

**AN EVALUATION OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS OF
MARITAL STABILITY IN OREDO LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AREA, EDO STATE**

BY

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BENIN CITY**

NOVEMBER, 2025

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT
OF SOCIAL WORK, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF
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REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (B.Sc.)
DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK**

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CERTIFICATION

We hereby certify that this project work was carried out by **Okonkwo Chisom JUDE** with the Matriculation number **SSC2106104** of the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc. Honors) degree in social work.

Mr. Charles Mfon
(Project Supervisor)

Dr. H. E. Eweka
Head of Department

Date -----

Date -----

DEDICATION

To my parents Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Okonkwo for their love and for their support towards my education

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I give special thanks to God for His divine guidance and protection throughout my academic journey.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my supervisor, Mr. Charles Mfon, for his exceptional guidance, expertise, and unwavering support, which significantly contributed to the success of this project.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to the Head of Department of Social Work, Dr. H.E. Eweka for her valid efforts towards my academic success and to every lecturer in the department who has at one time or the other, contributed their quota in tutoring me throughout my stay in the university.

To my loving family, Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Okonkwo, and my lovely siblings Okonkwo Joy, Okonkwo Jennifer and Okonkwo Kenneth for standing by me all through my academic struggle. May God bless you all. To my dear friends, Mrs. Gladys Emuophe, Karo Emuophe, Johnlaw, Mrs. Ifeanyi Chika, Tobi, Jennifer Charity, sister Juliet Omas, Roseline, and Promise, I express my deepest gratitude for your constant encouragement, support, and prayers. Your contributions mean the world to me.

At this juncture, I wish to evoke the omnibus clause which asserts that your name was not mentioned in this segment does not in any way minimize your contributions to this research. I do not take it for granted and I pray God rewards you all accordingly.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to find out the the socio-economic determinants of marital stability in Oredo Local government area, Edo State. It was a descriptive research with emphasis on survey approach. Purposive sampling method was used to cover both Urban and Rural areas of study. Findings revealed that marital conflicts did exist. The results of the two hypotheses tested revealed that there were no significant differences in the causes of marital conflicts among couples based on level of education and length of marriage. In conclusion, the inevitability of conflicts in any form of marriage was established. To prevent or manage crisis therefore will depend largely on the mutual understanding of couples involved. Based on this conclusion, it is recommended that adequate provision be made for both preventive, remedial and rehabilitative counseling, interventions through different bodies such as government and non-governmental organizations {NGO's} for the married and prospective couples to enhance marital stability in our societies.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Marital stability, defined as the continuity of a marriage, is a fundamental pillar of society. It provides a stable environment for child development and fosters social cohesion (Ojukwu, Woko, & Onuoha, 2016). Historically, in many Nigerian communities, including those in Edo State, marriage was a collective affair, with extended families playing a significant role in mate selection and conflict resolution. However, recent trends such as urbanization, economic shifts, and changing cultural values have introduced new complexities, contributing to an increase in marital instability and divorce (Adegoke, 2010; Ojukwu et al., 2016). In Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State, these societal changes have created a pressing need to understand the factors that either strengthen or weaken the institution of marriage.

The socio-economic landscape is a crucial determinant of marital stability. Economic well-being, including income, employment, and financial security, has a direct impact on the quality of a marriage. Research indicates that financial stress, poverty, and unemployment can lead to conflict and tension between couples, ultimately increasing the likelihood of divorce (Ventura, 2025). Conversely, a high socioeconomic status is often associated with greater marital satisfaction and stability ((Lee, Lee, Volling & Grogan-Kaylor, 2022). Beyond economics, social factors like educational attainment,

age at marriage, family background, and cultural and religious beliefs also play a significant role. For instance, a disparity in educational levels between spouses can create a gap in values and communication, potentially leading to marital problems. Similarly, differences in cultural and ethnic backgrounds have been found to be a contributing factor to marital dissolution in Oredo Local Government Area (IIGD Publishers, 2024).

This study aims to evaluate these socio-economic determinants, providing a comprehensive analysis of how they influence marital stability within the specific context of Oredo Local Government Area. By focusing on this urban area, we can gain insights into the unique challenges and dynamics that married couples face in a rapidly evolving society.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

The rise in marital instability in Nigeria, as evidenced by increasing divorce rates, is a significant concern with far-reaching consequences for individuals, families, and the wider community. In Oredo Local Government Area, the family unit, traditionally the bedrock of society, is facing considerable strain. This instability leads to a host of problems, including emotional distress for couples, negative impacts on the psychological and academic well-being of children, and a weakening of the social fabric (researchClue.com, n.d.). While the general trend of marital instability is well-documented, a specific and in-depth understanding of the socio-economic factors

driving this phenomenon in Oredo LGA remains limited. Existing studies have often focused on a single aspect, such as communication or ethnicity, without a holistic examination of the complex interplay between economic and social variables. Therefore, there is a gap in the literature regarding a comprehensive evaluation of how factors like income levels, educational attainment, and changing social values collectively influence the stability of marriages in this specific location. This study seeks to bridge that gap by providing a detailed analysis to inform relevant interventions and support systems.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the socio-economic determinants of marital stability in Oredo Local Government Area, Edo State.

The specific objectives are to:

1. examine the influence of economic well-being (income and employment) on marital stability in Oredo LGA.
2. assess the impact of educational attainment on marital stability among couples in Oredo LGA.
3. determine the extent to which cultural and religious factors contribute to marital stability or instability in the study area.
4. find out the role of social workers in addressing socio-economic determinants of marital stability

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the influence of economic well-being on marital stability in Oredo LGA?
2. How does the educational attainment of spouses affect marital stability in Oredo LGA?
3. What role do cultural and religious factors play in determining the stability of marriages in Oredo LGA?
4. What are the roles of social workers in addressing socio-economic determinants of marital stability.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it provides both academic and practical insights into how socio-economic factors influence marital stability within Oredo Local Government Area, Edo State. Marriage is one of the most important social institutions, and its stability is closely linked to community well-being, child development, and social cohesion. By focusing on Oredo, which represents a diverse mix of urban and semi-urban populations with varying cultural, educational, and economic backgrounds, this study generates findings that are locally grounded yet broadly applicable to Nigerian society.

First, the study contributes to the academic literature by filling a contextual gap. While several scholars have explored marital stability from psychological or

cultural perspectives, relatively fewer studies have examined the socio-economic determinants of marital outcomes within Edo State. By highlighting how income levels, employment patterns, educational attainment, and housing conditions influence marital stability, the research enriches scholarly understanding and provides empirical evidence for localised marital studies in Nigeria.

Second, the findings will be valuable for policymakers and social planners. Marital instability has social costs, including increased rates of single parenting, poverty, and weakened child outcomes. Insights from this study will help government agencies, particularly the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in Edo State, design targeted interventions such as financial literacy programmes, vocational training, and marital counseling services that strengthen families. By linking socio-economic factors to marital outcomes, the study provides a foundation for evidence-based policymaking.

Third, the research is beneficial to religious and community leaders in Oredo. Churches, mosques, and traditional institutions play central roles in marital counselling and dispute resolution. With a clearer understanding of how socio-economic pressures contribute to instability, these leaders can develop more context-specific guidance and support systems for couples, thereby reducing conflicts and fostering long-term stability.

Fourth, the study holds significance for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in family development and gender empowerment. Many NGOs design programmes to support women, children, and vulnerable families, but often without a detailed empirical understanding of the socio-economic realities shaping marriage in Oredo. This study provides evidence that can guide programme design, ensuring that interventions address the root causes of marital instability rather than its symptoms.

