

## Domestic Violence Against Married Working Women in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper examined the rate at which violence against married working women by their intimate partners is prevalent in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria. Two research questions were raised and two hypotheses guided the study. The two hypotheses were generated at 0.05 margin error. The study adopted the survey type of the descriptive research design. The sample comprised of 581 respondents chosen through the proportionate random sampling technique. Data collected were analysed with the aid of descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings of the study showed that domestic violence was prevalent among married working women in the Federal Capital Territory. The most common form of domestic violence was economic abuse with the highest mean value of 3.53, SD = 6.35. The findings also revealed that age had predictive influence ( $F_{(4,576)} = 8.636, P < 0.05$ ) on domestic violence against married working women. In view of the findings, it was concluded that economic abuse was the most prevalent form of domestic violence among married working women in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The study recommended among others that married couples should be exposed to necessary counselling interventions that would help in reducing domestic violence to barest minimum and increase happiness in marriage. Married working women should ensure they make significant financial contributions to the upkeep of the family as lack of this may trigger issues that may result to violence in the home.

**KEYWORDS:** Domestic violence, married working women, economic abuse, Federal Capital Territory (FCT)

### INTRODUCTION

Marriage appears to be the dream of every eligible man and woman. The oldest and most prevalent institution in the world today is the institution of marriage, and it appears that marriage is the core building block of any society. In most nations of the world especially in Africa, marriage is held sacred and divorce is frowned at. The glamour and happiness usually expressed by couples, friends and relatives of the day of wedding in Nigeria (either traditional or court) suggests that marriage is meant for blissful and satisfactory relationship. However, observations have shown that many marriages fail soon after the contract as many couples are hardly compatible. Hence, different forms of spousal abuse (verbal, physical, emotional, economic and sexual) begin to manifest.

The regular occurrences of domestic violence against married women that are working usually vary on the basis of culture religion and socio-economic factors. <sup>[1]</sup>Emphasised in his study that all over the world, domestic violence is a major issue of concern for many women that are working, even in developed countries. World Health Organisation (WHO, 2024) reported that one third of women in the world had experienced physical and/or sexual abuse from a close partner in their lifetime. This statistic holds true across various socio-economic backgrounds, including working women. <sup>[2]</sup>Observed that women, irrespective of their status in their working places, were affected by domestic violence but studies revealed that men experience higher levels of stress, which make them more vulnerable to certain types of abuse <sup>[3, 4]</sup>. If a woman is economically dependent on her husband, she may feel trapped in the relationship due to financial constraints. In some cultures, societal expectations that women perform all domestic chores, even while maintaining a full-time job, can exacerbate tensions at home, leading to violence.

Domestic violence has become a great problem in many communities all over the world and Nigeria is not an exception. According to <sup>[5]</sup>, domestic violence is spousal abuse, battering, domestic abuse, intimate partner violence and family violence. Domestic violence in its simplest form can be defined as a coercive and aggressive behaviour of both adolescents and adults against their intimate partners<sup>[6]</sup>. In addition, it is any act of psychological, physical or sexual abuse or the threat of such abuse inflicted against an individual that is highly connected to him or her by marriage<sup>[7]</sup>.

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<sup>[8]</sup>Described domestic violence as any act of violence, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty against any woman which results or may result to sexual, physical, or mental suffering or harm whether happening in private or public life. Such act denies women of their fundamental human rights and deprived them of equality, security, self-worth, dignity and right to enjoy fundamental freedom. Brutality against women cuts across all boundaries of class, socio-economic status, education, age, ethnicity and cultures<sup>[9]</sup>.

<sup>[10]</sup>Clearly reported that domestic violence's cases especially the physical aspect is increasing daily. The authors exposed in their report that at least once in a week, a case of a man maltreating or killing his wife or a woman maltreating her husband will occur. However men suffer domestic violence in a smaller scale than the women<sup>[11]</sup>.

