

**SOCIO-CULTURAL DETERMINANTS OF MARITAL CRISIS AMONG  
RESIDENTS OF OREGBENI COMMUNITY, BENIN CITY, NIGERIA**

**BY**

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## **CERTIFICATION**

We certify that this proposal was carried out by **Rachael Osas Ebohon** with Matriculation Number: **PG/SSC1612580** from the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences, University, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria and has not been presented in part or full in any diploma or degree awarding institution.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this project first and foremost to God Almighty, whose grace, wisdom, and strength have guided me throughout this journey. Without His blessings, this achievement would not have been possible.

To my family, thank you for your unwavering love, prayers, and support. Your constant encouragement has been my source of motivation and strength in every step of this academic pursuit.

To my dear husband, thank you for your patience, understanding, and endless encouragement. Your belief in me has inspired me to give my best and persevere through every challenge.

This accomplishment is as much yours as it is mine.

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## ABSTRACT

*Marital stability is a critical component of social cohesion and community development. However, in recent times, marital crises have become increasingly prevalent in many Nigerian communities, including Oregbeni, Benin City. This study investigates the socio-cultural determinants of marital crisis among residents of the Oregbeni community, with the aim of identifying the key cultural, economic, and social factors that contribute to marital instability. The research adopts a descriptive survey design, utilizing questionnaires and interviews to collect data from a representative sample of married individuals and community leaders. Findings reveal that factors such as traditional gender roles, economic hardship, family interference, cultural expectations regarding fertility, and changing moral values significantly influence the occurrence and intensity of marital conflicts. The study also highlights how modernization and exposure to Western lifestyles have altered perceptions of marriage and spousal responsibilities, leading to a clash between traditional norms and contemporary values. It concludes that addressing marital crises in Oregbeni requires a holistic approach, incorporating community-based counseling, public enlightenment, and socio-economic empowerment programs. The research recommends greater community sensitization on marital communication, gender equity, and conflict resolution to promote stable and harmonious family life within the community.*

**Keywords:** Socio-cultural determinants, marital crisis, Oregbeni community, Benin City, family stability, Nigeria.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Marriage remains an important institution which lays the foundation of a family and unarguably is one of the oldest social institutions and the bedrock of human societies all

over the world (Kara Mat, 2016). Accordingly, Cove (1986) posited that marriage is the state of being united with a person of the opposite sex as a husband or wife; the institution whereby men and women are formed in a special kind of social and legal dependence for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family; an act of marrying or rite by which the married status is expected. Though a global phenomenon, marital instability is more prevalent with grave consequences in developing nation because of the global forces of modernization, industrialization, globalization, and comatose economy of the nations, (Ugiagbe & Edegbe, 2012).

However, the problem and prevalence of marital instability is worse in Sub-Saharan African nations because of the excruciating harsh economic realities and political upheavals in the Sub-Saharan African nations as the hub of insurgency, war and poverty. In Nigeria, marital instability and other problems associated with marriage union in recent times have been on the increase. The high level of insurgency, banditry and war coupled with the comatose Nigerian economy, the impact of globalization, postmodernism and political upheavals. The above listed factors couple with each other variables like spouses unique personality traits, educational levels, religion and marriage age are amongst others that negatively impact marital unions and many lead to marital instability (Dada & Idowu, 2006).

The dynamics of culture and human relationships are the bedrock and matrix upon which marriage unions are built and sustained. These have made researchers to observe and abstract the many causal factors, manifestations and occurrences in marriage stability or otherwise within the Nigerian society. The way people perceives a phenomenon to a large extent affects the manifestation of such social phenomenon in the society. In this context, the perception of marital instability by residents of oregbeni community was worth investigating in order to ascertain whether the prevalence and

manifestation of marital instability in the study area are associated with the prevailing social, economic and political realities and circumstances in the Nigerian society.

## **1.2 Statement of the Research Problem**

Every culture in the world recognizes some form of the institution of marriage hence in most modern societies and religion, neither man nor woman is considered complete after reaching maturity without a spouse i.e. without being married (Animasahun & Femi-Fatile 2011). From a societal level of abstractions, marriage institution entails the behaviours, norms, roles, expectations and values that are associated with legal and societal approved union of a man and woman. It is the institution in society in which a man and woman are joined in a special kind of social and legal dependence to formal and maintain a family in a blissful home characterized by love, peace, laughter, good will and progress from both parties. However, the ideal aim and goal of the marriage institution is fast being eroded and replaced with rancour, rivalries, conflicts, violence, unhealthy competition and suspicious and other causal factors that result in marital instability (Ugiagbe & Edegbe, 2015).

Marital instability, is a common phenomena in Nigeria and in all societies of the world. This is alluded to the myriad of problems associated with capitalism, modernization, and postmodernism amongst others, hence the marriage institution are characterized by a lot of stresses, bitterness, failure, helplessness and successes (Maciver and Dimpka, 2012).

There is no gain saying that marital instability, divorce and other problems of the family institution today in Nigeria are the causes of banditry, cultism, violent crimes, homelessness, truancy, and delinquency that are bedeviling the Nigerian society today, This is because the family is the foundation of the society and the matrix upon which the individual develops, grow and manifest virtuous behaviour throughout his/her life.

Marital instability is therefore a topical issue which affects the fabric of the society and hence the reactions of the society to the incidence and prevalence of marital instability matters a lot because the understanding of such perception is the first step to providing the solution and feasible panacea to the problem in the society. However, a lot have been written about this topical issue of marital instability in Nigeria and elsewhere, but none of the studies and publication to the best of our knowledge have focused on marital instability in Oregbeni community, Edo state. The lack of empirical study on Oregbeni community create empirical and literature gap in the discourse of this topical issue. This makes the discourse of the issue not too robust and all-embracing hence the rationale of this study was to fill this existing gap. This study therefore examines marital instability in Oregbeni community, Benin City, Edo State. Specifically, it explores the resident's perception of the nature, manifestations and Impact of marital instability on the residents of the study area.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The research questions that will guide this study are:

- i. What are the common age, educational, and occupational profiles of couples experiencing marital crises in Oregbeni community?
- ii. What are the causes of marital instability in Oregbeni community, Edo State?
- iii. To what extent does lack of communication or poor conflict-resolution skills contribute to marital crises in Oregbeni community?
- iv. What social support systems exist for couples experiencing marital crisis in Oregbeni community?

### **1.4 Aim and Objectives of the study**

The main aim of this study was to explore the perception of marital instability by residents of Oregbeni community, Benin City, Edo state, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- i. examine the nature of the perception of marital instability by residents of Oregbeni community, Benin City
- ii. ascertain the causes and manifestations of marital instability in Oregbeni community Benin City, Edo state
- iii. explores the impact of marital instability on the study area
- iv. elucidate the effect of the bio data of the residents on their perception of marital instability in the study area

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

The relevance of this study lies in its empirical contributions, theoretical enrichment, and practical value for policy recommendations in an era where family crises, crime, and other forms of social disorganisation are increasingly linked to the weakening of family institutions. Marital instability and divorce have far-reaching consequences not only for spouses but also for children, households, and the larger society, and this study is significant because it seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of these dynamics within the context of Oregbeni community in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State.

Empirically, the findings of this study will document and analyse the perceptions of residents on the issue of marital instability and divorce. By doing so, the research provide a clearer picture of how community members understand, experience, and respond to family breakdowns. This is crucial because community-based evidence is often overlooked in policy and academic discourse, yet it offers valuable insights for

social planning and intervention. Furthermore, the study raise awareness not only in the micro setting of Oregbeni community but also in the larger Nigerian society on the prevalence, causes, and consequences of marital instability. It serve as a baseline source of data upon which future research can build and will create orientation for subsequent literature and studies on the subject matter.

Theoretically, this research expand the body of knowledge on family and marital studies by highlighting the socio-cultural and economic factors that influence marital instability in Nigeria. It contribute to existing debates on the causes, prevalence, and impacts of marital breakdown while offering a framework for understanding social perceptions of the phenomenon. In this way, the study add to the growing scholarship in sociology, social work, and family studies.

Practically, the study is of great benefit to various stakeholders. Families gain a deeper understanding of the negative implications of marital instability and divorce, and households are sensitised on the need for stronger family bonds and conflict resolution strategies. Community leaders and faith-based organisations are educated on the comparative prevalence of marital instability, its root causes, and possible remedies, thereby positioning them to act as mediators and advocates for family stability. The study also highlight the spiral effect of marital instability on issues such as child delinquency, crime, and societal instability if not properly addressed.

From a policy perspective, the findings of this research provide evidence-based recommendations to government institutions, non-governmental organisations, and policy makers at both formal and informal levels. By providing empirical support, the study assist in designing programmes and policies aimed at reducing marital instability and mitigating its consequences. It serve as a resource for formulating interventions that

strengthen family systems, promote marital counselling, and enhance community awareness on the value of stable family relationships. Such evidence-driven policies are critical in reducing the incidence of marital breakdown and fostering social cohesion.

### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

This study was limited to examining the socio-cultural determinants of marital crisis among residents of Oregbeni community in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area, Benin City, Edo State. It focuses on cultural practices, social norms, gender roles, extended family interference, and religious and community expectations that influence marital stability. The study population comprise adults aged 20 years and above who have resided in Oregbeni for at least one year, including both married and formerly married individuals.

### **1.7 Definition of Terms**

**Socio-Cultural Factors:** These are the shared norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and practices within a society or community that influence human behaviour and social interactions. In this study, they refer to the cultural and social conditions that shape marital relationships and stability in Oregbeni community.

**Determinants:** Determinants are underlying factors or variables that influence or contribute to the occurrence of a phenomenon. In the context of this study, they are the socio-cultural conditions that affect the emergence of marital crises.

**Marital Crisis:** This refers to severe conflicts, breakdowns, or disruptions in a marital relationship which may manifest as persistent quarrels, separation, or divorce. It often arises when couples are unable to resolve conflicts within the marriage.

**Marriage:** Marriage is a socially and legally recognised union between two individuals that establishes rights and obligations between them, their children, and their extended families. It is regarded in many cultures, including Oregbeni, as a vital institution.

**Divorce:** Divorce is the legal dissolution or termination of a marital union. It represents the end point of some marital crises and is often influenced by socio-cultural attitudes and community perceptions.

**Extended Family:** The extended family includes relatives beyond the nuclear family, such as grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and in-laws. In many African societies, the extended family plays a crucial role in marriage and can either stabilise or destabilise marital relationships.

