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MARITAL INSTABILITY AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT OF TEACHERS IN NORTH CENTRAL, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect and social adjustment of teachers in North Central Nigeria. This study employed a correlational design, utilizing a structured questionnaire to collect data from a sample of 500 tertiary teachers selected from a total population of 10,000 tertiary teachers from six (6) states of North Central Nigeria; namely: Benue, Kwara, Kogi, Nasarawa, Plateau and Niger. The six schools selected were; Benue State University, Fidei Polytechnic, Gboko, Kogi State University, Anyigba, College of Education, Katsina-Ala, Federal Polytechnic, Offa, and Akperan Orshi College of Agriculture, Yandev. Content and construct validity were employed to check the validity of the instrument. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to measure the questionnaire's reliability. For the marital instability scale, a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.78 was obtained, and 0.82 for the social adjustment scale. They both exceeded the generally accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating good internal consistency. A Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.85 was obtained, confirming that the instrument provided consistent results over time. Descriptive statistics and chi-square tests were used for analysis. The results show that stress at work and financial hardships are major causes of marital instability among educators. A strong correlation between marital instability and social adjustment emerged, indicating that when instability occurs, it has profound effects on teachers' personal and professional lives. The study also suggests the establishment of counseling services, stress management programs, and financial support initiatives to help teachers effectively navigate marital and professional challenges. Additionally, marital instability negatively affects teachers' emotional well-being, social interactions, and productivity.

Keywords: Marital instability, Social adjustment, North Central Nigeria, Professional well-being, Teachers.

Introduction

One core cultural structure whose existence has an enormous influence on both the stability of society along with individual well-being is marriage. Similarly, across numerous different societies, marriage is considered important in Nigeria for having the

capacity to serve as the framework for raising children, economic partnership, and emotional support. Although marital instability, often emerges as disagreements, breakups, or divorces, has raised in concern, specifically among specialists like teachers. The subsequent generations are deeply influenced by teachers, and both their career competence and the academic success of students they teach are significantly influenced by their own mental health. From a psychological perspective, a person's marital state is often linked with happiness, self - fulfillment, self - esteem, mental well - being, and life satisfaction (Lawrence *et al.*, 2019).

Despite where it is contracted, marriage is a complicated social and cultural relationship. Marriage takes up an important position in all societies, reaching a degree which each cultural group has developed its own traditions and values around it (Abekhale, 2020). The concept of marriage has grown into widely recognized. Consequently, marriage establishes a firm basis and provides opportunities for the development of households, that serve as the key components of civilization for humans. Most times, in order for marriages to legally take place in a specific cultural context, it has to adhere to the norms, rites, and laws that have been set by the community in question (Amato *&* *Rogers*, 2017).

An understanding of social adjustment is vital for interpreting the ways that individuals interact with their social surroundings. For anyone to attain psychological equilibrium and productive connections with others, people have to coordinate their actions and perspectives with the expectations of the society in which they live. Stability in an individual's state of mind, accomplishments in academics and in job settings, and generally contentment with life are all interrelated to successful social adjustment (Williams, 2017).

Marriage is often defined in many different kinds of ways and covers an assortment of viewpoints because the wide variation in cultures. Several cultures have a conviction that marriage forms a spiritual link between a husband and wife that binds the two together throughout the rest of their entire lives. Consequently, marriage incorporates much more than solely reproduction, sex, sexual fulfillment, and desire (Ambakederemo & Ganagana, 2016).

Factors such as communication can significantly influence marital stability (Wayas, 2017). Work-life balance also influences marital stability to a great extent (Omoniyi, 2016). Consequently, coping strategies such as seeking social support and time management positively influence marriage stability (Yaro, 2022). For ages, marriage has been honored as being one of the seven ordinances proclaimed by Christ in the Church. A male individual along with a woman acquire an everlasting relationship through marriage, and this is commonly referred to as the matrimonial covenant (Barr *et al.*, 2015). Canon law asserts that marriage has three primary functions: first of all, to give birth to children; second, forging a mutual consortium; and third, to act as a solution for concupiscence.

Animals and human beings share the first end.

Statement of the Problem

Marital instability has become a pressing social issue, with far-reaching consequences for individuals, families, and professional life. In Nigeria, particularly in the North Central region, Teachers deal with significant difficulties that might lead to marital instability. These difficulties include sociocultural expectations, work-related stress, and financial limitations. Teachers frequently have little time to manage their professional and marital obligations due to the emotionally and physically taxing nature of the teaching job. Because of this, many teachers go through marital problems, separations, or divorces, which can have an impact on their general well-being and social skills.

