

**SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS INFLUENCING MARITAL ADJUSTMENT OF
FEMALE POST-GRADUATES IN UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT:
IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING.**

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Abstract

The study investigated socio-demographic factors influencing marital adjustment of female graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt. The study adopted ex-post facto research design. The population for the study consists of all married female post-graduate students in the Faculty of Education. A sample size of 200 post graduate students was used for the study. Three specific objectives, research questions and corresponding hypotheses guided the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to draw the sample. An instrument titled “Socio-Demographic Influences of Marital Adjustment Questionnaire” (SIOMAQ). Validity of the instrument was determined by experts in measurement while Cronbach Alpha was used in determining a reliability coefficient of 0.84. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions while ANOVA was used in testing the tenability of the hypotheses. Findings of the study showed that Based on the findings, It was recommended that female graduate students should sought for wise counsel from appropriate and experienced personalities, learn to manage, save and invest finance for the future and finally maturity comes from experience. In addition, professional counsellors need to instill in the women the essence of positive thinking that is, the right attitude to life.

Keywords: Demographic determinants, Family and marital adjustment, Graduate students, Counselling implications.

Introduction

Marriage is a legal union and an interaction system. The viability of this system is measured by verbal and nonverbal correspondence between the spouses, and by sending and receiving messages (Özgüven, 2009). This system, which includes the unity of two people with different interests, desires and needs, is a special cooperation shaped by social rules and laws that are effective in the development and self-realization of the individual (Frone, Russell & Cooper, 2017). Marriage supposedly should be pleasurable, happiness driven, peace, satisfactory, shared interaction with others, fulfilling of social responsibilities as well as enhancing personality. In a marriage, it is important that spouses can express their spiritual, social and sexual expectations and messages because a harmonious marriage comes true, first of all, with a healthy communication (Özgüven, 2009). Marriage adjustment is the effort of the spouses themselves and to each other to reach a consensus, achieve common purpose and balance on the specific conditions of marriage. Marriages of couples who can interact with each other, who can agree on marriage and family issues and solve their problems positively are defined as harmonious marriages (Erbek, Akar & Alphan, 2005). A harmonious marriage is hidden in the completion of a wife and her husband in all areas of life, materially and spiritually (Özüğurlu, 2015). It is important for marriage adjustment that spouses have a ripeness in understanding of the growth and development in their relationship. If this development is not fully realized, the end of the marriage relationship is inevitable. Because marital adjustment requires a satisfying relationship between spouses, characterized by reciprocal interest, involvement, understanding and acceptance (Slathia, 2014). Although it is very important on the first days of marriage, marriage adjustment is a fact that should last a lifelong. Sexual harmony and mutual pleasure are among the most important factors that access marital adjustment to success (Goel & Narang, 2012).

Adjustment in marriage is inevitable due to the coming together of two different individuals with different personality, socio-cultural and economic background in a complex society. Adjustment is the effort couples make to meet the demands and challenges placed on them by the world in which they live in. It plays a central role in the existence of man, as he strives to achieve a happy and fulfilled life. Spanier, Lewis and Cole (2002) defined marital adjustment as the integration of the couple in a union in which the two personalities are not merely merged but interact to complement each other for mutual satisfaction and the achievement of common objectives. Marital adjustment is an adaptation between husband and wife to a point where there is

companionship, agreement on basic issues, values, affection, intimacy and accommodation of each other.

Marital adjustment can be defined as marital harmony or satisfaction. It involves the series of behaviours used to cope with the new demands of marriage relationship as they emerge (Chaudhari & Patel 2009). Marital adjustment, which proves the quality of one's marriage, is one of the most common topics of study in marriage and family. In many studies, marriage adjustment was associated with success, satisfaction, trust, happiness, consensus, commitment, acceptance, integration, and so on. These terms may sometimes be replaced by meaning within themselves, and each may have a different meaning. They are sometimes used to express the psychological state of one of the married couples, sometimes to express the social psychological aspect of the relationship, and sometimes to express the sociological dimension of a group or system (Chaudhari & Patel, 2009). Chaudhari and Patel (2009) stated that marital adjustment has long been used to describe the quality and stability of marriage. A well-adjusted marriage is expected to last for a long time and be satisfying by both spouses. The quality of marital relationship has been found to be consequential for health. A poor marital relationship could influence physiological functions and impact health outcomes through depression and health habits (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001).