Fifth, the study will be useful to couples and individuals themselves. By identifying socio-economic determinants that predict or undermine marital stability, the research offers couples the knowledge to anticipate challenges and strengthen their relationships. For example, understanding the link between unemployment and marital conflict can motivate couples to plan more effectively for financial sustainability before and during marriage.

Finally, the study contributes to sustainable development discussions. Stable families are linked to improved outcomes in education, health, and economic productivity, which align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), Goal 5 (Gender Equality), and Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities). By investigating the socio-economic conditions that promote marital stability, this research underscores the role of family life in broader social and economic development in Edo State and Nigeria at large.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study is delimited to an evaluation of the socio-economic determinants of marital stability, with a specific focus on married couples residing in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. The research will concentrate on three key determinants: economic well-being (income and employment), educational attainment, and cultural and religious factors. The study will not delve into psychological or individual personality factors, as these are beyond its scope. The data will be collected through a survey of a representative sample of married individuals within the specified geographical area.

1.7 Definition of Terms

The following terms are explained as used in context Socio-Economic Status (SES): This is a combined measure of an individual's or couple's position within society, determined by their income, education, and occupation

Education: can be defined as the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and character traits. It is a fundamental activity aimed at the transmission of culture, wisdom, and experience from one generation to the other

Occupation: An occupation is a person's regular work, profession, or job. It is the activity or set of activities that a person does to earn a living, often requiring specific knowledge, skills, or training.

Employment Status:

Income Level: This is the amount of money a couple earns from all sources

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Preamble

In order to locate the present research within the existing frame of knowledge and direct its focus, it is necessary to review the literature related to the issues being researched upon. The review is done under the following headings: the concept of marriage, in-laws' roles in marriage, the traditional concept of marriage, the Christian concept of marriage, the motivation for marriage, the concept of conflicts, types of conflicts, the causes of marital conflicts, the role of third parties in marital conflicts, the effect of conflicts on the couple, siblings and society, the counseling implication of marital conflict, constraints to effective family counseling in Nigeria and the need for marital counseling in schools, summary of the review and its bearing on the current study.

2.1 Conflicts and Marriage Relationship

Conflicts in human relationships and socialization among marriages have often resulted in distress, depression and even in diseases like sexually transmitted diseases, HIV or AIDS and in divorce and other forms of crises. How best can counseling methods help in resolving such issues? Is it possible for those involved in sour experiences as they interact to be given effective and resolving counseling means to assist themselves? From the beginning of creation, people have always had interest

in each other, in forms of human socialization such as friends, lovers, acquaintances and even as husbands and wives. The end results of such associations could be marriages, friendships, and groups of like minds, societies and nations who associate as a noble

folk. This practice could be as Mailumo (2018) succinctly puts:

1. Communities and organizations actually advertise for relationship
2. Nations offer citizenship to their members.
3. A man goes on his knees to propose to a woman for marriage and promise her heaven and earth and happy living thereafter.
4. People in different sweet human relationships pledge love. The Christian religion teaches that one must love even one's enemies to deserve the kingdom of God.

A manifestation of the value of association is in organizations' payment of benefits to dismissed staff except for extreme situations where victims forfeit everything. In the same vein, divorce attracts payment as part of disengagement benefits when a relationship turns sour. People suffer anger and pain when their cognitive ability fails in handling human relationship. There is no evidence to show that people will stop the search for each other either at individual or group level even as existing relationships are threatened. Mailumo (2018) explains that there is a magnetic force revolving round men and women, which if poorly managed, as regards

setting of poor moral standards or poor exchange of values of their performance and behavioural approach, could remain a source of problems in human relationship.

Most people have fallen victims of unacceptable circumstances. Examples are, people falling from high offices due to poor moral standards, issues of sexual harassment and the complex damaging effects of divorce on several segments of society are also common knowledge in this regard. Most of such processes and products of defective human relationship and socialization have given birth to cognitive methods in marital conflicts and management. How best these methods can be employed and achieved a desirable result for healthy psychological marital cohabitation

2.2 The Concept of Marriage and Family

The terms “marriage” and “family”, though difficult to separate, are not exactly the same. Nwoye (2019) posits that it is necessary to dichotomize the two words for the purpose of simplicity and understanding. Martison (2020) argues that there could be confusion in literature among the authorities due to the snail-shell relationship which exists between marriage and family. He further contends that the arrival of a child in a marriage makes the marriage and family two social systems operating under the roof at the same time as a subsystem of marriage and marriage as a subsystem of family.

Though the two terms (concepts) seem inseparable and are often used interchangeably, they possess features that mark them out as different. This is because the features of marriage as a heterosexual union of consenting adults cannot be said to be the same with family, which is basically a social grouping that has people who are either consequently and conjugally related or both ways related.

Oyedepo (2017) contends that the concept of marriage was instituted in the Garden of Eden by God. Making reference to the Holy Book, the Bible, she quotes from Genesis 2:8 as follows, “And Lord God planted a garden in the eastward of Eden and there He (God) puts a man and a woman He had formed”. Following the Biblical injunction, the concept of marriage started from the beginning of man. However, the theory of evolution antagonizes this argument. Roels (2017) concedes that God arranges from the very beginning the institution of marriage. That is, one man and one woman are arranged to come together in faith and love. Notwithstanding, the forms of marriage in the contemporary world seem to vary from the marriage between Adam and Eve, as the Bible and its adherents maintain.

David (2018) asserts that marriage is a legal union between a physically mature man and a physically mature woman within a cultural setting and within the prescribed norms of such a society.

The concepts of marriage and family vary from culture to culture and society to society. However, it may be contended that the union of a man and a woman all

over the globe involves sex and procreation. Hornby (2020) defines the term “marriage” as a legal union of a man and a woman as husband and wife. This, which represents the English definition of marriage, has been mirrored outside culture and custom, hence the definition is purely a linguistic one devoid of ethical connotations. The concept of marriage and family attracts many experts from all walks of life. Festy (2018) views marriage as a cohabitational union of man and woman. It appears he views marriage as a social system, which operates under one roof. In the same vein, Undiyaundeye (2020) sees marriage as a statutory expectation of a young man and woman who are supposed to pledge their love for each other to live as husband and wife under marriage ordinance.

Marriage is something deeper than the mere union of a man and a woman under the same roof. Nwoye (2019) perceives marriage as a sacred and a permanent contract which is assumed to be enacted when two people decide on their own accord and in the presence of at least two witnesses to exchange the formal consent to live a life of vocation of love and sharing for the purpose of promoting their mutual growth and welfare as persons in their journey together through life. Nwoye (2019) has identified permanence and sanctity in the institution of marriage. In the utopian world, the term “Marriage” hinges as reflected in the term, on love, “For better, for worse”, a ritual type of phrase on the altar among the couples. None of the people involved envisages conflicts and dissatisfaction at the beginning. The words “permanent” and

“love” lure the Christians, Muslims and cultural settings to guarantee the procreation and sustenance of family within the institution of marriage.

The concept of marriage institution has been viewed by Beattie (2019) as something deeper and more concrete than a mere legal sexual union between a man and a woman. In this view, the offspring within the marriage circle are actually forming a subsystem within the marriage, hence the concept of family. Gomwalk (2017) contends that in a marriage contract, a certificate is issued to the man and woman who are involved in this contract of marriage union. Gomwalk (2017) must be referring to the Church and Court marriages alone, ignoring the traditional customary marriage where certificates are not issued before the contract is made between the spouses among the elders and families of the spouses.

