

Demographic Factors Influencing Marital Discord Among Married Couples

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui faktor demografi yang mempengaruhi perselisihan perkawinan di antara pasangan menikah di Wilayah Pemerintah Daerah Ilorin Barat, Negara Bagian Kwara, Nigeria. Desain penelitian deskriptif tipe *ex-post facto* digunakan untuk penelitian ini. Seratus lima puluh pasangan menikah yang dipilih secara acak menjadi partisipan penelitian ini. Instrumen yang dirancang sendiri namun tervalidasi dengan baik berjudul Marital Discord Scale (M.D.S) dengan koefisien reliabilitas 0,75 digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data penelitian. Lima hipotesis nol diajukan dan diuji dalam penelitian ini. Prosedur statistik uji *t* digunakan untuk menganalisis data yang dihasilkan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tidak ada perbedaan yang signifikan dalam persepsi pasangan suami istri di Wilayah Pemerintah Daerah Ilorin Barat di Negara Bagian Kwara, Nigeria tentang perselisihan perkawinan berdasarkan gender dan afiliasi agama. Ditemukan juga bahwa terdapat perbedaan yang signifikan dalam perselisihan perkawinan pasangan suami istri di Wilayah Pemerintah Daerah Ilorin Barat, Negara Bagian Kwara, Nigeria berdasarkan usia dan kualifikasi pendidikan. Berdasarkan temuan penelitian ini, rekomendasi ditawarkan. Hal ini mencakup fakta bahwa konselor perkawinan harus dikonsultasikan jika diperlukan untuk memberi nasihat kepada calon pasangan mengenai berbagai kecocokan yang dapat memperpanjang hubungan mereka.

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to establish the demographic factors influencing marital discord among married couples in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria. The descriptive research design of the *ex-post facto* type was employed for the study. One hundred and fifty randomly selected married couples were the participants of the study. A self-designed but well-validated instrument titled the Marital Discord Scale (M.D.S) with a reliability coefficient of 0.75 was used to collect the research data. Five null hypotheses were raised and tested in the study. T-test statistical procedure was used to analyze the generated data. The findings of the study indicated that there was no significant difference in the perception of married couples in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria on marital discord based on gender and religious affiliation. It was also found that there was a significant difference in the marital discord of married couples in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria based on age and educational qualifications. Based on the findings of this study, recommendations were offered. This includes the fact that marital counsellors should be consulted as a matter of necessity to counsel the intending couples on various compatibilities that could elongate their relationship.

1. INTRODUCTION

Family is the most important primary group in society. Family and marriage are considered to be the two pillars of any society and as such they are the two most important societal institutions. In Nigeria, traditionally and from time immemorial, marriage has been allowed as an agreement between men and women; and marriage for most Nigerians is not merely an agreement but is sacrosanct (Chinwuba, 2015; Popoola & Fagbola, 2023). Once the couple enters into the bond of marriage, the relationship is considered perpetual till death does them apart. In other words, marriage used to be for life and it worked as a

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bulwark against social vulnerabilities (Aqmarina Bella Agustin, 2019; Wójcik et al., 2021). It had an inbuilt system of checks and balances, and roles and priorities were defined by the society for the couple. What distinguished marriage in Nigeria from marriage in other countries was the sanctity attached to marriage: a sense of perpetual bonding and an element of divinity in it (George et al., 2014; Umeaku et al., 2022). Marriage is one of the most important events in one's life affecting the physical status as well as the psyche of an individual. Unfavourable conditions in marriage or marital instability set in when the aforementioned virtues are lacking. Previous study noted that this is manifested in forms of conflict, violence, mistrust, constant bickering, neglect, and marital distress (Nuñez-Rola & Ruta-Canayong, 2019). They noted that such a situation may lead to separation, marital discord, or "marital disintegration". While ideal marriage ought to be a happy institution every intending couple looks up to, some couples soon after marriage begin to see immediately that the fantasy that engulfed the courtship or pre-marriage relationship fades away thereby leaving them with the realities of life.

