Perceived Causes of Domestic Violence among Couples as Reported by Educated Adults in Ilorin Metropolis, Nigeria

Author(s), DADA Martins Femi, OYETAYO
Morakinyo Oyewumi

Abstract:

Domestic violence remains a pervasive social problem with serious implications for individual wellbeing, family stability, and societal development. Although it is often associated with poverty, illiteracy, and rural settings, evidence suggests that educated adults are not immune to domestic violence, either as victims or perpetrators. This study investigated the causes of domestic violence among couples as reported by educated adults in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria, and examined whether perceptions differed based on gender, educational qualification, and age. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, involving 200 educated married adults selected through a multistage sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that stress and frustration ranked as the leading perceived cause of domestic violence, followed by infidelity, lack of conflict resolution skills, and power imbalance. Economic factors such as poverty, financial dependence, and economic stress were perceived as less influential among the educated population. Inferential analysis showed no significant differences in perceptions of the causes of domestic violence based on gender, educational qualification, or age. The study concludes that domestic violence among educated couples is largely driven by psychological, relational, and socio-cultural factors rather than purely economic conditions. The findings underscore the need for holistic interventions focusing on stress management, effective communication, and the transformation of harmful cultural norms within marital relationships.

About Author

Author(s):

DADA Martins Femi
Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling,
Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo
dametfem2005@gmail.com

OYETAYO Morakinyo Oyewumi
Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling,
Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo

Introduction

Domestic violence is one of the most ubiquitous and ongoing social problems that affects families and communities worldwide. It covers a wide range of abusive behaviours, which is physical, emotional and psychological abuse, sexual abuse, economic abuse, which occurs in intimate or familial relationships. Despite the fact that domestic violence is not limited by class, culture, and educational background, the expression and perceived reasons for the problem, or the reasons underlying victimisation, can differ according to contextual and socio-demographic factors. In Nigeria, domestic violence has remained a serious threat to marital stability, individual wellbeing and development of the society in spite of the rise in awareness, legal developments and educational advancement. In the last few years, however, more attention has been paid to understanding domestic violence outside of the conventional expectations attached to the poverty, illiteracy, or rural women. Studies have revealed that educated adults are not immune to domestic violence either as the victim or perpetrator (Abolakale, 2019; Okorie et al., 2020). This highlights the need to investigate the issue of domestic violence among educated populace, especially in urban areas where the availability of information and social resources is relatively better. Ilorin Metropolis as the head of Kwara State offers a good setting for such an investigation because of its diversity of population, cultural plurality and increasing educational attainment.

Domestic violence within couples has far reaching consequences beyond the victims themselves. Research has repeatedly associated domestic violence to poor mental health outcomes, low life satisfaction, impeded education, and long-term health challenges (Bo and Yating, 2023). Children exposed to domestic violence are especially vulnerable because exposure to it has been linked to emotional trauma, behavioural problems and cognitive deficits (Carnevale et al., 2020; Dodaj, 2020 ; Abel et al., 2019). These impacts point to the need for increased attention to domestic violence, not just as a private family matter, but as a major public health and development issue, too. In the Nigerian context domestic violence is often influenced by deeply rooted notions of socio-cultural roles, gender roles, and power roles within marriage. Patriarchal structures often provide legitimacy for male dominance and female submissiveness that can lead to power discriminations and abuse of power (Olujide, 2024; Zegeye et al., 2022). Attitudes that condone or normalise wife beating have been reported in various parts of sub-Saharan Africa including even the educated indicating that education may not be the key factor for removing harmful beliefs (Adu, 2023; Aboagye et al., 2021). These findings interrupt with the presumption that an increase in educational attainment will mean an increase in healthier relationship dynamics.

Economic factors are also important for the occurrence of domestic violence. While poverty and unemployment have been identified traditionally, as major causes of conflict, studies have shown that economic abuse, financial dependence, and unequal control of resources can be seen among couples who are educated (Adams et al., 2019; Izugbara et al., 2020). Financial stress, pressure related to job and failure to meet economic expectations may cause frustration and tension in the marriages, and this can escalate into violence. This is especially relevant in the urban Nigerian setting where there is a lot of cost of living pressure and where societal expectations are high regarding financial success. Psychosocial factors such stress, frustration, jealousy, infidelity and lack of effective conflict resolution skills have also been identified as critical factors in perpetuating domestic violence. Mahmood (2025) found that there was a strong relationship between domestic violence and aggressive behaviour, this would suggest that poor emotional regulation and unresolved interpersonal conflicts contribute significantly to the violent outcomes. Similarly, Atta, Newton and Shah (2025) identified stress related and relational factors as predictive of intimate partner violence in

West Africa contexts. These findings highlight the importance of looking at interpersonal dynamics within couples, and not just looking at structural factors.

