

Social Factors as Correlates of Marital Instability Among Married Women in Southwest, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated social factor as correlates of marital instability among married women in southwest, Nigeria. The study specifically determined the relationship between social factors (educational status, occupational status and income status) and marital instability among married women. The descriptive research design of the survey type was used in this study. The population consisted of all married women in Government Ministries and Departments in Southwest, Nigeria. The sample for this study consisted of 1,703 married women selected through multi stage sampling procedure. A self-developed questionnaire tagged Social Factors and Marital Instability Questionnaire (SFMIQ) was used to collect data for the study. The face and content validity of the instrument were determined by experts in Human Kinetics and Health Education. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. A co-efficient value of 0.81 was obtained which was considered high enough to make the instrument reliable. The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that the level of marital instability among married women was moderate. It was further revealed that marital instability differs based on women's occupational status and years of marital experience while women irrespective of their educational status and income status experienced same level of marital instability. It was recommended that health educators should get involved in mass campaign on issue regarding marital instability in

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Introduction

Marriage institution has suffered an intense decline partly due to increased divorce rates. However, the most challenge in marital relationship is the high rate of marital instability which results in marriage divorce, separation, single parenthood, positive response to couple cohabitation and same sex marriage. It is no longer a stigma in Nigeria for women to request for dissolution of marriage and men to celebrate their egocentricity by requesting for a liberty from the shackles of matrimony with pride.

Marital instability appears to continue to be on the increase, to an extent that many married couples seem to be suffering emotionally and physically (Hornby, 2010). In recent times, there has been public out-cry against the alarming-rate of divorce and marital instability among married people. The incidence of marital instability appears endemic such that scholars, teachers, churches, health practitioners among others are at a loss on the options available for identifying the causes of this situation in their attempt to proffer solutions.

The researcher observed that the rate at which divorce cases come up every day in customary courts especially in Ekiti State is alarming. The researcher observed that the charges against husband and wife are too numerous. For instance, husband may complain of the wife carefree attitude to marital issues, while the wife complain of her husband coming back home very late, tired and unable to perform his marital role.

The researcher observed that factors threatening stability of marriage in Nigeria include social factors. Social factors are influences derived from the customs, perceptions and beliefs of an individual's culture (Odi, 2010). The social factors are educational status, occupational status and income status. Education does not only provide basic knowledge and skills to improve health and livelihood, but it empowers men and women to take their rightful place in their homes, society and development process. Education gives human the status and confidence to influence household decisions. Educating young men and women is significant in breaking the cycle of poverty (Fehintola, 2009).

The duty of the man in the Nigerian culture is that of a dominant and manager of the home. The man wants to manage this role and does not want a situation that could militate against it so that the society does not see him as a weakling. It appears that some men are weary of marrying women who have acquired higher education. Men in this group seems to have control over women who less educated regardless of their own educational background. The reason for this is that such women will not see them as equals and give them enough respect, thereby enabling them master of the home.

The researcher observed that when the man has a lower educational qualification than the wife and his financial standing is also lower, he may develop feeling of resentment, jealousy and incapability at being able to have a control over his household, especially if the man did not approve of such educational attainment. The situation may lead to instability, eventual separation or divorce in the marriage.

It appears that some men, due to the exposure in higher institutions of learning believe that they will be more compatible with women who are also well educated like themselves. They believe they will be able to communicate effectively with such women and be easily understood by them. Many at times they may discover that their wives are hardly at home due to the level of their education. This may lead to feelings of being neglected and uncared for by the man who is usually left to the mercy of house helps who take the place of their wives at home.

On the other hand, if a wife is well educated and gainfully employed and the husband is not, such man may develop the feeling of inadequacy especially if the wife works with men who are more successful than himself and due to the wife's sense of dressing and sophistication, infidelity is often suspected and this can lead to marital instability.

Occupational status of married women may lead to marital instability. The gendered division of the household work posited in the role-specialisation model and gender norms-based models leads to woman's dependency on her partner's income. A woman's occupation may likely threaten marital stability where men's earnings are on average sufficient to satisfy a couple's material aspirations. Women who are in certain occupations that are highly rated by the society and admired by all men and women may display certain personal characteristics that distinguish them from those working in low rated occupations. Their behaviour sometimes may be intimidating and humiliating, and could bring about conflicts in marriage.

