

Self-Management As A Correlate Of Intimate Partner Violence Among Married Couples In South East, Nigeria

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Keywords	Abstract
Self-management, Intimate partner, Intimate partner violence, Married couples	This study investigated the relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples in South East, Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The design for this study was correlational survey. Population of the study comprised 2,586 registered married couples having intimate partner violence in South East, Nigeria. A sample of 254 registered married couples having intimate partner violence was drawn from the population using Multi-stage sampling procedure. The instruments used for data collection were Questionnaire titled: Self-Management Questionnaire (SMQ); and Intimate Partner Violence among Married Couples' Questionnaire (IPVMCQ). The instruments were validated by three experts and the reliability of the instruments was determined using Cronbach Alpha Statistics, which yielded indices of 0.82 and 0.86 respectively. In analyzing the data, linear regression was used to answer the research questions and t-test associated with linear regression was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 significant level. The findings revealed that, there was a very low and positive relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples ($R = 0.18$). There was no significant relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples ($t = 1.84$; $p = 0.87$). Based on the findings, the researchers recommended that, married couples should work hard on their emotions to reduce and manage intimate partner violence among them through self-management.

Introduction

Marriage could be defined as a legally accepted relationship between two or more people in which they live together as married couples. Marriage is ascertained through official ceremony between husband and wife living together as couple. Marriage could also be defined as the mix of love and heartfelt commitment between husband and wife who must have promised to stand by each other through life's journey (Madumere-Obike & Nwabueze, 2023). Marriage also known as 'matrimony' is a union of individuals that acts as a social and legal contract that gives a partner someone to rely on, brings a greater degree of intimacy and emotional security (Quinlan, 2023). It is the union of hearts, and a bond that goes beyond friendship, making two souls partners for life. Marriage is also a matrimony or wedlock that is culturally and legally recognized union between people known as 'couple', and this establishes rights and obligations between the married couple, as well as between them and their children, and between them and their in-laws (Haviland, Prins, McBride & Walrath, 2017). The universality of marriage within different societies and cultures is attributed to the many basic social and personal functions for which it provides structure, such as sexual gratification and regulation, division of labour between the sexes, economic production and consumption, and satisfaction of personal needs for affection, status and companionship (Sarasvati, Norton, Mikhaylovna, Mahadev, Isvar & Vidyasagar, 2023). Perhaps its

strongest function concerns procreation, the care of children and their education and socialization, and regulation of lines of descent. Thus, the level of union between the couple makes them intimate or non-intimate partner.

Partner could be a pair of people engaged in the same activity for the achievement of a common goal within a unit. They could be married couple, cohabiting couple or unmarried couple. In the context of this study, intimate partner could be seen as individuals with close personal relationship among them, who are identified as a couple characterized by some of the following dimensions: emotional connection, regular contact, ongoing physical contact as well as sexual relationships (Nwabueze & Nriamah, 2025). Intimate partnership is a relationship between couples that are legally married with the responsibility of having children and raising them responsibly (Hindin, Kishor & Ansara, 2009). Intimate Partner Violence among married couples therefore, becomes a very critical and widely reported issue across the globe as well as across different races. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a type of gender-based violence (GBV) that has been defined by World Health Organization (WHO) as a self-reported experience of one or more acts of physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former partner (World Health Organization, 2013).

Intimate partner violence or abuse (IPV) among married couples could be seen as an on-going pattern of behaviour, attitudes, and beliefs in which a partner in an intimate relationship attempts to maintain power and control over the other through the use of psychological, physical or sexual coercion (Diwe, Duru, Aguocha, Uwakwe, Merenu, Emerole & Iwu, 2016). Intimate partner violence among couples includes behaviours such as physical, sexual, psychological and economic harms among close partners (Ribeiro, Silva, Alves, Batista, Ribeiro, Schraiber, Bettiol & Barbieri, 2017). Intimate partner violence is a global health problem that affects both men and women, which is largely under-recognized and under-addressed as a public health issue. The World Health Organization defines IPV as behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours (WHO, 2017). Intimate partner violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviours, including physical injury, psychological abuse, sexual assault, enforced social isolation, stalking, deprivation, intimidation and threats by a current or former intimate partner, whether or not the partner is a spouse (Nriamah, 2024). It may include physical, emotional, sexual and financial abuse of which women are more likely to be injured than men (Lawoko, Sanz, Helström & Castren, 2011). They are sexually assaulted or murdered by an intimate partner, which makes women to be at lifetime risk (Benebo, Schumann & Vaezghasemi, 2018). Intimate partner violence is a common social and behavioural issue with negative effects on health, child, family and society (Olaleye, Jagun, Ajose, Sokeye, Omotosho & Ekor, 2015).

