

INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL VARIABLES ON MARITAL STABILITY AMONG COUPLES IN LAGOS EAST SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF LAGOS STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study determined to analyse the influence of psychological variables on marital stability among couples in Lagos East Senatorial District of Lagos State. The design of the study was descriptive employing ex-post facto research design. The population for this study comprised of couples in Lagos East Senatorial Districts in Lagos State. The selected districts were Ibeju Lekki, Ikorodu and Epe. Samples were 300 couples from the three (3) selected areas in Lagos East Senatorial District, Lagos, Nigeria. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation and range) were calculated for all the psychological variables. Hierarchical multiple regression models were used to examine the relationships between the four main psychological variables and marital stability. The findings revealed that there was significant influence of emotional states of mind (depression ($\beta = -.141$, $p < 0.05$), anxiety ($\beta = -.199$, $p < 0.05$) and affection ($\beta = .577$, $p < 0.05$)) on marital stability ($F_{change} (291) = 107233.5$, $p < 0.05$) among couples in Lagos East Senatorial Districts. There was significant influence of personality traits (extraversion ($\beta = .602$, $p < 0.05$), openness ($\beta = .743$, $p < 0.05$) and conscientiousness ($\beta = -.799$, $p < 0.05$)) on marital stability ($F_{change} (290) = 114237.2$, $p < 0.05$) among couples in Lagos East Senatorial Districts. It was recommended that marital guidance and counselling programmes should be organized among couples to assist them to cope with psychological variables to foster marital stability. Registries in Local government councils should mount awareness campaign to concertize married persons against the psychological variables that reduce marital stability. Government and its agencies such as Ministry of Women Affairs should live up to the social responsibility expectations by providing family-to-family marriage

education programme through mass media. Marriage counselling, seminars, symposia, workshops and conferences should be organized for couples on marital life.

Keywords: Psychological Variables, Marital Stability, Couples

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Marital stability is central in individual and family well-being. The benefits to society and to new generations when strong marriages are formed cannot be over emphasized. When there is marital stability, it makes a valuable contribution to any married individual's life. A positive, satisfactory marital relationship induces social well-being, physical and emotional health; and that is an important source of emotional support for adults.

Marital stability produces a sense of belongingness and associated positive emotions in married individuals and this sense of belongingness is associated with better and well-being in individuals (Ojukwu & Donatus, 2016, Idhalama, Ezeabasili & Idhalama, 2025). Marital stability in its classical conception refers to the balancing of self-interests and values leading to the formation and maintenance of steadier and consistent behaviours within and between married persons. Married persons, husband and wife bare expected to keep reliable companionship through the formation and development of healthier life styles that would prevent their marital engagement from turbulence, distrust and crises (Obiji, 2015).

Marriage stability is a condition that exists in marriage situation where two partners live, move and share consistent favourable interest, knowledge, values, emotions and beliefs. In specific terms, when there is no consistent, unity, cooperation and harmony over perceived interest, values, emotions and beliefs, much of the marital attitude formed would be negative, resulting into marital conflict and marital breakdown. Marital stability occurs when married persons stay, work and cooperate consistently together.

Psychological factors may represent another pathway to decreased quality of life among individuals (Katz, Ryu, Onuegbu, Psaros, Weiser, Bangsberg, & Tsai, 2013). Psychological factors can be positive, such as happiness, affect and vitality, or negative, such as anxiety, perceived stress and depressive symptoms. These can also be split to distinguish between trait and state aspects. Potentially important psychological variables are rarely targeted in studies related to marital instability. Many clinical and behavioural interventions lack a psychological component altogether. Factors which contribute to marital satisfaction include the way and manner of communication between couples at home, presence of children, influences of in-law, marriage relationship, satisfaction of sexual desires and occupational differences. Others are financial misunderstanding, physical violence, lack of love and moral commitment (Adigeb & Mbua, 2015, Idhalama, Aluede & Batagarawa, 2026). Uebelacken, Courtange and Whisman (2003) affirmed that depressive systems were associated with self-silencing and a pattern of communication characterized as wife-demand and husband withdraw. The negative correlation between depression symptoms and marital satisfaction was significant for women and not for men. However, Adigeb & Mbua (2015) asserting Abraham Maslow's theory of human motivation and comparing it with psychological factors (depression, self-esteem, love/intimacy, power sharing and satisfaction) that bring about harmony in marriage home, depression discourage wife and husband to work harmoniously together to achieve a better married life.

Based on this background, the study was carried out to examine the influence of psychological factors on marital stability among couples in Lagos State with the view of providing empirical data that would guide couples on appropriate measures and good conflict resolution strategies to adopt to handling contending issues in marriage.

