IJAAR PUBLISHING®

International Journal of Advanced Academic Research| ISSN: 2488-9849
Vol. 12, Issue 8 (2026) | https://doi.org/10.46654/jte5ex96

Domestic Violence Among Married Secondary School Teachers: Examining Differences by Gender, Educational and Family Background in Rivers State

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Abstract
The study assessed the difference of gender, educational background and family background on domestic violence among married persons in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a correlational survey design and was conducted in selected senior secondary schools across the three senatorial districts of Rivers State. The population comprised 3,186 married secondary school teachers in 323 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. A sample of 540 married teachers was selected using a multi-stage random sampling technique, while 513 properly completed questionnaires were used for data analysis. The instrument was validated by the researcher's supervisor and two experts in Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling. Reliability was established using the Cronbach Alpha method, yielding an overall coefficient of 0.81. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the independent samples t-test and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that gender, educational background and family background had no statistically significant difference on domestic violence among married persons in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The study concluded that domestic violence was not significantly influenced by these demographic characteristics. The study recommended that counselling services, emotional intelligence training, conflict resolution programmes and public awareness campaigns be strengthened to promote healthy marital relationships and reduce domestic violence among married persons in Rivers State.

Keywords: Domestic violence; Gender; Education; Family; Married persons; Secondary schools; Rivers State.

Introduction

Marriage is one of the oldest social institutions and remains an important foundation of family life and social organisation. A stable marital relationship contributes to the well-being of spouses, children and society, whereas persistent conflict and abusive behaviour undermine family relationships and individual well-being. However, some marital relationships are characterised by persistent conflict and domestic violence, making domestic violence an important social concern because of its potential consequences for spouses, children, families and communities. Domestic violence refers broadly to abusive behaviour occurring in a domestic or intimate relationship. in marriage, it be perpetrated by one spouse against the other and take physical, psychological, sexual, emotional or economic forms. Intimate partner violence (IPV), a closely related concept, refers to behaviour by a current or former intimate partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm. Oloniniyi et al. (2022), examined the prevalence and pattern of IPV and reported that both men and women were affected. Similarly, Folayan et al. (2022) examined factors associated with IPV among residents in Nigeria, demonstrating the continuing relevance of IPV as a social and public health concern.

Domestic violence should, however, be distinguished from violence against women. Violence against women is a gender-specific concept, whereas domestic violence or IPV involve either spouse. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that women bear a disproportionate global burden of IPV and identifies intimate partner violence as one of the most common forms of violence against women. This distinction is particularly relevant to the present study because the participants comprise both male and female married teachers.In Nigeria, available evidence also demonstrates the continuing importance of examining IPV. The Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey reported that 28% of women aged 15-49 had experienced physical or sexual violence, while 11% had experienced physical violence during the twelve months preceding the survey (NPC & ICF International, 2014). More recent Nigerian research has also examined IPV among adult populations and found that both men and women are affected, providing a broader basis for examining domestic violence across gender groups (Oloniniyi et al., 2022).

Gender is therefore an important variable in understanding domestic violence among married persons. Although women experience a disproportionate burden of IPV globally, men are not excluded from experiencing violence in intimate relationships. Nigerian evidence has documented IPV among both men and women, suggesting that gender should be examined empirically rather than assumed to determine victimisation or perpetration. Oloniniyi et al. (2022), for example, investigated IPV among Nigerian adults and reported that both men and women were affected during the period studied. Educational background also be associated with marital relationships and the management of conflict. Azhar et al. (2016) described education as an important factor in human development and improved living conditions. Differences in educational attainment therefore be associated with differences in communication, conflict resolution and awareness of healthy interpersonal relationships.

Empirical evidence has examined the relationship between education and marital violence, although the population investigated must be considered. Kreager et al. (2013), for example, examined the relationship between women's education, marital violence and divorce using data from 914 married women. Their findings showed that education was associated with marital stability and also influenced the likelihood of leaving violent marriages. Because the study focused specifically on married women, its findings should not be directly generalised to male married persons. The present study extends the examination of educational background to both male and female married teachers and seeks to determine whether

domestic violence differs according to educational attainment. Family background represents another factor that shape interpersonal relationships and behaviour in marriage. It encompasses the conditions, relationships, experiences and patterns of interaction in the family in which an individual is raised. These early experiences influence emotional development, attitudes toward relationships, communication patterns and approaches to resolving disagreements (Muola, 2010). Experiences in the family of origin also continue to influence interpersonal relationships in adulthood, including marital relationships (Goldenberg, Stanton & Goldenberg, 2017).

