



**PERCEIVED EFFECT OF PREMARITAL COUNSELLING
IN STEMMING THE TIDE OF SPOUSE ABUSE AMONG
MARRIED PERSONS IN DELTA CENTRAL SENATORIAL
DISTRICT OF DELTA STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract:

The study investigated the influence of premarital counselling on spouse abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District. A correlational research design was adopted, the population comprised all married persons in the senatorial district, estimated to be 248,768. A sample of 384 married persons was selected through simple random and convenience sampling techniques. A questionnaire was used to obtain data for the study. The questionnaire was validated through experts' judgement and factor analysis. The reliability coefficient obtained includes 0.83 and 0.79 for Pre-Marital Counselling Rating Scale and Spouse Abuse Rating Scale respectively. The mean, standard deviation and Pearson's coefficient of determination were used to answer the research questions and while regression and Fisher-z statistics were used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that married persons who participated in pre-marital counselling in Delta Central Senatorial District experienced a low level of spousal abuse; that married persons who did not participate in pre-marital counselling in Delta Central Senatorial District experienced a high level of spousal abuse; that there is a significant relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District; that there is no significant moderating impact of gender in the relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District; and that there is no significant moderating impact of duration of marriage in the relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District. The study recommended amongst others that intending couples are enjoined to as a matter of necessity, engage in pre-marital counselling so as to be educated on what to expect in marriage and how to deal with those issues that will eventually arise during the marriage.

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1. Introduction

Marriage is a union between a man and woman as husband and wife. It is a social institution that is designed among other things to ensure the happiness and fulfilment of the men and women who contract into it. The type and functions of marriage vary from culture to culture. Legally sanctioned marriages are generally conducted between heterosexual couples, although there are a few countries that recognize same-sex marriage. The prevailing view towards marriage is that it is based on emotional attachment between the partners and is entered into voluntarily. Okhakhume, Rotimi and Aroniyyaso (2016) stated that a good marriage is the most rewarding experience life can offer. It makes a person feel adequate, desired, approved and complete to a degree which is not possible in any other form of human relationship.

Marriage is a social institution under which a man and a woman establish their decision to live as husband and wife through legal commitment and/or religious ceremonies. One ultimate thing that must be born in mind is that marriage institution is not accidental but meant to achieve certain purposes. Marriage is also a socially acknowledged and approved sexual union between two adult individuals of the opposite sex. It is a unique institution that affirms and supports a distinct sociology in human culture; a bridging of the sex gap, facilitates the generation of life through the fusion of sexes; and promoting the birth right of children to know, to be connected to, and to be in stable relationship with their natural parents (Eboigbe, 2019). Marriage is a legal union between a man and a woman as husband and wife, which further connotes matrimony, wedlock, alliance, association and union.

Deducing from the definitions given above, certain purposes that constitute marriage are unveiled as follows: companionship; social integration of persons, approved sexual union; mutual commitment; mutual growth, bridging of the sex gap; and promoting the birth right of children. As beautiful and life-fulfilling as marriage is, the institution is however not without problems. According to Kehinde (2002), marriage is like a house, while new, it sparkles with fresh smells with lots of surprises, romance and new discoveries about those involved, which makes each day exciting to both partners but experiences have shown that not long after a family is established, both partners become major sources of individual's problems.

This conflict could result to an abuse between partners. An abuse is the improper usage or treatment of an individual, often to unfairly or improperly gain benefit. It can come in many forms, such as physical or verbal maltreatment, injury, assault, violation, rape, unjust practices, crimes, or other types of aggression. The United Nations Children's Fund' Innocenti Research Centre (UNICEF IRC, as cited in Dienne & Gbeneol, 2009) defined spouse abuse as violence that is perpetrated by intimate partners and other family members, and that is manifested through physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, economic abuse, and acts of omission. Other variance of spouse

abuse includes Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), wife beating, wife battering, man beating, husband battering, relationship violence, spouse abuse and family violence. It refers to any abusive treatment of one family member by another, thus violating the law of basic human rights.

According to Aihie (2009), spouse abuse is the intentional and persistent abuse of anyone in the home in a way that causes pain, distress or injury. It refers to any abusive treatment of one family member by another, thus violating the law of basic human rights. It includes battering of intimate partners and others, sexual abuse of children, marital rape and traditional practices that are harmful to women.

