



Research Paper

## Correlates of Spousal Violence among Couples in Rural Areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The study ascertained the correlates of spousal violence among married couples in rural areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. In all, 150 respondents were selected for the study using a multi-stage sampling procedure. Data for the study were obtained using a questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistical tools, prevalence rate and Spearman's rho rank correlation. The results of the study revealed that the mean ages of the respondents and their spouses were 43 years and 50 years respectively; 65.3% of them were females while their average monthly income was ₦36,333.83. The result of Spearman's rho rank correlation analysis revealed a significant relationship between household income, alcohol use by respondents, alcohol use by spouses of the respondents, smoking status of spouses of the respondents and domestic violence. The study recommended, among others that married couples and their spouses who smoke should be discouraged from the habit by family members, religious organizations, non-governmental and governmental agencies since smoking is significantly correlated with spousal violence in the study area.

**KEYWORDS:** Spousal violence, married couples, rural, Akwa Ibom.

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### I. INTRODUCTION:

Spousal violence refers to a pattern of abusive behaviours in a marital relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner (Oluremi, 2015). It occurs in all countries, irrespective of social, economic, religious or cultural groups (Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg and Zwi, 2002; World Health Organization, 2002). Physical violence, in particular, is very common among intimate partners in both developed and developing countries (Yusuf, Arulogun, Oladepo and Olowokeeree, 2011). Spousal violence can be from man to woman, and it can also be from woman to man.

Spousal violence is a growing health problem in Africa, where an unhealthy mix of tradition, inequality and ignorance is exacerbating the catastrophe (Alo, Odusina and Babatunde, 2012). Its occurrence in Nigeria is increasing everyday, with two out of three women in certain communities facing domestic violence (Oluremi, 2015). Spousal violence can lead to varieties of health problems, such as stress-induced psychological changes, substance use, lack of fertility control and loss of personal autonomy (Kishor and Johnson, 2005); it is a major public health and human rights problem in society (Tanko, Yohanna and Omeiza, 2016); and is also associated with morbidity (Watts and Zimmerman, 2002).

Jewkes (2002) reported that intimate partner violence is most common in patriarchal societies and the rural areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria are predominantly patriarchal societies (Ekong, 2003). However, there is a paucity of data on the prevalence and correlates of spousal violence in the rural areas of Akwa Ibom State, hence this study. The general objective of this study is to ascertain the correlates of spousal violence among couples in the rural areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria; and the specific objectives are as follows:

- i) To examine the socio-economic characteristics of married couples in rural areas of Akwa Ibom State;
- ii) To determine the prevalence of spousal violence among the respondents, and

- iii) To ascertain the socio-economic correlates of spousal violence among married couples in the study area.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The State lies between latitudes 4° 31" and 5° 31" North and longitudes 7° 35" and 8° 25" East; has an estimated population of 3,920,208 and a total land area of 7,245,935km according to the 2006 National Population and Housing Census of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (National Population Commission, 2006). Akwa Ibom State is located within the South Eastern axis of Nigeria, wedged between Cross River, Abia and Rivers State. Akwa Ibom State has two seasons: The wet season (March to November) and the dry season (December to February). The mean annual rainfall is about 2000mm, mean monthly relative humidity is 75% and mean diurnal temperature is 30° C.

A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed in the selection of the sample for this study. The first stage of the sampling procedure involved the random selection of five local government areas out of the thirty-one local government areas in Akwa Ibom State. The selected local government areas were Abak, Eket, Etinan, Itu and Oron. Purposive sampling was used at the second stage of the sampling procedure to select thirty rural households in each of the selected five local government areas. Purposive selection was used at the second stage to ensure that only households in the rural areas were selected for the study. Furthermore, one married couple in each of the selected rural households was also selected for the study resulting in a total sample size of 150. The adoption of purposive selection in the third stage of the multi-stage sampling procedure ensured that only married couples were selected for the study.

Objective one of the study was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages and means. Objective two was analyzed using prevalence rate which can be expressed as:

$$\text{Prevalence of spousal violence} = \frac{\text{Number of respondents with SVS score} > 39}{\text{Total number of respondents}} \times 100$$

Objective three was analyzed using Spearman's rho rank correlation. Its formula is as follows:

$$r = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

Where r = correlation coefficient  
d = differences between ranked value of X and Y  
n = number of paired variables

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Socio-economic characteristics of married couples in rural areas of Akwa Ibom State: Data in Table 1 show that females (65.3%) dominate farming in the rural areas of Akwa Ibom State, supporting the assertion of Akpabio (2005) and Asa et al. (2021) that most rural farmers in Akwa Ibom State are females. 46.7% of the respondents were aged between 21-40 years. This implies that majority of the respondents were within the economically active age group, therefore, any form of violence experienced may significantly affect their productivity. 92.7% of the respondents were in monogamous marriage and having 5-8 (62.0%) persons in their households. This may not be surprising as the area is dominated by Christians (93.3%) whose religion does not accept any form of polygamy. 42.7% of the respondents had attained secondary education. The implication is that a good number of the respondents have been formally educated and should therefore understand spousal violence practices and measures aimed at improving their well-being and peaceful co-existence. Table one also shows that majority of the respondents (78.7%) earn N50,000 and below every month which is relatively low. This result agrees with Asa and Solomon (2010) who reported that majority of rural dwellers in Akwa Ibom State have low income. The low income level may be a contributing factor to spousal violence.

