

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL AS A PREDICTOR OF MARITAL STABILITY AMONG MARRIED PERSONS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

The study examined educational level as a predictor of marital stability among married persons in Anambra State. The study adopted a correlational study design. The population of the study comprised 1,269,916 married persons in Anambra State. The sample consisted of 540 married persons selected through purposive sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire. The researcher administered the instrument with the help of the research assistants. The data collected were analyzed using regression analysis. The results of the study showed that educational levels are significant but weak positive predictors of marital stability among married persons. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended amongst others that intending couples should choose those that have attained the same education level as this could guarantee better and stable marital life.

Keywords: Educational level, Marital Stability, Married Person, Predictor, Marriage

Introduction

Marriage is the oldest social institution ordained by God as a social contract between two individuals to become husband and wife. It is an emotional-social covenant. Marriage has been variously defined by different scholars; Amao-Kehinde (2009) defined marriage as a sacred and permanent contract between a man and a woman who have consented to live a life of vocation, love and sharing for each other for the purpose of promoting their mutual growth and welfare as persons in their journey through life. This implies that marital relationship is meant to be a life-long one until the death of a partner. Obumse (2016) also defined marriage as an agreement and relationship between a man and woman which is legally contracted through tradition and in a solemn manner. According to Procter (2004) marriage is a social institution in which a man and a woman are legally united to establish a durable union as husband and wife for a new family unit. To Macious and Plumber (2005) marriage is a legally sanctioned relationship involving economic cooperation as well as normative sexual activity and child rearing that people expect to be enduring. Similarly, the researcher viewed marriage as a permanent but established relationship between a man and a woman

based on primary and secondary agreements and backed by legal injunctions, for companionship and procreation. There are different reasons why people enter into marriage. Katu (2006) posited that people enter into marriage because they see it as a means by which lust, sexual intercourse and competition are regulated in a society. Katu further stated that marriage in most West African and Asian societies confer the right on a man over the economic and domestic services of a woman but this is less the case in European and American societies owing to emancipation of women and their liberation activities. More so, Uwe (2006) noted that some of the reasons why people enter into marriage include procreation, peace of mind, emotional reassurance, and sense of security. Moore (2009) emphasized that healthy marital functioning is the bedrock for strong family functioning and wellbeing. These ultimately serve as veritable instruments for achieving dependent on the quality of marital relationship. The family is traditionally an important economic unit, the task of which is to ensure the economic security of its members, including those who do not participate in the labour market, and it establishes their social status (Sussman, Steinmetz & Peterson 1999). According to Davidson and Moore (2009), family has the following functions: reproduction of new members, sexual regulation, economic cooperation, education, protection and order, socialization of the young, and transmission of individual goals and societal value. Therefore, marital stability is the relationship in which couples live together in marriage, enjoying the closest possible loving and fulfilling relationship without any intention of breakup (Adesanya, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

People get married with the hope of having a happy marriage, which is conceptualized as a successful marriage. Marital stability is a pertinent ingredient to the stability and growth of any nation, given that the family is the basic unit of any nation. The quality of marital and family life is largely a function of the education and information resources available to individuals and families. Hence, the level of education and management of information regarding marriage could be sources of stress or comfort. Studies have shown that some marital dissatisfaction resulting from poor family management, also higher education of one of the married persons which places him/her on advantage of better income and status in the society could lead to family instability which trickles down to societal problems. These problems may eventually lead to marital separation and divorce which seems to be common in Anambra State nowadays. It is against the backdrop of the above mentioned challenges affecting the institution of marriage that this study is posed to interrogate.

Objectives of the Study

1. To ascertain whether educational level predicts marital stability among married persons in Anambra State.
2. To examine how inputs are made regarding major family decisions among married persons in Anambra State.
3. To determine the extent of consultation of the spouses on family decisions among married persons in Anambra State.
4. To improve on ways of sharing spousal interest among married persons in Anambra State.

Research Questions

1. How does educational level predict marital stability among married persons in Anambra State?
2. What is the level of inputs regarding major family decisions among married persons in Anambra State?
3. How do spouses consult on major aspects of family decisions among married persons in Anambra State?
4. In what ways can the sharing of spousal interest among married persons in Anambra State be improved in order to improve marital stability?

