

# **Marital Instability As Perceived By Married Academic Staff of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto: Implications for Marital Counselling**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This study investigated the effect of marital instability as perceived by married academic staff of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto; implications for marital counselling. The population of the study consists of all the five hundred and five (505) married academic staff of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto. A total of 217 married academic staff was sampled. The instrument titled "Determinant of Marital Instability Scale" was adapted version of Abdullahi (2012) with reliability index of 0.72 was used in collecting relevant data. Analysis of variance t-test was used in analyze hypotheses one and two. The findings indicated that, there was a significant difference among the respondents in their perception on factors responsible for marital instability base on the findings. However, the result further revealed no significant difference in perception of the respondents based on their family type. As a result of this, it was recommended among others that, marital instability counselling management services should be provided by the counsellors for the couples irrespective of their gender to enable them manage their marital life and resolve marital conflicts when they arise.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Marital instability, Married, and Academic Staff*

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Happiness in marriage is the ardent desire of all intending couples. Marital instability is always a human tragedy that is desired by no one. It causes hurt and suffering to human persons. It is an experience, which involves serious disruption of life at many levels. Many people who have been through the experience of a marital instability liken it to the experience of bereavement. One of the most important relationships between a man and a woman is marriage which involves emotional and legal commitments to each other in adult life. Selecting a partner and entering into a marriage contract is considered a personal achievement and the selection of marriage partner is indeed one of the most important decisions one makes in a lifetime. People marry for many reasons which include; physical attraction, love happiness, companionship and the desire to have children. Marriage is a socially and legally approved sexual relationship where parties involved have mutual understanding for procreation and protection of their future offspring (Musa, 2015). Marriage is the oldest social institution ordained by God as a social contract between two individuals to become husband and wife. Marriage is the state of being united with a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife for the purpose companionship, procreation maintaining a family (Grove, 2006).

Marriage is a special contract of union between a man and woman in accordance with the law which establishes conjugal and family life. It is the foundation of family and inviolable social institutions whose nature, consequences and incident are governed by law and stipulation. The origin of marriage can be traced to the period of creation. Marriage according to Nwokolo (2012) is a relationship and bond, most commonly between a man and a woman that plays a key role in the definition of many families. According to Tolorunleke(2014), marriage is the state of being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law or the state of being united to a person of the opposite sex in a relationship like that of a traditional marriage of opposite sex, it can also be the mutual relation of married (persons wedlock).

Marriage is a culturally approved relationship of one man and one woman (monogamy), one man and two or more women (polygyny), of one woman and two or more men (polyandry) in which there is cultural

endorsement of sexual intercourse between the marital partners of opposite sex and with the expectation that children would be born of the relationship (Abubakar 2016). Marriage is a socially, legally, culturally and religiously approved intimate relationship between a man and woman, it is a means of unity that connect between a man and a woman who aim to share a life together for establishing a family Akinade, (2015). Marriage is an institution ordained by God as well as the culture of many societies.

Marital instability, which simply refers to the interpersonal difficulties within the marital relationship, has many causative factors. Dessislav (2005) wrote thus: the family is the most basic unit of society and building block for national development. Just as there cannot exist any society without families or home, there cannot be sustainable development without stable families or home. Nothing man does is ever perfect, therefore, there are bound to be imperfections in marriages. Marital instability according to Yeh, Lorenz Wickrama, Conger and Elder (2006) is affective and cognitive states along the related actions that are precedent to terminating a relationship. Oyafunke, Falola and Salau, (2014) referred to marital instability as the process whereby marriages breakdown through separation desertion or divorce. Unfortunately, many children today are faced with the challenges of multiple divorces or separations within their families. Parents who divorce, often go on to remarry or form other intimate relationships have higher incidence of failure (Amato, 2001).

Marital instability has become a thing associated with the contemporary family institution. This however, is not to say that it had never once occurred in marital situation of the past but that the rate at which it occurs in our present society is quite alarming. Garba, (2015), posits that the rate of divorce in town depends on economic situation. He noted that in Ibadan, rich traders entice people's wives with their money. This is common in our contemporary marital institution than before. The problem of marital instability can be traced to the rapid growth rate of urbanization and industrialization in Nigeria. The economy is growing and it requires a lot of manpower (both skilled and unskilled). This has aroused every member of the family to become one way or the other involved in the economic growth of the nation.

