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Emotional Deprivation and Alcohol Abuse as Predictors of Dating Violence Among Young Adults in Lagos State

Quadri Ayomide Lawal^{1*} & Paul Oluwaseyi Animashaun¹

¹ Lagos State University, P. M. B. 0001, Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria.

* Author's ORCID ID; <https://Orcid.Org/0009-0009-9947-4313>; Email: Quadrilawal061@Gmail.com

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Dating violence is a significant public health concern, particularly among youths, where emotional and behavioural factors may contribute to the escalation of such behaviours. This cross-sectional study investigates the influence of emotional regulation and alcohol abuse as well as sex on dating violence among young adults in Lagos State, using a sample of 486 participants. It was hypothesized that young adults who are male will be more likely to engage in dating violence than females and emotional deprivation and alcohol abuse will have an independent and joint influence on dating violence among young adults. The results revealed a significant influence of sex on dating violence ($t = 3.197$; $df (485)$; $p < .05$). Furthermore, male young adults were more likely to engage in dating violence than their counterparts. Additionally, alcohol abuse was found to have both independent and joint predictive effects with emotional deprivation on dating violence ($R^2 = .310$, $F (2,484) = 108.49$, $p < .05$). The study suggested that parents and caregivers should consciously pay attention to both the physical and emotional needs of children. The study also advocates for comprehensive programs by governmental and non-governmental organizations to prevent and minimize alcohol abuse among young adults in Lagos state and for those experiencing dating violence, the study encourages seeking help and speaking out, emphasizing that victims are not to blame and that support is available. Additionally, perpetrators of dating violence are encouraged to seek help to improve their behaviour.

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INTRODUCTION

Dating violence has long-standing roots in human love interactions. Dating violence, a subcategory of general violence, is also known as relationship abuse, intimate partner violence (IPV), relationship violence, dating abuse, and domestic violence. Dating violence refers to a variety of violent acts committed by individuals in romantic relationships, regardless of whether they are heterosexual, homosexual, or disabled. This can happen in short-term, long-term, casual, or serious relationships, online, in-person, or long-distance relationships. Carlos et al. (2017) defined dating violence as a type of violence in a relationship that involves a single or repeated act, which could be committed by one or both parties using violence as coercion or harassment in order to obtain sovereignty or power. According to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2006), dating violence is defined as the behaviours against a partner or ex-partner such as physical violence (slapping, punching, and kicking, etc.), psychological or emotional violence (insulting, controlling, threatening, etc.), sexual violence (sexual coercion, sexual assault, rape, etc.), financial or economic violence, and cyber-violence (monitoring conversations and movements, sending unwanted sexually explicit photos), etc.; these behaviours encompass verbal, sexual, emotional, economic and physical forms of violence within the romantic relationship, as well as actions that disrupt or impose social limitations on each other's lives. Some scholars have claimed that the majority of victims of dating violence are women, with fewer victims being men. National crime surveys, such as the British Crime Survey, regularly show that

women constitute the majority of abuse survivors, but they can also be perpetrators (Klencakova et al., 2021). In contrast, Kelly and Johnson (2008) found that women are more violent than men in heterosexual relationships. In terms of the severity of potential injuries, emotional trauma, and fear, sexual and dating violence committed by boys and men has a greater negative impact on its victims than sexual and dating violence committed by girls and women (Archer, 2000; World Health Organisation, 2013; Wekerle, 1998). Previous research in this field found that dating violence is most prevalent among young individuals, with over 65% of first victimisation occurring between the ages of 13 and 19, with peak perpetration ages ranging from 16 to 17 years (Arqimandriti et al., 2018; Bonomi et al., 2012).