Spouse abuse is a pattern of abusive behaviours by one partner against another in an intimate relationship such as marriage, dating, family or cohabitation. It has many forms, including physical aggression or assault (hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, restraining, slapping, throwing objects), or threats thereof; sexual abuse; emotional abuse; controlling or domineering; intimidation; stalking; passive/covert abuse otherwise known as neglect; and economic deprivation (Seimeniuk, Krentz, Gish & Gill, 2010). Spouse abuse is not limited to obvious physical violence. It can mean endangerment, criminal coercion, kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment, trespassing, harassment and stalking (National Network to End Spouse Abuse, 2011). In this study, spouse abuse connotes an undesirable behavioural treatment one receives from a spouse in an intimate relationship like marriage.

The World Health Organization multi-country study indicated that worldwide spouse abuse was widespread in all the countries studied. With 13–61% reported ever having experienced physical violence by a partner, 6–59% reported sexual violence by a partner at some point in their lives, and 20–75% reported experiencing one emotionally abusive act, or more, from a partner in their lifetime (WHO, as cited in Onyekalheako, 2015). Studies done in Africa demonstrate a very high incidence of spouse abuse as highlighted in a systematic review done by Shamu, Abrahams, Temmerman, Musekiwa and Zarowsky (as cited in Onyekalheako, 2015).

Amnesty International (as cited in Aihie, 2009) reports that a third (and in some cases two-thirds) of women are believed to have been subjected to physical, sexual and psychological violence carried out primarily by husbands, partners and fathers while girls are often forced into early marriage and are at risk of punishment if they attempt to escape from their husbands. More pathetic is the revelation of gross underreporting and non-documentation of spouse abuse due to cultural factors (Oyediran, 2016).

Oyediran (2016), in a study of women's perception of wife-beating in Nigeria, found that 64.4% and 50.4% of ever-married and unmarried women, respectively, expressed consent for wife beating. Reports in the print and electronic media reveal vicious attacks on women by intimate partners in different forms such as 'acid bath', rape, beatings, some of which sometimes result in the death of the victim. Many victims do not report for fear of reprisal from abusers or the belief that the police and the judicial system cannot help. The police are also reported to frequently dismiss complaints of spouse abuse as a 'private matter'.

The impact of spouse abuse is far-reaching having physical and mental health implications. Project alert (as cited in Aihie, 2009), in a survey on violence against women, found that 64.4% of 45 women had been beaten by an intimate partner, while 56.6% of 48 interviewed market women admitted experiencing such violence. In a study, Obi and Ozumba (2007) on the factors associated with domestic violence, in South East, Nigeria, 70% of respondents reported abuse in their family with 92% of the victims being female partners and the remaining 8% being male. The common forms of abuse reported were shouting at a partner (93%), slapping or pushing (77%) and punching and kicking (40%). It is however disturbing to note that many women do not know if they had been abused or not (AfrolNews, 2007). This could be due to the acceptance of some abusive behaviour as 'normal'.

Oyediran and Isugo (2005), in a study of women's perception of wife-beating in Nigeria, found that 64.4% and 50.4% of ever-married and unmarried women, respectively, expressed consent for wife beating. Reports in the print and electronic media reveal vicious attacks on women by intimate partners in different forms such as 'acid bath', rape, beatings, some of which sometimes result in the death of the victim. Many victims do not report for fear of reprisal from abusers or the belief that the police and the judicial system cannot help. The police are also reported to frequently dismiss complaints of domestic violence as a 'private matter'.

It should be noted that women are not the only victims of domestic violence. Cases abound about how men have been victimised by their wives. According to Fink (2006), in the USA, domestic violence has affected 7.6% of males, while in South Africa, 4 in every reported 10 domestic violence cases, are men (WHO, 2002). Smith's (2002) study shows that 7% of women and 4% of men were victims of domestic violence. Similarly, statistics revealed that in Kenya, Zambia and Tanzania, domestic violence against men is prevalent (WHO, 2002). The works of Deinye (2008), Namadi (2017), Adebayo (2014) indicate that domestic violence against men in Nigeria is no longer a rarity but a reality and its prevalence is on the increase. This is further attested to by Barber (2008) when he stated that a male is abused by his female partner every 14.6 seconds. True, the subject of men being abused in any form by their spouses is a very delicate or rather sensitive one. Men generally, are likely to get worried about the stigma and ridicule they may get, should they even admit that their spouses are violent towards them. Mutepfa (2009) acknowledges the existence of domestic violence against men and that women are capable of abusing men in a marriage. Kumar's (2012) study shows that husbands are also at the receiving end of acts of physical aggression. Similarly, Namadi (2017) confirms that domestic violence against men exists and it is in varied forms. His study refutes the age-long held belief that husbands are the ones that dealt treacherously and violently with their wives.

