

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS DETERMINANTS OF MARITAL INSTABILITY AMONG MARRIED WOMEN IN IJEDE COMMUNITY: COUNSELLING INTERVENTION

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Introduction

Marriage is one of the important institutions in society, as it is a fundamental need because families are formed through it and the family is the core unit of human society. Marriage is an agreement and union between a man and a woman to live responsibly as husband and wife for companionship, reproduction, and nurturing of a family. Hence, marriage is a sane and important structure on which every society builds. Ojukwu (2013) confirmed this by saying that for the world to be at peace, marriages, homes, and families must be at peace, as stable marriages produce stable children and families, which in turn give rise to a stable society. Marriage is a union that is supposed to bring joy and happiness to society, as well as honor to those who participate in it. Marriage is meant to be sacred to those involved and it is necessary to the social order and in the interest of society.

However, in the past few decades, there have been significant changes in marriage and family life, all over the world (Musau, Kisovi, and Otor, 2015). Maciver and Dimkpa (2012) confirmed that the institution of marriage is now unstable. Marital instability has been on a continuous increase in Africa and other developing countries (Duke-Natrebo, 2014). According to Dada and Idowu, cited in Tolorunleke (2013), divorce and remarriage rates among married couples in Nigeria are alarmingly high at the moment.

According to Amina, cited in Omoniyi-Oyafunke, Falola, and Salau (2014), marital instability is associated with separation, divorce, and widowhood. Since one has no control over the condition that brings about widowhood, marital instability in this study, therefore, refers to the process in which marriage ends in divorce, dissolution, or separation, whether physically or mentally. The increase in divorce rates is one of the most visible changes in African societies and family lives. The effects and aftermaths of marital instability are grave, not only on the separated couple but on the children and society at large. According to Duke-Natrebo (2014), children from divorced parents

generally experience lower cognitive, behavioural, and health outcomes. In similar studies on the effects of divorce, Cravens (2013) and Gardner (2010) noted that marital instability increased the difficulty of single parenting, domestic violence, and estrangement in society. These issues have an impact on population dynamics, health, growth, efficiency, social order, and development.

Furthermore, children that experience regular instability and environmental stress in their early years, may continue to accrue unstable experiences as they get older, according to Adebowale (2011). Omoniyi-Falola et al (2014) established that children raised in single-parent families are more vulnerable to trafficking, rituals, and housework than children raised in intact families. Yildirim and Pendergas (2020) reported that divorce harms children's learning capacity and educational attainment. Divorce reduces household income and severely limits individual earning capacity in the marketplace. Divorce has a significant impact on crime, abuse and neglect, drug use, and the costs of compensating government services.

Marital instability has been shown to harm children's health and longevity. It also raises the risk of behavioral, emotional, and psychiatric problems, including suicide. It also has varying effects on children's hearts, minds, and souls, ranging from mild to severe, seemingly minor to observably significant, and short-term to long-term (Beckmeyer, Coleman, & Ganong, 2014). The effects of marital instability are grave on children's psychological and social development as Shahram, Ali, and Ghoobad (2012) cited in Adamu and Temesgen (2014) identified anti-social behavior and delinquency in children and adolescents; prostitution, particularly in areas of poverty and ignorance; abuse of women, men, and children, as well as using children in drug distribution and other illegal activities; Aggression and maladjustment in children, as well as straying away from their home; Academic failure, suicidal husband or wife or children; reduction in desire to marry other people, particularly children of divorced families; and children lose confidence and do not see a bright future.

Several factors have been identified by various researchers to have caused marital instability. Asa and Nkan (2017) identified sociocultural differences, psychological factors, economic factors, marriage-based factors, health factors, sex-related factors, conflict factors, and communication-based factors, as the major factors associated with marital instability. Okwudili and Anni (2021) confirmed that marital instability is caused by infidelity and lack of finance. Other factors are social incompatibility of marriage partners, sexual incompatibility, extreme social orientation, extended family affairs and issues, negligence behavior of the partners, economic situation (Amadi & Amadi, 2014; Garba, 2015) Ojukwu (2014) associated social unrest, delinquency, crime and some sickness with marital discord and family fragmentation.

