

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: THE IMPACT OF PERSONALITY TRAITS AND
RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION AMONG MARRIED FEMALE PUBLIC SERVANTS
IN MAISAURI COMMUNITY, KOKONA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA,
NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA.**

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Abstract

Domestic violence has been widely regarded as a major social problem that affects the health and well-being of numerous people worldwide. Given this, the current study investigated the impact of personality traits and religion orientation among married female public servants in Maisauri community, Kokona Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey research design was used to select a sample of eighty-three (83) married female participants for the study. Data was collected using self administered questionnaires consisting of socio demographic questions, the ten-item personality inventory ($\alpha = .82$), Short Form Composite Abuse Scale ($\alpha = .77$) and Religious Orientation Scale ($\alpha = .802$). The hypotheses formulated were tested using a regression analysis. On one hand, result showed that personality traits had a significant joint influence ($R^2 = .483$; $F(5, 77) = 10.824$; $p < .000$) on domestic violence; and observation of coefficient of determination shows that personality traits accounted for just 48.3% of the total variance observed in domestic violence. Religious orientation have significant influence on domestic violence [$F(2, 80) = 5.984$, $R^2 = .037$, $p < 0.01$]. In the light of the study outcomes, the study therefore, recommends that mental health professionals offering counseling services to couples should always screen for personality traits as this will aid in their provision of effective targeted interventions for couples in violence-plagued unions.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Personality trait, Religion Orientation

Introduction

Domestic violence is a pervasive and distressing social issue that transcends geographical boundaries, affecting individuals and families worldwide. According to Okafor (2020), domestic violence in most cases happens at home and it can be seen as an act of inflicting assault to an intimate relation or a group or community that its outcome is injury, death, physical harm and deprivation. It can also be in form

of threat or intimidation. It is a violation of human rights, a public health concern, and a significant challenge for social and legal systems in Nigeria (Abdullahi, et al., 2017). It also refers to any behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that can cause physical, sexual or psychological harm in addition to physical violence, coercion sexually, psychological abuse and controlling behaviour (World Health Organisation, 2015; National Population

Commission, 2019). While domestic violence affects individuals from all walks of life, this exploration focuses on public servants, who play crucial roles in the governance and administration of the country. Globally, over a third (35%) of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence by a non-partner at some point in their lives (World Health Organization, 2022). Similarly, in other sub-Saharan African countries, the prevalence of domestic violence is as high as 42.62% (Mossie et al., 2023). Reports from the Nigerian national population commission estimated women's lifetime exposure to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) from their current husband or partner at 19% for emotional IPV, 14% for physical IPV, and 5% for sexual IPV (Mapayi et al., 2018). Previous studies from Nigeria have shown the prevalence of IPV to range from 31 to 61% for psychological/emotional violence, 20 to 31% for sexual violence, and 7 to 31% for physical violence (NPC, 2019). Furthermore, studies conducted in different regions in Nigeria have reported prevalence of IPV ranging from 42% in the North (Tanimu et al., 2018), 29% in the South West (Oluremi, 2015; Ishola, 2016; Okenwa et al., 2018), 78.8% South East (Okemgbo et al., 2018), to 41% in the South South (Dienye et al., 2018).

Domestic violence has several well-established effects on health and wellbeing. Physical, sexual, and psychological violence by intimate partners severely impacts women's health short-term and long-term. This includes physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive problems. Their children's

health and wellbeing also suffer. For women, families, and societies, this violence brings massive social and economic costs. Specifically, intimate partner violence can lead to fatal outcomes like murder or suicide. Injuries also result, with 42% of abused women reporting an injury from the violence (WHO, 2021). Being exposed to domestic violence increases the victim's risk of experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Anxiety, Depression, substance abuse and suicide ideation (Gulati et al., 2020).

Notwithstanding, several factors can influence the domestic violence. These factors include individual factors, such as age (WHO, 2013; WHO, 2021), education (NPC, 2019) wealth status (Ali et al., 2014), community belief (Simon, 2016), religion (Istratii & Ali, 2023), and personal factors (Fasasi et al., 2020). Also, researchers have identified certain demographic factors like young marital age, low educational status, alcohol, drugs, gender of children, extended family, and women's financial dependence as responsible for domestic violence (Adjah & Agbemafle, 2016; Gage & Thomas, 2017; Princewill, 2023). However, the role of personality traits and religious orientation as factors in the experience of domestic violence has not been adequately explored.

