

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE, ROLE-OVERLOAD AND SUPPORT NETWORKS AMONG YOUNG MARRIED FEMALE TEACHERS IN NIGERIA: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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Abstract

Intimate partner violence (IPV) and role overload remain global issues that harm female teachers' mental health and hinder their ability to work effectively. This study examined the lived experiences of IPV, role overload, and support networks among married female teachers in Nigeria. It is an interpretive phenomenological study that involved in-depth interviews with 20 young married female teachers aged 20-45. Participants were selected from both private and public secondary schools across Kwara State, Nigeria, using a snowball sampling technique. Data were analyzed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Results identified four main forms of IPV: physical abuse, emotional violence, forceful control, financial exploitation, and sexual abuse. Role overload included family-work conflict, time-schedule constraints, energy exhaustion, and culture-based overloads. These young female teachers used religion-based support, restraint and compliance support, strong personal mental health support, and unconventional support to manage the negative effects of IPV and role overload. Based on these findings, it is recommended that a religious and cultural institutional policy framework be developed specifically for female teachers in Nigeria.

Keywords: Intimate partner violence (IPV), role-overload, support networks, young female teachers, Nigeria

Introduction

Marriage appears to be a relationship founded on the desire for pleasure and life satisfaction. It requires a meaningful connection based on mutual understanding and unconditional devotion (Girgis et al., 2020), as well as an agreement to live together for an extended period (Sadeghian et al., 2025). Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and role overload (RO) among employed women are stressors that negatively affect women's mental health. Young married female teachers in Nigeria often feel compelled to juggle domestic duties, in-laws' demands, other responsibilities, and career obligations daily, viewing these as core duties. The inability to manage these role overloads effectively may trigger IPV, especially among young married female teachers in Nigeria. Approximately 30% of women worldwide have been reported to experience IPV (WHO, 2021); this equates to 840 million women facing violence, including sexual violence (WHO, 2025). Furthermore, in 2019, 47% of women died from intimate partner violence, compared to only 6% of men (Cotter, 2021). Additionally, 83.2% of women reported experiencing moderate to high role overload, and a significant 72.9% showed symptoms of moderate to severe depression resulting from role overload (Alnazly et al., 2023).

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) has been defined as harmful behaviours toward a sexual partner that can lead to physical, sexual, and psychological pain (Olatunde, 2025); controlling

behaviours, emotional abuse, domestic violence (World Health Organization, 2012); neglect and financial abuse (University of Manitoba, 2024). Young women, including teachers, often experience IPV as they juggle their responsibilities to maintain their marriages. Between 15-24 years old, 19-66% of young women report experiencing various forms of IPV, such as unwanted first sex, in-laws' cruelty, constant arguments, a partner's excessive alcohol use, and overbearing behaviour (Stöckl et al., 2014); being slapped, beaten, kicked, pushed, choked and hit with objects, threatened with dangerous weapons homelessness, health concerns, obesity, impairment, poor partner's support (Gomes et al., 2018; Guedes et al., 2015; Lundy & Grossman, 2015; Sormanti & Shibusawa, 2008; Sood et al., 2016). Young women face IPV at a rate 9.5% higher than older women, which, in some cases, leads to pregnancy termination (Ler et al., 2020).

Bonilla-Algovia and Rivas-Rivero (2021) investigated Intimate partner violence against women who were trainee teachers using a cross-sectional design. 2395 trainee teachers were purposively selected for the study. The study revealed that bias against female employed teachers varies from one country to another, but women were revealed to be more prone to intimate partner violence. This finding further supports the long-standing cultural belief system in Nigeria that sees women as inferior to men (Akinduyo, 2026). Many Nigerian traditional dictates place women as the last-fiddle, relegated to the kitchen, full-time housewife, caregiver, mistress, housekeeper, domestic staff, and stay-at-home staff. Nigerian women to date are vulnerable to prejudice, discrimination, and different forms of exploitation due to their biological make-up and imperious cultural beliefs triggered by male-dominated societies, contradicting the Sustainable Development Goals for gender equality between males and females (Aina-Pelemo, 2023).

