



**INTIMATE PARTNER EMOTIONAL ABUSE, QUALITY OF LIFE AND
DEMOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS AS PREDICTORS OF
PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AMONG MARRIED INDIVIDUALS**

¹Bede C. Akpunne, PhD, ¹Favor A. Chukwuma, MSc., ¹Joshua O. Ogunsemi, PhD

¹Department of Psychology, Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria

(Corresponding email: ogunsemio@run.edu.ng, Mobile: +234 813 912 1197)

ABSTRACT

This study examined quality of life and intimate partners' emotional abuse as predictors of psychological distress among married individuals in Alimosho Metropolis. A cross-sectional design was utilised to select 381 married individuals (50.4% female and 49.6% male), aged between 28 and 55 years, who responded to the Eurohis Quality of Life Scale (EQLS), Emotional Abuse Questionnaire (EAQ) and General Health Questionnaire (GHQ). Data was analysed using IBM SPSS. Descriptive statistics (frequency count and percentages) and inferential statistics (multiple linear regression and independent t-test) were used to assess demographic variables and the study's hypotheses. Results revealed 39.3%, 23.95%, and 5.4% of mild, moderate, and severe levels of psychological distress, respectively. Also, intimate partners' emotional abuse ($\beta = .37, t = 7.69, p < .01$). Moreover, female married individuals had significantly higher psychological distress ($t(381) = 4.90, p = < .01$) than their male counterparts. Sociodemographic characteristics jointly contributed a significant variance of 27% to the variance in psychological distress [$R^2 = .27, F(6, 374) = 17.36, p < .01$]. Being female, lower income level and polygamous family type were predictors of psychological distress. The study suggests that psychological distress in married couples is influenced by intimate partner emotional abuse and low quality of life. It recommends that counsellors create community programs to prevent emotional abuse, enhance quality of life, and foster social support networks.

Keywords: *Quality of life, intimate partners' emotional abuse, psychological distress, married individuals, Nigeria*

Editor-in-Chief

Prof. Henry Odhianosen Imhonde

Assistant Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Oyeleke Johnson

Associate Editors: Ajibola Abdulrahamon Ishola, Dr. Leonard Orji, Dr. Daniel Kumuyi, Dr. Chinyere Okonkwo, Dr. Juliana Pwajok, Dr.

Samson Olowo Kolawole, Dr. Victor Onyecho

Consulting Editors:

Prof. Peter. O. Ebigbo, Prof. Ebenezer. O. Akinowo, Prof. Helen O. Osinowo, Prof. Onaolopo K. Taiwo, Prof. Erhabor Idemudia, Prof. Harry Obi Nwosu, Prof. Obiageli Omeje, Prof. Benjamin O. Olley, Prof. Gboyega Emmanuel Abikoye, Prof. Bolade O. Mokuolu

Akpunne, B. C., Chukwuma, F. A. & Ogunsemi, J. O. (2025)

Intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life and demographical characteristics as predictors of psychological distress among married individuals.

INTRODUCTION

Global statistics indicate that psychological distress among married individuals is a pervasive issue, with a significant impact on physical and mental health worldwide (Ballie et al., 2005; Tran et al., 2022). Psychological distress is a common form of mental illness, characterised by low psychological and social well-being (Viertiö et al., 2021), with intense behavioural and emotional suffering, including symptoms of depression, anxiety, restlessness, and tenseness (Cuijpers et al., 2009). These symptoms may also be associated with physical symptoms like headaches, fatigue, and lack of energy, which may vary among cultural groups. It is often characterised by periods of worry or sadness and can disrupt the individual's emotional state (Horwitz, 2007). According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2012), an estimated 10-15% of married individuals globally suffer from one psychological disorder or another, ranging from depression and anxiety to more severe mental health issues.

As we focus on Africa, the prevalence remains a concern, with studies suggesting that approximately 20% of married individuals in the continent encounter psychological distress (WHO, 2019;

Aborode, 2022). In Nigeria, a populous African nation, the situation is even more pronounced, with reports suggesting depressive symptoms as the most prominent issue with a 9.1% incidence rate. Other common problems include suicidal ideation (7.3%), hopelessness (6.9%), and psychomotor retardation (1.8%). People with generalised anxiety disorder reported excessive worrying (12.3%), irritability (11%), and inability to control worrying (7.3%) (Aborode, 2022; Gureje et al., 2005). Also, it has been reported that about 25% of married individuals grapple with psychological challenges originating from problems encountered in their relational cycles (Okumu et al., 2022). Factors such as economic stress, societal expectations, and cultural influences (Asiimwe et al., 2023; Okumu et al., 2022) contribute to these high rates, highlighting the urgent need for targeted interventions and mental health support to address the distress of married individuals in both Africa and Nigeria. Abramsky (2016) pointed out intimate partner violence and abuse as a serious public health concern among African communities, with harmful effects on the mental health and relational functioning of an individual, their family,

Akpunne, B. C., Chukwuma, F. A. & Ogunsemi, J. O. (2025)

Intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life and demographical characteristics as predictors of psychological distress among married individuals.

or a community (causing distress, pain, loss of freedom, or disability).

