



GENDER AND APPLICATION OF MARITAL STABILITY VARIABLES AMONG COUPLES IN IKA NORTH EAST SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF DELTA STATE

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Abstract

The study examined gender and application of marital stability variables among couples in Ika North East Senatorial District of Delta State. An ex-post fact research design was used for the study. The study was conducted in Ika North East Senatorial District. The population of the study was 22,721 marriage couples. The sample size of 529 married couples representing ten percent (10%) of the entire population was selected. A researcher developed instrument entitled “Gender and Application of Marital Stability Variables among Couples Questionnaire (GAMSVCQ)” was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face validity with a reliability coefficient of 0.87 obtained using Split-half method. Out of the 529 copies of the instrument administered, only 513 copies were completely filled and retrieved. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while independent t-test were used to test the hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study showed that there is no significant difference in the application of love to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial. The findings also showed that there is significant difference in the application of respect to ensure marital stability between male and female couples and that there is significant difference in the application of communication to ensure marital stability between male and female couples. Based on the findings, it was concluded that gender influence application of marital stability variables among couples in Ika North East Senatorial District of Delta State. It was recommended among others that marriage counsellors should regularly organize trainings to both couples on the rudiments of love; this would help to make them appreciate importance of love in ensuring marital stability.

Keywords: Gender, Marital Stability

Introduction

The importance of marriage as a unit of the family where the society attain its continuity cannot be overemphasize. It is however paramount for adequate consideration to be given when it comes to the choice of marriage among couples. It is evident that one of the quagmire and dismal face by couples in the 21st century is as a result of inadequate knowledge of what marriage entails. Infact, marriage as legal union between a man and a woman ought to be a bed of roses, unfortunately, thousands of marriages have fail in the sense that gender is still fueling crises, so many couples are still facing the predicament of identity, struggling to discovered who they are and where they belong in their homes, the philosophy of it is man's word is still deeply engulfed in so many male counterpart. Furthermore, a lot of couples tried to be more superior than others placing their ego and rating themselves in high esteem than their partners. Although it is not quite easy for two different people from different family background to cohabit without challenges such as exchanging words that are inappropriate either by trying to express their feelings towards one another. Marriage is one of the social institution that involves the coming together of a man and a woman from different family background to become husband and wife. (Suryandari and Holifah, 2022), marriage is an important thing in order of human life, where humans get a biological, psychology and social balance.

Marital stability is the ability of couples to live peacefully with each other without dissolution or divorce. Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (2016) equated marital success to marital stability and interpreted marital stability as the ability of couple in marriage to remain together instead of separating or divorcing. It is the capacity to return to equilibrium or to return to the original position after being displaced. Love, respect, communication, financial accountability are determinants of marital stability.

Love in its simplest terms means feeling of tolerance, understanding, compassion and rendering of support between husband and wives. Any marriage, where there is existence of love, there is void of crisis that could lead to violent in marriage. Love is one of the ingredient in marriage that helps male and female couples overlook their differences, drop ego, and being down to the earth for peaceful co-existence. Love is a strong feeling and affection couples have for each other. Psychologically, love is a fear of longliness and ageing alone, safety, protection, parallel belonging, flexibility, tolerance, happiness, excitement, a need to have a peaceful life, and connectivity also last but not least, love is defined individually based on one's impression of one's parents (Chapman, 2011). Braxton and Boudreaux (2010) love is a "Universal emotion that has become the basis of marriage and family for many society, which researchers continue to explore" (Bao, 2012) posited that the greatest degree of inner tranquility comes from development of love and compassion. Love in marriage may emanate when couples cares and have feeling of compassion for one another therefore this would invariably promote physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing of couples.

Statistically, in April 30, 2022, the Sahara report has it that the data showed that thirty five (35) women were killed by their husbands while wives killed their husbands on fourteen (14) different occasion. At least, 49 spouses reportedly died between January, 2021 and March, 2022, from the cases compiled, 39 deaths were related to domestic violence. According to World Health Organization (WHO) domestic violence among couples in Nigeria has increase. Below is a list of those who have been victims of domestic violence in their marriages which could be trace to lack of love in their marriages. Georgina Onuoha, Suzanne Rero, Mercy Aigbe, Foluke Daramola, Monalisa Chinda, Osinachi Nwachukwu, Alaba Bakare, Goni Abbah and so on.

