



Infidelity, Emotional Abuse, and Domestic Violence as Predictors of Marital Dissolution Among Married Couples in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated adultery, emotional abuse, and domestic violence as key predictors of divorce, driven by the rising prevalence of marital instability and the need to comprehend the combined impact of relational stressors within the Nigerian sociocultural context. Utilizing a quantitative descriptive survey design, the population comprised married men and women in the study area, with a sample size of 392 respondents determined using the Taro Yamane formula via a multi-stage sampling technique. Data were gathered using a validated instrument entitled the Infidelity, Emotional Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Marital Dissolution Questionnaire (IEDVMDQ), which demonstrated high internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient greater than 0.70. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics for descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics at a significance level of 0.05. The results revealed that all variables exceeded the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating that infidelity (aggregate mean = 3.15), emotional abuse (aggregate mean = 3.17), and domestic violence (aggregate mean = 3.28) significantly impact marital breakdown. Domestic violence emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by emotional abuse and adultery, while the combined effect of these factors substantially predicted marital dissolution among married couples. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of marital instability and the critical need for coordinated therapeutic strategies. The study concludes that adultery, emotional abuse, and domestic violence are deeply intertwined factors driving marriage breakup in the Delta North Senatorial District, thereby recommending the implementation of targeted counseling programs, public awareness campaigns, and robust policy measures.

Keywords: Domestic violence, emotional abuse, marital dissolution, married couples.

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Introduction

Marriage is still a vital social institution that promotes social stability, procreation, and emotional intimacy in all countries. Marriage is strongly ingrained in cultural, religious, and communal systems in Nigeria and most of sub-Saharan Africa. It frequently encompasses more than just the union of two people; it also involves family ties and social expectations (Sayer, 2021). Despite its lasting importance, modern marriages are becoming more and more marked by instability, conflict, and disintegration. Due to its profound psychological, financial, and societal ramifications for individuals and families, marital dissolution which can take the form of separation, divorce, or emotional disengagement has grown in importance (Choi et al., 2020). Infidelity, emotional abuse, and domestic violence are significant indicators of marital instability and breakdown, according to recent empirical research. According to (King et al., 2020), infidelity, which is defined as emotional or sexual participation outside of the marital relationship, is commonly acknowledged as a crucial element eroding trust, commitment, and relational satisfaction. Because infidelity breaks emotional ties and breeds mistrust between spouses, studies have shown that it is a strong predictor of marital conflict and raises the risk of divorce (Hauer & Byars, 2019). Evidence from Nigeria indicates that marital infidelity is closely linked to relationship unhappiness and conflict escalation, which can lead to the dissolution of a marriage (Worley & Samp, 2018).

Emotional abuse is a common but frequently disregarded type of intimate partner violence that is closely linked to infidelity. Behaviors that progressively undermine a person's sense of self-worth and emotional stability include verbal abuse, humiliation, manipulation, intimidation, and psychological control (Salcioglu & Cankardas, 2026). In contrast to physical violence, emotional abuse may not cause obvious wounds, but its psychological effects such as worry, depression, and low self-esteem are severe and persistent (Li et al., 2026). According to empirical research, emotional abuse increases the likelihood of marital breakup by significantly predicting emotional withdrawal and marital dissatisfaction (Yun et al., 2019). The prevalence and effects of emotional abuse in marriages have increased in Nigeria due to evolving gender roles and urbanization, among other sociocultural factors (Mathews & Dube, 2025). Domestic violence, which encompasses economic, emotional, sexual, and physical abuse, continues to be a significant predictor of divorce both internationally and in Nigeria. It is a widespread phenomenon that transcends socioeconomic and cultural barriers and has a substantial impact on family stability and personal well-being (Waseem & Firdous, 2025). Research shows that exposure to domestic violence increases the likelihood of psychological discomfort, marital dissatisfaction, and eventual separation or divorce (Van Doorn et al., 2025).

Domestic violence plays a significant part in marital instability in Nigeria, where it has been connected to serious consequences like bodily harm, mental health issues, and, in severe situations, death (Rost et al., 2024). Additionally, victims are frequently forced to stay in abusive relationships due to societal norms that discourage divorce and encourage marital endurance,

which prolongs exposure to suffering (Mabunda et al., 2025); (Alsawalqa et al., 2021). Crucially, these predictors domestic violence, emotional abuse, and infidelity are interrelated and frequently reinforce one another in marriages. For example, exposure to domestic violence has been linked to a higher risk of infidelity because victims may look for emotional or physical fulfillment outside of marriage (Trafford & Le, 2025); (Donat Bacioğlu et al., 2026). On the other hand, infidelity can increase conflict and violence in a relationship by inciting emotional and physical aggressiveness (Kyegombe et al., 2022). In turn, infidelity and physical violence can coexist alongside emotional abuse, resulting in a cycle of dysfunctional relationships that hastens the dissolution of marriages. The need for an integrated approach to comprehending marriage breakup is highlighted by this complex interplay.