Personality is worthy of note in the influence of domestic violence and is considered in current study. This is because, personality traits can shape individual's attitude, behaviors and relationships. Thus, personality traits are fundamental aspects of an individual's psychological makeup that influence their behaviour, emotions, and interpersonal relationships (Lamichhane et

al., 2011). Understanding how certain personality traits may contribute to domestic violence among public servants is essential for designing effective prevention and intervention strategies. Factors such as anger management, impulsivity, and controlling behaviours could be linked to an increased propensity for domestic violence (Manarini et al., 2023; Kanwal & Kazmi, 2022). Personality is the combination of psychological traits, behaviors, and emotional patterns that define how a person interacts with the world and how they adjust to life. It encompasses their major character traits, interests, motivations, values, self-image, abilities, and emotional tendencies (American Psychological Association, 2018). Studies (Yalch, 2012; Motevaliyan et al., 2014; Oguntayo et al., 2020) have found personality trait such as neuroticism and agreeableness to be strong predictors of attitude towards violence. Neuroticism for instance, has been associated with hostility and impatience, which makes individuals with such personality trait to be aggressive and reactive (Bernerth et al., 2008). People with agreeableness personality on the other hand, are considered tolerant and supportive and non-violent in relationships (Pobutsky et al., 2014).

Studies have demonstrated the existence of significant relationships between personality traits and domestic violence both in terms of being the victim as well as being the perpetrator of the violence. For instance, Fasasi and Alabi (2020) in their study conducted among married women in southwest Nigerian found personality traits of neuroticism, agreeableness and conscientiousness predicted higher

likelihood of experiencing domestic violence while extraversion personality predicted lower experience of domestic violence. The personality trait of openness personality did not significantly predict the experience of domestic violence. In terms of being the perpetrator of domestic violence, Bettencourt et al. (2006) found that highly neurotic individuals are more likely to exhibit intimate partner violence in romantic relationships compared to individuals who score low on neuroticism. Highly agreeable people are less likely to be violent in romantic or marital relationships as possess attributes such as being tolerant and supportive (Pobutsky et al., 2014). On the other hand, people who are less agreeable tend to have difficulty in resolving conflicts peacefully and may therefore take to violence as means of asserting their dominance in the relationships (Barlett & Anderson, 2012). Low conscientiousness may be associated being impulsive and irresponsible making such individuals to have a higher propensity of exhibiting violent outburst and be more likely to be more violent compared to highly conscientious individuals (Chen & Chan, 2021). Being highly open to experience is inversely associated with domestic violence as this trait promotes open communication, empathy and cooperation all of which are factors or acts that promote healthy and satisfying relationships.

Religious orientation is a concept that has been used interchangeably with religiosity and has been conceptualized differently by various scholars (Holdcroft, 2006). It thus, lacks a generally agreed definition. Krauss and Hood (2013) asserted that there are two

basic ways to define religious orientation and the most common definition states that religious orientation is the way an individual is religious. In other words, religious orientation is the form of a person's faith. This definition implies that non-religious people do not have a religious orientation, for they have no religion. Religious orientation, is another variable of the study which plays a significant role in Nigerian society, where a vast majority of the population adheres to various religious beliefs, including Christianity, Islam, and indigenous African religions. Religion often shapes individuals' values, moral principles, and social interactions. Examining how religious beliefs and practices influence attitudes toward domestic violence and its prevalence among public servants is crucial in the Nigerian context.

Previous research on the links between religion and domestic violence has had mixed findings. Some sociological and anthropological studies suggest religious women enduring intimate partner violence may forgive abuse based on their faith teachings (Merry 2009; Marsden 2014; Nason-Clark et al. 2018; Shaikh 2007). But victims may also use religious morals to condemn the abuse and develop a more justice-oriented faith view to address it (Johnson 2015; Shaikh 2007). One study in Ethiopia found some men cited religious morality as deterring them from abusing wives, indicating a potential protective effect of religiosity (Istratii 2020). Austin and Falconier (2012) found higher spirituality associated with less psychological aggression and more supportive coping in Latino couples. Other research indicates

religious service attendance relates to lower domestic violence perpetration (Fergusson et al. 1986; Ellison et al. 1999). However, some studies found religious beliefs tied to guilt of engaging in premarital sexual relation, fear of being ridiculed, and endurance of abuse among victims (Kamau 2016; Chavis & Hill 2008). Also, abused religious women may endure the abuse based on their religious belief that life and all sufferings are temporary and there awaits a better life for them in the hereafter (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2003).