Such realities of life may be discovering that they are not compatible, that life cannot always be as perceived, and so on. Marriage cannot always be rosy. Previous study noted that to go into marriage expecting a never-ending honeymoon is to experience the disappointment of a child dreaming of a never-ending flow of chocolate creams (Onuche, 2013). These unfavorable conditions as mentioned above set in, and the result may be marital discord. Life is a path usually travelled with a partner. It is full of communication, expectation, adjustment, and identification. Every person identifies his/her in a role and according to this journey of life begins. Marriage is one milestone of life, where one selects a partner, with a new role and new expectation (Andika, 2022; Onuche, 2013). Marriage is the coming together of two different individuals as husband and wife who agree to plan and set up their own family. Previous study viewed marriage as usually a union between an adult male and an adult female (DeMaris, 2015). Different interpretations are given on the importance of marriage by different persons, religions, and philosophers.

Previous study explained that marriage is the greatest source of social support for most people more than friends or including emotional and marital support and companionship (Andika, 2022). Marital discord is a situation that disrupts or interferes with the smooth interaction and relationship among members of a family. This can be between the two parents or between parents and their children. Discord may be a result of a lack of trust, drunkenness, lack of dialogue, lack of respect, joblessness, and idleness. It comes in the form of fights, quarrels, spouse battering, child abuse, and child molestation. It can result in a bad atmosphere in the home, separation, or even divorce. Other study opined that the existence of marital discord in a family is not necessarily bad, because there are some discords which produce positive outcomes (Rasyidin & Fitriani, 2021).

Previous study noted that the family and its structure play a great role in children's academic performance, while a conflicting family is another factor that determines the children's level of academic performance (Sundqvist et al., 2020). Marital discord can be defined as an active quarrelling or conflict resulting from a misunderstanding between a husband and a wife (Aziz & Jaber, 2022; Shaikh et al., 2020). The effects of marital discord are enormous including sexual excesses, social misconduct, frustration, raising children born out of marriage, thuggery, banditry, and armed robbers. This is true when litigation is involved, marital discord creates enmity between individuals and groups and strains existing relationships; the children from families with marital discords are likely to lack proper care from both parents and this may lead to breeding misfits in the society (Salinger & Whisman, 2021; Wilson & Marini, 2023).

Marriage dissolution is a frequent occurrence in society which is a source of concern to social stakeholders like government, family members, religious leaders and community heads. Marital discord rates have increased with negative consequences on the psychological and behavioural patterns of the parties involved (Onuche, 2013; Rasyidin & Fitriani, 2021). In the absence of urgent counselling interventions, marital discord could be problematic to the children, family, and society at large. The problems of marital discord include Behavioural problems such as loneliness, Psychological Problems like persistent worry and disturbed, emotional health problems, fatigue and stress, Mood challenges, Single Parenting like difficulty in instilling discipline in children, Financial burden, Poor academic performance of the students from marital conflicts and those from intact homes. To the best of the knowledge of the researcher, no previous studies were conducted in Offa LGA of Kwara State. The novelty of this study provide challenges of marital discord as perceived by married adults in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria. The main purpose of this study is to establish the demographic factors influencing marital discords among married couples in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria.

2. METHOD

A descriptive research design of ex post facto design was adopted for this study. The population was 2,201 married adults in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria. (National Population Commission, 2006). A sample size of 200 respondents was selected for participation in this study. A purposive sampling method was used to select 25 married adults each from eight communities in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria. The participants were selected from various houses and religious organizations. Also, a stratified sampling method was used to classify the respondents based on gender and age. A self-developed instrument titled the Marital Discord Scale (M.D.S) was used to collect the data for this study. The scale has two parts. Part A demands Demographic information of the participants. This demographic information includes age, gender, religious affiliation, and educational qualification. Part B contains the main items of the scale. These items were structured in four Likert formats with response options ranging from strongly like me, like me, not like me, and not at all like me. The scale has 20 items.