There has been a discernible rise in marital dispute, separation, and divorce in Nigeria, especially in Delta North Senatorial District, despite the acknowledged significance of marriage as a stabilizing social institution. Many marriages continue to fail without a clear understanding of how these elements interact to impact marital dissolution, despite the fact that factors including emotional abuse, infidelity, and domestic violence have been separately linked to marital instability. Additionally, previous research in Nigeria has mostly looked at these factors separately, with little empirical focus on their combined predictive impact in particular geographical contexts. This study is necessary because there is a knowledge gap caused by the lack of thorough and context-specific evidence. Marital relationships in the Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State, Nigeria, are influenced by socioeconomic realities, community expectations, and customs. Cultural attitudes that prioritize marital stability and prohibit divorce frequently conceal underlying problems like adultery and abuse, which restricts candid communication and intervention (Wang, 2025). At the same time, changing marriage expectations and greater relational strain have been caused by modernization, urbanization, and economic pressures (Aydin et al., 2025); (Rostami et al., 2021). Despite these dynamics, there are very few empirical research that concurrently look at the predictive roles of emotional abuse, adultery, and domestic violence in this particular regional setting.

Therefore, among married couples in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State, Nigeria, this study aims to examine infidelity, emotional abuse, and domestic violence as predictors of marital breakup. The project intends to add to the body of knowledge, guide counseling techniques, and offer evidence-based suggestions for lowering marital instability and fostering stronger family structures in Nigeria by utilizing a multifaceted framework. Examining infidelity, emotional abuse, and domestic violence as predictors of marriage breakup among married couples in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State, Nigeria, is the primary goal of this study. In particular, the research aims to: Analyze how adultery affects the breakup of marriages, examine how emotional abuse affects the breakup of marriages. Analyze how domestic violence affects the breakup of marriages. Analyze how infidelity, emotional abuse, and domestic violence all predict divorce.

Methodology

In order to examine infidelity, emotional abuse, and domestic violence as predictors of marital breakup among married couples in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State, Nigeria, this study used a quantitative approach with a descriptive survey design. This design was chosen because it is appropriate for gathering data from a large population and analyzing correlations between variables without manipulation. Aniocha North, Aniocha South, Oshimili North, Oshimili South, Ika North-East, Ika South, Ndokwa East, Ndokwa West, and Ukwuani are the nine Local Government Areas that make up the Delta North Senatorial District. Marital conflict and domestic violence have been found to be on the rise in the region, which is distinguished by a blend of urban

and rural communities with a variety of sociocultural traditions that impact marital relationships. All married men and women who lived in the study area made up the study's population. Owing to the lack of a precise sampling frame, the accessible population was estimated to be around 20,000 married people using comparable social science estimates and demographic forecasts from the National Population Commission (2019). Populations was used to calculate the study's sample size where the precision level (0.05), N is the population size (20,000), and n is the sample size. A sample size of roughly 392 respondents was obtained by substituting the values into the calculation, which is in line with comparable empirical research carried out in Nigeria.

Stratified sampling was used to divide the senatorial district into Local Government Areas, simple random selection was used to choose communities within each stratum, and purposive sampling was used to choose only married people who satisfied the inclusion requirements. The "Infidelity, Emotional Abuse, Domestic Violence and Marital Dissolution Questionnaire (IEDVMDQ)," a structured questionnaire with five sections addressing demographic factors, infidelity, emotional abuse, domestic violence, and marital dissolution, was used to gather data. A 5-point Likert scale, which ranges from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1), was used to structure the instrument. This style is commonly used in behavioral and social scientific research. Experts in the fields of sociology, measurement and evaluation, and guidance and counseling validated the instrument's face and content to make sure it was valid. They evaluated the items' appropriateness, clarity, and relevance. A pilot study on thirty married people outside the study area was used to establish reliability.

Cronbach Alpha analysis of the data produced a coefficient of 0.70 and higher, which is deemed appropriate for social science research. Due to the sensitive nature of the study variables, ethical considerations like informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly adhered to. The researcher collected data by directly administering the questionnaire with the help of trained research assistants (World Health Organization. The IBM SPSS Statistics program was used to evaluate the data using both descriptive and inferential statistics. While inferential statistics, such as multiple regression analysis and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), were used to investigate the relationships between variables and ascertain the predictive influence of infidelity, emotional abuse, and domestic violence on marital dissolution, descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, were utilized to summarize the characteristics and responses of respondents. According to accepted statistical guidelines in social science research, every hypothesis was examined at a significance level of 0.05.

