

## **ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOUR AS A DETERMINANT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG TEACHERS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*Assertive behaviour is the ability to express one's thoughts, feelings, and needs in a clear, direct, and respectful manner. It is a key component of healthy relationships, as it allows individuals to communicate their needs and boundaries without being aggressive or passive. However, when assertive behaviour is lacking, it could contribute to domestic violence. This is because individuals who are unable to assert themselves may be more likely to tolerate abusive behaviour from their partners. They may also be less likely to leave abusive relationships, as they may fear retaliation or believe that they deserve the abuse. However, there is a paucity of empirical research on assertive behaviour and domestic violence among public secondary school teachers in Kwara State. The objectives of the study are to examine the level of assertive behaviour among public secondary school teachers; establish the causes of domestic violence and investigate the relationship between the two variables. The study population includes 8172 public secondary school teachers in the state, from which a sample of 401 respondents was selected. The adopted questionnaires on the Assertive Behaviour Scale (ABS) by Ongong (2013) and the Domestic Violence Scale (DVS) by Marcia Bench (2018) were used to collect data for the study. The analyses were done using descriptive statistics of percentages and Pearson's. The results of this study revealed that married teachers suffer domestic violence as a result of low levels of assertive behaviour among Teachers in Public Secondary Schools In Kwara State, Nigeria. It also showed that there is a significant relationship between assertive behaviour and domestic violence among married teachers. Based on these findings, it was recommended that married couples should be enlightened on the importance of assertive behaviour in marriage, marriage counsellors should expose couples to causes of domestic violence in marriage, and there should be periodic enlightenment on how poor assertive behaviour leads to domestic violence in marriage.*

**Keywords:** Assertive behaviours, domestic violence, and Teachers.

### **Introduction**

Marriage, a long-standing social institution, has undergone significant changes in recent years, contributing to an increase in marital instability and divorce rates. In Kwara State, court-registered divorces decreased from 280 in 2021 to 250 in 2022, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. However, this data may not reflect the actual number of divorces, as some may occur outside the court

system, particularly in rural areas. Reducing divorce rates is a complex issue with significant consequences. Factors like poor communication and lack of assertiveness could contribute to domestic violence, as individuals who struggle to express their needs and boundaries may tolerate abuse and hesitate to leave harmful relationships. Assertive behaviour is crucial in healthy relationships, enabling individuals to communicate effectively and maintain their well-being.

According to the American Psychological Association (2019), Assertive behaviour (AB) is a vital social skill that enables individuals to express themselves effectively and maintain healthy relationships. It involves being able to say no, ask for favours, express emotions, and engage in conversations. When a wife exhibits assertive behaviour towards her partner, it can help prevent domestic violence and strengthen their relationship. Research shows that higher assertive behaviour leads to greater marital satisfaction. Assertive behaviour means communicating thoughts, feelings, and needs clearly and respectfully, without being aggressive or passive. According to the American Psychological Association (2019), key components of assertive behaviour include:

- **Eye contact:** Assertive individuals maintain eye contact with the person they are speaking to. This conveys confidence and sincerity.
- **Body language:** Assertive individuals stand up straight, with uncrossed arms, and have an open posture. This conveys confidence and openness.
- **Tone of voice:** Assertive individuals speak in a clear, firm voice. They avoid speaking too softly or too loudly.
- **Choice of words:** Assertive individuals choose their words carefully and avoid using vague or ambiguous language. They also avoid using "I" statements, which can appear aggressive.
- **Active listening:** Assertive individuals listen to the other person's words and try to understand their perspective. Assertive individuals avoid interrupting or talking over the other person.

Research suggests that assertive behaviour in couples can lead to greater respect for each other's feelings, thoughts, and rights, and can help prevent hurtful behaviour. Studies have shown that assertive behaviour, particularly by women, can reduce domestic violence and increase marital satisfaction (Nugraha et al., 2013). When women exhibit assertive behaviour, it can strengthen their relationship with their partner. However, this may not be effective for individuals experiencing ongoing violence (Wardani et al., 2012; Syafira & Kustanti, 2017). Overall, assertive behaviour can positively impact relationships, leading to greater mutual respect and satisfaction.