Individuals who grow up in families characterised by persistent conflict, hostility or violence be exposed to patterns of interaction that influence their perceptions of acceptable behaviour in intimate relationships. Conversely, supportive family environments provide opportunities to observe constructive communication, mutual respect and non-violent approaches to resolving disagreements. Exposure to family conflict does not, however, determine that an individual will engage in domestic violence as an adult. Rather, family background represents an experiential context that is associated with later relationship patterns and therefore warrants empirical investigation. Similarly, frequent parental conflict exposes children to negative communication patterns, whereas positive family relationships provide models of cooperation, respect and constructive problem-solving. Domestic violence has consequences that extend beyond the immediate relationship between spouses. Persistent conflict and abusive behaviour negatively affect the emotional and psychological well-being of spouses and disrupt family relationships. Children exposed to domestic violence experience emotional distress, behavioural difficulties, problems with academic functioning and challenges in developing healthy relationships. Families also experience emotional strain, instability and other social difficulties. These consequences underscore the need to identify factors associated with domestic violence and examine whether such factors differ among groups of married persons.

The study of domestic violence among married teachers is particularly relevant because teachers occupy an important position in the educational and social development of children and young people. Examining domestic violence among married teachers according to gender, educational background and family background therefore provide useful evidence about differences in this population. Against this background, the present study focuses specifically on gender, educational background and family background as explanatory/grouping variables associated with domestic violence among married teachers.

Statement of the Problem

Domestic violence is a major social and public health problem that affects people of different ages, cultures, educational backgrounds and income levels. Victims often suffer physical injuries, emotional trauma, anxiety, depression, fear, stress and post-traumatic stress disorder. Pregnant women experience pregnancy complications, permanent disability, or death affecting both mother and unborn child. Economic abuse led to poverty, homelessness, unemployment and social isolation. Children raised in violent homes are at risk of low self-esteem, poor academic performance, behavioural problems, substance abuse and risky sexual behaviour. Repeated exposure to family violence also encourages children to accept violence as a normal method of resolving conflict, increasing the likelihood of becoming future victims or perpetrators. Domestic violence also contributes to homicide, severe injuries and long-term physical and mental health problems affecting victims, perpetrators, children and other family members. Reports of deaths linked to domestic violence continue to demonstrate the seriousness of the problem. Reducing domestic violence requires identifying factors associated with abusive behaviour and those that promote healthy marital relationships. Such

knowledge support preventive measures, counselling programmes and family interventions. Against this background, this study therefore examined whether gender, educational background and family background were associated with differences in domestic violence among married teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This study sought to:

1. determine whether domestic violence differs significantly by gender among married teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. determine whether domestic violence differs significantly across educational-background groups among married teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.
3. determine whether domestic violence differs significantly across family-background groups among married teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. Does domestic violence differ significantly by gender among married teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?
2. Does domestic violence differ significantly across educational-background groups among married teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?
3. Does domestic violence differ significantly across family-background groups among married teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in domestic violence by gender among married teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference in domestic violence across educational-background groups among married teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

H_{03}: There is no significant difference in domestic violence across family-background groups among married teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Concept of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence, also referred to as intimate partner violence, is a major public health and social problem affecting individuals, families and communities. It refers to physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, economic, or verbal abuse committed by a current or former spouse or intimate partner to control, intimidate, or harm another person (CDCP, 2012, 2012; WHO, 2017). The terms domestic violence, partner violence and intimate partner violence are often used interchangeably to describe abusive behaviour occurring between intimate partners, while family violence also includes child abuse, elder abuse and adolescent-to-parent violence (Beel, 2023).Domestic violence remains widespread in many countries. Smith et al. (2017) reported that 37.3% of women experienced sexual violence, physical violence, or stalking during their lifetime, while 47.1% experienced psychological aggression. The same study found that 30.9% of men experienced sexual violence, physical violence, or stalking and 47.3% reported psychological aggression. Global estimates indicate that about 35% of women have experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner during their lifetime (WHO, 2014). Earlier reports also showed that between 10% and 69% of women experienced abuse by intimate partners, with many sufferings physical, sexual, psychological, or economic violence (Abayomi, 2014). These figures show that domestic violence remains a persistent problem.