Despite the negative effects of IPV, women are expected to concurrently meet up with their social roles, family demands, employment, emotional needs, and extended family obligations. All these may lead to role overload among employed teachers in Kwara State. Role overload has been described as a situation in which an individual's strengths, time, enthusiasm, and proficiency fall short of meeting job requirements (Huang et al., 2022). This eventually results in job burnout (Wedasmara et al., 2026; Xu & Wang, 2023); anxiety and fatigue (Liaba et al., 2025); health complications among low-ranking workers (Huang et al., 2022); job strain (Zhao et al., 2022); poor job satisfaction, work-family conflict (Akman & Kodalak, 2025); decreased daily life performance, impoverished social life (Arora, 2025); absenteeism from work and poor job performance (Kinebar et al., 2023); poor psychological well-being and low quality of life (Alnazly et al., 2023). All these negate the positive effect of performance on organizational growth and on employees' assessment, promotion, and benefits (Tang & Vandenberghe, 2021). Ma et al. (2025) examined work-family conflict, overwork, and mental health of female employees using a quantitative design to select 393 participants. Results revealed a high association of role overload with family-work conflict, leading to psychological concerns and emotional strain among employed women. It is crystal-clear that employed teachers may have

to grapple with balancing their careers with family duties and their personal lives. To balance all these, employed young female teachers will have to sacrifice their pleasure, leisure, workplace expectations, resources, time, sleep, personal demands, luxury, social activities, and mental health to douse rising tensions of conflicting priorities.

For young married female teachers in Nigeria, support networks are crucial for coping with the challenges of intimate partner violence and role overload, helping to maintain stable mental health and effective job performance. Support networks are efforts initiated by individuals to handle internal and external stressors that threaten their emotional well-being (Lazarus, 2013). According to Wachter et al. (2020), a strong support network, in turn, leads to better occupational outcomes and higher job satisfaction. Support networks can lessen the effects of difficult circumstances on an individual's well-being (Mango et al., 2017). It has been observed that developing effective support networks to buffer the negative impacts of intimate partner violence and role overload can directly and indirectly help sustain healthy outcomes among young employed teachers. Sere et al. (2021) studied how women cope with experiences of intimate partner violence using a longitudinal design. The study found that women seek help, use emotional regulation strategies, and avoid problems and distractions to cope with intimate partner violence. Additionally, Mansa (2020) reported that physical separation, defiance, and substance and alcohol abuse are some of the mechanisms women use to cope with these stressors. Family and organizational support (Gupta & Srivastava, 2021); resilience as a protective factor (Kimura et al., 2018); hiring house-help, sharing concerns with friends, and seeking help from family members (Akanji et al., 2020); family role re-adjustment and scaling back (Higgins et al., 2010); are strategies employed by career women, including young female teachers to disconnect from the actuality of stress, thwacking their psychological well-being negatively.

Statement of the Problem

As observed, young married female teachers in Nigeria, especially in Ondo State occupy multiple and often competing roles as educators, wives, mothers, caregivers, and contributors to household income. These intersecting responsibilities frequently expose them to significant role-overload, which can adversely affect their physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. At the same time, many women experience intimate partner violence (IPV), a pervasive public health and human rights issue that continues to undermine their health, safety, and quality of life. Despite growing awareness of IPV globally and within Nigeria, its interaction with role-overload and the availability and effectiveness of support networks among young married female teachers remain insufficiently understood.

Existing studies on intimate partner violence in Nigeria have predominantly employed quantitative approaches, focusing on prevalence, risk factors, and health consequences among women in the general population. Similarly, research on role-overload has largely examined occupational stress, work-life balance, and burnout among teachers without adequately considering how experiences of IPV may intensify these challenges. Furthermore, although

formal and informal support networks including family members, friends, colleagues, religious institutions, and community organizations are recognised as important resources for women experiencing violence and stress, there is limited empirical evidence on how young married female teachers perceive, access, and utilize these support systems within the socio-cultural context of Nigeria.

The unique experiences of young married female teachers warrant specific attention because they operate within professional environments that demand high levels of emotional labour and productivity, while simultaneously navigating cultural expectations surrounding marriage, family responsibilities, and gender roles. These expectations may discourage disclosure of abuse, normalize excessive caregiving responsibilities, or limit help-seeking behaviours, thereby compounding the effects of intimate partner violence and role-overload. Consequently, many women may experience prolonged psychological distress, reduced occupational performance, diminished well-being, and adverse family outcomes.

More importantly, there is a paucity of phenomenological research that captures the lived experiences of young married female teachers at the intersection of intimate partner violence, role-overload, and support networks. Quantitative findings alone cannot adequately illuminate the meanings these women attach to their experiences, the coping strategies they employ, or the contextual factors that shape their decisions to seek or avoid support. Without such in-depth understanding, interventions, workplace policies, counselling services, and community-based support programmes may fail to address their specific needs and lived realities.

Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by exploring the lived experiences of young married female teachers in Nigeria regarding intimate partner violence, role-overload, and support networks. Through a phenomenological approach, the study aims to generate rich, contextually grounded insights that can inform policy development, educational workplace practices, mental health interventions, and support services designed to promote the well-being, safety, and resilience of married female teachers in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory gives a practical understanding that women experiencing intimate partner violence are victims of socially established and culturally recycled norms that promote male dominance and authority over women. Bhandari (2024) affirmed that the female gender has been linked with all sorts of victimisation and oppression, hence the need to advocate for gender equality in different societies. Feminist theory changed a lot about female gender roles, showing gender disparity and performances dictated by the cultural norms women belong to (Adhikari, 2024). Feminist theory further explains why young women may be victims of role overload, as women are expected to balance family and work duties perfectly well, with little or no support from their husbands. Due to the cultural expectations and gender disparity, women are subject to many untold hardships, trauma, economic vulnerability, social difficulties, and mental concerns. Therefore, Hooks (2004) reported that women always found means of adapting to their challenges rather than escalating their challenges. They may endure, use silence, and seek help as it is applicable to them in different cultural settings.

Research Questions

In the Nigerian context, two research questions guided this study.

- 1) What are the influences of intimate partner violence and role overload on young female teachers?
- 2) What are the support networks employed by young female teachers?

Methodology

This qualitative study employed an interpretive phenomenological design. Apart from being participant-focused, this design was also considered suitable for this study because it allows the participants express narration of their personal stories and/or experiences about a particular circumstance (Alase, 2017); adapting numerous beliefs about their lived experiences (Sefotho, 2018). Explicitly, this study permitted the researcher to understand the real-life experiences of young married female teachers experiencing intimate partner violence and role-overload, with an understanding of how to cope with these challenges. Snowballing sampling technique to select twenty (20) young married female teachers from Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria. Ethically, informed consent was used to protect all information of the participants who voluntarily participated in the study. Also, participants were assured of the confidentiality and protection of all information supplied by the respondents. In appreciation for their voluntary participation, each participant was given one thousand naira (#1000) worth of airtime. A semi-structured interview was conducted to collect comprehensive information from the participants. A semi-structured interview helps to obtain complete information about the purpose of the study from the participants (Ruslin et al., 2022). Data analysis was done following the steps recommended by Noon (2018) to analyse the data in the following order: 1) Reading and note making 2) Noting emergent themes 3) Connecting emergent themes 4) Producing a table of themes 5) Continuing to the next case, 6) Final table, 7) Report writing

Results

A. Main emerging themes from Intimate Partner Violence

Emerging Theme 1: Physical Assault

Hajia & Fatima (Pseudonyms): At any slight misunderstanding, my husband has turned me into his punching bag. He would give me hot slaps, punch me, and hold my neck tight.

Andie, Bose & Themba (pseudonyms): My spouse hated me after giving birth to four children. He usually beat me with a can, a belt, and any available object at his disposal. Especially when meals were not prepared on time for him.

Lantem & Hymn (Pseudonyms): Gasping..... My husband is a beast. I have lost three (3) pregnancies prematurely to his beatings. I spent more than two (2) days in the hospital when I had a miscarriage due to the pushing and kicking I got from my husband after an argument.

Pomoi & Lei (Pseudonyms): Sigh..... My husband is a jealous type; anytime I speak to a man on the phone, even if the man is a co-worker. Also, he tells lies about me almost every time. But I am enduring because of my children.

Emerging Theme 2: Emotional Ill-treatment

Alat (Pseudonym): My husband abuses and calls me different bad names (i.e., good for nothing, silly, idiot, animal, stupid, imbecile) and body-shames me in the presence of my children and neighbours.

Pandro & Temmy (Pseudonym): My hubby keeps long malice, abuses me verbally, and nurses grudges against me in my marriage. This gives me emotional worries, resulting in high blood pressure to date.

Munit (Pseudonym): My marriage has been bedeviled with neglect, withdrawal of affection, and constantly shift blames on me as his way of life in my marriage.

Emerging Theme 3: Financial Abuse

Annie (Pseudonym): When having issues with my husband, he deprives me of his financial support and declines financial support for my business.

