SOCIO-CULTURAL VARIABLES AS PREDICTORS OF MARITAL STABILITY AMONG COUPLES IN IJEBU-ODE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OGUN STATE

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Abstract

This study was carried out mainly to determine the influence of socio-cultural variables on marital stability among couples in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State. This study adopted the survey approach of descriptive research design with sample of 150 respondents, 70 males and 80 females who were randomly selected from Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State. Stratified sampling technique was employed in selecting the participants. The researcher-made questionnaire was used to collect relevant data from the selected respondents. Findings revealed that lack of trust has relative influence (= .121) on couples' marital stability; ethnicity has relative influence (= .101) and communication has relative influence (= .114) on couples' marital stability. It was recommended that government should set up policy which will help in sustaining marital stability among couples. Seminars should be given to married couples in other to assist them on how to balance socio-cultural variables in marriage.

Keywords: Socio-cultural factors, Marital Stability, Ijebu-Ode Local Government.

Introduction

People's way of life, which includes their material lives among other things, is commonly defined and regarded as culture. Every matured man or woman's dream is to have a secure and contented marriage, to share the same values, and to be compatible in all areas of life, academically, economically, and socially (Barrie, 2023). However, certain sociocultural factors may occasionally have impact on marital stability. The variables' influence might be good, leading to a stable and happy marriage, or negative, leading to uncertainty and unhappiness in the marriage. These factors include social class, economic standing, educational attainment, religious background, and cultural variety (in the event of an interethnic marriage). These variables include age differences as well (Efobi, 2024).

The term "sociocultural" describes a broad range of social and cultural factors that have effects on attitudes, sentiments, actions, and eventually health results (Corin, 2017). According to Gonzalez and Birnbaum-Weitzman (2020), the phrase encompasses various elements, such as race, ethnicity, ethnic identity, sex, acculturation, language, beliefs and value systems, attitudes, and religion. Sociocultural variables are aspects of a particular population's norms, practices, and beliefs that they adhere to or follow. A group of people's customs influences how they interact with one another, but they also encompass the elements that distinguish one culture apart from another. The components pertaining to societal attitudes, habits, and values are referred to as socio-cultural aspects. Population, way of life, culture, preferences, customs, and traditions all have significant influence on their trends and advancements. These elements are shaped by society and are frequently inherited by next generations. People's emotions, actions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and interactions are influenced by sociocultural variables. Cultural transformation and social development are shaped by these elements (Barrett, 2020).

On the other hand, marital stability is the state of continuing to be legally married without divorcing, separating physically, or separating legally. According to Karney and Bradbury (2020), marriage stability is connected to yet separate from marital adjustment, quality, satisfaction, and success.

Numerous studies have shown that separated and divorced couples are more likely to face physical and mental health issues (Amato, 2010; Wang et al., 2015). They can also have a significant detrimental influence on their children's mental and physical well-being as well as their academic and social performance (Amato, 2007; Lansford, 2009). The importance of determining the elements that support marital stability is abundantly clear given that unstable marriages are bad for society and the family (Orathinkal and Vansteenwegen, 2006). (He, Zhong, Tong, Lan, Li, Ju & Fang, 2018). When a husband and wife have understanding of each other and take care of each other without planning to end their marriage, they can experience a certain level of peace and love that is known as marital stability (Adesanya, 2017).

Herbert Spencer, a British biologist and philosopher, developed structural functionalist theory, also referred to as functionalism theory (1820-1903). According to the notion, society and the human body are similar in that, just as the body's numerous organs cooperate to keep the body functioning, so too do society's diverse components work together to maintain its overall health. According to this idea, marriage is a complex system whose components cooperate to sustain stability and solidarity. This method examines marriage from a macro-level perspective, which focuses broadly on the ways in which marriage institutions influence or shape society, the couple, and their offspring collectively.

It examines the social structure as well as the societal roles that marriage plays, which might impact how stable a marriage is. In its simplest form, functionalism emphasizes that effort must be applied as rigorously as possible to every aspect of marriage that could affect the stability of marriage in both traditional and modern marriages, such as customs and practices, which affect the functioning of a supposedly stable and cohesive marriage system. Functionalism addresses the marital relationship as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements, which, if improperly considered, may affect marital stability as norms, customs, educational level, occupational status, family income, and institutions like the spouses' religion, among others.