According to Alireza and Bagher (2016), the involvement of women in wage carrying is a threat in the family solidarity; couples hardly find time to stay together for interaction purposes. Child care which should be the responsibility of the parents is now shifted to the school and house helps. There are also some social factors that affect the instability of the marriage. The idea of managing more than one wife might lead to an end of the family. The habits that either the wife or the husband is involved in extra marital affairs which are perpetuated by some men and some women might lead to an end of the family. The habits that either the wife or the husband is addicted to smoking or drinking also lead to marital dissolution. Lack of trust in many families amongst the couples is wrecking marriages today. Peer influences also threaten the marital solidarity if care is not taken by couples. As a result of outside influences, irrational decisions are made to the detriment of one's wish and this might lead to a marital crisis. Other factors such as education, illegitimate children, religion and infertility of the wife also initiate instability in the marriage.

In another development, marital instability has been described as a situation whereby the couples deliberately decided to separate for one reason or the other. The concept of marital instability is associated with separation, divorce and widowhood(Lesmin and Sarah as cited in Oyafunke and Salawu, 2014).

Adjustment is a behavioural process by which a person maintains balance among various needs that one encounters at a given point of time. It is a process of altering behaviour to reach a harmonious relationship with environment. The dictionary meaning of the word Adjustment is to fit, or make suitable, adopt, arrange, modify, harmonize or to make corresponded. According to Ezeaburukwe cited in Salawu (2015) Adjustment is the harmonious relationship between man and the environment through which he satisfies his need according to the social demands.

Ogunsami (2008), makes an attempt to explain what he viewed as best and realistic indices of marital adjustment, presented assumption of a well - adjusted marriage in the following explanations: that families who are well - adjusted should have agreement on matters critical to maintaining their marital union; sharing of common activities and interest that enhance family growth; sharing demonstrations of affection and mutual confidences help the marital dyad's ability to cope with day to day activities and mundane problems; and families who are happy and satisfied with the marital relation have few complaints about their marriage relationship and few doubts certainty of the marriage's chance of succeeding. In marital life sometimes instability set in due to maladjustment on the part of one or both partners. Marital instability may be product of many factors such as level of education of the families, religion, socio - economic status, family setting, pattern of marriage, employment status of one or both partners, infact, all these has been identified as one of the causes of marital instability or maladjustment (Olayiwola, 2009).

The fragility of the marital bond is a notable feature of the contemporary world. It spares no continent and is present at every level of society. It makes society fragile and even jeopardizes the education task and the trust that sustains a home. All too often it leads to numerous separation as well as divorce. One sometimes has the impression that separation and divorce are considered the only way out of marital crisis. This is part of the growing "divorce mentality" which is the product of marriage instability. Difficulties frequently lead to real friction and conflicts that in the "new mentality" (corruption of proper thinking and conception as a result of

problem from marriage instability) lead to separation, divorce, maladjustment, even murder, where a man kills his wife or the wife killing the husband. It is obvious from increasing rate of divorce, (Animasahun and Fatile, 2011) cases of single parents (Blankenhorn, 2003), Wife battering (Olarinmoye cited in Animasahun and Fatile, 2011); that these are among the resultant effect of marriage instability and marital adjustment in modern African society. Marriage instability and marital adjustment has made us to currently witness the invasion of many areas of human activity by a radical individualism; economic life, excessive competition among others. This individualism certainly does not encourage generous, faithful and permanent self-giving. This has resulted in marriages characterized by individualism and excessive competition between spouses. It also cuts across every race, economic status, educational or social status, even religious status. The endemic nature of the factors that impede marriage stability made it alarming especially in Africa where marriage is religiously adored.