The health consequences are severe. Victims experience chronic pain, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, injuries, disability and death (Okuda et al., 2015). Emotional abuse reduces self-esteem, create fear, anxiety, social withdrawal and psychological distress. Sexual violence damages trust and marital intimacy, while economic abuse limits financial independence and access to basic needs. Domestic violence also affects children, relatives, workplaces and communities. Evidence from Nigeria shows that domestic violence remains common. A Public Opinion poll conducted by NOIPolls Limited in partnership with Project Alert on domestic violence has revealed an increasing prevalence of domestic violence across Nigeria in recent times as reported by about 8 in 10 (78 percent) respondents (Elebeke, 2016). Reports also documented cases of wives abusing husbands physically, verbally and sexually, although many male victims do not report such incidents. Media reports continue to document cases involving severe assaults, threats and homicide between spouses.

National statistics also reveal increasing prevalence. Fasasi (2020) reported that domestic violence among women aged 15-49 increased from 25% in 2008 to 31% in 2013 and 36% in 2018. The study also found that more than one-quarter of women accepted wife beating under certain circumstances. *ThisDay* (2011) The This Day Newspaper report indicating that about 50% of Nigerian women have been battered by their husbands highlights a long-standing crisis in Nigeria. These daunting statistics pointed out that the prevalence varied, with higher rates occasionally reported among educated or urban-dwelling demographics, yet reporting rates to the Nigeria Police Force remained critically low. Data from the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (2015) indicated that one in four married women experienced physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. Regional studies have also reported high prevalence. Rates ranged from 42% in northern Nigeria (Tanimu et al., 2018), 29% in the South-West (Okenwa et al., 2009), 78.8% in the South-East (Okemgbo et al., 2002). Udoyen et al. (2017) identified high prevalence in the Niger Delta, with Rivers State recording about 60%, while Edo, Imo, Cross River, Akwa Ibom and Bayelsa also reported high rates. These findings showed that domestic violence remains a major concern in the region.

Researchers describe domestic violence as a pattern of behaviour used to gain power or maintain control over an intimate partner through intimidation, threats, humiliation, manipulation, coercion, or physical force (Ashifa, 2022; Mellouki et al., 2023). Abuse occurs regardless of age, religion, educational level, income, or social background. Victims often live in fear, isolate themselves from relatives and friends and experience difficulty leaving abusive relationships. Domestic violence occurs in different forms. Physical violence includes assault, hitting, slapping, kicking, choking, burning, pushing, or the use of weapons. Sexual violence includes rape, forced sexual acts and other non-consensual sexual activities. Emotional and psychological abuse involves insults, threats, intimidation, humiliation, manipulation, isolation, stalking, emotional blackmail, gas-lighting and controlling behaviour. Economic violence includes withholding money, restricting access to financial resources and controlling household finances. Other forms include cyberstalking, tracking devices, revenge pornography, abuse of religious beliefs and restrictions on movement or social interaction (Ukwuije, 2012).

Studies conducted in Rivers State show that both husbands and wives experience domestic violence. Nwoke and Eremie (2020) reported that men commonly experience verbal abuse, especially when unable to meet expected family responsibilities. Such experiences lead to emotional distress, alcohol misuse, or extramarital relationships. Women commonly experience physical assault, isolation, financial neglect and emotional abuse. Castro, Nobles

and Zavala (2017) identified factors such as disagreements over finances, childcare, household responsibilities, suspected infidelity, refusal of sex and communication problems as common sources of marital conflict associated with domestic violence. Domestic violence in this study refers to physical, psychological/emotional, sexual, economic and controlling behaviours perpetrated by one spouse against the other in marriage.

Empirical Review

Empirical evidence on domestic violence has expanded in recent years, showing that both men and women experience or perpetrate abuse in intimate relationships. Earlier studies concentrated mainly on violence against women, but recent findings showed that domestic violence affects both sexes, although the forms and frequency differ. Research has also examined the influence of gender, educational background and family background on domestic violence, producing mixed findings. Bhona et al. (2019) examined the relationship between socioeconomic factors and intimate partner violence using a household survey involving 532 women aged 18-60 years. The researchers used a socio-demographic questionnaire and the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2). Bhona et al. (2019) found that women with higher educational attainment were less likely to commit severe physical violence against their partners than women with lower educational levels. Higher education appeared to reduce the likelihood of aggressive behaviour in intimate relationships.