Literature Review

Marital institution has many variables affecting it, including marriage age, spouses educational level, religion, etc (Dada & Idowu 2006). The need for literacy cannot be overemphasized because education is a vital tool in influencing marital stability. However, in Nigeria and many other African countries, literacy percentage is very low (Maciver & Dimkpa, 2012). This has a resultant effect on the stability of marital life. Marital stability is defined as limited problems or challenges in marriage (Corwyn, Burchinal & Roderick, 2002). Azar (2002) defined marital stability as the capacity to return to equilibrium or to the original position after having been displaced. This definition contains the important notion of resilience to maintain and strengthen married life. It also tries to attain or return capability for the maximum self-support and personal independence. Examples of marital stability are parental mental health, stable relationships among couple and positive parenting are cited as symbols of marital stability. Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (2003) defined marital stability as marital success or marital satisfaction. Marital stability is interpreted as whether a couple in a marriage remains together instead of separating or divorcing. Marital satisfaction in contrast refers to how married partners evaluate the quality of their marriage. It is a subjective description of whether a marital relationship is good, happy or satisfying. Various names are used to identify stability in marriage. The most frequently used are marital happiness, marital quality, marital cohesion and marital adjustment (Bird & Melville, 2005). Characteristics of the home environment, such as warmth, emotional availability, stimulation, family cohesion, and day-to-day activities, have also been implicated in the notion of marital stability (Corwyn, Burchinal, & Roderick, 2002). Marital stability is a situation where both husband and wife enjoy relative peace and love brought about by their understanding each other and caring for each other without any intention of breaking up their marriage (Adesanya, 2007). Conversely, any relationship not characterized by the aforementioned qualities result into marital instability. To be satisfied in marriage is to reach one's goals or expectations in marital life or attain affective condition of a spouse who gained his/her desires in marriage. Marital stability is an individual's subjective impression of specific components within his/her marital relationship. It includes roles, interpersonal relationships and reciprocities, prosperities, motivations, inter marital contention factors, privacy preferences, perception of the partner's humour and attribution. Marital stability could be regarded as the product of interaction between husband and wife and the amount of agreement between one's expectations of the marriage and the rewards that marriage provides. A good marriage is the most rewarding experience life can offer. It makes a person feel adequate, desired, approved and complete to a degree which is not possible in any other form of human relationships (Coleman & Miller 2005). Marital

stability could be influenced by socio-economic variables either positively or negatively in our contemporary society. According to Collins Dictionary (2015) socioeconomic variables are circumstances or development that involves combination of social and economic factors. Economic means the concern of the organization of the money whereas socio as an adjective refers to something that is related to social factor in terms of status or rank that someone has in the society. Bradbury, Fincham and Beach (2000) defined socioeconomic variables as things that are related with management of money and how it could affect the status or rank of a person in the society. Baker (2014) viewed socioeconomic variables as a measure of one's combined economic and social status which tends to be positively associated with ones better condition of health. It refers to the level of income that individual earns at a particular period of time (Amato & Previti, 2003). This could be the total amount of money earned daily, weekly, monthly or yearly. Gurman and Peter (2002) addressed the question of how mechanization and the factory system influence family life in modern society. He maintained that the biggest single influence on the families of educated workers was the size of the wage the head received at work and the resulting standard of living which it permitted. Such a family never experienced poverty because the head income which was a "family wage" was high enough to keep the whole family at a passable living standard without the wife and children having to work. The fact that money was not a problem to the family kept the family intact and stable. However, the family of uneducated labourer suffers poverty and inadequacies when they try to pattern their style of living to that of the family of educated workers. This situation offers a good ground for factors that impede marriage stability to multiply (Bougheas & Yannis, 2009). In addition to others aspects of determining marital stability, education and income have been a focus of researches. Previous studies indicate that education and income facilitate marital success (Voydanoff, 2009). Education promotes more effective communication between couples, thus helping them to resolve differences. In contrast, the stress generated by economic hardship increases disagreements over finances, makes spouses irritable, and decreases expressions of emotional support (White, 1991). Nevertheless, well-educated individuals may hold especially high standards for marriage and expect a substantial level of emotional support, companionship, and personal fulfillment from their spouses. Because of these high standards, relationship problems may trigger thoughts of divorce relatively quickly among well-educated individuals. The researcher defined socioeconomic variables as evaluation of the effects of macro-variables that reflect the socio-economic environment (like social status, educational level, employment, family income etc.) where individuals live.