Psychological distress among married individuals is intricately linked to the alarming prevalence of intimate partner emotional abuse, a pervasive issue with profound implications for mental health and relationship dynamics (Okumu et al., 2022; Asimwe et al., 2023). Research underscores the association between psychological distress and emotional abuse, as individuals experiencing distress are more vulnerable to becoming victims or perpetrators of such abuse (Sachser et al., 2021). Intimate partner emotional abuse involves behaviours aimed at undermining an individual's self-worth and emotional distress, manifesting in forms such as verbal humiliation, manipulation, and isolation (Asimwe et al., 2023; Mapayi et al., 2013). In the context of married individuals facing psychological distress, the strain on interpersonal dynamics often creates an environment conducive to emotional abuse, exacerbating mental health challenges and perpetuating a cycle of harm within relationships (Mapayi et al., 2013). Addressing psychological distress among married individuals should therefore incorporate a comprehensive approach that recognises and combats the detrimental

effects of intimate partner emotional abuse on mental health and relationship satisfaction.

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a significant public health issue that violates human rights and affects women more frequently (Osinde et al., 2011). Women are more likely to be victims of violent and aggressive behaviours in intimate relationships, including emotional abuse and rape (Mapayi et al., 2013). It is then crucial to differentiate between physical violence and abuse, which is the well-studied type, and emotional or psychological abuse, which involves non-physical actions or attitudes intended to humiliate or intimidate another person (Schumacher & Leonards, 2005). This type of abuse is the main focus of current research.

Intimate partner emotional abuse has emerged as a critical concern in the realm of interpersonal relationships, raising profound questions about its impact on psychological distress among married individuals (Karakurt & Silver, 2013). Emotional abuse encompasses various behaviours that undermine an individual's self-worth, emotional security, and overall mental health within the context of an intimate partnership (Akinawo *et al.*,

Akpunne, B. C., Chukwuma, F. A. & Ogunsemi, J. O. (2025)

Intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life and demographical characteristics as predictors of psychological distress among married individuals.

2022). According to Follingstad et al. (2005), emotional abuse can take many forms, such as verbal abuse, dominance, control, isolation, mockery, or the exploitation of personal information for denigration. It is typically a prelude to physical abuse and affects the victim's emotional and psychological health (Karakurt & Silver, 2013). As a result, there is a growing focus on comprehending emotional abuse as a concept distinct from physical abuse, deserving of its theories and approaches to prevention (Okumu et al., 2022). Age and sex are relevant to the developing field of emotional abuse research. Research on interpersonal violence has always focused on young people and women who are pregnant as the archetypal victims (Mapayi et al., 2013), but new data is challenging these common findings, by identifying that males are more susceptible to spousal abuse (Karakurt & Silver, 2013; Asimwe et al., 2023).

A crucial factor in understanding the dynamics of such abuse is the predictive role of quality of life (QOL). Quality of life, a multidimensional construct, reflects an individual's perception of their overall life satisfaction, health, and distress (Helvik et al., 2013). According to the World Health Organisation, QOL is defined as

"individuals' perception of their position in life about their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns, as well as the culture and value systems in which they live." Quality of life serves as a potential mitigating factor in the face of intimate partner emotional abuse (Malik et al., 2021). Also, individuals with higher levels of perceived quality of life may be more resilient in coping with the negative consequences of emotional abuse. For example, a person who maintains a strong social support network, engages in fulfilling activities, and reports high life satisfaction may be better equipped to withstand the psychological toll of emotional abuse compared to someone with a lower perceived quality of life. A study by Garcia-Moreno et al. (2005) highlighted the importance of considering socio-economic status in understanding the interplay between quality of life, emotional abuse, and psychological distress. Married individuals facing economic hardship may experience different effects than those with more significant financial resources (Asimwe et al., 2023). This emphasises the need for a nuanced examination incorporating diverse demographic and contextual factors.

Akpunne, B. C., Chukwuma, F. A. & Ogunsemi, J. O. (2025)

Intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life and demographical characteristics as predictors of psychological distress among married individuals.

Recognising the complex interplay between intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life, and psychological distress is crucial for developing effective intervention strategies. The findings of this study can inform therapeutic approaches that focus on enhancing not only the psychological resilience of victims but also their overall quality of life. For instance, interventions aimed at improving coping mechanisms, fostering social support, and addressing socio-economic disparities may prove instrumental in minimising the adverse effects of psychological distress among married individuals. These challenges underscore the need for a nuanced understanding of quality of life and intimate partners' emotional abuse as predicting factors of psychological distress.

Objectives

The following objectives will be addressed in this study:

1. To examine the direct influence of intimate partner emotional abuse on

psychological distress among married individuals in the Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State.

2. To investigate the direct influence of quality of life on psychological distress among married individuals in the Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State.
3. To assess the joint predictive influence of intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life, sex, income level, and family type on psychological distress among married individuals in the Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State.

Against this backdrop, the conceptual framework in the diagram was developed to provide insight into the relationship among the study's variables.

Akpunne, B. C., Chukwuma, F. A. & Ogunsemi, J. O. (2025)

Intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life and demographical characteristics as predictors of psychological distress among married individuals.