When women exhibit assertive behaviour, it can lead to improved relationships. However, this has no effect on individuals trapped in ongoing abusive situations (Wardani et al., 2017). Domestic violence refers to a pattern of abusive behaviours within intimate relationships, including physical, emotional, or psychological harm. This study defines domestic violence as any form of mistreatment in heterosexual marital relationships. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence identifies four primary types of domestic violence:

- **Physical violence:** This includes any type of physical harm, such as hitting, punching, kicking, choking, or using a weapon.
- **Sexual violence:** This includes any type of sexual activity that is forced or coerced, such as rape, sexual assault, or unwanted sexual contact.
- **Emotional abuse:** This includes any type of verbal or emotional abuse, such as name-calling, humiliation, or intimidation.
- **Economic abuse:** This includes any type of financial control or exploitation, such as preventing someone from working or accessing their own money.

The World Health Organization (2015) reports that intimate partner violence is a significant global health issue, affecting approximately 35% of women worldwide. This translates to nearly one-third of women experiencing physical or sexual abuse from their partner at some point in their lives. Similarly, the National Population Commission of Nigeria (2020) found that in Ilorin, Kwara State, about 28.8% of women have faced physical or sexual violence from their intimate partner, which is also nearly one-third of women in the area.

According to WHO (2020), domestic violence can lead to;

- **Physical harm:** Intimate partner violence can cause various injuries, from bruises and cuts to broken bones and even fatalities.

- Reproductive health issues: intimate partner violence can lead to STIs, unplanned pregnancies, miscarriages, and other sexual and reproductive health problems.
- Emotional trauma: IPV can result in mental health issues like depression, anxiety, PTSD, and substance abuse.
- Financial struggles: IPV can lead to economic instability, including lost income, job loss, homelessness, and other financial challenges.

Many studies have been conducted in the past to investigate factors that enhance or lead to the deterioration of the quality of couples' relationships such as Okorie et al. (2020) focused on Perceived Determinants of Domestic Violence and the Strategies for Its Prevention. Trevillion et al. (2012) carried out a study on Experiences of Domestic Violence and Mental Disorders. The prevalence and determinants of domestic violence of different societies and cultures have been extensively studied in several countries across the globe including Nigeria; however, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, most of the existing studies on domestic violence focused on women there is paucity of studies on assertive behaviour as determinants of domestic violence among married teachers in Kwara State. Therefore, this study is not gender bias and intends to explore the assertive behaviour of married adults in the Ilorin Metropolis as well as its correlation with domestic violence.

#### **Purpose of the study**

The specific purposes of the study were to:

- iv. examine the level of assertive behaviour of married teachers in Kwara State.
- v. identify the perceived causes of domestic violence among married teachers in Kwara State.
- vi. determine the relationship between assertive behaviour and domestic violence among married teachers in Kwara State.

#### **Research Questions**

1. What is the level of assertive behaviour of married teachers in Kwara State?
2. What are the perceived causes of domestic violence among married teachers in Kwara State?

#### **Research Hypothesis**

**H01:** There is no significant relationship between assertive behaviour and domestic violence among teachers in Kwara State.

#### **Methodology**

The population of this study consisted of all 8172 public secondary school teachers in Kwara State. The target participants for this study are 400 teachers from 10 randomly selected public secondary schools in Kwara State. A simple random sampling technique was used in this study. Ten public secondary schools were randomly selected and 50 teachers were selected from each of the selected secondary schools. Assertive behaviour of married teachers was measured by Ongong's Assertive Behaviour Scale (ABS, 2018) and domestic violence was measured by Marcia Bench (2013). Each of the instruments contains 10 items. The questionnaire was divided into sections A, B and C. Section A is meant to collect the personal data of the respondents, Section B contains items on assertive behaviour and Section C contains items on domestic violence. The instrument has four-point rating scale; Strongly Agree (SA) =4, Agree (A)=3, Disagree(D)=2 and Strongly Disagree (SD)=1. An adopted instrument was used for this study, it has been established and validated.

The instruments for this study were personally administered by the researchers to the respondents in the sample schools. Before the administration of the questionnaire, the researchers introduced themselves to the principals of the selected schools and informed them about their mission in the schools. Upon obtaining the required permissions from the authority of each school, the researchers administered the instrument to the respondents. The completed questionnaire was collected from the respondents in each of the sample schools by the researchers. The data obtained for this study was analysed using percentage, mean, standard deviation (SD) and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) statistics. Simple percentage was used to analyse the demographic characteristics of the respondents, while mean and SD were used to analyse research questions 1 and 2. However, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (r) was used to test hypothesis one.