Emotional deprivation stands out as a significant factor closely associated with dating violence, this encompasses the profound absence of emotional responsiveness or attention provided to an individual, often by someone they trust or depend on. Emotional deprivation typically originates in early childhood as a response to a lack of emotional nurturing and the neglect of a child's emotional needs. When these needs go unmet, it can evoke feelings of invisibility, neglect, and insignificance in the child. In essence, they may perceive themselves as inconsequential and irrelevant (Paglia, 2021). This form of deprivation during childhood can manifest in adulthood causing an emotionally deprived adult to feel insecure when asking for emotional support, have a negative impact on his or her self-esteem, discouraging them from expressing how they really feel because they

don't want to be seen as weak and conviction of them not getting what they asked for, just makes them feel weaker. People with emotional deprivation can even build a very high wall around them. Emotional deprivation can make an individual feel scared when it comes to getting close to people, which can have an impact on their relationships outside of their households, such as romantic relationships, due to the fear of being rejected, abused, or deceived by their significant others (Gillette, 2022).

According to Victor and Adams (1953), alcohol is a central nervous system depressant that impairs brain function. Alcohol myopia theory, a cognitive-physiological concept, states that drinking causes people to focus solely on their immediate surroundings and impairs their ability to comprehend information (Steele & Josephs, 1988). As a result, the loss in brain functioning caused by alcohol consumption affects decision-making. Alcohol-impaired individuals may not consider the consequences of acting aggressively towards a partner, increasing the likelihood of dating violence, as there are positive connections between alcohol usage and dating violence (e.g., Lipsky et al., 2005; Low et al., 2017). According to alcohol abuse investigations, about four out of ten victims of intimate partner violence indicated that their spouse was under the influence of alcohol or drugs during an incident of relationship abuse (Catalano, 2007). Based on this fact, alcohol intake plays a crucial role in the context of dating violence. Research indicates that increased alcohol consumption is associated with a higher likelihood of perpetrating dating violence, with a notably stronger correlation observed among men (Thompson & Kingree, 2006).

Social learning theory developed by Bandura (1977) explains that dating violence can also be learnt like any other behaviour through observation and imitation of the behaviours of other people and the consequences of their behaviours which could be rewarded or punishment, the theory suggests

dating violent and other forms of domestic violent are often learned through observing parental and peer relationships during childhood. This theory not only elucidates dating violence but also extends to alcohol abuse, particularly through the concept of modelling, in the sense that alcohol abuse can be linked to individuals' observations of others engaging in these behaviours and the perceived positive outcomes associated with it. Take for instance, when an individual consistently observes a parent drinking alcohol to relax and improve their mood, they may come to associate drinking with these positive effects and adopt similar behavioural patterns.

Pilkington et al. (2021) did a meta-analysis of nine research and discovered that intimate partner violence victimization is modestly linked with the domains of disconnection and rejection, as well as decreased autonomy. A minor relationship was discovered with the domain of other-directedness. In a study by Atmaca and Gençöz (2016), 222 married women from four central Turkish cities were recruited to examine the relationship between child abuse, neglect, and intimate partner violence through the lens of schema theory. The results indicated that emotional deprivation experienced during childhood significantly increases the risk of exposure to dating violence later in life. Additionally, research by Cafferky et al. (2018) found that alcohol abuse is significantly associated, to a small to moderate degree, with the perpetration of physical dating violence by both men and women. Research indicates that the association between alcohol abuse and dating violence perpetration is stronger in men than in women (Cafferky et al., 2018). Specifically, heavy alcohol abuse among men, such as problem drinking and dependence, is more strongly linked to the perpetration of dating violence than moderate alcohol use (Cafferky et al., 2018; Foran & O'Leary, 2008).

The main objectives are to;

- Investigate the extent to which Sex Influences dating violence among young adults in Lagos state.
- Investigate the extent to which emotional deprivation and alcohol abuse jointly predict dating violence among young adults in Lagos state.

The following hypotheses were formulated to test the identified aims and objectives of this current study.

- Young adults who are male will be more likely to engage in dating violence than female young adults in Lagos state.
- Emotional deprivation and alcohol abuse will have an independent and joint influence on dating violence among young adults in Lagos state.

