



Age, Religion and Marital Adjustment among Married Teachers in Delta State

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ABSTRACT

This study examined age, religion and marital adjustment among married teachers in Delta state. The study was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated. The target population was all married teachers in public secondary schools in Delta State. The study utilized the multi-stage and stratified sampling technique. The instrument for the study was questionnaires which was validated for face, content and construct validated computed using factor analysis. The Cronbach Coefficient Alpha was used in estimating the internal consistency of the instrument which yielded an alpha of 0.94 for the marital adjustment instrument. Correlation and Coefficient Determination was used in answering the research questions while F-test (ANOVA) statistic associated with linear regression statistics were used in testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Based on the analysis, it was found that: there was no significant relationship between age and marital adjustment. Furthermore, it was revealed that there was significant relationship between religion and marital adjustment among married teachers in Delta State. Based on the conclusion, it was recommended among others that counsellors as well as others in the human services profession should organize workshops for married teachers to enhance their understanding of the interplay between age, religion and marital adjustment.

Key Words: Adjustment, Age, Marital Adjustment, Married Teachers, Religion

Introduction

Marriage is often considered a key factor in individual happiness and well-being, providing significant social support that surpasses that of friendships. It is envisioned as a beautiful journey, with the expectation that the relationship between spouses will improve over time. This institution is crucial not only for creating familial bonds but also for nurturing future generations (Olugbenga, 2018). Nevertheless, minor issues can arise within the relationship, and as Tolorunleke (2014) points out, if these concerns are not addressed, they may lead to growing tensions and potential separation over time. Recently, there has been a noticeable shift away from marriage, as many find it increasingly challenging to sustain a happy and stable partnership, resulting in marital instability and divorce. Omeje (2014) highlights that many contemporary marriages are rife with conflict, posing a significant threat to the marital satisfaction and joy that couples could otherwise experience.

Teachers play a vital role in shaping the educational framework of society, significantly influencing the development of young minds for the future. However, the teaching profession is fraught with various stressors that can adversely affect teachers' overall well-being. For married educators, the complexities of marriage can become even more pronounced due to the unique pressures associated with their careers. Teaching is not just a job; it requires emotional investment, dedication, and resilience. Married teachers often struggle to balance their professional responsibilities with personal expectations, particularly women, which can lead to significant challenges in marital relationships. The demands of lesson planning, grading, and extracurricular activities often result in long hours, making it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance. This extensive commitment can limit the quality time couples spend together, potentially straining their relationship. When both partners are teachers, their shared experiences can enhance marital adjustment, fostering a supportive bond. However, if one partner feels overshadowed by the other's success, it may lead to conflict and resentment. Therefore, marital adjustment is essential for couples to maintain a fulfilling relationship, requiring the ability to adapt to challenges and conflicts that arise. On the long-run, married teachers must navigate the complexities of their profession while fostering a supportive and understanding partnership to ensure a healthy marital life (Nwoko et al., 2023; Li et al., 2021).

Marital adjustment is a lifelong endeavour, especially in the early stages of marriage, where understanding each partner's individual traits is crucial. Even if couples are familiar with each other prior to marriage, people can change over time, making ongoing understanding essential. As Onabamiro et al. (2017) describe, marital adjustment involves modifying and adapting individual and couple behaviours to achieve maximum satisfaction in the relationship. This process requires partners to accommodate each other's needs and expectations to maintain harmony. Marital adjustment fosters a sense of unity and empathy between spouses, enabling them to work towards shared life goals, ultimately leading to marital satisfaction. It allows couples to overlook conflicts and resolve issues constructively, promoting positive feelings within the relationship. Essentially, marital adjustment is a method by which two partners adapt to one another to sustain their marriage (Yeganeh & Shaikhmahmoodi, 2013). Successful marital adjustment necessitates maturity and an acceptance of each other's growth and development. Without this awareness, the relationship may stagnate. Couples who are well-adjusted

typically enjoy healthier relationships, where both partners provide emotional support, companionship, sexual fulfilment, and economic stability for each other.