Teachers' professional efficiency depends on their social adjustment, which includes their capacity to communicate with coworkers, pupils, and the general public in an efficient manner. However, mental anguish, diminished focus, social disengagement, and even subpar work performance can result from unstable marriages. There is little empirical research on how teachers' marital instability affects their social adjustment, despite the fact that it is becoming more common among them. The majority of research on marital instability in Nigeria has concentrated on its psychological and economic impacts, paying little attention to how it affects teachers' relationships at work, in their communities, and in their social connections.

Given the critical role teachers play in shaping future generations, understanding the link between marital instability and social adjustment is essential. Without addressing this issue, the quality of education and overall teacher well-being may continue to decline. This study, therefore, seeks to examine the extent to which marital instability affects the social adjustment of teachers in North Central Nigeria, filling a significant gap in the existing body of knowledge.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of this study are:
1. To assess the prevalence of marital instability among teachers in North Central Nigeria.
2. To examine the relationship between marital instability and social adjustment among these teachers.

Research Questions

To guide this study, the following research questions are posed:
1. What is the prevalence of marital instability among teachers in North Central Nigeria?
2. Is there a significant relationship between marital instability and social adjustment among these teachers?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses will be tested in this study:
1. There is no significant prevalence of marital instability among teachers in North Central Nigeria.
2. There is no significant relationship between marital instability and social adjustment among teachers in North Central Nigeria.

Methodology

This study employed a correlational design, utilizing a structured questionnaire to collect data from a sample of 500 tertiary teachers selected from a total population of 10,000 tertiary teachers from six (6) states of North Central Nigeria; namely: Benue, Kwara, Kogi, Nasarawa, Plateau and Niger. Three states out of the six states were afterwards selected, purposeful sampling technique was used to select 12 Local Government Areas from the three selected states. The six schools selected were; Benue State University, Fidei Polytechnic, Gboko, Kogi State University, Anyigba, College of Education, Katsina-Ala, Federal Polytechnic, Offa, and Akperan Orshi College of Agriculture, Yandev. The questionnaire was designed to measure the level of marital instability and social adjustment of teachers in North Central Nigeria. A 5-point Likert scale was used to capture teachers' responses, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and chi-square analysis to test the null hypotheses at an alpha level of 0.05.

The data were analyzed using version 25 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were employed and Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to evaluate the relationships between marital instability and social adjustment among tertiary teachers. Simple percentages were used to answer research questions and chi-square statistics was used to test the research hypotheses.

Validity of the Instruments

Content and construct validity were employed to check the validity of the instrument. An extensive review of relevant literature, theoretical frameworks, and prior empirical studies on marital instability and social adjustment was used to successfully develop the questionnaire. Experts in educational psychology, counseling and sociology reviewed the instrument to ensure it accurately captured the variables under investigation. A pilot study was further done in order to confirm the construct validity using a sample of 50 teachers who were not part of the main study followed by a factor analysis to determine whether the questionnaire items loaded onto the expected outcomes. The results showed that the questionnaire effectively captured two different but related constructs which are marital instability and social adjustment, therefore its theoretical soundness was confirmed.

Reliability of the Instrument

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to measure the questionnaire's reliability. For the marital instability scale, a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.78 was obtained, and 0.82 for the social adjustment scale. They both exceeded the generally accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating good internal consistency. Within a two-weeks interval, the questionnaire was administered to a subset of 40 teachers to determine the instrument's stability. A Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.85 was obtained, confirming that the instrument provided consistent results over time.

Results

The results were analyzed and presented based on research questions and hypotheses as follows;

Research Question 1: What is the prevalence of marital instability among teachers in North Central Nigeria?

To answer the research question, data was collected, analyzed and presented in the table below.

Table 1: Percentage Scores of the prevalence of marital instability among teachers in North Central, Nigeria

S/no	Item	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1	Financial difficulties have contributed to instability in many teacher's marriages	350	70	150	30
2	Work-related stress makes it difficult to maintain a stable marriage	320	64	180	36
3	Teachers have considered separation or divorce at some point	290	58	210	42
4	Teachers feel emotionally detached from their spouse due to unresolved conflicts.	370	74	130	26
5	They have sought professional or religious counseling due to marital challenges	330	66	170	34
	Average	-	**66**		**37**

From the table (1), 350 respondents representing 70% of teachers indicated that they believe financial difficulties have contributed to instability in many teacher's marriages. This belief is a critical foundation for fostering marriages, as self-efficacy can lead to increased motivation and initiative among aspiring couples. On item (2), 320 respondents representing 64% of teachers agreed that work-related stress makes it difficult to maintain a stable marriage. While 64% of teachers expressed that work-related stress makes it difficult to maintain a stable marriage, 36% did not share this view. This indicates a general willingness hustle for money, an important characteristic for partners or couples, yet a significant number of teachers appear hesitant to move beyond their comfort zones. This difference may require further investigation into the underlying factors that contribute to this reluctance. On item (3), 290 respondents representing 58% of teachers agree that teachers have considered separation or divorce at some point. Only 58% of teachers felt they had considered separation or divorce at some point, whereas 42% disagreed. This reveals a possible gap in self-assessment among teachers, indicating that educational programs might need to place greater emphasis on developing skills and boosting confidence marriages. On item (4), 370 respondents representing 74% teachers which feel emotionally detached from their spouse due to unresolved conflicts. A significant majority (74%) of teachers expressed confidence in their capacity for creative problem-solving, reflecting a positive outlook on adaptability and tolerance, which are essential qualities for successful marriages. The 26% of teachers who disagreed may benefit from focused training in creative thinking and problem-solving techniques. On item

