

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS A PREVENTIVE AND PROTECTIVE FACTOR AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OF MARRIED EMPLOYEES IN FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY, ABUJA

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Abstract

This study investigated Emotional Intelligence (EI) as a protective and preventive factor against Domestic Violence (DV) amongst married employees in Municipal Area Council of FCT, Abuja. The study was aimed at ascertaining the relationship between EI and DV amongst participants with a view to identifying potential strategies for preventing and intervening in domestic violence situations. Adopting a quantitative survey design, the study was guided by two research questions, one hypothesis. Purposive-random sampling technique was used to select 100 married employees to participate in the study. Researchers' made instrument titled "Emotional Intelligence and Domestic Violence Scale" (EIDVS) was used for data collection. The content and construct validity of the instrument was ascertained by experts in faculty of education. Its reliability was determined using Cronbach Alpha that yielded a coefficient index of 0.78. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation as well as inferential statistics of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation were used to analyze the data. The findings of the study showed a high prevalence of DV amongst participants and a significantly negative correlation between EI and DV, indicating that higher EI is associated with lower experiences of DV. Thus, the study recommended among other things that counsellors should incorporate EI assessment into clients' evaluation and design and implement EI-based interventions to address domestic violence among couples.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence. EI-based interventions

Introduction

Domestic Violence also known as Intimate Partner Violence is a pervasive and complex social issue that affects individuals, families, and communities around the world (World Health Organization, 2013). In Nigeria, domestic violence has remained a significant public health concern which is deeply rooted in the patriarchal structure of the Nigerian society (Abakare, 2021). The National Population Commission in 2014 reported a prevalence rate of 31.5% for domestic violence in Nigeria. The Municipal Area Council of the FCT being part of the Nigerian society, is not exempt from this issue as there has been increasing reports of cases of domestic violence in its environs in recent years (Federal Capital Territory Administration, 2020). For instance, a study conducted in 2020 at the Federal Medical Center, Abuja found that 17.69% of antenatal clinic attendees reported experiencing domestic violence, with physical violence accounting for 3.19% of cases (Ekweani, et al., 2023).

The concept of domestic violence encompasses abusive behaviours that could either be physical, emotional, economical or sexual, occurring within familial or intimate relationships. It is trademarked by one family member exerting control or power over another in a manner that results in significant physical and mental harm to the victim (Martseniuk & Protsenko, 2023). Various forms of abuse, such as emotional manipulation and coercion, are globally recognized as integral components of domestic violence (Ekaterina & Anastasia, 2023). While domestic violence is traditionally associated with women as victims, it is important to note that the phenomenon is not limited to one gender because increasingly, reports have shown that men and children are also affected (Pathan, 2023).

Domestic violence usually present signs that can manifest physically, emotionally, sexually, or economically. Recognizing these signs is crucial for effective intervention and support for victims of domestic violence. The physical signs often include injuries such as bruises, cuts, or fractures, typically resulting from pushing, shoving, or hitting, with studies indicating that 41% of incidents lead to injuries (Iona, 2003). Emotional abuse may involve intimidation, humiliation, or manipulation, often characterized by controlling behaviors and threats. Sexual abuse can include coercion into unwanted sexual acts or reproductive control, such as preventing the use of birth control. Economic abuse is characterized by financial control, such as restricting access to money or employment opportunities. Furthermore, psychological signs may manifest as anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder, particularly in chronic victims (Raveesh, et al., 2022).

Domestic violence has far-reaching consequences for family wellbeing. It does not only affect the direct victim but also other family members as it touches on the emotional, physical, social, economic, and relational aspects of the family life. The emotional wellbeing of victims and witnesses of domestic violence would significantly be compromised, leading to increased rates of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Briere & Jordan, 2004). Children, in particular, experience emotional and psychological distress, including fear, guilt, and shame, which can have long-lasting effects on their emotional development (Holt, et al., 2008).

In order to maintain peace, security and justice, the Nigerian government has made efforts to curb the effects of domestic violence, particularly in Abuja and environs through a combination of legal frameworks, community engagement, and institutional collaboration. Despite these efforts, domestic violence has remained a pressing concern, requiring sustained efforts to address its root causes, improve support services, and provide further insight on potentially soft factors that counsellors and researchers could leverage on to advance prevention and intervention measures at tackling this serious public health issue.