Successful marital adjustment relies on several factors, including communication skills, conflict resolution strategies, and emotional support. For married teachers, achieving this adjustment can be particularly difficult due to the influences of age and religion. Teachers often struggle to balance their professional and personal lives, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy in both areas. This imbalance may decrease marital satisfaction and increase tension between partners. In Nigeria, especially in Delta State, these factors significantly impact married teachers, who face unique challenges due to their roles as both educators and family members. Understanding these influences is essential for enhancing teacher well-being and the overall health of educational systems, as successful marital adjustment fosters emotional intimacy and effective communication.

Age plays a significant role in marital adjustment, influencing maturity, life experiences, and expectations within a marriage. In Delta State, individuals marry at various ages, which can affect marital dynamics. Older couples tend to possess greater emotional maturity and life experience, allowing them to manage conflicts more effectively (Okesina, 2022). In contrast, younger couples often prioritize career advancement and personal growth, presenting unique challenges and differing priorities (Okesina, 2022). As people age, their focus commonly shifts; older couples may prioritize family and stability, while younger ones often seek independence and personal development. Recognizing these shifting priorities is crucial for maintaining harmony in marriage.

Additionally, age affects parenting styles and responsibilities, with couples at different stages facing distinct challenges. Significant age gaps between partners can lead to mismatched expectations and communication styles, complicating marital adjustment (Manoj, 2024). In Delta State, traditional gender roles shape the expectations for husbands and wives, influencing household responsibilities and communication. For married teachers, rigid adherence to these roles can result in frustration and conflict if not addressed openly. Teachers who neglect to negotiate their roles may experience resentment, negatively impacting their marital adjustment.

While age is a significant factor in marital adjustment, religion also plays a crucial role that can either enhance or hinder this process. People often feel a strong sense of belonging when they share religious values and beliefs, influencing their marriage choices based on their religious affiliations. Religion serves as a belief system that provides meaning and acts as a powerful social control mechanism, helping to create and uphold societal norms and values, including those related to marriage and socialization.

In Nigeria, particularly in Delta State, where Christianity and traditional African religions are prevalent, religion significantly shapes marital relationships. Religious teachings, as noted by Presler (2014), emphasize the sanctity of marriage, fidelity, and family unity, helping to strengthen connections among couples who share similar beliefs. These teachings also offer frameworks for conflict resolution, promoting forgiveness and compassion. Religious communities provide social support and resources, such as counseling and fellowship, which can aid marital adjustment.

However, challenges may arise from differing interpretations of religious teachings or varying levels of commitment between partners. For married teachers, sharing a common faith can help prevent unnecessary conflicts and provide a unified focus for raising children. Yet, strict adherence to religious norms may sometimes stifle open communication about personal needs, which can affect marital satisfaction.

Religion plays a significant role in shaping marital values and norms in Nigeria, particularly in Delta State, where Christianity and traditional African religions are common. While these teachings highlight the sanctity of marriage, varying levels of religious commitment can lead to conflicts, and rigid interpretations may stifle discussions about personal needs, thereby affecting marital satisfaction. Moreover, the length of marriage among teachers can influence relationship dynamics; while longer marriages typically strengthen emotional bonds, they may also result in complacency and the resurfacing of unresolved conflicts. Thus, ongoing communication and adaptability are essential for maintaining marital harmony and effectively addressing long-standing issues. For many, religion is a crucial factor in mate selection and influences how couples navigate challenges and child-rearing decisions, although differing beliefs about religious practices can impact their relationship (Presler, 2014).

Religion and marital adjustment among married teachers can vary depending on individual beliefs, values, and practices. Religion often plays a significant role in shaping one's moral and ethical values. These values can influence decision-making processes within a marriage. When both partners prioritize similar values stemming from their religious beliefs, it can promote understanding, trust, and cooperation, enhancing marital adjustment. Religion is the total of people's beliefs. Religion is seen as communal faith in and conformity to a pattern of thought. Religion is a system of beliefs and practices regarding sacred things that unite people into a religious group, or community.