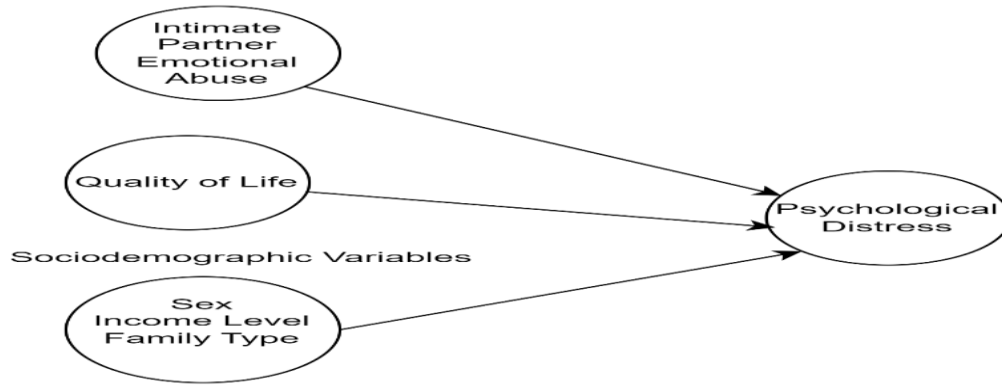


Figure 2.5: Conceptual Framework

Hence, the following relationships are hypothesised for the present study:

Hypotheses

H₁: There will be a direct influence of Intimate Partner Emotional Abuse on Psychological distress among married individuals in Alimosho Local Government in Lagos State

H₂: There will be a direct influence of Quality of Life on Psychological

Distress among married individuals in Alimosho Local Government in Lagos State

H₃: The joint influence of intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life, sex, income level and family type will significantly predict psychological distress among married individuals in Alimosho Local Government in Lagos State

METHOD

Design

The study employs an ex-post facto research design. This design is deemed appropriate because the variables under consideration are presumed to have occurred and cannot be experimentally modified during the study. A self-reported questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data so that causes could be

accurately and impartially studied after they had likely impacted another variable. This research strategy was used for this study because it is appropriate for investigations examining attitudes and opinions about the impact of quality of Life, intimate partner emotional abuse, and psychological distress among married

Akpunne, B. C., Chukwuma, F. A. & Ogunsemi, J. O. (2025)

Intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life and demographical characteristics as predictors of psychological distress among married individuals.

individuals in a selected local government in Lagos State.

Study Area/Setting

The study was conducted in Alimosho Local Government in Lagos State, Nigeria. Lagos State stands out as Nigeria's economic and commercial hub, showcasing rapid urbanisation and a blend of various cultural backgrounds. Alimosho mirrors the vibrancy and complexity of urban life, providing an ideal setting for studying the intricacies of intimate partner relationships within a rapidly evolving metropolitan context.

Participants

The study focused on married individuals residing in the Alimosho metropolis, Lagos State, Nigeria. Alimosho LGA of Lagos State has an estimated number of five hundred and thirty-eight thousand, nine hundred and thirty-nine (538,939) married individuals. Based on Nigerian census data 2006. Consequently, the selection of participants was predicated on their extensive reach and ease of access for the researchers. The Yamane (1967) sample size determination procedure [$n = \frac{N}{1 + (N \times e^2)}$], where N is the sample size, E is the margin of the error (0.05 for a 5% margin of error), a sample size of 400 was determined, based on a 50% maximum

variability and an accuracy of ± 5 at the 95% confidence level. Out of the 400 questionnaires distributed, 381 were suitable for data analysis. Due to non-responses, incomplete questionnaires, or data entry errors during data collection, only 351 usable responses were obtained. Despite this reduction, the 351 valid responses still provide a robust sample size, ensuring sufficient statistical power for meaningful analysis and the reliability of the study's conclusions (Yamane, 1967; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The age distribution of the sample shows that the majority (70.6%) are between the ages of 41 and 50 (47.05 ± 13.74). The sex distribution shows that 50.4% of the participants were females, while 49.6% were males. Distribution by educational qualifications reveals that 76.9% of the participants completed tertiary education, 22.6% completed secondary, and 0.5% had primary school education. A significant portion of the participants falls into the middle-income class (59.3%), with 17.8% in the high-income class and 20.5% in the low-income class.

The overwhelming majority (99.5%) of the participants were married, while a small portion of them (0.5%) were separated. The distribution according to family type shows

Akpunne, B. C., Chukwuma, F. A. & Ogunsemi, J. O. (2025)

Intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life and demographical characteristics as predictors of psychological distress among married individuals.

that 92.4% of the participants are from a monogamous family, while 7.6% were in a polygamous family. Half 50.9% of the participants were employed, 46.5% were self-employed, and 2.6% were unemployed.

Instruments

Three standardised scales were used for this study:

General Health Questionnaire (GHQ)

GHQ is a psychological assessment tool developed by Goldberg and Blackwell in 1970 (Goldberg & Blackwell, 1970). It is designed to detect possible psychological disorders or mental health issues across several dimensions, including somatic symptoms, anxiety and insomnia, social dysfunction, and severe depression. It is a five (5 Likert scale with 1 = better than usual and 5 = worse than usual. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 was reported in this study.

Emotional Abuse Questionnaire (EAQ)

EAQ was developed by Jacobson & Gottman (1998). It was initially a sixty-six-item (66) instrument used to measure emotional abuse in intimate relationships. In 2001, its 27-item scale was developed. It takes about 5 minutes to administer to participants. EAQ is rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Never to 4 =

Very often. All items are scored directly.

The items are summed up, and the higher the score, the greater the level of emotional abuse. The total score ranges from 27 to 108. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.83 was reported in this study.

Quality of Life (QoL)

The Eurohis Quality of Life Score (EQLS) is a brief 8-item scale developed by Schmidt et al. (2006). The instrument is measured on a 5-point Likert response format ranging from 1 = Very Poor to 5 = Very Good. It assesses an individual quality of life across four domains: Physical (Pain and discomfort, energy and mobility), psychological (positive and negative emotions), social (social relationship and support and social activities and participation), environmental (Living environment and housing, financial security and resources (Schmidt *et al.*, 2006). A Cronbach's alpha of 0.90 was reported in this study.