In the African context, marriage is one of the most important occasions in one’s life. The other occasions are one’s birthday and one’s day of demise. Of course, a new-born baby does not know what is happening nor is the dead person aware of anything. The most exciting day in African context is the very day one marries. Marriage, therefore, is not a private affair. It involves the families, the kith and kin of the intending couples, including the community at large. Onyejiaku (2017) points out that marriage is so exciting that the road cannot be all roses just as a coin has two phases. In the garden of love, as one adage describes the situation of the newly married couples, the other side of the coin is not envisaged.

Moss and Gingles (1965) posit that the marriage of young people may not be strictly accepted as marriage; rather it could be co-habiting since certain rites and or ceremonies that legitimize marriage are absent. This is to say that not all unions are marriages. In the study area, such “marriages” are not uncommon and are often caused by pregnancy as young people get themselves involved in love relationships. This situation has serious implications for the adolescent parents whose education is often truncated, especially the girl who would have to remain at home to give birth and take care of the child. Some marriages are therefore not properly constituted and may not be considered marriage in its strictest sense. Some marriages procreate while others do not; hence while some unions end up only as marriages, others become families (Sprey, 1972).

Sprey (1972) also contends that “Marriage, after all, continues well beyond one hundred game trials; for it is a relationship; one of the very few in our culture that is supposed to last”. Taking marriages as a game of which only a few are meant to last is contrary to the religious and cultural views of marriage in terms of permanency. Marriage is supposed to be in existence till death separates the spouses and not a game of trial or temporary situations, especially in the African and Christian traditions. Guillemo (1983) opines that marriage is a compromising union of man and woman which poses developmental life cycle tasks that require individuals to address issues of intimacy and reciprocity. One may share the idea of compromising. The married

people have to compromise as they continue to reciprocate each other in the cohabitation.

Baseden (1966) points out that marriage is a social institution in which a man and woman are bound to stay together as husband and wife under a recognized constitution. This view of marriage may be vague in most African societies since it is not forever and there is no blue print as regards to the customary marriages in Africa.

However, Denga (2018), advises that there is much need for marital adjustments among the couples in order to maintain stability in marriage and family cycle. Denga's research on marriage stability sees the term "marriage" as a game of discovery which continues till death does the spouses part or breakdown may come due to the inability of the partners to adjust to each other's way of living and prevailing circumstances beyond their control. Family is seen as a continuation of marriage, which comes as a blessing to the marriage, but not the initial purpose of marriage. The initial purpose of marriage is love-sharing and companionship among the married couples, which motivates people to marry.

2.3 In-Laws' Role in Marriage

In-laws in marriage relationship refers to the relatives one acquires through marriage. These in-laws are relatives of either the husband or wife. Those who constitute in-

laws in this context are parents and siblings of the couples. In a large group, members of extended family, for example, nieces, nephews, cousins, and grandparents are also regarded as in-laws. The desire to have a home makes a young man and a young woman to come together as husband and wife. Evans-Pritchard (2017) notes that among the Nvers of the Northern Sudan, a young man talks of a home with reference to his family of procreation. The moment one leaves home to marry, something happens to the bond that holds parents and child, because a child remains emotionally attached to his or her parents for life. Freud (2019) and Undie (2018) point out that parents often get involved in arranging their children's marriages to help the children overcome this attachment.

The fact that parents are involved in the marriage negotiation and the subsequent innate desire to help their children settle down quickly, lead to intrusion into the privacy of the couple, which could occasionally cause misunderstanding. Shyrack (2017) opines that: although parents' intrusion may cause strife in the home, these in-laws are often unaware that their presence is causing someone pain, some may claim objectivity in their intrusion in the couple's marital life feeling that it is their legitimate rights to interact with their children Undie (2018). As the in-laws interact with the young couples, problems such as jealousy, bad socio-cultural practices and negative attitudes to infertility and all-female children could emanate or be aggravated.

2.4 Infertility

When a man gets married, the anticipation by family members is having children in the nearest possible time. As the marriage progresses if there is no sign of pregnancy, worries set in for the couples; the period of waiting for pregnancy is a time of anxiety and unsolicited advice and suggestions from relatives and friends. The woman who is unable to become pregnant is the focus of discussion by the in-laws. The in-laws never care to know who is the cause of the barrenness but would simply accuse the woman either of infidelity, teenage abortion or witchcraft. The woman is called names and the man would be asked to look for another wife for he was “marrying a man”. Society appreciates fecundity; anyone who falls short of achieving this aim encounters enormous difficulties in marriage. The problem of barrenness is especially excruciating in polygamous homes. Hannah the wife of Elkana in the Bible suffered most humiliating experience annually at Shiloh (1 Samuel Chapter 1& 2:1-21). Njoroge (2017), is of the view that a childless woman is not only just tormented by co-wife/wives but also by the extended family members, especially the in-laws.

2.5 Socio-Cultural Practices

Some cultural practices in the society breed problems between the in-laws and the couple. One of such practices is giving of names to children. If a child is given a name without the consent of the parent in-laws, hell is let loose. More daring is the idea of giving out a child into marriage without consulting the in-laws who are the

grand parents or uncles of the would-be wife or husband involved. Gentui (2017) reasons that names play a significant role for the individual and the society. In the Nigerian context and the world over, a woman after marriage is expected to change her father's name and adopt her husband's family name. This change, she maintains, has many implications. One of these is loss of identity. If the woman refuses to oblige to this change, she is seen as uncompromising and not good enough a wife. Gentui (2017) believes that a woman should be seen in her own capacity as a person, and not in terms of her marital status. When these issues are given much credence by in-laws, they make it difficult for the young couples to live an adjustable life in marriage.

From all that has been mentioned, it is noted that in-laws, most often, see only the negative aspects of their sons or daughter in-laws. It would have been most beneficial to their children if they appreciated the virtues of their in-laws and de-emphasized the little faults since no human being is faultless. In-laws should learn to accommodate new members of their family and give them the opportunity to learn in marriage. Daughter-in-laws should also learn not to listen to gossips in order to live peacefully with their in-laws. It is only when young couples resist the influence of neighbours and friends' tales about in-laws that they can truly appreciate them and have a better judgement of their ideas. If, on the other hand, in-laws appreciate the positive sides of their children's marriage, it would be more beneficial to even the continuity of the family (Obe 2018).

2.6 The Christian Concept of Marriage

Christianity came with the establishment of schools and churches. The church doctrine on marriage stipulates that in marriage only two are united and joined by bond of marriage. Christ taught more on this when referring to these words as being uttered by God “so they are no longer two but one” (Matt.19:6). He immediately confirms the stability of the bond which was proclaimed long ago in the scripture: “What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (Matt. 19:6).

According to Lewis (1985), unity and indissolubility are considered the most essential properties of marriage and the natural aims of marriage become impossible when unity is destroyed in any marriage relation existing between couples. This can be caused by polygamy or polyandry or when permanence is removed through divorce, the unity and dissolubility cannot be justified on the basis of the sacramental nature of the reality: they are in the first place, founded on the anthropological characteristics of marriage as such bridegroom give and received each other, has in itself an inner tendency towards definitiveness and exclusiveness, Gangwari (2017). The person who gives himself or herself to another no longer belongs to himself or herself but the other. The marital bond of faithfulness is therefore, on the basis of its inner being, disposed to be definitive and exclusive.