The case of spouse abuse is not different in Delta State, particularly in Delta Central Senatorial District. The researcher recalls a case of a man battering between a man and his wife somewhere in Ughelli North Local Government Area, where the man was stabbed to death by his wife simply because he did not come home after work the

previous day. There was another case in Uvwie where a woman contracted a group of boys to beat up her husband because she saw him with a girl. The man was hospitalised for almost four months. There is yet another case the researcher witnessed in Sapele Local Government Area of Delta State, where a woman who had an argument with her husband over the welfare of their daughter, angrily poured hot water on the husband.

Various strategies have been suggested that can help curtail the scourge of spouse abuse among married persons. The researcher is, however, interested in the perception of premarital counselling. This is because, it seems few studies have been carried out in these areas to determine their influence on spouse abuse among married persons, with particular reference to Delta Central Senatorial District.

Premarital counselling commonly refers to a method that is intended to improve and enhance premarital relationships leading to more pleasing and established marriages with the envisioned consequence intended to avoid divorce. The providers of premarital counselling can be private or faith-based, and although they come from different backgrounds, they share the same goals. The ultimate goal of premarital counselling is to support relationships prior to marriage in order to prevent the risk of future divorce and give them a better base for a stable and satisfactory marriage (Stahmann, 2010).

The primary goals of premarital counselling include facilitating the shift from single to married life, increasing stability and satisfaction (long and short term), developing the couple's communication skills, enhancing the companionship and promise to the relationship, enhancing intimacy between the couple, introducing and implementing problem-solving and decision-making abilities in the capacities of finances and marital responsibilities (Kepler, 2015).

Premarital counselling is an educational, therapeutic and preventive approach. Marriage opens up a broad range of issues for couples, which require training and education on how to deal with these issues. A study conducted on 3344 couples concluded that couples who have received premarital counselling had 31% less chance of marriage failure (Parhizgar, et al., 2017). Premarital counselling is an orderly, step-by-step and organized process which contains an introduction to the purposes of marriage, male and female psychology, awareness about correct criteria for marriage, the required conditions for entering into marriage and sex education (Sherman & Fredman, 2013). These trainings should also be the basis for the progress of couples' relationship and include communication skills, satisfactory relationship, active listening, conflict management skills, problem-solving skills, control of emotions, increased awareness and understanding of couples from own self, others and marriage, strengthening ties and emotional relationships between them and their understanding and knowledge about the pathology and the crisis of marriage (Davazdahemami, et al., 2004).

With the desire of married persons to attain a happy and satisfying marriage, and cases of spouse abuse in the senatorial district continuing to remain high, the researchers need to be aware and educated on prevention and intervention strategies that support the attainment of a positive marriage and interrupt patterns of spouse abuse. This study, therefore, aims to explore whether couples who engage in premarital counselling have

lower rates of spouse abuse in their marriage than are found in those who never attended premarital counselling.

2. Statement of the Problem

The researcher has consistently observed the spate of spouse abuse among married persons in Delta State, particularly in Delta Central Senatorial District. Several cases of spouse abuse abound. This has manifested in the form of husbands beating their wives or wife beating their husbands, nagging, separation, rejection, ejection, desertion, abandonment and lack of maintenance. Others include the destruction, of properties, denial of sexual relationships, divorce and a host of others, the home environment has become distorted, thereby inhibiting good cordial relationships among couples in marriage. It continues to gather momentum and permeates all levels of family relationship. This cuts across all the social strata which include Christians and non-Christians, rich and poor, male and female, quiet and aggressive individuals, young and old, high-income group and lower income group, and a host of others in marital relationship, with very unhealthy consequences.

The consequence of spouse abuse on the victim is horrible. Such behaviour has substantial public health consequences, including both general health and reproductive health consequences such as chronic pain, injuries, fractures, disability, unwanted pregnancy and contraceptive use, rates of HIV, and other sexually transmitted infections. Victims of spouse abuse also suffer from psychological disturbances. In addition, it has an adverse effect on the economic progress of a country in the form of increased economic costs including loss of women's labour hours and increased healthcare costs.

Several reasons have been identified be responsible for spousal abuse. However, little attention has been paid to the role of pre-marital counselling, hence, it has not been fully explored. This is the crux of the study, to explore the nature of the influence of premarital counselling on spouse abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District.

3. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- 1) What is the level of spousal abuse among married persons who participated in pre-marital counselling in Delta Central Senatorial District?
- 2) What is the level of spousal abuse among married persons who did not participate in pre-marital counselling in Delta Central Senatorial District?
- 3) What is the influence of premarital counselling on spouse abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District?
- 4) To what extent will gender moderate the influence of premarital counselling on spouse abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District

- 5) To what extent will the duration of marriage moderate the influence of premarital counselling on spouse abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District

3.1 Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- 1) There is no significant relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District.
- 2) There is no significant moderating impact of gender in the relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District.
- 3) There is no significant moderating impact of the duration of marriage in the relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District.

4. Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study is hinged on the cultural theory of violence. The cultural theory of violence was propounded by Johan Galtung (1990). Some of the major assumptions are the pervasiveness of specific violent patterns within a societal dimension. Proponents of the cultural model link spousal abuse to pluralistic norms, traditions, and customs of the society, particularly emphasizing the role of societal norms and customs in enacting enabling conditions for spousal abuse. Norms and traditions are society-specific, and in the sub-Saharan African region, norms emphasize the unequal socialization of men and women. Married women are socially expected to submit to the “authority” of their husbands (male dominance) and accept wife-beating as the norm and a husband’s attempt at correcting the excesses or wrongdoing of his wife.

According to the theory of cultural violence, the difference in the ways that men and women are constructed in diverse cultures perpetuates the systemic abuse of women. Particularly in African cultures, including the Nigerian culture, gender roles are clearly defined, and male domination and control are maintained and exercised through, for example, traditional values, beliefs, and customs. Women’s experiences within the domestic sphere are shaped by sociocultural expectations of normative femininity such as passivity and submission, whereas it is expected that men exhibit normative masculinity such as aggression and domination, and traditional norms recognize men as domestic heads and breadwinners, and women as procreators and domestic caretakers. This theory is particularly relevant to the objective of this study which seeks to examine how pre-marital counselling can reduce or stem the ugly tide of spousal abuse among married persons. In the Nigerian cultural context, the total submission of women to men in marital relationships is enforced during the performance of marriage rituals or rites. In some Nigerian societies, a woman signifies the acceptance of marriage, in addition to her total submission to the man by kneeling before her prospective husband during the

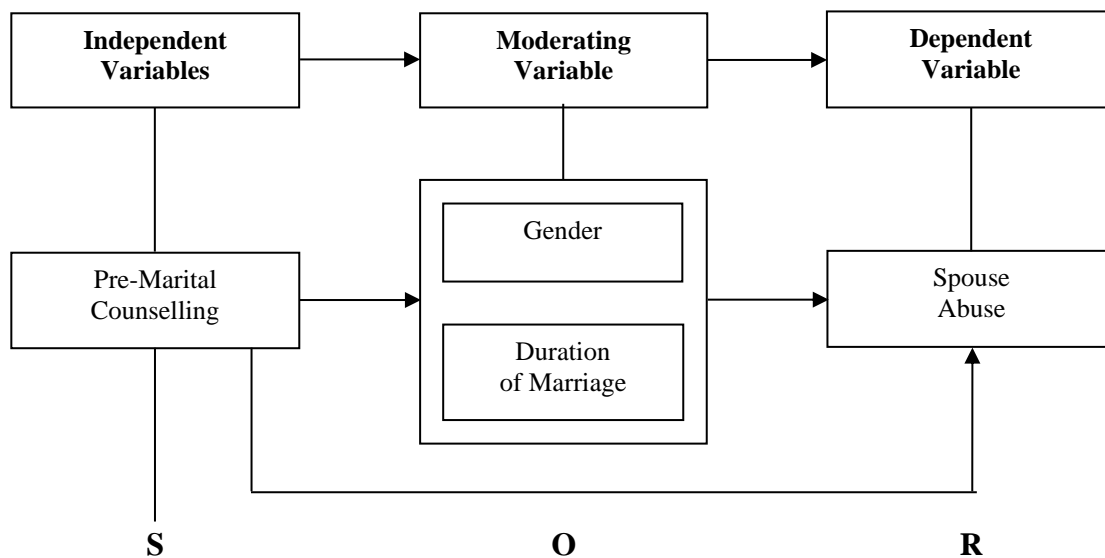
marriage ceremony. A man pays a bride price or dowry, including stipulated “head drinks,” and other items the kindred of the woman may demand. Because male entitlement, power, and superiority, compared with female submission, are conveyed during the performance of marriage rituals, the place of female marital abuse can be noted when there is a transgression of the female subordinate role.

4.1 Conceptual Model of the Study

This study explored the influence of the independent variable of pre-marital counselling on the dependent variable of spouse abuse among married persons. It is against this backdrop the conceptual framework is hinged on the Ivan Pavlov Stimulus Response Theory. The S-R theory was first used by Pavlov in 1927 when he conducted a psychological experiment by pairing a conditioned stimulus (a bell) with an unconditioned stimulus (food), a dog would begin to salivate (response) when the bell was rung without the food. By implication, a stimulus causes an action or response. It is a word often used in biology to describe a phenomenon that causes a reaction in an organ or cell. Thus, S-R Theory stated that behaviour manifests as a result of the interplay between stimulus and response. In other words, behaviour cannot exist without a stimulus of some sort. In psychology, a stimulus is any object or event that elicits a sensory or behavioural response in an organism. While in behavioural psychology, a stimulus constitutes the basis for behaviour. The current study is essentially a measure of behaviourism involving spouse abuse among married persons stimulated by pre-marital counselling. It makes the S-R theory relevant to this study.