According to Masau, Kisoviand Otor (2015), issues like carelessness, infidelity, aggression, drunkenness, problems with the in-laws, unemployment, age disparity and polygamy, can all contribute to marital instability. Egbo et al (2020) affirmed that lack of communication is a potent factor leading to marital instability. Marital instability causes "disruptions in the parent-child relationship, continuing discord between former spouses, loss of emotional support, economic hardship, and an increase in the number of other negative life events," according to the American Psychological Association. Divorce has a wide range of negative consequences for individuals and society. In religious practice, divorce reduces the frequency with which God is worshiped and

prayed to (Bastaitis & Mortelmans, 2016).

Considering the importance of stable marriage in the society and grave ill consequences marital instability can lead to, both in the immediate and long run, even generally in the society, there is a need to investigate more factors that can lead to marital instability to be forewarned on the necessary ways of avoiding it. Several researchers as mentioned above have established various factors causing marital instability, however, the interest of this study is based on domestic violence.

Domestic violence has become one of the universal problems that cut beyond the borders of nations, cultures, races, and social classes. It is a peril that is ingrained in society and has taken the lives of numerous women, children, elderly people, and men around the world. One of the most common domestic violence happened in the context of marriage. In every form of relationship, there is bound to be disagreement and conflict in marriage inclusive. Hence, marital conflict is inevitable and will help partners to know each other more and adjust in marriage. However, most of the conflict that is not well resolved or managed well, end up in disarray and women are majorly the ones at the receiving end. Adeyemo (2011) confirmed that three out of every four women experience domestic violence at the hands of their husbands or those who claimed to care for them.

Hence, domestic violence is termed to be a kind of gender-specific abuse since its victims are mostly women, more often than not, as Ajie (2011) argues that five million members of the Nigerian womenfolk are molested yearly, including older women and are victims of various acts of domestic violence. Adegbite and Ajuwon (2015) also confirmed that large proportions of the women (88.9%) in their study had experienced at least one form of violence in marriage.

Domestic violence is also referred to in the literature as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, battering, family violence, and intimate partner violence (IPV). It is a pattern of abusive behaviors that partners in intimate relationships, such as marriage, experience. This pattern of abusive behavior manifests itself in a variety of ways, including physical abuse or threats (such as hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, restraining, slapping, or throwing objects); sexual abuse, emotional abuse, verbal controlling or domineering, intimidation, stalking, passive/covert abuse/neglect, stalking and economic deprivation. (Siemieniuk, Krentz, Gish & Gill cited in Muhammed, 2019)

Many people are disturbed by, and deeply concerned about, the epidemic of domestic abuse in all of its manifestations that are sweeping through our nation. It is no longer acceptable to assume that everyone is protected within the confines of the family. According to Edukugho (2013), most domestic abuse victims are left to suffer in silence, occasionally dying, suffering life-altering injuries, or being permanently crippled.

As reported by Muhammed (2019), in some parts of the country in Nigeria, most acts of domestic violence never make it to police custody and those who do, are referred back to be resolved amicably at home. As a result, many people still believe that domestic violence is a normal occurrence and do not support outside intervention. People also believe that because men are naturally aggressive and women are naturally passive, abuse is to be expected. Nigerian cultures in some areas do not approve of a woman making home affairs public; regardless of the nature of violence in a marital relationship, women are encouraged to persevere for the sake of their children. Women are also

expected to be completely submissive to their husbands and accept whatever happens in the marriage.

To further buttress this, Nigerian customary law, like that of most other African countries, states that the man is superior to the woman and as such, has the authority to discipline her (Okigbo, 2015, Anyanwu & Anyanwu, 2017). These laws are sacred, particularly in rural areas, and explain why reports of intimate partner violence may be treated lightly. As a result, many women suffer from domestic abuse, while others are unaware that they have been abused. (Adomako Ampofo & Prah cited in Igbolekwu et al 2021).

This study, therefore, theorized that married women, in the past few years, endured all forms of domestic violence and stay in the marriage because of raising their children within the confidence of their fathers, but the trend seems to have changed with the advancement of gender equality, feminism promotion, education and economic independent of women and freedom. Most women seem not to withstand violence anymore, especially with all the measures put in place by government and NGOs to save women from violence. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the extent to which domestic violence influences marital instability among married women. The study also investigates the age difference and academic qualifications, as it relates to marital instability among married women.