Unity then means “an exclusive and total union between man and one woman”. Gangwari (2019) explains that: Unity means the marriage is between one man and

one woman. It means that the man or the woman cannot marry another person, as the marriage must be between a man and a woman and not a man marrying a man or woman marrying a woman. The contending refers thus: marriage is designed to be practiced exclusively by one man and one woman. God intends monogamy to be the rule in marriage not polygamy or polyandry. Washikda (2017) holds that the unity of marriage, distantly recognized by our Lord, is made clear in the equal personal dignity, which must be accorded to a husband and wife in mutual and unreserved affections. Once the marital bond is lawfully and validly established, it is permanent and cannot be broken by any human authority (civil or ecclesial) except death. Absolutely, Canon 1141 of the new Code declares: “A marriage which is ratified and consummated cannot be dissolved by any human power or by any cause other than death. This law includes other Christians who are validly baptized when marriages contracted among themselves are ratified (unions). When a ratified marriage is subsequently consummated sexual intercourse performed in a human manner, the union becomes absolutely indissoluble.

In line with the traditional concept of marriage, the second Vatican Fathers proclaimed that: “marriage and married love are by nature ordered to the procreation and education of children”. Indeed, children are the supreme gift of marriage and greatly contribute to the good of the parents themselves. God himself said “it is not good that man should be alone (Gen. 2:18) and from the beginning he made them

male and female” (Matt. 19:4). Wishing to associate them in a special way with his creative work he charged them, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28). Without intending to underestimate the order end of marriage, it must be said that true married love and the whole structure of family life which results from it is directed to disposing the spouse to cooperate valiantly with the love of the creator and saviour, who, through them, will increase and enrich his family from day to day.

The conscious exclusion of children by the spouse in their marital union is sinful in the eyes of the church. Tagwana (2018) observes that heterosexual relationship within a marriage is a legitimate means through which couples express their love for each other. Nevertheless, it should at the same time be open to procreation which is the natural consequence of the union. Any sexual union devoid of the intention of procreation, reduce the gift of human sexuality to “mere sex”, a commodity of consumption, pleasure and exploitation. Ayuba (2017) who conducted a research interview with Muva tribe of Adamawa, again posits that Christian marriage fulfills the essential elements of the mutual well-being of the spouses. It presupposes co-habitation and embraces companionship, love, affection, control, mutual help and sexual union. The selfless and reciprocal self-giving of couples to each other promotes their natural spiritual well being. It is the intimate communion of life and love that guarantees the good of their children born out of the union.

However, the union does not depend solely on children to be sustained. Pope John Paul II, says even when children are not born of a marriage, the bond of togetherness should be equally strong enough to uphold the marriage. In fact, physical sterility may be indicative of a vocation to serve mankind in other social necessities. The second Vatican teaches that marriage does not lose value without procreation, though very important but can still be achieved. A marriage can be said to be successful if personal relationship of the spouse grows to maturity and perfecting each other. Unlike the customary marriage, Christian marriage is a sacrament with distinctive characteristics. Once contracted, it cannot be dissolved till death.

2.7 Age of Marriage and Occurrence of Conflict

The age of a marriage relationship comes from the time the couples celebrate their love life together either according the traditional, church, mosque or court doctrines. This relationship progresses from one stage to another until they part to see no more. Marriage has three stages during a couple's lifetime. These are: (1) the beginning stage (2) the expanding stage (3) the contrasting stage.

At the beginning of a marriage love is usually predominant and conflict may not come in much except in the area of understanding with each other in the area of some lapses by either of them before the marriage like stepchildren's interference in their love affairs. Ume (2010) observes that changing trends in the family formation may change the couple's ways if not properly handled by the couples.

The influence of family values has a part to play here. The review of existing evidence on conflict handling in marital relationship depends largely on what each person wants and the orientation therein. The orientation on what the couple's expectations are provides a soft ground for their landing and adjustment. This affects the positive or negative way of handling and resolving conflicts as they come either to expunge or linger on, leading them to a bad position in the family interaction. In agreement with the foregoing, Genda (2020) contends that couples' family and religious ties affect the behaviour towards being determined to make a success in a relationship whatever the stress they perceive. Marital stability is presumed to be linked to perceptions of the fairness of the marital relationship.

2.8 The Motivation for Marriage

The idea of love-sharing and the need for companionship (since man is a gregarious being) motivate many people to marry. However, a good number of spouses enter the marriage contract without proper aims. This view is supported by Guzzo (2020) and Sadeghian et al. (2025), who noted that some people enter the marriage contract without rational and realistic expectations, which may later be thwarted, hence leading to marital disputes.

Thus, Guzzo (2020), Sadeghian et al. (2025), and Okoye and Ugwu (2024) contend that many men and women enter marriage with confused ideas and

expectations and with a self-centered focus. Guzzo (2020) and Okoye and Ugwu (2024), for instance, argue that when these misconceived expectations are not fulfilled, marital conflicts—often culminating in marital breakdown—surface in such unions. In their own contributions, Bagarozzi and Reuben (2017) and Mouris (2020) point out that some couples are motivated more by romantic and erotic notions than by a critical examination of the personalities of those they intend to marry.

One observes in the study area that some young men and women are triggered into marriage by material wealth, and when these expectations are not met, marriage problems emerge, which may result in divorce. Similarly, some adolescents are motivated to marry by infatuation, which does not amount to genuine love; when this temporary attraction fades away, problems arise in the relationship. In line with this, Etta (2020) observes that marriages based on “cupboard love” are prone to dissolubility as against the indissolubility emphasized in canon law.

Recent research further suggests that developmental pressures and socio-emotional stresses can push adolescents into premature marriages without clear intentions or adequate preparation (Mouris, 2020; Sadeghian et al., 2025). High sexual drive among adolescents, particularly males, has been noted as one factor that lures some into early unions that they are not truly prepared for. This underscores the importance of marriage counselling beginning not only in schools but also within the family, with parents guiding their children about the consequences of indiscriminate

sexual relationships, especially regarding health and social risks (Okoye & Ugwu, 2024).

In this regard, Mallum (2018) succinctly presents the following as the primary motives for most marriages in Africa: companionship, procreation, assistance, social requirements/expectations, and self-actualization. Among these, companionship remains critical for social existence and effective interpersonal symbiosis. As Sadeghian et al. (2025) emphasize, companionship and intimacy serve as psychological lubricants for peaceful coexistence in marriage.

Procreation also stands out as a statutory expectation within African traditional settings, reflecting cultural continuity and fulfilling divine injunctions. Ayaliwhu (2018) and the Oxford Research Encyclopedia (2024) maintain that childbirth is often the paramount reason for marriage in African societies. However, this expectation, if not managed properly, may create pressure, anxiety, and suspicion between spouses, sometimes escalating into conflict.

2.9.3 Assistance

Couples, as a matter of fact, need each other's assistance. It could be financial or otherwise. If two people are living together as spouses, they rely on each other for survival. There could be division of labour for life to move forward. The wife takes care of the flaws of the husband and vice versa, (Oyedepo, 1988).

2.9.4 Social Requirements/Expectations

The society expects that every grown up adult man or woman should get married when of age. Based on this premise, Agim (2018) believes, any adult man or woman who is of age to marry and has refused to do so need not be given a post of responsibility since he or she has not gone through the test of facing social responsibilities.