Operational Definition of Terms

Dating violence: Dating violence involves Detachment, Humiliation, coercion, physical and Sexual abuse as measured by the Dating Violence Questionnaire-R developed by Rodríguez-Díaz et al. (2017).

Emotional deprivation: Emotional deprivation is defined as the expectation that one's desire for a normal degree of emotional support will not be adequately met by others. This is as measured by Young Schema Questionnaire-L3 (Young et al., 2003).

Alcohol abuse: Alcohol abuse is the unhealthy or persistent drinking behaviour, loss of control over the quantity used ranging from binge drinking and alcohol dependence to addiction resulting in a physical withdrawal reaction when alcohol use is abruptly discontinued. This is as measured by Attitudes Towards Alcohol developed by Francalanci et al. (2011).

Young adults: These consist of individuals within the age range of 18 -35.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design so as to examine the different variables of interest at once. For primary data, structured questionnaires were used for data collection, and they lasted for about a month. The structured questionnaire was in pencil and paper format as well as in google form. In the study, emotional deprivation, drug abuse and demographic variables (Sex) served as independent variables, while dating violence served as the dependent variable. This study was carried out in Lagos state.

Study Population and Location

The study population included young adults between the ages of 18-35 years of age in Lagos state. Due to financial constraints limiting the ability to reach a larger sample, a total of 500 young adults were initially sampled, but only four hundred and eighty-seven (487) properly filled out the questionnaire. The study employed the use of a convenient sampling technique in the selection of the two tertiary schools namely; Lagos State University, Ojo and the University of Lagos, Akoka and a recreational centre namely Ikeja City Mall, across two (2) divisions of Lagos State, Nigeria. Convenience sampling was used in selecting the participants from the study areas (i.e., from Lagos State University, University of Lagos, Ikeja City Mall).

Measures

The data was collected using a standardised questionnaire which was divided into three sections.

Demographic variables: This included sex, age, and religion, relationship status.

Dating violence: This was measured using the Dating Violence Questionnaire-R developed by Rodríguez-Díaz et al. (2017) which consists of 20 items. This is a self-report questionnaire that requires participants to respond to each question on

a 4-Likert point scale (0-never to 4-all the time). It is five dimensions (Detachment, Humiliation, Coercion, Physical and Sexual violence) of abuse in affective interpersonal relationships of adolescents and youths. The internal consistency of the dimensions is as follows; Detachment=.68, Humiliation=.72, Sexual=.74, Coercion=.64, physical=.75 and the total internal consistency is .84.

Emotional deprivation: This was measured using the Young Schema Questionnaire-L3 by Young and Brown (2003) which consists of 17 items. This is a self-report questionnaire that requires participants to respond to each question on a 6-likert point scale (1 - completely untrue of me to 6 - describes me perfectly). It has been found to have good internal consistency in both clinical and nonclinical participants with internal consistency of 0.896 and 0.895 respectively.

Alcohol abuse: This was measured using the Attitudes Towards Alcohol developed by Francalanci et al. (2011) which consists of 15 items. This is a self-report questionnaire that requires participants to respond to each question on a 5-likert point scale (1- absolutely false to 5-absolutely true). It is distributed between three domains: Social ease, Unease and Economic Aspects. The internal consistency of the domains is Social ease=0.91,

Unease=0.69, and Economic aspects=0.84 The total internal consistency of the scale is 0.91.