Theoretical Framework

Structural functionalist theory otherwise known as functionalism theory was propounded by an English philosopher and biologist, Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). The theory states that there exist similarities between society and the human body; it suggests that just as the various organs of the body work together to keep the body functioning, the various parts of society work together to keep society functioning. This theory also sees marriage as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. This approach looks at marriage through a macro-level orientation which is a broad focus on the marriage structures that shape or affect society, couple and their children as a whole. It looks at both social structure and social

functions of marriage which can affect the stability of marriage. Functionalism addresses marital relationship as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements which if not properly considered may affect marital stability as norms, customs, educational level, occupational status, family income and institutions such as religion of the spouses etc. in the most basic terms, it simply emphasizes that effort is needed to be imputed in marriage as rigorously as possible to each feature of the marriage which could affect the stability of marriage in both traditional and modern marriage such as customs and practices etc. which affect the functioning of a supposedly stable and cohesive marriage system. The structural functionalist theory is a macro sociological analysis with a broad focus on marriage structures that can shape society and affect a marriage as a whole. The use of this theory becomes so appropriate since stability of marriage both socially and economically can be affected by educational attainment. It is necessary that much effort is imputed into considering these factors which could affect marital bond before spouses get marry in order to avoid marital instability.

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Methods

The study adopted correlational survey design. Correlational survey design is suitable to this work because the study aims at determining the extent to which socioeconomic variables such as educational level predict marital stability among married persons in Anambra State. The study was conducted in Anambra State which has a total of twenty one (21) Local Government Areas. The choice of this area was made because of the reported cases of marital instability in Anambra State. Personal experiences and media reports tend to show there is a high level of marital instability in the area. The population of the study consisted of 1,269,916 married persons who were married as at the year 2006 to 2010 when data were collected from Socio-Economic Survey on Nigeria (National Population Census, 2010). This was calculated from Anambra State's total population of 4,182,032 in 2006 census of Federal Republic of Nigeria. The sample comprised 600 married persons selected from the population. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample of the study. The researcher used participants who are legally married and were living with their spouses. The choice was based on Nworgu (2006) who posited that in purposive sampling technique, specific elements which satisfy some predetermined criteria of socioeconomic variables are most relevant in the accomplishment of the purpose of ones studies. Although the criteria selected was based on the researcher's judgement. The research instrument used for this study was a "**Socioeconomic and Marital Stability Questionnaire**" (SMSQ) adapted from Tzeng (2003). The items in the substantive questions were rated on a 4-point response scale. The response formats adopted for which one was Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points; Agree (A) = 3 points; Disagree (D) = 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point. The section A of the instrument was subjected to face and content validity by three experts, two from Guidance and Counselling and one from Measurement and Evaluation, all in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus, Anambra State. In order to ensure the reliability of the

instrument, Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was used. This measured the internal consistency of items in the instrument. To do this, 40 copies of “Socio-economic and Marital Stability Questionnaire” (SMSQ) were administered on 40 married persons in Enugu State. Enugu State was chosen because the State and Anambra State belonged to the old Anambra State. Also Enugu State and Anambra State belong to the same ethnic group (Igbo) and they have identical marriage culture. The responses of the respondents were scored and analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha Method. The alpha coefficient for the marital stability questionnaire yielded 0.80. The coefficient was considered high enough showing that the instrument was reliable and good for the study. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher with the help of three research assistants. The research assistants were briefed on modalities of administration and return of the questionnaire. The respondents were given sufficient time to complete and return the questionnaire on completion. The administration of the instrument took a period of four weeks. Follow up visits were made by the researcher to retrieve copies of the instrument which were not collected on the spot. Out of the 600 copies of questionnaire distributed respondents, 540 (90%) were duly completed and used for data analysis. Data collected were analyzed using regression analysis.