Emotional intelligence (EI) has been identified as one of such factors that could serve as a significant preventive and protective measures against domestic violence. The term Emotional Intelligence was first coined by psychologists John Mayer and Peter Salovey in 1990 (FME, 2014) who defined it as the ability to perceive, access and generate emotions with a view to assist thought, understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to regulate emotions reflectively in order to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Tripathy, 2018).

According to Goleman (1995) who is referred to as the father of EI, emotional intelligence is 'understanding one's own feelings, empathy for the feeling of others and the regulation of emotions in a way that enhances living.' In his redefined and reconstructed model of EI, in 1996 Goleman posited that EI is not the opposite of Intelligent Quotient, but rather, a separate set of traits which is much more powerful than IQ to predict the success of one's life. He defined it as the abilities to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustration, to control impulse and delay gratifications, to regulate one's mood and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope. Unlike his initial EI framework that consisted of five domains, in the year 2000, he reconstructed the framework to consist of 4 primary domains namely: self-awareness, social-awareness, self-management, and relationship management which have twenty competencies including: Emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment; empathy, service orientation, organizational awareness, emotional self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, achievement drive, initiative, developing others, influence, communication, conflict management, visionary leadership, catalyzing change, building bonds, teamwork and collaboration (Boyatzis, et al., 2000).

Studies have shown that higher levels of EI are associated with reduced instances of both experiencing and perpetrating violence thereby highlighting its role in fostering healthier interpersonal-relationships. A study by Oyedokun and Andah (2020) found that higher levels of EI correlate with reduced job stress and burnout, which can mitigate the risk of experiencing or perpetrating domestic violence. Specifically, the study revealed that EI enhances self-management and adaptability, equipping individuals to handle interpersonal conflicts more effectively, thereby potentially reducing domestic violence incidents. Another study by Marzieh, et al., (2021) that compared women who experienced domestic violence with a control group revealed that those who had higher emotional intelligence scores exhibited lower levels of neuroticism and higher levels of other personality traits, suggesting that emotional intelligence can mitigate the risk of experiencing domestic violence. Furthermore, another study

by Rodríguez-Espartal and Meneses (2022) which focused on Peruvian women found that higher emotional intelligence, particularly in emotional perception, inversely correlated with symbolic gender violence, reinforcing the notion that emotional intelligence can act as a buffer against various forms of violence. These findings all together highlight the importance of fostering emotional intelligence as a preventive and protective measure against domestic violence, suggesting that interventions aimed at enhancing EI could be beneficial in reducing vulnerability to the phenomenon. Despite the importance of EI in preventing domestic violence, not so much research has been done on this subject, particularly in the Municipal Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Therefore, to close this gap and validate the findings of previous studies which were conducted in different geographical and cultural context, there is a need to investigate the relationship between EI and domestic violence amongst married employees in the Municipal Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja in order to identify potential strategies for preventing and intervening in domestic violence situations.

Objectives of the study

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the extent to which domestic violence is prevalent amongst married employees in the Municipal Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory.
2. Ascertain the gender difference in exposure to domestic violence amongst married employees in Municipal Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja?
3. Investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and experience of domestic violence amongst married employees in the Municipal Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory.

Research Questions

To guide the study the following questions were raised:

1. To what extent is domestic violence prevalent amongst married employees in Municipal Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja?
2. What is the gender difference in exposure to domestic violence amongst married employees in Municipal Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja?

Hypothesis

This hypothesis was formulated to be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Emotional intelligence has no significant relationship with the experience of domestic violence amongst married employees in Municipal Area Council of the FCT, Abuja.

Methodology

Quantitative research design was employed for this study. Using simple random sampling technique, 100 respondents (50 males and 50 females) were sampled for the study. Emotional Intelligence and Domestic Violence Questionnaire (EIDVS) was used for data collection. The