Procedure

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select married individuals for participation in the research. After the ethical approval was granted by the Redeemer's University Ethical Review Committee (Reference number: RUN/REC/2024/199), the researchers set

Akpunne, B. C., Chukwuma, F. A. & Ogunsemi, J. O. (2025)

Intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life and demographical characteristics as predictors of psychological distress among married individuals.

out to collect data using a standardised battery of instruments. An information page, containing the objectives, informed consent and privacy/confidentiality statement regarding the study's data, was provided to the participants on the first page of the instrument. Five trained research assistants distributed copies of the questionnaire. Participants were recruited for the study using a snowball sampling technique, ensuring the representation of diverse socio-demographic backgrounds within the Alimosho metropolis.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS v23) and AMOS version 23. According to Hu &

Bettler (1991), the following indexes were utilised in the assessing the model fit – the normed Chi-Square ($X^2/df < 3$), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA < 0.08), Standardized Root mean Square Residual (SMRMR < .08) Goodness-of-fit index (GFI > 90), Tucker-Lewis fit index (TLI > 90), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI > .90). Descriptive statistics such as frequency, mean (SD). Percentage distribution was employed to characterise the demographic features of the participants. Pearson product-moment correlation and hierarchical multiple regression analysis were used to evaluate the association and make the prediction.

RESULTS

Table 2: Prevalence and patterns of psychological distress, intimate partners' emotional abuse, and quality of life

Variables	M	SD	F	Nil	F	Mild	F	Moderate	F	Severe
Psychological distress	27.48	8.31	120	31.4 %	150	39.3%	91	23.9%	20	5.4%
Intimate Partner's Emotional Abuse	M	SD	F	None	F	Mild	F	Moderate	F	Severe
	46.67	13.91	300	78.6 %	60	15.7%	15	3.9%	6	1.6%
Quality of Life	M	SD	F	Poor	F	Fair	F	Good	F	Excellent
	27.13	5.27	36	9.5%	95	24.9%	170	44.6%	80	21%

Table 2 summarises the patterns and nature of the variables in this study. Table 4.3 showed that 31.4% of the participants reported no experience of psychological distress, while 39.3%, 23.95%, and 5.4%

reported mild, moderate, and severe levels of psychological distress, respectively. Also, 78.6% reported no experience of intimate partner emotional abuse, while 15.7%, 3.9%, and 1.6% reported mild,

Akpunne, B. C., Chukwuma, F. A. & Ogunsemi, J. O. (2025)

Intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life and demographical characteristics as predictors of psychological distress among married individuals.

moderate, and severe intimate partner emotional abuse, respectively, among the participants. Table 4.3 further showed the patterns of quality of life, of which 9.5% reported poor psychological well-being.

However, 24.9%, 44.6%, and 21% of the participants reported fair, reasonable, and excellent quality of life, respectively.

Table 3: Summary of Correlation Matrix among the Variables in the Study

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Intimate Partner Emotional Abuse	46.67	13.91	1	-.26**	.41**	-.08	.19**	-.38**	-.05
2. Quality of Life	27.13	5.27		1	-.24**	.22**	-.46**	.07	.25**
3. Psychological Distress	27.48	8.31			1	.25**	.22**	-.24**	-.04
4. Family Type	-	-				1	-.34**	.11*	.05
5. Income Level	-	-					1	-.174**	-.19**
6. Sex	-	-						1	.04
7. Age	47.05	13.74							1

Note: ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$ $N = 380$.

The result in Table 4.4 showed the test of the relationship between variables. From the table, it was indicated that intimate partner emotional abuse had an inverse significant relationship with quality-of-life [$r(381) = -.26, p < .01$], and a positive significant relationship with psychological distress [$r(381) = .41, p < .01$]. Quality of life had a significant negative relationship with psychological distress [$r(381) = -.24, p < .01$].

The socio-demographic factors indicated a significant positive relationship between age and quality of life [$r(381) = .25, p < .01$], sex and intimate partner emotional abuse [$r(381) = -.38, p < .01$], and psychological distress [$r(381) = -.24, p < .01$]. Income level [$r(381) = .19, p < .01$], [$r(381) = .46, p < .01$]; [$r(381) = -.22, p < .01$]

had a significant relationship with intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life and psychological distress, respectively. Family type [$r(381) = .22, p < .01$], [$r(381) = .25, p < .01$] had a significant relationship with quality of life and psychological distress, respectively. Educational level [$r(381) = .33, p < .01$] and employment status [$r(381) = -.15, p < .01$] had significant relationship with quality of life. Other socio-demographic factors such as age, educational level, and employment status had no significant relationship with psychological distress [$r(381) = -.04, p > .05$], [$r(381) = -.02, p > .05$], [$r(381) = .06, p > .05$], respectively.

Akpunne, B. C., Chukwuma, F. A. & Ogunsemi, J. O. (2025)

Intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life and demographical characteristics as predictors of psychological distress among married individuals.

Structural Equation Modelling

The control for gender, income level and family type, include intimate partner emotional abuse and quality of life, aligned well with the data, robust χ^2 (N=381)=47.50 ($p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df=23.75$), CFI=0.971, TLI=0.901, RMSEA=0.06,

95% CI [0.05, 0.06], SRMR=0.047. Given the acceptable result of the model fit indices, the effects were modelled among the latent variables to test the study's hypotheses.