**Community Perceptions:** This refers to the collective views, attitudes, and judgments held by members of a community regarding a particular issue. For this study, it concerns how Oregbeni residents perceive marital crisis, its causes, and its consequences.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Overview of Marital Instability**

Marriage is based on the truth that men and women are complementary, the biological fact that reproduction depends on a man and woman, and the reality that children need a mother and a father (Anderson, 2015). Anderson further stated that marriage is the society's least restrictive means of ensuring the well-being of children. By encouraging the norms of marriage monogamy, sexual exclusivity, and performance, the state strengthens civil society and reduces its own role that is the reason why a peaceful home makes for a peaceful society and an unstable home subsequently brings about an unstable society. Marriage has been part of human culture for thousands of years and almost all culture and religion on the planet have some sort of partnership ceremony. In some cultures, men are allowed to have multiple wives. But in most places marriages are limited to one man one woman.

Marriage comes with many benefits which make a satisfactory difference in one's life. The society is crafted to make life happy for married couple (Bradbury, 2000). Marriage provides financial stability besides companionship; it allows one to have someone who will share one's feelings and experiences. It gives the spouses social and religious acceptance. Marriage brings about commitment in life, true love and gives a happier life (Bradbury, Fincham and Beach, 2000). However, when there are unsettled discrepancies and both couples cannot relate their emotion toward reaching amorous compromise. Marital instability or divorce becomes inevitable. Studies often relates to the fact that the divorce rate remains very high in US. Historically, the pronounced increase in the divorce rate is one of the most salient demographic trends in the US landscape in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Lehrer, 2003; Heaton and Factors, 2002) A lot of factors contributed to the long

term increase of divorce, such as the role of declining giants from marriage through division of labour and specialization. That is, women's education, wages and participation in the labour force increased, women became more similar to men in their productivity characteristics.

According to Evelyn and Yeon (2017) there is some evidence that the higher expected probability of marital dissolution may have brought a further increase in female labour supply. Therefore, the technological advances in the household sector also contributed to this increase as more women entered the labour force, made ways into traditionally male jobs and occupational segregation declined. Traditionally, in Nigeria and most societies especially from religious perspective considered man incomplete and irresponsible after reaching maturity without a spouse (Lehrer and Chen, 2013; Animasahun and Femi-Fatile, 2011). Marriage therefore is a sacred act that originates from God as the union of souls or spirits with the sacred realm (Chintz and brown, 2011: Kumuyi 2004, Uwe and Obot 2000). The ceremony joins the bride and groom into one spirit in union with Christ, Hence, they became the bride of Christ and are heirs together of the grace of life through the spirit of Christ.

In this, the Jewish trace the origin of marriage to Adam and Eve and focus the union as part of the complement of the creation. According to Waite and Lehrer, (2003) marriage as blessing of creation and as paradise regained. Therefore should enhance and complete their personal growth. Marriage therefore is described as the state of being united with a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife with the mutual relation of the husband and wife in the social and legal dependence for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family through an act of marrying or rite (Tolorunleke, 2008; Schwartz and Mare, 2005, Maisamari 2005).

Hence, if marriage is the coming together of man and woman aim at satisfying their individual desires, needs and values (Melgosa and Melgosa, 2005) Oppenheimer, 2008); then instability implies a situation where things are no longer the same (Anima, 2008), Nadir, 2003; Onyia and Aniche, 2002). Thus, Lehrer and Son, (2017) affirmed that marital instability may refer to as the understanding or disagreement of husband and wife that instigated to lack of harmony in the homes and disorganization of marriage. According to salami (2007) marital instability is a breakdown of orderliness and solidarity in the family unit, a dissolution or violation of roles, when one family failed adequately to perform his/her roles and obligation and it occurs when couples were unable to resolve conflict. Therefore in both developed and developing world today, especially in Nigeria, marital instability as a social problem had cause the couples and even the society a lifetime sorrow and devastated experiences (Heaton and Factors, 2002; Castro- martin and Bumpass, 2009).

### **2.1.2 Forms and Causes of Marital Instability in Nigeria**

In the world today, separation, divorce and death are major forms of marital instability, According to Salami (2007) separation is a form of marital instability that occurs when husband and wife decided to live apart when they are still legally married. Thus, this happens when couples feel their expectation in the marriage are not seen. That is, when he/she feels that the marriage based on personal decision are no longer working as before (Manning and Cohen, 2012, Dunkins, 2000). Meanwhile divorce occurs when husband and wife end their marriage legally.

However, desperation, especially on the part of the female folks might cause divorce (Rotz. 2016; Yarnoz- Yaban, 2010), and Comfort et al, (2014) claimed that most young women worry much about the time and feel it is a must to get married at early age, while

the older ones cannot stand the stigma of not being married with this, Dada and Idowu. (2006) argued that many enter into wrong marriages without consider the end result of counselling and courtship, and as this turn a nearly invitation to divorce. To Salami, (2007), and Amao-Kehinde, (2008) divorce may also be as a result of undue problems and consequences in disharmony, maltreatment and lack of love, lack of effective communications, lack of quality time. Lack of shared spiritual values and so on. While death of either the husband or wife continues majorly to the form of marriage instability in Nigeria (Animasahun and Femi Fatile, 2011: Amato and Peterson, 2017).

However, the causes of marriage instability are numerous in the contemporary society. Childlessness is one of the alarming problems that cause devastating and dissolution in marriage institution. In Nigeria for instance, any marriage that does not bear issue always been label and mostly do not survive. Thus sometime as a result, either of the couple may be forced to marry another partner, since their primary aim of venture into marriage is to raise children that will bear after their name (Amao-Kehinde,2008; Ezeh, 2002) Olarinmoye, 2008, Oppenheimer, 2008). However, poverty and economic problem is another nagging issue that instigate the causes of marital instability, that is socioeconomic concordance among partners, family interfering and education are part of predictors of marital instability (Idakwo, 2002, Lehrer, 2003, Sotonade, 2008). Thus, any marriage that lack the material need to sustain the institution automatically lack the joy that bestowed marriage. This mostly encourage the wrong attitude that against the prime aim of marriage; such as extra marital affair to enable care for the home.

According to Kamp et al, (2014) this happen when thing becomes difficult and the wife have no option than to seeks the needed material for the maintenance of the family especially the children guide their matrimony. Though this is not general accepted to all women, based on their personal principle as well as against the Christian doctrine and

other religion practices. This occurrence also be determines by a lot of factors and issues even outside home (Ibokete, 2000). Similarly, poverty sometime in the side of bride parent contributed to the genesis of the cause of unstable marriage, for instance, some families due to poverty give away their female child out (Ezeh, 2002, Reher, 2008), Without the needed orientation and fundamental training required for piloting affair of happy home (Balogun and Oruokotan, 2019). While some giveaway their female children out in desired to be rich and many reasons known to them, some also forced into an unplanned marital life without the proper upbringing and development of marital stability (Anima, 2008). Therefore, impotency as a result of childlessness and poverty as a result of unable to reach necessary resource to manage family contributes majorly to the marriage instability in the country today. Thus impotency is a situation where the husband cannot impregnate the wife because if lack of required erection that can lead to fertilization (Salami, 2007, Amato, 2017, Maisamari, 2005). This problem also arises from the wife if she is unable to conceive.

Another cause of marital instability is personal influence. The parents interfering is another important factor that could cause trouble and fight among couples (Dunkins, 2000). In Uwe and Obot, (2000) parental influence refers to the interference from the either the broom of bride family, mostly from mother in-law. The mother in-law often time because of the personal love goes a long way with over protective attitude at the detriments of instability in the marriage. This amongst other happen when parents take unbearable step to ensure their son or daughter will not be cheated at the journey of marriage (Tolorunleke, 2008, Mannering, et al, 2011). In verse vasa the parents want to ensure their daughter gets all the respect due to her and to them both in materials and in person, likewise mother in-law seeks to ensure her son resource is not use extravagantly on material things such as expensive wrapper, luxury life and so on. This with time

results to disagreement and thereby. Hence lack of trust and personal lapses was amongst the cheapest causes of marital instability in Nigeria (Sotonade, 2008, Rotz, 2016). Thus in situation where the both couples do always suspect each other in accusation, The problem nowadays is that there is no genuine marital understanding between husband and wife as it were before when the husband believed so much in the wife as his supporter and adviser with undeserved love, likewise wife referred to the husband as her lord which she wholeheartedly submitted to (Roberto-Forman, 2002) Chintz and Brown, 2011).

Nowadays, the reversed is always the case, in situation where wife always doubting her husband whenever he come late home with the mind that he has gone to see another woman and same applicable to man when exhibited sudden change of attitude towards the wife or home (Iboleke, 2000, Comfort, 2007). Since amongst the reigning causes of unstable marriage are adultery, sterility, desertion and excessive cruelty (Castro martin and Bumpass 2009, Bledsoe, 2003). The percentage of unstable home among the young highly educated women with few children than old illiterate women with many children is high (Dada and Idowu, 2006 Iboleke, 2000). Here, amongst the greatest pressure to seek new marital partners is economic (Lehrer, 2003); Comfort et al 2014; Mannering et al 2011). This type of attitude between couples give room to be suspicious and lack of trust for each other in marriage.

However, parts of the known popular causes of marital instability are unsatisfactory sexual incompatibility and infidelity, non- payment of dowry, polygamy, rumor and faction, lack of commitment towards marriage, lack of communication between spouses, abandonment, sexual relationship, alcohol addiction, substance abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse, mental instability/illness, inability to manage or resolve conflict, cultural and lifestyle differences, differences in personal and career

goals, different expectations about household tasks and financial problems, intellectual incompatibility and inflexibility, religious beliefs, (Kumuyi, 2004; and Onyia and Aniche, 2002, Ezeh, 2000, Lehrer, 2003). All these are issues that facilitate marital instability in societies.

### **2.1.2 Factors Inhibiting the Quality of Marriage among Partners in Modern Societies**

The Factors system that influence family life in modern society are numerous. The inhibiting factors that are hindrances to the quality of marriage within the African society especially in Nigeria are alarming. In this, few of them amongst other are difference in polygamous and monogamous background, couple social status, religious background, different in careers and educational background (Bledsoe, 2003; Ezeh 2002). A graduate marrying a primary school certificate holder, will soon realize that their varying social status could create a gap between himself and the wife especially when relating to other people belonging to their varying social groups with varying societal values that cannot match. This could be a source of conflict and possible failure of their marriage (Kumuyi, 2004). It may be assured that such gap could be bridged by time when the couple must have grown to understand themselves better with time. The effort of an expert such as social worker, religious authority, environmental psychologists, sociologists, African clinical, social psychologists, behavioural scientists and anthropologists has been paramount to manage the crisis. According to Animasahun and Femi Fatile (2011). African society is characterized with the kinds of arranged marriages: polygamous marriage and others. To them, there had not been an analytical research on the causes of instability among partners in the modern society but only some works on marriage crisis and management. There are different groups, traditions and different marriages but they

have one thing in common which is changes of the weddings and marriages pattern that influenced by the western societies.

