

**SOCIO-RELIGIOUS VARIABLES AND MARITAL STABILITY IN IKOT EKPENE
SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF AKWA IBOM STATE**

BY

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ABSTRACT

The study examined socio-religious variables and marital stability among secondary school teachers in North East Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State. The study covered two socio-religious variables of religious denominational affiliation and communication. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to give direction of the study. The research design of the study was correlational with the study sample of 718 married teachers selected from a population of 1795. Data for the study were generated using researchers made instrument tagged "Socio-Religious Variables and Marital Stability Questionnaire (SRVMSQ). The instrument had 51 items in all and was validated by three experts from the Department of Educational Foundations (Test and Evaluation Unit) of the University of Uyo, Cronbach Alpha Reliability index of 0.84 was established. The generated data were statistically analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. The findings of the study showed that the two variables of religious denominational affiliation and communication significantly relate to marital stability. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that counselling workshops, symposia and conferences be organized regularly for married secondary school teachers on marital stability to help function adequately in their place of work.

**KEYWORDS: Marital Stability, Religious Denomination Affiliation, Communication,
Secondary School Teachers, Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District**

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AND STATEMENT OF STUDY

The institution of marriage is a central pillar on which the society is based. Marriage is potentially a delicate relationship between spouses since it usually involves the living together of or a partnership between two or more persons who are relatively peak strangers to each other. It entails a continuous and initiate association between person differing in temperament and other

individual characteristics (Biroude, 2004). The concept of marriage is a bit difficult to define. It can include elements of shared genealogy, close proximity, emotional intimacy and cultural definitions. It is a powerful legal and social institution that protects and supports intimate family relationship by providing a unique set of rights, privileges and responsibilities. Marriage represents a multi-level commitment, one that involves person to person, family to family and couple-to-state commitments. In all societies, it is viewed as a relatively permanent bond, while in some societies, it is virtually irrevocable. The stability provided by a lifelong promise of remaining together makes marriage the institution most suited to rearing and socializing the next generation of family 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.

Religion exerts a generically positive effect on unmarried and married parental relationships. Religious institutions typically promulgate pro-social norms regarding care and consideration. They also offer practical and psychological support to their members that may foster higher- quality relationships among urban parents, regardless of their marital status. Religious norms that stress the importance of caring and forgiveness may lead to more supportive behaviour and better relationships among all urban parents (Ammerman, 2007). Likewise, the normative stress that urban churches place on "decent" living e.g., working hard, avoiding alcohol and drug abuse, and steering clear of the street may also help urban parents avoid problematic behaviour that threatens relationships (Anderson 2000; McRoberts 2003).

The practical and emotional support that many churches offer to their members regardless of family status may also be valuable to unmarried couples. For instance, many congregations offer members low-cost childcare, job training or employment leads, or financial aid, all of which can be helpful to couples, especially low income couples, regardless of their marital status (Edgell 2003; McRoherts 2003). Religious belief and practice are also associated with lower levels of psychological distress and higher levels of psychological well-being, even in the face of stressful conditions like poverty and discrimination (Ellison, 2004). Specifically, religious belief can help individuals make sense of challenges, while religious institutions offer social support to individuals in stressful situations, since stress is a major source of relationship problems (Conger, 2000; Rook, Dooley, and Catalono, 2001). The protective social psychological functions of religious participation may be linked to higher-quality relationships for married and unmarried couples.

Low religious participation and religious heterogamy are also associated with a greater risk of marital dissolution (Bramlett and Mosher, 2002; Heaton, 2002). As regards mechanisms for this association, problem behaviours within the context of marriage may account for the relationship between religiosity and divorce. Amato and Rogers (2007) found that lower church attendance was associated with an increased likelihood of reporting problems stemming from jealousy, moodiness, infidelity, irritating habits, spending money and drinking/drug use. In terms of subjective accounts of divorce, more religious individuals were more likely to cite infidelity as a cause of divorce, and less likely to blame incompatibility (Amato and Previti, 2003). Amato and Previti (2003) stressed that this does not indicate that religious individuals are more likely to experience infidelity; rather, it may demonstrate that highly religious individuals divorce only under extreme conditions.