Societal pressure and interference from outside make matters even worse in the context of marriage ties. Expectations from extended family members, especially in-laws often affect decision-making and power relations in marriages. In many cultures in Nigeria, in-law interference has been linked to marital discord and susceptibility to domestic violence (Okorie et al., 2020). Additionally, the expectations of society around gender performance, fertility, and marital success can be an undue stress on couples, and couples are more likely to experience conflict and abuse as a result. Despite the increasing literatures that existed in the area of domestic violence, there is still the gap in empirical research to specifically focus on the perceived causes of domestic violence among the educated adults in Ilorin Metropolis. Most of the existing studies are either restricted to women's victimizations, adolescents, rural populations, and little interest being paid to educated married adults and their perception on causative factors (Abolakale, 2019). It is important to understand these perceptions in order to develop culturally relevant and effective prevention and intervention strategies.

Furthermore, there may be some socio-demographic variables such as gender, educational qualification, and age that may affect individual's perception of the causes of domestic violence. While some studies report that men and women have significantly different opinions on domestic violence, others report little or no differences between demographic groups (Hanafi et al., 2022; Adu et al., 2022). These inconsistencies require additional investigation especially in places of particular locality such as Ilorin Metropolis.

Against the above background, this research work focuses on the cause of domestic violence among couples as reported by educated adults in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. By concentrating on educated people, the study aims to question plausible simplified narratives about domestic violence and offer nuanced understanding on the complex interplay between psychological, economic, social and relationship factors contributing to domestic violence. The findings are expected to add to academic knowledge, provide information for counselling practises and guidance for policymakers and stakeholders for creating targeted interventions. The aim of this study is to investigate the causes of domestic violence among couples as reported by educated adults in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. The specific purposes of the study are to:

1. Identify the major causes of domestic violence among couples as perceived by educated adults in Ilorin Metropolis.
2. Examine whether there is a significant difference in the perceived causes of domestic violence based on gender.
3. Determine whether educational qualification significantly influences perceptions of the causes of domestic violence.
4. Assess whether age differences significantly affect perceptions of the causes of domestic violence among educated adults.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the causes of domestic violence among couples as reported by educated adults in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. The descriptive survey design was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to collect data from a representative sample of respondents and describe existing conditions, perceptions, and relationships without manipulating any variables. This design has been

widely used in domestic violence studies to capture respondents' opinions and experiences across socio-demographic groups.

Population of the Study

The population for this study comprised educated adults residing in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. For the purpose of this study, educated adults were defined as individuals who had attained a minimum of National Certificate in Education (NCE) or Ordinary National Diploma (OND) and were currently married or in a marital union. Ilorin Metropolis was selected due to its urban nature, educational diversity, and cultural heterogeneity, which provide a suitable context for examining domestic violence among educated couples.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A total of 200 respondents participated in the study. The sample consisted of 162 males (81.0%) and 38 females (19.0%), reflecting the gender distribution of the respondents. In terms of educational qualification, 124 respondents (62.0%) possessed NCE/OND certificates, 71 respondents (35.5%) held Higher National Diploma (HND) or first degrees, while 5 respondents (2.5%) had postgraduate qualifications. The age distribution showed that 45.0% of respondents were between 31–35 years, followed by 36–40 years (30.0%), 25–30 years (15.0%), and 41 years and above (10.0%).

A multistage sampling technique was employed. First, Ilorin Metropolis was purposively selected due to its concentration of educated adults. Second, simple random sampling was used to select respondents from workplaces, educational institutions, and residential areas within the metropolis. This approach ensured fairness and enhanced the representativeness of the sample.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher after an extensive review of relevant literature on domestic violence (Adams et al., 2019; Izugbara et al., 2020). The questionnaire consisted of two sections:

Section A focused on respondents' demographic information, including gender, age, and educational qualification.