#### **Results**

The data presented in Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents using frequency and percentages.

**Answers to the Research Questions**

**Research Question One:**

*What is the level of assertive behaviour of married teachers in Kwara State?*

**Table 1:**

**Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Level of Assertive Behaviour of Married Teachers in Kwara State**

N	Assertive behaviour of married teachers are:	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	SD
1	Ability to use body language properly when relating with a spouse.	99 (24.7)	14 (3.5)	7 (1.7)	0 (.0)	281 (70.1)	2.13	1.75
2	Hiding feelings in order not to hurt spouse.	30 (7.5)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	7 (1.7)	364 (90.8)	1.32	1.05
3	Accepting blame to allow peace to reign.	8 (2.0)	7 (1.7)	7 (1.7)	14 (3.5)	365 (91.0)	1.20	0.73
4	Avoiding partners to prevent unnecessary arguments.	8 (2.0)	14 (3.5)	21 (5.2)	8 (2.0)	350 (87.3)	1.31	0.87
5	Taking responsibility for partner's mistake.	14 (3.5)	15 (3.7)	0 (0.0)	21 (5.2)	351 (87.5)	1.30	0.92
6	Avoiding negative emotions when relating opinions with a partner.	16 (4.0)	14 (3.5)	14 (3.5)	14 (3.5)	343 (85.5)	1.37	0.99
7	Being consistent in rejecting unfavourable requests from spouses.	15 (3.7)	7 (1.7)	21 (5.2)	14 (3.5)	344 (85.8)	1.34	0.94
8	Ability to be firm in my decision.	30 (7.5)	7 (1.7)	21 (5.2)	29 (7.2)	314 (78.3)	1.53	1.16
9	Having confidence in making eye-to-eye contact when relating with a spouse.	30 (7.5)	0 (0.0)	7 (1.7)	21 (5.2)	343 (85.5)	1.39	1.08
10	Speaking out for my right without being sentimental.	23 (5.7)	0 (0.0)	14 (3.5)	21 (5.2)	343 (85.5)	1.35	0.99

**Source:** Field Survey 2023

Table 2 shows that the respondents' level of assertive behaviours is low. This is because the percentage distribution of the items skewed to the right, particularly on the "strongly disagree" response with 70.1%, 90.8%, 91.0% and so on. The mean values also indicated a low level of assertive behaviour among the respondents as all the values are below the average score of 3.0. Thus, it can be inferred from the above that, the assertive behaviour used by public secondary school teachers in Kwara State is low.

**Research Question Two**

**Table 2:**

**Rank Order of the perceived causes of domestic violence among married teachers in Kwara State**

S/N	Items	Mean	Rank Order
2.	He (she) shouts at me and says I am a fool.	3.32	1 <sup>st</sup> .
7.	He (she) makes me feel humiliated.	3.23	2 <sup>nd</sup>
10.	He (she) blames me for his anger.	3.10	3 <sup>rd</sup>
1.	He (she) gets angry at every situation.	2.72	4 <sup>th</sup>

3.	He (she) gets angry at every situation.	2.70	5 <sup>th</sup>
11.	He (she) makes me responsible for his problems.	2.66	6 <sup>th</sup>
4.	He (she) calls me using bad language.	2.65	7 <sup>th</sup>
9.	He (she) does not care about my interests.	2.57	8 <sup>th</sup>
8.	He (she) gets annoyed about my family relations.	2.40	9 <sup>th</sup>
6.	He (she) pushes me when he is angry.	2.31	10 <sup>th</sup>
5.	He (she) throws my objects when he (she) is angry.	2.27	11 <sup>th</sup>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2023

The major causes of domestic violence as perceived by public secondary school teachers in Kwara State were 'He (she) shouts at me and says I am a fool has a mean score of 3.32 (1st), 'He (she) makes me feel humiliated' which has a mean score of 3.23 (2nd), and 'He (she) blames me for his anger' which has a mean score of 3.10 (3rd). Also, 'He (she) gets angry at every situation which has a mean score of 2.72 (4th). 'He (she) makes me responsible for his problems' has a mean score of 2.70 (5th), 'He (she) calls me using bad language' has a mean score of 2.66 (6th), He (she) does not care about my interests' has a mean score of 2.65 (7th) and He (she) gets annoyed about my family relations has a mean score of 2.57 (8th) while other statements have a mean score that below the 2.50 benchmark.