2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Marriage instability which is known to be one of the painful experiences of life had been noticed to be on the rise in our nation presently which has really led into lots of inadequacies. The society is the beneficiary of happy marriages. If families are at peace, it would be beneficial to the society because the product of a peaceful family is a product of united and peaceful society. But, with the increase rate of divorce in our society, the place of emotional instability and crime rate is also rampant. Its effect on the family life interference in the development of the children and crime is obvious. It is high time now that the society must do something to preserve the sanctity of marriage, for the pace. If divorce continues to increase at such an alarming rate, then the society itself would be adulterated and people would lose faith in the stability of life, marriage and long lasting relationship. The wish of every couple is to live their lives joyfully till death parts them. Unfortunately, this wish does not always come to reality because at a particular period in their lives, frictions don arise which leads to a near or total collapse of the marriage. And this is one of the inevitable challenges that accompany marriages. Hence, this study investigated the influence of psychological variables on marital stability among couples in Lagos East Senatorial Districts of Lagos state.

2.1 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the influence of psychological variables on marital stability among couples in Lagos East Senatorial Districts of Lagos. State,

Specifically, the study seeks to;

- i. examine the influence of emotional states of mind (depression, anxiety, and affection) on marital stability among couples in Lagos East Senatorial Districts;
- ii. examine the influence of personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness) on marital stability among couples in Lagos East Senatorial Districts.

2.2 Research Hypotheses

The following hypothesis were tested at 0.05 level of significance

Ho1: Emotional states of mind ((depression, anxiety, and affection) have no significant influence on marital stability among couples in Lagos East Senatorial Districts

Ho2: Personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness) have no significant influence on marital stability among couples in Lagos East Senatorial Districts.

3.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Behavioural theory seeks to explain human behavior by analyzing the antecedents and consequences present in the individuals environment and the learned associations he or she has acquired through previous experience. This entry describes the various traditions within the behavioural perspective (classical conditioning, operant conditioning, cognitively mediated behavioural theory and functional contextualism). Behavior controls how we communicate, cope with negative feelings, and react to stress. Many of our behaviors are in response to “environmental factors” but how we respond has genetic underpinnings (Lewis, 2012). Behavioural psychology is basically interested in how a behavior results from stimuli both in the environment and within the human person.

People have expectation about how others should act in a given situation. Some expectations are based on individual, relationship or situation. Other expectations are based on rule of social and cultural appropriateness. When couple’s behavior deviates from these expectations, an expectancy violation occurs. Expectancy violation theory explains how couples respond to unexpected communications which may even lead to conflict. For example, if husband asks the wife where are you coming from? The wife responds by saying, what do you mean by that question? The husband will be angry because he was not expecting such an answer and that could lead to conflict, meaning that expectancy violation has taken place (Burgoon, 2015).

In intercultural marriages, the diverse world perception, beliefs and values based on couples’ different cultural background produces inconsistent expectancies. Greater understanding of marital interaction in intercultural marriage can be achieved through the effects of language expectancy to marriages of in-group members, positive or negative violation to couple expectancies derived from their background to mate selection (Ting-Toomey, 2013).

Expectancy violation theory involves socially normative pattern of behavior. They are predictive pattern and prescriptive component. Predictive components refer to communicative acts that are typical in given language or conflict behavior that is known for a particular language. All languages have communications that are the guidelines for human conduct that carry associated anticipations for how others will behave so as to avoid conflict (Rosenberg, & Chopra, 2015).

In the study of Liu, Min, Zhai, & Smyth (2016), social exchange theory posits that all human relationships are formed by the use of subjective cost-benefit analysis and compassion of alternative. The theory has roots in economics, psychology and sociology. Costs are the elements of relational life that have negative value to a person, such as the effort put into a relationship and the negative responses of a partner. Costs can be time, money, effort and so on. For example, one partner may put his money, time and effort to support the family while the other one will not appreciate it. Rewards are the element of a relationship that has positive value. Rewards can be sense of acceptance, support and companionship. The social exchange perspective argues that people calculate the overall worth of a relationship by subtracting its costs from the rewards. It provides: $Worth = Rewards - Costs$ (David, & Venatus, 2019).

With social exchange theory, both parties take in responsibilities of one another also. Benefits include things such as materials or financial gains, social status and emotional comforts.

3.1 Conceptual framework

Marriage is an important institution both for the individual and the society at large. For the individual, it is a significant and memorable event in one's life cycle as well as the most important foundation in the family formation process. It is also a rite of passage that marks the beginning of an individuals' separation from the parental unit, even if generations continue to be socially and economically interdependent (Quisumbing and Hallman, 2013).

The concept of marriage is a bit more difficult to define and can include elements like close proximity and emotional intimacy. It is a powerful, legal and social institution that protects and supports intimate family relationships by providing a unique set of rights, privileges and responsibilities (Clayton, 2014). Marriage represents a multi-level commitment, one that involves person-person, family-to-family and couple-to-state regarded as inexperienced and irresponsible. Marriage brings respect, self-esteem and honour.