2.9.5 Self-Actualization

An individual's aim of survival is self-actualization and self-fulfillment. Obe (2018) contends that one of the achievements of a successful married man or woman is self-actualization. People who are married make a conscious attempt to contribute their best quota to achieve maximum positive returns on output as they share their lives together.

One of the best ways of selecting a life partner is through courtship. So, parents, religious leaders or marriage counselors should give adequate information on courtship, especially during premarital counseling of intending couples.

2.10 Premarital Counseling and Marital Stability

Premarital counseling provides a couple with opportunity to dig up any potential pitfalls that could hinder their marriage from lasting a lifetime. It causes people to consider and discuss things that would increase the likelihood of the success of their marriage as noted by Baker (2015). Usually couples enter marriage with predetermined ideas on how conflict should be handled, the way money should be

managed, and how religious issues should be addressed, how many children they should have, and what it means to love someone. Pre-marital counseling then offers expert suggestions on how to handle all these issues (Shumm et al., 2010). Premarital counseling is as old as man himself, as all societies around the world offer counseling services of some sort before and during marriage relationship (Futris et al., 2011). They see premarital counseling as a form of advice that benefits couples who are planning to married.

Premarital counseling is not a form of therapy according to Futris et al. (2011); it is couples' education on skills that they will need to support them in having a happy, healthy and lasting marriage. It helps couples identify and communicate about their fears, desires, beliefs, values, dreams, needs, and other issues that would be avoided and never be discussed without premarital counseling (Marang'a, 2013). Individuals, who take part in premarital counseling compared to those who do not go through premarital counseling, tend to have a happier marriage. According to Kepler (2015), there is a 40-50% chance of divorce among couples who do not go through premarital counseling. He posited that premarital counseling either secular or faith-based has a goal of supporting marriage to endure life challenges.

A research done by Farnam, Pakgohar and Mir-Mohammadali (2011) among 200 couples in Ireland found premarital counseling education to have a significant effect on marital satisfaction. This argument concurs with Kepler (2015) who argued

that premarital counseling education has a significant effect on marital satisfaction. However, he emphasized that in order for such classes to be effective the educators must pay close attention to participants' needs, demands and problems. Farnam et al. (2011) highlighted aspects of premarital counseling as family planning, personal health, sexuality, and communication and conflict resolution skills. Results from a research done by Yoo & Bartle (2012) suggest that empowering couples with effective communication skills enhances their emotional stability and increases sexual intimacy which more often than not increase their marital satisfaction. Carol and Doherty (2014) concur with Yoo & Bartle (2012) as she argues that premarital education is effective in enhancing quality communication. It equips couples with conflict management skills which enhances quality relationships.

The goal of premarital counseling flows directly from the purpose of marriage which is fellowship, companionship, mutual respect and good communication as revealed by a research done by Wilmoth and Smyser's (2010) among 2010 religious churches in Mississippi State University. Their research findings support Adler (1931) findings as quoted by Wilmoth and Smyser (2010) who suggests that marriage is not merely an action taken by two people but also involves a connection of the past with the future. Kepler (2015) also highlighted that the primary goal of premarital counseling includes a shift from singlehood to married life which require development of communication skills, increase to marital stability and satisfaction so

as to enhance the companionship and intimacy between the couple. The goal of premarital counseling according to Kiuna and Kiuna (2012) is to establish cooperation relationship not only for the good of the couple but for the wellbeing of all connected to couple's lives.

The key emphasis in Adlerian theory is empowering couples with problem solving skills to help them prevent problems later in marriage (Kepler, 2015). According to Wilmoth & Smyser (2010), pastors who employ premarital assessment questionnaires (PAQs) are more likely to prepare couples better for marriage compared to those who do not use such assessment tools. According to their study only 29.1% of the 2010 counselors' use (PAQs). The finding suggests that a large majority of clergy do not use assessment or instruments that are appropriate for premarital education.

Schumm et al. (2010) found out premarital counseling quality was strongest predictor of successful premarital outcome in a religious setting. They continued to say that length of premarital counseling is variable. They highlighted that one session is not enough and they proposed eight to nine sessions. The content covered in most premarital counseling session includes communication, commitments, conflict resolutions, egalitarian roles, sexuality, personality issues and finances. While the discussed literature has highlighted a lot benefits of premarital counseling, eleven benefits stood out: improved communication, better handling of marital mistrust,

competent ways of handling in-laws, enhancement of marital satisfaction, reduced divorce rate, enhancement of intimacy, conflict management skills, handling of issues related to family of origin issues, personality issues, management skills, finance management and long-term goals setting.

2.10.1 Premarital Counseling and Effective Communication among Couples

Communication in marriage is vital for a happy marriage. Without good communication, all advice in the world is likely to fail to help rebuild a bad marriage relationship. Communication according to Kiuna and Kiuna (2010) is the key to unlock marital problems. Couples must communicate with one another in ways that reveal their deepest feelings and their underlying needs in order to establish fulfilling relationships (Sauerheber & Bitter, 2013). Communication either good or bad affects whatever goes on between humans. It can be through words, verbal or written; non-words-symbols, sounds, or silence, facial expressions-jeers or smiles; touches-nurturing touch or lack of touch, playful touch, or coercive touch; and/or a combination of these elements in recurrent pattern (Yoo & Bartle., 2012).

Positive communication is one of the characteristics of a stable marriage and family according to Kiuna and Kiuna (2010). However, communication does not always equal to agreement among couples and families. Family members have differences and conflicts, but if they speak directly and honestly about them without blaming each other, their relationship is likely to remain intact. Dysfunctional

marriages or families on the other hand, are either overly critical or hostile in their communication with each other or deny problems and avoid verbal conflict. Although verbal hostilities are not productive, neither is avoidance of problems. Futris et al. (2011) research reveal that communication in healthy marriages and families has several benefits, for example partners good listening skills and humour. Humour is a characteristic of positive family communication and a healthy marital relationship. It involves the ability to pay attention to what others are thinking and feeling. Communication is not just talking, but listening to what others have to say (Tambling & Glebova, 2013). Honest communication that is open creates an atmosphere of love and admiration for one another that allows family members to express their differences freely. It is through communication that couples can resolve the unavoidable problems that arise in some marriages.

Poor communication is found in unhealthy family relationships just as effective communication is found in healthy families. Poor communication is a common complaint of families who have difficulties in sustaining their marriages as often reported by marriage and family therapist (Tambling & Glebova, 2013). Poor communication is usually indirect and unclear that can lead to numerous family problems that include, frequent family conflict, lack of intimacy, weak emotional bonding and ineffective problem-solving strategy. Shumm et al. (2010) argues that

premarital counseling can be a good way of helping couples become aware of areas of incompatibility such as values, life goals and ways of dealing with conflicts.