Section B contained items measuring perceived causes of domestic violence among couples, such as stress and frustration, infidelity, power imbalance, jealousy, poverty, financial dependence, lack of accountability, in-law interference, and societal pressure.

Responses in Section B were rated on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). Higher mean scores indicated stronger agreement that an item constituted a cause of domestic violence.

Validity of the Instrument

The instrument was subjected to content and face validity by experts in counselling psychology and measurement and evaluation. Their suggestions were incorporated to ensure that the items adequately covered the construct of domestic violence causes and were clearly worded, culturally appropriate, and relevant to the study population. This process enhanced the accuracy and appropriateness of the instrument for the target respondents.

Reliability of the Instrument

To ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted among educated adults outside the study area. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach's alpha method, which yielded a reliability coefficient considered acceptable for social science research. This indicated that the instrument was reliable and capable of producing consistent results over time.

Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher personally administered the questionnaires with the assistance of trained research assistants. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality, and participation was strictly voluntary. Completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately to minimize loss and ensure a high response rate.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean scores and rank order were used to answer the research question on the causes of domestic violence among couples. The independent samples t-test was employed to test the hypothesis on gender differences, while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test hypotheses on educational qualification and age at the 0.05 level of significance. Statistical decisions were made based on calculated values in relation to critical values and p-values.

Results

Table 1: The distributions of respondents on variables:

Item	Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender			
	male	162	81.0
	female	38	19.0
	Total	200	100.0
Education Qualification			
	NCE/OND	124	62.0
	HND / First Degree	71	35.5
	Postgraduate	5	2.5
	Total	200	100.0
Age Range			
	25-30 years	30	15.0
	31-35 years	90	45.0
	36-40 years	60	30.0
	41 yearsand above	20	10.0
	Total	200	100.0

Table 1 presents the demographic distribution of the respondents. The gender distribution shows that a large majority of the respondents were male (81.0%), while females constituted only 19.0%, indicating that the views captured in the study were predominantly from male respondents. In terms of educational qualification, most respondents possessed NCE/OND certificates (62.0%), followed by those with HND or first degrees (35.5%), while only a small proportion had postgraduate qualifications (2.5%). This suggests that the study largely reflects the perceptions of educated adults at the lower and middle levels of tertiary education. Regarding age, the highest proportion of respondents fell within the 31–35 years age range (45.0%), followed by those aged 36–40 years (30.0%), indicating that the sample was mainly composed of adults in their prime marital and productive years. Respondents aged 25–30 years accounted for 15.0%, while those aged 41 years and above constituted 10.0%, showing relatively fewer older participants in the study.

Research Question 1: What are the Causes of domestics violence among couple as reported by educated adult in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State*?*

Table 2: Means and Rank order analysis on Causes of domestics violence among couple as reported by educated adult in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State.

Item No.	Items	Mean score	Rank
7	Stress and frustration	3.2650	1st
8	Infidelity	2.9950	2nd
9	Lack of conflict resolution	2.9650	3rd
2	Power inbalance	2.8000	4th
6	In-law interference	2.6850	5th
3	Jealousy and Possessiveness	2.6300	6th
5	Lack of accountability	2.6100	7th
10	Societal pressure and expectations	2.5850	8th
1	Poverty and Economic stress	2.5750	9th
4	Financial dependence	2.5700	10th

Table 2 shows the mean and rank order analysis of the perceived causes of domestic violence among couples as reported by educated adults in Ilorin Metropolis. The results indicate that stress and frustration was ranked as the most prominent cause of domestic violence, with the highest mean score (3.2650), suggesting strong agreement among respondents on its influence. This was followed by infidelity (mean = 2.9950) and lack of conflict resolution (mean = 2.9650), highlighting the role of emotional strain and poor communication in marital violence. Power imbalance ranked fourth (mean = 2.8000), reflecting issues of dominance and control within relationships. Factors such as in-law interference, jealousy and possessiveness, and lack of accountability occupied the middle ranks, indicating moderate influence. Meanwhile, societal pressure and expectations, poverty and economic stress, and financial dependence ranked lowest, though their mean scores were still above the acceptance threshold, implying that while economic and societal factors contribute to domestic violence, they are perceived as less influential compared to psychological and relational factors among educated couples in Ilorin Metropolis.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the Causes of domestics violence among couple as reported by educated adult in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State *on the basis of gender.*