There are a number of studies conducted by previous researchers in relation to the marital instability and marital adjustment and its effects on children. Below are some of these related empirical works: In a study conducted by Lehrer (2006): titled "determinants of marital instability based his work, the influence of various factors on marital instability using the theoretical framework developed in the economic literature and data conducted in the USA by the National Survey of Family Growth in the year 1982. The findings of this study showed that, education, socio-economic status, religious affiliation, age at marriage, premarital birth, broken Family and place of resident as the factors that can inhibit marital stability. Adeoti (2000) researched on sources of marital conflicts as perceived by educated married people in Ijero Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Ogidan in Oganija (2013) worked on marital adjustment problems of educational employed and unemployed married couples in selected Towns in Kwara State, However, Essere (2006) looked at the communication management skills training as marriage enrichment programme in the improvement of marital adjustment. Filani in Oganija (2013) worked on experimental study of the effects of communication skills training on marital adjustment and styles of communication of educated couples in Ogbomosho, They all found out that poor communication is the major source of marital instability.

Another researcher's work on the causes of marital conflicts amongst couples in Nigeria: Implication for Counselling psychologists in Zuba, Abuja studied 1000 couples among the Ijaw, Ilaje, Yorubas and the Baribas (Tolorunleke ,2014). The findings of his work showed that, communication, cultural background, family type, educational attainment, childbearing, religious affiliation, type of marriage, income and age of marriage are some of the major factors responsible for marital instability. Abane (2003) worked on for better for worse: social dimension of marital conflict in Ghana. More so, Tinja (2001) also worked on the influence of the in-law married couples in Sokoto. Umara, Mburza and Goni (2010) worked on the causes of divorce among couples in Maiduguri metropolis, Bomo State: implication for counseling in which 600 divorcees were sampled from four wards in the metropolis (Maisandari, Bulabulin, Mafoni and Gwange wards of Maiduguri, Bomo State, Nigeria).

The findings of the works revealed that, poverty, promiscuity, poor feeding, squander mania of food items and impotency/infertility as the major causes of divorce. Usoroh, Ekot and Inyang (2010) in their work titled spousal communication styles and marital stability among civil servants in Akwa Ibom State used 13,117 civil servants. The result of their revealed that couples varied in their communication style with the majority adopting leveling. Their study also showed that educational qualification had significant influence on both communication style and marital stability. Effect of infidelity on marital instability among married couples in Abeokuta research done by (Akanni, 2011). A sample size of 300 couple was sampled by him and his result of his work showed that, infidelity has significant effect on child neglect; also the result showed that infidelity has effect social vices among married couples and lastly, the result revealed that infidelity has significant effect on broken marriages.

Additionally, Animasahun and Fatile (2011) studied the patterns of marital instability among married couples In Lagos, Nigeria, in their study, 250 married men and women were sampled. The result of their findings indicated that there was no significant difference in marriage instability between couples with polygamous family background and couples with monogamous background, there was no significant difference in marriage instability among couple with different social status, there was no significant difference between couples with different marital communication style. There was no significant difference in marriage instability among couples with different careers/occupation. There was no significant difference in marriage instability among couples with different educational background.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Broken homes have now become rampant in our contemporary days in which husband, wife and their children live apart. This is evidenced from the fact that, the law courts are day in day out crowded with people willing to disrupt their companionship (marriages), creating disharmony in the society and strengthening the rate of hatred among families, ethnic groups and religious affiliation. Therefore, the problem of marital instability in Nigeria needs immediate attention. Marital discord negatively affects spouse's smooth relationship and the life

of their children. Marital instability is a major problem among Nigerian couples. There are many factors that are responsible for marital instability and marital adjustment in Nigeria.

Without understanding it is nearly impossible to solve conflicts that can lead to numerous family problems, including excessive family conflicts, ineffective problem solving skill, lack of intimacy, weak emotional bonding as well as marital maladjustment. Many yell and shout on their families, while some others use withdrawal style by keeping their feelings to themselves. They care not to share the information concerning the progress of marital relationship with their partners. Some even prefer sharing their feelings with their extramarital partner to their better half. Poor or lack of understanding invariably can increase risk of divorce and marital maladjustment. The thrust of the present study is to examine the effect of marital instability and marital adjustment on children among married academic staff of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto with a view of showing their implications for marital counselling.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions are generated for the conduct of this study:-

1. What are the different factors responsible for marital instability as perceived by male and female academic staff of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto?
2. Is there any difference in the perception of academic staff of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto of the factors of marital instability on the basis of family type?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses are generated to guide the conduct of the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female academic staff of Shehu Shagari College of Education on the factors responsible for marital instability.
2. There is no significant difference in the perception of academic staff of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto of the factors of marital instability in the basis of family type.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