The opposite of love according to the researcher is not actually hate but indifference. Love overlooks indifferences, does not keep record of wrong, love does not hurt, love ignores awkward behaviour, tolerates, cares overlooks weaknesses and encourages strength. Couples who love themselves are bond to experience marital stability. Marital stability may lead to absolute peace, happiness, fulfillment. Sometimes marital stability between couples could be traced through their parents' marriage. Couples whose parents are happily married as well as loves each other, would likely be happily married and as well love themselves. Stable marriage is devoid of abuse, violence, divorce and so on. Factors associated with love in marriage include but not limited to: Commitment, Intimacy, Attraction, Care, Trust, Passion. The above love factors are shown in fig. 1 below.

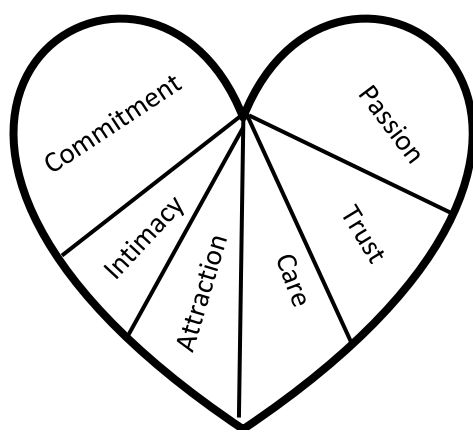


Fig. 1: Love factors diagram

Hoesni, *et al.* (2012) investigated how urban males give meanings to love within marriage. The result of the study showed that the most agreeable elements of love within marriage belong to commitment and intimacy component.

Konyeme (2010) defines marriage as a social union or legal contract between individuals that creates kinship. Marriage is an institution in which interpersonal relationships usually intimate and sexual are acknowledge in varieties of ways, depending on the culture or subculture in which it is found. Marriage is a relationship between two opposite sexes (male and female) who are expected not to operate in isolation but have the responsibility to coexist in some levels love, appropriate communication and mutual respect. It is pertinent that the relationship between male and female couple be treated in an appropriate and respectful way. Every individual is unique irrespective of gender differences, couples are expected to express themselves in a more appropriate and as well with mutual respect as this may foster harmonious marriage, some application of marriage stability variables that may foster harmonious relationship between couples in this study includes, the different ways, male and female couples love, communicates as well as show mutual respect between themselves. Fabian (2021) investigated determinants of marital stability among staff of universities, in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings of the study showed that mutual respect is a determinant of marital stability. The findings of the study showed that love is a determinant of marital stability. The finding further showed that financial accountability is a determinant of marital stability. Based on the findings, it was concluded that the determinants of marital stability among couples were mutual respect, love and financial accountability.

Respect in marriage is paramount in that, it is one of the virtue that serves as a corner stone for a successful marriage. Where mutual respect is lacking between husband and wife marriage could easily be destroy or more, often, could prompt to stressful, painful as well as unhappy living between male and female couples. Insufficient marital mutual respect could limit couples from solving

problem that could trigger violence, abuse or divorce. O'Rourke *et al* (2011) in their view demonstrated that there are many ways to strengthen a healthy partnership despite the partner's impactful differences. Compromises are often one of the best tools couples can employ to work respectfully together. Vassar (2012) identifies dozen behaviours to actually demonstrate respect, not just to talk about it.

Lasting marriage does not only require love but as well respect which is often regarded as the pioneer component in a marriage that aspire to succeed. Garcia (2012) mentioned some characteristics of respect to include:

- i. Respect is mutual
- ii. Respect attracts humility
- iii. Respect reduces conflict
- iv. Respect embraces transformation.

According to Donn, *et al.* (2016), some examples of mutual respect in marriage include:

- i. Honest conversation. Couples who maintain mutual respects in their marriage are those with honest conversation, they exhibit integrity in all aspects of their conversation.
- ii. Respecting each other's emotion. Respecting one's partners could be attributed to how well his or her emotion is put into consideration, showing empathy and feeling of understanding when one is depressed, stressed or passing through hard time is a sign of marital respect which would help to ensure marital stability.
- iii. Limited criticism. Criticism is one of way of ensuring proper way of doing thing. When there is absent of criticism thing might not be right but criticism is good in a marriage when it is done in a respectful way.
- iv. Forgiveness and apology. Couples with mutual respect easily forgive each other and apologize where necessary. Any marriage without forgiveness cannot stand the test of time.

