Spousal communication and socio-demographic variables as predictors of domestic violence among married couples

Komunikasi pasangan dan variabel sosio demografi sebagai prediktor kekerasan dalam rumah tangga di antara pasangan yang sudah menikah

Emmanuel E. Uye[1]*, Esohe G Ehondor[2], Abiola E. Sholarin[3]

[1] Department of Psychology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The menace of domestic violence has continued to shake many marriages in Nigeria with attendance consequences on the couples, children and society. Studies have examined factors predicting domestic violence with contradicting results. Therefore, this study examined spousal communication and socio-demographic predictors of domestic violence among married couples. The study adopted cross-sectional survey design while purposive sampling technique was used to select three communities in Ketu Local Government Area in Lagos State. Data were collected from 250 participants using validated questionnaires. Data collected were analysed to test two hypotheses. The result showed significant relationship between spousal communication, income level and domestic violence. Also, the result indicated that spousal communication and income level jointly predicted domestic violence. Furthermore, spousal communication, income level, number of children and length of years in marriage independently predicted domestic violence. The study concluded that spousal communication and socio-demographic variables were strong predictors of domestic violence. It is recommended that married couples should create quality time for communication among themselves

KEY WORDS:

[1] Corresponding Author: Emmanuel E. Uye, email: emmanuel.e.uye@gmail.com, Department of Psychology, University of Ibadan, Oduduwa Road, Ibadan 200132, Oyo, Nigeria

domestic violence; income level; spousal communication

ABSTRAK

Ancaman kekerasan dalam rumah tangga terus mengguncang banyak pernikahan di Nigeria dengan konsekuensi yang terjadi pada pasangan, anak-anak, dan masyarakat. Studi telah menguji faktor-faktor yang memprediksi kekerasan dalam rumah tangga dengan hasil yang bertentangan. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini menguji komunikasi antarsuami-istri dan prediktor sosiodemografi dari kekerasan dalam rumah tangga di antara pasangan yang sudah menikah. Studi ini mengadopsi desain survei lintas-seksional sementara teknik pemilihan sampel yang disengaja digunakan untuk memilih tiga komunitas di Wilayah Pemerintahan Lokal Ketu di Negara Bagian Lagos. Data dikumpulkan dari 250 peserta menggunakan kuesioner yang telah divalidasi. Data yang terkumpul dianalisis untuk menguji dua hipotesis. Hasil menunjukkan hubungan yang signifikan antara komunikasi antarsuami-istri, tingkat pendapatan, dan kekerasan dalam rumah tangga. Juga, hasil tersebut menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi antarsuami-istri dan tingkat pendapatan secara bersama-sama memprediksi kekerasan dalam rumah tangga. Selain itu, komunikasi antarsuami-istri, tingkat pendapatan, jumlah anak, dan lamanya tahun dalam pernikahan secara independen memprediksi kekerasan dalam rumah tangga. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa komunikasi antarsuami-istri dan variabel sosiodemografi merupakan prediktor kuat dari kekerasan dalam rumah tangga. Disarankan agar pasangan yang sudah menikah menciptakan waktu berkualitas untuk berkomunikasi di antara mereka sendiri.

KATA KUNCI

KDRT; tingkat pendapatan; komunikasi antar suami-istri

Introduction

Marriage is a socially acceptable union between a man and a woman. It involves the coming together of two different individuals as husband and wife for the purposes of companionship, pleasure, procreation and sustenance of human races (Animashaun, 2019). One pervasive problem affecting the peaceful union between a man and a woman in marriage is domestic violence. Wilson (2023) described domestic violence as a pattern of abusive behaviour in a relationship that is used by one's partner to gain or maintain power and control over another partner. Terms such as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, battering, family violence, and intimate partner violence have been used interchangeably

with domestic violence in the literature (Onyekaiheako & Fwacs, 2015). Therefore, this study adapted the definition given by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2015) where domestic (or intimate) violence is defined as 'any behaviour within an intimate relationship that cause physical, sexual or psychological harm including act of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviour to one's partner. Domestic violence appears in different forms and manifestations such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, spiritual abuse, economic abuse and psychological (emotional) abuse (Wilson, 2023). Studies have shown that many of domestic violence are perpetrated by men to women (Enimapopo & Nwamadi, 2023; Umeh, 2022). For example, Huecker et al. (2023) reported that 500,000 woman compared to 100,000 men have been domestically abuse in several ways.

Domestic violence against women in marriage is a pervasive one, and it occurs in various cultures irrespective of the women's social, economic, religious, ethnic, or racial backgrounds (Klein et al., 2021; Skott, 2021). Globally, the prevalence of domestic violence against women was 55% and for Africa 51% (OECD, 2023). In Nigeria, domestic violence is on the increase. For example, Okedare and Fawole (2023) reported that prevalence of physical violence was 31.4%, sexual violence 37.1%, and psychological violence 58.6% among women in slum environments in Lagos state and these cuts across the States in Nigeria. Specifically, studies conducted across Nigeria have reported prevalence of domestic violence in different geopolitical zones as combined North 42%, South-west 29%, South-east 79%, and South-south 41% (Benebo et al., 2018).