It is against this background that this study investigates domestic violence as a determinant of marital instability among married couples in Ijede, Lagos, with the intention of proffering interventions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the influence of domestic violence on the marital instability of married women in Ijede Community. The study also investigates, age differences and academic qualifications as they relate to marital stability

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for this study

1. What is the influence of domestic violence on the marital instability of married women in the Ijede community?
2. How does domestic violence influence marital instability among married women in the Ijede community based on age.?
3. What is the influence of domestic violence on marital instability among married women in the Ijede community based on academic qualification?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were raised for this study

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between domestic violence and marital instability among married couples.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in marital instability of married women in Ijede community based on age

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in marital instability of married women in

Ijede community based on academic qualification.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research design of survey type. The population for this study consists of all married women in the Ijede community. One hundred and eighty-five (185) volunteered married women were sampled across the Ijede community in Lagos state, using a purposive sampling technique.

The major instrument used for gathering data from the respondent is a validated instrument titled “Questionnaire on Domestic Violence and Marital Instability” (QDVMI). The instrument was developed by the researcher and was used to gather information for the study. The instrument was content-validated by experts. The reliability of the instrument was determined through test-retest reliability of 0.76 reliability coefficient. The questionnaire is structured with close-ended items and its responses are patterned on a Four Point Likert-type Rating Scale, which stated Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD). The questionnaire is divided into three sections (A, B, C). The first section comprises the demographic data of the respondents such as age, and educational qualifications, Section B comprises items on domestic violence while section C comprises items on marital stability.

Data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and Analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Results

The main purpose of the study was to determine the influence of domestic violence on marital instability among married couples in the Ijede community. Data analysis was done on a total of 185 questionnaires that were properly filled and accounted for and used for this study. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed in analyzing the collected data. The demographic data of the respondents were done using simple percentage distribution, while the influence of domestic violence on marital instability of married couples was presented in mean, and Pearson Product Moment correlation (PPMC) was used to test the only formulated hypothesis at 0.05 alpha level of significance, while Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to answer the two other research questions.

Demographic Data

This section presents the results of data obtained on the respondents in frequency counts and percentages.

Table 1: Percentage of Distribution of Respondents Based on Age.

AGE	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-27	12	6.5
28-37	80	43.2
38-42	42	23.2
43-47	50	27.0
TOTAL	185	100.0

Table 1 above indicated that 12 respondents, corresponding to 6.5%, are within the age range 18-27, 80 respondents corresponding to 43.2%, are within the age range of 28-37, 43 respondents corresponding to 23.2% are within the age range of 38-42, while 50 respondents corresponding to 27.0%, are within the age range of 43-47, making a total of 185 respondents, corresponding to 100%

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Based on Educational Qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SSCE	46	24.9
GRADUATE	105	56.8
POSTGRADUATE	32	17.3
OTHERS	02	1.1
TOTAL	185	100.0

Table 2 above show that 46 respondents, corresponding 24.9%, acquired SSCE qualification, 105 respondents, corresponding to 56.8%, are graduates, 32 respondents, corresponding to 17.3%, are postgraduates, while those that acquired other qualifications, 2 corresponding to 1.1%, making a total of 185 respondents corresponding to 100%.

Hypothesis Testing

Three research hypotheses were postulated for this study and were tested, using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 alpha levels.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between domestic violence and marital instability among couple in Ijede.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and correlation between domestic violence and Marital Instability among Couples in Ijede

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	R Value	P level
Domestic Violence	185	3.52	.643	181	-.062	0.195
Marital Stability	185	3.36	.582			

* $p < 0.05$

Table 3 indicates that the calculated r-value is -.062 and 183 degrees of freedom, with a corresponding p-value of 0.195, which is not less than 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated p-value is less than the alpha level, the null hypothesis is, therefore, rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between domestic violence and marriage instability among married couples in the Ijede community.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in marital instability of married women in Ijede community based on age

Table 4: Analysis of Variance showing the marital stability of couples in Ijede based on age

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig	Remark
Between Groups	6.918	2	3.459	4.053	.019	S
Within Groups	155.320	182	8.53			
Total	162.238	181				

From the analysis of variance in Table 4, there is a significant difference in the marital stability of couples in Ijede based on age. The F-ratio ($F(2, 182) = 4.053, P < .05$) further affirms the significance of the finding. This implies that age is a factor affecting marital instability, hence there is a significant difference in marital instability of Ijede women based on age. Therefore, hypothesis two is rejected.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in marital instability of married women in Ijede community based on academic qualification.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance showing the marital stability of couples in Ijede based on academic qualification

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig	Remark
Between Groups	.470	2	.235	.429	.652	NS
Within Groups	99.908	182	549			
Total	100.378	184				

From the analysis of variance in Table 5, there is no significant difference in the marital stability of couples in Ijede based on academic qualification. The F-ratio ($F(2, 182) = .429, P > .05$). Since the P value is greater than the significant level, the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that there is no significant difference in marital instability of married women in the Ijede community based on academic qualification. This further implies that academic qualification does not determine the marital stability of the participants.