Binta & Ella (Pseudonym): stops paying bills such as house rent, medicare, food provision, children's school fees, electricity bill, water rate, car maintenance, and other financial needs

Emerging Theme 4: Uncensored controlling behaviour

Lodo (Pseudonym): My husband is envious to the extent of checking my conversation with people. I remember there was a time he hacked my WhatsApp account, giving him direct access to my conversations.

Abuchi (Pseudonym): My husband does not give me full freedom in our marriage. He wants to control everything about me.

Emerging Theme 5: Sexual Abuse

Aruba (Pseudonym): My husband coerces me into sexual intercourse even when I am tired and not medically fit for it. I must not have an option when he is ready for sexual intercourse.

Ola (Pseudonym): My sexual satisfaction is not his priority at all.

Table 1: Summary of emerging themes from Role-overload

S/N	Emerging Themes of Role-Overload	Sub-themes of Role-overload
1	Family-work conflict/overload	Pressure from domestic chores, office deadlines, care for husband, children, in-laws, aged parents, a perfect wife and employer, family health-maintenance, cleaning, personal engagements, and career advancement.
2	Time-Schedule Overload	Insufficient time to balance office and family responsibilities, too many overlapping tasks, skipping meals, extra time overload, family-work itinerary clash, rushing to meet up with clashing must-do or pressing obligations, struggling with difficult tasks
3.	Energy Exhaustion Overload	Tiredness, burnout, exhaustion, mental overload, reduced happiness, poor job performance, and irritation
4.	Culture-based Overload	Struggling with traditional rites of gender inequality, being more traditional than supporting modernisation, limited freedom in decision-making, default combinative caregiver

Table 1 shows that four main themes, i.e., 1) Family-work conflict/overload, 2) Time-Schedule Overload, 3) Energy Exhaustion overload, and 4) Culture-based overload, confront young married female teachers experiencing role-overload.

Table 2: Summary of Emerging Themes from Support Networks

S/N	Emerging themes for Support Networks for IPV and role overload	Sub-themes of Support Networks for IPV and Role Overload
1.	Religion-based support	Attending church/mosque programmes, reading the Bible/Quran, Fasting, praying, giving alms, seeking support/guidance from clerics, joining prayer intercessory groups, and comforting myself with religious assurances
2.	Restraint and Compliance Support	Self-control, silence, withdrawal from arguments, submissiveness, brushing aside abuses, and the emplacement of efforts to please my husband always

3. Personal Strong Mental Health Support (PSMHS)

Enduring hardship for the good of my children, weeping therapy, hoping for the best always, attending social events, not considering divorce, organising roles

Table 2 shows that four main themes: 1) Religion-based support, 2) Restraint and Compliance Support, 3) Strong Mental Health Support, and 4) Unconventional support, such as support networks for young married female teachers experiencing intimate partner violence and role-overload.

Discussion of Findings

The study showed that many young married female teachers in Nigeria experience physical assault as a form of intimate partner violence. This finding is in line with de Ceballos and Carvalho (2021), who found 22.9% of young female teachers were victims of physical violence, 7% were victims of life-threatening aggression that included guns, glass, and knives. Aye et al. (2024) asserted that 1 out of 15 women was physically assaulted by her spouse. Physical assault among young married female teachers has resulted in health challenges, violation of women's fundamental privileges, poor work performance, injury, trauma, seclusion, spontaneous abortion, fatigue, stress, suicide, and debt for medical treatments (Aye et al., 2024). Hitting, beating, knocking, slapping of the face, defamation, and yelling were some forms of experiences of women experiencing intimate partner violence (Taiwo & Favour, 2022). Emotional ill-treatment was another form of intimate partner violence found to be traumatizing the mental health of young married female teachers, which includes body-shaming, nursing grudges, malice-keeping, neglect, blame-shifting, and withdrawal of affection by the husbands. This is in tandem with the findings of Iqbal and Fatmi (2021) that emotional ill-treatment is prevalent among women and is reported to be higher among women living in rural areas than those living in urban areas. Despite emotional abuse in marriages, many women still endure due to increased poverty and genuine love for the husband (Mulaudzi et al. 2022). Financial abuse is another main form of intimate partner violence among young married female teachers in Nigeria. These include deprivation of financial support, bills such as house rent, medicare, food provision, children's school fees, electricity bill, water rate, car maintenance, and other financial needs. In line with the findings of Stylianou (2018), economic abuse has serious detrimental effects on the psychological and mental outcomes of victims of intimate partner violence. Furthermore, this study revealed that different uncensored behaviours (i.e., jealousy, lack of freedom in marriage, hacking my WhatsApp conversation, and controlling everything about me) do not make young married teachers happy in their marriages. In tandem with Aboagye et al. (2025) asserted that women experiencing controlling behaviour were found to be victims of emotional abuse from their husbands. While sexual violence (i.e., sexual coercion and negligence of the wife's sexual satisfaction) was the least common form of intimate partner violence. This contradicts the findings of Barker et al. (2019)

that sexual abuse is the most common type of intimate partner violence. In all, physical assault is prevalent among young married female teachers in Nigeria, though they occur in different forms.