**Table 1: Socio-economic Characteristics of Married Couples in Rural Areas of Akwa Ibom State.**

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
<b>Age class years</b>		
21-40	70	46.7
41-60	64	42.7
61-80	16	10.6
<b>Gender</b>		
Females	98	65.3
Males	52	34.7
<b>Educational status</b>		
No formal education	28	18.7
Primary education	33	22.0
Secondary education	64	42.7
Tertiary education	25	16.6
<b>Age class of spouses</b>		
21 – 40 years	58	38.7
41 – 60 years	65	43.3
61 - 80 years	25	16.7
Above 80 years	2	1.3
<b>Educational status of spouses</b>		
No formal education	34	22.7
Primary education	33	22.0
Secondary education	50	33.3
Tertiary education	33	22.0
<b>Monthly income</b>		
₦50,000 and below	118	78.7
₦50,0001-100,000	30	20.0
₦100,001 and above	2	1.3
<b>Household size</b>		
1-4 persons	38	25.3
5-8 persons	93	62.0
9-12 persons	19	12.7
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	140	93.3
Non-Christianity	10	6.7
<b>Type of marriage</b>		
Monogamous	139	92.7
Non-monogamous	11	7.3

Source; Authors computation

2. Prevalence of spousal violence among married couples in rural areas of Akwa Ibom State: The spousal violence scale score was used. The range of scores of the spousal violence scale used for this study was 0.78 and its midpoint (39) served as the cutoff point between those who experienced spousal violence and those who did not experience spousal violence. The prevalence of spousal violence was then computed from this midpoint as follows:

Prevalence of spousal violence

$$\Rightarrow \frac{\text{No of respondents with SVS} \geq 39}{\text{Total number of respondents}} \times 100$$

$$\Rightarrow \frac{49}{150} \times 100\%$$

$$\Rightarrow 32.7\%$$

The prevalence of spousal violence among couples in rural areas of Akwa Ibom State was 32.7%. Majority of the respondents who were reported abused were females. This assertion corroborates the findings of Makama (2013) who reported that patriarchy structure of Nigeria contributed to the wide gender inequality that dominates every sphere of life of the rural people. Similarly, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2016) reported that the rate of intimate partner violence in Bangladesh is high with one in two ever-married women reporting physical and/or sexual violence during their lifetime. Furthermore, Yusuf et al. (2011) showed that more females experienced physical violence than males. The prevalence rate of spousal violence in this study could have been underestimated because of the belief that issues concerning families and intimate partners of spouses should not be discussed openly as they are seen as private matters.

3. Socio-economic correlates of spousal violence in the study area: Table 2 shows the correlation analysis of the relationship between household income, marriage type, alcohol use by respondents, alcohol use by spouses of the respondents, smoking status of respondents, smoking status of spouses of the respondents and spousal violence among married couples in rural areas of Akwa Ibom State. The table reveals a low significant relationship between household income and spousal violence among respondents at 5% level ( $r=0.163$ ). The higher the income of the respondents, the greater the level of violence. This result contradicts the findings of Ruchira et al. (2017) who noted that household poverty remains a risk factor for intimate partner violence, driven by marital stress and tension over scarce resources. Also, table two shows a low positive significant relationship between alcohol use by respondents and spousal violence at 10% level ( $r=0.143$ ). The implication is that an increase in alcohol use by the respondents is associated with an increase in spousal violence. This result negates the finding of Yusuf et al. (2011) who stated that females who drank alcohol were less likely to experience violence.

Furthermore, the table reveals that there is a significant relationship between alcohol use by spouses of the respondents and spousal violence at 1% level ( $r = 0.405$ ). An increase in the level of alcohol used by the spouses of the respondents is directly related to the level of spousal violence experienced. This agrees with the findings of Diksha et al. (2016), who opined that women whose husbands drink alcohol often are at more than two folds greater risk of experiencing spousal violence as compared to women whose husbands do not drink alcohol. The table also reveals a low significant relationship between the smoking status of the spouses of the respondents and spousal violence at 1% level ( $r=0.239$ ). This implies that an increase in the smoking status of the spouses of the respondents is significantly related to an increase in spousal violence. This corroborates Mehmet et al. (2014) who stated that excessive consumption of alcohol has been considered a factor that provokes aggressive and violent male behavior towards the wife and children.

**Table 2: Correlation Analysis Result of Socio-economic Variables related to Spousal Violence among Married Couples in Rural Areas of Akwa Ibom State.**

Spousal Violence		
Household Income	correlated coefficient	0.163**
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.000
Alcohol use by the respondents	correlated coefficient	0.143*
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.080
Alcohol use status by spouses of the respondents	correlated coefficient	0.405***
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.000
Smoking status of spouses of the respondents	correlated coefficient	0.239***
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.003

Source; Authors computation

\*, \*\* and \*\*\* denote significance at 10%, 5% and 1% respectively

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results of the study show that the prevalence rate of spousal violence is 32% in the study area and majority of the respondents who were reported abused were females. Household income, alcohol use by respondents, alcohol use by spouses of the respondents and smoking status of spouses of the respondents had a significant relationship with spousal violence among married couples in rural areas of Akwa Ibom State. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Married couples in the rural areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria should be encouraged to reduce or stop the consumption of alcohol. This is based on the findings that alcohol use, either by the respondents or their spouses, is associated with spousal violence.
2. Married couples and their spouses who smoke should be discouraged from the habit by family members, religious organizations, non-governmental and governmental agencies in the study area since smoking is significantly correlated with spousal violence in the study area.
3. Government and non-governmental agencies should set up marriage counseling clinics to help tackle the problem of spousal violence in the study area since the findings reveal its occurrence among married couples in the study.

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