Wives' employment may have a disruptive effect on marriage due to their financial independence resulting from their participation in productive activities. The researcher observed that women's income independence does not intrinsically weaken marriage per se, but gives women resources that they can use to escape from "unhappy marriages". This is so, because greater independence allows women to set a higher standard for the minimally acceptable marital satisfaction which may affect marital instability.

In view of the above, the study examined social factors as correlates of marital instability among married women in Southwest, Nigeria. Specifically, the study:

- i. assessed the level of marital instability among married women in Southwest, Nigeria;
- ii. determined the relationship between social factors (educational status, occupational status and income status) and marital instability among married women; and
- iii. found out the difference in marital instability among married women based on their marital experience.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the level of marital instability among married women in Southwest, Nigeria?
2. What are the social factors that are related to marital instability among married women?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were generated for this study:

1. There is no significant relationship between educational status and marital instability among married women.
2. There is no significant relationship between occupational status and marital instability among married women.
3. There is no significant relationship between income status and marital instability among married women.
4. There is no significant difference in marital instability among married women based on their year of marital experience.

Methodology

The descriptive research design of the survey type was used in this study. This describes and interprets what was concerned with issues like social factors relatedness to marital instability without manipulation of factors. The population consisted of all married women in Government Ministries and Departments in Southwest, Nigeria comprising Lagos,

Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti State. The sample for this study consisted of 1703 married women from Government Ministries and Departments in Southwest, Nigeria which were selected through multi stage sampling procedure.

A self-developed questionnaire tagged "Social Factors and Marital Instability Questionnaire (SFMIQ)" was used to collect data for the study. The instrument consisted of three sections namely. Section A of the instrument sought for the bio-data of the respondents while Section B consisted of 16 items which sought information on marital instability among married women. Adapted three-point scale of Likert type was used as follows: Frequently - 3, Sometimes - 2 and Never - 1. Section C consists of 12 items which sought information on each of the social factors such as educational status, occupational status and income status as related to marital instability. It was prepared using adapted four point scale of Likert type as follows: Strongly Agree - 4, Agree - 3, Disagree - 2 and Strongly Disagree - 1.

The instrument was subjected to face and content validity. The items in the Questionnaire were presented to experts in the fields of Human Kinetics and Health Education to ascertain its face and content validity. The experts indicated that the items and the build-up of the instrument have facial relevance and acceptability to what it claims to measure. The reliability of the instrument was determined by finding the internal consistency of the instrument. The data collected were analysed using Cronbach Alpha statistics. A coefficient value of 0.81 was obtained which was considered high enough to make the instrument reliable.

The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics. Hypotheses 1 – 3 were tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis while hypothesis 4 was tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Research Question 1: What is the level of marital instability among married women in Southwest, Nigeria?

Table 1: Level of marital instability

Levels of marital instability	No of Respondents	Percent age
Low (16.00 – 24.25)	420	24.7
Moderate (24.26 - 39.34)	990	58.1
High (39.35 – 48.00)	293	17.2
Total	1,703	100

Table 1 revealed the level of marital instability experienced by the respondents. The mean score and standard deviation of the responses were used to determine the levels as either low, moderate or high. The low level of marital instability was determined by subtracting the standard deviation from the mean score ($31.80 - 7.55 = 24.25$). The moderate level of marital instability was determined by the mean score (31.80) while the high level of marital instability was determined by adding the mean score and standard deviation ($31.80 + 7.55 = 39.35$). Therefore, low level of marital instability starts from 16.00 to 24.25, the moderate level starts from 24.26 to 39.34 and the high level of marital instability is from 39.35 to 48.00. The findings showed that the level of marital instability among married

women in Southwest Nigeria was moderate. Figure i further revealed the level of marital instability at a glance