There are various theories that are postulated to explain the concept of marital adjustment. For instance, the structural theory proposes that marital pathology is caused where one member in the dyad is swallowed up by the personality of the other. Mangus (2017) also noted that the role theory proposes that the essential factor in any marital crisis or discontentment is the phenomenon of role conflict, which arises from incompatible role expectations between the two parties in the marriage. Davis (2012) also explained that the financial management theory stated that the husband's economic performance has important marital roles as far as the family is concerned. There is also the overall-appraisal theory which refers to an individual's general appraisal concerning the entirety of his or her life situation. When an overall appraisal approach theory is applied, Marital adjustment is typically assessed using questions (Clarke & Hill, 2018). This approach tries to understand marital adjustment interface on a global level and considers the "whole" view. However, the current study best fits the over-all appraisal theory of marital adjustment propounded by Grzywacz and Marks (2017). The over-all appraisal theory of marital

adjustment refers to maintaining equilibrium or over-all sense of harmony in life (age-wise, finance and years of experience in marriage).

Okorodudu (2012), there are various factors that may affect marital adjustments of married couples. While some of these may be social, some on the other and may be demographic in nature. These may include the age of the couples, the income level as well as the number of years of marriage. Demographic factors are personal characteristics used to collect and evaluate data on people in a given population. Demographic variables are widely acknowledged as a great influence on staff performance. According to George (2019), demographic characteristics are personal characteristics and include information such as ethnicity, race and family size. Bell (2018) defines demographic characteristics as personal statistics on information such as age, sex, education level, income level, marital status, occupation, religion, birth rate, death rate, average size of family, average age at marriage.

Age denotes a period of human life, measured by years from birth, usually marked by a certain stage or degree of mental or physical development and involving legal responsibility and capacity: the age of discretion; the age of consent; it is the length of time during which a being or thing has existed; length of life or existence to the time spoken of or referred to. According to Kaarina (2006), the age concept has recently emerged in various fields among others, gerontological, psychological, futurological, demographic, legal, political and cultural contexts as an interest of research. Diversity studies have included age among race, gender, creed, ethnicity, background, education, function, and personality differences (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998).

Age is a human attribute that has long been taken for granted. However, we know very little about the age beneath the skin and beyond the body. According to Baradicco (1991), age is associated with the maturity level of an individual. This is to say that the older an individual, the supposed level of maturity he or she should attain in handling issues related to every aspects of their lives. From this premise, it could be that the age of a married woman could play a big role in adjusting or readjusting the extent to which they adjust in their marriages.

Income refers to wages, salaries, profits, rents, and any flow of earnings received. Income can also come in the form of unemployment or worker's compensation, social security, pensions, interests or dividends, royalties, trusts, alimony, or other governmental, public, or family financial assistance. It can also come from monetary winnings, as from lotteries and other games

or contests where money is awarded as a prize. Income can be looked at in two terms, relative and absolute. Absolute income, as theorized by economist John Maynard Keynes, is the relationship in which as income increases, so will consumption, but not at the same rate. Relative income dictates a person's or family's savings and consumption based on the family's income in relation to others. Income is a commonly used measure of wealth and even to some extent, the extent to which one complies or adjust to situations. From this premise, it could be that low-income families may find it difficult to acquire some things and as such can influence the extent to which they adjust in marriages. As stated by Boushey and Weller (2005), families with higher and expendable income can accumulate wealth and focus on meeting immediate needs while being able to consume and enjoy luxuries and weather crises.

Similarly, years of marriage represents the extent to which one has been or stayed in marriage. as stated by Uza (2015), the number of years on an individual may determine the level of their adjustment or mal-adjustment in marriage. It could be that those with many years or experience in marriage may over the years learn to adapt to marital stress and demands compared to those that don't stay long.

Although several studies have assessed the challenges of married graduate students in their career with emphasis on productivity and career excellence, not much has been done on married female graduate students with reference to the impact or influence of demographic determinants on marital adjustment among them because of their inability to reconcile the differences in their ages, income, parenting differences etc. Based on these variables, it was the interest of the researcher to investigate the influences of socio-demographic factors on marital adjustment of post graduate female students in the University of Port Harcourt.

Aim and Objectives of the study

The study aimed at investigating the socio-demographic factors influences marital adjustment of post graduate female students in the University of Port Harcourt. In specific terms, this study intends to;

1. Ascertain the extent to which age determines marital adjustment of married post graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt.
2. Find out the extent to which income level determines marital adjustment of female graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt.

3. Determine the extent to which years of marriage determines marital adjustment of female graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. To what extent does age influence marital adjustment of female post-graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt?
2. To what extent does income level influence marital adjustment of female graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt?
3. To what extent do years of marriage influence marital adjustment of female post-graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the influence of age on marital adjustment of female post-graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt.
2. There is no significant difference in the influences of Income level on marital adjustment of female graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt.
3. Years of marriage has no significant influence on marital adjustment of female graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt.

