

**VALUE ORIENTATION AND MARITAL HARMONY AMONGST MARRIED
EMPLOYEES IN MUNICIPAL AREA COUNCIL OF FEDERAL CAPITAL
TERRITORY, ABUJA NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between value orientation and marital harmony amongst married employees in municipal area council of Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja Nigeria. Research questions and hypotheses guided the study. Correlation survey design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised married employees in Abuja Municipal Area Council of FCT. The sample of the study consists of 150 participants sampled using purposive-random sampling technique. A researchers' made instrument titled; Value Orientation and Marital Satisfaction Scale (VOMSS) was used for collecting data. Validity of the instrument ascertained by experts was 0.78. Reliability was determined using Cronbach Alpha which yielded 0.82. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The results revealed significant relationship between value orientation and marital harmony amongst couples in FCT. Researchers recommended that counsellors should organize marriage seminars periodically to empower couples to imbibe values that promote openness, readiness to change, respect, tolerance, perseverance, forgiveness and love in their marital relationship. Similarly, stakeholders in various cultural and traditional institutions as well as government orientation agencies should embark on vigorous campaigns to reorient the populace on obnoxious social and cultural beliefs that serve

as breeding grounds for marital disharmony.

Keywords: Value orientation, Value re-orientation, Marital harmony, Married employees.

Introduction

A family is the basic unit of every society and it is the most important component of a community. Every family lives in a home. Home is the physical structure which brings family members together. Family members that are living in an ideal home share great love and care that could enable them to live together peacefully. The home which family members live could define them in terms of background, attitude, achievements, values, honour and dignity. However, the major institution which determines peace in every home is the marital relationship between husband and wife, especially how they organize their marriage. Umahi (2015) described marriage as an institution which a society recognizes a man and a woman being bounded together through love and affection to live together as couples, have sexual relationship and reproduce children which they are to train and nurture together in peace. It is because of how essential marriage is to the overall mental and physical well-being of spouses, their children and the society at large that marital relationships have long been an object of interest for counsellors, psychologists and sociologists.

Marriage as ordained by God is meant to be a life-long relationship (Esere, 2003). But the worrisome rate of marital crisis leading to the breakdown of marriages and the ripple effects on people has in recent years evoked a great deal of concerns around the world. Denwigwe, et al (2023) posits that the increasing rate of marital instability characterized by divorce, separation, and cohabitation is one of the new and challenging developments in modern family life. According to Adelman (2019), the incidence of divorce has gone up exponentially, and not even the wearisome process and expensive cost of filing for divorce, which depends on factors like a court, location, lawyers' charges, and sometimes the reason for divorce, has been able to stop the high rate. Lagos State alone for instance was said to have received 354 applications for divorce filed in two customary courts. Court approved 93 divorce, withdrew 30, while 231 were yet to be attended to. In Abuja the nation's capital city, around 4000 applications for divorce were submitted between January and August, 2020. Not forgetting that other states of the country have their own share of the list. Since marriage is a human institution with two members of the union having the power to give birth and this can be between 0 and 10 or more, the outcome of the event (giving birth) will be varied depending on the number. When one considers these datasets and multiplies it with other categories, the trend will become overwhelming. That notwithstanding, many unhappy couples have not presented themselves in court for divorce and may never do so (Denwigwe, et al 2023).

Marriage must be the family unit that makes society a cohesive whole. It must create home as the breeding ground of the species, education of the young, the reassurance for man's mind, the morality of the world, the give and take of love, the security, comfort and acceptance that ensures

peace, gentleness and goodness in the world. But when this setting is threatened by crises, it produces adverse ripple effects on humanity globally. This explains why people often attribute to the rising cases of crime, criminality, violence and terror attacks ravaging societies to the breakdown of marriages (Asuquo & Maliki, 2007).

It is in the light of the above, that marital harmony (satisfaction or stability) is considered by scholars as an integral component in marriage. Marital harmony is a strongest predictor of happiness and fulfilment in life. It is associated with higher rates of productivity, better general adjustment and fewer health problems. This is because marital harmony is associated with better emotional and physical functioning and more work success for married people (and presumably provides more protection from other kinds of stress) than marital pain and unhappiness. The benefits of marital harmony also extend to children. Children's emotional, physical health, and educational success are all better when marriage relationship is healthy and void of discord (Fakher, 2018).

However, the scandalous pace of disharmony that ruins the marriage institution and family life and still generates concern among people all over the world in recent years has produced a spirited discussion on the subject. Marital instability which refers to the increasing rate of divorce, separation and cohabitation as described in Denwigwe, et al (2023) is one of the modern issues confronting the phenomenon of the family. It is a new challenge of family life, widening family diversity and dissent. According to Adelman (2019), divorce is also on the rise and seems to decrease the incidence. Marital harmony means the adjustment of spouses to each other and the cultivation of companionship capable of affectionate relationships leading to gratifying realization of common goals and the attainment of personal autonomy. If partners' growth and development adjustment is not experienced and realized, then matrimonial conflict is inevitable.