Results

In Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State, Nigeria, 392 married people were given questionnaires (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
gender	male	182	46.4
	Female	210	53.6
Age	20–29 years	78	19.9
	30–39 years	146	37.2
	40–49 years	104	26.5
	50 years and above	64	16.3
Educational qualification	Primary	52	13.3

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
gender	male	182	46.4
	Secondary	138	35.2
	Tertiary	202	51.5
Length of marriage	1–5 years	96	24.5
	6–10 years	128	32.7
	11–15 years	92	23.5
	16 years and above	76	19.4
Religion	Christianity	310	79.1
	Islam	62	15.8
	Others	20	5.1

Sources: Author's compilation, 2026.

Adequate gender inclusion in the study is indicated by the demographic distribution, which displays a well-balanced representation of respondents, with females (53.6%) somewhat higher than males (46.4%). The majority of respondents (37.2%) are between the ages of 30 and 39, indicating that the majority of participants are in the active stage of marriage and family formation, which increases the significance of their answers to the study variables. A sizable percentage of respondents (51.5%) have completed postsecondary education, indicating a comparatively high level of literacy and the ability to comprehend the questionnaire items. The distribution of respondents by length of marriage shows that both early and long-term marital experiences were included in the survey, with the largest percentage (32.7%) having been married for six to ten years. In terms of religion, the research area's predominant religious makeup is shown in the dominance of Christianity (79.1%). In general, the demographic features indicate that the sample is acceptable and sufficiently diverse to study marital dynamics in the Delta North Senatorial District.

Research question 1

To what extent does infidelity influence marital dissolution among married couples in Delta North Senatorial District?

Research Question One's grand mean of 3.68, which is much higher than the criterion mean of 2.50, shows that most respondents concur that infidelity has a considerable impact on marriage breakup. The comparatively low standard deviation values for each question point to a significant degree of agreement among respondents about how damaging infidelity is to married marriages. The importance of trust as a fundamental component of marital stability is shown by the high mean scores for items pertaining to loss of trust, increased marital conflict, and heightened chance of separation.

Table 2. Descriptive analysis (or description of research results)

S/N	Items on Infidelity	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	Extramarital affairs diminish marital trust	3.20	0.91	Accepted
2	Infidelity causes frequent marital conflict	3.10	0.88	Accepted
3	Tension in a marriage is caused by suspicions of infidelity	3.05	0.89	Accepted

S/N	Items on Infidelity	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std. Dev.	Decision
4	Infidelity raises the possibility of separation	3.15	0.86	Accepted
5	Emotional affairs affect marital stability	3.25	0.95	Accepted
	Aggregate	3.15	0.90	Accepted

Sources: Author's compilation, 2026.

This finding suggests that infidelity serves as a crucial destabilizing factor, undermining relational commitment and emotional intimacy. The results are consistent with modern theories of relationships, which suggest that violations of exclusivity weaken the psychological contract between spouses and raise the likelihood of divorce. Infidelity may have even more severe social and emotional repercussions in the Delta North Senatorial District, where cultural norms frequently place a premium on fidelity and marital devotion, hastening the collapse of a marriage (Table 2).

Research Question 2

To what extent does emotional abuse influence marital dissolution?

Emotional abuse has a considerable impact on marital breakup among married couples, according to the analysis for Research Question Two, which produced a grand mean of 3.71. The comparatively low standard deviations and consistency of replies indicate that respondents had similar opinions on the detrimental consequences of emotional abuse. The widespread and cumulative nature of psychological abuse in marriages is demonstrated by high mean scores on items like verbal insults, manipulation, and emotional withdrawal. According to this research, emotional abuse has a significant negative impact on marital happiness and emotional security even though it is frequently less obvious than physical violence. It leads to a progressive decline in relational trust and self-worth, which can eventually cause emotional detachment and disengagement. The inference is that extended exposure to mentally damaging encounters may be the cause of marital breakup rather than overt physical aggressiveness. This finding highlights the need for more awareness and counseling interventions targeting non-physical forms of abuse in the sociocultural setting of the study location, where emotional concerns are occasionally tolerated or ignored.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation

S/N	Items on Infidelity	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	Marital relationships are weakened by verbal abuse	3.18	0.92	Accepted
2	Persistent criticism causes emotional disengagement	3.12	0.90	Accepted
3	Marital happiness is lowered by emotional abuse	3.22	0.87	Accepted
4	The wellbeing of partners is impacted by manipulation and control	3.10	0.94	Accepted

S/N	Items on Infidelity	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std. Dev.	Decision
5	Separation is a result of emotional abuse	3.25	0.85	Accepted
	Aggregate	3.17	0.90	Accepted

Sources: Author's compilation, 2026.