A descriptive survey design was used in this study to find out the marital instability and marital adjustment among married academic staff of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto. The population of the study consisted of all married academic staff in all the seven schools comprises of thirty three department in the college with a total population of 527 with sample size of 217 married academic staff in the college. The selection of the samples size was done through the use of the Research Advisors (2006) table for determining sample size and proportionate sampling technique was used in getting various sample size of the married staff thus allowing equal chance in the selection procedure. The married academic staff in Shehu Shagari College of Education was purposively selected in that there are other academic staff that are not married and other not an academic staff

Thus, a total of 217 were drawn from the total population of 527. Also subjects used for the study were selected based on simple random sampling technique by writing 'YES' and 'NO' in ballot form. The research instrument that was used for this research is an adapted questionnaire by designed by Abdullahi (2012); titled Questionnaire on Determinant of Marital Instability Scale (DMIS). The instrument consists of two parts; Part A deals with Bio-data of the respondents with eight (8) items that seek to elicit personal information about respondents, while section B seeks information on the probable determinants of marital instability and marital adjustment and it consists of 15 sub-headings in which 5 items are under each sub-heading making 75 items in all. The instrument was designed with four likert scale type as follows: Strongly (SA=4), Agree (A=3), Disagree (D=2), Strongly Disagree (SD=1) for positive items and reverse for negative. The instrument (questionnaire) was adjudged to have face and content validity by experts from the field of guidance and counselling and measurement and evaluation and reliability was established after analysis at 0.72 level of correlation coefficient using PPMCC method through the first and second method of administration.

The researcher with the aid of two research assistants in each school administered the instruments to respondents. The analysis of the data collected was through the use of computer statistical package, that is the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 2.0 for accuracy and proper conclusions that would lead to the accurate generalization of findings based on the hypotheses raised Chi-square was employed to analyze the data generated in the study. The alpha of 0.05 level of significance was set as the standard for retaining or rejecting the hypothesis.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

This section highlights the data presentation of key research questions. Prior to inferential analysis, preliminary analysis was done to explore the response of the respondents using basic descriptive statistics which include frequencies and percentages.

**Analysis Based on the Cause of Marital Instability of Respondents**

**Table 1: Perceived causes of Marital Instability and Marital Adjustment among Married Academic Staff of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto**

Factor	Mean	Ranking
Marital Infidelity/Unfaithfulness in Marriage	3.32	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Parent-In-Law Interference	3.245	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Sex Incompatibility	3.36	1 <sup>st</sup>
Marital Communication Styles	3.18	4 <sup>th</sup>
Illogical Thought	3.15	5 <sup>th</sup>
Educational Attainment	3.12	6 <sup>th</sup>
Financial Status	2.32	8 <sup>th</sup>
Age at Marriage	3.08	7 <sup>th</sup>
Workaholism	2.32	8 <sup>th</sup>
Alcohol\Substance Abuse (Drunkenness)	1.68	10 <sup>th</sup>

**Source: Researcher’s Field Work (2020)**

Result presented in table one shows the perception causes of marital instability among Married academic staff. Subjects responded on ten (10) indicates that the cause of marital instability as perceived by most respondents is “marital sexual incompatibility in marriage with a mean score of 3.32 and ranked 1<sup>st</sup>, closely followed by Marital Infidelity/Unfaithfulness in Marriage with a mean score of 3.32 and ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> while “Parent-In-Law Interference” with a mean score of 3.24 ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>. And the least cause of marital instability as perceived by respondents is “Alcohol\Substance Abuse (Drunkenness)” with a mean score of 1.68, ranked 10<sup>th</sup>.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female academic staff of Shehu Shagari College of Education on the factors responsible for marital instability.

**Table 2: Mean Gender Difference in the Perception of the factors of Marital Instability**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-Cal	t-Crit	p-value	Decision
Male	142	71.6	15.0				
Female	75	62.30	18.20	21.91	1.97	0.036	Significant

From the result of table 2, an independent t-test was conducted to compare the instability level of male and female respondents. The result depicts that there was a statistical significant difference in the communication level of male respondents ( $M = 71.6, SD = 15.0$ ) and that of female respondents ( $M = 62.30, SD = 18.20$ ),  $p = 0.036$ . Thus, the hypothesis is rejected. The result implies that male and female academic staffs differ significantly in their level of marital instability.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the perception of academic staff of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto of the factors of marital instability on the basis of family type.