Ineffective communication can also give birth to mistrust in relationships. According to Miller et al. (2014), marital suspicion appears to underlie many social interactions, it accounts for the stability or dispute of a wide variety of human relationships therefore it is not surprising that it is present among married couples. Suspicion in marriage is the act of suspecting something, especially something wrong, with one's spouse on little evidence or without proof. Misunderstandings among couples encourage the seeds of emotional suppression according to Miller, et al (2014). Flirting 'harmlessly' with people of the opposite sex, having lunch or drinks after work with members of the opposite sex, discussing your work problems, sharing jokes and gossip with colleagues or friends of the opposite sex but not with your partner can lead to marital suspicion which can easily breaks the bond of marriage just as adultery does (Miller et al., 2014). Premarital counseling empowers spouses with suspicion thoughts on how to communicate and discuss it and the two works to out the way forward (Marang'a, 2013)

2.10.2 Premarital Counseling and Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction according to Farnam et al (2011) is the individual happiness with marriage that depends on intra-personal concepts. Often religion serves as a great resource for couples to achieve marital satisfaction (Duba et al., 2012;

Ellison et al., 2010; Mahoney, 2010). Wilmoth and Smyser (2010) argue that marriage preparations improves marital satisfaction as it increases one's commitment to his or her spouse which is associated with lower rate of divorce. Kepler (2015) concurs with this argument as he stated that marital dissatisfaction can lead to divorce and can affect people of all ages, race and culture. Premarital counseling decreases marital dispute . According to Tambling and Glebova (2013), many states in the United State of America offer counseling programs for couples who wish to be helped however services are not utilized despite their availability. One possible reason of not using the services is that the programs are not trusted by the couples to meet their needs. Marital satisfaction also demands that couples enjoy intimate sexual satisfying relationships.

Sex related subjects addressed during premarital counseling are most helpful topics because intimacy in any marriage is paramount. According to Farnam et al. (2011), sex provides intimacy, closeness and bonding when couples have been too busy to make love for extended periods of time, they can feel a mysterious relational distance. Since the topic of sex is generally taboo in Africa, it is often ignored however; this topic in the context of marriage has been accepted and it should provide couples with a platform to discuss practical things like sex and birth control. Many new couples are blind-sided when they first enter into a sexual relationship. A sense

of trust and being accepted, being pursued and desired are important factors in marriage relationship.

According to Kepler (2015), factors behind marriage failures includes, lack of communication, disagreements on child-rearing styles, infidelity, expectation differences, lack of commitments, employment and finance management issues among others. Ability to effectively communicate is fundamental in any relationship because it guarantees that couples understand one another. Futris et al. (2011) cited that, couples who participate in premarital counseling experience greater level of marital satisfaction and are unlikely to get divorced. They also tend to have fewer negative interactions and experience high level of pleasure in their marriage and less negative interactions.

Another test of conflict resolution skills among married couples is the extent to which they can handle in-laws' interference. In-laws consist of relatives, especially the parents of one's husband or wife. In-laws are generally perceived as "enemies" by many couples, because some of them deliberately and most times, unnecessarily interfere with their children families (Kepler, 2015). Except in a few cases, many couples would rather keep their in-laws at a distance. But, as much as many couples would want to, the extended family practice in the African culture may not permit it. However, the Bible in Genesis 2:24 and Mark 10:7-8 say that 'a man and woman must leave their parents and cleave to one another becoming one' and thereby create a

new family. This new family is not an extension of the parental family. From the biblical point of view, it is a new unit, which often contradicts the traditions of the society. However, in-law relationships often described as ambiguous, and this ambiguity stems from the fact that couples belong to three different families: the new family the couple has started plus both partners' families of origin. As a result, in-law relationships often cause hostility and stress between spouses who have emotional and psychological loyalties to their families. Premarital counseling is likely to help the young partners to shift their loyalties from parents to each other.

Usually, if there is an in-law problem and the husband's family is controlling, then it is the husband (with support from his wife) who needs to lay down boundaries for his family. In like manner, if it is the wife's family that is controlling, it is the wife's responsibility (with support from her husband) to lay down boundaries for her family. Regardless of which set of in-laws the interference comes from, it is an assault upon the sanctity of the marriage outlined in the Bible. As such couples, who allow their parents to interfere with their marriage, are not living up to their responsibility to love and protect each other. In-laws are not the final arbiters of the relationship however; the husband and wife are. A couple therefore has a right to privacy and when that privacy is violated, they have the responsibility to see to it that it is protected. In-laws do not have an inalienable right to suggest on how their children's marriage should be conducted. Kepler (2015) posited that premarital counseling has

proved helpful in managing in-laws' issues; it equips couples with problem solving skills to enable them handle marriage problems including in-laws.

Additionally, while some couples are able to work through their issues more effectively others find it impossible leading to divorce. Dew and Huston (2012) posited that, disagreements and poor communication style are both contributors of divorce. This is specifically true when couples are disagreeing about finances (Dew & Huston, 2012). In addition to communication, financial issues have been research focus however it is still under studied compared to the influence that everyday finances have on family life. Studies have disclosed that financial issues are significant predictors of divorce (Amato & Rogers, 2018; Britt & Huston, 2012; Dew & Huston, 2012). When spouses are incapable of resolving contrasting, money demands or has conflicting goals for spending or saving, disagreements tend to arise. Husbands and wives report that their financial arguments are more difficult to solve, they last longer, and are more significant to them than other types of disputes (Britt, and Huston, 2012). There is evidence to suggest that money disputes between spouses are correlated with a reduction in marital gratification (Dew & Huston, 2012). Transition from engagement period to marriage also known as courtship requires premarital counseling. It is very important for the success of marriage and has been found to be effective (Li et al., 2015)

2.10.4 Premarital Counseling and Marital Stability

A person's family of origin is the foundational piece of who they are according to Duba et al (2012). Very often families have rules, expectations, patterns, taboos and protocols that even family members are not aware of. Therefore, by creating a genogram during premarital counseling with a therapist, a method of mapping a client's family holistically; not simply a genealogy, can shed a great deal of light on how one's family operates, and provides insight into the couple by preparing them on how to relate with their spouses. Premarital counseling includes conversations about family's unique upbringing. Even though couples usually try to avoid the negative cycles they have experienced in their own families, the effect is usually felt. Anxiety, depression, anger, fear and recurrent relationship problems are often tied up in unresolved issues from the past. However, premarital counseling help couples with skills to deal with their old wounds and successfully re-adjust their lens on life.

2.11 Review of Empirical Literature

The Concept of Marriage

The institution of marriage is a central pillar on which the society is build. Marriage involves the living together of, or a partnership between, two or more persons who are relatively strangers to each other (Karina, 2011). As a powerful legal and social institution, marriage protects and supports intimate family relationships by providing a unique set of rights, privileges and responsibilities. It represents multi-

level commitments, one that involves person-to-person, family-to-family, and the couple (Kepler, 2015).

Biblically and in almost all societies, marriage is viewed as a permanent bond, so much so that in some societies, it is virtually irrevocable (Bagarozzi & Sperry, 2012). The stability provided by a life-long promise of remaining together makes marriage the institution most suited to rearing and socializing the next generation of members, a necessary task if the society's norms, values, and goals are to be maintained and if the society itself is to be perpetuated (Vail, 2012).

In some societies, the connection between marriage and reproduction is so strong that if conception does not occur, a divorce is permissible and often automatic. In others, a marriage does not take place until after pregnancy occurs (Baker, 2015). Kepler (2012) describes a family as, an ordinary social system having unique properties of its own, including, roles, rules, forms of communication, a power structure and problem-solving skills that allow various tasks to be performed effectively and ways of negotiations. When marriages break down and fail to provide the healthy nurture that is needed, the impact is not only on the lives of the individuals, but also on communities; implying that everybody pays for unhealthy marriages.

A family system is more than the total of all its individual members. This means that one cannot know the family simply by knowing each person as an individual because each individual will behave differently outside the family (Strait et

al., 2015). People's behaviour is deeply influenced by their family background, and people are best understood by understanding their family. When an individual has a problem, not only does the family get affected but also the whole community gets involved in finding a solution. This argument concurs with a popular opinion that: "it takes a couple to bear a child but it takes a whole village to raise the child".