Intimate partner violence is characterized as an interpersonal trauma, and symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which was identified in 31–84.4% of women exposed to IPV (Golding, 2007). Pigeon, Cerulli, Richards, He, Perlis and Caine (2011) reported that, other comorbid symptoms such as depression, anxiety, suicidality, substance abuse and sleep disturbances are the effect of intimate partner violence among couples. It has been found that cohabiting women have a higher risk of experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) than married women (Wong, Choi, Fong, Choi, Wong, So, Lau & Kam, 2016).

The intimate partner violence includes: physical, sexual, emotional (psychological), and verbal violence. Physical violence is the intentional use of physical force, with the potential for causing harm, injury, disability or death (Breiding, Basile, Smith, Black & Mahendra, 2015). Machado, Martins and Caridade (2014) stated that, physical violence is the intentional use of physical force such as shoving, choking, shaking, slapping, punching, burning, use of a weapon, restraints, or use of one's size and strength against another person, which may cause death, disability, injury, or physical harm. This simply means that, the acts of physical violence may include slapping, hitting, kicking and beating of one by a partner. Austin, Sootsman and Eicher (2004) suggested that physical violence includes hitting and all kinds of aggressive behaviours excluding outright sexual aggression on one by an intimate partner in relationship.

Sexual violence may include forceful sexual intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion of one by a partner. Sexual violence included all forms of coercion, rape, molestation and sexual assault on one by a partner (Austin, Sootsman & Eicher, 2004). Sexual violence could be a process of forcing or attempting to force a partner to take part in a sex act, sexual touching, or a non-physical sexual event (sexting) when the partner does not or cannot consent, and all these can lead to emotional violence.

Emotional (psychological) violence includes insults, belittling, constant humiliation, intimidation (e.g. destroying things), threats of harm and threats to take away children. Psychological or emotional violence is all about controlling with manipulative behaviours, monitoring and isolation of one by a partner (Austin, Sootsman & Eicher, 2004). Emotional violence among intimate partners, especially married ones is any non-physical behaviour or attitude that is designed to control, subdue, punish, or isolate one by an intimate partner

through the use of humiliation or fear. However, this form of violence can include verbal assault, dominance, control, isolation, ridicule, or the use of intimate knowledge for degradation of one by a partner (Follingstad, Coyne & Gambone, 2015). It targets the emotional and psychological well-being of the victim, and it is often a precursor to physical abuse (Engel, 2012). However, the acts of emotional or psychological violence are distributed along a continuum starting from what is commonly termed ‘psychological aggression’ (e.g. yelling and insults) and ending with more severe abuse, often labelled ‘coercion’ (e.g. threats and isolation) known as ‘verbal violence.

Verbal violence could be emotional, which involves using range of words or behaviours to manipulate, intimidate, and maintain power and control over a partner. These include insults, humiliation and ridicule, the silent treatment, and attempts to scare, isolate, and control one’s partner in a relationship. Verbal violence may also include: shouting, yelling, insults and scathing remarks of a verbal nature on one by a partner without physical contact (Nriamah, 2024). Verbal violence is a type of emotional abuse, through which someone uses words to assault, dominate, ridicule, manipulate, and/or degrade another person and these negatively impact that person's psychological health (Gordon, 2022). Verbal violence is a means of controlling and maintaining power over another person, especially married couples.

The factors that trigger off these violent acts among married couples may include: jealousy or rejection unlike in spousal abuse where issues over housekeeping and child-rearing are the more common factors (Umana, Fawole, & Adeoye, 2014). Controlling violent behaviours among married couples may include: isolating a person from peer pressure, mentoring, prudent financial management, employment engagements, education and proper medical care. Married couples are males and females living together as husbands and wives. Hence, married couples can prevent intimate partner violence through self-management.

Self-management could be seen as the ability to regulate one’s behaviours, thoughts, and emotions in a productive way, especially married couples having intimate partner violence. This means that excelling in personal and professional responsibilities among married couples help to reduce intimate partner violence among them for the benefit of their family (Nwabueze & Igbinedion, 2013). Self-management, which is also referred to as “self-control” or “self-regulation” is the ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviours effectively in different situations and these are geared towards reducing intimate partner violence among married couples. Self-management entails married couple’s involvement in managing stress, delaying gratification, motivating oneself, setting and working toward personal and marital goals (Transforming Education, 2014).