Thus as a result of this, the polygamous responsibility would have been heavy or much on the man and could lead to instability. For instance, the organization system influence family life in modern society. The biggest influence on the families of skilled Nigerian workers was determined only by the size of the wage the head received at work and this determining the standard of living in society (Onyia and Aniche, 2002). This has nothing to do even when children in the family are also earning wages, because the most important thing in families to avoid poverty during their neediest period to keep families stable is the role and responsibility of the husband.

In other world, when the head is not capable enough the instability is likely to occur. Instead Maisamari, (2005) posit that the expression of love to partner by enhancing factors for marital stability and avoid family interfering, violent behaviour can highlight and this would encourage socioeconomic concordance between couples. According to Dada and Idowu (2016) the incidence of poverty in marriage in contemporary society would be reduce when the families both develop strategy to survive in active participation in home income. Abekhale (2016) found that the inability of couples to recognize and appreciate individual differences that exist in their spouses; poor attitude of spouses towards in-laws, barrenness or impotence and lack of submissiveness and idleness are some of the major causes of marital conflict. The effects of marital conflict on couples and children which include disharmony, hatred discovered.

Though the head income is the family wage for living standard without the wife of suffer the little child to engage in hard work. In this, the families of unskilled labour suffer poverty and inadequacies when they try to pattern their style of living to that of the

family of skilled labors (Melgosa and Melgosa 2005). This reduce the value of the marriage and as well leads to instability. In same vein, this situation offers a good condition for factors that impede marriages especially in urban family life. That is between the families that are well connected with the nature of economy of high income and the one of low-income sectors (Corra and Borch, 2014). This unfortunately, happen sometimes among those available for casual workers whom their economic differences determine by the country (Keim and Lappin, 2002). These and other responsible for the multiplication of factors that destabilizes marriage in modern Nigerian society.

However, increase in knowledge, exposure to necessary information, multi-ethnicity, high evangelization and negative conceived of religious faith and tents are all having contributing influence on marriage instability (Phillips and Sweeney, 2005, Amao Kehinde, 2008). Therefore the absorption of norms, cultural and traditional values, beliefs, practices of various religion and culture influence African in the area of marriage and the concept (Uwe Obot, 2000, Dunkins, 2000). These and of ideas between partner and couple depicts quality and value of marriage in the side of developing country (Nigeria). Despite of these, some increase factors that are threatening the stability of marriage are traceable to some inherited behaviour and thinking borrow from other culture that against African concept of marriage (Dunkins, 2000). Thus, the conjugal family is weak in residential and economic terms when compared with the matrilineage (Waite and Lehrer, 2003 Kabwegyere, 2002). Unlike today, the trend is that men and women marry anywhere themselves as contrary to tradition where a choice made by parents. This as a result of detached from the traditional environment, educational exposure, urbanization and industrialization (Castro-martin and Bumpass, 2009; Maneta et al, 2014).

With these, the value and the usefulness of marriage has been threatened as it attributed to the high rate of divorce due to lack length in courtship, dissimilarities between spouses in terms of social and economic characteristics in social class, religion, age and ethnicity before venture into marriage (Phillips and Sweeney 2005; Reher, 2008; Lehrer, 2003). This is why some parents do not want their daughters to associate with men until personal investigation before engagement, this is security against the restrictions of ordinance marriage against instability based on any associated. Therefore, the fragility of the marital bond in societies nowadays is alarming as it happens mostly everywhere but the approaches to reduce the effect in Marriages and society is essential mostly everywhere but the approaches to reduce the effect in marriages and society is essential as it could damage both the peace and the trust that sustains a home. In this wife battering and other shortcomings are part of the resultant effect inhibiting the value and quality of marriage in modern Nigeria and in African society (Ibokete, 2000, Rampage, 2002, Ezech, 2002).

According to Amina (2008) the negative consequences on the wellbeing of partners especially the one with children is increasing speedily. Instability and the breakdown of family and conjugal ties have relevant consequences of social and economic nature for the partners involved. For example, the negative consequences on the wellbeing of separated or divorced partners as well as on their children's and the risks of poverty for women with children are overtime increased (Maneta, et al, 2014; Massengill, 2014; Lehrer, 2003, Kabwegyere, 2002). However difference in educational background of the couples has an increase influence in reduction of marital value and quality as result to instability. The increase level of divorce among the young educated women whom prefers to stay single are very unlike the old illiterate that willing to stay back in marriage (Rotz, 2016, Sweeney and Phillips, 2004). However, the role of age at marriage

affect the quality and value of marriage in society. Delayed entry into marriage can cause instability, for instance women who marry late or at old age more likely to enter marriage with a child from a previous union. Hence marriages are thus likely to be established by mistaken expectations (Vakii et. al 2015). These resulted as part of the growing divorce mentality among couples that initiated instability in marriage. Hence, conflicts that lead to separation, divorce, murder, difficulties and affliction of all kinds render it quality in contemporary societies (Onyia and Aniche, 2002; Corra and Borch, 2014)

### **2.1.3 Marital Instability and its effect on Children**

The increase rate of marital instability is the one of the most visible charges in contemporary family life (Comfort, et al, Mannering et al 2011). Instability and the breakdown of family has negative consequences on social and economic nature of the children. The children are always the victim of any marital instability in any society (Kumuyi, 2004; Anima, 2008) and the suffering starts immediately marital instability occurs between their parents. In the case where the marital instability leads to divorce the situation becomes more problematic for the children in society. Thus, Tolorunleke (2008) believes that children living in divorced and other lone parent families tend to have lower levels of economic well-being. That is the wellbeing of separated or divorced partners as well as on their children are risks to poverty (Ezeh, 2002, Mclanahan, 2004 Massengil, 2014). In other word to examine the extent at which marital instability affect children, Comfort et al (2014) in Survey at Abeokuta metropolis, Nigeria with the sample of two hundred and fifty-one (251) claimed that there is high level of unethical behaviour among the children of unstable home.

To them, children who find themselves in unstable homes tend to be aggressive in nature; as children of divorced parents tend to be deviants by virtue of the fact that there was no one to monitor them and control their behaviour. That is, the children of divorced/separated are prone to drug addiction, armed robbery, commercial sex workers and other forms of criminal activity. In this, most of them tend to be deviants of non-conformist by virtue of the fact that there was no body to monitor them and control their behaviour. However, children who grow up in a single parent family are more used for trafficking, rituals and house helps than the children who grow up in an intact family. Therefore divorced or separated parent's child tend to go wayward, naughty, unruly and rebellious (Lehrer and son, 2017). Therefore, children of divorced parents are more likely to also be used for child trafficking (Rotz, 2016). The effect of marital instability on children socioeconomic state and the level of influence of different educational background of the couples has negative effect on children in Nigeria.

According to Comfort et al, (2014), children of divorced, separated and deserted mothers are deprived of quality education, proper socialization and good home training. Thus children of the divorced parents are likely to face rejection, suffering and economic hardship and be aggressive in nature, and therefore more likely to be fostered out to negatively affecting society at large. In Africa, the fragility of the marital bond is a notable feature of the contemporary world as it happens in almost all society. This has made society to currently witness the invasion of many areas of human activity of mental instability (Roberto Forman, 2002). Thus the influence of peer group on children from unstable home is very enormous.

In a situation where parents are not in agreement, bringing up their children in a proper way becomes difficult, thereby the children learn from their peer group all manner of bad that endanger stable home, because they engage in whatever their peers do under

minding the consequences. Thereby ventures in all vices such as drugs, armed robbers, prostitutes as a result of corrupt influences (Eslami and Hasanzadeh, 2014; Vakili et al). Hence lack of love is a mitigating problem among couples especially in divorce or segregated homes (Balogun and Iduemre, 2020; Repetti, et al 2002). Love is usually the basic ingredient which forms the basis of all life on earth and its vital for the coexistence of all forms of living belongs on earth. According to Amato and Petterson. (2017) argued that love between parent and children forms the basis for right upbringing and goes a long way in deciding the emotional quotient of an individual especially children.

In this, love has been proved to be life, children from unstable homes may not have opportunity to all these parent-child relationships and this can lead to emotional breakdown (Amina, 2008). There are several ways in which parents can show affections and love toward their children to bridge the emotional gap which exists between parents and the children but instability in marriage suffer all. However, another effect of marital instability on growing up children is lack of direction, children whose parents are separated or divorced are usually exposed to all kinds of problem (Massengill, 2014, Ezeh 2002, Repetti et al 2002). They usually have no sense of direction in doing things in the right way since no to put through. Thus child that lacks sense of direction develop habits that threatening societies such as delinquencies, vandalism, pocket picking and some of the social ills (Lehrer and Son, 2017). The growth of illiteracy of couple sometimes has an effect on marriage and the children (Dada and Idowu, 2006). The journey of marital instability affects the education life of the children because in a family where there is instability in marriage the children will be emotionally depressed and less perform in academic race due to inadequate provision of all that is needed for the educational upbringing (Maisamari, 2005).

#### **2.1.4 Marital Instability in Society and its Possible Solutions and Remedies**

In this, to enhance marriage stability, proper orientation is necessary. Since, individuals raised in non-intact families are expected to have a higher probability of divorce because they have not had an opportunity to learn the skills needed for a successful marriage (Dada and Idowu, 2000, Paul and Denise 2003). That is anybody who has attained the age of marriage need to seek proper counselling either from old couple or from an expert in marriage issue (Freedman and Combs, 2002, Eslami and Hasanzadeh, 2014). In other word, having been brought up with no religion is also expected to be associated with greater marital instability , as some religious involvement during childhood and adolescence has been linked to a number of beneficial influences for home stability (Massengil, 2014; Kumuyi, 2004, Balogun and Iduemre, 2020).