Table 4: Standardised Direct, Total and Squared Multiple Correlations (SMC) of the predictive influence of Intimate Partner Emotional Abuse and Quality of Life on Psychological Distress

					Bootstrap 95% CI		SMC
		β	SE	Z	LLCI	ULCI	
Intimate Partner Emotional Abuse <--> Psychological Distress	Total Effect	0.32	0.03	6.74	0.21	0.41	$R^2 = 0.33, p < .01$
	Direct Effect	0.32	0.03	6.74	0.21	0.41	
Quality of Life <--> Psychological Distress	Total Effect	-0.14	0.08	-2.77	-0.26	0.01	
	Direct Effect	-0.14	0.08	-2.77	-0.26	0.01	

CI, Confidence Interval; LLCI, Lower Limit Confidence Interval; ULCI, Upper Limit Confidence Interval

H1: There will be a direct influence of Intimate Partner Emotional Abuse on Psychological Distress among married individuals in Alimosho Local Government Area in Lagos State.

The results from the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) indicated that intimate partner emotional abuse had a significant positive direct effect on psychological distress. Specifically, intimate partner emotional abuse was found to be positively and independently associated with psychological distress ($\beta = 0.32$, $SE = 0.03$, $Z = 6.74$, $p < .01$, $95\% CI [0.21, 0.41]$). This suggests that higher levels of emotional abuse from a partner are associated with

increased psychological distress among the participants. Therefore, H1 was supported.

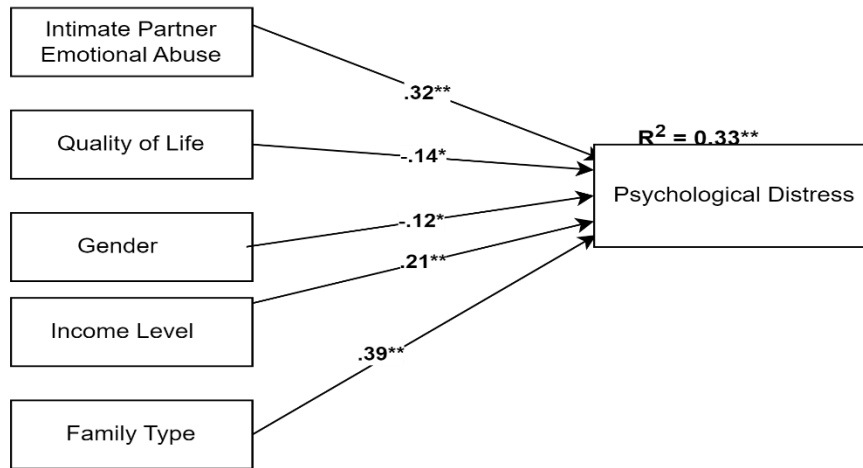
H2: There will be a direct influence of Quality of Life on Psychological Distress among married individuals in Alimosho Local Government Area in Lagos State.

The SEM results also revealed a significant negative direct relationship between quality of life and psychological distress. Quality of life negatively predicted psychological distress ($\beta = -0.14$, $SE = 0.08$, $Z = -2.77$, $p < .05$, $95\% CI [-0.26, 0.01]$). This indicates that participants with a higher quality of life reported lower levels of psychological distress. Therefore, H2 was supported.

Akpunne, B. C., Chukwuma, F. A. & Ogunsemi, J. O. (2025)

Intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life and demographical characteristics as predictors of psychological distress among married individuals.

Fig. 2 Standardised results of the SEM model. Covariate (Gender dummy coded – 0 = male, 1=female; Family type dummy coded – 0=monogamous, 1=polygamous) is represented in a rectangle. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.



H3: The joint influence of intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life, sex, income level and family type will significantly predict psychological distress among married individuals in Alimosho Local Government in Lagos State

The results of the SEM analysis are shown in Fig. 2. Included in the model, being female ($\beta = -0.12$, $SE = 0.75$, $Z = -2.68$, $p < 0.05$, 95% CI [-0.22, -0.04]); those in a lower income level ($\beta = -0.287$, $SE = 0.69$,

$Z = -4.17$, $p < 0.01$, 95% CI [-0.10, -0.31]), and individuals in polygamous family type ($\beta = 0.39$, $SE = 0.54$, $Z = 8.61$, $p < 0.01$, 95% CI [0.28, 0.49]) were significant predictors of psychological distress. In summary, it was noted that intimate emotional abuse and quality of life accounted for 33% of the variance in psychological distress ($R^2 = 0.33$, $p < .01$).

DISCUSSION

The present study assessed the predictive impact of intimate partner emotional abuse and quality of life on psychological distress, controlling for demographic variables (gender, income level and family type) among married individuals in Alimosho LGA of Lagos State, Nigeria. The findings from the study on intimate

partner emotional abuse, quality of life (QoL), and psychological distress among married individuals in Alimosho Metropolis reflect notable patterns that resonate with existing research. The prevalence of psychological distress and intimate partner emotional abuse, coupled with variations in QoL, aligns with the

Akpunne, B. C., Chukwuma, F. A. & Ogunsemi, J. O. (2025)

Intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life and demographical characteristics as predictors of psychological distress among married individuals.

conclusions drawn by Manalo et al. (2023) and Spencer et al. (2024), who highlighted that economic and emotional abuse significantly impacts the quality of life and psychological disorders among couples in their different studies. In this study, a substantial proportion of married individuals reported experiencing psychological distress and varying degrees of intimate partner emotional abuse, corroborating the studies of Okumu et al. (2022) and Asiimwe et al. (2023)'s assertion that emotional abuse detrimentally affects psychological well-being. Asiimwe et al. (2023) concluded that individuals in abusive homes and who are socioeconomically lower suffer from both sides of the indicators of mental well-being. It was opined by Asiimwe et al. (2023) that both marital satisfaction and socioeconomic stability improve one's quality of life and reduce psychological disorders.