instrument was designed by the researchers with two parts namely; parts A and B. Part A sought to elicit the demographic characteristics of the respondents while part B consists of statements that test the EI level of respondents as well as their domestic violence experience. While Part A was measured at nominal scale, part B was measured at interval scale in which EI statements (covering items 1-40) were graded on the range: **always** (4), **sometimes** (3), **rarely** (2) and **not at all** (1) for positive statements and reverse order for negative statements. DV statements (covering items 41-60) on the other hand were grade on the range: **always** (3), **sometimes** (2), **rarely** (1) and **not at all** (0). These enable the researchers to assign meaning to the responses of participants. The instrument was validated by experts in faculty of education, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, while its reliability was determined using Cronbach Alpha that yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.78. Cronbach Alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument because of its wide acceptance as a good measure of internal consistency and the fact that it was adjudged to be easy to compute and interpret.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. The data were coded and analysed into quantitative summary reports using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 27. The data were keyed into the program under specific category from which analysis was run to obtain descriptive statistics in form of mean and standard deviation which were used to answer the research questions 1 & 2 with a view to describing the extent of the prevalence of domestic violence among the participants and the difference in exposure to domestic violence between male and female respondents. While the mean score of 1.50 was used as the bench mark for determining high or low prevalence level of dv where scores below 1.50 are considered low and scores above 1.50 are considered high, the value of 0.50 was used as a bench mark for determining correlation coefficient of the variables where values below 0.50 are considered low relationship and values above 0.50 are considered high relationship. The hypothesis of the study was tested using PPMC for significant relationship at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One: To what extent is domestic violence prevalent amongst married employees in Municipal Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja?

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of the extent of dv prevalence amongst participants

Variables of Domestic Violence	N	Sum %	Mean \bar{X}	Std σ	Decision
Physical violence		27.5%	0.82	0.92	High
Emotional/Psychological Violence		26%	0.78	0.93	High
Economic Violence	50	28%	0.84	0.98	High
Sexual violence		24.9%	0.75	0.87	High
Aggregate Score			0.80	0.93	High

Scale: 1.50 – 2.49HE; 2.50 – 5.00VHE

Table 1 revealed that participants scored an aggregate mean of 0.80 and standard deviation of 0.93, indicating that domestic violence is prevalent among married employees in Municipal Area Council of FCT to a high extent. The result also revealed that economic violence is the most prevalent form dv with a mean of 0.84, followed by physical violence with mean of 0.82, then emotional violence with mean of 0.78 and sexual violence with 0.75.

Research Question Two: What is the gender difference in exposure to domestic violence amongst married employees in Municipal Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of gender difference in exposure to dv amongst participants

Indices of Domestic Violence	N	Male			Female				
		Sum %	Mean X	Std. (σ)	Decision	Sum %	Mean \bar{X}	Std (σ)	Decision
Physical violence		33%	1.00	1.003	HE	19%	0.58	0.85	HE
Emotional Violence		32.8%	0.97	0.98	HE	22%	0.65	0.82	HE
Economic Violence	50	32.8%	0.97	1.09	HE	23%	0.70	0.85	HE
Sexual violence		29%	0.86	0.93	HE	21%	0.63	0.81	HE
Aggregate Score			0.95	1.001	HE		0.64	0.83	HE

Scale: 1.50 – 2.49HE; 2.50 – 3.50VHE

Table 2 showed that both male and female participants experienced high exposure to domestic violence in its various manifestations. However, the male participants had a slightly higher exposure to domestic violence with a mean aggregate of **0.95** and standard deviation of **1.001** above their female counterparts who had mean aggregate of **0.64** and standard deviation of **0.83**. This reveals that the male folks are mostly exposed to domestic violence contrary to the common notion that the female folks are the mostly exposed to dv. It is very interesting that the male respondents had higher experiences of domestic violence in all of its forms than their female counterparts.

Test of hypothesis

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and the experience of domestic violence amongst married employees in Municipal Area Council of FCT, Abuja.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis on the relationship between EI and the experience of dv among married employees

		Emotional Intelligence	Domestic violence
Emotional Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	1	-.841**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	50	50
Domestic Violence	Pearson Correlation	-.841**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	50	50

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From table 3 above, the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and the experience of domestic violence is $r = - 0.841$. This indicates that there exists a very high negative relationship between the two variables.

The table also indicate that the exact probability is 0.01 which is less than the significant level 0.05 ($p = 0.01 < \alpha=0.05$). This shows that the relationship between the variables is significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The negative value of the correlation suggests that scores for the two variables move in opposite directions. Therefore, a relatively high scores on emotional intelligence leads to a relatively low scores in domestic violence, asserting undoubtedly that emotional intelligence is a panacea for the occurrences of domestic violence in households.

Discussion of findings

This study sought to investigate emotional intelligence as a preventive and protective factor against the experience of domestic violence amongst married employees in municipal area council of Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Specifically, the study wanted to find out the extent to which married employees in Municipal Area Council of Abuja experience domestic violence, the difference of exposure to domestic violence between male and female employees and the relationship between emotional intelligence and the experience of domestic violence among participants. From the presentation and analyses of the data gathered from respondents, the study made the following findings:

First, the study found a significant prevalence of domestic violence among married employees in the Municipal Area Council of FCT, Abuja. The forms of violence identified

included physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse. Economic violence emerged as the most prevalent, followed by physical, emotional, and sexual violence. This high prevalence aligns with previous research on domestic violence in Nigeria, where socio-economic stressors, cultural norms, and patriarchal structures often contribute to the persistence of domestic violence (Ekweani, et al., 2023; Abakare, 2021).