Studies have investigated different predictors of domestic violence among various populations with contradicting results. One factor considered in this study as likely to predict domestic violence among married couples is spousal communication which is the exchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or sign between husband and wife (Usoroh et al., 2010). It tends to be the medium used by people to create and manage relationships between themselves. This ability and willingness for married couples to communicate have been found to be among the most important factors in maintaining a satisfying relationship (Mallory, 2022). Communication is a necessary ingredient in marriage as it is an inevitable requirement before the commencement of the relationship and also a necessary ingredient for the sustenance of the union. Studies have found that a couple who communicates effectively tends to score low on domestic violence scale compared to those who do not communicate effectively with their spouses (Awujo & Onwukwe, 2019; Onoyase, 2017).

One theory that explains how spousal communication can contribute to domestic violence among married couples is marital communication theory. The theory posits that conflict in marriage is due to inappropriate communication (Helms, 2013). That conflict ensues in a marriage relationship in a situation where there is confusion and lack of clarity in communication between husband and wife. This occurs where the partner who is receiving the message of the communication finds it very difficult to make a meaning out of the communication. Where there is such confusion and lack of understanding in the communication between couples, the tendency is for the confused partner to reject the communication thereby creating a vacuum, which leads to conflict. When applied to this study, domestic violence arises when couples have problems communicating effectively to one another. When messages are not well-conceived or when messages are not properly interpreted, it would trigger domestic violence among married couples. Awujo and Onwukwe (2019) has used the marital communication theory and found that lack of communication among couples is an important source of marital problems. This is because many things are repressed and left unsaid, the result of which leads to bitterness, frustration and tension within either of the partner

The second theory used to explain how spousal communication contributes to domestic violence is the social exchange theory developed by Homans, Blau and Emerson which has undergone several revisions (Cook et al., 2013). The theory posits that individuals strive to minimize cost and maximize rewards, likewise is the development of a relationship with someone which is based on the perceived outcomes as the reason to be in a marital relationship. When this outcome is perceived to be greater, couples tend to disclose more and develop a close relationship with each other. Thus, social exchange theory is based on a central premise that the exchange of social and material resources is a fundamental form of human interaction.

According to this theory, people weigh the potential benefits and risks of social relationships; when the risk outweighs the rewards, people will terminate and abandon that relationship. This could possibly explain the express occurrence of issues of divorce. This is a humanistic theory because it has intuitive credibility. It makes sense and is relative to actual communication practice. It has a systematic approach and it is timely. It also has heuristic value because it is applicable to situations. The viability of social exchange rests on the assumption that human beings recognize each other's situation, notice each other's needs, and in some ways are likely to engage in reciprocity- a condition in which a response is correlated to the worth of the original message. In other

words, human beings act with one another in full recognition that their acts will be noticed and in some way reciprocated (that is, they will receive a return on their communicative investment).

Relating this theory to this study, marital violence often arise when couples are not gaining much in the communication process between themselves which could trigger more domestic violence in their marriage

Another factor considered in this study as likely to predict domestic violence among married couples is income level. Income level is an economical and sociological term used to measure an individual's work experience, family economic and social position in relation to other people based on socio-economic parameters. Status APA Task Force on Socioeconomic (2006) conceptualizes income level as the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is measured as a combination of education, income and occupation. When viewed through a social class lens, privilege, power and control are emphasized. Income level is relevant to all facets of behavioural and social sciences. A family socio-economic status is based on family income. Studies have found that financial problems tend to increase domestic violence among married couples (Okhakhume et al., 2016). Therefore, married couples with less income tend to experience more domestic violence than married couples with high income status.

Besides the income level of the married couples, the number of children and length of marriage could also predict domestic violence among married couples. For example, studies have found the number of children (Onyekaiheako & Fwacs, 2015) and length of years in marriage (Abolakale, 2019) as additional socio-demographic predictors of domestic violence among married couples.

The issue of domestic violence has continued to generate intense interest among psychologists, health professionals and marriage counselors in the world and in a developing country such as Nigeria. This is because domestic violence has become a global burden with far reaching consequences on family building cohesive and peaceful coexistence. It is a menace that has a devastating effect on individual victims, their children, and the community at large.

Domestic violence has serious negative implications on society especially among married couples who have children. The high increase of youth involvement in different crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery, pipeline vandalism, prostitution, gang membership and drug addiction are caused as a result of domestic violence. This is because parents who are supposed to take

care of their children are not available to take good care of them, making these children to be hijacked by their peers or friends who then lure them to engage in anti-social behaviours (Arinze-Umeobi, 2008; Dinah, 2012). Also, domestic violence has far reaching physical and mental health implications with murder as an extreme consequence.