Methods

The research design for this study is the ex-post facto research design which is a methodological approach for eliciting possible or probable antecedents of events that have occurred already and which cannot be subjected to direct rigorous manipulation and control by the researcher. It is used to cover investigation that are done retrospectively (after the effect has occurred) to identify possible cause-and-effect relations between the variables under study through observation of existing conditions and inquisitively searching back historically for the plausible causal factors (Kpolovie, 2016).

The population of the study consisted of married post-graduate female students in the faculty of Education in the University of Port Harcourt. Data from the school of graduate studies revealed that there are an estimated 345 post graduate students drawn across Masters and Ph.D. programmes beginning from the 2022/2023 academic session. These categories of students were used for the study because they were matured and understand the nature of the study and can as

well provide relevant data needed to complete the study. A sample of 200 (two hundred) married female graduate students was used for the study which was selected from the departments in the Faculty of Education in University of Port-Harcourt. The sampling technique adopted for the study was purposive sampling techniques. The departments used were all departments in the Faculty of Education. The researcher considered 200 Married female students. An instrument named “Socio-Demographic Influences of Marital Adjustment Questionnaire” (SIOMAQ) which was used as instrument for data collection. SIOMAQ was a non-cognitive assessment tool which was self-developed. The instrument had two sections. Section A was designed to contain instructions and demographic information of the respondents. Information like age, income level and years of marriage was asked. In section B, the instrument contained 30 items which were designed to measure the overall aspect of marital adjustments of the respondents beginning from sexual, financial, social, emotional adjustments and others. After writing, the items were properly edited and re-edited by the researcher by thoroughly going through the pool of items a number of times, reconstructing and modifying the items until the instrument was considered to be of good quality by the researcher. To ensure face, content and construct validity of the instrument, some copies were presented to two experts in Measurement and Evaluation for criticism, suggestions, correction and modification of validity in relation to the topic. Reliability of SIOMAQ was determined using Cronbach Alpha method and after administering the instrument to a pilot study group of 30 respondents, it was subjected to analysis which revealed a reliability coefficient of 0.84. Administration of SIOMAQ was on face to face basis. Data realized was analyzed using mean, standard deviation as well as Analysis of Covariance.

Results

Research Question One: To what extent does age influence marital adjustment of female post-graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt?

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the influence of age on marital adjustment of female post-graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt.

Table 1 shows ANOVA analysis of the differences in influence of age on marital adjustment of female post-graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt

Age	N	\bar{x}	Std. D.		
25-30 years	58	15.45	6.43		
31-35 years	103	13.24	5.67		
36 Years & Above	39	23.46	3.23		
	Sum of Sq.	Df.	Mean Sq.	F	Sig.
Between Groups	14354.692	2	7177.346	44.67	.000
Within Groups	30044.908	198	160.668		
Total	44399.600	200			

The calculation in the table above shows that the mean values for those between 25-30, 31-35 and 36 years and above are 15.45, 13.24 and 23.46 respectively. These mean values indicates that post-graduate married students between the age of 36 years and above have greater marital adjustments compared to those of other age group. The calculated F-value was 44.67 while the sig value is 0.000. therefore, since sig. value ($p=0.000<0.05$) is less than the alpha value of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative accepted meaning that there is a significant difference in the influence of age on marital adjustment of female post-graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt

Research Question Two: To what extent does income level influence marital adjustment of female graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt?

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the influences of Income level on marital adjustment of female graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt.

Table 2 shows ANOVA analysis of the differences in income level on marital adjustment of female post-graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt.

Income Level	N	\bar{x}	Std. D.		
Below Minimum Wage	22	10.21	5.32		
₦50-100,000	89	19.60	8.17		
Above ₦101,000	89	29.42	6.43		
	Sum of Sq.	Df.	Mean Sq.	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1985.604	3	661.868	6.088	.001
Within Groups	20221.812	197	108.719		
Total	22207.416	200			

Table 2 reveals that the mean values for those whose income are below the minimum wage is 10.21. those who receive #50,000-100,000 were 19.60 while those who get #101,000 and above are 29.42 respectively. These mean value shows that post-graduate married students who receives above #100,000 are better adjusted in marriage followed by those who receives #50,000-#100,000. The calculated F-value was 6.088 while the sig. value is 0.001. Hence, since the sig. value ($p=0.001 < 0.05$) is less than the alpha value of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected meaning that there is a significant difference in the influences of Income level on marital adjustment of female graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt

Research Question Three: To what extent do years of marriage influence marital adjustment of female post-graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt?

Hypothesis Three: Years of marriage has no significant influence on marital adjustment of female graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt.