Data Collection Procedure

The researchers met with the young adults at the University of Lagos State, Lagos State University, and Ikeja City Mall. At each setting, the researcher introduced themselves to the participants established rapport and sought their consent before administering the questionnaire. The researchers also ensured confidentiality and informed the participants about their right to withdraw from the study. Also, the participants were also notified that it was a voluntary study, i.e. the participants had a right to decide whether they wanted to participate in the study or not, and no incentives would be given.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25. Descriptive statistics such as the mean (standard deviation) and frequency (percentages) depicted the socio-demographic variables and scores on the study measures. Hypothesis 1 was tested using an independent t-test, and Hypothesis 2 was tested using multiple linear regression. All statistical analyses were 1-tailed, and the level of statistical significance was set at a p-value less than 0.05.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics

Demographic variables	N	Percent	Mean	SD
Sex				
Male	218	44.8		
Female	269	55.2		
Age	487		23.38	3.93
Religion				
Christianity	285	58.5		
Islam	162	33.3		
Others	40	8.2		
Been in a relationship				
Yes	487	100		
Currently in a relationship				
Yes	194	39.8		
No	293	60.2		

The participants consisted of a total of 487 young adults made up of 218 males (44.8%) and 269 females (55.2%). The age range of the total participants is 18-35, with a mean age of 23.38 and a standard deviation of 3.98. Christian participants were two hundred and eighty-five (285) (58.5%), Muslim participants were one hundred and sixty-two (162) (33.3%) and others were forty (40) (8.2%). Participants who had been in a relationship were four-hundred and seventy-seven (477) (100%). At the time the data was collected, those

currently in a relationship were one hundred and ninety-four (194) (39.8%) and participants not currently in a relationship were two hundred and ninety-three (293) (60.2%).

Hypothesis 1: Young adults who are male are more likely to engage in dating violence than female young adults in Lagos state. This hypothesis was tested using an independent t-test, and the result is presented in the table below;

Table 1: Summary table of Independent t-test showing the influence of Sex on Dating violence among young adults in Lagos state.

	Sex	N	Mean	Std	df	t-value	Sig
Dating violence	Male	218	16.11	19.30	485	3.197	.001
	Female	269	11.02	15.78			

The result from the table above shows that there is a significant influence of sex on dating violence among young adults in Lagos state. ($t = 3.197$; $df (485)$; $P < .05$). This indicates that there is a statistical difference in the observed dating violence scores between male and female young adults in Lagos state who participated in this study. Also, from the table, it could also be observed that male young adults (**Mean= 16.11**) were more likely to

engage in dating violence than female young adults (**Mean= 11.02**) in Lagos state. This accepts the stated hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: Emotional deprivation and alcohol abuse will have an independent and joint influence on dating violence among young adults in Lagos state. This hypothesis was tested using multiple regression, and the result is presented below:

Table 2: Summary table of Multiple Regression showing the joint and independent influence of emotional deprivation and alcohol abuse on dating violence.

Predictors	R	R ²	F	Sig	β	T	Sig
Model	.556	.310	108.497	.000			
Emotional Deprivation					.085	2.300	.022
Alcohol abuse					.587	11.565	.000

The result in the table showed that emotional deprivation and alcohol abuse jointly predict dating violence ($R^2 = .310$, $F (2, 484) = 108.497$, $P < .05$). It could also be observed that emotional deprivation and alcohol abuse accounted for 31% of the changes observed in dating violence among young adults in Lagos state. This means that 31% of the variance observed in dating violence among young adults in Lagos state was attributed to the predictor variables (emotional deprivation and alcohol abuse).

Additionally, it could be observed that emotional deprivation ($\beta = .085$, $t = 2.300$, $p < .05$) was a significant independent predictor of dating violence, it could also be observed that alcohol abuse ($\beta = .587$, $t = 11.565$, $p < .05$) was also a significant independent predictor of perceived body image. The stated hypothesis is thereby accepted.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that sex influences dating violence. These results further showed that male young adults were more likely to engage in dating violence than female young adults. The finding is consistent with the study carried out by Yildirim-Hamurcu and Terzioglu (2023) among Turkish students. The findings of this study showed that men supported dating violence in all its forms more than women did. This result is also consistent with the research by Klencakova et al. (2021), which highlights that women are more frequently the victims of abuse in intimate relationships than men, although they can also be perpetrators. However, this result also stands in partial contrast to studies like that of Kelly and Johnson (2008), which suggest that women can be more violent than men in heterosexual relationships. This discrepancy could be due to contextual factors, which cultural differences, social norms, as their research was carried out in the United States of America. It is also possible that different types of violence (e.g., physical, emotional, psychological) are perpetrated differently by men and women, which could have accounted for the variations in findings across studies. Male predominance in dating violence can be explained by a few factors, which include the traditional gender roles which often socialize men to assert dominance and control, particularly in romantic relationships. This form of gender role ascribed to the male sex encourages aggressive behaviours as a means of maintaining power, which could lead to a higher propensity for violence when they perceive their authority is challenged or when they face emotional conflicts.