The theory became relevant to the present study because the independent variable is influential toward the promotion of the negative behaviour which characterizes its response. Consequently, the stimulus-response theory is adopted because it supports this research study and also enables the researcher to conceptualize a model that could illustrate the study using a sketch to model the variables under investigation. Figure 1 presents the model of the study as follows:

Figure 1: Conceptual model of the study



Source: Constructed by the researchers (2022).

Key:

S = Represents the stimulus. In this work, the stimulus is the independent variable and includes pre-marital counselling

O = Represent the organismic facto. In this work, it is the moderating variables and are gender and duration of the marriage, which influence or adulterates the outcome of the independent variable on the dependent variable

R = Represent the response. In this work, the response is the dependent variable and it is spousal abuse, which is the problem of the study, to which a solution is being sought.

Stimulus in this study consists of the independent variable of pre-marital counselling. The organismic refers to the individual’s gender and duration of marriage while the response is the manifestation of spouse abuse. The model in Figure 1 explains that the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable could be moderated by the gender and duration of marriage of the respondents.

The model was adapted from the SOR theory of Hull (1952), that is, the Stimulus-Organism-Response Theory (S-O-R). The theory proposes that an organism’s behaviour is a product of stimulus in the environment, where the organism’s innate potentials are best explored. Hull believed that human behaviour is a result of the constant interaction between the organism and its environment. The environment provides the stimuli that the organism needs to make in order to survive within the environment.

Hull explains that when survival is in jeopardy, the organism is in a state of need (when the biological requirements for survival are not being met) so the organism begins to fashion means of reducing that need. He argued further that the internal state of the organism was a necessary part of learning and that the link was stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R). It is the internal state of the organism that determines whether it would learn (behave) or not.

5. Methods

This study adopted a correlational research design. The population comprised 248,768 married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District. The study sample comprised 384 married persons. The sample was drawn from four out of the eight local government areas of the senatorial district. Simple random and convenience sampling techniques were used to select the respondents. Four local government areas were drawn using a simple random sampling technique such that all the Local Government Areas in Delta Central Senatorial District were written on a piece of paper, folded and poured into a container, thereafter, the researcher picked four pieces of paper, representing the four selected Local Government Areas. After selecting the four Local Government Areas, the researcher used a convenience sampling technique to select 96 married persons from each local government areas making a total of 384 married persons. The choice of a convenience sampling technique was because the researcher used only those who were available and were willing to participate in the study.

A questionnaire was used in this study. The questionnaire was tagged "Questionnaire on Pre-Marital Counselling and Spouse Abuse among Married Persons" (QPMCSMP). It contains three sections. Section A contains the demographic data of respondents such as sex and duration of marriage; Section B contains Pre-Marital Counselling Rating Scale; while Section C contains Spouse Abuse Rating Scale. Items from sections B and C were structured on a rating scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). The research instrument was validated by experts' judgment. This is to ensure that the instruments met face, content and construct validities. The items were given to the research supervisor and other experts in Guidance and Counselling Department, who established the face and content validities of the instrument. Some of the items were corrected by the experts in terms of language choice, to suit the purpose of the study. Some of the experts suggested the removal of items that looked similar to other items. Some items were rephrased in terms of sentence structure. Their opinions and recommendations were taken into consideration in drafting the final instruments. In order to ensure that the instrument is reliable, the questionnaire was distributed to 30 married persons in Obiaruku. The data were subjected to Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient. The reliability coefficient obtained includes 0.83 and 0.79 for Pre-Marital Counselling Rating Scale and Spouse Abuse Rating Scale respectively.

The instruments were administered to the respondents by the researchers with the assistance of three research assistants. The researchers visited the homes and working places of the respondents to administer the data. The instrument was retrieved immediately to avoid loss of data. Mean, standard deviation and Pearson's coefficient of determination were used to answer the research questions while regression statistics and fisher-z statistics were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22.

6. Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of spousal abuse among married persons who participated in pre-marital counselling in Delta Central Senatorial District?