Although previous studies have investigated some predictors of domestic violence with contradicting results, few studies have investigated spousal communication and socio-demographic factors (e.g., income level, number of children at home and the number of years in marriage) as predictors of domestic violence among married couples especially in a developing country like Nigeria. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to determine whether spousal communication and socio-demographic factors would jointly and independently predict domestic violence among married couples in three metropolises in Lagos State, Nigeria. The specific objectives in this study were to examine the relationship among spousal communication, income level and domestic violence among married couples in Ketu Local Government Area (LGA), Lagos, Nigeria, meaning whether increased in spousal communication and income level would lead to less domestic violence among study participants. Also, to investigate whether spousal communication, income level, number of children and length of marriage would jointly and independently predict domestic violence among married couples in Ketu LGA, Lagos, Nigeria. The results of joint and independent contributions of each of these variables would predict the occurrence of domestic violence among participants in the population of study.

The study would be relevant to professional psychologists, social workers and counselors as it shed more light on the role spousal communication, income level, number of children and length in marriage play in domestic violence among married couples. Also, the findings of this study would help to design psycho-educational programmes (counseling, seminars, workshops, etc) to assist married couples who are currently experiencing domestic violence on how to improve their communication skills with their spouses.

Empirical Studies

Some studies have investigated the influence of spousal communication on domestic violence. For example, Awujoand Onwukwe (2019) investigated the relationship between verbal and non- verbal communication patterns and marital adjustment of married teachers in Port Harcourt metropolis. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated for the study. The

findings of this study revealed that verbal communication and non-verbal communication were significant predictors of marital adjustment among married public secondary school teachers in the Port Harcourt metropolis.

Extending further, Afolabi et al. (2017) examined communication patterns and demographic factors on marital satisfaction among 200 married couples. The result showed a significant negative relationship between communication patterns and marital satisfaction. In their own study, Onoyase (2017) investigated the determinant of marriage stability among married couples in North Central Nigeria. The finding showed no significant difference between married couples from Kogi and Benue states in their identification of communication as determinant of marriage stability. Further study by Adewale (2016) was on the influence of communication on domestic violence among couples in Surulere Local Government Area of Lagos metropolis. The result indicated a significant influence of communication on domestic violence among sampled participants.

A closely related study was by Esere et al. (2015) who investigated the influence of poor communication and faulty cognition on marital stability among married adults in Owerri metropolis. Six hundred questionnaire forms were randomly distributed among the married adults in Owerri metropolis. The study found that poor communication and faulty cognition were responsible for marital instability. Similarly, Onyekaiheako and Fwacs (2015) examined the cause and effect of communication breakdown in marriages. A total of 100 randomly selected married couples in Babcock University constituted the sample. The finding showed that most of the participants agreed to the statement that lack of effective communication was the cause of breakdown in marriage.

In their own study, Esere et al. (2014) investigated hindrances to and solutions to effective communication in marriage as expressed by married couples in Kogi State. The study findings revealed that participants viewed obstacles to effective communication to include getting home late on a regular basis, harsh tone of voice during conversation and bringing up memories of past events. The suggested solutions to these obstacles of effective communication were to consider one's spouse contributions, have trust in one's spouse and to consider spouse's opinions when discussing issues.

Earlier study by Esere et al. (2011) was on the influence of spousal communication on marital stability among 600 stratified randomly selected married couples in the Ilorin metropolis. The findings showed that most of the

participants agreed to the statement that lack of effective communication is the cause of marital stability. Along similar thinking, Usoroh et al. (2010) examined the role of spousal communication styles and marital violence among 300 civil servants in Akwa Ibom State. The result showed that married couples varied in their communication styles which affect domestic violence.

In order to determine the relationship among personal, situational, and socio-cultural factors and intimate partners' abuse among married couples, Oladeji (2013) found that all these factors significantly predicted intimate partners' abuse. So was Amao-Kehinde (2008) who conducted a study on effective communication skills training and conflict resolution strategies in the improvement of marital adjustment of married couples in Lagos State found that participants in the treatment group, that is, communication skills training and conflict resolution strategies scored significantly higher than participants in the control group. In the same study, it was revealed that there are significant statistical differences in the improvement of marital adjustment of subjects exposed to communication skills training and those in control groups. This implies that communication skills' training was effective.

Bradbury et al. (2000) in their own investigation on marital satisfaction interviewed 51 recently married couples where various cues, verbal and non-verbal that transpired between couples during interviews. It was found that close communication including body communication was an important factor in marital communication. The use of verbal and non-verbal ways of communication still retains their value in marriage up till now, Also, Esptein et al. (2004) reported that relationship focused standards, that is, standards for marriage that place a major emphasis or priority on the marriage are related to both marital adjustment and communication patterns.