**Table 3: Mean difference on the perception of academic staff of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto of the factors of marital instability on the basis of family type**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-Cal	P-value	Decision
Polygyeny	97	91.78	22.72	.276	.716	Not Significant
Monogamy	120	91.08	22.97			

From the result of table 3, an independent t-test was conducted to compare the mean score of marital instability of Polygyeny and Monogamous respondents. The result depicts that there was no statistical significant mean difference in the marital instability of polygyeny respondents ( $M = 91.78, SD = 22.72$ ) and that of monogamous respondents ( $M = 91.08, SD = 22.97$ ),  $p = .716$ . Thus, the hypothesis is retained. The result implies that there was no significant difference among academic staffs based on family type.

### III. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are further discussed as follows:

Finding from hypothesis one revealed the significant difference in the perception of male and female married academic staff of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto on the factors responsible for marital instability. Both male and female married academic staff perceived marital infidelity/unfaithfulness in marriage, parent-in-law, sex incompatibility, marital communication styles, illogical thought, educational attainment, Financial status, marital age, workaholism, and Alcohol/substance abuse (drunkenness). This is in line with the

work of Lehrer (2006), which stated that, student perceived parent-in-law interference as the number one cause of divorce followed by sex incompatibility of any of the spouses, educational attainment occupied the third and fourth place respectively and the least factor were age difference.

Finding from hypothesis two indicated that, there is no significant difference in the perception on factors responsible for married academic staff of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto based on their family type. The finding of this study seen to support the conclusion reached by Ogwohademle and Ishola (2013) which stated that family type and communication does influence marital instability and extramarital affairs

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings of this study, it could be concluded that, the academic staff of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto differ in their perception on all factor such as age at marriage, marital communication styles, financial status, educational attainment, illogical thought, marital infidelity/unfaithfulness in marriage, alcohol/substance abuse sex incompatibility, workaholism and parent-in-law interference. But nevertheless, the academic staff of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto irrespective of their gender, age range, marital status, age at marriage, duration of marriage, religious, family type and Educational qualification acknowledged that marital age, marital communication, financial status, educational attainment, illogical thought, marital infidelity/unfaithfulness in marriage, alcohol/substance abuse (drunkenness), sex incompatibility, workaholism, parent-in-law interference are responsible for marital instability among married couples. Although, among all these factors, marital infidelity was seen as the most prominent factor responsible for marital instability, while educational attainment was see as the least factors.

#### **Counselling Implications**

The acceptance of all the two hypotheses in this study is a strong indication of the perception of marital instability which could be as a result of any variable studied in this work calls for urgent counselling intervention. Based on this, guidance and counselling service through marital counselling should be extended to families so that adequate orientation would be rendered to couples to see the evil in marital instability and work on each other and relationship which have produce children to a lifelong one that must be guided love, affection, integrity, trustworthy that never call for a third party. Also, the counsellors in dealing with young adults' should counsel them in relation to the afore-mentioned factors inhibiting the betterment of marital life for them to be acquainted with. Moreso, the study also implies that issues concerning marriage should be taught in our schools as this will afford the students the fundamental knowledge on what marriage is all about as well as what can jeopardize the effectiveness of marriage for them to avoid later in their lives.

By and large, the findings of this study have a multi-dimensional implication for marriage counsellors, spinsters and bachelors, married couples as well as government. This is informed from the fact that, the problems confronting marriages are direct concern of the entire society. This therefore, indicates that, to ensure marital stability among us, couples should be encourage to make a deliberate decision to consult a marriage counsellor(s) for pre-marital and marital counselling for their marriage assessment.

#### **V. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

1. Marital instability counselling and management services should be provided by the counsellor for the couples with respect to their gender to enable them manage their marital life and resolve marital conflicts when arise.
2. Patience is the key to every life endeavor. For this reason, couples irrespective of their family type should cultivate the spirit of patience and self-control. This would keep the flame of love burning.

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