Oguntayo et al. (2018) investigated the influence of socio-economic factors on domestic violence among married persons in Ibadan, Nigeria. The findings showed no significant difference in domestic violence based on gender ($F = .06$, $p > .05$). The study concluded that gender alone did not explain differences in domestic violence among married persons. During the COVID-19 lockdown, Oguntayo et al. (2020) examined personality traits, emotional intelligence, socio-contextual factors and spousal violence among 356 participants in Lagos, Nigeria. Multiple regression analysis revealed no significant gender difference in spousal violence ($F = .05$). The findings showed that both men and women were susceptible to domestic violence during the lockdown period. Educational background has also received considerable attention. Okedare and Fawole (2023) investigated intimate partner violence among 1,050 young women aged 18-24 years in slum and non-slum communities in Ibadan, Nigeria. The study adopted a cross-sectional design and collected data using a modified version of the World Health Organization Violence Against Women questionnaire. Binary logistic regression showed that women with secondary education experienced lower levels of intimate partner violence than those with lower educational attainment. The study also found that low educational attainment among male partners, alcohol consumption and involvement with other women increased the likelihood of physical violence.

Mapoma et al. (2022) examined the relationship between education and domestic violence among 9,552 married women using data from the Zambia Demographic and Health Survey. Women whose educational level was similar to that of their husbands were less likely to experience domestic violence than those with lower educational attainment. Differences in educational status between spouses were associated with variations in domestic violence, suggesting that education influences marital relationships. Family background has also been linked to domestic violence. Gubi and Wandera (2022) investigated intimate partner violence among 2,559 ever-married men using data from the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey. The study adopted a correlational survey design and analysed data using chi-square and binary logistic regression. Men who witnessed violence between their parents during childhood were more likely to experience emotional abuse and other forms of intimate partner violence in adulthood than those who had not witnessed parental violence. The

findings indicate that childhood exposure to family violence influence later intimate relationships.

Tan et al. (2022) examined the relationship between attitudes toward intimate partner violence and self-confidence among 1,125 university students. The researchers found that students whose parents were separated reported greater acceptance of intimate partner violence than those whose parents lived together. The findings showed that family experiences shape attitudes toward violence in intimate relationships. Okedare and Fawole (2023) also reported that family characteristics influenced intimate partner violence. Women whose parents were separated or widowed had greater odds of experiencing physical violence than those whose parents remained together. Higher levels of violence were also reported among respondents whose parents' consumed alcohol. In some communities, respondents whose fathers had secondary education recorded higher levels of psychological violence. These findings showed that parental relationships and family experiences affect later marital behaviour.

Methodology

This study adopted a comparative survey design. The survey design enabled the researcher to collect data from a large group of respondents using a structured questionnaire. The study was conducted in selected senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Rivers State, located in the Niger Delta region, comprises 23 Local Government Areas grouped into three senatorial districts: Rivers East, Rivers South-East and Rivers West. The population comprised 3,186 married secondary school teachers, consisting of 1,973 males (61.9%) and 1,213 females (38.1%), in 323 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State (RSSSSB, 2024). A sample of 540 married teachers was selected through multi-stage random sampling. Two Local Government Areas were selected from each of the three senatorial districts, followed by six senior secondary schools from each district. Finally, 30 married teachers were selected from each school through simple random sampling. Of the 540 questionnaires distributed, 513 properly completed copies were retrieved and analysed, comprising 239 males (46.6%) and 274 females (53.4%). This unequal representation is acknowledged as a limitation when interpreting gender-based findings.

Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled: Domestic Violence Scale (DVS). The instrument consisted of five sections. Section A obtained respondents' demographic information. Section B contained 30 items on gender; Section C comprised 10 items on educational background and Section D contained 10 items on family background. Given the sensitive nature of domestic violence, the questionnaires were completed privately and individually by the respondents. No spouse, colleague or unauthorised person was permitted to be present while a respondent completed the instrument. The completed questionnaires were collected and securely handled to protect respondents' privacy and confidentiality. Responses were rated on a four-point Likert scale. Face and content validity of the instrument were established by the researcher's supervisor and two experts in Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling. Their observations and recommendations were incorporated before the instrument was administered.

