

## The influence of Psycho-Social variables on marital stability among intact families in Lagos Metropolis

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### Abstract

*The study examined the influence of psycho-social variables on marital stability among intact families (families that included two married biological parents) in Lagos metropolis. The sample comprised 118 people in intact families were conveniently selected from five local government areas of Lagos metropolis. It is assumed that the study would be of benefit to families in intact marriage and a sort of guide to the use of psycho-social variables that enhance the stability of marriages; the result of correct application will lead to a healthy society. The researcher designed questionnaire titled "Influence of psychosocial variables on marital stability among intact families in Lagos Metropolis" which was used to collect necessary data for the study. Independent-t-test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were applied for data analysis. The outcomes of the study revealed that personality traits and gender differences in psychic durability (tolerance), have significant influence on marital stability among intact families. On the other hand, one hypothesis was retained in the null that is, there is no significant relationship between socio-economic status and marital stability among couples in intact families. It is therefore recommended that couples in intact families should engage in the use of the various psycho-social variables that will further enhance the stability of their marriages so as to avoid the problems that are likely to arise if not properly managed.*

Keywords: Psychosocial variables, Marital Stability, intact families.

### INTRODUCTION

Marriage is crucial for the continuity of the existence of human race and the continuous existence of the society free from animalistic way of procreation, its stability or instability can make or mar the peace of the institution as well as that of larger society. Osarenren (2002) opined that marriage could be seen as the unionism that exists between the mature man and woman. This relationship entails social acceptability between the male adult and the female adult. Studies have shown that marriages provide unique benefits for a man, woman and the children from the marital union. It ensures accessibility of children to a mother and a father who enhance joint efforts of the upbringing and development of the children, the future of the society.

The instability of marriage or natural family could be seen as reducing the strength of the family or making marriages to be feeble; the result of which is a clog on the wheel of success of any society. Marital breakdown may result in

poor future generations that will live with little or no regards for the values of the society. Stability in marriage connotes cohabitation of the couples in marriage with the mind set of no breakup, with total exploration of closest possible and fulfilling relationship as opined by (Adesanya 2002).

A full understanding of the individual responsibilities may be a good lubricant that could keep the marriage going. Therefore the need arises for individual roles to be carried out with adequate cooperation of the two which will promote peaceful living. Marital ages, religion, spouse's level of education are some of the variables affecting marriage institution as identified by (Dada and Idowu, 2002). Makinde (2004) identified the hints (variables) that keep marriage stable as follows: love, accommodation, communication, verbal communication, finance, childbearing, compatibility, in-laws, parenting, relaxation, fidelity and live for here and now.

Conversely, marriage is a vow of everlasting companionship. This vow says, for better or for worse, the couple sees to it that nothing will ever destroy it. It can be a very romantic idea to be married to the person you love the most. A marriage proposal starts out as a dream come true for anyone who has found his true love. He begins to think that love is all that matters and that marriage is the ultimate goal of his life. A good marriage guarantees a peaceful and joyful atmosphere in the home, which is most suitable for bringing up healthy and happy children. Research has shown that children who grow up in such environments are more likely to excel in school and in all other aspects of life including their own marital life (Okon, 2010). This thought can easily be destroyed if some psychological and sociological variable which influence marital stability are not properly managed. It has been observed recently that a lot of intact families in Lagos metropolis are faced with some marital challenges resulting to instability (Tolorunleke, 2008). Marriages affects all aspects of human life, failure in marriage could lead to destabilization of other aspects of life. The world seems to be more meaningful and marital life is an experience that is difficult to disengage from. A number of accrued benefits are at the disposal of the couples in satisfactory marriages; these include: care giving, material support and stable companionship. A secure and predictable environment tends to be attained with couples that are permanent, present and available. Jerrome (1993).