Self-management is the ability to manage one's own life and time, which includes the skills of self-organization, self-direction, self-motivation and self-monitoring for the reduction of intimate partner violence among married couple (Moffitt, Arseneault, Belsky, Dickson, Hancox, Harrington, Houtes, Poulton, Roberts, Ross, Sears, Thomson & Caspi, 2011). Self-management is also a process of making changes in one's life, which can be an added advantage to married couples in reducing intimate partner violence over time (Asodike & Nwabueze, 2017). Self-management encompasses many different aspects of management such as self-awareness, self-motivation, self-care, and self-leadership, which equip one to take charge of one’s life and manage his family and marriage effectively. Self-management is a skill that helps married couples to be successful in their marriage life. In order to develop better self-management skills among married couples, it is important for couples to have clear goals and objectives, as well as an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses to help them overcome intimate partner violence overtime.

Self-management principles are necessary for every married couple, because they help them reach their goals and be more productive, which is important in building a sustainable peaceful marriage. Married couples require strong self-management experiences to reduce intimate partner violence among them (Asodike & Nwabueze, 2017). Self-management among married couples can improve life outcomes such as physical health, income, parenting, substance independence, child-bearing, education of children and quality improvement. Married couples’ self-management promotes intimate partnership among couples such as: improving family finances, life satisfaction and parenting skill. Such skills as problem solving, resisting stress, communicating clearly, managing time, strengthening memory, and family building are examples of self-management (Asodike & Nwabueze, 2017). Hence, married couples with self-management principles and intimate partnership are gender sensitive. In relation to self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples, marriage becomes gender sensitive.

Gender can be seen as the socially determined roles and relationships between married couples that are intimate. Gender is the behaviours, attitudes, roles and status assigned to male and female individuals in a socio-cultural setting; which is culturally and socially constructed characteristics and roles ascribed to male and female individuals (Madumere-Obike & Nwabueze, 2023). This implies that male and female couples have respective

roles ascribed to them. Gender equally refers to a socio-cultural stratification of male and female individuals, and this stratification follows societal norms and values' considerations that define the roles male and female individuals play in the society for sustainable development (Mukoro, 2013). Gender can be seen as a social and psychological difference between men and women who are married together with intimate partnership. It is a socially constructed and learned behaviour as well as expectations associated with male and female citizens in the society who are married as man and woman with intimate partnership (Nwabueze & Iremeka, 2018). Keller (2010) stated that, gender is a cultural construct used in relation to characteristics and behaviours that are based on biological and physical differences between men and women that are married as husbands and wives. It refers to economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female (UN-Habitat, 2003). Operationally, gender can be seen as the socially determined roles and relationships between married couples which may be male and female human beings with intimate partnership.

Statement of the Problem

Intimate partner violence among married couples leads to severe physical injuries, chronic pain, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal tendencies and substance use disorders. It equally may lead to unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease (STD) and HIV transmission, exacerbation of chronic health problems from stress related trauma, risky health behaviours and negative pregnancy outcomes such as miscarriage, preterm labour and low-birth-weight infants. Equally, Children who witnessed IPV from their parents are more prone to anger, fear, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and conduct problems. These children are also more likely to become perpetrators when they grow up. Hence, married couples with weak self-management principles experience regular intimate partner violence. Hence, factors that may increase the risk of IPV may include alcohol and drug use, being married at young age, stress, unequal power in relationships, and harmful attitudes to gender relations that may result in female disempowerment and marginalization, lower educational status, unemployment, psychiatric illness, a history of violent relationships in childhood, academic and financial under-achievement.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated the relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence of married couples in South East, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. ascertain the relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples; and
2. ascertain the relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples as moderated by gender.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study.

1. What is the relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples?
2. What is the relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples as moderated by gender?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significant level.

1. There is no significant relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples.
2. There is no significant relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples as moderated by gender.

Methodology

Design of the Study: The design of this study was correlational survey design. Nworgu (2015) posited that, a correlational research design is the research design that measures the relationship between two or more factors to determine or estimate the extent to which the values for the factors are related. A correlational research design seeks to establish a relationship or association between two or more variables that would not readily lend themselves to be experimentally manipulated. Madumere-Obike and Nwabueze (2018) submitted that correlational survey design allows for the computation of a statistical measure called the correlation coefficient used to predict the values of the two or more variables that are related in an identifiable pattern. This design was adopted as the study investigated self-management as a correlate of intimate partner violence among

married couples in South East, Nigeria.

Population of the Study: Population of the study comprised two thousand, five hundred and eighty six (2,586) registered married couples having intimate partner violence cases recorded in South East, Nigeria. This included 2,586 married men and 2,586 married women.