The most important psychological characteristics that depicts a mature personality are value orientation. Value orientation constitutes a meaningful side of an individual's personality orientation which represents the internal basis for his/her behaviours, decisions and attitudes toward reality. Like human needs, values form a source of meanings to every individual. They define cultural groups, societies and individuals; they describe time changes, as well as the foundations of behaviour. values are the most effective regulator of lives of people and social groups that control decisions in situations of choice and they constitute a compelling imprint on conduct. (Schwartz, 2012; Antoci, 2019).

No value exists in isolation but stands in relation of mutual presupposition to other value-contents in order to be actualised. Values are almost always part of a system of values that, moreover, is arranged coherently as a whole and functions latently as a holistic guiding principle that perpetually directs us in every respect in rational combinations of self-sufficient life (Antoni, 2019). Schwartz (1992) cited in Alomar, et al (2017) identified the existence of ten basic values which encapsulate all possible human values that are believed to cut across nations, upon which

guiding principles of life emanate. The values include; Universalism, Benevolence, Tradition, Conformity, Security, Power, Achievement, Hedonism, Stimulation, and Self-direction.

Several studies have investigated the relationship between value orientation and marriage success. For ease of understanding, human values have been summed into four types: self-transcendence self-enhancement, openness to change, and conservation. The expression of these values shows one's value orientation. Value orientation according to Kluckhohn (1951) cited in Antoci (2019) is an organised and generalised concept, which serves as a factor influencing behaviour, nature, human, inter-human and divine, which determines what is human, what humans are motivated towards, how they relate to each other and to their environment, and what is desirable and undesirable as it may affect behaviour, nature, human, inter-human, and divine as they may be related to inter-human relations and to the environment. A person's value orientation is a value system which comprises of the inner convictions that stimulate their actions and are the basis of the content and the direction of their activity, maintaining its stability, certainty and sustainability, and the consistency of their behaviour and their relations with the social world and other people.

Marriage relationships are increasingly becoming chaotic in the society with many leading to divorce or separation (Esere 2003). While the menace seems to be a nation-wide phenomenon, the situation in Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria is worrisome. Many marriages are collapsing by the day with the customary courts terminating a large number annually. As such, it is common to find in the city many single parent families (not by death) and a number of reconstituted families with step parent/child relationships, leading to adverse consequences on children's personality, growth and adjustments which affects the stability of the family unit and the society in general. Counsellors must therefore guard with relevant knowledge to provide credible and deep-rooted solutions that will stem the tide of the menace.

Incidences of breakdown of some marital relationships leading to the dissolution and the psychological implication of these developments on most citizens of the world in recent years have precipitated fears and concern among people. Denwigwe, et al (2023) citing research postulates the fact that rising rate of marital instability depicting the occurrences of divorces, separation, and cohabitation amongst marriages serves as one of the contemporary and dynamic developments in modern family life worldwide'. Adelman (2019) submits that 'the incidence of divorce has increased many folds, and it can be said without mincing words that no country is spared of the phenomenon of divorce.

Emerging evidences from many studies have shown the effects of values orientation on the cognitive perception of persons, and how this parameter affects behavioural manifestations especially among interdependent relationships such as marriage. These relationships have been shown to have great influence on the ideas of individual persons. The choice of orientation which new entrants in matrimony prefer is worth a mention. It has not only become obvious, but has equally attracted great interest how certain influences such as religious contextualization are

described as ‘catalysts’ for some types of marriages in different parts of the world. For example, Seddighi, et al (2014) and Jafari, et al (2015) in two separate researches examined the relationship between the religious orientation (religious adherence) and marital satisfaction among subjects (couples) in cities of Qom and Tehran, Iran. Many of these studies, while inconclusive with few exceptions, were conducted using somewhat different methods. The first type of study, conducted with combined total samples of 150 and 382 couples, indicates a positive and significant correlation between religious orientation and marital satisfaction. The pattern reveals that couples committed to religious values tend to enjoy happier, more stable and satisfying marriages than those who are not

The study; “relationship between cultural values and marital satisfaction” (Fakher, 2018) investigated the impact of collectivism and gender role orientation on marital satisfaction in Palestinian couples. A total of 307 married participants (187 males and 120 females) completed self-administered questionnaire which revealed that cultural value orientation has significant influence on marital satisfaction. Edet (2021) researched on the relationship between value orientation and marital adjustment among university lecturers in Cross River State, Nigeria using 76 target groups of lecturers and found that there is significant relationship existing between marital adjustment and lecturers’ session of orientation for morality, academic, social, perseverance, self-motivation and cultural value orientation. Deniwgwe, Ebone, and Ango (2023) determined whether the social value orientation affects stability of marriages among heads of department in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria. Ex-post facto research method was used, and 400 heads of departments answered Social Value Orientation and Marital Stability Questionnaire (SVOMSQ) which revealed that their orientation on social values affects marital stability.