Burdette, Ellison, Sherkat and Gore (2007) stated that couples with higher levels of religiosity tend to enjoy greater marital satisfaction, fidelity and stability with less likelihood of domestic violence. According to the author, they also tend to have a higher quality of

relationship with their children. Sullivan (2001) also found that couples who are more religious tend to exhibit greater marital commitment than couples who are less religious, Sullivan discovered that among a cohort of 172 newlywed couples, those who reported being more religious (measured by church attendance, importance of religious beliefs in day-to-day life, seeking spiritual comfort during difficulties and generally being a religious person) tended to report higher levels of commitment to their spouses than peers who reported being less religious.

On the average, there is less likelihood of domestic violence among couples who attend church regularly than among those who do not, especially among couples whose partners have similar religious beliefs and practices (Sullivan, 2001). Compared with individuals who attended religious services only once a year or less, those who attended church regularly (at least once a week) were less likely to commit an act of violence against partners. Regular attendance at religious services reduced the odds of perpetrating domestic violence by half for women and for men.

On marital satisfaction, Fiese and Thomas (2001) maintained that marital satisfaction is related to participation in religious holiday rituals. The author further explained that husbands and wives who participate in religious holiday rituals tend to report higher levels of marital satisfaction than peers who do not. Husbands' marital satisfaction was associated with the meaning of the religious rituals and wives' marital satisfaction was associated with the practice of those rituals. Mullins and Brackett (2006) maintained that frequency of church attendance is related to marital fidelity. The author discovered that married individuals who attended religious services often were less likely to be unfaithful to their spouses than peers who attended less frequently. Regnerus and Burdette (2006) explained that the presence of communities of worship in an area is associated with reduce incidence of divorce. Controlling for other selected factors associated with the likelihood of divorce, couples with higher concentrations of various religious denominations had a lower incidence of divorce. Mark, Julie, and Brandt (2006) stated that couples who pray together tend to reconcile conflict more easily. Spouses who prayed had decreased negativity, contempt, hostility and emotional reactivity toward their partner during conflict.

Denominational affiliation determines couples belief about marriage. For instance, while Christians see marriage as a unity of one man and one woman the Muslim brethren do not regard it so (Morgan, 2005). To the Muslims, a man can marry up to four wives provided he is able to care of them. However, many Muslims marry more than four wives (Morgan, 2009). Equally, while Christians see divorce as a sin against God, the Muslims see it as being constitutional (Morgan, 2005). The latter can divorce in the morning and remarry in the afternoon as the case may be. David and John (2003) maintained that couples who worship in the same denomination are more likely to stay in marriage than those from different denominations. These authors opined that it is as a result of the fact that both understand each other and what they stand for. The authors further stated that most marriages collapse because either of the partners, especially the wife has refused to follow the other to his / her own denomination.

The definitions of communication are as problematic as definitions of marriage and family. Most theorists define communication, in such a way that it includes any instance of creation of symbols and in some medium in such a fashion that other people can notice the symbols and make sense of them (Fitzpatrick and Ritchie, 1993). Communication in marriage is vital to a happy marriage and family life. Without good communication, all the marriage advice in the world cannot help rebuild a bad marriage relationship into a good one. Communication is

the key to unlock marital problems. It does more than help to solve conflict. To establish emotionally fulfilling relationships, couples/partners must learn how to communicate with one another in ways that will reveal their deepest feelings and their underlying needs (Davidson and Moore, 2006).

According to Davidson and Moore (2006), communication is a huge umbrella that covers and affects all that goes on between humans. The author stated that, communication is learned; communication between marriage partners may occur via words, verbal or written; non-words-symbols, sounds, or silence, facial expressions-jeers or smiles; touches-nurturing touch, no touch, playful touch, or coercive touch; and behaviours, a combination of these elements in recurrent pattern. Communication among spouses and family members, especially when they gather for various reasons in the home, can provide an opportunity for an exchange of ideas, and concerns and can reinforce the unique identity of each of the family members as being radically unique and loved. The various forms and means by which a family might communicate are unique to each family.