2.11.1 Premarital counseling and marital stability; Africa perspective

In the traditional African societies, young adults were taught how to be goodwives and husbands in preparation for getting married by their aunties and uncles. The young people were instructed on the expectations and roles in marriage. However, due to migration from rural to urban in search better lifestyles, industrialization, globalization and change of life, young people have no access to that kind of counseling. As, a result, there is need for professional counselors to enhance and where necessary to replace traditional practices (Ng'ang'a & Wasanga, 2010).

Africans are community-oriented people who tend to think and act on the basis of how their decisions will impact the community. As such, marriage and family takes a central part in the consciousness and the daily occupation of the African people. Each family in the community endeavours to instruct its young ones on the weighty matters of good marriage and family and how such matters influence directly or indirectly the well-being of both the immediate family and the larger community (Ng'ang'a and Wasanga, 2010). Traditionally, premarital education was given

through three major avenues namely: apprenticeship, simply watching others do something and then doing the same thing. Girls for example, learned how to cook, care for the babies, care for the home, and work in the farm by watching their mothers. Much of the girls' training for the responsibilities of marriage came through daily associations with their mothers while boys learned how to watch over their father's beehives on high trees, harvest honey, care for the domestic animals, hunt, and fish as they accompanied their fathers doing all these activities (Mbunga, 2010). The second avenue of preparation for marriage was actual teaching whereby grandmothers and aunties taught young girls in this regard. During meal times, girls ate food at their grandmothers' houses as they listened to teachings on life in general but more often than not, the lessons covered issues such marriage, fertility, sexuality, women's menses, families with whom they are related and should never marry, romance, choosing the right man for a husband, procedures for marriage such as how to care for their husbands and children, and how to maintain a marriage (Mbunga, 2010).

The third avenue for marriage preparation was during the initiation ceremonies. The initiation ceremony was the time when a girl became a woman and a boy became a man (Kunhiyop, 2008). The ceremonies gave young men and women the right to marry because they provided the final training required to enable persons to marry. The ceremony combined several procedures for both boys and girls, including the physical operation of circumcision, various tests of physical endurance,

teachings on how an adult man should care for his wife and family, and the performance of various rites and ceremonies. The girls, on their part, learned how to handle their husbands and home and what to do when they encountered misunderstandings and conflicts with their husbands and the new relatives. Parents, uncles, aunts, and grandparents functioned as counselors, keepers of family boundaries and peace keepers. Africans emphasize on good relationship-they believe it is needed not only between the two-young people who are intending to marry but between their families as well.

Hence, marriage in the African family system is not only between the two-young people who intend to marry, but between the families from which the individuals come from (Mbunga, 2010). The words of counsel to the young couple did not mean that the parents should dominate the new family, but that they should respect it and assist them where necessary so that their marriage would succeed (Karina, 2011). The counseling to the new couple by their parents showed first that a new family has been established, yet the new family remains part of the larger family, the community. This counsel clearly defined the responsibilities of husband and wife to one another as a subsystem within the extended family and also defined the boundaries of the families of origin and the larger community (extended family) and lists the responsibilities of the parents to continue caring for the new family. The boundary of mutual respect and friendship between the two families of origin was

mandated. All three parties-husband, wife, and parents were told to pursue the happiness and success of the new family. African traditional family counselors believed that prevention is better than cure and they began counseling instruction before marriage took place. Such instructions remained as lifelong guidance for the new family (Nga'ng'a & Wasanga, 2010)

In Kenya, the rate of divorce may not be as high as in some other western countries but has its own dreary picture. The institution of marriage is facing many challenges (Marang'a, 2013) and one the major challenges is marital dispute . As such, premarital counseling is a good avenue that can equip couples on how to deal with issues such as faith, tribe and racial differences (Mbunga, 2010). Basically, premarital counseling practices fall under three major models: the African traditional model, secular counseling model, which draws almost entirely from psychology and other humanistic disciplines, and the religious models, which include Christian, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. However, this research focuses on only Christian premarital models, specifically the model used in PCEA churches.

The church has diverse premarital counseling programs with programs differing on a number of important dimensions. According to Mbunga (2010), the differences ranges from the number of sessions taken, the qualifications of those who conduct the sessions, content given and the type of programs employed. In Christians premarital programs, Christian's principles and ideals taught are based on the Word of

God. The main problem with the Christian model used in PCEA churches is lack of a standardized curriculum that would ensure all the practitioners (Parish Ministers) are teaching similar ideas agreed upon and tested against the word of God and scientifically tested. This leaves every parish minister to use whatever material available in the name of Christian premarital counseling.

For example, all the clergy in Milimani presbytery uses different premarital manuals for pre-marital counseling. They then conduct the premarital counseling according to couple's needs. Some clergy builds their counseling on one question: Why do you want to get married to him or her, as their foundation hence the need to evaluate the effective of such uncoordinated practice and materials used in the Milimani South Presbytery churches.

2.12 The Concept of Marital Stability

Stability basically suggests the capacity to return to equilibrium or to the original position after having been displaced (Kepler 2015). This statement suggests an important notion of resilience which maintains and strengthens marriage, for the maximum self-support and personal independence. Farnam et al. (2011) cite parental mental health, stable relationships among couple and positive parenting as marks of marital stability. Characteristics of the home environment, such as warmth, emotional availability, family cohesion and harmonious day-to-day activities, have also been implicated as signs of marital stability. Theory of marital success versus failure

reflects a causal process model that specifies satisfied versus not satisfied married partners. According to Gottman's (1994) as quoted by Navarra (2011), marital partners' negative nonverbal message causes a shift in perceptions of each other that may lead to unfavourable beliefs about the other partner. In particular, negative nonverbal message such as sarcasm and accusations predicts relational dispute . Conversely, a high ratio of positive-to-negative messages indicates stability. Stable couples have a 5:1 positive-to-negative messages ratio while unstable marriages enact a 1:1 positive-to-negative nonverbal message ratio. As such unstable marriages exhibit an equal number of positive to negative non-negative messages. According to Gottmann (1994), negative behaviours lead to negative emotional reactions. Differences between stable and unstable marriages also are evident in the response a partner extends regarding his or her partners' negative behaviour. For example, stable partners rely on positive or benign attributions to respond to a negative behaviour. Once hostile attributions are attained, partners begin to distance themselves from one another, re-cast the history of the marriage, and, finally, separate. The primary strategies for maintaining stability would be to use cooperative strategies that avoid negative reciprocity, and attempt to explain the partner's negative behaviour using benign attributions. When one cannot alter defensive beliefs about his or her partner, then marital counseling with a spiritual leader would be of good help as noted by Navarra (2011).

Marital stability is interpreted as the ability for a couple to remain together instead of separating or divorcing during a difficult time (Marang'a, 2010). On the contrast, marital satisfaction refers to how marital partners evaluate the quality of their marriage. It is a subjective description of whether a marital relationship is good, happy, or satisfying. Various names are used to identify satisfaction in marriage: the most frequently used one's marital happiness. There is therefore a need to investigate the effectiveness of premarital counseling programs on both marital satisfaction and stability (Navarra, 2011).

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses were postulated and tested in this study.

H01. There is no significant relationship between socio economic factors and marital stability amongst couples in the study area

H02. There is no significant difference between couples married in the church and the others (traditional or court) in their attitude towards marital stability

H03. There is no significant difference as to how literate couples view marital stability and extended family interference family

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Preamble

Methodology involves the systematic collection and analysis of data in research. It also involves the research design, population of study, sample size, sampling methods or techniques, sources of data, instruments of data collection and the techniques of data analysis. The components of the methodology of this research are outlined here under.