Sample and Sampling Technique: A sample size of 254 couples was drawn using stratified random sampling technique representing 9.8% of the population. This represents 508 respondents.

Instrument for Data Collection: The instruments used for data collection were Questionnaire titled: Self-Management Questionnaire (SMQ); and Intimate Partner Violence among Married Couples' Questionnaire (IPVMCQ). Self-Management Questionnaire (SMQ) had two sections of A and B. Section A elicited demographic information of the respondents such as gender. Section B comprised questionnaire items structured based on the variables of the study. The instruments were structured in line with four point Likert scale response option of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). Intimate Partner Violence among Married Couples' Questionnaire (IPVMCQ) had two sections of A and B. Section A elicited demographic information of the respondents such as gender. Section B comprised questionnaire items structured based on the variables of the study. The instruments were structured in line with four point Likert scale response option of Very High Level (4), High Level (3), Low Level (2), and Very Low Level (1).

Validity of the Instruments: The instruments were scrutinized by the researchers before giving out for validation. Three experts in the field of Education; one from Counselling and Human Development Studies' Department, one from Educational Management and Policy Unit in the Department of Educational Foundations, and one in Research, Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Science Education, all from University of Nigeria, Nsukka validated the instruments. Copies of the instruments were given to these three experts for face validation of what the instrument appeared to measure superficially. After thorough examination and proof-reading, the experts made comments, observations and corrections on the objectives, research questions, hypotheses and questionnaire items, which were systematically effected in the final draft of the instruments before going for reliability test.

Reliability of the Instruments: In order to ensure the internal consistency reliability of the instruments, twenty copies of the questionnaire were given to twenty (20) married couples in North Central, Nigeria. However, 20 copies of each questionnaire were administered to the respondents once. Thereafter, the internal consistencies of the instruments were determined using Cronbach Alpha Statistics at 0.82 for Emotional Intelligence; and 0.86 for Intimate Partner Violence among Married Couples.

Method of Data Collection: The researchers went to the Social Welfare Offices in South East Nigeria and explained to the heads of departments their mission to examine married couples with Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). The researchers and the heads of departments of the Welfare Offices decided to invite all the male partners and female partners for counselling on different occasions. After sending them messages, a date was fixed for the counselling. The male partners came for counseling first, and the researchers distributed the two hundred and fifty four (254) copies of questionnaire to them with the help of four (4) research assistants. On the second day, female partners also came for counselling, and the researchers distributed the two hundred and fifty four (254) copies of questionnaire to them with the help of same four (4) research assistants. These research assistants were adequately briefed on how to distribute the questionnaire to the respondents and answer any question that the respondents may ask on the spot. Direct delivery and retrieval method was used to administer and retrieve the instrument from the respondents, which enabled 100% retrieval rate of the questionnaire.

Method of Data Analysis: In analyzing the data, linear regression was used to answer research question one and two. In testing the hypotheses, t-test associated with linear regression was used to test the hypotheses one, and t-score was used to test hypotheses two at 0.05 significant level. The decision rule was as follows: Very Low = 0.01-0.20; Low = 0.21-0.40; Moderate = 0.41-0.60; High = 0.61-0.80; Very High = 0.81 and above.

Results

The results obtained through analysis of data were used to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses that guided the study are presented below. The summary of findings was equally presented.

Research Question One: What is the relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples?

Table 1: Linear regression analysis on the relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Decision
1	0.18 ^a	0.03	0.03	Very Low and positive relationship

R = Correlation coefficient, R² = Coefficient of determination

Key (R): Very Low = 0.01-0.20; Low = 0.21-0.49; Moderate = 0.50-0.60; High = 0.61-0.80; Very High = 0.81 and above

The result in Table 1 shows that the correlation coefficient (R) between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples was 0.18 with adjusted regression square (R²) which is given as 0.03. The result indicates that there exist a very low and positive relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples. This indicated that, couples with weak self-management will definitely have very high intimate partner violence. The result had shown that the coefficient of determination (R²) associated with the correlation coefficient of 0.18 was 0.03, indicating very high self-management would reduce intimate partner violence among couples. This implied that, self-management accounts for 3% of intimate partner violence among married couples. This is an indication that, 97% of the variation in intimate partner violence among married couples is attributed to other factors other than self-management.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples.

Table 2: t-test associated with linear regression analysis on relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	P-value	Alpha level	Decision
	B	Std. Error					
1 (Constant)	13.44	0.12		1.01	0.00		Accepted/
1 Self-Management	0.13	0.05	0.18	1.84	0.87	0.05	Not Significant

The result in Table 2 shows that, the t-test value associated with linear regression on self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples is 1.84. The hypothesis was accepted as it shows a probability value of 0.87, which is greater than the alpha value of 0.05. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples as moderated by gender?