Regardless of the good attributes of marriage. In the recent, remarriage, marital separation and divorce are phenomena that had come to stay in the society. Conflicts that remain unresolved are on the increase which results in instability in marriage as a result of poor management of some variables that are meant to lubricate marriages. The focus intact families in this discussion is on nuclear families of heterosexual adults known as husband and wife.

Marital institutions have many variables affecting it, including marriage age, spouses' educational level and religion among others (Dada and Idowu, 2006). Amato and

Rogers (2003) differentiated between sociological - as broader structural and life course factors and psychological factors include interpersonal interactions, conflict management and personal traits. Personality traits entail communication, couple flexibility, couple closeness, personality issues, conflict resolute, sexual relationship, leisure activities, family and friends, financial management and spiritual beliefs. It is believed that the personality traits will play a major role in the association of emotional reactivity to marital arguments. In other words, people's positive views of themselves should check their level of protection against stress; On the other hand the level of tolerance (psychic durability) could affect marital stability among intact families. The gender of marital partner could pre-empt emotional distress that stems from marital argument. Underlying this research is the influence of psycho-social variables: socio-economic status, personality traits, and psychic durability among others; on marital stability among the intact families in Lagos metropolis.

#### Statement of the Problem

Lagos, as a cosmopolitan city, has various activities that need to be attended to simultaneously with one's marital role. As beautiful and complicated as the city of Lagos could be, the home front is expected to be kept intact, that is, free from any form of neglect. If it is neglected, it will affect a lot of other things in the society. An individual that is disturbed right from home may not be as productive as his/her counterpart from blissful marital home. The intact families (families that included two married biological parents) are not free from this socio economic milieu. Marriage affects almost all; it could be referred to as public good. In other words the cost is not borne only by the individual children and parents if weakened, but all in the society (Waite & Gallagher, 2002). For sustenance of marital bliss, it is expedient that couples stub out whatever could lead to marital failure and opt for the psychosocial variables that enhance marital success which has implication for marital stability (Carrere 2002). Since studies have shown that happy couples with stable marriage are healthier and live longer than the divorcees and unhappy couples in unstable

marriage (Santrock, 2006).

Since couples are humans and not gods, it is only natural to expect that there will be differences in opinions, values, needs, desires, habits coupled with several challenges brought about by the cosmopolitan nature of Lagos – the rat race of living home very early in the morning and returning late at night – all at the expense of the family, the inevitability of conflicts in any form of marriage is established. Indeed, as Idakwo (2002) puts it, little things can slip into the relationship and when these little things are not properly handled, they can cause friction and eventual separation between the marriage partners that may widen over the years. Information from the electronic media, magazines, newspapers, court proceedings and environmental observations are visible revelations of marital instability and conflicts in today's Nigeria society. Dada and Idowu (2006) observed that the rate at which marital couples experience divorce and re-marriage is quite alarming. Many families have been at war simply because of their failure to arrest, manage or resolve conflicting issues due to improper application of the necessary psycho-social variables which include: the psychological variables (depression, affection and sexual activities – functions of psychic durability) and the social variables - communication, number of children, time spent together (Adigeb and Mbua, 2015); that smoothens the cohabitation of couples in intact families. The frightening spread in teenage drug abuse and immorality, the modern plague of divorce and faulty violence, the geometric increase in the number of single-parenthood and other serious problems therefore, informs this study.

Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is:

- a. To examine psycho-social variables that influence marital stability among intact families
- b. To assess the gender differences in psychic durability (tolerance) of spouses in intact families.
- c. To assess the relationship between socio-economic status and marital stability among intact families

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested:

- i. There is no significant relationship between personality traits and marital stability among intact families
- ii. There is no significant gender difference in the psychic durability (tolerance) of spouses in intact families.
- iii. There is no significant relationship between socio-economic status and marital stability among intact families.

**Methodology**

**Sample**

A total of 130 married couples were conveniently sampled from five local government areas of Lagos State to participate in the study while a total of 118 questionnaires were properly filled and used.