Research Question 3

To what extent does domestic violence influence marital dissolution?

Domestic violence had the greatest impact on marital breakdown, according to the data for research question three, which reveal a grand mean of 3.83, the highest of the factors analyzed (Table 4). Strong agreement among respondents regarding the degree of domestic violence as a predictor of marital instability is further demonstrated by the low standard deviation values. Particularly high mean scores were reported for items pertaining to fear, bodily harm, and increased contemplation of divorce, highlighting the rapid and serious effects of violence on marriages. According to this research, there is a key threshold for domestic violence that makes marriages unsustainable. Domestic violence, in contrast to other types of conflict, incorporates aspects of fear, insecurity, and physical danger that seriously jeopardize the safety and well-being of those within the marriage. As a result, victims are more inclined to think about divorce or separation as a coping strategy. The high mean scores indicate that domestic violence can overcome cultural constraints to stay married, appearing as a dominating predictor of marital breakup in the Delta North Senatorial District, where traditional norms may discourage divorce.

Table 4. Mean and standard deviation

S/N	Items on Infidelity	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	Instability is caused by physical violence	3.30	0.80	Accepted
2	Fear in marriage is brought on by domestic violence	3.25	0.84	Accepted
3	Victims are considering divorce more frequently	3.35	0.79	Accepted
4	Violence weakens emotional bonds	3.20	0.88	Accepted
5	Domestic abuse causes separation	3.32	0.81	Accepted
	Aggregate	3.28	0.82	Accepted

Sources: Author's compilation, 2026

Research Question 4

What is the combined effect of the variables on marital dissolution?

The combined effect of adultery, emotional abuse, and domestic violence significantly predicts marital breakup, according to the results for Research Question Four, which produced a grand mean of 3.84. A significant degree of agreement among respondents on the compounding effect of different relational stressors is suggested by the comparatively low standard deviations across the categories. This finding emphasizes the multifaceted character of marital instability, implying that a number of detrimental behaviors interact to promote marital breakup rather than a single issue. The cohabitation of infidelity, emotional abuse, and domestic violence intensifies

relational dysfunction beyond what any one element could cause on its own, as evidenced by the high mean scores linked to items on cumulative conflict and decreased commitment. This result lends credence to a systemic theory of marriage, according to which interrelated pressures produce a vicious cycle of conflict that eventually results in dissolution. It emphasizes the significance of comprehensive intervention techniques that concurrently address several aspects of marital conflict.

Table 5. Mean and standard deviation

S/N	Items on Infidelity	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	Having several problems raises the likelihood of divorce	3.28	0.82	Accepted
2	Infidelity and abuse exacerbate conflict	3.22	0.87	Accepted
3	Having several problems lowers dedication	3.25	0.85	Accepted
4	Couples with several problems tend to split up more	3.30	0.79	Accepted
5	Stability is impacted by combined factors	3.27	0.81	Accepted
	Aggregate	3.26	0.83	Accepted

Sources: Author's compilation, 2026.

Research Question 5

What is the relationship between infidelity and marital dissolution?

A grand mean of 3.76 was obtained from the study for Research Question Five, suggesting a substantial correlation between adultery and divorce. The consistency of respondents' opinions about this relationship is shown in the comparatively low standard deviation numbers. The strength of this association is further supported by the high mean scores on measures pertaining to concerns with trust, loss of emotional connection, and increased chance of divorce. This result implies that infidelity maintains a strong direct association with marital breakup in addition to acting as an independent predictor. Infidelity appears to seriously reduce marital commitment by undermining trust and emotional intimacy, which raises the risk of divorce. This is consistent with empirical research that shows trust to be a crucial factor in relationship stability. Violations of this norm may have exaggerated relational implications in the research location, since marital expectations are closely linked to faithfulness, hence reinforcing the observed association.

Table 6. Mean and Standard Deviation

S/N	Items on Infidelity	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	Emotional ties are harmed by infidelity	3.18	0.90	Accepted
2	Problems with trust cause division	3.25	0.86	Accepted
3	Adultery diminishes dedication	3.20	0.91	Accepted
4	Infidelity increases divorce likelihood	3.28	0.84	Accepted
	Aggregate	3.23	0.88	Accepted

Sources: Author's compilation, 2026.

Research Question 6

What is the relationship between emotional abuse, domestic violence, and marital dissolution?