Despite efforts by scholars and other stakeholders to clarify and curb the issues around marital disharmony, the menace has remained perennial in our society. This calls for more and more research in this area. The desire to validate the generalizability of the above empirical works coupled with the desire to explore values of openness to change, and conservation values which were not addressed in previous studies. The current research therefore investigates the relationship between value orientation and marital harmony amongst married employees in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of the research were to:

1. Find out the relationship between married employees’ openness to change values and marital harmony in FCT, Abuja.
2. Find out the relationship between married employees’ conservation values and marital harmony in FCT, Abuja.

Research Questions

The questions that guided the study were:

1. How is married employees' endowment in openness to change values related to marital harmony in FCT, Abuja?
2. How is married employees' endowment in conservation values related to marital harmony in FCT, Abuja?

Hypotheses

The hypotheses formulated and tested were:

H₀₁ There is no significant relationship between married employees' openness to change values and marital harmony in Municipal Area Council of FCT, Abuja.

H₀₂ There is no significant relationship between married employees' conservation values and marital harmony in Municipal Area Council of FCT, Abuja.

Methodology

The study adopted co-relational survey research design. This is considered appropriate because the study sought to establish the relationship between value orientation and marital harmony among married employees. The population of the study comprised all married employees (government and private) within Municipal Area Council of FCT. One hundred and fifty respondents (75 males and 75 females) were sampled for the study using purposive-random sampling technique. Researchers' made instrument titled "Value Orientation and Marital Satisfaction Scale (VOMSS)" was used for data collection. The instrument is made up of two parts – first part elicited bio-data of the respondents while second part consisted statements that test the disposition of respondents on the variables being studied namely; openness to change values, conservation values and marital harmony at a four-point rating scale. Positive statements are evaluated and graded on the continuum ranging from always (4), sometimes (3), rarely (2) and not at all. Negative statements were evaluated and graded in reverse order. These enabled the researchers to assign meaning to the responses of participants. The instrument was validated at the faculty of education of Nasarawa State University Keffi, and the reliability on the other hand showed Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.82, appropriately reliable for the study.

The research questions were answered, and findings explained using mean and standard deviation as measures of central tendency and dispersion while a bench mark of 2.50 was used to assess the level of the variables. Mean score of 2.50 and above on any of the variables was judged to be high while 2.49 and below on any of the variable was judged to be low. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One: How is employees’ endowment in openness to change values related to marital harmony in Municipal Area Council of FCT, Abuja?

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of the relationship between employees’ openness to change values and marital harmony.

Variables	N	Response Category		Mean	SD	Remark
		High Score	Low score			
Openness to change Values	150	126 (84%)	24 (16%)	3.28	.441	High Openness to change Values
Marital Harmony		126 (84%)	24 (16%)	3.30	.604	High Marital Harmony

Scale 2.50

According to Table 1, majority (84%) of the respondents scored high in Openness to change values with the same number scoring high in marital harmony, while 16% of the respondents scored low in openness to change values with the same number scoring low in marital harmony. Similarly, the result shows in summary that the score in Openness to change values and Marital Harmony are high because both had an aggregate mean score that was way above the bench mark of 2.50. This shows that high endowment in openness to change values by spouses is related to marital harmony.

Research Question Two: How is employees’ endowment in conservation values related to marital harmony in Municipal Area Council of FCT, Abuja?

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of the relationship between employees’ conservation values and marital harmony.

	N	Response Category		Mean	SD	Remark
		High Score	Low score			
Conservation Values	150	138 (92%)	12 (8%)	3.63	.364	High Conservation Values
Marital Harmony		126 (84%)	24 (16%)	3.30	.604	High Marital Harmony

Scale 2.50

As shown in Table 2, an overwhelming majority (92% of the respondents scored high in conservation values with 84% scoring high in marital harmony, while 12% of the respondents scored low in conservation values with 24% scoring low in marital harmony. This implies that not all who scored high in conservation values scored high in marital harmony. Overall, the score in conservation values together with Marital Harmony was high as well as their aggregate mean score

endow their children with conservation values it contributes to marriage stability.

The hypotheses were formulated in order to test the statistical basis for the existence, the size and the meaning of the relationship observed between the variables under study were the following:

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between employees’ openness to change values and marital harmony in FCT, Abuja.