The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha method. 30 married teachers who met the eligibility criteria but were outside the study sample/area participated in the pilot and were excluded from the main study which produced an overall reliability coefficient of 0.81. The subscales recorded reliability coefficients of 0.81 for Personality Traits, 0.82 for Locus of Control, 0.79 for Emotional Intelligence and 0.80 for Domestic Violence, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. The researchers, assisted by

four trained research assistants, personally administered the questionnaires after obtaining permission from school principals. 540 questionnaires were administered; 513 were properly completed and usable, giving a response rate of 95.0%, while 27 (5.0%) were excluded because they were not returned or were unusable. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the descriptive research questions. Independent Samples t-test and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to test the research hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: Does domestic violence differ significantly by gender among married teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in domestic violence by gender among married teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Independent-Samples t-Test of the Difference in Domestic Violence Scores by Gender among Married Teachers in Senior Secondary Schools

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	t-value	df	p-value	Mean Diff	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Cohen's d
Male	239	39.23	7.374	0.477							
					-.126	511	.900	-0.087	-1.452	1.277	-0.011
Female	274	39.32	8.235	0.497							
Total	513	—	—	—							

The results in Table 1 show that male married persons (M = 39.23, SD = 7.37, *n* = 239) and female married persons (M = 39.32, SD = 8.24, *n* = 274) had similar mean scores on domestic violence. The small mean difference (-0.087) showed that gender had little difference on domestic violence among married persons in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The independent samples t-test revealed no statistically significant difference in domestic-violence scores between male and female married teachers, $t(511) = -0.126$, $p = .900$, $d \approx -.01$. Since the *p*-value is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted. This indicates that gender has no significant difference on domestic violence among married persons in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: Does domestic violence differ significantly across educational-background groups among married teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Hypothesis 2; There is no significant difference in domestic violence across educational-background groups among married teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 2: One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of Differences in Domestic Violence Scores across Educational-Background Groups among Married Teachers

Educational Background	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	F-value	p-value	Eta-squared
ND/NCE	77	39.92	8.459	0.964	38.00	41.84			
HND/B.Sc.	214	39.67	7.901	0.540	38.60	40.73			
M.Ed./M.Sc.	126	39.28	8.279	0.738	37.82	40.74	1.363	.253	.008
Ph.D.	96	37.89	6.410	0.654	36.59	39.18			
Total	513	39.28	7.838	0.346	38.60	39.96			

The results in Table 2 show slight differences in the mean domestic violence scores across educational levels. Respondents with ND/NCE qualifications recorded the highest mean score (M = 39.92, SD = 8.46), followed by those with HND/B.Sc. (M = 39.67, SD = 7.90), M.Ed./M.Sc. (M = 39.28, SD = 8.28), while those with Ph.D. qualifications recorded the lowest mean score (M = 37.89, SD = 6.41). The close mean scores showed that educational background had little difference on domestic violence among married persons in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Domestic-violence scores did not differ significantly across the four educational-background groups, $F(3,509) = 1.363$, $p = .253$, $\eta^2 = .008$, indicating that educational background explained only 0.8% of the variation in domestic violence scores. Therefore, educational background has no significant difference on domestic violence among married persons in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Question 3: Does domestic violence differ significantly across family-background groups among married teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in domestic violence across family-background groups among married teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 3: One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of Differences in Domestic Violence Scores across Family-Background Groups among Married Teachers

Family Background	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	F-value	p-value	Eta-squared
Intact	255	39.46	8.004	0.501	38.47	40.45			
Divorce	124	38.56	7.407	0.665	37.24	39.87			
Single	92	38.99	7.306	0.762	37.48	40.50	1.058	.366	.006
Separated	42	40.93	9.081	1.401	38.10	43.76			
Total	513	39.28	7.838	0.346	38.60	39.96			