Family is the world's oldest form of human relationship that has survived thousands of years, withstanding odds of the highest order (Hillman, & Ventura, 2018). Family according to Goldenberg (2012) is a natural social system having unique properties of its own. Family background plays a very big role on a child's life. Family background refers to all the objects, forces and conditions in the family which influences the child physically, intellectually and emotionally. With some families, the background varies from time to time for the same individuals. Because it is parents who are primarily responsible for establishing the family and exercise control over it, and they are responsible for the type of family background that exists; this means that parental attitudes are very important in promoting healthy family background (Muola, 2010).

4.0 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Early study reported by Eysenck and Wakefield (1981) used questionnaire to assess marital satisfaction, personality, background, social attitudes, sexual attitudes and sexual behavior independently on 566 males and 566 females who had been married to each other for from 0-40 years. The marital Satisfaction (MS) variable was factored and transformed into an almost normally distributed variable that yielded a correlation of 0.73 between husbands' and wives' scores. The influence of all other variables on the MS of the couples was assessed with regression analyses. With all variables accounting for over two-thirds of the variance of MS, the sexual behavior and sexual attitude variables contributed most heavily; background and personality moderately; and social attitudes only minimally.

Akram, Vafa, & Pejman, (2017) investigated the factors affecting the quality of life and marital satisfaction of married nurses and nursing assistant in three teaching hospitals of Kerman University of Medical Sciences. Four hundred and forty-six married nurses and nursing assistant participated in this study. Participants were selected by simple random sampling, and data were collected with the World Health Organization Quality of Life Standard. Happy hours spent with family, working hospital and belief in the negative effect of night shift work on personal, family and social life were found to be effective parameters on four domains of life quality. Marital satisfaction and communication domain in the Enrich questionnaire were significantly correlated with total score of quality of life ($P = 0.008$). Idealistic distortion domain in the Enrich questioner was significantly correlated with the social domain of quality

of life ($P = 0.031$). Organizational and administrative support, including training in the effective communication skills between couples, making balance between work and family.

Adigeb and Mbua (2015) investigated the correlation between psychosocial factors and marital satisfaction among public servant in Cross River State, Nigeria. The researchers discovered that psychological factors such as depression, affection and sexual activities significantly relate with marital satisfaction among public servants. In a systematic review of studies, Zaheri, Dolatian, Shariati, Simbar, Ebadi, & Azghadi, (2016) surveyed the effective factors on marital satisfaction in view of Iranian men and women. Their study surveyed articles published from 2005 to 2015. According to their results, the spiritual and religious, sexual and interpersonal factors, communication and interaction factors and mental health had positive impact on marital satisfaction in the vast majority of studies.

5.0 RESEARCH METHODS

The design of the study was descriptive survey research design. The population for this study comprised couples in Lagos East Senatorial Districts in Lagos State. The selected areas are Ibeju Lekki, Ikorodu and Epe. Three hundred (300 couples were selected from three (3) areas (Epe, Ikorodu and Ibeju Lekki) in Lagos East Senatorial District, Lagos Nigeria. Stratified sampling technique was used to select the respondents and this technique is considered applicable.

Instruments

- i. Beck Depression Inventory- Short form (BDI-SF) (Beck et al. 1961): the BDI-SF uses a subset of the items from the full-scale BDI form and correlates .95 with the full scale scores.
- ii. Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) (Beck et al. 1988): the BAI is a 21-item scale and has a strong history of psychometric reliability and validity and specifically differentiates depression from anxiety symptoms despite their general overlap
- iii. McGill Friendship Questionnaire-Respondents' affection (MFQ-RA). The MFQ-RA is a 16-item questionnaire measuring respondents' feelings towards a friend/friendship. Positive statements about the friendship are responded to along a 9-point scale from "very much disagree" "to very much agree"
- iv. Big five inventory: the big five inventory (BFI; John et al. 1991; John and Srivastava 1999) is a 44-item instrument that assess the big five personality factors.

6.0 RESULTS

Ho1: Emotional states of mind (depression, anxiety, and affection) have no significant influence on marital stability among couples in Lagos East Senatorial Districts

Table 1: Linear Regression Analyses Examining the influence of Emotional states of Mind (Depression, Anxiety and Affection) on Marital Stability.