Age could be a contributor to violence between husbands and wife. A wife that is very young if compared with the age of her husband may find it extremely difficult to freely express her contrary views at home and where this happens, domestic violence could be highly prevalent<sup>[12]</sup>. Therefore, it could be concluded that women that got married at early age may be at the risk of been abused by their intimate partners. Despite the level of technology, education and civilisation achieved all over the world, many married women are abused and maltreated by their intimate partners called husbands<sup>[13]</sup>. It is not known if age could be a predictor of violence especially against women who are older than or who has a wide age difference with their partners.

Recently, domestic violence seems to be one of the major challenges married women are facing in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria. According to <sup>[14]</sup> a man crushed his wife to death with his car over a minor disagreement in the home. This is just one of the countless cases of domestic violence against married women in the society. Some women had experienced physical and psychological abuse in their marital homes and others have continued to live and endure with more threatening and difficult situations. In the process, many women had lost their lives due to the brutality and maltreatment received from their husbands.

In some situations where the victim cries out for help from the police, friends and relatives, the woman is often not believed and she may be advised to continue to bear with the problem and be more tolerant. Generally, the rate at which women experienced domestic violence in Africa is high and Nigeria has been reported as one of the countries having high record of violence against women<sup>2</sup>. In the home, a person may be subjected to different forms of abuse such as physical, verbal, emotional, sexual and economic abuse which may happen repeatedly <sup>[15]</sup>. A woman may often be subjected to more than one form of abuse or domestic violence. One of the forms of domestic violence is verbal abuse. It is the use of unpalatable and derogatory language to inflict harm to another person<sup>[16]</sup>. Verbal abuse includes intimidating, shouting, threatening and insulting the abused<sup>[17]</sup>,

Physical abuse is another common form of domestic violence in the society. This may involve beating, burning, squeezing, suffocating and prevention of sleep<sup>[18]</sup>. The victim may be poisoned or exposed to excessive, heat, light or cold ad sensory overload. Sexual abuse is another form of domestic violence. This involves sexual harassment, assault and exploitation. Fondling, penile or digital penetration and exhibitionism done to a person of opposite sex through the use of force is sexual abuse<sup>[19]</sup>. The use of any force to ensure a person engages in sexual act unwillingly is sexual abuse. It does not matter whether or not the act is completed<sup>[20]</sup>. Economic abuse is another form of domestic violence that is obvious to everyone in the society. It is the refusal to provide fund for the general upkeep of the family<sup>[21]</sup>. <sup>[22]</sup>Examined the most common form of violence against married women by their husbands or other intimate male partners. With the aid of 44-item self-administered questionnaire, four hundred and thirty one (431) government employees of Oyo State government were interrogated. One of the findings showed that 31.3% of the wives interviewed, had been beaten by their husbands and 42.5% men had been perpetrators. <sup>[23]</sup>Examined the occurrence and factors contributing to economic abuse against working women in the formal and informal sectors in Warri, Nigeria. The findings revealed no significant difference in the occurrence of economic abuse between women in the informal sector and formal sector. The commonest forms of economic abuse experienced by women were partner's refusing to contribute to family upkeep.

<sup>[24]</sup>Investigated the causative factors of domestic violence against women and strategies for preventing it in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. The result of the study showed that the most prevalent forms of domestic violence against women were verbal abuse (80.95%) and physical abuse (69.05%).