Communication is the process by which message is passed from sender to receiver (encoder and decoder). It is the act of passing information verbally and non-verbally. Communication entails the use of codes created by the eyes, bodily movement or vocal sounds (Fatimayin (2018) communication is both the process of creating and ascribing meaning. What matter most in communication is the meaning it conveys what type of conversation and communication proceeds out of couples mouths? words can calm situation and at the same time words can trigger some situation. With word, marriage could be build; with words marriage could be destroyed. Sasq (2018) emphasized that communication is one of the building blocks of marriage, where there is appropriate communication in marriage, there is possibility of having a happy and healthy home. Use of appropriate communication by husband and wife is one of the key factor for marital stability. Passing messages has a way of affecting marriage either positively or negatively. Daniel (2016) communication entails more than just encoding and decoding information, news, ideas, and feelings, it also entails individuals developing a shared understanding. Understanding the feeling and mode of one's spouse before transmitting information is necessary in marriage, most marriages which experience crisis and divorce in recent years could be traced to lack of proper communication. When it comes to marriage, communication is very important because it necessitates sharing of one's ideas and feeling to one's partner (Iyama, 2010).

In marriage, communication allows one to express his or her feelings and needs. Husband and wife who communicate appropriately examine their words and their composition before speaking out could have more healthy and happy marriage than their counter parts who communicate

inappropriately. Inappropriate communication in this study may be trace through the use of abusive words, such as, you are a foolish woman or man, one lacks home training, do you think you can control me? You are very stupid and so on. Suryandari and Holifah, 2022) averred that communication between husband and wife could affect their marriage either positively or negatively. Parental ways of communication could also have a way of affecting their children's communication in marriage. For instance, most parents who abuse each other may also breed children that would in turn abuse themselves in marriage, and invariably this may lead to marital instability. Egbo *et al.* (2020) examined the relationship between communication and marital stability among couples in Enugu Metropolis. The result obtained from the analysis showed that communication influences marital stability among couples in Enugu Metropolis.

Statement of the Problem

The importance of marriage as the bedrock of any family from which the society attains its continuity cannot be overemphasized. Despite the role which marriage plays in the family as well as the society, many couples still find it difficult to cohabit in harmony. Most males and females still live in an unhealthy and unhappy marriage; this to a great extent could hamper the peace of the entire family as well as the society at large. Emphatically, without marriage there would be no family and without family, there would be no society. It is therefore believed that the existence of unstable marriage could lead to unstable society; therefore, for society to be a better place to live, there must be adequate and stable marriage where couples learn to love and respect each other, as well as communicate effectively. For there to be sustainable development in the society, it must be traced to sustainable marriage that is characterized by love, respect, in genuine love and so on.

Empirical analysis of abuse, conflicts, divorce as well as death succinctly indicates that 95 percent of such are orchestrated by lack of love, mutual respect, inappropriate use of words between husband and wife (Donn, *et al.*, 2016); Sasa 2018 and Joachim, *et al.*, 2021). Though none of such studies examined gender difference in the application of marital stability variables, this study was therefore poised to examine gender and application of marital stability variables among couples in Ika North East Senatorial District of Delta State.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed at investigating gender and application of marital stability variables among couples in Ika North East Senatorial District of Delta State. The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. examine the difference in the application of love to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial
2. determine the difference in the application of respect to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial
3. find out the difference in the application of communication to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial

Research Question

1. What is the difference in the application of love to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial?
2. What is the difference in the application of respect to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial?

3. What is the difference in the application of communication to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial?

Research Hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference in the application of love to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial.
2. There is no significant difference in the application of respect to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial.
3. There is no significant difference in the application of communication to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial.

Methodology

An ex-post fact research design was used for the study. The study was conducted in Ika North East Senatorial District. The population of the study was 22,721 marriage couples. The sample size of 529 married couples representing ten percent (10%) of the entire population was selected. A researcher developed instrument entitled “Gender and Application of Marital Stability Variables among Couples Questionnaire (GAMSVQC)” was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face validity with a reliability coefficient of 0.87 obtained using Split-half method. Out of the 529 copies of the instrument administered only 513 copies were completely filled and retrieved. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while independent t-test were used to test the hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One

What is the difference in the application of love to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial?