Statement of the problem

The incidence of domestic violence regardless of the form is increasing on a daily basis. Although, both men and women are victims and perpetrators of violence, the rate of experience of violence undeniably differs according to gender, with more women bearing the larger burden of experience of violence (WHO, 2021).

Empirical studies have documented evidence suggesting personality trait such as the Big Five trait to be a significant predictor of attitude towards and experience of violence (Oguntayo et al., 2020; Tyler & Brownbridge, 2022). However, literature relating experience of domestic violence to personality traits as well as religious orientation has been sparsely explored especially among public servants in Nigeria despite the high rate of domestic violence prevalent in the country. In addition, most of these studies have focused on demographic, socio-economic, household and cultural characteristics of the victims. This study, therefore, seeks to bridge this knowledge gap and contributing to the body of literature on

the impact of personality traits and religion orientation on the experience of domestic violence of selected married female public servants in Maisauri Community, Kokona Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

ii. Find out the religion orientation influence on domestic violence among Married Female Public Servants in Maisauri Community, Kokona Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Research Objectives

In line with extant theoretical studies, the fundamental objective of this present study aims to determine the impact of personality traits and religion orientation on the experience of domestic violence among Married Female Public Servants in Maisauri Community, Kokona Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. While, the specific objectives are as follows:

i. Examine the influence of personality traits (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to Experience) on domestic violence among Married Female Public Servants in Maisauri Community, Kokona Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

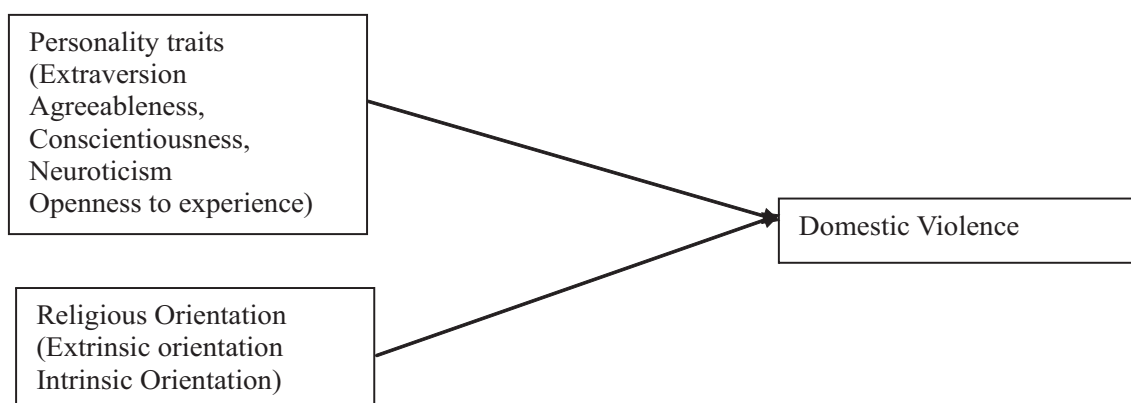
Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated

i. Personality traits (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to Experience) will significantly and positively influence domestic violence among Married Female Public Servants in Maisauri Community, Kokona Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

ii. Religion orientation will have significant influence on domestic violence among Married Female Public Servants in Maisauri Community, Kokona Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Figure1: The conceptual model for the research variables and their relationships



Source: Author's compilation

The researchers have developed a conceptual framework for this study based on the review of literature and the research variables namely, personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience), and religion orientation. Based on the above, personality traits and religious orientation are two factors that can influence both the perpetration and the experience of domestic violence.

Method

Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional research design. This type of design allows the researchers to collect data from a population or a representative subset at a single point in time.

Setting

This present study was carried out among some selected registered married female public servants in Maisauri Community, Kokona Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The setting allows easy accessibility to young married female workers, and there was more likelihood for respondents to show interest and comply with participation in the study.

Participants, Sample and Sampling Technique

A total number of 83 young married female public servants participated in this study. Random sampling technique was used in selecting the sample of young adult women (N = 105) who were enrolled at a counseling centre in Kokona Local Government Area, Nasarawa State. The women are victims of

domestic partner violence, currently married and living with their husband at the time of the study. Thus, the participants' characteristic stands as; 1.2% of the respondents were below 20 years, 43.4% were between 21 – 30 years, 42.2% were between 31 – 40 years while 13.3% were from 41 years and above. It is further shows that 31.3% were Christians, 63.9% were Muslims while 4.8% were from other religious affiliations. Moreover, on their educational qualification, 8.4% of the respondents had SSCE, 55.4% had ND/NCE, and 30.1% had HND/BSC while 6.0% had postgraduate qualification. On their family type 44.6% were from polygamous families while 55.4% were from monogamous families.