The prevalence of economic violence, in particular, could be linked to financial stress and power imbalances within marital relationships, where control over finances is used as a tool of domination. This finding emphasizes the need for interventions that address not only physical abuse but also the more covert forms of domestic violence, such as financial control and emotional manipulation, which can have equally devastating effects on victims (Tolman & Raphael, 2000)

Secondly, contrary to the common notion that women are more frequently victims of domestic violence, the study found no significant difference between male and female participants in terms of exposure to DV. Interestingly, male participants reported slightly higher experiences of domestic violence across all forms, although the difference was not statistically significant. This challenges traditional views that primarily associate domestic violence with female victims and highlights the importance of recognizing male victims, who may face societal stigma and barriers to seeking help (Pathan, 2023).

The findings suggest that domestic violence is not exclusively a gendered issue, as both men and women can be affected. This is consistent with emerging research that acknowledges the victimization of men in intimate partner violence, even though male victims may be less likely to report their experiences due to societal expectations around masculinity and emotional restraint (Konstantinos & Łuczak, 2016). Addressing DV in Abuja requires an inclusive approach that considers the experiences of all genders, and support services must be made accessible to male victims as well.

The third finding of this study seems to be the most critical of all. It revealed that there was significant negative correlation between emotional intelligence and the experience of domestic violence, indicating that individuals with higher emotional intelligence are less likely to experience domestic violence. This finding is consistent with other studies that suggest emotional intelligence, particularly in areas such as self-regulation and empathy, plays a protective role in interpersonal relationships by reducing conflicts and fostering healthy communication (Oyedokun & Andah, 2020; Rodríguez-Espartal & Meneses, 2022).

Individuals with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage their emotions, navigate interpersonal conflicts, and build stronger, more empathetic relationships. This finding aligns with Goleman's (1996) model of emotional intelligence, which posits that EI is a crucial skill for managing emotions and understanding others, both of which are essential for resolving conflicts peacefully. In the context of domestic violence, this means that individuals with higher EI may be better able to de-escalate conflicts and avoid situations that

could lead to abuse.

The significant negative correlation also highlights the potential of emotional intelligence training as a preventive measure against domestic violence. By fostering emotional awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation, interventions aimed at improving EI could reduce the likelihood of domestic violence occurring in households. This is supported by the findings of Tavakol, Mohammad, and Mostaali (2021), who found that women with higher EI scores exhibited lower levels of neuroticism and better emotional stability, reducing their risk of experiencing domestic violence.

Implications for Counselling Practice

The findings of this study have several practical implications for addressing domestic violence in Abuja. The findings underscore the need for incorporating emotional intelligence training into both workplace and community-based counselling interventions. By enhancing EI among employees, particularly in high-stress environments, it may be possible to reduce the risk of domestic violence in both professional and personal contexts. Employers, especially those with married employees, should consider offering EI development programs to promote healthier interpersonal relationships and conflict management skills. School counsellors should prioritize the integration of emotional intelligence into their counselling programmes so as to equip young people, particularly those in secondary schools with the skills needed to manage their emotions and build healthy relationships. By fostering EI from a young age, society can address the root causes of domestic violence and promote long-term change.

Conclusion

This study has provided valuable insights into the prevalence of domestic violence among married employees in the Municipal Area Council of FCT, Abuja, and the protective role that emotional intelligence can play in preventing and mitigating such violence. The findings emphasize the importance of addressing not only the physical aspects of domestic violence but also the emotional and psychological factors that contribute to its occurrence. By promoting emotional intelligence through targeted interventions, it may be possible to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence and foster healthier, more supportive relationships in Nigerian households.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommended that:

1. Counsellors should incorporate emotional intelligence trainings in their community-based and workplace counselling programmes to reduce domestic violence risk.
2. Government agencies and NGOs at the vanguard of addressing domestic violence should ensure that their support services are accessible to both men and women without any stereotype.
3. Policy makers should integrate EI curricula in schools to equip young people with emotional regulation skills, fostering healthier future relationships.

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