The study's findings also corroborate the work of Adams and Johnson (2020), who reviewed psychological distress in intimate relationships and found that such distress often stems from relationship dynamics, including emotional abuse. The high levels of psychological distress observed in the Alimosho Metropolis sample are consistent

with their findings, indicating that intimate partner emotional abuse is a significant factor in psychological distress among married individuals. Furthermore, the significant variation in QoL across different levels of emotional abuse observed in this study aligns with Adams and Johnson's comprehensive review, highlighting the importance of relationship factors in shaping psychological outcomes.

Additionally, this study's results resonate with the work of Akinnawo et al. (2022), who explored the impact of emotional regulation difficulties on psychological distress among Nigerian youth. The observed levels of psychological distress and QoL among the Alimosho Metropolis participants reflect similar trends in emotional regulation and mental health challenges reported in their research. This consistency across studies emphasises the broader applicability of findings related to emotional abuse, psychological distress, and quality of life, reinforcing the need for targeted interventions and support systems for married individuals experiencing emotional abuse. These findings highlight the importance of integrating mental health support with relationship counselling to address both the symptoms and underlying causes of psychological distress.

Akpunne, B. C., Chukwuma, F. A. & Ogunsemi, J. O. (2025)

Intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life and demographical characteristics as predictors of psychological distress among married individuals.

The analysis of the second objective shows significant sex differences in the scores on intimate partners' emotional abuse, quality of life, and psychological distress among the married individuals considered in this study. Past studies attest to sex differences in intimate partner violence and emotional abuse (Mapayi et al., 2013; Karakurt & Silver, 2013; Abrahamsky et al., 2016; Sydra, 2020), and they all corroborate the findings of this study. For instance, Karakurt & Silver (2013) found emotional abuse in relational affairs to be predominant among males, while women were more subjected to physical abuse. However, Mapayi et al. (2013) found a significant correlation between women and physical and emotional abuse. The current study, however, found that married women were exposed to a higher level of intimate emotional abuse than their married male counterparts. The findings reveal that perceived quality of life (QoL) significantly differs among married individuals experiencing varying degrees of psychological distress in Alimosho, Lagos State. Other data indicate that males and females do not differ in quality of life (Oishi et al., 2004). However, the related research reported a slight difference in the quality of life among the study participants.

Many studies indicated that reports of quality of life are subjective (Watanabe et al., 2010; Salari et al., 2020; Rubio et al., 2014) and that it is based on individuals' subjective experience, situation, and condition of life (Comer et al., 2011). Most of the studies reviewed reported that individuals with higher psychological distress will report lower QoL, reflecting a strong inverse relationship between these variables (Manalo et al., 2023; Harms et al., 2019; Subramaniam et al., 2018).

The findings on the role of demographic factors—income, family type and gender—in shaping the psychological distress among married individuals reveal that these factors significantly influence both QoL and psychological outcomes. Specifically, higher-income people tend to report better QoL and lower psychological distress. Conversely, lower income, education levels, and unemployment are associated with poorer QoL and higher psychological distress. This finding resonates with the work of Benson and Williams (2019), who found that socioeconomic factors significantly impact relationship well-being and individual QoL. Their study supports that demographic factors are crucial in determining psychological health and overall life satisfaction.

Akpunne, B. C., Chukwuma, F. A. & Ogunsemi, J. O. (2025)

Intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life and demographical characteristics as predictors of psychological distress among married individuals.

The results corroborate the research of Clark and White (2019), who explored the link between urban contexts, demographic factors, and psychological distress. They found that socio-economic and demographic variables, such as income and education, are pivotal in shaping individuals' mental health and QOL. Our findings, which show significant impacts of these demographic factors on QOL and psychological distress, align with Clark and White's observations, reinforcing the importance of these factors in understanding mental health dynamics in urban settings.

Additionally, these findings align with the works of Thoits (2010), who discussed the significant findings and policy implications related to stress and health. Thoits emphasised that demographic factors like age and socioeconomic status significantly influence stress levels and health outcomes. This study's results, which demonstrated how age, income, education, and employment status affect QOL and psychological distress, underscore the relevance of these demographic factors in shaping mental health. This alignment highlights the need for targeted interventions that consider these demographic variables to improve QOL

and reduce psychological distress among married individuals effectively.

Conclusion

This study explored the predicted role of quality of life (QOL) and intimate partner emotional abuse on psychological distress among married individuals in Alimosho Metropolis. The findings demonstrate that quality of life and intimate partner emotional abuse significantly predict psychological distress, suggesting that higher QOL and lower intimate partner emotional abuse can mitigate the experience of psychological distress among married individuals. The results also revealed that gender, income level and family type are predictors of psychological distress, emphasising the roles of socio-demographical characteristics in the experience of psychological distress among married people.