Table 3: Inferential analysis of the relationship between Openness to change values and marital harmony of spouses in municipal area council of FCT

Variables	N	Pearson r	p-value	Remark
Openness to change	150	0.506**	0.004	Null hypothesis Rejected (p-value<0.05)
Marital Harmony				

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

From Table 3, the Pearson Correlation-Coefficient value for the relationship between openness to change values and marital harmony of employees in municipal area council of FCT is $r = 0.506$ which is indicative of a moderate positive relationship. This suggests that increase in openness to change by spouses is moderately linked to increase in marital harmony. Furthermore, because the probability value (0.004) is less than the alpha value (0.05), the null hypothesis was rejected to mean that the r-coefficient of 0.506 is significant. This demonstrated that spouses’ openness to change disposition had a positive, moderate and significant relationship with marital harmony.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between employees’ conservation values and marital harmony in Municipal Area Council of FCT, Abuja.

Table 4: Inferential analysis of the relationship between Conservation values and marital harmony of spouses in municipal area council of FCT

Variables	N	Pearson r	p-value	Remark
Openness to change	150	0.420**	0.000	Null hypothesis Rejected (p-value<0.05)
Marital Harmony				

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

From Table 4, the Pearson Correlation-Coefficient value for the relationship between

a moderate positive relationship. This suggests that increase in conservation values by spouses is moderately linked to increase in marital harmony. Furthermore, because the probability value (0.000) is less than the alpha value (0.05), the null hypothesis was rejected to mean that the r-coefficient of 0.420 is significant. This demonstrated that spouses' endowment in conservation values had a positive, moderate and significant relationship with marital harmony.

Discussion

This study investigated the relationship between value orientation and marital harmony amongst married employees in municipal area council of FCT, Abuja Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated the relationship between openness to change values, conservation values and marital harmony amongst participants. From the presentation and analyses of the data gathered, the following findings were revealed:

The study revealed a strong positive correlation between couples' openness to change values and marital harmony. This finding is in tandem with studies of Ganji and Navabinezhad (2012), Scheppingen, et al (2017), Edet (2021), Izuchi and Nwachukwu (2021), and Denwigwe, et al (2023) which revealed that locus of control, self-control, self-concept, self-motivation, and social values had positive significant relationship with marital adjustment and harmony. The finding, thus, implies that when spouses endorse openness to change values such as independence of thought, action and feelings, as well as readiness for change based on constructive engagement, they would be more open to dialogue and more understanding and compromise with each other, which ultimately would lead to marital harmony.

Secondly, this study uncovers significant positive relationship between couples' conservation values and marital harmony which support Seddighi, et al (2014); Jafari, et al (2015) and Fakher (2018) who ascertained that commitment and adherence to religious and cultural values of couples have significant relationship with marital adjustment, marital satisfaction and harmony. This means that when spouses imbibe and are committed to observing religious, social and cultural values that emphasize honesty, faithfulness, respect for others, tolerance, perseverance, forgiveness and love, such couples would experience happier, stable, harmonious and satisfying marriages than those who do not. It must be noted also that strict adherence to and strong resistance to change from exploitative and obnoxious cultural and social values would serve as a breeding ground for marital crisis or disharmony.

Implication for Counselling

The above findings imply that most of the marital crises that couples in municipal area council of FCT are experiencing, leading to separation and divorce could be traced to spousal deficiency in values that promote self-concept, transparency, constructive dialogue and the willingness to change from exploitative and obnoxious cultural and social norms. This calls for intensive value re-orientation for couples in unhealthy marriages. The goal of marital counselling therefore should be the identification of value deficiencies in couples and value-reorientation to enable them get rid of obnoxious social and cultural norms that breed spousal crises.

Conclusion

The result of this study indicated that there is significant relationship between openness to change values, conservation values and marital harmony. To this effect, it was concluded that marital harmony enjoyed and expressed by couples to an extent, is a function of how endowed they are in values that promote openness, readiness to change, respect, tolerance, perseverance, forgiveness and love in the course of their marital relationship.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the discoveries of this research:

1. Counsellors should organize periodic reorientation to encourage couples to imbibe values that promote openness, readiness to change, respect, tolerance, perseverance, forgiveness and love.
2. Stakeholders in cultural and government orientation agencies should embark on vigorous campaigns to reorient and disabuse the minds of uninformed persons from obnoxious social and cultural beliefs that serve as breeding grounds for marital disharmony.
3. Counsellors should arrange orientation for parents and teachers in order to help them understand the need for investing in positive values leading to important growth of interpersonal relationship among youths. This is important to that when our youths as husband and wives assume the responsibility of positions they will have adequate values to fall upon at their various places in the society.
4. Counsellors should organize orientation programme for young people to educate them on the impact of value orientation on marriages, with a view to guide them in future marriage decisions.

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