Procedure

Based on the focus of this study, the method adopted for the collection of data is the primary method through the use of questionnaire because the researchers were interested in generating data directly mainly from the respondents without relying only on already existing data. The questionnaire was structured to elicit the relevant information from the sampled populations. The questionnaire consists of four (4) parts, section A, B, C, and D. Where **Section A** consists of demographic information of the participants, such as age, gender, academic status, marital status, levels of education, religion, and family types. **Section B** of the questionnaire is the short version of the ten-item personality inventory questionnaire, developed by (Li, 2013). BFI-10 inventory that measures five-dimension of PT (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and

neuroticism). The scoring format is based on a 5-point Likert scale which ranges from 1=disagree strongly to 5=agree strongly. The reliability of each dimension was reported as; extraversion traits =.79, agreeableness=.69, conscientiousness=.70, neuroticism=.76, and openness to experience =.65 “(LI, 2013). While the present study recorded a composite Cronbach alpha of .82 for the inventory. Some of the items with 'R' denoted reverse scoring while the others were directly scored. The dimension of the inventory included; extraversion (items; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7, 1R), agreeableness (items; 2, 6 and 7R), conscientiousness (items; 3R, and 8), openness to experience (items; 5R and 10) and neuroticism (4R and 9). **Section C** was used to measure domestic violence using the Short Form Composite Abuse Scale (Revised). The CASR-SF is a 15-item scale developed by Ford-Gilboe et al (2016). The items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale: not at all=0, 'once'=1, 'a few times'=2, 'monthly'=3, 'weekly'=4, and 'daily or almost daily'=5. The scale covers three domains thus: physical, sexual and psychological. Some of questions in the CASR-SF asked respondents to assess lifetime, recent and current exposure, and abuse frequency. Moderate correlations were observed between the CASR-SF and the measures of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and coercive control. The composite internal consistency of the CASR-SF ranged between 0.942 to 0.975 while each subscale had an acceptable Cronbach alpha (0.938 for psychological abuse, 0.847 for physical abuse, and 0.884 for sexual abuse). The scale is scored by adding all responses together. Scores range from 0-75; below 30 is considered low, 31 to 45 is considered moderate while above 45 is high.

The present study recorded reliability Cronbach's alpha of .77. **Section D** measures participants' religion orientation. The “Religious Orientation Scale (ROS)” used in the research was developed by Allport and Ross (1967). ROS has become one of the most widely used religiosity scales in the psychology of religion. The scale aims to measure two different constructs, namely “Intrinsic and Extrinsic Religious Orientation.” The scale, which has 20-items in total, consists of nine items that measure intrinsically motivated religiosity, and 11 items that measure extrinsic religiosity. Sample items include “I enjoy reading about my religion,” and “Although I am religious, I do not let it affect my daily life.” Items were rated on 5-point Likert scales, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Cronbach Alpha score of ROS was found as 0.802.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using (statistical packages for the social sciences) SPSS 21.0. Descriptive statistics such as; frequency, mean, standard deviation and variance were used to describe participants' demographic information. The reliability analysis of the study instruments was ascertained and reported as local reliability for future reference. The Hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis.

Results

Hypotheses Testing

In this section of the study, result of each hypothesis was analyzed.

Hypothesis One

This hypothesis stated that personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience) will significantly predict

domestic violence among married female public servants. This was tested using multiple regression analysis and the result is presented in table 1.

Table 1:
Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Showing the Influence of Personality Factors on Domestic Violence among Married Female Public Servants in Nigeria

DV	Predictor(s)	R	R ²	F	df	t	P	
Domestic Violence	Constant	.695	.483	10.824**	5,77			
	Agreeableness					-.356	-2.864	.006
	Neuroticism					.245	2.393	.020
	Conscientiousness					-.162	-1.271	.209
	Openness					-.010	-3.012	.008
	Extroversion					-.524	-5.604	.001