(5), 330 respondents representing 66% of teachers have sought professional or religious counseling due to marital challenges. Nonetheless, the 34% who disagreed may signify a group that requires further encouragement and support to nurture their marriage interests. The overall agreement rate across the items stands at 66%, reflecting a generally positive attitude toward marriage among teachers. However, the 37% average disagreement indicates that there are specific areas where teachers may feel unsure or lack confidence, especially due to work-related stress which makes it difficult to maintain a stable marriage.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant relationship between marital instability and social adjustment among these teachers?

To answer the question above, data has been presented and analyzed as shown below;

Table 2: Percentage Scores on the relationship between marital instability and social adjustment among the teachers in North Central Nigeria

S/no	Item	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1	Teachers often feel withdrawn or isolated at work due to stress from my marriage	180	36	320	64
2	They receive support from colleagues or friends when dealing with marital instability	150	30	350	70
3	Teacher's ability to teach and engage with students is negatively affected by marital challenges	270	54	230	46
4	They avoid social gatherings or workplace interactions because of issues at home	200	40	300	60
5	Teacher's level of productivity at work decreases due to emotional distress from marital instability	350	70	150	30
	Average	-	**98**		**27**

Table (2) shows that 64% of teachers disagreed with the statement that marital stress makes them feel withdrawn or alone at work, while 36% agreed. This implies that while a sizable minority (36%) of teachers do experience social disengagement as a result of marital instability, the majority do not. While 70% disagreed, just 30% said they get assistance from friends and coworkers when their marriage is unstable. This suggests that when faced with marital difficulties, the majority of teachers feel that there is a lack of social support at work. While 46% disagreed, 54% agreed that marital instability has a detrimental impact on their capacity to instruct and interact with students. This nearly uniform distribution shows that although some teachers face marital troubles that affect their careers, others are able to continue being excellent educators. 60% of teachers disagreed, with 40% agreeing that problems at home cause them to avoid social events or interactions at work. This implies that although some teachers experience social disengagement as a result of unstable marriages, most do not let it have a big impact on their relationships at work. Just 30% of instructors disagreed with the 70% who thought that emotional turmoil from unstable marriages lowers their productivity. This research raises serious concerns because it shows that teachers' job performance is significantly impacted by marital instability. On average, 46%

of respondents agree, whereas 54% disagree. This indicates that although a sizable percentage of teachers struggle with social adjustment as a result of marital instability, a small majority (54%) do not believe it has a significant impact on their relationships and productivity at work. Even while social disengagement may not always happen, marital instability does have a noticeable effect on work performance, as seen by the high agreement rate (70%) on decreased productivity.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant prevalence of marital instability among teachers in North Central Nigeria.

Table 3: Chi-square Analysis for Hypothesis 1

Response	Observed	Expected	df	X^2cal	X^2tab	α	Remarks
Strongly Agree (SA)	120	100	3	6.4	7.81	0.05	Not significant
Agree (A)	210	200					
Disagree (D)	100	120					
Strongly Disagree (SD)	70	80					

X^2cal = 6.4, df =3, X^2tab =7.81, α = 0.05

The calculated chi-square statistic (6.4) is lower than the critical value (7.81) at a significance level of 0.05. This indicates that the differences between the observed and expected frequencies are not statistically significant. As a result, we do not reject the null hypothesis, which posits that there is no significant prevalence of marital instability among teachers in North Central Nigeria.

In summary, although there are noticeable trends suggesting a change in teacher attitudes towards students, these trends do not attain statistical significance. This implies that while awareness and acceptance may be increasing, the perceptions have not yet become strong enough to reflect a significant shift away from traditional views.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between marital instability and social adjustment among teachers in North Central Nigeria.