Table 3 shows ANOVA analysis of the differences in income level on marital adjustment of female post-graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt

Years of Marriage	N	\bar{x}	Std. D.		
1-5 years	49	10.21	5.32		
6-10 years	73	22.23	8.17		
Above 10 years	78	29.42	6.43		
	Sum of Sq.	Df.	Mean Sq.	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3160.750	2	1580.375	5.738	.004
Within Groups	51505.360	198	275.430		
Total	54666.111	200			

Table 3 reveals that the mean values for respondents whose marriages are between 1-5 years are 10.21. Those between 6-10 years is 22.23 while those whose marriages are 10 years and above is 29.42. These mean value shows that post-graduate married students whose are married for 10 years and above adjust more in marriage compared to others. The calculated F-value was 5.73 while the sig. value is 0.004. Hence, since the sig. value ($p=0.004 < 0.05$) is less than the alpha value of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected meaning that years of marriage has no significant influence on marital adjustment of female graduate students in the University of Port Harcourt.

Summary of the Findings

To this end, the findings of this study were;

- Older married female graduate students tended to be well adjusted than younger married female graduate students.
- High income earners tended to resolve life issues as quickly compared to low income earners.
- Length of marriage has significant influence on marital adjustment of female graduate students.

Discussion of findings

It was indicated that the married female students of 35 years and above were capable of handling personal lives, family and career as compared to the other categories of married women. The finding means that the older one gets, the more matured and capable of adjusting to marital issues. The finding is not surprising because to the best of the researcher knowledge because she is aware that age comes with maturity and responsibilities which younger individuals could not adjust to. This finding is in agreement with that of Ibiyinka (2014) who also found that younger married women had difficulties in balancing multiple demands of work, study and social activities.

Furthermore, in terms of income level, the findings indicated that married graduate students whose salaries are within ₦50,000-₦100,000 or above have better work-life balance than those whose income are less or just minimum wage. The finding means that income level of an individual's do contribute to how well they get adjusted meaning that the more money or wealth one has, the more they may be able to adjust to the demands of marriage. This is true because those with high income will do things at their disposal without a blink. The findings of the present study is in agreement with Ibiyinka (2014) who suggested that the University should show concern towards married female students with financial conditions.

As regards, years of marriage, the findings indicated that the women of 10 years in marriage can handle life issues than those that are younger in marriage. this means that the more one stays in marriage, the more they get the needed experience to adjust to the demands of marriage. This finding is also in agreement with Ibiyinka (2014) who suggested that maturity comes with experience and the many years spent in marriage give more experience than a lesser year spent.

Counselling implication

Based on the researcher's findings, there is the implication that majority of the students are becoming aware of striking a balance among their personal, family and career lives. One of the results of the study is that there is a significant extent to which age determine work-life balance among married post-graduate. There is the implication that most of the female graduate students are equipping themselves with necessary materials that would broaden their minds and enable them to handle life issues with ease.

The results of the findings show that most young female graduate are not equipped emotionally to handle family, personal life and career. Based on this, there is the implication that counselors can play a vital role in counselling them such as

1. Family counselling
2. Post-marital counselling

This will help minimize the rate at which priorities are misplaced and the individuals involved will properly plan ahead of their schedules.

Conclusion

It has been widely shown that married persons tend to be better adjusted in their lives as they get older, in finances and years they have spent together with their spouses. This seems true both in the area of psychological adjustments and in life as general. This study has established that marital adjustment could be achieved when deliberate and intentional measures are put in place such as cutting down on activities that sap energy , making effort to set achievable goals, prioritizing daily activities, doing things right, contributing to finance the home etc. This study has also shown that maturity comes with experience for most individuals as it is rightly put: Maturity comes from experiences, mistakes, learning and understanding and it is all about doing things, trying things and even thinking things. Finally, time heals everything. Things change, people change, feelings change. One should not dwell on the past, because time teaches one to look into ones past from a different perspective and on the other hand, concentrate ones mind on the present moment and do the right things. However, as time passes, one gradually understand that “the show must go on” ;one has to pick oneself and keep going no matter how tough the situation was because certainly where there is a will, there is a way. Therefore, based on the foregoing, this research concludes that experience and exposure to realities of life are very vital for the female graduate students as they will learn to adjust in any phase of their lives.

Recommendations

Based on the researcher’s findings, it is recommended that;

1. Female graduate students should sought for wise counsel from appropriate and experienced personalities.
2. Female graduate students should learn to manage, save and invest finance for the future.
3. Female graduate students should bear in mind that maturity comes with experience and time heals everything for most individuals as it is rightly put: “Maturity comes from experiences,

mistakes, learning and understanding and it is all about doing things, trying things and even thinking things”.

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