The minimum and maximum obtainable scores are respectively 20 and 80. The face, content, and construct validities of the scale were determined by giving the fast draft of the scale to five specialists in educational guidance and counselling and testing and assessment at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. The suggestions and observations of these experts were affected in producing the final copy of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument is established by the split-half method. Fifty copies of the instrument were administered to married couples in Ilorin South Local Government Area of Kwara State. The administered copies were odd and even scored. These two sets of scores were correlated to determine the reliability coefficient of the scale.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

This returns 0.72 which is accepted to be high enough to be used for collecting research data. The result of the demographic data of the respondents is presented in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Demographic Distribution of the Participants

S/N	Variable	Category	NO	%
1	Gender	Male	79	42.3
		Female	71	57.7
		Total	150	100
2	Age	young less than 35 years	66	44
		Old 35 years and above	84	56
		Total	150	100
3	Religion	Islam	108	72
		Christianity	42	28
		Total	150	100
4	Edu. Qualification	Degree Holders	86	57.33
		Non-degree Holders	64	42.67
		Total	150	100

[Table 1](#) shows the demographic distribution of the participants. From the table, it is shown that 79 males 42.3%, and 71 females make gender distribution. Age distribution of the participants indicated that young participants (less than 35 years) account for 66 (44%) and old who are 35 years and above (56%). Distribution of the basis of religion showed 108 participants are Muslim (72%) and 42 (28%) are Christians. Educational qualification distribution showed that 86 respondents are degree holders (57.33%) while non-degree holders are 64 (42.67%). T-test table showing the difference in the marital discord of married couples in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria based on gender is show in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. T-Test of Difference in the Marital Discord Based on Gender

Variables	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Df	t. Observed	Sig	Rem.
Male	79	53.56	11.35	147	0.85	0.43	NS
Female	71	52.72	10.23				

NS (Not significant at 0.05 critical region)

Table 2 shows the result obtained from testing hypothesis one. From the table, it is shown that t . observed = 0.85, degree of freedom = 148 and significant level = 0.34. Since the significant level is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference in the marital discord of married couples in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria, based on gender. T-test table showing the difference in the marital discord of married couples in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria based on age is show in **Table 3**.

Table 3. T-Test of Difference in the Marital Discord Based on Age

Variables	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Df	t. Observed	Sig	Rem.
Young	66	51.47	10.31				
Old	84	55.18	12.03	148	3.53	0.01	**

** (Significant at 0.05 critical region)

Table 3 shows the result obtained from testing hypothesis two. From the table, it is shown that t . observed = 3.53, degree of freedom = 148 and significant level = 0.01. Since the significant level is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the marital discord of married couples in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria, based on age. T-test table showing the difference in the marital discord of married couples in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria based on religious affiliation is show in **Table 4**.

Table 4. T-Test of Difference in the Marital Discord Based on Religious Affiliation

Variables	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Df	t. Observed	Sig	Rem.
Muslims	108	52.63	13.14				
Christians	42	52.82	9.17	148	0.93	0.18	NS

NS (Not significant at 0.05 critical region)

Table 4 shows the result obtained from testing hypothesis three. From the table, it is shown that t . observed = 0.93, degree of freedom = 148 and significant level = 0.18. Since the significant level is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference in the marital discord of married couples in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria, based on religious affiliations. T-test table showing the difference in the marital discord of married couples in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria based on educational qualification is show in **Table 5**.

Table 5. T-Test of Difference in the Marital Discord Based on Educational Qualification

Variables	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Df	t. Observed	Sig	Rem.
Degree Holders	86	55.17	11.51				
Non-Degree Holders	64	55.18	10.21	148	4.73	0.00	**

** (Significant at 0.05 critical region)

Table 5 shows the result obtained from testing hypothesis two. From the table, it is shown that t . observed = 4.73, degree of freedom = 148 and significant level = 0.00. Since the significant level is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the marital discord of married couples in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria, based on Educational Qualifications.