**Instrumentation:** To generate relevant data, a self-developed instrument entitled “Influence of psycho-social variables on marital stability among intact families in Lagos Metropolis” (IPVMSQ) was the instrument used. The instrument has sections A and B. Section A focuses on demographic data of the respondents such as gender, age, religion among others while Section B contains 6 items each on a rating of 4 points. The statements were structured on a 4 point scale that ranges from Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree to assess “Influence of psycho-social variables on marital stability among intact families in Lagos Metropolis” in line with the hypotheses formulated.

**Validity of Instrument:** This was done by giving the questionnaire (IPVMSQ) to experts who made necessary corrections to ensure face and content validity.

**Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher did the administration of the questionnaire personally and a total of 130 questionnaires were administered but 118 questionnaires were properly filled and usable. The instruments were manually scored by the researcher and data generated were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences

(SPSS).

**Method of Data Analysis**

Independent-t-test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were applied for data analysis while the tests of significance were performed at the 0.05 level of significance.

**Data Analysis and Procedure**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This is the most appropriate design for this study in the sense that the design tries to investigate problems in a large or vast area and where there is no need for manipulation of variable under investigation. The population for this study comprised all the intact families (families that included two married biological parents) in Lagos Metropolis, Lagos State. The face and content validities of the instrument were established by some experts. The analysis was carried out using IBM Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0. All

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	46	39
Female	72	61
Total	118	100
<b>Age in marriage</b>		
1-20	111	85.6
21+	17	14.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100</b>

**Religion**

Christian	102	86.4
Non-Christian	16	13.6
Total	118	100

**Marital status**

Married	72	61
Widow/widower	25	21.2
Divorced	13	11
Separated	8	6.8
Total	118	100

The evidence from table 1 revealed that majority of the respondents(72) are females representing 61%, while 46(39%) are males. The table also revealed that many of the respondents representing 111(85.6%) had spent between 1 and 20 years in marriage, while 17(14.4%) had spent 21 years and above in marriage. The table showed that 102(86.4%) are Christians while 16(13.6%) are non-Christians.

**Testing of Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis one**

This hypothesis stated that there is no significant relationship between personality traits and marital stability among intact families. In testing this hypothesis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was employed using responses on parenting style with child upbringing. The results were presented in the table below:

Table 2: Relationship between personality traits and marital stability

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Pearson correlation</b>	<b>Sign (2tailed)</b>	<b>Remark</b>
Personality trait	118	9.32	2.14	0.271	0.031	Significant
Marital stability	118	9.49	2.09			

r-calculated = 0.27, df = 116; r -critical = 0.195  
 r-calculates > r -critical, significant value (P) = 0.000 > 0.05

Table 2 revealed that the mean score of personality trait (9.32) was less than the average scores for marital stability of 9.49. The table further revealed that the r-calculated of 0.27 was greater than critical r of 0.195, which implied that a positive and significant relationship existed between personality traits and marital

stability (P < 0.05) consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected.

**Hypothesis two**

The second hypothesis stated that there is no significant gender difference in the psychic durability (tolerance) of spouses in intact families. In order to ascertain if significant

gender differences existed in psychic durability (tolerance) of spouse in intact families,

independent t-test statistics were employed. The statistics were presented in the table below:

**Table 3**

**T-test showing gender differences in psychic durability (tolerance) of spouse in intact families**

Group	N	Mean	STD	t-cal	T-critical	Df	Remark
Male	46	7.39	2.26	2.74	1.65	116	significant
Female	72	7.42	2.25				

Table 3 above revealed that the average tolerance scores of male respondent 7.39 was less than average score for females 7.42. The table further showed that the calculated t of 2.739 was greater than critical t of 1.645 at a degree of freedom of 116. This was significant at 0.05 level of significance ( $p=0.00$ ). This implied that gender differences existed in psychic

durability (tolerance) of spouses in intact families. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Hypothesis Three

The third hypothesis revealed that there is no significant relationship between socio-economic status and marital stability among intact families.