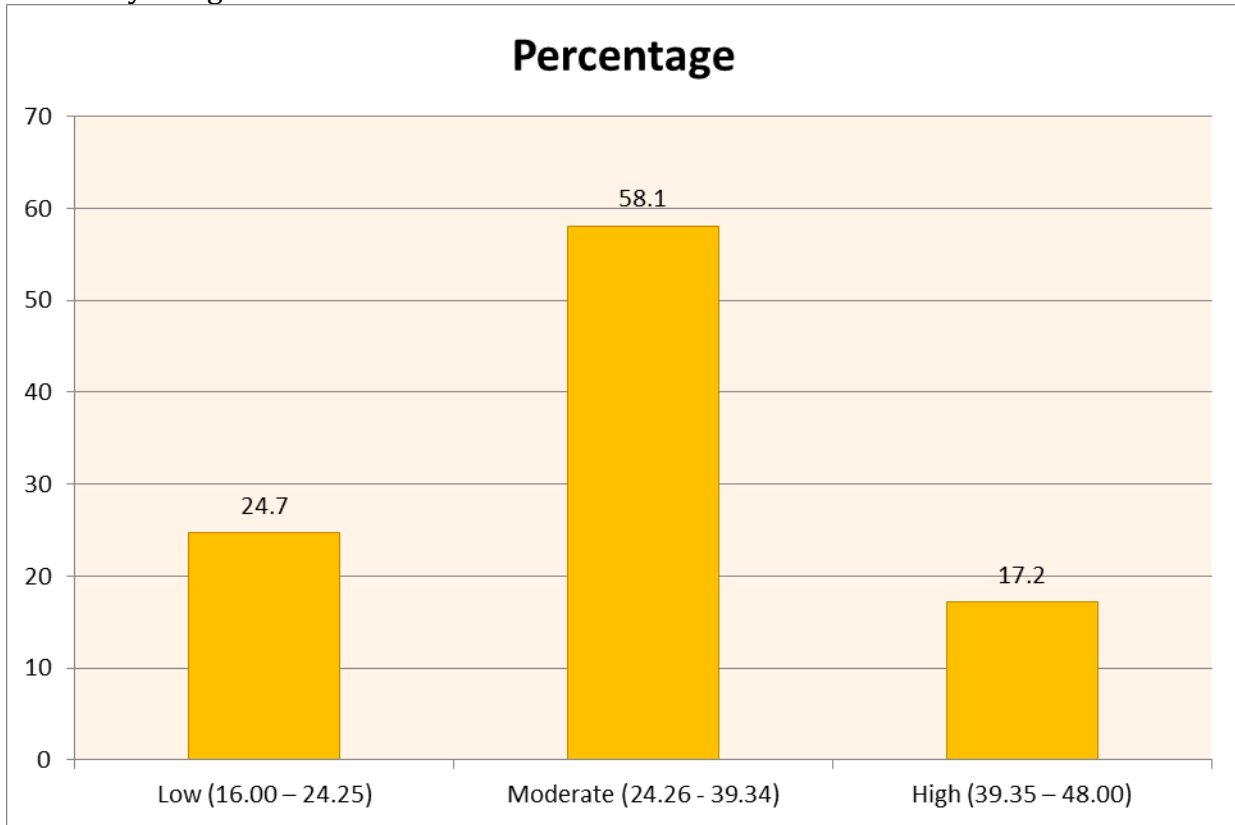


Figure i: Bar Chart Showing Level of marital instability among the respondents

Research Question 2: What are the social factors that are related to marital instability among married women?

In answering this question, data on social factors as it is related marital instability were collected from the responses of the respondents to items under Section C of SFMIQ (items 1 – 12) in the questionnaire. The data were collated and analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentage, mean and standard deviation. In table 2, the mean score cut-off mark of 2.50 was derived by finding the average of the scoring system. Mean score of items greater than mean cut-off of 2.50 were accepted while those less than 2.50 were rejected.

Table 2: Percentage and Mean Scores of Social Factors that are related to Marital Instability among Married Women

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
1.	Illiteracy can cause marital instability	65 (3.9)	98 (5.8)	842 (49.5)	696 (40.9)	1.73
2.	Disparity in level of couples education can generate issues	37 (2.2)	610 (35.8)	933 (54.8)	123 (7.2)	2.33
3.	Different educational background of the couples can lead to marital instability	202 (11.9)	475 (27.9)	818 (48.0)	208 (12.2)	2.39
4.	Educational specialization of couples can be a source of	134 (7.9)	411 (24.1)	957 (56.2)	201 (11.8)	2.28