The results in Table 3 show slight differences in the mean domestic violence scores based on family background. Respondents from separated families recorded the highest mean score (M = 40.93, SD = 9.08), followed by those from intact families (M = 39.46, SD = 8.00), single-parent families (M = 38.99, SD = 7.31) and divorced families (M = 38.56, SD = 7.41). The close mean scores indicate that family background had little difference on domestic violence among married persons in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Domestic-violence scores did not differ significantly across the four family-background groups, $F(3,509) = 1.058$, $p = .366$, $\eta^2 = .006$. Since the *p*-value is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted. The effect size was negligible ($\eta^2 = .006$), indicating that family background accounted for only 0.6% of the variation in domestic

violence scores. Therefore, family background has no significant difference on domestic violence among married persons in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings for research question one revealed that gender had no significant difference on domestic violence among married persons in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Male and female respondents recorded very similar mean scores on domestic violence and the independent samples t-test showed no statistically significant difference between the two groups. This showed that domestic violence was experienced at comparable levels by both male and female married persons, indicating that gender alone did not account for variations in domestic violence among the respondents. The finding is consistent with the earlier study by Oguntayo et al. (2018), who reported no significant difference in domestic violence based on gender among married persons in Ibadan, Nigeria. Similarly, the finding agrees with Oguntayo et al. (2020), who found no significant gender difference in spousal violence during the COVID-19 lockdown, concluding that both men and women were susceptible to domestic violence. The result also supports the findings of Smith et al. (2017), who reported that both men and women experienced comparable levels of psychological aggression and other forms of intimate partner violence. Furthermore, the finding aligns with Hamel (2016), whose analysis using the Conflict Tactics Scales indicated that men and women reported similar rates of verbal and physical aggression in intimate relationships. These findings collectively showed that domestic violence is not exclusively a gender-specific phenomenon but can affect either spouse depending on prevailing interpersonal, social and environmental circumstances.

The findings for research question two indicated that educational background had no significant difference on domestic violence among married persons in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The result showed that educational attainment alone did not significantly influence the occurrence of domestic violence among married persons in the study area. This finding is consistent with the study of Oguntayo et al. (2018), which reported that socio-economic factors did not significantly differentiate domestic violence among married persons. The finding also agrees with the observation of Oguntayo et al. (2020) that personal and socio-contextual factors, rather than demographic characteristics such as gender alone, better explain variations in spousal violence. However, the finding contradicts Bhona et al. (2019), who found that higher educational attainment reduced the likelihood of severe physical violence among women, suggesting that education could serve as a protective factor against abusive behaviour. Similarly, the result differs from Okedare and Fawole (2023), who reported that women with higher educational attainment experienced lower levels of intimate partner violence compared with those with lower educational backgrounds. Mapoma et al. (2022) also found a significant relationship between educational attainment and domestic violence among married women, indicating that educational differences between spouses influenced the likelihood of experiencing violence.

The findings for research question three indicated that family background had no significant difference on domestic violence among married persons in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Although respondents from separated families recorded the highest mean domestic violence score, followed by those from intact, single-parent and divorced families, the differences among the groups were small and not statistically significant. The ANOVA result further confirmed that family background accounted for only a negligible proportion of the variation in domestic violence. This finding suggests that family background alone did not significantly influence domestic violence among married persons in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The finding is inconsistent with

the study of Gubi and Wandera (2022), who found that men who witnessed violence between their parents during childhood were more likely to experience emotional abuse and other forms of intimate partner violence in adulthood than those who had not witnessed parental violence. Similarly, the finding contradicts Tan et al. (2022), who reported that university students whose parents were separated showed greater acceptance of intimate partner violence than those whose parents lived together, indicating that early family experiences influenced attitudes toward violence in intimate relationships. The result also differs from Okedare and Fawole (2023), who found that women whose parents were separated or widowed were more likely to experience intimate partner violence than those whose parents remained together. These previous studies showed that family experiences during childhood shape later marital behaviour and vulnerability to domestic violence.

Conclusion

The study found no statistically significant differences in domestic-violence scores across gender, educational-background and family-background groups among the sampled married teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings showed that domestic violence occurs across different demographic groups and is not determined by these characteristics alone. Therefore, efforts to reduce domestic violence should focus on broader psychological, interpersonal and socio-environmental factors rather than relying solely on demographic variables.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, it was recommended that:

1. School counsellors should organize regular marital counselling and conflict resolution programmes for married teachers to promote healthy relationships and reduce domestic violence.
2. Government and relevant stakeholders should implement public awareness campaigns that emphasize that domestic violence can affect both men and women regardless of their educational or family background.
3. Educational authorities should incorporate emotional intelligence, effective communication and anger management training into staff development programmes for married teachers.
4. Community-based organizations and family welfare agencies should strengthen accessible counselling and support services for couples experiencing marital conflict before it escalates into domestic violence.

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