Findings/Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	Variables	Frequency	Percent
Marital Status	Married	495	91.70
	Divorced	45	8.30
	Total	540	100.00
Educational Level	High		
	PhD	45	8.30
	Msc	102	18.90
	B.Sc/HND	123	22.80
	Low		
	NCE./OND	60	11.10
	WAEC	156	28.90
FSLC	54	10.00	
Total	540	100.00	
Occupational Status	Civil Servant	138	25.56
	Business	402	74.44
	Total	540	100.00
Income Level (Annual Income)	High		
	N141 - 000 and above	261	48.30
	N111,000 - 140,000	36	6.70
	Low		
	N81,000 - N110,000	84	15.60
	N20,000 - N50,000	159	29.40
Total	540	100.00	

As shown in Table 1, of the 540 respondents, 495 which represent 91.7% are married while 45 respondents which accounted for 8.3% of the respondents are divorced. On the educational qualification and educational level, the sample distribution of the respondents according to educational qualification shows that greater proportion (28.90%) of the respondents have WAEC, followed by those with B.Sc/HND and M.Sc degree with 22.80% and 18.90%. Respondents who have NCE/OND, FSLC and PhD degree made up 11.10%, 10.00% and 8.30% of the respondents respectively. For occupational status shows that the greater proportion (74.44%) of the respondents are into business, followed by civil servants (25.56%). According to their annual income and income level, it showed that out of the 540 respondents, majority were on annual income of 141,000 and above. This is followed by those on 20,000 - 50,000 with

29.40% and those on 81,000-110,000 annual income level with 15.60%. The least percentage of respondents 6.70% are on 111,000- 140,000 annual income

Research Question 1: Does educational level predict marital stability among married persons in Anambra State?

Table 2. Summary of Simple Regression Analysis with Educational Level as Predictor of Marital Stability

	<i>Unstandardized B</i>	SE B	β
Constant	3.08	.07	
Educational Level	.21	.04	.19
R	.19		
R ²	.04		

The summary of the simple regression analysis as shown in Table 1 indicates that educational level is a weak predictor of marital stability among married persons in Anambra State. This is shown by the regression coefficient ($R = .19$) and the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .04$) which indicates that educational level explained 4% of the variance in marital stability among married persons in Anambra State. The beta weight ($\beta = .19$) shows that educational level is a weak positive predictor of predict marital stability among married persons in Anambra State.

Hypotheses testing

Hypothesis 1: Educational level does not significantly predict marital stability among married persons in Anambra State.

Table 3: Test of Significance of Simple Regression Analysis with Educational Level as Predictor of Marital Stability

	<i>Unstandardized B</i>	B	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Constant	3.08		43.04	.000
Educational Level	.21	.19	4.40	.000
R	.19			
R ²	.04			
<i>F</i>	19.36			.000

As shown in Table 3 above, the simple regression coefficient (R) is .18 while the R² is .03. The F-ratio associated with these is 19.36 and the P-value = .000, since the P-value is less than the stipulated .05 level of significance, it was decided that educational level is a significant but weak predictor of marital stability among married person in Anambra State. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Discussion of the Findings

The discussions of the findings were done based on the responses of the respondents, as regards to the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

The results in Tables 2 and 3 of this study indicated that educational level is weak predictor of marital stability among married person in Anambra State, the P-value = .000, since the P-value is less than the stipulated .05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected which means that educational level is a significant

but weak predictor of marital stability among married person in Anambra State. This finding conforms to the study of Renne (2000) who found that the level of education attainment of couples determines their success in marriage. Couples that are not educated have more marital conflict than those educated. He explained that the proportion of men who have extra marital relations is more with couples with less education than with couples who are highly educated.

Summary of Findings

1. Educational level is a weak predictor of marital stability among married persons in Anambra State
2. Educational level is a significant but weak predictor of marital stability among married person in Anambra State.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study which indicated that educational levels are significant but weak positive predictors of marital stability among married persons in Anambra State, it is therefore concluded that highly educated people should look for spouses that are also well educated so that when they marry their family income and occupational status will be at par and complementary to each other. This will ensure mutual respect and understanding for each other in the marriage.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Prospective couples should endeavor to choose partners that have equivalent academic qualification because it has been ascertained that the level of educational attainment of couples determines their success in marriage.
2. Counseling psychologists and Sociologists should organize marriage seminars both at schools and at religious houses so as to sensitize couples on the need for marriage stability as doing so will make them to speak beyond the classroom environment and speak to the public.
3. Government should endeavor to implement free education for both the boy and girl child to University level. This will help both attain equal educational level for a successful marital live.

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