** $p < .001$

Result in Table 2 shows that personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience) significantly predict domestic violence among sample population ($R^2 = .483$; $F(5, 77) = 10.824$; $p = .000$). Observation of coefficient of determination shows that personality traits significantly accounted for 48.3% of the total variance observed in domestic violence. Based on this result, hypothesis one which stated that 'personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness) will significantly predict domestic violence was therefore supported. On the independent basis, the result showed that agreeableness ($\beta = -.356$, $t = -2.864$; $p = .006$), neuroticism ($\beta = .245$, $t = 2.393$; $p = .02$), openness to experience ($\beta = -.010$, $t = -3.012$; $p = .008$) and extraversion (β

$= -.524$, $t = -5.604$; $p = .001$) significantly and independently predicted domestic violence. On the other hand, conscientiousness ($\beta = -.162$, $t = 1.271$; $p = .209$) did not independently predict domestic violence among married female public servants. These suggests that agreeableness, openness to experience and extroversion each have significant negative effect on domestic violence while neuroticism have positive effect.

Hypothesis Two

This hypothesis stated that religion orientation will have significant influence on domestic violence. This hypothesis was tested using multiple regression analysis and the result is presented in table 2.

Table 2:
Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Showing the Influence of Religion Orientation on Domestic Violence among Married Female Public Servants

DV	Predictor(s)	R	R ²	F	df	β	t	P
Domestic Violence	Constant	.191	.037	5.948**	2,80			
	Extrinsic					-.203	-2.694	.008
	Intrinsic					-.199	-2.286	.023

***p* < .001

Results in Table 4 indicates that overall, the two dimensions of religious orientation jointly predicted counterproductive domestic violence among female public servants [$F(2, 80) = 5.984, R^2 = .037, p < 0.01$]. In terms of the dimensions, intrinsic religious orientation have significant negative influence of domestic violence ($\beta = -.203, p < .01$), likewise, intrinsic religious orientation have a negative influence on domestic violence ($\beta = -.203, p < .01$). Thus, the hypothesis was accepted.

Discussion of the Findings

The study aims to investigate domestic violence: impact of personality traits and religion orientation among married female public servants. The hypothesis one which stated that personality traits will significantly and positively predict domestic violence was therefore supported by this result. The possible explanation can be attributed to the fact that personality traits can be determinants of domestic violence, as they can influence an individual's likelihood of engaging in abusive behaviors within a relationship. This is consistent with some studies (Oguntayo et al., 2018; Oguntayo et al., 2020) who have found personality trait such as neuroticism and agreeableness to be strong predictors of attitude towards violence.

Result also agreed with previous study who found people with neuroticism personality trait to exhibit reactive and aggressive behaviour (Bernerth et al., 2008). Again, findings are similar with several studies who have found a positive association between high levels of neuroticism (emotional instability) and aggression or violence in intimate relationships (Bettencourt et al., 2006). However, result is not in conformity with other results that, high levels of openness and agreeableness have been associated with healthier and more satisfying relationships (Barlett et al., 2012; Kalokerinos et al., 2020; Hellmuth & McNulty, 2008).

Results of analysis of the second research hypothesis showed that religious orientation have significant influence on the experience of domestic violence among the female civil servants in this study. Both dimensions of religious orientation had significant negative effect on the domestic violence. The negative influence indicates that higher intrinsic and extrinsic orientation both associate with lower domestic violence experience among the married women in this study. This finding is in agreement with previous related studies by scholars who found that religion has a deterrent effect on domestic violence (Istratii, 2020; Austin & Falconier, 2012;

Sharp, 2010). The finding however, contrast Kamau (2016) and Chavis and Hill (2008). This finding suggests that religious involvement whether for intrinsic and extrinsic reasons may serve a protective role against domestic violence among women.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study on married female civil servants in Keffi found that certain personality traits and religious orientations are associated with risk of domestic violence among female civil servants in Kokona Local Government. Specifically, lower agreeableness, openness to experience, and extraversion, as well as higher neuroticism predicted higher levels of domestic violence. Additionally, both intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations had a significant negative relationship with domestic violence. Taken together, these findings suggest that interventions aimed at shaping personality development and promoting intrinsic faith values could help reduce domestic violence among this population.

Recommendations

Given the study's outcomes, therefore, the followings are recommended:

- i. Mental health professionals offering counselling services to couples should always screen for personality traits as this will aid in their provision of effective targeted interventions for couples in violence-plagued unions.
- ii. Churches and mosques should sponsor support groups, classes or seminars for married couples as well as premarital couples on developing healthy relationships, managing emotions and nonviolent conflict resolutions.

- iii. Religious teachers and leaders should constantly promote religious teachings on nonviolence and healthy marriages to reduce domestic abuse against women.

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