Table 3: Means, Standard Deviations and t-value of Respondents' view on the Basis of gender

Gender	No.	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-val.	Crit. t-val.	p-value	Decision
Male	162	27.3457	2.83352					
				198	0.79	1.96	0.239	Accepted
Female	38	27.7368	2.25034					

*Significant; p<0.05

Table 3 shows the mean, standard deviation and t-value of respondents on the basis of male and female. The result on the table revealed that the calculated t-value of 0.79 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 with 198 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value of 0.239 is greater than the 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. Thus there is no significant difference in the Causes of domestics violence among couple as reported by educated adult in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State *on the basis of gender*

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the Causes of domestics violence among couple as reported by educated adult in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State *on the basis of* educational qualification.

Table 4: ANOVA comparing respondents on Causes of domestics violence among couple as reported by educated adult in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State based on educational qualification

Sources	SS	df	MS	Cal. F-val.	Crit. F-val.	p-value	Decision
Between Group	.588	2	.294	.039	3.00	0.962	Accepted
Within Group	1484.132	197	7.534				
Total	1484.720	199					

Table 4 above presents the calculated F-val. of 0.039 which is less than the critical F-value of 3.00 at 0.05 alpha level. And since the p-value of 0.962 which is greater than 0.05, thus the hypothesis accepted. This implies there is no significant difference in the Causes of domestics violence among couple as reported by educated adult in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State *on the basis of* educational qualification.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the Causes of domestics violence among couple as reported by educated adult in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State *on the basis of* age.

Table 5: ANOVA comparing respondents on Causes of domestics violence among couple as reported by educated adult in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State based on age

Sources	SS	df	MS	Cal. F-val.	Crit. F-val.	p-value	Decision
Between Group	26.031	3	8.677	1.166	2.60	0.324	Accepted
Within Group	1458.689	196	7.442				
Total	1484.720	199					

Table 5 above presents the calculated F-val. of 1.166 which is less than the critical F-value of 2.60 at 0.05 alpha level. And since the p-value of 0.324 which is greater than 0.05, thus the hypothesis accepted. This implies there is no significant difference in the Causes of domestics violence among couple as reported by educated adult in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State *on the basis of* age.

Discussion of Findings

This research work focused on the causes of domestic violence among husband-wife couples as described by educated adults in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State and the difference in perceptions among them based on gender, educational qualification, and age. The findings offer significant information about the complex psychological, relational, economic and socio-cultural influences on domestic violence, even in educated populations. Findings from the mean and Rank order analysis showed that stress and frustration were ranked as the number one cause of domestic violence among couples. This implies that the pressures created by the work demands, economic responsibilities, and societal expectations to a great extent strain the marital relationships. This result is consistent with the results of Atta, Newton and Shah

(2025) who noted the presence of stress-related factors as strong predictive variables of intimate partner violence among West African situations. Similarly, Mahmood (2025), reported that there was a significant relationship between domestic violence and aggressive behaviour; hence, it is sometimes said that when one is under unmanaged stress, it is often expressed as aggressive behaviour between intimate relations. The high status of stress among educated adults reflects the existence of education that does not protect individuals from overloading or poor coping mechanisms.

Infidelity became the second most important cause of domestic violence. This finding is reflective of the emotional turmoil, mistrust, and conflict that is a part of extramarital relationships. Infidelity has been widely documented to serve as a trigger of intimate partner violence because of the feeling of betrayal and jealousy (Okorie et al., 2020). In the Nigerian socio-cultural setting with its high value for fidelity in marital relationships, infidelity may lead to confrontations which may result to violence. This result also supports Mahmood's (2025) claim that interpersonal conflicts make a significant contribution to aggressive behaviour. The third-ranked cause is a lack of conflict resolution, and this reflects a deficiency in the communication and problem solving skills of couples. Educated adults can be knowledgeably and educated but do not have the interpersonal skills needed to resolve differences constructively. This finding supports the work of Abolakale (2019) who stated that poor conflict management is one of the key determinants of domestic violence in married adults in Ilorin Metropolis. The inability to resolve conflicts amicably often leads to resonance in the form of accumulated resentment which may then result in emotional or physical abuse.