A macro sociological approach that focuses on marriage structures that have the power to influence society and a marriage in its entirety is the structural functionalist theory. The application of this idea becomes especially pertinent given that educational attainment might have an impact on the social and economic stability of a marriage. In order to prevent marital instability, careful consideration of these aspects that may impact the link between spouses must be made before marriage. According to this idea, marriage is a complex system whose components cooperate to sustain stability and solidarity. It examines the social structure and roles that marriage plays in society, which may have an impact on how stable a marriage is. The use of this theory becomes so appropriate since stability of marriage can be affected by communication.

Statement of the Problem

Every married man and woman want to live a happy, long life together until death parts them. This isn't always the case, though, as conflicts can occur at any time during a couple's life and cause the marriage to almost completely fail. This is only one of the inescapable difficulties that come with being married. Numerous couples' marriage stability is influenced by socio-cultural elements, including religion, age, social class, socioeconomic status, educational background, personality, and traditional values. However, many couples fail to grasp the significance of these characteristics, which is understandable given the high rate of home breakups caused by lack of love, incompatibility, lack of understanding, and differences in age, education, religion, and social class. For example, a lot of people are not aware that in inter-ethnic marriages,

where the partners come from different cultural backgrounds, it's important to respect one another's cultural backgrounds since it promotes marital stability. These days, similarities between couples, immaturity, low socioeconomic position, ineffective communication, lack of tolerance, lack of mutual trust, lack of patience, and non-childbearing are the main reasons why marriages fail. The couples in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area, Ogun State are not exempted from the menace of marital instability. All these factors need to be addressed to prevent marital instability among couples. Based on the above identified problems, this study examined the influence of socio-cultural variables on marital stability among couples in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Theoretically, sociocultural variables as predictors of marital stability are grounded in several interdisciplinary theories that integrate sociological, cultural, and psychological perspectives. These include social exchange theory, family systems theory, and ecological systems theory. Each theory provides a lens through which to analyze how sociocultural factors influence marital dynamics and stability. Social exchange theory in the first place, posits that relationships are maintained through a cost-benefit analysis (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Within the context of marital stability, sociocultural variables such as socioeconomic status, cultural norms, and educational background contribute to the perceived costs and benefits of remaining in a marriage. For instance, higher levels of socioeconomic stability may reduce stress that often lead to marital conflict.

Family systems theory on the other hand, emphasizes the interconnectedness of family members within the broader societal context (Bowen, 1978). This theory highlights the importance of cultural traditions, family roles, and community support in sustaining marital stability. Couples who share similar cultural values and maintain strong support networks are more likely to navigate marital challenges successfully.

Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory underscores the multilayered influences of sociocultural factors, ranging from immediate environments (microsystem) to broader societal norms (macrosystem) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This perspective helps explain how variables such as religious affiliation, community involvement, and societal attitudes toward marriage affect the longevity and quality of marital relationships.

This framework provides a comprehensive approach to understanding how sociocultural factors contribute to the stability of marriages. It can guide future research and interventions aimed at strengthening marital relationships in diverse contexts.

Empirically, in their investigation into the impact of communication on marital stability, Esere, Yusuf, and Omotoso (2021) discovered that the majority of participants concurred with the assertion that ineffective communication is the death knell for stable marriages. Additionally, it was discovered that married people' perceptions of the impact of spousal

communication on marital stability varied significantly based on factors such as gender and length of marriage. Based on the results, it was suggested—among other things—that marriage counseling clinics be established in all significant Nigerian establishments to inform married men and women about the need of good communication in marriage for a harmonious and supportive home environment.

In Anambra State, married individuals' educational attainment was investigated by Obiekwe & Nzubechukwe (2020) as a potential indicator of marital stability. The study's findings demonstrated that among married people, educational attainment is a substantial but weak positive predictor of marital stability. It was suggested, among other things, that prospective spouses select partners who have completed a similar degree of education because this could ensure a more fulfilling and secure marriage.

In her research on the impact of communication on couples' marital adjustment, Agi (2015) found that, in contrast to men, who speak less because they view it as unmanly, women typically talk more in marriages because they see it as a means of easing tension and offering some emotional relief. Additionally, happy marriages are enjoyed by couples that openly express their emotions to each other. Eventually, she came up with the following five main guidelines for productive communication: commitment, ownership, dialogue, respect, and listening.