David and John, (2003) stated that communication in healthy marriages and families has several important aspects. Members of strong families are extremely good at listening. Humour is another important aspect of healthy marital and family communication. Communication involves the ability to pay attention to what others are thinking and feeling. In other words, an important part of communication is not just talking, but listening to what others have to say. Communication within the family is extremely important because it enables members to express their needs, wants and concerns to each other. Open and honest communication creates an atmosphere that allows family members to express their differences as well as love and admiration for one another. It is through communication that family members are able to resolve the unavoidable problems that may arise in families. Just as communication is almost always found in strong, healthy families, poor communication is usually found in unhealthy family relationships. Marriage and family therapists often report that poor communication is a common complaint of families who are having difficulties. Poor communication is unclear and indirect. It can lead to numerous family problems including excessive family conflict, ineffective problem solving, lack of intimacy and weak emotional bonding.

In Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District, the influence of social and religious factors on marital stability still persist. It is against this backdrop that the researchers carried out a study on the relationship between socio-religious factors such as church denominational affiliation, communication and marital stability.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between socio-religious variables and marital stability among secondary school teachers in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State.

Specifically, the study aimed at the following objectives:

1. To find out the relationship between religious denomination affiliation and marital stability in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State.
2. To find out the relationship between communication and marital stability among secondary school teachers in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State.

Research Question

1. What is the relationship between religious denominational affiliation and marital stability?
2. What is the relationship between communication and marital stability of secondary school teachers in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between religious denominational affiliation and marital stability of secondary school teachers in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State.
2. There is no significant relationship between communication and marital stability of secondary school teachers in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State.

METHOD

Design of the study

The study adopted the survey research design. This is a method through which opinions are obtained from a cross-section of target respondents.

Area of the Study

The research area for this study was Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of all the 1795 married secondary school teachers in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State for the 2015/2016 academic session (Akwa Ibom State Secondary School Board, 2015).

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 718 married teachers was used for this study selected with the use of stratified random sampling technique from 11 Local Education Committees (LECs) before the hat and draw method was used in selecting one school from each LEC.

Research Instrument

The researchers-made instrument entitled “Socio-religious Variables and Marital Stability Questionnaire (SRVMQ) was used for this study. The instrument had three sections ABC with 48 items in all. Section ‘A’ had a pre-survey questionnaire with four items, sought to obtain demographic information on the respondents’ as per marital status, years of experience in marriage and gender. Section B which was the instrument for the main study continued 14 items on socio-religious variables measured on a four-point scale with responses of strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A) Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Section “C” contained 30 items adapted and modified from Hudson’s (2001) index of marital stability. The instrument was modified based on the fact that Hudson area of study differed from the present study area.

Validation of the Instrument

Three experts from Educational Evaluation, Guidance and Counselling and Sociology of Education respectively validated the instrument.

Reliability of the Instrument

Thirty (30) teachers who did not take part in the main study were used for trial testing of the questionnaire. Data obtained from the trial test were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha reliability technique. A reliability index of .84 was realized. The instrument was therefore found to be appropriate for the study. This index was similar to the reliability index of 0.81 realized by Hudson (2000).

Procedure for Collecting Data

The instrument was personally administered on the subjects by the researchers during school hours. The researchers first administered a pre-survey questionnaire to select the married teachers. Those selected with the help of the principals were assembled in the staffroom and the questionnaire was administered on them. Administered copies of the instrument were collected back from the participants immediately after completion.

Method of Data Analysis

The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as descriptive analysis and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between religious denominational affiliation and marital stability?