Madanian et al. (2013) found among 120 new couples that marital satisfaction was greater amongst those who were older and had higher level of communication skills and understanding. Sagrestano et al. (2006) investigated the relationship among perceived marital power, the demand/withdraw interaction pattern, and self-report of the use of verbal aggression and physical violence among a sample of 42 married couples. The result showed that lower levels of perceived power by the husbands and higher levels of perceived power by the wives were associated with the use of verbal aggression and violence by husbands and wives. The husband demands wife withdraw interaction pattern was associated with husband's use of verbal aggression and the wife demands husband withdraw pattern was associated with husband's

verbal aggression and violence and with wife's violence.

Markman et al., (1993) examined the effect of communication deficits on domestic violence among 26 married couples. The study found that the more positively premarital couples related in their communication, the more satisfied they were in their relationship. They also found that the more dissatisfied they were in their communication, the more dissatisfied they were with their relationship. Willis and Briggs (1992) focused on tactile communication between men and women as a function of their relationship. The result indicated that couples who have been married for one year or more were less likely to touch one another and suggestions were made that the finding may provide a sign of trouble in the relationship.

Also, studies have been done on some socio-demographic variables that would influence domestic violence among married couples. For example, Aliakbari et al. (2018) examined socio-demographic factors related to domestic violence among Iranian women. The study found a significant relationship between domestic violence and length in marriage and the wife's independent income as well as the family's income. In their own study, Bett et al. (2017) examined the relationship between annual income and marital satisfaction among career couples. The study found significant positive correlation of socio-demographic variables including annual income with marital satisfaction.

In yet another study, Okhakhume et al. (2016) investigated the influence of socio-economic variables on domestic violence among 200 married couples. The result revealed that the monthly income has significant influence on domestic violence, meaning that participants with low monthly income experienced higher levels of domestic violence while participants with high monthly income experienced lower levels of domestic violence. Further study by Bonnes (2015) has examined educational level and income imbalance as predictors of likelihood of physical and emotional intimate partner violence among married couples in Malawi. The study found that education and income imbalance predicted the likelihood of physical and emotional intimate partner violence among married couples.

Lauer and Lauer (2014) found that income level of married couples influenced domestic (verbal) abuse. Studies have also confirmed the effects of educational level on domestic violence among married couples. For example, Maciver & Dimkpa (2012) investigated factors that influence marital stability as perceived by literate spouses in Yenogoa metropolis in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The findings showed that financial challenges contributed to domestic violence

among study participants. Earlier study by Idialu (2003) on the causes of domestic violence among married couples in Edo State confirmed that financial problems put enormous strain on family relationships among couples. However, Mustafa et al. (2013) who investigated income level on domestic violence found no relationship between income level and domestic violence among married couples.

The studies reviewed in this study have clearly linked spousal communication and income level to domestic violence across many population and samples. For examples studies by Awujo and Onwukwe (2019), Afolabi et al. (2017) and Onoyase (2017) have clearly established spousal communication as a strong predictor of domestic violence, meaning that the better spouse engages in efficient and seamless communication, the less frequent would be incidence of domestic violence. Also, studies by have linked income level to the level of domestic violence, meaning that when the spouse have reasonable level of income, all things being equal, there tends to be less domestic violence among the partner (Bett et al., 2017; Bonnes, 2015; Okhakhume et al., 2016). Thus, some standards of comfort are a good indicator of less domestic violence. It was the intention of this study to test whether spousal communication and income levels would promote domestic violence among married couples in a heterogeneous metropolis in Lagos, Nigeria.

The hypotheses formulated for the study conducted in Ketu LGA, Lagos are as follows: (1) There is an expected association between spousal communication, income level, and domestic violence within married couples in Ketu LGA, Lagos; (2) Significant joint and independent predictions are anticipated regarding spousal communication, income level, number of children, and length of marriage, collectively and separately contributing to the prediction of domestic violence among married couples in Ketu LGA, Lagos.

Method

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The method was suitable because data were collected from participants without the manipulation of the study variables. The independent variables in the study were spousal communication, income level, number of children and length of marriage while the dependent variable was domestic violence.

The study was carried out among married couples in Shangisha, Magodo, and Ketu metropolis in Ketu Local Government Areas (LGA) of Lagos State. Lagos State is the commercial nerve centre of Nigeria with virtually more than

250 ethnic groups being represented. A purposive sampling technique was used to select Ketu LGA in Lagos State. The criteria for selecting Ketu LGA were that it has more representatives of many ethnic groups in Lagos State. Two, it has one of the most international markets in Lagos State. And thirdly, Ketu LGA is a converging centre for anyone coming into Lagos State. Thereafter, a simple random sampling method was used to select Shangisha, Magodo, and Ketu in Ketu LGA of Lagos State for the study.