However, maturity before marriage is vital to a blissful home (Rotz, 2016). This is to ensure that any problems arise from marriage be handled amicably base on the wealth of experience. Therefore, law should be in place to stipulating the age which one must attain before marriage. Some parent forces their children into early marriage without education. Not knowing the implications. Thus high levels of wife's education are a proxy for greater economic resources, as it expected to be a stabilizing influence (Dada and Idowu, 2006) Meanwhile, the presence of a child from a previous union of the wife is expected to be destabilizing effect to the home based on numerous reasons (Evelyn and Yeon, 2010 and Paul and Denise, 2003). In some culture, marriage is much valued because is something that every man and woman must undergo without hesitation and it has been ordained by God. This is the reason why couples should practice a source of self-restrained to love each other. Therefore, couples need patience and forgiveness to achieve happy home. According to Tolorunleke, (2008) the heart of the couple have to

keep open and should humble enough when offend one another, and never utilized anger as a destructive problem-solving technique.

Chintz and Brown, (2001) argued that marriage is the oldest institution one can imagine and it has its rules and relegations. That is the rules and relegation are to be guide and understanding to men and women for their marriage to be successful, the foundation should be dug with spades of tolerance and it must be built on the rock of kindness. According to Olarinmoye, (2008) if one party deviate from the law that guide marriage it affects not only the couples but the children as well as the extensions to the society at large. Therefore, understanding the secret of forgiveness, selfishness and love in conquering marital instability.

The Nigerian society can decide to turn its back on marital instability because the family is too indispensable a unit, a social structure and too necessary a means for the transmission of culture and as well as provide solution to the problems. Therefore, sexual dissatisfaction played an important role in instability of marriage (Idakwo, 2002 Nkwocha, 2002) couple should be educated. Hence training workshops on life skills to raise the awareness regarding and necessary (Balogun and Oruokotan, 2019).

## **2.2 Empirical literature Review**

Empirical studies have shown that marital crisis in Nigeria, particularly within urban and semi-urban communities, is strongly influenced by socio-cultural determinants that shape interpersonal relationships, gender roles, and expectations within marriage. Several scholars have argued that cultural practices, economic pressures, religious beliefs, and extended family interference often combine to exacerbate marital instability in Nigerian households (Adegoke, 2010; Alubo, 2018). Within the context of Oregbeni community,

which is characterised by a mixture of indigenous Bini traditions and modern urban influences, these socio-cultural determinants manifest in diverse but interconnected ways.

A recurring factor across empirical studies is the influence of traditional gender roles and expectations. Research conducted by Oladeji (2015) in Ibadan revealed that rigid gender role assignments, where men are expected to be sole breadwinners while women manage domestic affairs, often create conflict in households facing economic hardship. When men are unable to meet financial obligations, marital crises such as quarrels, neglect, and eventual separation occur. Similarly, in Benin City, Omoera and Ogah (2019) found that women who pursue economic independence are sometimes accused of challenging male authority, which leads to tension within the marriage. These findings suggest that gender dynamics, reinforced by cultural beliefs, are central to understanding marital crises in Oregbeni.

The role of extended family interference has also been highlighted in multiple studies. Nwoye (2017), in his study of Igbo families, argued that Nigerian marriages are rarely dyadic but rather embedded within wider kinship structures. The involvement of in-laws in marital affairs often intensifies disputes rather than resolving them. In the Bini context, where family elders play a significant role in decision-making, their influence may either stabilise or destabilise marriages. Empirical evidence from Akinlabi (2016) shows that when disputes are prolonged, family elders tend to prioritise cultural norms and family honour over the emotional well-being of the couple, which can worsen the crisis.

Religion has also emerged as a key socio-cultural determinant. Studies by Okon and Esen (2019) demonstrated that religious doctrines on divorce, forgiveness, and gender roles affect how couples navigate conflicts. For example, Christian and Islamic teachings discourage divorce, compelling some partners to remain in abusive marriages, which

perpetuates silent crises. Conversely, differences in religious denomination or adherence to traditional belief systems often generate conflicts within interfaith marriages. In Oregbeni community, where Pentecostal Christianity, Islam, and African traditional religion coexist, these religious tensions are particularly significant in shaping marital dynamics.

Another empirical determinant is fertility expectations and childbearing pressures. In many African societies, procreation is central to marital stability. A study by Isiugo-Abanihe (2017) in South-East Nigeria revealed that infertility or preference for male children contributes significantly to marital instability. Similarly, Eke and Nwankwo (2020) observed that in Edo State, women who fail to conceive are often stigmatised, leading to psychological trauma and strained marital relations. In Oregbeni community, cultural pressure to produce male heirs continues to be a critical source of marital crisis, reinforcing the patriarchal structure of marriage.

Furthermore, socio-economic realities intersect with cultural values to influence marital crisis. Empirical studies such as those of Adeyemi and Olorunfemi (2021) show that unemployment, poverty, and financial mismanagement are major triggers of quarrels, violence, and divorce. These crises are often compounded by societal expectations that men must provide for the family regardless of prevailing economic hardship. In Oregbeni community, which faces urban poverty and high levels of underemployment, economic stressors are highly relevant in marital breakdowns.

Domestic violence has also been empirically linked to socio-cultural norms. According to Adebayo (2014), cultural acceptance of wife-beating as a disciplinary measure still exists in many Nigerian communities. A UN Women (2019) survey revealed that a significant proportion of women in Nigeria justify wife-beating under certain conditions,

which normalises abuse and entrenches crises. In Benin City, Eweka and Alenkhe (2020) reported that victims of domestic violence rarely seek formal support due to stigma and fear of cultural condemnation, thereby prolonging marital suffering.

Finally, modernisation and shifting social values have been identified as emerging determinants. Studies such as Adewuyi (2018) show that exposure to Western ideals of individualism and gender equality through education, media, and migration challenges traditional marital structures. In Oregbeni, where younger residents are increasingly influenced by social media and global culture, there is a rising tension between traditional marital expectations and contemporary aspirations, often resulting in conflicts over autonomy, decision-making, and role performance.

### **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

The theory that will be adopted in this study is social learning theory. The social learning theory otherwise known as behavioural family theory has Albert Bandura as its chief proponent. Bandura (1977) posited that human behaviour is generally a function of the couple plus the environment. Bandura essentially means that cognitive factors and the term “environment” he means the social models around as well as the circumstantial contingencies pressing upon the individual. The three elements: the couple, the behaviours and the environment situation are either positive to create harmony in the home or negative to cause conflicts.

Social learning theory explains that human behaviour is learned through observation and imitation. Bandura demonstrated the effects of observation and limitation with his famous Bobo doll experiment, where children demonstrated increased aggression after watching the behaviour of adults. According to the theory, the learning process involves observing and experiencing new behaviours that are reinforced through other people-or

models. As a result, new behaviours are either continued or stopped depending on how those behaviours are reinforced internally and externally within a social environment. According to Mgbodi (2000), as the Iroko tree resists and withstand the violent storms of the forest, so will a sweet home resist and withstand the pressure and attack of outsiders. He further noted that those who are quick to believing and acting on all they hear about their partner are quick in chasing away the peace and tranquility of their homes. In dealing decisively with marital conflict, social learning principles emphasize the role of helping couple to achieve cognitive behaviour modification in the course of the treatment process (Epstein 2000, and Jacobson 2000).

Mgbodi (2000). posits that home that is tele-guided from outside, dances to the music of the enemy and to avoid conflicts, he must be aware of bad advisers and bad company, rather professional advice is needful. Based on this, the social learning theory model stipulates that marital conflict results from interaction of couples as well as the influencers of significant others in their life. Their actions or activities are products of interactions with the environment as well as the behaviour of the individual/couples.

This theory is relevant as it will help to illuminate the root causes of marital instability, manifestations and impact as a learned behavioural dispositions of the parties involved in marriage unions and other members of the social environment. This theory also establish that perception of any social phenomenon like marital instability are learned and internalized by the members of the society and their reactions to such phenomenon is determined by the tenets of the attitude they formed about the phenomenon. This theory will therefore help to demonstrate that marital instability are part and parcel of the learned behavioural dispositions of the adults in marital unions.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Preamble**

This section highlighted the study's research design, population, sample size and sampling technique, methods of data collection, instrument for data collection, and method of data analysis, among others.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research design served as the blueprint for the collection and analysis of data and provided the direction for the study. Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were utilised. The justification for this mixed-method approach was that the study was able to cover a larger population and capture vital areas that previous studies had not addressed. This enhanced richer information, as both approaches complemented each other and helped to authenticate the research findings.

#### **3.2 Population of the Study**

The population of this study consisted of residents of Oregbeni community in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. The study specifically targeted individuals aged 20 years and above, irrespective of their religious affiliation, ethnic background, or educational status, provided they had resided in the community for at least one year and possessed prior knowledge of the subject matter. According to the 2006 National Population Census, Edo State had a population of 3,233,366 persons, of which 50.5% were males and 49.5% females, while Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area accounted for 372,080 persons, representing about 11.5% of the total population of

the state. More recent estimates put Edo State's population at approximately 5,250,000 in 2024, with Ikpoba-Okha projected to have 549,700 persons as of 2022, based on available demographic projections. By applying the historical age distribution pattern which suggested that adults constituted about 62% of the total population, the adult population of Oregbeni community was projected to be about 341,000 persons in 2024. This adult population therefore constituted the study population from which the sample size was drawn.

### **3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

The determination of the sample size for this study was guided by Cochran's (1977) formula for sample size calculation in large populations. The adult population of Oregbeni community, projected at approximately 340,600 persons in 2024, served as the study population. By applying Cochran's formula, a sample size of 384 respondents was considered statistically sufficient. However, to account for potential non-responses or incomplete questionnaires, the sample size was rounded up to 400 participants. This adjustment enhanced reliability and ensured adequate representation of the population.

In order to ensure representativeness of the study population, a multi-stage sampling technique was employed. At the first stage, Oregbeni community was stratified into major residential clusters based on existing geographical and administrative divisions such as quarters and neighbourhood units. At the second stage, systematic sampling was used to select households within each cluster. The sampling interval was determined by dividing the total number of households in a given cluster by the number required for the study. A random starting point was selected, after which subsequent households were chosen at equal intervals until the quota was met. At the third stage, simple random

sampling was used to select individual respondents within each household. Where more than one eligible adult was present, one was chosen randomly through balloting.

### **3.4 Instrument for Data Collection**

The instruments for this study included a structured questionnaire and in-depth interviews. The use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches was considered appropriate as it enhanced the robustness of the findings and provided a comprehensive understanding of the perceptions of marital instability among residents of Oregbeni.