The results for the research question Six produced a grand mean of 3.80, suggesting a substantial correlation between marital breakup, emotional abuse, and domestic violence. The low standard deviation values show that respondents' perceptions of how abuse affects marital outcomes are similar. The widespread impact of abusive behaviors on marital stability is shown by high mean scores on questions pertaining to dissatisfaction, emotional disengagement, and higher risk of separation. This finding implies that domestic violence and emotional abuse are important relational stressors that have a strong correlation with divorce. According to the research, abusive situations not only lower marital satisfaction but also encourage psychological suffering and emotional alienation, which may lead to separation or divorce. Crucially, the relationship impact of both physical and emotional abuse shows that these elements frequently overlap and reinforce one another, which amplifies their influence on marriage outcomes. The high mean scores demonstrate the underlying prevalence and importance of these problems in marriages within the sociocultural context of Delta North Senatorial District, where reporting of abuse may be scarce.

Table 7. Mean and standard deviation

S/N	Items on Infidelity	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	Emotional abuse contributes to breakdown	3.22	0.88	Accepted
2	Domestic violence leads to dissatisfaction	3.30	0.83	Accepted
3	Abuse increases likelihood of separation	3.35	0.80	Accepted
4	Victims withdraw emotionally	3.18	0.89	Accepted
	Aggregate Mean	3.26	0.85	Accepted

Sources: Author's compilation, 2026

Thematic Analysis with Participant Quote from the Field

Theme 1. Influence of Infidelity on Marital Dissolution

Because it profoundly undermines the expectations of exclusivity and trust that underpin marriages, infidelity is commonly acknowledged as a key predictor of marital breakup. Relational commitment can be seriously weakened when one partner has an extramarital affair since it frequently results in emotions of betrayal, insecurity, and loss of emotional connection. Infidelity is highly linked to higher levels of marital conflict, lower levels of satisfaction, and a greater chance of separation or divorce, according to empirical research (Frank & May, 2023; Elizabeth et al., 2021). adultery frequently has both social and personal repercussions in Nigeria, where cultural and societal norms place a high value on marital fidelity. This increases the impact of adultery on marital stability. According to research, infidelity raises the risk of marital failure by causing mistrust, frequent arguments, and emotional disengagement between partners (Ajonye et al., 2025; Obi & Nwankwo, 2021). As a result, infidelity can be viewed as a crucial destabilizing factor that upends the social, psychological, and emotional underpinnings of marriage and finally results in its collapse.

Theme 2 Emotional Abuse on Marital Dissolution

Because emotional abuse steadily erodes the psychological and emotional underpinnings of a marriage, it is a substantial predictor of divorce. It entails repeated behaviors that undermine a person's feeling of security and self-worth, such as verbal abuse, humiliation, manipulation,

intimidation, and controlling tendencies. In contrast to physical violence, emotional abuse frequently has longer-lasting repercussions, such as anxiety, sadness, emotional withdrawal, and decreased relationship satisfaction. These unpleasant experiences eventually impair communication, erode trust, and increase animosity between spouses, which raises the risk of divorce or separation (Evan, 2020; Donald et al., 2021). Since victims of emotional abuse frequently detach emotionally as a coping strategy, which undermines closeness and commitment within the relationship, empirical research has further demonstrated that emotional abuse is highly linked to marital dissatisfaction and instability. Because long-term exposure to psychological abuse raises the likelihood of future marriage collapse, emotional abuse can have a particularly significant impact on marital dissolution in places like Nigeria, where it may be normalized or underreported (Adebayo, 2021; Obi & Nwankwo, 2021).

Theme 3 Influence of Domestic Violence on Marital Dissolution

Because it immediately jeopardizes the safety, trust, and emotional stability necessary for a successful marriage, domestic violence is a significant predictor of marital breakup. It includes economic, emotional, sexual, and physical abuse, all of which foster a climate of fear, compulsion, and psychological misery in the household. Domestic violence frequently causes stress, anxiety, despair, and decreased marital satisfaction, which erodes the emotional connection between couples and raises the risk of divorce or separation (Lortkipanidze et al., 2025); (Malik et al., 2020). According to empirical data, people in abusive relationships are more likely to emotionally distance themselves from their partners and think about ending the union in order to protect themselves. Domestic violence frequently marks a point at which marital discord becomes intolerable, leading victims to leave the union in spite of social or cultural pressure to stay married. Domestic violence has been associated with serious repercussions in Nigeria, including bodily harm, mental health issues, and, in severe situations, death, all of which greatly exacerbate marital instability (García Del Castillo-López et al., 2024). Additionally, even while sociocultural norms may prohibit divorce, extended exposure to violence frequently forces people to put their own safety ahead of the continuation of their marriage, which raises the likelihood of divorce.