Two validated questionnaires were used for data collection. First, domestic violence. This was measured using the 29-item Domestic Violence Scale developed by Banozic (2018). The scale is presented in a 5-point Likert's format that ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Sample items include 'If a man objects to his partner socializing with her friends, it just shows his love for her' and 'If a man controls when his partner can speak to her family, it just shows his love for her'. The author reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.85 while in the present study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.81.

Second, spousal communication. This was assessed using the 15-item Spousal Negative and Open Communication Style Scale developed by Van Den Troost et al. (2005). The scale is scored on a 5-point Likert's format ranging from 1-strongly disagree 5 – strongly agree. Examples of items are: 'My partner often pushes/or has his/her own way' and 'My partner and I interrupt each other a lot when we are talking'. The author reported Conbrach's alpha of 0.77, while this study reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.75. Also, demographic characteristics of the participants such as age, religion, educational qualification, income level and length of marriage were collected.

A letter of introduction was collected from the Department of Psychology, University of Ibadan as a means of identification. Each potential participant was contacted one-on-one by the researchers where the purpose of the study was explained to them. They were duly informed that participation in the study was voluntary and that they can decline to fill the questionnaire at any point where they feel uncomfortable. The questionnaires were given only to those who gave their consents to participate in the study. It took less than 15 minutes to complete the questionnaires which were collected on the spot. A total of 259 questionnaires were distributed to the potential participants (couples) and 254 were retrieved (i.e., 98% response rate), that is, five questionnaires were not retrieved. After screening, four questionnaires were incompletely filled and were removed, left with 250 valid questionnaires from the participants that were used for the final analysis.

Data collected were coded and analysed using the SPSS version 23. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the socio-demographic variables while inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses. Hypothesis one was tested using zero-order correlation while hypotheses two was tested using multiple regression analysis. All hypotheses were accepted at a $p < 0.05$ level of significance

Result

Study Participants
Table 1
Demographic Variables of the Study Participants

Variables	N	%
Age bracket		
Less than 25 years	18	15
25-34 years	125	50
35–44 years	63	25
45 years and above	24	10
Qualifications		
School Certificates	43	17
Ordinary Diplomas	70	28
Degrees	127	51
Not stated	10	4
Income bracket		
Less than a month N100,000	135	53
N100,000 -N200,000	84	34
Above N200,000	33	13
Religious backgrounds		
Christians	131	52
Muslims	111	44
Others	10	4
Number of children		
1-2	122	49
3- 4	94	37
5+	22	9
Not stated	12	5
Length in marriage (years)		
5	101	40
6 -10	92	37
11 -15	28	11
16-20	20	8

Not stated	12	4

Table 1 shows the demographic variables of the study participants. As shown in Table 1, the majority of the participants has between 1 and 2 children (49%), earned less than N100, 000 per month (53%), and was degrees holders. Also, more participants reported that they have been in marriage for five years and more have Christian background.

H1: There would be significant relationship among spousal communication, income level and domestic violence among married couples in Ketu LGA of Lagos State. This was tested using zero-order correlation statistics and the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Zero-Order Correlation among Spousal Communication, Income Level and Domestic Violence
Inter-correlation among the variable of the study

SN Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
Spousal communication	26.16	8	.26	-	
Income level	19.67	5.73	-0.36*	-	
Domestic violence	16.76	4.99	-0.40*	-0.27*	

* significant as at p < 0.05

Table 2 presents results on the relationship among spousal communication, income level and domestic violence. The result showed a significant and negative relationship between spousal communication and income level (r = - 0.36, p< 0.05). Also, the result indicated a significant and negative relationship between income level and domestic violence (r = - 0.27, p< 0.05). This connotes that the higher the income level, the lower the domestic violence among married couples in Ketu metropolis. In addition, the result revealed a significant and negative relationship between spousal communication and domestic violence (r = - 0.36, p < 0.05).

H2: Spousal communication, income level, number of children and length of marriage would jointly and independently predict domestic violence among married couples in Ketu LGA of Lagos State. This was tested using multiple linear regression analysis and the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 3

Model Summary of Regressions Analysis of Predictors of Domestic Violence

Model summary b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Sig
1	.41a	.17	.011	5.47725	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant): Spousal communication, Income level, Number of children, Length in marriage
b. Criterion variable: Domestic violence

Model		Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient		
		B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)		40.904	3.596		11.034	
Income level		-1.896	1.219	-0.20	-2.47	.002
Income level		-1.896	1.219	-0.20	-2.47	.002
Number of children		1.829	1.191	0.23	-7.56	.000
Length in marriage		-.793	1.024	-0.25	-4.74	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Domestic violence

Table 3 presents results of the joint and independent prediction of spousal communication, income level, number of children and length of marriage on domestic violence among married couples in Lagos. The result revealed that spousal communication, income level, number of children and length of marriage jointly predicted domestic violence among married couples in Lagos State [R^2 = 0.17, F (6, 217) =10.80, p < 0.05]. Collectively, spousal communication, income level, number of children and length of marriage accounted for about 17% variance in domestic violence. Also, income level, number of children (β = 0.23, t = -7.56, p < 0.05) and length of marriage (β = -0.25, t = - 4.74, p < 0.05) independently predicted domestic violence among married couples in Lagos. However, spousal communication did not independently predict domestic violence among married couples in Lagos (β =-0.12, t =-0.70, p > 0.05). The hypothesis was partially supported.