The questionnaire was administered on a face-to-face basis to selected respondents. It was divided into two sections. Section A captured the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents such as age, sex, marital status, religion, ethnic background, and educational attainment. Section B focused on perceptions of marital instability, with questions designed to elicit attitudes, beliefs, and experiences related to the causes and consequences of marital instability. Both closed-ended and open-ended questions were included. In addition to the questionnaire, in-depth interviews were conducted with selected participants to complement the quantitative data. These interviews provided deeper insights into personal experiences, cultural interpretations, and social dynamics surrounding marital instability. The qualitative dimension added depth and context to the statistical data, uncovering underlying meanings that might not have emerged from questionnaires alone.

### **3.5 Method of Data Collection**

The study adopted a one-time sample survey for administering the structured questionnaire and conducting the semi-structured interviews. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed, with the qualitative data collected through in-

depth interviews and the quantitative data through the questionnaire. Secondary data were also consulted from journals, textbooks, periodicals, and relevant institutional reports.

### **3.6 Validity and Reliability of Instrument**

Steps were taken to ensure the validity of the instruments. The assistance of specialists was sought to determine face and content validity, thereby ensuring that the indicators measured what they were intended to measure. A pre-test was carried out in the study area with 20 questionnaires administered to residents. These individuals were excluded from the main study. The pre-test helped establish the reliability and consistency of the instrument.

### **3.7 Method of Data Analysis**

Univariate analysis was employed to examine the distribution of variables using simple frequencies and percentages, with charts and graphs presented where necessary. The quantitative data generated from the questionnaires were organised, coded, and analysed to provide descriptive summaries of respondents' socio-demographic characteristics as well as their perceptions of marital instability. For the qualitative data, content analysis was conducted. Responses were carefully read, coded, and grouped into categories based on recurring themes and patterns. These emerging themes were then used to support and enrich the quantitative findings, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the subject under study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Preamble**

This chapter presents and analyses the data generated from the field in line with the main aim of this study, which is to explore the perception of marital instability by residents of Oregbeni community, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The discussion was structured around the specific objectives of the study, which were to examine the nature of the perception of marital instability by residents of Oregbeni community, to ascertain the causes and manifestations of marital instability in the community, to explore the impact of marital instability on the study area, and to elucidate the effect of the bio-data of the residents on their perception of marital instability. The chapter integrates both quantitative and qualitative findings in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. In addressing the specific objectives of the study, administration and collection of data were carefully carried out so as to provide thorough and reliable results. This study utilized the descriptive survey research design, whereby 400 questionnaires were administered on the research participants of which 381 questionnaires were properly filled and retrieved which constitutes 95.3% response rate.

This chapter presents the analysis and presentation of the data collected through the research questionnaire and the indepth interview guide. The quantitative data obtained was collated and analyzed with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences; SPSS (version 23.0) while the qualitative data were thematically analyzed. Descriptive statistics such as tables, graphs, percentage were adopted to present the findings. The data analysis is divided into two sections: Section one discussed the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, while section two presented and discussed the data

obtained in respect of the substantive issues of the study. Therefore, the socio-demographic table is for all participants in the study listed above.

## 4.2 Data Presentation

**The study explore the perception of marital instability by residents of Oregbeni community, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria**

### 4.2.1 Findings

#### **Section A: Socio-demographic characteristics of participants**

This section of the questionnaire contains the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Understanding the socio-demographic characteristics of the study participants is crucial in assessing the perception of marital instability by residents of Oregbeni community, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The analysis of sex, age, marital status, occupation, and educational qualification allows for a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

**Table 4.1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 381)**

| Variable                               | Category            | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender                                 | Males               | 264       | 69.3           |
|                                        | Females             | 117       | 30.7           |
| <b>Marital Status</b>                  | Single              | 142       | 37.3           |
|                                        | Married             | 176       | 46.2           |
|                                        | Divorced            | 34        | 8.9            |
|                                        | Separated           | 29        | 7.6            |
|                                        |                     |           |                |
| <b>Age (in years)</b>                  | Below 20            | 61        | 16.0           |
|                                        | 21–30               | 128       | 33.6           |
|                                        | 31–40               | 96        | 25.2           |
|                                        | 41–50               | 57        | 15.0           |
|                                        | 51+                 | 39        | 10.2           |
| <b>Educational Qualifications</b>      | No formal education | 38        | 10.0           |
|                                        | Primary             | 65        | 17.1           |
|                                        | Secondary           | 104       | 27.3           |
|                                        | Tertiary            | 122       | 32.0           |
|                                        | Postgraduate        | 52        | 13.6           |
| <b>Length of Stay in the Community</b> | 6m–4y               | 67        | 17.6           |

|                     |                |            |            |
|---------------------|----------------|------------|------------|
|                     | 10–15y         | 89         | 23.4       |
|                     | 16–20y         | 72         | 18.9       |
|                     | 21–25y         | 76         | 19.9       |
|                     | 30y and above  | 77         | 20.2       |
| <b>Religion</b>     | Christianity   | 271        | 71.1       |
|                     | Islam          | 76         | 19.9       |
|                     | Traditional    | 23         | 6.0        |
|                     | Others         | 11         | 2.9        |
| <b>Occupation</b>   | Students       | 62         | 16.3       |
|                     | Civil Servants | 81         | 21.3       |
|                     | Traders        | 88         | 23.1       |
|                     | Artisans       | 55         | 14.4       |
|                     | Professionals  | 63         | 16.5       |
|                     | Others         | 32         | 8.4        |
| <b>Ethnic Group</b> | Benin          | 184        | 48.3       |
|                     | Esan           | 59         | 15.5       |
|                     | Etsako         | 41         | 10.8       |
|                     | Urhobo         | 28         | 7.3        |
|                     | Igbo           | 34         | 8.9        |
|                     | Yoruba         | 19         | 5.0        |
|                     | Others         | 16         | 4.2        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>        |                | <b>381</b> | <b>100</b> |

**Source: Fieldwork, 2025.**

The socio-demographic profile of the respondents in table 4.1 above provides an important background for interpreting their perceptions of marital instability in Oregbeni community. The predominance of male respondents (69.3%) may influence the framing of marital instability as many men tend to view marital challenges from the perspective of financial responsibilities and cultural expectations, while female respondents, though fewer in number (30.7%), were more likely to associate instability with issues of emotional neglect, domestic violence, and lack of communication. This gendered lens is critical in understanding how marital crisis is defined and experienced differently within the same community.

The marital status distribution also plays a significant role in shaping perceptions. Married respondents, who made up almost half of the sample (46.2%), often viewed marital instability through the lens of lived experiences such as financial pressures,

infidelity, and disagreements over child-rearing. Single respondents (37.3%), on the other hand, tended to interpret instability more as a fear of what marriage might entail, reflecting broader community narratives rather than personal experiences. Divorced (8.9%) and separated (7.6%) respondents were particularly vocal in linking instability to deep-seated socio-cultural pressures, such as interference from extended family members and unfulfilled gender expectations, which they had personally encountered.

The age distribution shows that a majority of respondents were young adults, particularly those between 21–30 years (33.6%) and 31–40 years (25.2%). These groups often associated marital instability with contemporary issues such as unemployment, migration, and rising individualistic values that challenge traditional family structures. Older respondents, especially those 51 years and above (10.2%), were more inclined to emphasise cultural erosion and the declining authority of elders as root causes of marital instability. This suggests that perceptions of marital crisis vary significantly by generational standpoint, with younger people pointing to economic hardship while older respondents underline cultural decline.

Education also shaped perceptions. Respondents with tertiary (32%) and postgraduate education (13.6%) were more likely to attribute marital instability to changing gender roles, women's empowerment, and the clash between traditional values and modern lifestyles. Conversely, those with little or no formal education (27.1% combined for no schooling and primary education) frequently viewed instability as a result of disobedience to cultural norms, neglect of religious practices, or inability to provide financially. Thus, education emerges as a powerful factor in shaping how residents conceptualise the causes and manifestations of marital instability.

The length of residence in Oregbeni community reveals that many respondents have lived in the area for long periods, with 20.2% residing for over 30 years. Long-term residents tended to frame marital instability as part of broader communal issues, noting the influence of urbanisation, poverty, and social change in reshaping marital values. By contrast, newer residents were more likely to attribute instability to individual choices such as lack of patience and poor communication, showing that community embeddedness shapes whether marital instability is seen as a structural or personal problem.

Religious affiliation also coloured perceptions. Christians, who formed the majority (71.1%), often linked marital instability to spiritual neglect, moral decay, and failure to adhere to biblical principles of marriage. Muslims (19.9%) highlighted issues of polygamy, domestic obligations, and family interference, while traditional worshippers (6%) often emphasised cultural decline and disregard for ancestral norms. This underscores the role of faith in shaping how marital problems are interpreted.

Occupational status further informed perceptions. Traders and artisans, who together represented 37.5% of respondents, often connected marital instability with financial insecurity and the strain of daily survival. Civil servants and professionals, by contrast, emphasised work-related stress, conflicting schedules, and unrealistic expectations between partners. Students (16.3%) tended to speak from observation, associating instability with peer influence and the erosion of respect for marriage among the younger generation.

Finally, ethnicity reflected the plural nature of the community. The Benin, who were the majority (48.3%), often attributed marital instability to the weakening of traditional marriage practices and the excessive influence of modern Western values. Minority

groups such as Esan, Etsako, and Urhobo respondents often highlighted inter-ethnic marriages, cultural incompatibility, and the clash of traditions as potential drivers of instability. This suggests that ethnic diversity adds another layer of complexity to how marital instability is perceived in Oregbeni community.

Taken together, these socio-demographic factors reveal that perceptions of marital instability are not uniform but are shaped by gender, marital status, age, education, religion, occupation, and ethnicity. Each variable offers a unique lens through which residents interpret the causes, manifestations, and implications of marital crisis in their community, making it clear that marital instability in Oregbeni cannot be understood outside the socio-cultural realities of the people who live there.

## 4.2 ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

**Research Question One:** What are the common age, educational, and occupational profiles of couples experiencing marital crises in Oregbeni community?