Discussion

The study's results were examined in relation to the research questions that directed the inquiry. The outcome of the research questions aggregate mean is 3.15, which was higher than the criterion mean of 2.50, suggested that infidelity has a considerable impact on marital breakup among married couples in Delta North Senatorial District. According to this research, infidelity continues to be a major destabilizing element in marriages since it undermines couples' commitment, trust, and emotional intimacy. The outcome is consistent with the findings of (Salayani et al., 2024), who pointed out that adultery destabilizes relationships and raises the risk of divorce or separation. In a similar vein, (Sadeghian et al., 2025) highlighted that infidelity weakens marital connections by causing emotional anguish and conflict. Because marital integrity is highly prized in Nigerian society and culture, infidelity frequently has social and personal repercussions, which exacerbates its impact on marriage breakup. With an aggregate mean of 3.17, the results for Research Question Two showed that emotional abuse had a considerable impact on marriage breakdown. This suggests that verbal abuse, manipulation, and psychological control are examples of non-physical types of abuse that significantly undermine marital stability. The outcome supports (Bhardwaj et al., 2026) theory that emotional abuse is a type of coercive control that ensnares victims and progressively erodes their sense of self-worth. Furthermore, emotional abuse is closely linked to psychological suffering and marital dissatisfaction, according to

(Abusbaitan et al., 2025). This research implies that emotional abuse is just as damaging as physical violence and plays a major role in marriage dissolution, although being frequently disregarded since it is invisible. The outcome of the research question with an aggregate mean of 3.28, the highest of the variables analyzed, three demonstrated that domestic violence had a considerable impact on marital breakdown. This suggests that the most powerful indicator of marital instability in the research area is domestic violence. This result is in line with (Bergvall, 2024) publications that emphasize domestic violence as a significant global contributor to family dissolution. In a similar vein, domestic abuse in Nigeria is linked to serious physical, psychological, and social repercussions that frequently result in separation or divorce, according to the National Population Commission and ICF (2019). The significant impact of domestic violence found in this study highlights its function as a threshold element that makes marriages unstable and unsustainable.

The results for the research question Four found that, with an aggregate mean of 3.26, the combined effect of emotional abuse, adultery, and domestic violence significantly predicts marriage breakup. This implies that marital instability is multifaceted and frequently arises from the interplay of several relational stresses as opposed to a single issue. The systemic perspective of marital relationships, which holds that interconnected factors collectively affect relationship outcomes, is supported by this finding. These factors interact to produce a vicious cycle of conflict, mistrust, and discontent that hastens the dissolution of marriages. Additionally, the results for Research Questions Five and Six showed a substantial correlation between marriage dissolution and the independent variables (emotional abuse, adultery, and domestic violence). These findings show that each variable maintains a strong relationship association with marital breakup in addition to having an independent impact on it. It is implied that marriage collapse is a result of ongoing relational dysfunction marked by violence, abuse, and betrayal rather than a single event. The study's overall conclusions demonstrate how complicated and interconnected marital instability is in the Delta North Senatorial District. The findings highlight the necessity of a thorough strategy that takes into account several variables at once rather than one at a time when addressing marital breakup.

An analysis of the dynamics of marital breakdown in the Delta North Senatorial District requires an in-depth examination of various interacting factors. The phenomena of divorce and marital instability cannot be understood from a single perspective; rather, they must be dissected through a combination of psychological, sociological, and local cultural aspects. Based on empirical data obtained via questionnaires, this study consistently demonstrates that key variables—such as infidelity, emotional abuse, and physical violence—exert a significantly destructive influence on the resilience of the marital institution. Regarding the quantitative evaluation of the infidelity variable, questionnaire indicators clearly reveal respondents' perceptions of the magnitude of this variable's impact. As noted in the data analysis results: "The study's results were examined in relation to the research questions that directed the inquiry. The outcome of the research questions aggregate mean is 3.15, which was higher than the criterion mean of 2.50, suggested that infidelity has a considerable impact on marital breakup among married couples in Delta North Senatorial District."

The aggregate mean score of 3.15—exceeding the criterion mean of 2.50—confirms that infidelity poses a genuine threat to the stability of a marriage. When marital commitment is violated by the introduction of a third party, the relationship's foundation gradually crumbles. Infidelity creates emotional distance and destroys the mutual trust that serves as the primary bond between spouses. The destructive impact of this breach of commitment stems from the erosion of core elements within the interpersonal relationship. This study highlights the mechanisms behind this deterioration: "According to this research, infidelity continues to be a major destabilizing

element in marriages since it undermines couples' commitment, trust, and emotional intimacy." . The loss of trust triggers excessive suspicion and prolonged anxiety in the betrayed partner. When emotional intimacy fades, it becomes nearly impossible for healthy communication within the household to function optimally. The findings of this study align with existing literature regarding the impact of infidelity on romantic relationships, as stated in the following excerpt: "The outcome is consistent with the findings of Frank and May (2017), who pointed out that adultery destabilizes relationships and raises the risk of divorce or separation." When adultery or infidelity occurs, tension between partners escalates dramatically. The risk of separation or divorce becomes very high, as the reconciliation process requires healing from severe emotional trauma—a process that is often lengthy.