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in the application of love to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial

Table 1: Independent t-test analysis of the difference in the application of love to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial (n= 513)

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	Sig.	Remarks
Male	244	14.71	3.06	0.42	0.68	Not significant
Female	269	14.60	2.93			

***significant at .05 alpha level; df=511**

The result as shown in Table 1 showed that the mean score of 14.71 obtained by the males was almost the same with that of 14.60 obtained by the females. This result implies there is no difference in the application of love to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial.

In testing the research hypothesis, the result in Table 1 showed that the computed t-value for the difference in the application of love to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial at 511 degrees of freedom is 0.42, while its corresponding probability level of significance is .68 alpha. This level of significance greater less than .05 in which the decision is based. With this result, the null hypothesis was retained. This implies that there is no significant difference in the application of love to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial.

Research Question Two

What is the difference in the application of respect to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial?

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference in the application of respect to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial.

Table 2: Independent t-test analysis of the difference in the application of respect to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial (n= 513)

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	Sig.	Remarks
Male	244	11.11	3.79	10.30	0.01	Significant
Female	269	14.39	3.44			

***significant at .05 alpha level; df=511**

The result as shown in Table 2 showed that the mean score of 14.39 obtained by the females was greater than that of 11.11 obtained by the males. This result implies that females applied respect to ensure marital stability more than their males counterparts. This therefore means that there is difference in the application of respect to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial.

In testing the research hypothesis, the result in Table 2 showed that the computed t-value for the difference in the application of respect to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial at 511 degrees of freedom is 10.30, while its corresponding probability level of significance is .01 alpha. This level of significance is less than .05 in which the decision is based. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is significant difference in the application of respect to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial.

Research Question Three

What is the difference in the application of communication to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial?

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant difference in the application of communication to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial

Table 3: Independent t-test analysis of the difference in the application of communication to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial (n= 513)

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	Sig.	Remarks
Male	244	11.11	3.79	5.58	0.01	Significant
Female	269	14.39	3.44			

***significant at .05 alpha level; df=511**

The result as shown in Table 3 showed that the mean score of 15.97 obtained by the males was greater than that of 14.53 obtained by the females. This result implies that males applied communication to ensure marital stability more than their females counterparts. This therefore means that there is difference in the application of communication to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial.

In testing the research hypothesis, the result in Table 3 showed that the computed t-value for the difference in the application of communication to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial at 511 degrees of freedom is 5.58, while its corresponding probability level of significance is .01 alpha. This level of significance is less than .05 in which the decision is based. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is significant difference in the application of communication to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the difference in the application of love to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial revealed that there is no significant difference in the application of love to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial. The finding is in line with that of Chapman, (2011) whose finding showed that love influences marital stability among couples. The finding is also in line with that of Braxton and Boudreaux (2010) who found that there is a significant positive relationship between marital love and family stability of married teachers.

The findings of the difference in the application of respect to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial revealed that there is significant difference in the application of respect to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial. The finding lend credence to that of Fabian (2021) whose finding showed that there is significant influence of mutual respect on marital stability among couples in Southwest Nigeria. The finding also lend credence to that of Konyeme (2010) who found that that mutual respect is a determinant of marital stability.

The findings of the difference in the application of communication to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial revealed that there is significant

difference in the application of communication to ensure marital stability between male and female couples in Ika North East Senatorial. The finding lend credence to that of Suryandari and Hollfah (2022) whose finding showed that there is significant influence of love on marital stability among couples in Southwest Nigeria. The finding also lend credence to that of Egbo *et al.* (2020) who found that that communication is a determinant of marital stability.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there is no difference in the application of love to ensure marital stability between male and female couples while females applied respect to ensure marital stability more than their males counterparts, males applied communication to ensure marital stability more than their females counterparts. In order words, gender influence application of marital stability variables among couples in Ika North East Senatorial District of Delta State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Marriage counsellors should regularly organize training to both couples on the rudiments of love; this would help to make them appreciate importance of love in ensuring marital stability.
2. Non-governmental agencies should use the media to educate couples on the roles of respect in ensuring marital stability. This will help to reduce the rate of divorce in the society.
3. The government at all levels should employ the media in creating awareness programmes to couples and would be couples on the importance of effective communication in marriage. This will help to ensure marital stability in the society

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