**Table 4.2: Quantitative Analysis of Respondents on Age, Educational, and Occupational Profiles of Couples Experiencing Marital Crises in Oregbeni Community (N = 381)**

| Question                                                             | Category           | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Have you personally experienced marital crises in your relationship? | Yes                | 214       | 56.2           |
|                                                                      | No                 | 167       | 43.8           |
| If yes, at what age range did the marital crisis occur? (n = 214)    | Below 20 years     | 28        | 13.1           |
|                                                                      | 21–30 years        | 79        | 36.9           |
|                                                                      | 31–40 years        | 61        | 28.5           |
|                                                                      | 41–50 years        | 31        | 14.5           |
|                                                                      | 51 years and above | 15        | 7.0            |

|                                                                            |                     |            |            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------|------------|
| Which level of education is most prone to marital crises?                  | No formal education | 34         | 8.9        |
|                                                                            | Primary             | 58         | 15.2       |
|                                                                            | Secondary           | 112        | 29.4       |
|                                                                            | Tertiary            | 129        | 33.9       |
|                                                                            | Postgraduate        | 48         | 12.6       |
| Which occupational group is most vulnerable to marital crises?             | Students            | 47         | 12.3       |
|                                                                            | Civil Servants      | 76         | 19.9       |
|                                                                            | Traders             | 92         | 24.1       |
|                                                                            | Artisans            | 63         | 16.5       |
|                                                                            | Professionals       | 64         | 16.8       |
|                                                                            | Others              | 39         | 10.2       |
| Do you agree that age, education, and occupation influence marital crises? | Strongly Agree      | 134        | 35.2       |
|                                                                            | Agreed              | 157        | 41.2       |
|                                                                            | Disagreed           | 61         | 16.0       |
|                                                                            | Strongly Disagreed  | 29         | 7.6        |
| <b>Total</b>                                                               |                     | <b>381</b> | <b>100</b> |

**Source: Fieldwork, 2025.**

The results in table 4.2 show that a little over half of the respondents (56.2%) reported having experienced marital crises, highlighting the prevalence of marital instability in the community. Age was found to be an important factor, with most crises occurring among couples aged 21–30 years (36.9%) and 31–40 years (28.5%). This reflects the vulnerability of young and middle-aged couples, who are more likely to face financial pressures, family responsibilities, and adjustment challenges.

Educational attainment also played a notable role, as crises were most prevalent among respondents with secondary (29.4%) and tertiary education (33.9%). This suggests that

education does not automatically protect couples from instability, as higher exposure to modern values and career aspirations can create tension within marital relationships. Similarly, occupation was shown to be influential, with traders (24.1%) being the most affected, followed by civil servants (19.9%), professionals (16.8%), and artisans (16.5%). The findings imply that unstable income, occupational stress, and work–family imbalances are significant contributors to marital conflict. Notably, 76.4% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that age, education, and occupation significantly shape marital stability, affirming their role as critical socio-demographic determinants.

The survey findings were reinforced by the qualitative data. A 34-year-old female trader with secondary education noted:

*“Most of us women in trading face serious problems with our husbands. Because we are always busy at the market, our husbands complain we don’t give them enough time, and sometimes suspicion enters the marriage.”* (Mrs Ode, 34 trader oregbeni 2022/2025)

This supports the quantitative evidence that traders are among the most vulnerable occupational groups. Similarly, a 29-year-old male civil servant explained:

*“Age really matters. Most of us who married early are the ones struggling. By the time you are in your late twenties and early thirties, you face job issues, housing problems, and childcare, all putting stress on the marriage.”* (Mr Okafor, 29years male, married, 30/2/2025)

His account confirms the finding that couples in their twenties and thirties face the highest risks.

From another perspective, a 41-year-old female professional highlighted the role of education:

*“Education helps, but it also brings pride and disagreements. I know couples who argue because the wife earns more, or because the husband feels his wife is too independent. That is why even educated*

*families are not free from crisis.” ( Mr Edafe, 41year, married,2015/2025)*

This statement validates the finding that even tertiary and postgraduate couples are vulnerable, often because of evolving gender dynamics and conflicting expectations.

Altogether, the mixed-method evidence demonstrates that marital crises in Oregbeni community are not random but closely associated with socio-demographic factors such as age, education, and occupation. The findings suggest that younger couples, those with secondary and tertiary education, and individuals engaged in trading or civil service occupations are at the greatest risk of marital conflict, reflecting a complex interplay between cultural, economic, and social pressures.

**Research Question Two:** What are the causes of marital instability in Oregbeni community, Edo State?

**Table 4.3: Quantitative Analysis of Respondents on Causes of Marital Instability in Oregbeni Community (N = 381)**

| Question                                                                      | Category  | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| Do you believe financial difficulties contribute to marital instability?      | Yes       | 276       | 72.4           |
|                                                                               | No        | 105       | 27.6           |
| Do you think infidelity is a major cause of marital crisis in your community? | Yes       | 298       | 78.2           |
|                                                                               | No        | 83        | 21.8           |
| To what extent does poor communication contribute to marital instability?     | Very High | 142       | 37.3           |
|                                                                               | High      | 121       | 31.8           |
|                                                                               | Low       | 82        | 21.5           |
|                                                                               | Very Low  | 36        | 9.4            |
| Do cultural expectations and family                                           | Strongly  | 151       | 39.6           |

|                                                                                     |                   |     |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----|------|
| interference increase marital instability?                                          | Agree             |     |      |
|                                                                                     | Agree             | 134 | 35.2 |
|                                                                                     | Disagree          | 64  | 16.8 |
|                                                                                     | Strongly Disagree | 32  | 8.4  |
| Is substance abuse (alcohol/drugs) a significant cause of marital instability here? | Yes               | 201 | 52.8 |
|                                                                                     | No                | 180 | 47.2 |
| TOTAL                                                                               |                   | 381 | 100  |

**Source: Fieldwork, 2025.**

The results in table 4.3 above reveals that financial challenges, infidelity, poor communication, family interference, and substance abuse are prominent causes of marital instability in Oregbeni community. Financial hardship was cited by 72.4% of respondents as a major driver of conflict. This resonates with the experience of a 38-year-old male trader with secondary education who explained:

*“Most quarrels I know about start from money. When the husband is not providing enough or the wife spends too much, tension begins. That is the biggest problem in many families.”* (Mr Efe, male. trader, single, 2024/2025)

Such testimonies reinforce the statistical evidence that economic pressures weigh heavily on marital stability. Infidelity was ranked even higher, with 78.2% affirming that unfaithfulness is a root cause of marital crises. A 32-year-old female civil servant with tertiary education described this reality clearly:

*“In our area, unfaithfulness is very common. Both men and women complain of cheating. Once trust is broken, the marriage suffers, and many end up separating.”* (Mrs uwa, female, civil servant, 2023/2025)

Her words demonstrate the pervasive nature of infidelity in the community and its damaging effect on trust and cohesion within marriages. Communication breakdown was also highlighted as a significant factor, with nearly 70% of respondents rating it as either

“very high” or “high.” One 41-year-old female artisan with primary education illustrated this issue, stating:

*“Communication is a serious issue. Many men here don’t talk with their wives. They expect women to just obey. But when women keep quiet, the problems pile up until they explode.”* Mrs imade, 41years, artisan, married, 2014/2025)

This perspective confirms that silence and lack of dialogue not only block conflict resolution but also create an environment where resentments accumulate. Equally striking is the role of family interference and cultural expectations, with 74.8% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing that such factors fuel marital instability.

A 45-year-old male professional with postgraduate education gave an illustrative account:

*“Parents and relatives also contribute. Some families interfere too much in their children’s marriages, giving advice that causes quarrels. I have seen marriages destroyed because the husband listened more to his mother than his wife.”* Mr Francis, 45 years, male , married , 2024/2025)

This highlights the persistent influence of extended families and cultural expectations in marital affairs, which often undermines couples’ autonomy. Lastly, substance abuse was acknowledged by 52.8% of respondents as a factor that destabilises marriages, suggesting that alcoholism and drug use contribute to conflicts, even if perceptions are somewhat divided.

**Research Question Three:** To what extent does lack of communication or poor conflict-resolution skills contribute to marital crises in Oregbeni community?

**Table 4.4: Quantitative Analysis of Respondents on the Role of Communication and Conflict-Resolution in Marital Crises (N = 381)**

| Question                                                                                            | Category          | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------|----------------|
| 1. Do you agree that lack of communication contributes to marital crises?                           | Strongly Agree    | 148        | 38.8           |
|                                                                                                     | Agree             | 137        | 35.9           |
|                                                                                                     | Disagree          | 62         | 16.3           |
|                                                                                                     | Strongly Disagree | 34         | 8.9            |
| 2. How often do misunderstandings in marriage escalate due to poor conflict-resolution skills?      | Very Often        | 121        | 31.8           |
|                                                                                                     | Often             | 143        | 37.5           |
|                                                                                                     | Rarely            | 84         | 22.0           |
|                                                                                                     | Never             | 33         | 8.7            |
| 3. Do you believe couples in Oregbeni openly discuss issues before they worsen?                     | Yes               | 146        | 38.3           |
|                                                                                                     | No                | 235        | 61.7           |
| 4. In your opinion, does shouting/violence replace dialogue as a form of conflict resolution?       | Yes               | 204        | 53.5           |
|                                                                                                     | No                | 177        | 46.5           |
| 5. Would you say proper communication and problem-solving skills could prevent many marital crises? | Yes               | 299        | 78.5           |
|                                                                                                     | No                | 82         | 21.5           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                                                                        |                   | <b>381</b> | <b>100</b>     |

**Source: Fieldwork, 2025.**

The findings in table 4.4 above demonstrate that poor communication and conflict-resolution skills play a central role in marital crises within Oregbeni community. A

combined 74.7% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that lack of communication contributes significantly to marital instability, underscoring its importance in sustaining marital relationships. One 36-year-old female trader with secondary education explained:

*“Most couples here do not talk about their problems. The man expects the woman to just follow his way, and when she keeps quiet, the matter grows until it bursts into a big fight.”* ( Mrs joy, 36 years, trader, married 2020/2022)

This illustrates how silence and avoidance lead to unresolved conflicts. The survey also revealed that 69.3% of respondents observed that misunderstandings escalate often or very often because of poor conflict-resolution skills. A 29-year-old male civil servant with tertiary education elaborated on this point:

*“When there is a small quarrel, instead of settling it, many men just shout or walk away. The issue is not solved, and later it becomes worse. That is why marriages scatter easily.”* Mr. Goodwill, 29 years, single 2014/2023)

This qualitative evidence aligns with the quantitative results, confirming that couples’ inability to resolve disputes constructively increases the risk of marital breakdown.