Many studies such as <sup>[25, 26, 27]</sup> examined major factors responsible for the high rate of domestic violence against married women. Factors found by various studies include incompatibility of partners<sup>[28]</sup>, disagreement between couples<sup>[29]</sup>, continued quarrelling<sup>[26]</sup>, nagging <sup>[30]</sup>, refusal to have sex <sup>[31]</sup>, extra marital affairs <sup>[16]</sup> as well as disrespect shown to in-laws <sup>[32]</sup>. Violence against women in Nigeria is common to the extent that highly educated and well placed women in the society were victims<sup>[17]</sup>, maintained that women that had been abused by their husbands cut across all social and economic classes wealthy or poor, educated or uneducated, prominent or not prominent. In general, domestic violence affects largely women. Despite the fact that domestic violence largely affected women, yet, nothing much has been achieved in checking this menace. Women are an essential part of labour force and their role cannot be overemphasized. The consequences of any form of abuse could be devastating. Sometimes, the abused may end up dying. This study therefore investigated domestic violence against married working women in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

<sup>[29]</sup>Investigated how prevalent intimate partner violence was among married women in a civilized community in Lagos State, Nigeria. They also investigated factors responsible for the prevalence of intimate-partner violence in the community. A descriptive research design of correlational type was adopted to elicit information from 400 married women between the ages of 18 and 49 year

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in Ikosi Isheri Local Council Development Area of Lagos State. The findings revealed that 50.5% of the women had experienced physical violence, 33.8% had been exposed to sexual violence while 85% had experienced psychological/emotional violence. The study also identified partners' lower educational status and daily intake of alcohol as factors responsible for the prevalence of the physical violence. In addition, unemployment and use of alcohol were responsible for the sexual violence while respondents' view of parental violence and use of alcohol by partners were responsible for the psychological violence against married women.

<sup>[33]</sup>Carried out a study on the prevalence of domestic violence and its causative factors among married women who were in the reproductive in North Western Ethiopia. The results revealed that physical, psychological and sexual violence were prevalent among the respondents. The study carried out by <sup>[34]</sup> on the moderating influence of gender and age on emotional abuse among marriage mates revealed that younger men experienced higher levels of emotional abuse but declined as the age increased. In addition, women that were older experienced less level of emotional abuse than older men. Overall, the results indicated that younger respondents experience higher level of emotional abuse. Finally, the study revealed that high level of isolation was common among younger women and damage of property was more experienced among women than men and it increased with age.

<sup>[35]</sup>Carefully examined the influence of intimate partner violence on empowerment of American women in their reproductive years. Results of the study revealed that women between ages 35 and 49 years were more likely to experience domestic violence when compared to other age groups. The results of the study further showed that wealth index, age of the respondents, total number of children and empowerment status significantly associated with intimate partner violence. Finally, the study showed that women without empowerment experienced higher domestic violence than their counterparts that were empowered in the society. <sup>[2]</sup> Investigated the influence of age of spouse and associated factors on intimate partner violence in Nigeria. Findings of the study revealed that level and rate of intimate partner violence in Nigeria reduced as spousal age difference increased. That notwithstanding, the spousal age difference was not found to be a predictor of intimate partner violence but found to be protective of intimate partner violence.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Domestic violence has become one of the major challenge facing women especially married working women in Nigeria. Women are responsible for the domestic affairs at home and in the family. However, it seems many married working women in one way or the other have not been able to adequately perform their primary assignment in the home and at their various places of work due to domestic violence they experience. The study is based on the researcher's conversations and observations on the happenings in families in Abuja.

The impacts of domestic violence against married working women are felt in the workplace. They tend to be disrupted at work and this affects their work performance. For instance, some of them sometimes go late to work or unable to go at all, due to physical restraints by their partners and this may eventually lead to job loss. Also, they could manifest at their workplace this emotional and physical distress they suffered at home which can negatively affect workplace interpersonal relationship, decreased concentration and job performance. If this trend continues, some affected women may engage in alcohol or drug use, risky sexual behaviours and suicidal behaviours. Domestic violence also affects the mental and physical health of the victims. The consequences of domestic violence include but not limited to miscarriage, physical injuries, gynecological problems and sexually transmitted diseases which include headache, haemorrhage, Human Immune Deficiency Virus (HIV), pelvic pains and permanent disabilities. These obvious consequences revealed why violence against women in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria should be considered a social malaise which deserves attention.