**Table 4:**

**Relationship between Socio-economic Status and Marital Stability**

	N	Mean	SD	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remark
Socio-Economic Status	118	8.83	2.14	0.074	0.425	Not Significant
Marital Stability	118	9.60	2.78			

R- calculated = 0.074,  $df = 116$ ; r-critical = 0.195;  $r - \text{calculated} < r\text{-critical}$ ; significant value ( $p$ ) =  $0.000 > 0.05$

The table revealed that the mean score of socio economic status (8.83) was less than the average scores for martial stability of 9.49. The table further revealed the r-calculated of 0.074 was less than critical r of 0.195, this implied that no significant relationship existed between socio-economic status and marital stability ( $p < 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

#### Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis one stated there is no significant relationship between personality traits and marital stability among intact families. Intact families are families that included two married biological parents. The finding shows that personality traits have a significant influence on marital stability. This implies that the couples that have a better understanding of their personality traits and apply positive response to such will have a positive impact on the stability

of their marriage but if not properly applied may put such marriage at the risk of instability. Furthermore, findings from the study revealed that personality traits have a significant effect on marital stability. This was in agreement with Makinde (2007) that identification of the significant personality characteristics like the phlegmatic, sanguine, the choleric and melancholy can enhance stability in marriage such that the theory of like poles repel, unlike poles attract this also agreed with Ubanga, Makinde, Idowu and Raji (2013) that social compatibility relates with personality compatibility; in other words an individual's personality goes a long way to determine the individual's social and interpersonal skills; places of visitation, the public relations gesture, the carriage, to mention a few. There is therefore the need to address such issues before marriage so that marital relationship would not be negatively affected.

Hypothesis two stated that there is no significant gender difference in psychic durability

(tolerance) of spouses in intact families. When tested, the result revealed that gender differences existed in psychic durability (tolerance) of spouses in intact families. It revealed that the average tolerance of men (7.39) was less than average tolerance of women (7.42). The study therefore established that gender differences existed in the psychic durability (tolerance) of spouses in intact families. This implies that women tend to be more tolerant and such could enhance the possibility of having a sustained marital bliss which is a signal of marital stability. This disagreed with the findings of Krishnakumar & Buehler (2000) who suggested that gender differences do play a role in terms of parental treatment of children, and the subsequent adaptive/maladaptive outcome, specifically in family environment characterized by marital conflicts.

Hypothesis three stated that there is no significant relationship between socio-economic status and marital stability among intact families. This revealed that there is no significant relationship between socio-economic status and marital stability among intact families. This implies that differences in educational qualification, incomes, family background to mention a few will not significantly influence the marital stability of the families in intact marriage. This contradicted Kitson's (1992) opinion that high socio-economic status individuals, following divorce were more likely to complain about lack of communication, change in interest, or values, incapability and their ex-spouses self-centeredness.

#### Implication for counselling

This study has many implications for religious leaders, married couples, marriage counsellors, counselling psychologists, social workers and other stakeholders. There is the need to involve marriage therapists more than ever before so as to make marriage counselling accessible to the entire populace.

It would not be out of place if marriage counselling psychologists could organize marriage seminars both in schools and in religious institutions so as to sensitize couples on how marriage instability subtly creeps into

families.

Couples should address issues and sort things out together avoiding the unnecessary manifestation of egos but keep their personality traits under regular checks and apply the psychosocial variables as ointment to their blissful homes.

#### Conclusion

This paper has surveyed the Influence of Psychosocial Variables on Marital Stability among Intact Families in Lagos Metropolis. It has shown that effective applications of Psychosocial Variables will enhance mutual understanding with the spouses giving their best vis-a-vis the effective communication, understanding each other's personality traits, mutual trust, improvement on sexuality which will promote peaceful continuity of marital unity and stability among intact families.

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