Table 1: Mean assessment of the level of spousal abuse among married persons who participated in pre-marital counselling in Delta Central Senatorial District

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	I am hardly battered by my spouse.	2.24	1.02	High
2.	I always want to be financially better than my spouse.	2.21	1.12	High
3.	My spouse doesn't cooperate after marriage.	2.12	0.95	Low
4.	My spouse is not being supportive in my education.	2.09	1.00	Low
5.	I often experience nagging from my spouse.	1.92	0.84	Low
6.	I have been enduring to keep my marriage.	1.86	0.85	Low
7.	I am always engaged in arguments with my spouse.	1.83	0.81	Low
8.	I have been the only one maintaining the home.	1.82	0.83	Low
9.	My spouse does not allow me to worship my God in my own way.	1.82	0.75	Low
10.	I am regularly fed up with the overbearing character of my spouse.	1.82	0.75	Low
11.	My spouse barks orders at me.	1.81	0.79	Low
12.	I am frequently engaged in quarrelling with my spouse.	1.81	0.79	Low
13.	My spouse talks me down in the presence of our visitors.	1.79	0.76	Low
14.	I am physically assaulted by my spouse during a disagreement.	1.79	0.76	Low
15.	My spouse denies me my conjugal rights.	1.78	0.78	Low
16.	My spouse always talks about me negatively to his friends.	1.78	0.78	Low
17.	I am frequently involved in fighting with my spouse.	1.78	0.77	Low
18.	I am always shouted upon without provocation.	1.75	0.78	Low
19.	My spouse is not being careful with his or her financial progress.	1.75	0.78	Low
20.	I always go out with other persons with whom I am emotionally involved.	1.71	0.77	Low
21.	I love another person more than my spouse.	1.70	0.72	Low
22.	I oppress my spouse.	1.67	0.72	Low
Average Mean		1.86	0.82	Low
Criterion Mean = 2.50				

Table 1 shows the mean level of spousal abuse among married persons who participated in pre-marital counselling in Delta Central Senatorial District. From the result, the mean level of spousal abuse ranged from 1.67 to 2.24 with an average mean of 1.86. The criterion mean used for the assessment is 2.50, which means that married persons who participated in pre-marital counselling in Delta Central Senatorial District experienced a low level of spousal abuse, as shown in the remark section of the table.

Research Question 2: What is the level of spousal abuse among married persons who did not participate in pre-marital counselling in Delta Central Senatorial District?

Table 2: Mean assessment of the level of spousal abuse among married persons who did not participate in pre-marital counselling in Delta Central Senatorial District

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	I am always shouted upon without provocation.	3.27	0.74	High
2.	My spouse is not being careful with his or her financial progress.	3.27	0.74	High
3.	My spouse does not allow me to worship my God in my own way.	3.26	0.74	High
4.	I am regularly fed up with the overbearing character of my spouse.	3.26	0.74	High
5.	I love another person more than my spouse.	3.22	0.91	High
6.	I have been enduring to keep my marriage.	3.19	0.76	High
7.	I oppress my spouse.	3.11	0.95	High
8.	I am frequently involved in fighting with my spouse.	3.08	0.89	High
9.	My spouse barks orders at me.	3.00	0.87	High
10.	My spouse is not being supportive in my education.	3.00	0.93	High
11.	I am frequently engaged in quarrelling with my spouse.	3.00	0.87	High
12.	My spouse talks me down in the presence of our visitors.	2.96	0.91	High
13.	I am physically assaulted by my spouse during a disagreement.	2.96	0.91	High
14.	My spouse denies me my conjugal rights.	2.94	0.92	High
15.	My spouse always talks about me negatively to his friends.	2.94	0.92	High
16.	I have been the only one maintaining the home.	2.93	0.99	High
17.	I am always engaged in arguments with my spouse.	2.91	0.91	High
18.	I always go out with other persons with whom I am emotionally involved.	2.84	0.93	High
19.	I often experience nagging from my spouse.	2.79	1.06	High
20.	My spouse doesn't cooperate after marriage.	2.64	0.97	High
21.	I always want to be financially better than my spouse.	2.52	1.01	High
22.	I am hardly battered by my spouse.	2.51	0.91	High
Average Mean		2.98	0.89	High
Criterion Mean = 2.50				

Table 2 shows the mean level of spousal abuse among married persons who did not participate in pre-marital counselling in Delta Central Senatorial District. From the result, the mean level of spousal abuse ranged from 2.51 to 3.27 with an average mean of 2.98. The criterion mean used for the assessment is 2.50, which means that married persons who did not participate in pre-marital counselling in Delta Central Senatorial District experience a high level of spousal abuse, as shown in the remark section of the table.

Research Question 3: What is the influence of premarital counselling on spouse abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District?

Table 3: Correlation and coefficient of determination of the influence of premarital counselling on spouse abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i> ²	<i>r</i> ² %	Decision
Pre-Marital Counselling	365	-0.408	0.166	16.6	Negative Relationship
Spouse Abuse					

Table 3 showed a Pearson's coefficient of determination, which was used to examine the influence of premarital counselling on spouse abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District. The result shows an r of -0.408, and r^2 of 0.166, which indicated the relationship between pre-marital counselling and spouse abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District. The result revealed a negative relationship between the two variables. Pre-marital counselling contributed 16.6% to the variability in spouse abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District.