Domestic violence, regardless of whether the woman is employed or not, significantly affects physical and mental health. Women who experience abuse may suffer the long-term health issues such as depression, chronic pain, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). For employed women, domestic violence can lead to absenteeism, decreased productivity, and poor job performance due to the physical and emotional toll of the abuse. The victims of domestic abuse may find it challenging to maintain stable employment which could lead to a cycle of poverty and economic dependence on the abuser.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following are the research questions raised for the study.

1. How prevalent is domestic violence against married working women in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja?
2. What are the common forms of domestic violence against married working women in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja?

### **RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

The hypothesis generated and tested at 0.05 margin error is as follows:

1. There is no significant prediction of age on domestic violence against married working women in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.

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## RESEARCH METHOD

The descriptive research design of survey type was adopted for this study. The population consisted of all married working women Federal Capital, Abuja. The sample comprised of 581 married working women in Abuja. The sample was selected using proportionate sampling procedure in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. An instrument adapted from [36] was used for data collection. Content and face validities of the instrument were found and test-retest method of estimating reliability was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. Data got from the pilot study were subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and the reliability coefficient value of 0.72 was obtained. The instrument was administered to 581 respondents in Federal Capital Territory Abuja, Nigeria. Data collected were subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistics. Specifically, the research questions were subjected to simple percentage, frequency, mean scores and standard deviation while the hypothesis was subjected to Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

## RESULTS

**Research Question One:** How prevalent is domestic violence against married working women in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja?

In answering the research question, responses of the respondents to the questionnaire items on domestic violence scale were collated, scored and subjected to analysis involving frequency count and simple percentage. Table 1 contains the result.

**Table 1. Prevalence of domestic violence against married working women in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja**

Domestic Violence	Frequency	Percentage
Common (High) domestic violence	380	65.4
Not common (Low) domestic violence	201	34.6
Total	581	100

Table 1 showed the frequency counts and percentage for the responses to how prevalent domestic violence is against married working women in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The result indicated that 380 (65.4%) of the total sample experienced high level of domestic violence while 201 (34.6%) of the respondents experienced low level of domestic violence within the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. By implication, the percentage of respondents who experienced common/high level of domestic violence is greater than the percentage of respondents who indicated not common/low prevalence of domestic violence among married working women in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Therefore, domestic violence against married working women is highly prevalent in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

**Research Question Two:** What are the common forms of domestic violence against married working women in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja?

In answering the research question, responses of the respondents to the questionnaire items on forms of domestic violence: verbal abuse, physical abuse, economic abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse were collated, scored and subjected to analysis using mean and standard deviation. The result is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Forms of domestic violence against married working women in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.**

Forms of domestic violence	Mean Score( $\bar{X}$ )	SD	Ranking
Verbal abuse	2.33	7.88	4 <sup>th</sup>
Physical abuse	2.10	6.51	5 <sup>th</sup>
Economic abuse	3.53	6.35	1 <sup>st</sup>
Sexual abuse	2.39	13.3	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Emotional abuse	2.34	13.01	3 <sup>rd</sup>

Result from table 2 indicated that verbal abuse reported (mean score=2.33, SD= 7.88), physical abuse (mean score=2.10, SD=6.51), economic abuse (mean score=3.53, SD=6.35), sexual abuse (Mean score=2.39, SD=13.3) and emotional abuse (mean score=2.34, SD=13.01). This revealed that economic abuse was the most common form of domestic violence against married working women in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, followed by sexual abuse. This implies that married working women in Abuja are economically and sexually abused by their husbands.

## Hypothesis 1

There is no significant prediction of age on domestic violence against married working women in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.