Yusha, Ubogu, and Mamman (2021) investigated the reasons behind marital instability in Nigeria's Katsina State. According to their research, there are eight key characteristics that contribute to marital instability in Katsina State. Disregard for family members (0.706), children's sex preferences (0.680), infertility (0.614), age differences between spouses (0.605), sexual unhappiness (0.564), adultery (0.547), pestering (0.528), and forced marriage (0.526). The eight key factors alone accounted for 60.1% of the causes of marital instability in Katsina State, according to the cumulative percentage of variance. These elements were further broken down and divided into four categories: attitudinal, sexual incompatibility, maturity, and procreative/child carrying. The study recommends that there is need for stakeholders addressing the procreative/child bearing, sexual incompatibility, maturity and attitudinal factors to reduce marital instability in the state.

Researchers have been paying more attention to forgiveness since Fenell (1993) discovered that it is essential to a long-lasting marriage due to its positive impact on marital quality and stability through the adaptive process of repairing inevitable injuries and transgressions (McNulty, 2008; David and Stafford, 2015). Researchers agree that forgiveness entails a prosocial changing process toward the transgressor, in which positive emotions increase and negative motivation, such as unforgiveness, decreases (McCullough et al., 2001; Li and Lu, 2017). This is despite the fact that there is disagreement over what constitutes forgiveness. Although a number of academics have suggested that the process of forgiving involves both an emotional and an intellectual

decision (Strelan and Covic, 2006), there is little empirical data regarding the relative contributions of emotional and decisional forgiveness to marital stability.

The social, economic, and cultural shifts in people's lifestyle patterns are often the cause of the instability that exists in certain marriages in our culture today. According to Amaonye (2016), these changes have happened and are happening so quickly that they haven't yet permeated our way of life. When a younger woman marries an older guy, there might not be the same level of love and affection between the husband and wife that makes a marriage strong and committed. Another factor that might divide or bring a couple together is wealth or poverty (Baker & O'Connell, 2022). For example, a couple who lacks money in their marriage might not be able to live happily and peacefully together. This is because one of the things that bind a marriage together, according to Uzor (2020), is money.

Another sociocultural factor that either strengthens or weakens a husband and wife's marriage is the language barrier. This is due to the possibility of disintegration occurring when couples do not speak to each other well in a shared language. No marriage can endure throughout time without efficient communication, as stated by Ulumor (2013). Speaking the same language, Ulumor believes that couples who speak it together are more unified and in love than those who do not. Therefore, before getting married, people should carefully assess the possibility of inter-ethnic marriage.

An essential sociocultural factor in each marriage is religion. A people's religion is their way of life. Molokwu (2024) claims that disparities in religious perspectives or origins have caused marriages to fail. Accidental weddings, or unions that are imposed on partners to spare their family or families from humiliation, should be shunned like the plague. Instead, marriages should be carefully planned. A guy and his wife should both be of legal age before getting married (App, 2021). They ought to develop in all spheres – social, financial, temperamental, and economic. In order to have a good marriage, they must continue to feel devoted to one another. In addition to wanting to feel cared for and secure, the wife needs also feel wanted. It takes love and affection for the spouse to have a stable marriage. Couples in a marriage should avoid making the cognitive mistake of expecting the other person to see it (Wietzke, 2023). As a result, the husband should let the wife know if he wants her to act in a particular way. The wife should also tell her husband of her intentions.

Marriage stability is often promoted by sexual compatibility, and a significant portion of marital unity is based on sex. In actuality, having sex is one of the most acceptable ways for a husband and wife to communicate their unity of thought and emotion. Marital partners should so be socially compatible. Having children is a factor that might not be her fault in a foster marriage. Both the husband and the wife should get medical attention to address or resolve the issue of childlessness in order to remove any unwarranted fears. Couples should reject the third party mentality and the meddling of in-laws if they want

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their marriage to succeed. They ought to refrain from cleaning their soiled underwear in public. It is recommended that they belong to the same religious sect, share financial responsibility, have similar thoughts, keep the home peaceful, and let love and affection govern their lives (Khan, Elius, Mohd Nor, Yakub zulkifli Bin Mohd yusoff, Noordin & Mansor, 2020).

Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated for testing in this study:

Ho1   There is no significant influence of ethnicity on couples' marital stability.

Ho2   There is no significant influence of communication on couples' marital stability.

Methodology

The descriptive research survey design was used in this study. The sample for this study comprised 150 respondents 70 males and 80 females who were randomly selected from Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State. Stratified sampling technique was employed in selecting the participants. The researcher-made questionnaire was used to collect relevant data from the selected respondents. The questionnaire was designed with 20 items which focused on socio-cultural variables and marital stability among couples. The instrument was validated and reliability coefficient of 0.76 was reported. The hypotheses were analysed using regression at 0.05 level of significance.

Testing of Hypotheses

1.   There is no significant influence of ethnicity on couples' marital stability.

Table 1:   Regression analysis showing the influence of ethnicity on couples' marital stability

Coefficients[a]				
Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**	**Standardized Coefficients**	**T**	**Sig.**
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
(Constant)	9.660	.145		66.440	.010
Ethnicity	.262	.040	.101	6.560	.010

Dependent Variable: Couple's marital stability

Table 1 shows the influence of ethnicity on couples' marital stability. The table shows that ethnicity has relative influence ($\beta = .101$) on couples' marital stability. However, the level of influence of ethnicity on couples' marital stability is significant ($p < 0.05$). Thus,

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the research findings show that there is influence of ethnicity on couples' marital stability.

2.   There is no significant influence of communication on couples' marital stability.

Table 2:   Regression analysis showing the influence of communication on couples' marital stability

Coefficients[a]				
Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**T**	**Sig.**
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
(Constant)	9.660	.145		66.440	.030
Communication	.262	.040	.114	6.560	.030

Dependent Variable: Couple's marital stability

Table 2 shows the influence of communication on couples' marital stability. The table shows that communication has relative influence (= .114) on couples' marital stability. However, the level of influence of communication on couples' marital stability is significant ($p < 0.05$). Thus, the research findings indicate that there is influence of communication on couples' marital stability.

Discussion

The result of this study also indicates that ethnicity has relative influence ($\beta = .101$) on couples' marital stability. According to Suyemoto et al. (2020), ethnicity is a multifaceted, dynamic concept that advances and supports relations through communities coming together around cultural connection. Suyemoto et al. continues to add that ethnicity influences and affect individuals and groups' thinking, emotions and behavior. This is in line with Cognitive Behavioral Theory which acknowledges the interaction between cognitions, behaviours and emotional response (Epstein and Zheng, 2017). According to Nelson (2015), ethnicity refers to a group of people with a common heritage and share common cultural values and customs. Pereira (2020) observes that ethnicity points to a collective group of people that shares common beliefs and practices. Koos and Neupert-Wentz (2020) add that demographically separated communities or tribes have their own set of cultural or traditional values which guide them in life. Kibuthu (2016) observes that couples experience challenges of adaptation to new cultural practices and managing in-laws which may influence their union. Sabbe et al. (2019) asserts that intercultural challenges among couples are shaped by complex dynamics that have close association with ethnicity.

The findings show that there is influence of communication on couples' marital stability. A successful marriage is like food. It depends on many key ingredients to be successful. These ingredients include such attributes as trust, love, tolerance, friendship, ability to manage conflict, loyalty, sincerity and, above all, effective communication. Ugulu (2016) stated that if marriage is meant to be a permanent relationship, there is need for happiness, love, joy, trust tolerance and couples' ability to manage their marital conflict for a stable home. Ugulu stated that for a stable home couples must learn to communicate with each other effectively. Communication according to Esere (2011) is a life wire of marriage relationship or any other meaningful relationship. Esere stated that it is the elixir for ailing marital relationship, noting that many problems escalate when there is no communication and many problems are resolved when there is effective communication (Egbo, Asogwa & Agbo-Peters, 2020).

Conclusion

In line with the result of this study, it can be concluded that there is influence of ethnicity on couples' marital stability and that there is influence of communication on couples' marital stability. It is therefore recommended that government should set up policy which will help in sustaining marital stability among couples. Seminars should be given to married couples in other to assist them on how to balance socio-cultural variables in marriage. Discrimination of ethnicity should be avoided among married couples.

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