Discussion

The first hypothesis showed that there was no significant difference in the marital discord of married couples in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria based on gender. This means that the marital discords expressed by male married couples are not significantly different from those expressed by their female counterparts. This implies that the gender of the respondents does not influence their perceptions of the marital discords. This finding disagrees with the finding which revealed that significant differences did not exist in the problems of marital discord as expressed by married persons based on gender (Crawley et al., 2015). Hypothesis two indicated that there was a significant difference in the marital discords of married couples in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria based on age. This finding shows that the marital discord of young couples is slightly and significantly lower than that expressed by their older colleagues. The implication of this is that the ages of the participants exert significant influence on their marital discords. This finding corroborates the finding

of other study which reported that significant difference exists in the problems of marital discord as expressed by married persons based on age (Salinger et al., 2021).

Other study noted that children are the greatest victims of a battered marital relationship (Aradhana & Pangaribuan, 2022). To have a happy marital life among couples, other study identified a combination of factors such as communication, compromise, and commitment, with a generous sprinkling of blind luck (Bong et al., 2021). However, the absence of the above factors leads to marital discord. Marital discord is likened to a "semi-hell" to their children and society, because of its adverse effects on the psychological adjustment and behaviours of children from families with marital discords (Abbas et al., 2019; Cusinato et al., 2020).

Previous study studied stress, marital challenges, and coping techniques of woman-married secondary school instructors in Sokoto Metropolis (Yaro, 2022). The findings of this research endeavour showed that there is a relationship between home-based and work-based sources of stress, character factors, and behavioural factor-related challenges and a sizeable relationship between the affectionate issue and social aid coping techniques of female married secondary school teachers in the Sokoto metropolis. Other study examined the academic qualification and duration of marriage on marital discords amongst Nigerian couples (Inayah et al., 2019). It was also found by this study that the duration of marriage exerted a significant relationship with the Marital Satisfaction of the sampled couples. Other study findings indicated that there is a significant relationship between married teachers' emotional intelligence and their marital satisfaction (Anyamene, 2020). Other study showed that there was a significant effect of emotional focus therapy on the marital dissatisfaction of newly married teachers of the study (Muraina & Emeka, 2019). Another study showed that there was a relationship between married persons' low and high stages of academic attainment marital steadiness while there was no significant relationship between those with medium degrees of academic attainment and their marital stability (Anyamene, 2020).

The findings of this study show that there was no significant difference in the of married couples in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria based on religious affiliation. Put differently, the marital discord of Muslim participants was not significantly different from that of Christian participants. This implies that religious affiliation does not influence the marital discord of married couples in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. This finding disagrees with the findings concluded that there was no significant religious influence on the marital discord of their participants (Ranga, 2022). It was also found in the study that there was a significant difference in the marital discords of married couples in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria, based on educational qualifications. The marital discords of degree-holding participants are observed to be significantly different from those of non-degree-holding participants. The implication of this is that the level of educational qualifications does not influence the marital discord of married couples in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. This finding supports which report a significant difference in the marital disharmony of a set of married couples (Yaro, 2022).

People around married couples (such as family and friends) should provide appropriate support for the couples in times of marital discords. They should do away with the opinion that the man should be able to handle the problem. Irrespective of the religious affiliations, the marital discords are not significantly different. Being a Muslim or Christian does not significantly influence the marital discords of the couples. This implies that family counsellors can be successfully relied upon to manage marital discord than religious leaders. Marriage counsellors should educate intending and married couples on factors that could lead to separation or marital discord or which may make them become single parents and provide them with effective communication and social life skills they can employ to guide against marital discord. Married adults or parents should work together to help their marriage stable and functional so that they can be able to avoid becoming a victim of marital discords.

4. CONCLUSION

This finding revealed that the man is not significantly different from the woman in marital discord. The assertion that the ages come with wisdom and maturity holds for the findings of this study. The ages of the respondents exert a significant influence on the marital discords. The intending couples should age enough and ensure that they have the required wisdom to handle the marital discord before they settle for marriage. The intended marital couple should also be compatible based on educational qualifications. This is based on the finding that educational qualification exerts a significant difference in the marital discords of couples. People of related educational qualifications would be able to view events from a similar perspective unlike those without educational compatibility.

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