### Hypothesis Testing

#### Research Hypothesis One:

*There is no significant relationship between assertive behaviour and domestic violence among teachers in Kwara State*

**Table 3:**

**PPMC (r) Statistics Showing Relationship between Assertive Behaviours and Domestic Violence Among Public Secondary School Teachers in Kwara State**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. R	p-value	Remark
Assertive Behaviour	401	36.32	14.23	399	-.206*	0.000	Rejected
Domestic Violence	401	37.69	19.32				

\* Sig. at  $p < .05$

Table 4 shows that, at the degree of freedom (df) of 399, the calculated r-value of  $-.206$  ( $p = .000 < .05$ ) is statistically significant; hence, the hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a significant correlation between assertive behaviour and domestic violence among public secondary school teachers in Kwara State, Nigeria.

### Discussion

This study examined assertive behaviour as a determinant of domestic violence among public secondary school teachers in Kwara State. From the analysis presented, the following discussions of the findings were made. The first finding of this study revealed the assertive behaviours used by public secondary school teachers in Kwara State. About 87.0% of the respondents fall on low assertive behaviour. The reason for this could be that many of the couples were not aware of the importance of assertive behaviour in marriage. The finding was against Fowler et al (2015) who found that happy couples with marital stability and satisfaction were more likely to use assertive behaviours such as active listening skills, agreeing, approving, assent, using laughter and humour, and possessing character virtues of self-restraint, courage and friendship. Also, Baucon et al., (2016) found that relationship-focused standards, which prioritize the marriage and place a major emphasis on it, are significantly related to communication patterns within the relationship. Gordon et al (2019) found that good communication may aid partners in creating a positive relationship, which in turn may foster the development of relationship-focused standards.

Hammed (2019) found that assertiveness training proved to be effective in the improvement of participants' interpersonal skills considerably when compared with the control group. The finding therefore took sides with Lazarus (2020) who found and justified the use of assertiveness training as an effective behavioural management technique. Research Question two revealed that the main causes of domestic violence as perceived by public secondary school teachers in Kwara State were that he (she) shouts at me and says I am a fool he (she) makes me feel humiliated and he (she) blames me for his anger.

Also, he (she) gets angry at every situation. he (she) makes me responsible for his problems, he (she) calls me using bad language, he (she) does not care about my interests and he (she) gets annoyed about my family relations while other statements have a mean score below the 2.50 benchmark. This finding is congruent with that of Carlson (2017) found that battered women experience feelings of hopelessness, lowered self-esteem and self-confidence, guilt, and self-blame, which lead to feelings of depression and the belief that they have no control over their lives. The extent to which domestically abused couples perceive that they possess the capacity to successfully engage in behaviours that will positively affect outcomes in the face of abuse and violence has been demonstrated to be limited (Star & Brandt, 2019).

Research Hypothesis One revealed that there is a significant correlation between assertive behaviour and domestic violence among public secondary school teachers in Kwara State, Nigeria this is by the study of Wehr and Kaufman (2017) identified in their study that assertiveness training increases assertiveness and decreases domestic violence among married couples. Akinade (2017) applied assertiveness training in the management of violence among businesswomen successfully. Kling (2020) used assertiveness training effectively in changing antisocial behaviour among adolescents. According to Wise (2021), assertiveness training is effectively adopted in educating adolescents on personal transactions and social responsibility. Oladele (2016) stated that assertive training had been applied successfully in the treatment of conditions such as obsessive-compulsive disorder, sexual communication, smoking, chronic urinary retention and labour management disputes.

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion drawn from the results of this study is that public secondary school teachers in Kwara State suffer high levels of domestic violence majorly caused as a result of low levels of assertive behaviour. The findings provide novel scientific evidence further validating the connections that exist between assertive behaviour and domestic violence among married teachers. Thus, an increase in assertive behaviour leads to minimizing the occurrence of domestic violence and perhaps, improved marital satisfaction. These findings inform effective counselling practices in the area of assertiveness for reducing married teachers' domestic violence.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

1. Married couples should be enlightened on the importance of assertive behaviour in marriage.
2. Marriage counsellors should expose couples to the causes of domestic violence in marriage.
3. There should be periodic enlightenment on how poor assertive behaviour leads to domestic violence in marriage.

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