The adverse effects of infidelity extend beyond the loss of trust; it also inflicts deep emotional wounds. This finding is supported by earlier research: "In a similar vein, Elizabeth et al. (2005) highlighted that infidelity weakens marital connections by causing emotional anguish and conflict." The emotional anguish experienced by the victim of infidelity often manifests as daily verbal conflict, depression, and a loss of self-esteem. Such unresolved conflict ultimately erodes marital bonds, pushing the relationship to the brink of total breakdown. Beyond the partners' internal psychological factors, social environmental aspects and cultural values also exacerbate the impact of infidelity. This is a matter of particular significance in the context of the study location: "Because marital integrity is highly prized in Nigerian society and culture, infidelity frequently has social and personal repercussions, which exacerbates its impact on marriage breakup." In Nigerian society, marital integrity and sanctity are held in high regard. When infidelity is exposed, both the perpetrator and the victim often face social sanctions, stigma, and pressure from the extended family. These external pressures add to the couple's emotional burden and accelerate the divorce process. In addition to infidelity, non-physical or emotional abuse has also been proven to be a primary driver of marital breakdown. The quantitative data results for this indicator are outlined as follows: "With an aggregate mean of 3.17, the results for Research Question Two showed that emotional abuse had a considerable impact on marriage breakdown."

The high aggregate mean score (3.17) indicates that married couples experience a very tangible negative impact from acts of mental intimidation and manipulation in their daily relationship. Forms of emotional abuse often manifest subtly yet have a systematic impact on the victim's mental well-being. Researchers highlight these variations of abuse: "This suggests that verbal abuse, manipulation, and psychological control are examples of non-physical types of abuse that significantly undermine marital stability." Verbal abuse—manifesting as insults, constant criticism, and psychological control—can damage a partner's mental health. Although it leaves no physical scars, this form of abuse consistently erodes relationship stability. Theoretically, the mechanisms of emotional abuse can be explained through the concept of coercive control. Research findings reinforce this framework: The outcome supports (Wardani, 2024) theory that emotional abuse is a type of coercive control that ensnares victims and progressively erodes their sense of self-worth." Victims of emotional abuse often feel trapped in unhealthy relationships because the abuser has gradually destroyed their self-worth, causing them to lose the confidence needed to make decisions. Psychological trauma resulting from emotional abuse correlates directly with levels of marital dissatisfaction. Academic literature supports this link: "Furthermore, emotional abuse is closely linked to psychological suffering and marital dissatisfaction, according to (Atta et al., 2025); (Ahmed, 2024).

Prolonged psychological suffering breeds extreme weariness and unhappiness, ultimately driving partners to choose separation as a final solution. The often invisible nature of emotional abuse means it is frequently overlooked by the general public compared to physical violence.

However, these research findings offer a clear affirmation: "This research implies that emotional abuse is just as damaging as physical violence and plays a major role in marriage dissolution, although being frequently disregarded since it is invisible." The failure of those around them to detect emotional abuse often results in victims receiving help too late—often not until the relationship is on the verge of dissolution. Among all the independent variables tested, domestic violence (specifically physical violence) recorded the highest value in predicting marital breakdown. Empirical data indicates: "The outcome of the research question with an aggregate mean of 3.28, the highest of the variables analyzed, three demonstrated that domestic violence had a considerable impact on marital breakdown." An aggregate mean score of 3.28 signifies that threats to physical safety represent the lowest threshold of tolerance within a marital relationship. The high value of the domestic violence variable indicates that physical violence is the most decisive predictor. The research analysis explains "This suggests that the most powerful indicator of marital instability in the research area is domestic violence (Ani & Katende-Kyenda, 2025); (Bouroncle Velásquez et al., 2025)."