Discussion

This study investigated the influence of spousal communication and socio-demographic factors as predictors of domestic violence among married couples in some selected metropolis in Ketu Local Government Area of Lagos State.

Two hypotheses were generated and tested.

The hypothesis that there would be a significant relationship among spousal communication, income level and domestic violence was confirmed. It was found that a significant and negative relationship exists between income level and domestic violence meaning that increase in income level tends to decrease domestic violence. When married couples have a reasonable level of income, it tends to predict the level of domestic violence they would experience. Economic comfortability, when other factors are controlled such as good communication predicts happiness and life satisfaction thus reduce conflict and violence. Also, it was found that a significant relationship exists between spousal communication and domestic violence implies that increase in spousal communication tends to predict domestic violence. These findings are in line with Afolabi et al. (2017) study who found domestic violence to be related to couples communication skills; the more dissatisfied they were with their relationship, the more violence they would experience. Also, the study finding supported Adewale et al. (2021) who found a strong link between communication patterns and domestic violence. The finding in this study is in accordance with Bett et al. (2017) who found socio-demographic variables including annual income and marital satisfaction to predict domestic violence among their study participants. This means that the higher the communication level, the lower the violence among married couples in Ketu metropolis in Lagos State. Spousal communication act as oil that lubricates relationship. Couples that are free with themselves and express their thoughts and feelings freely would likely reduce conflict between themselves.

The hypothesis that spousal communication, income level, number of children and length in marriage would jointly and independently predict domestic violence was supported. That means couples who communicate effectively with one another, have moderate to high income streams, with between 2 and 3 children and have been in marriage for between 5 and 10 years tend to be satisfied with themselves, hence less tendency to demonstrate domestic violence. The finding lent credence to Awujo and Onwukwe (2019) study who found that verbal and non-verbal communication were significant predictors of marital adjustment among married public secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis. Also, the study finding is in accordance with Esere et al. (2015) who found that participants were of the view that obstacles to effective communication include getting home late on a regular basis, harsh tone of voice during conversation and bringing up memories of past events. In the same vein, Heise et al. (2021) and Ezems (2019) indicated that personal,

situational, and socio-cultural factors effectively predicted intimate partner abuse. However, Bulte and Lensink (2021) found that income level had no positive influence on domestic (marital) conflict among married couples.

Finally, the number of children and length of marriage predicted domestic violence such that children in the family give more stress at home when parents do not communicate with themselves and when there is less money to manage the home. Dissatisfaction at home tends to lead to domestic violence. Equally important is the length of marriage. Couples with fewer years in marriage tend to show less understanding with themselves causing dissatisfaction in one form or another predicting domestic violence. This finding is in agreement with previous studies that length in marriage and the wife's independent income as well as the family's income contributed to domestic violence (Enimapopo & Nwamadi, 2023; Umeh, 2022). However, the present finding contradicted previous result by Khemthong and Chutiphongdech (2021) who found that number of children at home and length in marriage did not predict domestic violence among married partners.

Conclusion

This study has empirically established that spousal communication and socio-demographic factors of income level, number of children and length of marriage are good predictors of domestic violence among married couples in Ketu Local Government Area in Lagos State, Nigeria. Based on the findings in this study, the following suggestions are stated. Because the study found healthy communication to predict presence of domestic violence, married couples should create time to communicate with each other either through physical contact or through electronic gadget such as phone as well as video call where couples are geographically apart.

Since income level predicted domestic violence, it is suggested that married couples should plan and manage their finances to reduce stress and work-family conflict. Finally, as number of children at home comes with diverse demands including financial demand, taking early decisions on the number of children to have is important to manage and run the family with less stress and less violence.

This present study was faced with some limitations. First, three metropolises in one LGA out of 20 LGAs in Lagos state was selected for the study, hence hindering generalisation of the study findings. Further studies should include more Local Government Areas in Lagos. Second, data were

collected using self-reported questionnaires which often tend towards social desirability. Further studies should include qualitative methods such as interview, focus group discussion and observational method to validate data collected from self-reported questionnaires. Finally, only two independent variables were investigated in this study. Further studies should include self-esteem, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and learned helplessness to examine domestic violence among married couples.