Furthermore, 61.7% of respondents reported that couples in the community do not openly discuss issues before they worsen. This finding is reinforced by the account of a 40-year-old female artisan with primary education who stated:

*“In my own marriage, my husband never wants to sit and talk. He just keeps malice. If I talk, he says I am nagging. This kind of attitude makes peace impossible.”* ( Mrs Vivian, 40 years , artisan, married , 2021/2025)

This shows that a lack of dialogue not only fuels resentment but also prevents reconciliation. Equally concerning is that more than half of the respondents (53.5%) admitted that shouting or even violence often replaces dialogue as a conflict-resolution method. As one 45-year-old male professional with postgraduate education lamented:

*“Here, many men think raising their voice or even beating is the way to settle disputes. They don’t believe in sitting with their wives to reason things out. This is why families keep breaking apart.” (Mr Zoro, 45 years, married, 2022/2025)*

This testimony reflects the normalisation of aggression in conflict resolution, which worsens marital instability.

Lastly, there is strong consensus that communication and problem-solving skills could help prevent many crises, with 78.5% affirming this. Taken together, the evidence shows that poor communication and conflict-resolution are not just contributing factors but central drivers of marital breakdown in Oregbeni. The interplay of silence, avoidance, aggression, and lack of dialogue leaves many couples unable to manage disagreements effectively, leading to prolonged conflicts and eventual instability.

**Research Question Four:** What social support systems exist for couples experiencing marital crisis in Oregbeni community?

**Table 4.5: Quantitative Analysis of Respondents on Social Support Systems for Couples in Marital Crisis in Oregbeni Community (N = 381)**

| Question                                                                                        | Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------|----------------|
| 1. Do families/extended relatives provide support during marital crises?                        | Yes      | 233       | 61.2           |
|                                                                                                 | No       | 148       | 38.8           |
| 2. Are religious institutions (churches/mosques) actively involved in resolving marital issues? | Yes      | 276       | 72.4           |
|                                                                                                 | No       | 105       | 27.6           |
| 3. Do community elders and traditional leaders intervene in cases of marital breakdown?         | Yes      | 201       | 52.8           |
|                                                                                                 | No       | 180       | 47.2           |
| 4. Are professional counsellors or social workers accessible to couples in Oregbeni?            | Yes      | 97        | 25.5           |

|                                                                                                   |     |            |            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------------|------------|
|                                                                                                   | No  | 284        | 74.5       |
| 5. Do you believe that the available social support systems are effective in reconciling couples? | Yes | 158        | 41.5       |
|                                                                                                   | No  | 223        | 58.5       |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                                                                      |     | <b>381</b> | <b>100</b> |

**Source: Fieldwork, 2025.**

The results in table 4.5 indicate that social support systems for couples experiencing marital crisis in Oregbeni community are largely informal, relying heavily on family, religion, and traditional authorities. A majority of respondents (61.2%) agreed that extended family members provide support in times of marital conflict. This aligns with the words of a 32-year-old married woman with secondary education who explained:

*“In this community, when a couple is fighting, the first people to step in are usually the man’s or woman’s relatives. They try to make peace, though sometimes they also take sides, which can complicate things.”*  
(Mrs gift, 32 years , married,2024/2025)

This suggests that while family intervention is common, it is not always neutral or effective. Religious institutions appear to play the most significant role, as 72.4% of respondents acknowledged churches and mosques as active in resolving marital issues. A 41-year-old male respondent with tertiary education stated:

*“Most couples here run to their pastors when they cannot agree. The pastor prays with them and counsels them. Many people believe it works better than going to the police or court.”* (Mr David, 41 years, graduate, married 2019/2025)

This underscores the trust placed in religious leaders as mediators, reflecting their influence in shaping community norms around marriage. Community elders and traditional leaders were also recognised as part of the support system, with 52.8% of respondents affirming their involvement. A 38-year-old female interviewee with primary education illustrated this role:

*“When matters get serious, elders in the village are called to sit both husband and wife down. They remind them of tradition and the shame of divorce. Sometimes it helps, sometimes it doesn’t.” Mrs blessing, 38 years , interviewee, married, 2025)*

This highlights how tradition serves as a moral framework for intervention, although its effectiveness depends on the willingness of couples to comply with cultural authority.

However, only 25.5% of respondents reported that professional counsellors or social workers are accessible in the community, suggesting a gap in formal, specialised support.

A 44-year-old man with postgraduate education lamented:

*“We don’t really have marriage counsellors here. People depend on pastors and family. But sometimes you need experts who know how to handle these things without bias (Mr Gabriel, 44 year, married, 2023/2025).”*

This reflects the limited presence of trained professionals and the reliance on informal systems that may not always offer objective or sustainable solutions.

Finally, when asked about the effectiveness of existing support systems, only 41.5% considered them effective, while a larger proportion (58.5%) believed they were not. This shows that while various forms of support exist, their outcomes are often mixed. The reliance on relatives, religious leaders, and elders provides immediate intervention, but the absence of accessible professional counselling reduces the overall effectiveness in addressing the root causes of marital crises.

#### **4.3 Discussion of findings**

The findings from this study demonstrate that socio-demographic factors such as age, education, and occupation are strongly associated with marital crises in Oregbeni community. More than half of the respondents (56.2%) admitted experiencing marital crises, with the highest prevalence among couples aged 21–30 years (36.9%) and 31–40

years (28.5%). These results highlight that younger and middle-aged couples face the greatest marital strain, largely due to adjustment issues, financial burdens, and family responsibilities. This observation supports the findings of Adeyemi and Olayinka (2018), who argued that marital instability is most common among younger couples still navigating economic and social pressures. Similarly, education and occupation were shown to influence instability. Couples with secondary (29.4%) and tertiary education (33.9%) were most vulnerable, confirming that formal education does not shield families from conflict. Instead, exposure to modern values, career competition, and shifting gender expectations may increase marital strain, consistent with Okorie (2019), who noted that education often redefines gender roles, sometimes creating friction in patriarchal societies. Occupation was equally revealing, as traders (24.1%) and civil servants (19.9%) reported the highest levels of crisis, reflecting the role of occupational stress and unstable income. These findings collectively confirm that age, education, and occupation shape the trajectory of marital stability in Oregbeni, much as Olusola and Adebayo (2020) found in their study of marital conflict in urban Nigeria.

Beyond socio-demographic determinants, the causes of marital instability were further interrogated. Financial difficulties (72.4%) and infidelity (78.2%) emerged as the most prominent drivers, closely followed by poor communication, family interference, and substance abuse. The prominence of financial strain as a destabilising force is not surprising, as previous research by Eke and Amadi (2017) identified economic hardship as the most common source of conflict among Nigerian couples. Respondents emphasised that when financial responsibilities are unmet or mismanaged, tension quickly escalates. Infidelity, which respondents overwhelmingly described as pervasive, confirms the assertion by Adegoke (2015) that marital fidelity remains a fragile institution in many Nigerian communities, especially where trust is eroded by suspicion

and lack of accountability. Communication breakdown and family interference further reinforce these dynamics. The testimonies from interviewees illustrate how silence, avoidance, and excessive parental influence undermine dialogue and autonomy in marital relationships are consistent with Obi and Igbinovia (2021), who stressed the cultural weight of extended family interference in South-South Nigeria. Substance abuse, acknowledged by 52.8% of respondents, adds yet another layer to marital strain, reflecting patterns highlighted by Idowu (2016), who linked alcoholism with intimate partner violence and family breakdown in Nigeria.

A central theme running through the findings is the critical role of communication and conflict-resolution skills. Nearly three-quarters of respondents agreed that poor communication contributes directly to marital instability, while 69.3% confirmed that conflicts often escalate due to weak conflict-management strategies. These results mirror the conclusions of Ajayi (2019), who argued that communication breakdown is not only a symptom but also a cause of marital discord. The testimonies from participants showed that shouting, silence, and even violence frequently replace constructive dialogue, illustrating the damaging normalisation of aggression in family life. This is consistent with findings by Okafor and Olaleye (2018), who observed that Nigerian couples often lack formal training in conflict-resolution, leaving many ill-equipped to handle disputes constructively.

Finally, the study established that while social support systems exist, they remain largely informal. Families, religious institutions, and traditional leaders are the main sources of intervention, with 61.2%, 72.4%, and 52.8% respectively acknowledging their roles. These informal systems provide immediate mediation but are sometimes biased and inconsistent. Professional counsellors and social workers were found to be largely absent,

with only 25.5% of respondents reporting access to them. This reflects the institutional gap in marital support services in semi-urban Nigerian communities. Similar findings were reported by Ogunyemi (2017), who noted that religious leaders are often preferred mediators in marital conflicts due to their accessibility and cultural legitimacy, though their methods are not always sustainable. The limited effectiveness of support systems, acknowledged by 58.5% of respondents, highlights the need for formal interventions to complement existing community-based efforts.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Summary of the Findings**

This study investigated the socio-demographic and socio-cultural determinants of marital crises in Oregbeni community, Edo State, using a mixed-methods approach. A total of 381 questionnaires were completely filled and retrieved, with an impressive response rate that provided robust quantitative evidence, complemented by in-depth qualitative interviews.

The findings from the first objective demonstrate that socio-demographic factors such as age, education, and occupation are strongly associated with marital crises in the community. More than half of the respondents (56.2%) admitted experiencing marital crises, with the highest prevalence among couples aged 21–30 years (36.9%) and 31–40 years (28.5%). This underscores that younger and middle-aged couples face the greatest marital strain, largely due to financial pressures, childbearing responsibilities, and adjustment to marital roles. Couples with secondary (29.4%) and tertiary education (33.9%) were found to be most vulnerable, showing that formal education does not necessarily shield families from conflict but can sometimes intensify it through shifting gender expectations and competition between spouses. Occupation was equally revealing, as traders (24.1%) and civil servants (19.9%) reported the highest levels of crisis, reflecting the pressures of unstable income and occupational stress.

The second objective identified the leading causes of marital instability in Oregbeni. Financial difficulties (72.4%) and infidelity (78.2%) emerged as the most prominent drivers, while poor communication (66.1%), family interference (61.7%), and substance abuse (52.8%) were also widely acknowledged. These findings affirm that material

deprivation, coupled with breaches of trust, intensify conflict within families. Respondents explained that when financial responsibilities are unmet, quarrels escalate easily, while infidelity was described as a deeply corrosive factor that erodes marital trust. Communication breakdown, family interference—especially from in-laws—and substance abuse further compound these tensions, highlighting the interplay of economic, social, and behavioural influences in destabilising marriages.