Recommendations

The current study has certain limitations, which constrain the generalizability of the results to other populations of married individuals within the Nigerian context. Firstly, the sample size was small compared to the calculated sample size for the study, and a large amount of missing data prevented the researchers from reaching the calculated sample size. Also, the data were

Akpunne, B. C., Chukwuma, F. A. & Ogunsemi, J. O. (2025)

Intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life and demographical characteristics as predictors of psychological distress among married individuals.

obtained using a self-administered questionnaire, which may be susceptible to reporting bias. The study's cross-sectional technique made it difficult to determine the causative direction of the relationship between intimate partners' emotional abuse, quality of life and psychological distress. The relationship between these variables might have been well established in our findings if we had used a mixed methods technique. Future research should explore the specific QOL dimensions, such as economic stability, social support, access to healthcare and intimate partner emotional abuse, that most significantly influence

psychological distress among married individuals. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide insights into the long-term effects of QOL improvements on psychological well-being and the effectiveness of various support interventions over time. Investigating the impact of cultural and socio-economic factors on the interplay between emotional abuse, Qol, and psychological distress could further refine intervention strategies and policy recommendations tailored to diverse populations.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil

REFERENCES

- Aborode, A. T., Corriero, A. C., Mehmood, Q., Nawaz, A., Aayush, U., & Hasan, M. M. (2022). People living with mental disorders in Nigeria amidst COVID-19: Challenges, implications, and recommendations. *The International journal of health planning and management*, 37(3), 1191–1198. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hpm.3394>
- Abramsky, T., Devries, K. M., Michau, L., Nakuti, J., Musuya, T., Kyegombe, N., & Watts, C. (2016). The impact of SASA!, a community mobilisation intervention, on women's experiences of intimate partner violence: secondary findings from a cluster randomised trial in Kampala, Uganda. *Journal of epidemiology and community health*, 70(8), 818–825. <https://doi.org/10.1136/jech-2015-206665>
- Adams, R. H., & Johnson, M. (2020). "Psychological distress in Intimate Relationships: A Comprehensive Review." *Journal of Family Psychology*, 34(2), 167–178.
- Akinnawo, E. O., Akpunne, B. C., Akpunne, S. I., Bello, I. B., Onisile, D. F., & Akpunne, E. N. (2022). Psychometric properties of difficulties in Emotion Regulation

Akpunne, B. C., Chukwuma, F. A. & Ogunsemi, J. O. (2025)

Intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life and demographical characteristics as predictors of psychological distress among married individuals.

- Scale (DERS) on young Nigerian people. *Psychology*, 13(3), 361-374.
- Asiimwe, R., Nuwagaba-K, R. D., Dwanyen, L. and Kasujja, R. (2023). Sociocultural considerations of mental health care and help-seeking in Uganda, *SSM - Mental Health*, 4, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmmh.2023.100232>.
- Benson, L., & Williams, P. (2019). "Socio-Economic Factors and Relationship Wellbeing: A Longitudinal Analysis." *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 81(3), 589-604.
- Baillie A. J. (2005). Predictive gender and education bias in Kessler's Psychological Distress Scale (K10). *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 40, 743-748.
- Clark, S., & White, K. (2019). "Urban Contexts and Psychological distress: Exploring the Linkages." *Journal of Urban Health*, 96(4), 567-578.
- Comer, J. S., Blanco, C., Hasin, D. S., Liu, S. M., Grant, B. F., Turner, J. B., & Olfson, M. (2011). Health-related quality of life across the anxiety disorders: results from the National Epidemiologic Survey on alcohol and Related Conditions (NESARC). *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 72(1), 43-50. <https://doi.org/10.4088/JCP.09m05094blu>
- Cuijpers P, Smits N, Donker T, ten Have M, de Graaf R. (2009). Screening for mood and anxiety disorders with the five-item, the three-item, and the two-item mental health inventory. *Psychiatry Research*: 250-255. doi: 10.1016/j.psychres.2008.05.012.
- Follingstad DR, Coyne S, Gambone L. (2005). A representative measure of psychological aggression and its severity. *Violence and Victims*. 20(25-38).
- Garcia-Moreno C, Jansen HA, Ellsberg M, Heise L, Watts C. (2005). WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women. Geneva: World Health Organization. 204:1-8.
- Gureje O, Lasebikan VO, Ephraim-Oluwanuga O, Olley BO, Kola L. (2005). Community study of knowledge of and attitude to mental illness in Nigeria. *Brazil Journal of Psychiatry*. 186:436-441.
- Goldberg, D.P. and Blackwell, B. (1970) Psychiatric illness in general practice: A detailed study using a new method of case identification. *British Medical Journal*, 1, 439-443.
- Harms, C. A., Cohen, L., Pooley, J. A., Chambers, S. K., Galvão, D. A., & Newton, R. U. (2019). Quality of life and psychological distress in cancer survivors: The role of psycho-social resources for resilience. *Psycho-oncology*, 28(2), 271-277. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pon.4934>
- Helvik, A. S., Engedal, K., & Selbæk, G. (2013). Change in quality of life of medically hospitalized patients--a one-year follow-up study. *Aging & mental health*, 17(1), 66-76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2012.715137>
- Horwitz, A.V., (2007). Distinguishing distress from disorder as psychological outcomes of stressful social arrangements. *Health*. 11(3):273-289.
- Karakurt, G., & Silver, K. E. (2013). Emotional abuse in intimate relationships: the role of gender and age. *Violence and victims*, 28(5), 804-821. <https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.vv-d-12-00041>

Akpunne, B. C., Chukwuma, F. A. & Ogunsemi, J. O. (2025)

Intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life and demographical characteristics as predictors of psychological distress among married individuals.