Table 1:

PPMC Analysis of Religious Denominational Affiliation and Marital Stability

Variables	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum xy$	r-cal	Remarks
	$\sum y$	$\sum y^2$			
Religious Denominational Affiliation	13032	318506			
Marital Stability	13174	401268	347484	0.41*	Average Relationship

Data on Table 1 on religious denominational affiliation and marital stability show a calculated r-value of 0.41. The correlation coefficient indicates an average relationship. This result implies that church denominational affiliation has average relationship with marital stability.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between communication and marital stability of secondary school teachers in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State?

Table 2:

PPMC Analysis of Communication and Marital Stability

Variables	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum xy$	r-cal	Remarks
	$\sum y$	$\sum y^2$			
Communication	7680	185622	265048	.62*	Moderate High Relationship
Marital Stability	13174	401268			

In Table 2, the result of the analysis on communication and marital stability shows a calculated r-value of .61. The result shows a moderate high relationship between communication and marital stability. The result infers that communication between couples has high relationship with marital stability.

Hypothesis I: There is no significant relationship between religious denomination affiliation and marital stability of secondary school teachers in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State.

Testing the Hypothesis, PPMC was used as presented in Table 3

Table 3: Correlation Analysis of Religious Denominational Affiliation and Marital Stability

n = 718

Variables	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum xy$	df	r-cal	r-crit
	$\sum y$	$\sum y^2$				
Religious Denominational Affiliation	13032	318506	347484	716	.41*	0.07
Marital Stability	13174	401268				

***Significant at 0.05. level, df=716, n=718**

Data testing in Table 3 show a calculated r-value of 0.41 and a critical r-value of 0.07 with 716 degree of freedom and .05 significant level. The calculated value was found to be greater than the critical value, hence, the null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant relationship between religious denominational affiliation and marital stability was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis was retained. This shows that religious denominational affiliation has a significant relationship with marital stability. This finding is supported by Amato and Previti (2003) who found that lower church attendance was associated with an increased likelihood of reported problems stemming from jealousy, moodiness, infidelity, irritating habits, spending money and drinking/drug use. Interm of subjective accounts of divorce, more religious

individuals were more likely to cite infidelity as a cause of divorce, and less likely to blame it on incompatibility (Amato and Previti 2003). These authors stressed that this does not indicate that religious individuals are more likely to experience infidelity, rather, it may demonstrate that highly religious individuals divorce only under extreme conditions.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between communication and marital stability of secondary school teachers in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State.

PPMC was used in testing the hypothesis and presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis of Communication and Marital Stability

n = 718

Variables	ΣX	ΣX^2	Σxy	df	r-cal	r-crit
	Σy	Σy^2				
Communication	7680	185622	265048	716	.62*	0.07
Marital Stability	13174	401268				

***Significant at 0.05. level, df=716, n=718**

The result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation of communication and marital stability as presented in Table 4 shows a calculated r-value of 0.62, which was greater than the critical r-value of 0.07. Since the calculated r-value was greater than the critical value at 0.05 significance level and 716 degree of freedom then the null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant relationship between communication and marital stability stand rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This infers that communication is very important in maintaining stability in marriage. This finding is supported by the findings of Davidson and Moore (2006) who opined that communication is a huge umbrella that covers and also affects all that goes on between humans. Communication according to the authors is learned. It is also between marriage partners, which may occur via words, verbal or written, non words symbols, sounds or silence, facial expression, jeers or smiles, touches nurturing touch, no touch, playful touch or coercive touch, and behaviours or a combination these elements.

Conclusions

It is obvious that there are issues of marital instability in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District. It is also concluded that religious denominational affiliation is a strong determinant of marital stability in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District. It could also be concluded that communication is effective in maintaining marital stability in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District.

Recommendations

It would not be out of place if marriage counselors, psychologists could organize marriage seminars both at schools and at religious arenas so as to sensitize married couples on how marriage stability could be ensured. Family counselors, social workers and relevant Non-

governmental Organizations (NGOs) will be helpful in providing strategies of reducing or solving the problem of communication gap between spouses. Thus, ensuring stability in marriage.

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