References

Abolakale, M. S. (2019). Patterns of domestic violence among married adults in Ilorin Metropolis , Nigeria : Implication for counselling. *Covenant International Journal of Psychology*, 4(1), 55–70.

Adewale, D., Dey, N. E. Y., Owusu Ansah, K., Duah, H. O., & Agbadi, P. (2021). The association between polygyny statuses of currently married and in-union women and attitude towards intimate partner violence against women in Ghana. *Social Sciences and Humanities Open*, 4(1), 100207. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2021.100207

Afolabi, A. B., Oladotun, A. S., Chinedu, E. O., & Tolulope, O. E. (2017). Psychological factors in marital satisfaction among married couples. *Journal of Marital Issue*, 12, 45 –67.

Aliakbari, S. A., Safarzadeh, S., Bayat, F., Pormehr-Yabandeh, A., Dashti, S., Roozbeh, N., & Banaei, M. (2018). Related factors of domestic violence: A population-based research on Iranian women. *International Journal of Women's Health and Reproduction Sciences*, 6(3), 269–275. https://doi.org/10.15296/ijwhr.2018.45

Amao- Kehinde, A. O. (2008). Communication skills training and conflict resolution strategies in the improvement of marital adjustment of some selected married couples in Lagos State.

Animashaun, B. (2019). Tripod of marriage: Conviction, affection and attraction. In Feeding Centre Church.

Arinze-Umeobi, D. C. (2008). Domestic violence against women in Nigeria: A legal anatomy. *European Journal of Psychological Research*, 2(1), 1–416.

Awujo, C. G., & Onwukwe, U. (2019). Relationship between verbal and non-verbal communication patterns and adjustment of married teachers in Port Harcourt Metropolis. *European Journal of Traning and Development Studies*, 6(2), 9–17.

Banozic, A. (2018). Validation of a short version of a self-rated instrument designed to measure attitudes towards domestic violence. *Sociology and Criminology-Open Access*, 06(01), 180 – 191. https://doi.org/10.4172/2375-4435.1000180

Benebo, F. O., Schumann, B., & Vaezghasemi, M. (2018). Intimate partner violence against women in Nigeria: A multilevel study investigating the effect of women's status and community norms. *BMC Women's Health*, 18(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1186/S12905-018-0628-7/FIGURES/3

Bett, G., Kiptiony, G., & Sirera, M. (2017). Relationship between demographic characteristics and marital satisfaction for career couples in Kericho County , Kenya. *IOSR-Journal of Humanities and Social Science*s, 22(12), 53–60.

Bonnes, S. (2015). Education and Income Imbalances A. In Springer Publishing. http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/springer/vav/pre-prints/content-VV2015-Sep_Final_A3_Bonnes_001-019

Bradbury, T. N., Fincham, F. D., & Beach, S. R. H. (2000). Research on the nature and determinants of marital satisfaction: A decade in review. J*ournal of Marriage and Family*, 62(4), 964–980. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00964.x

Bulte, E., & Lensink, R. (2021). Empowerment and intimate partner violence: Domestic abuse when household income is uncertain. I*n Review of Development Economics* (Vol. 25, Issue 1, pp. 148–162). https://doi.org/10.1111/rode.12715

Cook, K. S., Cheshire, C., Rice, E. R. W., & Nakagawa, S. (2013). Social exchange theory. *Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research*, 61–88. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-6772-0_3/COVER

Dinah, J. (2012). Socio-demographic factors and marital conflict. *Journal of Research in National Development*, 8(1), 431 – 438.

Enimapopo, E. T., & Nwamadi, L. (2023). Causes and consequences of domestic violence among married women in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. *Journal of Advances in Education and Philosophy*, 7(05), 178–186. https://doi.org/10.36348/jaep.2023.v07i05.006

Esere, M, O., Yeyeodu, A., & Oladun, C. (2014). Obstacles and suggested solutions to effective communication in marriage as expressed by Married Adults in Kogi State, Nigeria. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 114, 584–592. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.12.751

Esere, M. O., Iruloh, B. R., Ojiah, P. O., Bukoye, R. O., & Chieke, D. N. (2015). Poor communication and faulty cognition on marital stability of married adults in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Sciences Research*, 1(5), 58–65.

Esere, M., Yusuf, J., & Omotosho, J. (2011). Influence of spousal communication on marital stability: implication for conducive home environment. Edo *Journal of Counselling*, 4(1–2), 50–61. https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ejc/article/view/72724

Esptein, H., G., R., & Burnett driver, J. (2004). Daily marital interactions and positive affect during marital conflict among newlywed couples. *Family Process*, 43(3), 301–314. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.2004.00024.x

Ezems, G. A. (2019). A handbook on domestic violence: The Nigerian perspective. Draphically Making Ltd.