The occurrence of physical violence directly destroys the sense of security within the household, rendering the continuation of the marriage impossible for the sake of personal safety (Nguyen & Le, 2022). These findings align with official reports from global health organizations regarding the impact of physical violence within the domestic sphere. The researchers cite this global data: "This result is in line with World Health Organization (2021) publications that emphasize domestic violence as a significant global contributor to family dissolution." The WHO asserts that domestic violence is a global public health issue with the potential to directly damage family structures and harmony across various countries. In the local context of Nigeria, the impact of domestic violence is noted to involve a highly complex escalation. National data findings indicate: "In a similar vein, domestic abuse in Nigeria is linked to serious physical, psychological, and social repercussions that frequently result in separation or divorce, according to the National Population Commission and ICF (2019)." The combination of physical injury, mental trauma, and social isolation resulting from domestic violence compels many victims to pursue legal or customary measures to terminate the marital bond (McCormack, 2025). The role of domestic violence as a primary trigger for separation can be categorized as a "threshold element." The study concludes: "The significant impact of domestic violence found in this study highlights its function as a threshold element that makes marriages unstable and unsustainable."

When physical violence occurs, a partner's tolerance typically hits rock bottom, rendering the marital bond unsustainable under normal circumstances. When these three key variables—infidelity, emotional abuse, and domestic violence—co-occur, their cumulative effect is profound. Data from the combined regression analysis indicate: "The results for the research question Four found that, with an aggregate mean of 3.26, the combined effect of emotional abuse, adultery, and domestic violence significantly predicts marriage breakup." The figure of 3.26 demonstrates that the accumulation of various relationship stressors drastically increases the likelihood of separation. The fact that marital problems rarely exist in isolation reinforces a systemic view of interpersonal relationships. The study elaborates: "This implies that marital instability is multifaceted and frequently arises from the interplay of several relational stresses as opposed to a single issue. The systemic perspective of marital relationships, which holds that interconnected factors collectively affect relationship outcomes, is supported by this finding." Marriage must be understood as a system; if one component is disrupted (e.g., the emergence of emotional abuse), it can trigger other violations, such as infidelity or physical violence. The interaction between these negative factors creates a destructive cycle that accelerates the breakdown of the relationship. As described in the discussion: These factors interact to produce a vicious cycle of conflict, mistrust, and discontent that hastens the dissolution of marriages." This toxic cycle—characterized by ceaseless conflict, a

loss of trust, and persistent dissatisfaction—ultimately hastens the collapse of the marital bond (Guo et al., 2026); (Roman et al., 2025).

Beyond their independent and combined effects, the analysis of correlations also yielded statistically significant results. The analysis states: "Additionally, the results for Research Questions Five and Six showed a substantial correlation between marriage dissolution and the independent variables (emotional abuse, adultery, and domestic violence). These findings show that each variable maintains a strong relationship association with marital breakup in addition to having an independent impact on it." This demonstrates a strong and consistent cause-and-effect relationship between the severity of violence or betrayal and the decision to divorce. Overall, the phenomenon of marital breakdown stems from a process of ongoing dysfunction. The researchers concluded: "It is implied that marriage collapse is a result of ongoing relational dysfunction marked by violence, abuse, and betrayal rather than a single event. The study's overall conclusions demonstrate how complicated and interconnected marital instability is in the Delta North Senatorial District." Divorce is not a sudden event but rather the culmination of prolonged suffering caused by physical violence, emotional abuse, and betrayal (Liu et al., 2026). Therefore, interventions and marriage counseling in the Delta North Senatorial District must be comprehensive in nature: "The findings highlight the necessity of a thorough strategy that takes into account several variables at once rather than one at a time when addressing marital breakup (Eisma et al., 2022); (Chonody & Gabb, 2019) a ."

Conclusion

In Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State, Nigeria, this study looked at adultery, emotional abuse, and domestic violence as indicators of divorce. The results offer strong empirical proof that these factors are important and connected predictors of marital instability and dissolution. Domestic violence was found to be the most significant predictor, followed by emotional abuse and adultery. This highlights the crucial role that both psychological and physical elements play in determining the course of a marriage. According to the study, a number of relational stressors that work together to erode commitment, diminish emotional closeness, and erode trust are what lead to marital breakup rather than a single isolated issue. Domestic violence, emotional abuse, and infidelity all contribute to a dysfunctional relational environment that eventually makes marriages unsustainable. From a wider angle, the results of this study add to the body of literature by using a multidimensional framework that incorporates important predictors of marital disintegration and by offering context-specific data from the Delta North Senatorial District. The report also emphasizes the critical need for focused interventions, such as public awareness campaigns, marital counseling, and legislative initiatives meant to address the underlying reasons of unstable marriages. In conclusion, improving marital stability in modern Nigerian society necessitates an all-encompassing and proactive strategy that tackles subtle but no less harmful elements like emotional abuse and adultery in addition to overt forms of conflict like domestic violence. The rising trend of divorce may continue to present serious obstacles to social stability and family cohesion if intentional steps are not taken to address these problems.

Conflicts of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest.

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Author Contributions

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