The result of the second hypothesis also shows that emotional deprivation and alcohol abuse jointly predict dating violence among young adults in Lagos state. Emotional deprivation and alcohol abuse accounted for 31% of the changes observed in dating violence among young adults in Lagos state. Furthermore, emotional deprivation and alcohol abuse were also independent predictors of

dating violence. This result is in line with the findings of Atmaca and Gençöz (2016), who in their study demonstrated a link between childhood emotional deprivation and later exposure to intimate partner violence. Emotional deprivation during formative years may impair an individual's ability to form secure attachments and healthy relationships, making them more vulnerable to abusive dynamics in adulthood. The result that emotional deprivation is a significant predictor of dating violence could also be explained using the "The Schema Theory", which posits that early maladaptive schemas such as those formed by emotional deprivation can lead to dysfunctional relationship patterns (Young et al., 2003), which can include susceptibility to dating violence. The result on alcohol abuse also being a significant predictor of dating violence is in line with the result of previous research, such as those by Cafferky et al. (2018) and Foran and O'Leary (2008), which indicated that alcohol abuse, particularly heavy drinking, significantly increases the risk of violent behaviour in intimate relationships. This is because the disinhibitory effects of alcohol exacerbate aggressive tendencies, leading to an increased likelihood of violence. This supports the statistic cited by Catalano (2007) which reveals that four in ten victims of intimate partner violence reported that their partner was under the influence of alcohol.

Additionally, the findings have significant implications for intervention and prevention strategies. The study reflects the need for parents and caregivers to be attentive not only to their children's physical needs but also to their emotional needs as the emotional relationships children build with their parent or caregiver have a profound impact on their future relationships with others, in the sense that adequate emotional care from parents can foster healthy bonds and help children recognize unhealthy relationships and boundaries. The result of the study also advocates for a comprehensive program by governmental organizations (such as NDLEA etc.) and non-governmental organizations (such as PADDI etc.) to

prevent and minimize alcohol abuse among young adults in Lagos state. For young adults experiencing dating violence, the study encourages seeking help and speaking out, as it is important for victims to understand that they are not to blame and that support is available. Not only that, perpetrators of dating violence are encouraged to seek help to improve their behaviour and contribute positively to society and organizations such as the Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA), Hands Off Initiative, and Mirabel Center are recommended to provide support and information to both victims and perpetrators of dating violence.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to examine the predictive factors contributing to dating violence among young adults in Lagos state. Based on the findings made in this study, the researcher was able to draw the following conclusions from the research objectives; the study revealed that emotional deprivation and alcohol abuse are predictive factors of dating violence, and the result showed that there is a joint influence of emotional deprivation, and alcohol abuse on dating violence. The study also provided evidence that sex has a significant influence on dating violence.

LIMITATIONS

This study is not without its limits, it is limited in terms of the scope and variables of the study. Another limitation of the study is that participants were not randomly selected and, therefore, not representative of the Lagos state population. Therefore, future studies should be carried out using a larger sample size as well as a randomly selected participant. Additionally, Future studies could look into other factors (such as emotional dependency, peer influence, family dynamics etc.) contributing to dating violence.

Data Availability Status

Data are available on request due to privacy and other restrictions. The data that supports the

findings are available on request from the corresponding Author (Lawal Quadri Ayomide).

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Conflict of Interest

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author affirms that there are no conflicts of interest.

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