	problems in marriage					
5.	Occupational schedule do affect family	233 (13.7)	734 (43.1)	692 (40.6)	44 (2.6)	2.62
6.	Nature of occupation women engages in could dictate marital instability	37 (2.2)	610 (35.8)	933 (54.8)	123 (7.2)	2.51
7.	Distance of primary place of assignment could generate problems in marriage	426 (25.01)	599 (35.2)	521 (30.6)	157 (9.2)	2.87
8.	Occupational demands can aggravate marital problems	55 (3.2)	637 (37.5)	907 (53.1)	102 (6.2)	2.41
9.	Poverty do contribute to marital instability	224 (13.2)	801 (47.0)	610 (35.8)	68 (4.0)	2.72
10.	High disparity in the income of couples can generate issues in marriage	64 (3.7)	475 (27.9)	928 (54.5)	236 (13.9)	2.19
11.	Financial mismanagement by either of the couples can lead to marital instability	31 (1.9)	606 (35.6)	923 (54.2)	143 (8.4)	2.25
12.	High demand from the wife's or husband's family can generate problems in marriage	97 (5.8)	424 (24.9)	979 (57.5)	203 (11.9)	2.23

Mean Cut-off: 2.50 Percentages in Parenthesis

Table 2 showed the social factors that are related to marital instability among the respondents. Using the criterion mean score of 2.50 as cut-off to determine the affirmative of each statement, the respondents indicated that the major factors related to marital instability are occupational schedule ($\bar{x} = 2.62$), nature of occupation ($\bar{x} = 2.51$), distance ($\bar{x} = 2.87$) and poverty ($\bar{x} = 2.72$). The least factors related to marital instability included illiteracy ($\bar{x} = 1.73$), disparity in couples level of education ($\bar{x} = 2.33$), different educational background ($\bar{x} = 2.39$), educational specialization ($\bar{x} = 2.28$), occupational demand ($\bar{x} = 2.41$), disparity in income ($\bar{x} = 2.19$), financial mismanagement ($\bar{x} = 2.25$) and financial demand from relatives ($\bar{x} = 2.23$).

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between educational status and marital instability among married women

In testing this hypothesis, data on educational status sub-variable of social factor were collected from the responses of the respondents to items under Section C of SFMIQ (items 1 – 4) in the questionnaire. Data on marital instability were collected from the responses of the respondents to items under Section B of SFMIQ (items 1 – 16) in the questionnaire. Both were compared for statistical significance using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 levels. The result is presented in table 3.

Table 3: Relationship between educational status and marital instability among married women

Variables	N	Mean	Stand Dev	r-cal	P-value
Educational Status	1703	8.73	2.02	0.048	0.613
Marital Instability	1703	31.80	7.55		

$P > 0.05$

Table 3 showed that the r-cal value of 0.048 was not significant at 0.05 level because the P-value (0.613) > 0.05 . The null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies that there was no significant relationship between educational status and marital instability among married women.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between occupational status and marital instability among married women

In testing this hypothesis, data on occupational status sub-variable of social factor were collected from the responses of the respondents to items under Section C of SFMIQ (items 5 – 8) in the questionnaire. Data on marital instability were collected from the responses of the respondents to items under Section B of SFMIQ (items 1 – 16) in the questionnaire. Both were compared for statistical significance using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 levels. The result is presented in table 4.

Table 4: Relationship between occupational status and marital instability among married women

Variables	N	Mean	Stand Dev	r-cal	P-value
Occupational Status	1703	10.41	2.38	.553*	0.000
Marital Instability	1703	31.80	7.55		

* $P < 0.05$

Table 4 showed that the r-cal value of 0.553 was significant at 0.05 level because the P-value (0.553) < 0.05 . The null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was significant relationship between occupational status and marital instability among married women. This implies that, as the occupational status increases, the marital instability among the couples increases.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between income status and marital instability among married women

In testing this hypothesis, data on income status sub-variable of social factor were collected from the responses of the respondents to items under Section C of SFMIQ (items 9 – 12) in the questionnaire. Data on marital instability were collected from the responses of the respondents to items under Section B of SFMIQ (items 1 – 16) in the questionnaire. Both were compared for statistical significance using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 levels. The result is presented in table 5.

Table 5: Relationship between income status and marital instability among married women

Variables	N	Mean	Stand Dev	r-cal	P-value
Income Status	1703	9.39	2.51	.032	0.699
Marital Instability	1703	31.80	7.55		

$P > 0.05$

Table 5 showed that the r-cal value of 0.032 was not significant at 0.05 level because the P-value (0.032) > 0.05 . The null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies that there was no significant relationship between income status and marital instability among married women.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference in marital instability among married women based on their year of marital experience

Table 6: Marital instability among married women based on their year of marital experience

Groups	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9356.898	3	3118.966	60.498*	.000
Within Groups	87591.222	1699	51.555		
Total	96948.120	1702			

*P < 0.05

The result presented in table 6 showed that F-cal value of 60.498 was significant at 0.05 level of significance because the P value (0.000) < 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was significant difference in marital instability among married women based on their year of marital experience. In order to locate the source of the differences observed, Post – hoc analysis (Scheffe) with mean difference was carried out.