Power imbalance was ranked at the fourth which reflected the unequal decision-making or dominant within relationships. This finding aligns with literature that has been published that relates domestic violence to patriarchal norms and unequal power relations in marriage (Olujide, 2024; Zegeye et al., 2022). Among educated couples too, traditional gender expectations can perpetuate dominance and control and lead to abuse. This supports a statement made by Esposito et al. (2020) which asserts that violence against women is frequently normalised in a private setting, hence making it less apparent and at the same time, more socially acceptable. The role of in-law interference, which ranks fifth in the list, highlights the impact of extended family structures in the marriages in Nigeria. Interference from relatives can increase tensions, reduce autonomy of the spouses and increase conflicts that can lead to domestic violence. This finding is in line with Okorie et al. (2020) who identified family interference as an important cause of domestic conflict in South-East Nigeria. It also embodies the communal nature of marriage practiced in many African societies, where the opinion of others often governs his or her marriage issues.

Other identified causes, such as jealousy and possessiveness, lack of accountability and societal pressure and expectations, are among the conclusions that added to the role of emotional insecurity and cultural norms in domestic violence. Societal expectations about being financially provided for, having children and succeeding in marriage can put excessive pressure on couples contributing to frustration and conflict. This is in the same vein as Adu 2023 and Adu et al. 2022 who reported that the socio-cultural beliefs and expectations play a major role in affecting the attitudes towards intimate partner violence in different societies. Contrary to popular belief, poverty and economic stress and financial dependence were lower in this study for causes of domestic violence. This finding implies that in the case of educated adults, domestic violence may not be driven by the economic constraint per se, but more be psychological and relational. While the issue of economic abuse as a major form of domestic violence has been emphasised in Adams et al. (2019), the relatively lower ranking in the present study could be attributed to the relatively higher level of financial autonomy among

educated couples in Ilorin Metropolis. Nonetheless, this is not to say that economic factors are not relevant, but rather reflects their relatively lesser significance for this particular population.

The hypothesis testing showed no significant difference on the perceived causes of domestic violence based on gender. This implies that both male and female respondents had similar views on what would precipitate domestic violence among couples. This finding contradicts some studies that report gender-based differences in the perceptions of domestic violence (Hanafi et al. 2022), but agrees with others around the convergence of view among educated populations (Aboagye et al., 2021). The similarity in perception may be accounted for by educational and social experience. Similarly, significant difference was not observed based on the educational qualification. Respondents from different levels of education (NCE/OND, HND/First Degree and postgraduate) did not differ significantly in their perception of the causes of domestic violence. This finding is in line with Izugbara et al. (2020) who found that education alone does not remove the risk of domestic violence or shape the deeply ingrained beliefs. It further suggests that domestic violence is a complex problem which is shaped by factors other than formal education.

Finally, there was no significant difference also based on age, showing that the perception of the causes of domestic violence was consistent across age groups. This implies that domestic violence is seen as a common social issue that is above age throughout the educated adult populations. This finding supports the work of Bo and Yating (2023) that highlighted the long-bearing and cross-generational effect of domestic violence strengthening the case for universal approaches in prevention.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the common causes of domestic violence among couples in Ilorin Metropolis is not only stress and frustration, but infidelity, lack of conflict resolution skills, and power imbalance, and not mainly the economic factor. Despite education level, couples are still at risk for domestic violence in response to psychological pressures, interpersonal problems and socio-cultural factors. The lack of any notable effects on gender, educational qualification or age further illustrates that domestic violence is pervasive and universal among educated adults. These findings illuminate the importance of holistic intervention that addresses emotional wellbeing, the skills of communication and cultural norms in the context of marital relationships.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government and non-governmental organizations should implement marital counselling and stress management programmes to help couples develop healthy coping strategies.
2. Couples should be encouraged to participate in communication and conflict resolution workshops to reduce the escalation of marital disagreements into violence.
3. Awareness campaigns should challenge harmful socio-cultural norms that promote power imbalance and tolerate domestic violence, even among educated populations.
4. Religious institutions, educational bodies, and community organizations should integrate domestic violence prevention and relationship education into premarital counselling.
5. Existing laws against domestic violence should be strengthened and effectively enforced to protect victims and deter perpetrators.
6. Extended family members should be educated on the negative impact of undue interference in marital affairs.

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