- Jacobson, N. and Gottman, J. (1998). When men batter women: New insights into ending abusive relationships. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Manalo, M. F., Ng, S., Ozdemir, S., Malhotra, C., Finkelstein, E. A., Ong, K. D., & Teo, I. (2023). Quality of life and psychological distress of patients with advanced cancer in the Philippines. *Quality of life research : an international journal of quality of life aspects of treatment, care and rehabilitation*, 32(8), 2271–2279. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11136-023-03389-y>
- Mapayi, B., Makanjuola, R. O., Mosaku, S. K., Adewuya, O. A., Afolabi, O., Aloba, O. O., & Akinsulore, A. (2013). Impact of intimate partner violence on anxiety and depression amongst women in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. *Archives of women's mental health*, 16(1), 11–18. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00737-012-0307-x>
- Oishi, S., Diener, E., Napa Scollon, C., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2004). Cross-Situational Consistency of Affective Experiences Across Cultures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86(3), 460–472. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.86.3.460>
- Okumu, M., Orwenyo, E., Nyoni, T., Mengo, C., Steiner, J. J., & Tonui, B. C. (2022). Socioeconomic Factors and Patterns of Intimate Partner Violence among Ever-Married Women in Uganda: Pathways and Actions for Multicomponent Violence Prevention Strategies. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37(17-18), NP16397-NP16420. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605211021976>
- Osinde, M. O., Kaye, D. K., & Kakaire, O. (2011). Intimate partner violence among women with HIV infection in rural Uganda: critical implications for policy and practice. *BMC women's health*, 11, 50. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6874-11-50>
- Rubio, J. M., Olfson, M., Pérez-Fuentes, G., Garcia-Toro, M., Wang, S., & Blanco, C. (2014). Effect of first episode axis I disorders on quality of life. *The Journal of nervous and mental disease*, 202(4), 271–274. <https://doi.org/10.1097/NMD.000000000000117>
- Salari N., Hosseinian-Far A., Jalali R., Vaisi-Raygani A., Rasoulpoor S., Mohammadi M., Rasoulpoor S., Khaledi-Paveh B. (2020). Prevalence of stress, anxiety, depression among the general population during the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Global Health*. 16:57. doi: 10.1186/s12992-020-00589-w
- Sachser, C., Olaru, G., Pfeiffer, E., Brähler, E., Clemens, V., Rassenhofer, M., ... & Fegert, J. M. (2021). The immediate impact of lockdown measures on mental health and couples' relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic-results of a representative population survey in Germany. *Social science & medicine*, 278, 113954.
- Schumacher J. A. and Leonard, K. E. (2005). Husbands' and wives' marital adjustment, verbal aggression, and physical aggression in early marriage. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*. 73:28–37.
- Schmidt, S., Mühlan, H., & Power, M. (2006). The EUROHIS-QOL 8-item index: psychometric results of a cross-cultural field study. *European Journal of Public Health*,

Akpunne, B. C., Chukwuma, F. A. & Ogunsemi, J. O. (2025)

Intimate partner emotional abuse, quality of life and demographical characteristics as predictors of psychological distress among married individuals.

16(4), 420–428.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/cki155>

- Spencer, C. M., Keilholtz, B. M., Palmer, M., & Vail, S. L. (2024). Mental and Physical Health Correlates for Emotional Intimate Partner Violence Perpetration and Victimization: A Meta-Analysis. *Trauma, violence & Abuse*, 25(1), 41–53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838021137686>
- Thoits, P. A. (2010). "Stress and Health: Major Findings and Policy Implications." *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour*, 51(Suppl), S41-S53.
- Tran, N. T., Franzen, J., Jermann, F., Rudaz, S., Bondolfi, G., & Ghisletta, P. (2022). Psychological distress and well-being among students of health disciplines in Geneva, Switzerland: The importance of academic satisfaction in the context of academic year-end and COVID-19 stress on their learning experience. *PloS one*, 17(4), e0266612. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0266612>
- Viertiö, S., Kiviruuu, O., Piirtola, M., Kaprio, J., Korhonen, T., Marttunen, M., & Suvisaari, J. (2021). Factors contributing to psychological distress in the working population, with a
- Yamane, T. (1967) *Statistics: An Introductory Analysis*. 2nd Edition, Harper and Row, New York.

abuse, 25(1),

41–53.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838021137686>

- Subramaniam, S., Kong, Y. C., Chinna, K., Kimman, M., Ho, Y. Z., Saat, N., Malik, R. A., Taib, N. A., Abdullah, M. M., Lim, G. C., Tamin, N. I., Woo, Y. L., Chang, K. M., Goh, P. P., Yip, C. H., & Bhoo-Pathy, N. (2018). special reference to gender difference. *BMC public health*, 21(1), 611. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-10560-y>
- Watanabe N, Furukawa TA, Chen J, Kinoshita Y, Nakano Y, Ogawa S, et al. (2010). Change in quality of life and their predictors in the long-term follow-up after group cognitive behavioral therapy for social anxiety disorder: a prospective cohort study. *Psychiatry*. 0:81.
- World Health Organization (WHO) (2019). <https://www.who.int/psychological-disorders/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>
- World Health Organization. (2012). *"Understanding and Addressing Violence Against Women: Intimate Partner Violence."* Geneva: World Health Organization.