Table 3: Regression Analysis on the relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples as moderated by gender

Gender	N	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error Estimate	of Decision
Male	254	0.17 ^a	0.03	0.03	1.24035	Very Low and Positive Relationship
Female	254	0.19 ^a	0.03	0.03	1.23635	

Note: N = Sampled couples

Result in Table 3 shows that, there is no relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples as moderated by gender. The regression coefficient (R) is 0.17 for male and 0.19 for female couples, while the adjusted regression square R² is given as 0.03 and 0.03 respectively. This shows that, there is a very low and positive relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples as moderated by gender. This means that, male and female married couples with weak self-management accounts for higher intimate partner violence, but male and female married couples with strong self-management accounts for lower intimate partner violence.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples as moderated by gender.

Table 4: t-test associated with multiple regression analysis on the relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples as moderated by gender

Gender	N	R	df	t-score	P-Value	Sig. Value	Decision
Male	254	0.17 ^a					Ho2
Female	254	0.19 ^a	507	1.35	0.83	0.05	Accepted/Not Significant

Result on Table 4 shows that, the t-score value on the relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples as moderated by gender is 1.35 with 507 degree of freedom. The hypothesis is not significant (accepted), because the p-value of 0.83 is greater than the alpha significant value of 0.05. Hence, the male and female couples had a very low regression coefficient of 0.17 and 0.19 respectively. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples as moderated by gender.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that, there is a very low and positive relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples. The test of hypothesis one showed that, there is no significant relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples. The result indicates that there exist a very low and positive relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples. This indicated that, couples with weak self-management will definitely have very high intimate partner violence. The result had shown that a strong self-management would reduce intimate partner violence among couples. This implied that, self-management among married couples plays a key function in determining their level of intimate partner violence. It determines the level of anxiety among married couples, ways of adjusting to different temperaments, and various ways of displaying honesty and integrity. It harnesses relationship by determining the level of conscientiousness to handle negative emotions, empathize with partner, political awareness creation to make practical decisions, and level of communication skill among couples. It equally determines inspirational leadership ability to control induced emotions, self-regulation to resolve conflicts among them, motivational spirit to lessen stress, social awareness to express their views more effectively, and self-management capacity to improve peer relationships.

In line with the findings, Landry (2019) stated that self-management is one of the major skills needed by married couples for self-control, self-awareness, cooperation and empathy that are necessary for intimate partnership among them. Self-management helps in harnessing relationships, promoting effectiveness, satisfaction and productivity among married couples (Nwabueze & Bolaji, 2020). Self-management contributes towards an increased sense of creativity, promotes innovative thinking, reduces stress and improves relationships among married couples (Ibe, 2015). It encourages relationship management to overcome life challenges, self-control among couples to empathize with partners, achievement orientation to build strong relationships by exchanging thoughts with each other, organisational awareness to develop rising talents among married couples, marital coaching to avoid emotional breakdowns, conflict management to resolve conflicts, and teamwork among couples to learn positively from experiences.

The findings of the study also revealed that, there is a very low and positive relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples as moderated by gender. This means that, male and female married couples with weak self-management accounts for higher intimate partner violence, but male and female married couples with strong self-management accounts for lower intimate partner violence. The test of hypothesis two had shown that, there is no significant relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples as moderated by gender. This means that, weak self-management among male and female couples increases the level of intimate partner violence among them, especially on the side of the male couple. Ikiroma, Ekuri and Asim (2017) revealed that gender influences the level of self-management among married couples when it comes to intimate partner violence. Azuka (2012) revealed that, there was a significant, but high positive relationship between self-management and intimate partner violence among male and female married couples. Pablo, Rosario, Ruth and Natalio (2012) equally revealed that a new standpoint was taken to control the age, which is one of the prime socio-demographic properties that interact with gender and self-management, in order to make clear how gender affects self-management among married couples experiencing intimate partner violence.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers concluded that, self-management determines the level of intimacy among married couples or creates intimate partner violence among the couples. Strong self-management unites couples to understand and work with each other to reduce intimate partner violence among

them. But, weak self-management has been seen to induce intimate partner violence among married couples. However, there is no significant relationship self-management and intimate partner violence among married couples. Hence, married couples require strong self-management to manage their relationships and improve their married lives.

Recommendations

Base on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Married couples should work hard on their emotions to reduce and manage intimate partner violence among them through strong self-management.
2. Male and female married couples should possess strong self-management to reduce regular occurrence of intimate partner violence among them.

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