For young married teachers in Nigeria, role overload is a source of negative mental health concerns. This study revealed its prevalence and various manifestations, along with different forms of intimate partner violence. The different types of role overload include a) Family-work conflict/overload (i.e., pressure from domestic chores, office deadlines, caring for husband, children, in-laws, aged parents, being a perfect wife and employer, maintaining family health, cleaning, personal engagements, and career advancement); b) Time-schedule overload (i.e., insufficient time to balance office and family responsibilities, overlapping tasks, skipping meals, extra time demands, family-work schedule clashes, rushing to meet pressing obligations, and struggling with difficult tasks); c) Energy exhaustion overload (i.e., tiredness, burnout, exhaustion, mental fatigue, reduced happiness, poor job performance, and irritation); and d) Culture-based overload (i.e., tiredness, burnout, exhaustion, mental fatigue, reduced happiness, poor job performance, and irritation). These findings align with Shen et al. (2019), where psychological distress and intimate partner violence were prevalent among women, causing stress, loneliness, and experiences of psychological and physical violence. Despite the high occurrence of intimate partner violence and role overload among women, these issues are associated with increased stress (Pakhomova et al., 2021). The plausible reasons for women experiencing role overload in Nigeria include cultural norms rooted in gender inequality, disparity, and the perception that women are properties of their husbands. In Nigerian culture, women's primary roles often involve domestic chores, helping their husbands, family members, and in-laws with errands.

To maintain positive mental health and buffer the intense effects of intimate partner violence and role overload among young married female teachers in Nigeria, adequate support networks were employed. They are a) Religion-based support (i.e., Attending church/mosque programmes, reading the Bible/Quran, Fasting, praying, giving alms, seeking support/guidance from clerics, joining prayer intercessory groups, and comforting myself with religious assurances); b) Restraint and Compliance Support (i.e., self-control, silence, withdrawal from arguments, submissiveness, brushing aside abuses, and the emplacement of efforts to please my husband always); c) Personal Strong Mental Health Support (i.e., enduring hardship for the good of my children, weeping therapy, hoping for the best always, attending social events, not considering divorce, organising roles, enduring hardship for the good of my children, weeping therapy, hoping for the best always, attending social events, not considering divorce, organising roles); d) Unconventional support (i.e., apologising every time, alcohol consumption, taking sleeping pills, and seeking support from parents and friends). This finding is in line with Taiwo and Favour (2022), who revealed that over 40% of women who experienced intimate partner violence coped well by praying and keeping silent about their ordeals. Other support networks employed by women in these categories include: exploring support and emotion regulation

(Wath et al., 2016); religious coping, facing stressors directly, and avoidance coping strategies (Rizo, 2016); and others employ suitable support networks to cope with their challenges (Akanji et al., 2020). Of interest is the finding that some young married female teachers in Nigeria employed more than one support network to alleviate their suffering.

Conclusion

For young married female teachers in Nigeria, intimate partner violence and role overload are inhumane treatments against young female teachers. This study showed that intimate partner violence and role overload are combinations of abnormalities that occur in different patterns against women. Intimate partner violence occurs in the forms of physical, financial, emotional, uncensored controlling behaviours and sexual assaults. While role overload occurs in different patterns, such as family-work conflict, time-schedule, energy exhaustion, and culture-based overload. To assuage the negative outcomes of intimate partner violence and role overload among young married employed teachers in Kwara State. They employed religion-based support, Restraint and Compliance, Personal Strong Mental Health, and Unconventional support networks.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i) Government at all levels enforces constitutional and legal frameworks that bar gender inequality in Nigeria.
- ii) There should be a continuous and huge grassroots campaign against the maltreatment of women in any form it appears.
- iii) There should be agencies and toll-free numbers where victims of intimate partner violence and role overload could report and identify culprits. This will pave the way for meting out necessary punishments for culprits and compensation to victims.
- iv) Mental health support should be readily available and accessible for victims of intimate partner violence and role overload.

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