Research Question 4: To what extent will gender moderate the influence of premarital counselling on spouse abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District?

Table 4: Pearson's Correlation and Coefficient of Determination on the moderating impact of gender on the influence of premarital counselling on spouse abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District

Gender	Variable	N	r	r^2	$r^2\%$	Remark
Male	Pre-Marital Counselling	177	-0.443	0.196	19.6	Negative Relationship
	Spouse Abuse					
Female	Pre-Marital Counselling	188	-0.382	0.146	14.6	Negative Relationship
	Spouse Abuse					

In Table 4, the researcher presented the result of a Pearson's correlation and coefficient of determination, which was used to examine the moderating impact of gender on the influence of premarital counselling on spouse abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District. The result shows that $r = -0.443$, $r^2 = 0.196$ and $r^2\% = 19.6$ for male married persons and $r = -0.382$, $r^2 = 0.146$ and $r^2\% = 14.6$ for female married persons. The result implies that a negative relationship exists between pre-marital counselling and spouse abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District. Pre-marital counselling contributes 19.6% and 14.6% variability to spouse abuse among male and female married persons respectively.

Research Question 5: To what extent will the duration of marriage moderate the influence of premarital counselling on spouse abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District?

Table 5: Pearson's Correlation and Coefficient of Determination on the moderating impact of duration of marriage on the influence of premarital counselling on spouse abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District

Duration of Marriage	Variable	N	r	r^2	$r^2\%$	Remark
Below 10 Years	Pre-Marital Counselling	216	-0.438	0.192	19.2	Negative Relationship
	Spouse Abuse					
Above 10 Years	Pre-Marital Counselling	149	-0.370	0.134	13.4	Negative Relationship
	Spouse Abuse					

In Table 5, the researcher presented the result of a Pearson's correlation and coefficient of determination, which was used to examine the moderating impact of duration of marriage on the influence of premarital counselling on spouse abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District. The result shows that $r = -0.438$, $r^2 = 0.192$ and $r^2\% = 19.2$ for married persons below 10 years and $r = -0.370$, $r^2 = 0.134$ and $r^2\% = 13.4$ for married persons above 10 years. The result implies that a negative relationship exists between pre-marital counselling and spouse abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District. Pre-marital counselling contributes 19.2% and 13.4% variability to spouse abuse among married persons below and those above 10 years respectively.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District.

Table 6: Regression analysis of the relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	27.703	1	27.703	72.476	.000 ^b
Residual	138.753	363	.382		
Total	166.456	364			
Variables in Equation					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	T	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	3.582	.159	-.408	22.569	.000
Pre-Marital Counselling	-.500	.059		-8.513	.000
$\alpha = 0.05$, $R = 0.408$, $R\text{-Square} = 0.166$					
a. Dependent Variable: Spouse Abuse					
b. Predictors (Constant): Pre-Marital Counselling					

In Table 6, the researcher presented the result of a regression analysis, which was used to test the hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District. The result shows that $F(1, 364) = 72.476$, $p < 0.05$ level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District.

The R^2 value of 0.166 showed that pre-marital counselling contributed 16.6% to the variability in spouse abuse among married persons. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for predicting spouse abuse from pre-marital counselling is 0.500; the standardized coefficient (β) was -0.408, $t = -8.513$. Pre-marital counselling is significant at an alpha level of 0.05.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant moderating impact of gender in the relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District.

Table 7: Pearson's correlation and Fisher's Z statistics of the moderating impact of gender in the relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District

Gender	Variable	N	r	Fisher-z	Remark
Male	Pre-Marital Counselling	177	-0.443	0.743	Not Significant
	Spouse Abuse				
Female	Pre-Marital Counselling	188	-0.382		
	Spouse Abuse				

In Table 7, the researcher presented the result of Pearson's correlation and Fisher's Z statistics, which was used to determine the moderating impact of gender in the relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District. The result shows that male married persons had a coefficient (r) of -0.443 while female married persons had a coefficient (r) of -0.382.

In order to determine the moderating impact of gender in the relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District, the statistical significance of the difference between the correlation coefficients of male and female married persons was conducted and a value of 0.743 was obtained, which is less than 1.96, the correlation coefficients are therefore not statistically significantly different. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted, which means that there is no significant moderating impact of gender in the relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant moderating impact of the duration of marriage in the relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District.