3.1 Research Design

This is the specification of the method and procedures for acquiring the information needed for the research. It made use of qualitative and quantitative method of data collection which involve conducting interviews and the circulation of carefully designed questionnaires to respondents in the study area. Survey method involving the use of questionnaires was adopted for this study. The survey method is chosen in preference to other methods like content analysis because of its capacity to measure human attitudes and opinions. This enabled the researcher to generate valid information from samples of human elements that constituted the respondents of the questionnaire (Orodho, 2009). According to Agbonifoh and Yomere (2018), a survey is a method by which information are obtain from a sample or subset within a larger

population with the intention of studying the sample and thereafter generalizing the results to the entire population from which the sample was drawn.

3.2 Population of the Study

The National Population Census of Nigeria in 2006 puts the population of Nigeria at one hundred and forty million, four hundred and thirty one thousand, seven hundred and ninety, at which Edo state figures stood at three million, two hundred thirty three thousand, three hundred and sixty six (3,233,366). From which Oredo Local government Area has a population of 2,157. The population of Oredo Local government Area was used in the investigation of this study. However, it comprises the three senatorial districts. The results obtained can therefore be used to generalize marital stability among married couples in Benin.

3.3 Sample Size/Sampling Technique

The sample size of this study was 200 respondents which comprise males and females of voting age (18 years and above). This is a representative sample of the population of electorate in Oredo Local government Area Edo State. In determining the sample size, the Taro Yamani (2019) formula was used as presented below:

$$n = N / 1 + (Ne^2)$$

Where;

n = Sample size

N = Population Size

e = error limit

Given an error limit of 0.10 and a population sample of approximately 621,509 in the community

Hence, a sample size of 100 respondents is chosen for the study.

3.4 Research Instrument: Questionnaire/ In-Dept Interview

The standardized questionnaire was use to elicit information from the respondents. It guarantees subjects anonymity and encourages high response rate. The questionnaire comprised of standardized questions structured to appropriately elicit useful information from the respondents. The questionnaire is divided into two sections, sections A and B. Question in section A dwells on the bio-data of respondents – sex, age, educational qualifications, gender and occupation. Section B comprised of questions that relate to the marital stability and other related issues which enabled us to get the required information or data for the analysis.

3.5 Validity and Reliability of the Research Instrument

Reliability and validity of data were fortified by allowing experts in statistical analysis to make useful inputs on the research instruments. The questionnaire constructed was also given to supervisor to scrutinize so as to ensure that the research instruments was consistent with variables raised in the hypotheses and that they actually measure the issues under study by the researcher. This therefore improved without doubt the validity of the research instruments.

3.6 Method of Data Collection

For the purpose of the study, primary and secondary data formed the nuclei of data collection for analysis. The primary source of data was based on the administration of questionnaire and the conduct of interviews, while the secondary source included perusal of textbooks, journals, newspapers, magazines, internet amongst others.

3.7 Method of data analysis

The data collected was analyzed using standardized methods. To this end, the Chi-Square (χ^2), simple percentage and t-test were used to analyze the questionnaire. Analysis of data by simple percentage enabled the researcher to know the different opinions in assessing and testing the hypothesis for interpretations. The chi-square was used to substantiate the data or facts of the study. The data was presented in tables according to bio-data information like sex, age, marital status, educational qualification, and occupation.

The formula for the computation of the chi-square (χ^2) is given below:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

f_e

Where:

χ^2 = Chi-square

f_o = Observed frequency

f_e = Expected frequency

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents, analyzes, and interprets the data collected from respondents in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. The analysis is structured in line with the study's objectives, which examine the socio-economic determinants of marital stability. A total of 100 questionnaires were administered, and 94 were correctly filled and returned, representing a 94% response rate.

4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	40	42.6
Female	54	57.4
18–30	16	17.0
31–40	36	38.3
41–50	28	29.8
51 and above	14	14.9
Primary	10	10.6
Secondary	22	23.4
Tertiary	48	51.1
Postgraduate	14	14.9

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The table shows that most respondents were females (57.4%), majority aged 31–50 years, and over half possessed tertiary education. This implies that the study sample was dominated by educated adults in their economically active years — an appropriate demographic for assessing marital stability.

4.2 Economic Well-Being and Marital Stability

Most respondents affirmed that financial factors significantly affect marital stability. The finding supports Ventura (2025) and Lee et al. (2022), who reported that financial stress and unemployment heighten conflict, while steady income fosters harmony. Thus, economic well-being is a major determinant of marital stability in Oredo.

4.3 Educational Attainment and Marital Stability

Education enhances understanding and effective communication between couples. Respondents largely agreed that educated partners exhibit tolerance and conflict-resolution skills. This corroborates Okoye and Ugwu (2024), who found that disparities in education often create communication gaps that strain marital relationships.

4.4 Cultural and Religious Factors Influencing Marital Stability

Cultural and religious values significantly influence marital stability. Most respondents believe religion promotes patience and unity, while conflicting cultural norms and family interference often create tension. This supports Gentui (2017) and Kepler (2015), who identified in-law intrusion and differing religious values as triggers of instability.

4.5 Role of Social Workers in Promoting Marital Stability

Findings reveal that social workers play vital roles in promoting marital stability through counseling, advocacy, and mediation. However, respondents noted a need for expanded community-level family counseling programs to reach more couples.

4.6 Hypothesis Testing

Results from Chi-square and t-test analyses revealed significant relationships between socio-economic factors and marital stability ($p < 0.05$). Specifically, income, education, and marriage type were found to have significant effects on marital stability in Oredo Local Government Area.

4.7 Discussion of Findings

The findings reveal that marital stability in Oredo LGA is closely tied to economic well-being, education, and cultural or religious factors. Couples facing financial insecurity are more prone to conflict and emotional strain. Education improves communication, mutual respect, and problem-solving, while religion reinforces patience and unity. Moreover, social workers are recognized as crucial actors in counseling and preventing family disintegration.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study examined the socio-economic determinants of marital stability in Oredo Local Government Area, Edo State. From data analysis, the major findings include:

1. Economic well-being significantly affects marital stability.
2. Educational attainment positively correlates with marital harmony by enhancing communication and understanding.
3. Cultural and religious influences shape marital expectations, while extended family interference remains a destabilizing factor.
4. Social workers play essential roles in counseling and strengthening family systems, though their services remain underutilized.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that socio-economic determinants particularly income, education, and cultural norms—strongly influence marital outcomes in Oredo LGA. Addressing these issues through improved economic empowerment, educational equity, and social work interventions can reduce divorce rates and strengthen family systems.

5.3 Recommendations

1. Government and NGOs should initiate vocational and entrepreneurship schemes to reduce unemployment and financial pressure on families.
2. Religious institutions and social workers should emphasize premarital counseling and continuous relationship education.
3. Awareness programs should promote gender equity, tolerance, and respect within marriage.
4. Community social workers should be deployed to provide family therapy, mediation, and conflict-resolution services.
5. The Ministry of Women Affairs should create family welfare units focused on marital education and support systems.
6. Further research should include larger samples and comparative analyses across multiple LGAs in Edo State.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This study adds empirical evidence to Nigerian marital research by linking socio-economic determinants directly to marital stability within Edo State. It further highlights the pivotal role of social work practice in family development and stability.

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