Discussion

The present study examined domestic violence as a determinant of marital instability among women in the Ijede community in Lagos. The findings revealed that domestic violence is one of the major factors that contribute to marital instability in our society. The finding corroborated the finding of Wagman et al (2016) whose study shows that severe physical abuse is an important risk factor for union disruption. This study also aligns with that of Nwosu (2019) who established a link between domestic violence and marital instability.

Finding from the response to Hypothesis Two and Hypothesis Three reveal that the majority of the respondents were within the age range of 28-37 and they are all educated. The result of the findings to research question Two reveals that age is significant to marital stability. This result aligns with

Garcia-Hombrados and Ozcan (2022) whose study findings show that marrying at a very young age has a higher risk of divorce. This study also agrees with that of Lehrer and Son (2017) whose study reveals that marital instability decreases with certain ages and increases at some other ages, showing the significance of age in marital stability. Drawing an inference from the study of Magelisch et al (2015) who reveals that marital stability and satisfaction are common in a couple at an older age. The result of this finding could be a result of the fact that older couples are more resilient psychologically towards marital strain. This could also be a result of most older women being able to express their thought and probably reduce the rate at which their partners dominate them. The implication of this is that the husband might feel threatened by not being able to control the wife, thus exercising unnecessary authority on the partner.

The response to Hypothesis Three, as shown in Table 5, reveals that there is no significant difference in the marital stability of women based on academic qualification. This implies that the level of education is not a yardstick in determining marital stability. This finding is corroborated by the findings of Ojukwu, Woko and Onuoha (2016), whose findings revealed that there was a positive relationship between married persons with low and high levels of educational attainment and marital stability. The result of this study is against that of Nwamadi (2022), whose study reveals that education and occupational levels of couples are determinant factors for marital stability among couples. Justification for the reason behind the result of these findings could be that although those who are highly educated are expected to be more reformed and have a way of adjusting to situations confronting them in marriage, since education helps more in modification and enhancement of behavior change, however, those without education or with low education, especially women, could be humbler and resilient in accepting a lot of flaws from their partner.

Implications for Counselling/Counselling Intervention

Based on the findings of this study, the counsellors and para-counsellors should encourage good parenting and emphasize more on preventive measures during pre and post-marital counselling.

The marital counsellors should collaborate with religious institutions and equip the Marriage Committee with important tips, to prevent domestic violence that could jeopardize the stability of the homes. The school counsellors should identify students at different/various school levels that exhibit violent traits, and engage such students in counselling. The Counsellors should intensify more efforts by involving all stakeholders, such as ministry of Woman's Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Community leaders, the Ministry of Youth and Social Development and religious leaders, by organizing workshops, symposiums, seminars, and conferences at regular intervals to enlighten the general populace on the negative effects of domestic violence on the victims. People should also be educated on the importance of marrying at a more mature age, to enhance marital stability.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be summarized that domestic violence is one of the major factors that affect the stability of the family. Although there are different forms of domestic violence that women in Ijeda can be subjected to, other factors, such as financial constants, and in-law interference, among others, can result in marital instability in society.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Counsellors should identify all forms of domestic violence, enlighten people on how to manage their differences.
- ii. Counsellors should stress more good parenting styles, to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence at all levels in society.
- iii. Counselling psychologists should educate people on the importance of marrying at a more mature age to enhance marital stability.
- iv. Marital Counsellors and para-marital counsellors should be encouraged to attend seminars, workshops, and conferences, where the negative impact of domestic violence and other factors that militate against marital stability, will be stressed and discourage
- v. Counsellors and religious leaders should encourage couples to shun violence during pre and post-marital counselling.
- vi. The Federal and State governments should collaborate with ministries of education to construct counselling ethics and employ professional counsellors to counsel students in the schools so as nip the problems on the head.

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