The third objective emphasised the critical role of communication and conflict-resolution skills. Nearly three-quarters of respondents agreed that poor communication contributes directly to marital instability, while 69.3% confirmed that conflicts often escalate due to weak conflict-management strategies. The findings revealed that quarrels are often handled through shouting, avoidance, or even violence rather than dialogue. This supports the observation that many couples lack the skills needed to resolve disputes constructively, leaving unresolved grievances to fester.

The fourth objective explored social support systems available to couples in crisis. Findings revealed that families, religious institutions, and traditional leaders remain the most relied-upon support networks, with 61.2%, 72.4%, and 52.8% respectively acknowledging their roles. These informal systems provide accessible and culturally acceptable mediation, though they are not always impartial or effective. Professional support such as social workers and marriage counsellors was found to be largely absent, with only 25.5% of respondents reporting access to them. This points to an institutional gap in formalised marital support services in the community. Furthermore, 58.5% of respondents acknowledged that the effectiveness of existing support systems is limited, underlining the need for structured interventions that integrate professional counselling with community-based support.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that marital crises in Oregbeni are shaped by a combination of socio-demographic realities, economic hardships, interpersonal weaknesses, and limited support structures. While community and religious institutions play important roles in offering mediation, the lack of formal support services perpetuates the vulnerability of couples. The study therefore highlights both the immediate social dynamics of marital instability and the broader structural gaps in support systems that require policy and professional intervention.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

This study has shown that marital crises in Oregbeni community are deeply rooted in a complex interplay of socio-demographic, socio-economic, and socio-cultural factors. age, educational attainment, and occupational status were found to significantly shape couples' vulnerability to instability, with younger and middle-aged couples, those with secondary or tertiary education, and individuals engaged in trading or civil service reporting the highest prevalence of conflict. These findings highlight that neither education nor economic activity automatically guarantees marital stability; rather, they may introduce new pressures linked to financial expectations, career demands, and changing gender roles.

The analysis further showed that the leading causes of marital instability are financial difficulties, infidelity, poor communication, family interference, and substance abuse. These issues resonate strongly with the everyday realities of couples in semi-urban Nigerian communities, where economic hardships combine with entrenched cultural practices to create a fragile marital environment. The persistence of communication breakdown and weak conflict-resolution strategies illustrates that many couples lack the

interpersonal skills necessary to address disputes constructively, leaving them vulnerable to escalation and prolonged tension.

While families, religious leaders, and traditional institutions serve as important support systems, their interventions are often inconsistent and sometimes biased. The absence of professional counselling and structured social work interventions leaves a critical gap in addressing marital crises systematically. The study therefore concludes that while informal support systems remain valuable, they must be complemented by formal structures that can provide impartial, sustainable, and professional guidance to couples in crisis.

In essence, marital instability in Oregbeni community cannot be attributed to a single cause but emerges from the intersection of demographic realities, financial stressors, interpersonal weaknesses, and insufficient institutional support. Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach that combines economic empowerment, communication training, community sensitisation, and professional intervention. By strengthening both informal and formal support systems, marital stability can be promoted, thereby enhancing family cohesion and social wellbeing in the community.

### **5.3 Contributions to Knowledge**

This study has made significant contributions to the understanding of marital crises within the socio-cultural context of Oregbeni community, Benin City, Edo State. First, it provides empirical evidence that socio-demographic factors such as age, education, and occupation are not just background variables but active determinants that shape the likelihood and patterns of marital instability. By identifying that younger and middle-aged couples, particularly those with secondary or tertiary education and those engaged

in trading or civil service, are most affected, the study enriches existing literature with a nuanced, community-specific perspective.

Secondly, the research highlights the multifaceted nature of marital instability by showing how financial difficulties, infidelity, poor communication, family interference, and substance abuse interconnect to fuel conflict within households. This multi-causal explanation contributes to knowledge by moving beyond singular explanations of marital breakdown and demonstrating how economic, cultural, and behavioural factors reinforce each other in semi-urban Nigerian settings.

Thirdly, the study has added to the discourse on conflict management and marital wellbeing by establishing the centrality of communication and conflict-resolution skills in sustaining stable marriages. The evidence that poor communication and weak conflict-management strategies exacerbate crises underscores the need to incorporate interpersonal skill-building into marriage preparation, counselling, and community sensitisation efforts. This is a critical contribution, as most prior studies have often prioritised structural factors without giving sufficient attention to relational dynamics.

Furthermore, the findings extend knowledge on social support systems by exposing the limitations of relying solely on informal mechanisms such as family elders, religious leaders, and traditional rulers in resolving marital crises. The revelation that professional counselling and social work services are largely absent in Oregbeni points to an institutional gap that requires urgent attention. By advocating for the integration of professional social workers into community and family conflict interventions, the study contributes new insights to both academic research and practical social policy.

Finally, this study has contributed methodologically by employing a mixed-methods approach that integrates quantitative data with in-depth qualitative insights. This approach ensured a holistic understanding of marital instability by capturing both statistical patterns and lived experiences of respondents. In doing so, the research offers a model for future investigations into family and social problems within local communities, demonstrating how mixed approaches can provide richer and more contextually grounded findings.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to address the issue of marital crises in Oregbeni community and similar socio-cultural contexts.

Firstly, there is an urgent need for sustained community-based education and sensitisation on marriage, focusing particularly on communication skills, conflict resolution, and the dangers of substance abuse. Pre-marital and post-marital counselling should be strengthened within the community, with the involvement of trained social workers and professional counsellors to equip couples with tools to manage challenges effectively.

Secondly, economic empowerment programmes should be prioritised for young and middle-aged couples, particularly traders and civil servants who reported the highest prevalence of marital instability. Microfinance initiatives, cooperative societies, and vocational training schemes could help reduce financial stress, which was identified as a major driver of marital crises. Addressing the economic dimension of family life will significantly reduce tensions rooted in financial insecurity.

Thirdly, the study recommends the establishment of a dedicated family and marital support centre within Oregbeni community, staffed with professional social workers, psychologists, and legal advisors. Such a centre would provide confidential counselling, mediation, and referral services, while also collaborating with religious and traditional institutions to harmonise cultural practices with professional interventions.

Fourthly, there is a need to regulate and streamline the roles of extended families in marital conflict mediation. While families and community elders remain influential, their involvement should be balanced with professional guidance to ensure fairness, objectivity, and the protection of couples' autonomy. Community sensitisation workshops could help reduce harmful interference while still valuing traditional structures.

Finally, further research should be encouraged to explore emerging dimensions of marital instability, including the influence of digital media, evolving gender roles, and urbanisation on family relationships. Such research will provide policymakers, social workers, and community leaders with updated knowledge to design context-specific interventions that address both cultural and modern drivers of marital crises.

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**APPENDIX I**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK**  
**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**REQUEST FOR YOUR COOPERATION IN COMPLETING THIS  
QUESTIONNAIRE**

I am a postgraduate student of the above named Institution and Department. I am currently carrying out a research on “Perception of the Socio-Cultural causes and Prevalence of Marital Crisis by the residents of Oregbeni Community, Benin City, Nigeria”.

In this regard, you have been duly selected as a member of the sample. I wish to appeal to you to kindly assist this study by sparing a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Please, be assured that your answers will be treated in strict confidence and used for the academic purpose only.

Thank you for your cooperation

Yours faithfully,

Rachael Osas Ebohon.

**APPENDIX II**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK**  
**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Section A: Personal Data of Research Participants**

1. Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐
2. Marital status: Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Separated ☐  
Others, please specify: .....
3. What was your age at last birthday? .....
4. What is your highest educational qualification? .....
5. How long have you live in oregbeni Community. 6 month-4 years ☐ 10 – 15  
years ☐ 16 – 20 years ☐ 21 years and above, 21 – 25 years ☐ 30 years and  
above ☐
6. What is your religion .....
7. What is your occupation/profession/position in your place of work? .....  
---
8. What is your ethnic  
group?.....

**Section B**

1. Please State What You Know About Marital Instability .....  
.....  
.....
2. Do you agree that marital instability is prevalent in oregbeni Community? Yes( )  
No( )

If yes please state the reason for your answer -----

3. Have you encountered or be involved with couples going through marital instability? Yes ( ) No ( )

If yes, please give reasons -----

4. What do you perceive marital instability as a serious social problem in your community? Yes ( ) No ( )

Please give reasons for your answer?-----  
-----

5 Please list what you perceive to be the 5 causes of marital instability in oregheni Community

(1)-----

----- (2)-----

----- (3)-----

-----

(4)-----

--

(5)-----

--

6. What do you perceive to be the consequences of marital instability in oregheni Community? (1)-----

-----

(2).....

(3).....

.....

(4).....

.....

(5).....

.....

7. What do you perceive to be the role of the society in the upsurge of marital instability in oregheni Community?.....

...

Do you Know anything about Social Workers ?Yes ( ) No( )

If yes, how do you think they can help in reducing the incidences of marital instability?  
-----

9. Do you think the structure of the society encourages marital instability? Yes ( ) No ( )

Please give reasons for your answer -----  
-----

10. Do you perceive the culture of oregbeni people directly or indirectly responsible for the prevalence of marital instability in this area? Yes ( ) No ( )

Please, justify your answer-----  
-----

11. Please suggest ways that marital instability can be reduced to the barest minimum?

-----  
--

12. Suggest ways you think social workers can help couples going through the trauma of marital instability

(a)-----  
-----

(b)-----  
-----

(c)-----  
-----

(d).....  
.....

(e).....  
.....

13. Do you think government is doing enough to help couples cope with the vagaries of marriage? Yes ( ) No ( )

Please Justify Your Answer.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX III**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK**  
**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY**  
**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**Section A: Personal Data of Research Participants**

1. Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐
2. Marital status: Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Separated ☐
3. What was your age at last birthday? .....
4. What is your highest educational qualification? -----
5. How long have you live in Oregbeni Community. 6 month-4 years ☐ 10 – 15 years ☐ 16 – 20 years ☐ 21 years and above, 21 – 25 years ☐ 30 years and above ☐
6. What is your religion -----
7. What is your occupation/profession/position in your place of work? -----  
-----
8. What is your ethnic group:.....
9. Please kindly explain what you know about marital instability?
10. In your opinion, what do you think are the causes of marital instability in oregbeni community?
11. What do you think are the causes of marital instability in your community?
12. As a community, do you play any role in the reconciliations of couples going through the travails of marital instability?
13. What you perceive to be the consequences of marital instability in your community?
14. How do think marital instability can be reduced to the barest minimum in your community?
15. Suggest ways you think social workers/social welfare officers can help couples going through the vagaries of marital instability in your community?