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In testing this hypothesis, scores of the respondents relating to domestic violence among married working women in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja were computed and analyses with the aid of Analysis of Covariance (ANOVA) at 0.05 margin error based on respondent's age. The result is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. ANOVA summary of domestic violence of married working women based on age.**

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	38110.342	4	9527.586	8.636	.000
Within Groups	635453.596	576	1103.218		
Total	673563.938	580			

$p < 0.05$

The ANOVA result on Table 3 indicated that the F-value is 8.636, p-value is 0.00. Since p-value is less than 0.05, the hypothesis is therefore rejected at 0.05 level of significance ( $F_{(4, 576)} = 8.636, P < 0.05$ ). This implies that there was a significant difference in age of respondents on domestic violence against married working women in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Since there was a significant difference, a post-hoc was carried out to establish the respondents' age that brought about the significant difference. Dunnet Multiple comparison was considered, it showed the difference in the scores of the age range.

**Table 4. Dunnet multiple comparison of Post-hoc showing, differences in the mean scores of respondents' age.**

Age group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
18-25	197.67	33.83	5.80	185.87	209.48
26-35	202.98*	27.39	2.45	198.13	207.83
36-45	190.01	32.87	2.53	185.00	195.01
46-55	186.41	34.90	2.37	181.73	191.09
56-60	171.81	40.98	6.64	158.34	185.28
Total	190.72	34.07	1.41	187.94	193.50

The result in the Table 4 showed the Dunnet multiple comparison range score that was used to determine the mean of the respondents' age that led to the significant difference. The post-hoc result indicated that age group (26-35) had the highest mean score of 202.98. The significant difference was noted in age range of 26-35. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected.

## DISCUSSION

Finding from research question 1 revealed a high level of domestic violence among respondents within the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Therefore, the prevalence of domestic violence against married working women was high in the locale of this study. The finding is in line with that of [29] which revealed high prevalence of domestic violence in Lagos State, Nigeria. The result also corroborates the findings of [22] which indicated domestic violence was prevalent in Oyo State. This implies that domestic violence is one of the challenges facing married women in Nigeria.

Findings of research question two revealed the prevalent forms of domestic violence among married working women in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Economic abuse was found to be one of the most prevalent forms of domestic violence against married working women in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja followed by sexual abuse ranking second, while emotional abuse ranked third, verbal abuse ranked fourth and physical abuse was the last. This implies that married working women in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja are economically abused by their husbands. This is in agreement with the findings of [23] that revealed the rate of economic abuse against women working in the informal and formal sector in Warri, Nigeria. It also corroborates the findings of [27] which revealed that economic abuse among married persons in South-East, Nigeria was high. The result contradicted the outcome of the study conducted by [24] which revealed verbal abuse as the most common forms of domestic violence in Enugu State. This contrast may be due to the hard economic situation in Nigeria. This condition could make married working women vulnerable to economic abuse. Husbands with low income, low job occupational status and no job at all are more likely to perpetrate economic abuse on their wives. In addition, the dissimilarity in the study could be as a result of the differences in the geographical location in which the study was carried out. Their study was carried out in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State while this study was carried out in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.

Findings of hypothesis revealed that age had predictive influence on domestic violence against married working women in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The finding was in agreement with the findings of [35] which indicated that age influenced domestic violence. The result corresponds with the findings of [33] which found that age predicted domestic violence. Also, [2] Found

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age as a predictor of intimate partner violence. The similarities of the result of this study could be due to the fact that men and women need to reach a certain level of maturity before marriage. This could also be due to the fact that age disparity in marriage may pose differences in opinions, views and perceptions of issues. This may put women under stress or pressure to adjust to these differences and when the woman tries to resist the change it could lead to conflicts, disagreements and crisis in the home.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that domestic violence is prevalent in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. Economic abuse took the lead, sexual abuse was next and emotional abuse was the third. The least form of domestic abuse is physical abuse. It was also concluded that age had predictive influence on domestic violence against married working women in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The study therefore recommended among others that married couples should be exposed to necessary counselling interventions that would help in reducing to barest minimum domestic violence and strengthen happiness in marriage. Married working women should ensure they make significant financial contributions to the upkeep of the family as lack of this may trigger issues that may result to violence in the home.

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