Heise, L. L., Raikes, A., Watts, C. H., & Zwi, A. B. (2021). Violence against women: A neglected public health issue in less developed countries. *Social Science and Medicine,* 39(9), 1165–1179. https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(94)90349-2

Helms, H. M. (2013). Marital relationships in the 21st century. In G. W. Peterson & K. R. Bush (Eds.), Handbook of marriage and family (Third). Springer.

Huecker, M. R., King, K. C., Jordan, G. A., & Smock, W. (2023). Domestic Violence. StatPearls Publishing.

Idialu, E. E. (2003). A Study of management of crises associated with family finances in Edo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Contemporary Issues*, 1(2), 62–82.

Klein, L. B., Chesworth, B. R., Howland-Myers, J. R., Rizo, C. F., & Macy, R. J. (2021). Housing interventions for intimate partner violence survivors: a systematic review. *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse*, 22(2), 249–264. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838019836284

Lauer, R. H ., & Lauer, J. C. (2014). Social problems and the quality of life. McGraw-Hill.

Maciver, J. E., & Dimkpa, D. I. (2012). Factors influencing marital stability. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(1), 437–442. https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2012.03.01.437

Madanian, L., Mansor, S. M. S. S., & Omar, A. H. bin. (2013). Marital satisfaction of iranian female students in Malaysia: A qualitative study. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 84, 987–993.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.06.686

Mallory, A. B. (2022). Dimensions of couples' sexual communication, relationship satisfaction, and sexual satisfaction: A meta-analysis. *Family Psychology*, 36(3), 358–371.

Markman, H. J., Renick, M. J., Floyd, F. J., Stanley, S. M., & Clements, M. (1993). Preventing marital distress through communication and conflict management training: A 4- and 5-Year Follow-Up. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 61(1), 70–77. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006x.61.1.70

Mustafa, H., Mohd Hasim, M. J., & Aripin, N. (2013). Income on marital instability among couples. *Applied Research Quality of Life*, 8, 299– 322.

Okedare, O. O., & Fawole, O. I. (2023). Intimate partner violence among young women in Ibadan, Nigeria: are there slum and non-slum differences? *BMC Women's Health*, 23(1), 1–13,. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-023-02446-5

Okhakhume, A. S., Ohguntayo, R., & Aroniyaso, O. T. (2016). Influence of Socio-economic status and marital satisfaction on domestic violence among couples living in Nigeria. *International Journal of Applied Psychology*, 6(6), 179 – 184. https://doi.org/DOI: 10.5923/j.ijap.20160606.03

Oladeji, D. (2013). Personal, situational and socio-cultural factors as correlates of intimate partner abuse in Nigeria. *Advances in Sexual Medicine*, 03(04), 92– 97. https://doi.org/10.4236/asm.2013.34014

Onoyase, A. (2017). Determinants of marriage stability among married couples in North-Central Nigeria implication for counselling. W*orld Journal of Educational Research*, 4(3), 356. https://doi.org/10.22158/wjer.v4n3p356

Onyekaiheako, D., & Fwacs, U. (2015). Domestic Violence and its predictors among married women in Southeast Nigeria. *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)*, 6, 562 – 567. www.ijsr.net

Sagrestano, L. M., Heavey, C. L., & Christensen, A. (2006). Individual differences versus social structural approaches to explaining demand-withdraw and social influence behaviors. In K. Dindia & D. J. *Canary (Eds.), Sex differences and similarities in communication* (pp. 379–395). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Skott, S. (2021). Disaggregating Violence: Understanding the decline. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(15–16), 7670–7694. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260519838496

Status APA Task Force on Socioeconomic. (2006). Report of the APA task force on socioeconomic status. In APA Council of Representatives (Vol. 23). American Psychological Association (APA. http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21282485

Umeh, J. (2022). Osinachi Nwachukwu: Untold story about cause of death of popular female gospel singer. Vanguard News Nigeria, 10. https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/04/osinachi-nwachukwu-untold-story-about-cause-of-death-of-popular-female-gospel-singer/

Usoroh, C., Ekot, M., & Inyang, E. S. (2010). Spousal communication styles and marital stability among civil servants in Akwa Ibom State. *Journal of Home Economics Research*, 13(DECEMBER), 74–84.

Van Den Troost, A., Vermulst, A. A., Gerris, J. R. M., & Matthijs, K. (2005). The Dutch marital satisfaction and communication questionnaire: A validation study. *Psychologica Belgica*, 45(3), 185–206. https://doi.org/10.5334/pb-45-3-185

Willis, F. N., & Briggs, L. F. (1992). Relationship and touch in public settings. Journal of Nonverbal Behavior, 16(1), 55–63. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00986879

Wilson, L. (2023). Domestic violence. Encyclopaedia of Forensic Sciences (Third). Elsevier.

This page is intentionally left blank