Table 8: Pearson's correlation and Fisher's Z statistics of the moderating impact of the duration of marriage in the relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District

Duration of Marriage	Variable	N	r	Fisher-z	Remark
Below 10 Years	Pre-Marital Counselling	216	-0.438	0.700	Not Significant
	Spouse Abuse				
Above 10 Years	Pre-Marital Counselling	149	-0.370		
	Spouse Abuse				

In Table 9, the researcher presented the result of a Pearson's correlation and Fisher's Z statistics, which was used to determine the moderating impact of duration of marriage in the relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married

persons in Delta Central Senatorial District. The result shows that male married persons had a coefficient (r) of -0.438 while female married persons had a coefficient (r) of -0.370. In order to determine the moderating impact of duration of marriage in the relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District, the statistical significance of the difference between the correlation coefficients of male and female married persons was conducted and a value of 0.700 was obtained, which is less than 1.96, the correlation coefficients are therefore not statistically significantly different. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted, which means that there is no significant moderating impact of the duration of marriage in the relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District.

7. Discussion

The first finding revealed that married persons who participated in pre-marital counselling in Delta Central Senatorial District experienced a low level of spousal abuse. This finding lends credence to the fact that pre-marital counselling can help to reduce the incidence of spouse abuse. Premarital counselling uses a variety of interventions to help couples deal with marital distress, communication, finances, conflict resolution, etc. In order for many couples to address marital dissatisfaction, they need to identify appropriate strategies for working through their problems. This finding agrees with Yilmaz and Kalkan (2010), who stated that pre-marital counselling programmes significantly increase the relationship satisfaction level. The finding is also consistent with Bradbury & Karney (2014), who found that the act of making couples conscious of the accessibility of relationship interventions and familiarizing them with the practice of seeking support for relationship problems may make help-seeking more probable later in their relationship.

The second finding showed that married persons who did not participate in pre-marital counselling in Delta Central Senatorial District experienced a high level of spousal abuse. This finding implies that married persons who did not participate in pre-marital counselling are more likely to experience spouse abuse. This is because they stand to miss the benefits of pre-marital counselling, which those who participate in enjoys. The finding was in line with the study of Egbo (2011) in Enugu Metropolis, Nigeria on pre-marital counselling influence on marital stability and social adjustment. The findings revealed that couples who received counselling had more stable relationships while those who did not attend had a relationship problem. The finding also supports the views of Kelper (2015) who found that individuals who took part in pre-marital counselling showed greater marital satisfaction than those who did not take part in pre-marital counselling.

The third finding revealed that there is a significant relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District. The finding further showed that pre-marital counselling contributed

16.6% to the variability in spouse abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District. This finding implies that the more married persons participate in pre-marital counselling, the less likely they will experience spouse abuse and vis versa. The finding supports the study of Kepler (2015) who conducted a study on marital satisfaction on the impact of pre-marital and couples counselling. The finding showed that individuals who took part in pre-marital counselling indicated greater marital satisfaction than those who did not take part in premarital counselling.

The fourth finding showed that there is no significant moderating impact of gender in the relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District. This means that gender has no role to play in the influence of premarital counselling on spouse abuse among married persons. This could be because of the fact that premarital counselling may have an effect on both male and female married persons.

The fifth finding revealed that there is no significant moderating impact of the duration of marriage in the relationship between premarital counselling and spousal abuse among married persons in Delta Central Senatorial District. This finding means that the duration of marriage cannot influence how premarital counselling affects spouse abuse among married persons. The possible explanation for this finding may be that no matter how long the marriage has been, the effect of pre-marital counselling will be the same.

8. Conclusion/Recommendations

Based on the outcome of the study, the researcher concluded that premarital counselling is very likely to influence spousal abuse among married persons. That the more married persons participate in pre-marital counselling, the less likely they will experience spouse abuse. The relationship between pre-marital counselling and spouse abuse cannot be moderated by gender and duration of the marriage.

Arising from the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- intending couples are enjoined to as a matter of necessity, engage in pre-marital counselling so as to be educated on what to expect in marriage and how to deal with those issues that will eventually arise during the marriage.
- that married couples should show more adherence to their religious faiths and apply what they are taught to their marriage, especially when they are confronted with marital conflicts

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Dr. Iyeke, Patrick Okoh is a senior lecturer with specialization in guidance and counseling. His research interest is essentially on counseling needs of higher institution students to which he renders individual counseling. He has also served in many faculty and university committees such as Faculty Teaching practice committee and currently a member of the University TETFUND committee on manuscript and book development. He is married with children.

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PERCEIVED EFFECT OF PREMARITAL COUNSELLING IN STEMMING THE TIDE OF SPOUSE ABUSE
AMONG MARRIED PERSONS IN DELTA CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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