Table 7: Scheffe Post – hoc test in marital instability based on year of marital experience

Groups	N	1 – 10	11 – 20	21 – 30	Above 30	Mean
1 – 10	374					34.92
11 – 20	473	*				33.45
21 – 30	544	*	*			29.45
Above 30	312	*	*			29.66

*P < 0.05

In table 7, significant difference was found in marital instability between women who had 1 – 10 years of marital experience and women who had 11 – 20 years of marital experience. Also, a significant difference was found in marital instability between women who had 1 – 10 years of marital experience and women who had 21 – 30 years of marital experience. There was significant difference in marital instability between women who had 1 – 10 years of marital experience and women who had above 30 years of marital experience.

A significant difference was found in marital instability between women who had 11 – 20 years of marital experience and women who had 21 – 30 years of marital experience. Also, a significant difference was found in marital instability between women who had 11 – 20 years of marital experience and women who had above 30 years of marital experience. However, there was no significant difference in marital instability between women who had 21 – 30 years of marital experience and women who had above 30 years of marital experience.

It can be deduced that marital instability was common among women who had 1 – 10 years of marital experience than those with longer years of marital instability closely followed by those with 11 – 20 years of marital experience.

Discussion

The study revealed that level of marital instability among married women in Southwest, Nigeria was moderate. The probable reason why marital instability is moderate could be as a result of social factors surrounding marriages. The study also revealed that major factors related to marital instability are occupational schedule, nature of occupation, distance and poverty. This finding was in line with the study of Agupugo (2008) who found out income status, poverty and nature of occupation constituted some social factors causing family instability among couples.

It was also revealed that there was no significant relationship between educational status and marital instability among married women. This implies that educational status is not related to level of marital instability. The reason for this finding might be because both women who are educated and not educated experience marital instability. This finding is in consonance with findings of White and Rodgers (2010), Lyngstad and Jalovaara (2010), Ozcan and Breen (2012), and Raymo (2013) who concluded that marital instability does not depend on educational status of the couple, either the man or the woman. However, this finding contradicted the finding of Tucker and O'Grady (2001) who found out that education level of woman is an important determinant in whether the couple was likely to have a satisfying marriage. They concluded that women of higher education levels have more satisfying marriages.

The study revealed that there was significant relationship between occupational status and marital instability among married women. This implies that an increase in occupational status will lead to increase in marital instability. Raz-Yurovich (2012) concluded that women's occupational status will determine marital stability. South (2001) and Teachman (2002) concluded that occupational status of women will go a long way to determine level of marital stability.

The study revealed that there was no significant relationship between income status and marital instability among married women. This implies that the income status of a woman does not determine their marital stability as both women with high and low income experience marital instability. White and Rogers (2010) found out that income is less salient to marital quality than subjective measures. This finding is in line and consistent with findings of White and Rogers (2010), Rogers (2004), and Brines (2004) who all found out that income status of women has no relationship with marital instability. They concluded that women of all levels of income status face one challenges or the other in their marriages.

The study also revealed that there was a significant difference in marital instability among married women based on their year of marital experience. This study revealed that marital instability was common among women who had 1 – 10 years of marital experience than those with longer years of marital instability closely followed by those with 11 – 20 years of marital experience. The study supports the finding of Oko (2011) who found out that couple with more years of marital experience are not likely to experience marital instability.

Conclusion

Sequel to the findings of this study, it was concluded that the level of marital instability among married women was moderate. Furthermore, occupational status was related to marital instability while educational status and income status were not related to marital instability among married women. In addition, marital instability differs based on years of marital experience.

Recommendations

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

1. Health educators should get involved in mass campaign on issue regarding marital instability in Southwest Nigeria.
2. Health educators should make use of media resources to disseminate information on prevention of factors that influence marital instability.
3. Ministry of women affairs in Southwest Nigeria should work hand in hand with health educators to given public enlightenment to couples on good interpersonal relationship and communication in marriage.

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