousness and spouse abuse. This implies that people on low conscientiousness are more likely to be abused because they make bad choices and misbehave during marriage by saying hurting things, getting into arguments and fighting.

The finding in hypotheses 4 indicated positive relationship between traits of extraversion and spouse abuse. This result showed that there was no significant relationship between the traits of extraversion and spouse abuse.

This means that the extroverted people are sociable, self confident and strongly influenced by forces in the environment. This findings is in line with the studies of [Field and O'Keefe \(2004\)](#) in their previous research on sensation about an extravert who revealed a positive association with accidents and physical violence's and traumatic injury. However, several studies have associated extraversion with several positive relationship variables such as satisfaction, marital success and intimacy ([White, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 2004](#)).

The result in hypothesis 5 revealed that there was positive significant relationship between traits of agreeableness and spouse abuse. Agreeableness is associated with love style, relationship, satisfaction and marital stability.

This finding is in line with [Fehr and Broughton \(2001\)](#) who found that high agreeableness is related to companionate love and low agreeableness was associated with, passionate love. Also the finding is line with the view of [Sousou \(2004\)](#) who found that agreeableness is related to storage for women and agape and negatively related to Ludus and Pragma for men.

The funding in hypothesis 6, indicated that there was positive significant relationship between neuroticism and spouse abuse among couples. This could be as a result of fear, worry, envy, frustration, jealousy and loneliness.

The finding supports the study of [Gattis, Berns, Simpson, and Christensen \(2004\)](#) who found that spouses neuroticism was higher in distressed spouses who sought counseling than in non-distressed spouse. The finding was also in line with the studies of [Hayes and Joseph \(2003\)](#) who found that both husbands and wives neuroticism at the beginning of the study predicted greater likelihood of divorce.

However, the finding is also in support of the studies of [Caughlin, Huston, and Houts \(2000\)](#) who reported a similar finding from 13 years longitudinal study that each partner's trait anxiety at the beginning of the study predicted both their own and their spouse's subsequent marital dissatisfaction.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings from the study, the following conclusion were drawn. The study revealed that traits of openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness and neuroticism have significant relationship with spouse abuse among couples. Socio-economic status and extraversion had no significant relationship with spouse abuse among couples.

5. Recommendations

On the basis of the above findings, the following recommendations were made.

- 1 Counselor Educators should equip those in training with relevant skills so that they can assist both abusers and victims to acquire positive behaviour and related with each other positively.
- 2 Practicing counselors can assist the victims to identify the weak behavioural pattern and strengthen the same so that they can overcome the abusive behaviour of the partners.
- 3 The counseling Association in each State should organized seminars, conference and workshops on regular basis to keep married men and women on the consequences of spouse abuse.
- 4 Counselors should make their lessons interesting and attractive for couples to learn more effectively on spouse abuse.

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