Table 4: Chi-Square Analysis for Hypothesis 2

Response	Observed	Expected	Df	X^2cal	X^2tab	α	Remarks
Strongly Agree (SA)	70	50	3	9.5	7.81	0.05	Rejected (Significant)
Agree (A)	120	110					
Disagree (D)	60	80					
Strongly Disagree (SD)	50	60					

X^2cal = 9.5, df =3, X^2tab =7.81, α = 0.05

Table 4 indicated that chi-square calculated value (X^2cal) = 9.5, degree of freedom = 3, X^2tab = 7.81 at 0.05. The calculated chi-square statistic (9.5) is greater than the critical value (7.81) at a significance level of 0.05. This indicates a statistically significant result, allowing us to reject the null hypothesis, which posits that there is no significant relationship between the analyzed variables that influence marital instability and social adjustment among

teachers in North Central Nigeria. This significant outcome suggests that the responses are not merely a product of random variation; instead, they reveal meaningful differences in teacher perceptions regarding marital instability and social adjustment. The observed frequencies in the Strongly Agree and Agree categories, which are higher than expected, indicate a significant shift.

Discussion of Findings

In research, the findings and discussions are vital as they provide a framework for interpreting and conveying the results to the public. Drawing on the data collected and analyzed in this study, the following findings are presented, arranged according to each hypothesis.

This study sought to investigate the hypothesis that "There is no significant prevalence of marital instability among teachers in North Central Nigeria." To test this hypothesis, a chi-square analysis was conducted using data from a sample of 500 teachers. The responses were categorized into four groups: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The observed frequencies for each category were compared to the expected frequencies, assuming that no relationship exists.

The study revealed that the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant prevalence of marital instability among teachers in North Central Nigeria was not significant since X^2_{cal} was lesser than X^2_{tab}. Therefore, there is no significant prevalence of marital instability among teachers in North Central Nigeria.

Based on the chi-square analysis for Hypothesis 2, the calculated chi-square value $X^2_{Cal} = 9.5$ is significantly greater than the tabulated value $X^2_{tab} = 7.81$, with degrees of freedom df = 3 and a significance level $\alpha = 0.05$. This suggests that the null hypothesis (H_0), which states that there is no significant relationship between marital instability and social adjustment among teachers in North Central Nigeria, is rejected.

Conclusively, the chi-square analysis shows a significant shift in teacher perceptions related to marital instability and social adjustment. The findings align with previous studies that emphasize the rejection of traditional stereotypes. This is in line with the works of Omoniyi (2016) who worked on, ’Adjustment Strategies for Marital Stress Among 422 Female Teachers in Nigeria.’’ According to the study, female primary school teachers use a variety of techniques, including professional therapy and good communication, to cope with marital stress. It also mentioned how these tactics are influenced by variables including age, the number of children, and marital status.

Also, Wayas (2017), worked on "Relationship Between Psycho-Social Variables and Marital Adjustment Among 20,045 married Women in Federal College of Education Zaria, Nigeria" The study discovered a strong negative correlation between 322 participants, determined using Krejcie and Morgan’s sample size distribution table., in-law interference, and marital

adjustment. On the other hand, there were favorable correlations found between love, communication, and marital adjustment.

The significance of these results reinforces the need for continued efforts to challenge and eliminate outdated beliefs about marital instability and social adjustment which is in line with the works of Yaro (2017) who conducted a study on "Stress, Marital Challenges and Coping Strategies of Female Married Secondary School Teachers in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State, Nigeria". Based on the study, work-family conflicts are the main cause of the high levels of stress and marital difficulties faced by married female secondary school teachers in Sokoto. Time management and looking for social support have been found to be effective coping mechanisms.

Conclusion

The study looked at how common marital instability is among educators in North Central Nigeria and how it affects their ability to adjust socially. The results show that teachers have a high rate of marital instability, with unresolved disagreements, work-related stress, and financial hardships being the main causes. Additionally, the study discovered that teachers' emotional health, social interactions, and productivity are all impacted by marital instability. A considerable percentage of teachers suffer from withdrawal, lower involvement, and poorer work performance, even though some are able to maintain their social integration in spite of marital difficulties. There was no discernible prevalence of marital instability among North Central Nigerian teachers, according to the statistical study. Nonetheless, a strong correlation between social adjustment and marital instability was found. It additionally indicates that although marital instability may not be common, when it does happen, it significantly affects teachers' social adjustment and productivity at work.

Addressing marital instability is key to upholding good educational standards and guaranteeing the well-being of teachers, given the critical role they play in influencing future generations. The study emphasizes the necessity of professional counseling, workplace support networks, and initiatives that can assist educators in effectively managing their professional and marital obligations.

Recommendations

In view of the research findings, the researcher wished to make the following recommendations:

1. Counseling departments should be set up in schools and other educational facilities to offer instructors emotional and professional support as they deal with unstable marriages.
2. To give teachers the tools they need to successfully manage both job and personal issues, schools should host courses on stress management and work-life balance.
3. Educational stakeholders should think about financial aid programs, cooperative savings plans, or wage restructuring to promote teachers' financial well-being, as financial challenges are a significant factor in marital instability.

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