	Beta		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Sex	1.740	2.350	.945

Age	-2.485	-2.109	-657
Number of Children	1.165	2.107	.998
Education		-.762	-.614
Employment status		-.347	-.347
Length of marriage		-.878	-.283
Depression			-.141*
Anxiety			-.199*
Affection			.577*
F _{change}	243.721	117.744*	107233.5*
Df	296	293	291
R ²	.721	.869	1.000
R ² change	.712	.158	.130

*p < 0.05

The results of the regression model predicting marital stability by psychological variable of emotional states of mind of respondents revealed significant negative relationship with depression ($\beta = -.141, p < 0.05$), and anxiety ($\beta = -.199, p < 0.05$). However, the model showed significant positive relationship with affection ($\beta = .577, p < 0.05$) which was entered in the final step, and uniquely accounted for 13.0% of the variance in marital stability (Fchange (291) = 107233.5, $p < 0.05$); no other covariates in the variance final step were significant. After controlling for the demographic and socio-demographic variables, higher levels of marital stability was best predicted by higher values of affection and by lower values of depression and anxiety. These results imply that emotional states of mind (depression, anxiety and affection) significantly influenced marital stability among couples in Lagos East Senatorial Districts. Thus, the hypothesis one was rejected.

Ho2: Personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness) have no significant influence on marital stability among couples in Lagos East Senatorial Districts.

Table 2: Linear Regression Analyses Examining the influence of Personality Traits (Neuroticism, Extraversion, openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness) on Marital Stability.

	Beta		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Sex	1.740	2.350	3.865
Age	-2.485	-2.109	-2.735
Number of Children	1.165	2.107	2.889
Education		-.762	-1.058
Employment status		-.347	-.940
Length of marriage		-.878	-1.178
Neuroticism			.312
Extraversion			.602*
Openness			.743*
Agreeableness			.219

Conscientiousness			-.799*
F _{change}	243.721*	117.744*	114237.2*
Df	296	293	290
R ²	.721	.869	1.000
R ² change	.712	.158	.131

*p < 0.05

The results of the regression model predicting scores on the marital stability indicated that extraversion ($\beta = .602$, $p < 0.05$) and openness ($\beta = .743$, $p < 0.05$) were significantly and positively associated with scores of marital stability on the final step. Only conscientiousness ($\beta = -.799$, $p < 0.05$) was significantly and negatively associated with scores of marital stability. After controlling for demographic and socio-demographic variables, personality traits accounted for 13.1% of variance in the marital stability among couples when it was entered into the model in step three (Fchange (290) = 114237.2, $p < 0.05$). This means that personality traits (extraversion, openness and conscientiousness) significantly influenced marital stability among couples in Lagos East Senatorial Districts, thus the null hypothesis two was rejected.

7.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings on the relationship between psycho-emotional state and marital stability indicated that a significant association exists between psycho-emotional state of married persons and their marital stability. This means that the nature of a married person's emotional condition over experience, events, and issues confronting his or her family may stir up negative emotion such as anxiety, worries, and fears and so on and may ginger up feelings for quitting a married relationship. This result supports Ojukwu & Obiji (2016) who found that negative emotion developed about certain experiences bring out conflict at marriage. David, Olson & Defrain (2003) had remarked that to maintain a marital life span, community need to establish healthy atmosphere for its members.

Another finding revealed that only personality traits of extraversion, openness and conscientiousness significantly influenced marital stability among couples in Lagos East Senatorial Districts. In support of this finding, Tavakol, Nasrabadi, Moghadam, Salehiniya & Rezaei (2017) reported a positive relationship, some negative and some lack of association between marital stability and variables of personality traits. Some researchers believe openness has a direct correlation with marital stability. Studies on openness and its relationship with marital satisfaction conclude that paying attention to spouses' conversations and demands results in a better understanding of their point of view. Perfectionism is another attribute that has been studied but not included in the current study. Perfectionism significantly affects human behaviour, it includes both positive and negative perfectionism. Perfectionism affects all aspects of life including romantic relationships and marital satisfaction.

8.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it is therefore concluded that psychological variables such as depression, anxiety, affection, extraversion, openness and conscientious significantly influenced marital stability among couples in Lagos East Senatorial Districts of Lagos state. The psychological variables of emotional affection, personal extraversion and openness

positively influenced marital stability while the psychological variables of emotional depression and anxiety, personal conscientiousness and sexual attitudes negatively contributed significantly to variation in marital stability of married couples. Effective treatments of these variables may result in improved marital life.

8.1 Recommendations

The following recommendations were suggested based on the findings of this study

1. Marital guidance and counselling programmes should be organized among couples to assist them cope with psychological variables to foster marital stability.
2. Registries in Local government councils should mount awareness campaign to concertize married person against the psychological variables that reduce marital stability.
3. Government and its agencies such as Ministry of Women Affairs should live up to the social responsibility expectations by providing family-to-family marriage education programme through mass media. When these are implemented the high rate of marital instability in our society will be reduced.
4. Marriage counselling, seminars, symposia, workshops and conferences should be organized for couples on marital life.
5. For the counsellors, lectures, workshops, etc., should be organized for married couples to enhance marital stability and to teach them some skills in maintaining positive psychological variables that promote marital stability.

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