The interplay of educational background, sexual satisfaction, occupational stress, age, gender, religion, duration of marriage, and marital adjustment is complex, particularly for married teachers in Delta State, Nigeria. Understanding these dynamics is essential for fostering healthier relationships and enhancing quality of life. This study aims to address existing research gaps by examining how these factors interrelate, offering insights that can inform policy, practice, and future research. By focusing on the specific challenges faced by married teachers, the study seeks to improve the overall well-being of individuals, families, and the educational system in Delta State. Ultimately, it aims to uncover the relationships among these variables to better understand marital adjustment among married teachers in Delta State.

Uwe and Obot (2000) highlighted that immaturity within a couple can hinder their ability to find balance in their relationship, that is the age of couples can make or mar the level of marital stability enjoyed by couples. This immaturity manifests in differing desires, thoughts, and the capacity to fulfil responsibilities. They note that individuals lacking maturity often struggle with disagreement, operating under the belief that love necessitates total agreement. In essence, they may prioritize personal satisfaction over the well-being of the relationship, thinking that love justifies any action, regardless of its consequences. Additionally, the appropriate age for marriage appears to be influenced by cultural and geographical factors.

The age of couples is frequently examined in marital satisfaction research, as it is often considered the best predictor of marital contentment, according to Sweet and Bumpass (2002). Early marriage is associated with a higher risk of marital instability compared to later marriages. Factors contributing to this instability include low socioeconomic status, lower education levels, and premarital pregnancy, all common among early marriages. Sweet and Bumpass investigated whether the link between age at marriage and marital instability could be attributed to education, premarital pregnancy, religious beliefs, or parental marital stability. Their multivariate analysis of a large sample of married white women under 45 revealed that marital instability was not solely dependent on these factors, reinforcing the idea that age remains the strongest predictor of marital stability. They also explored the relationship between age, marital satisfaction, and marital role performance.

Research on the relationship among age, religion, and marital stability has evolved over the years, with studies indicating that factors like religiosity can significantly impact marital satisfaction and stability. Haotanto (2016) posited that later marriages reduce the likelihood of divorce, indicating better marital adjustment. According to Haotanto, each additional year of age at marriage decreases the risk of divorce by eleven percent. As individuals age, their maturity in thinking and behavior tends to improve, leading them to more thoughtfully consider their desires for a lifelong relationship. Consequently, Haotanto identified age as a key predictor of marital adjustment.

Research on religiosity and marital satisfaction, as noted by Wilson and Filsinger (2016), has shown that religious rituals, experiences, and beliefs are linked to both marital satisfaction and stability. Numerous studies consistently demonstrate a positive correlation between marital satisfaction and religious faith. Couples who share the same religious beliefs tend to experience greater satisfaction, regardless of their specific denomination (David & Stafford, 2015). This may be attributed to the values reinforced by religion, such as forgiveness, the shared rituals that couples engage in, and the sanctity they associate with marriage in the context of their faith. Additionally, some studies (Diblasio, 2010) suggest that the capacity for forgiveness significantly contributes to both marital satisfaction and longevity.

A study by David and Stafford (2015) suggests that discussions between couples about their religious beliefs and the role of God in their marriage can enhance the practice of forgiveness among Christian couples. Dollahite and Lambert (2007) found that religious vows contribute to the "sanctity" of marriage, resulting in improved marital quality. Additionally, Rose et al. (2018) discovered that a husband's strong religious faith positively influences his wife's marital satisfaction. Of note, Sullivan (2001) also pointed out that attitudes towards commitment, divorce, marital stability and seeking marital help when in conflict were associated with religiosity. Hence, religion is an arbiter to the marital adjustment, especially when the couples belong to the same religion. Lambert and Dollahite (2016) on their part revealed that religious beliefs and practices can benefit couples during times of disagreement leading to better marital stability and that religion was helpful in preventing problems, resolving conflict, and also reconciling after a conflict. Bozhabadi et al. (2020) in their study revealed that there was a good and robust correlation between sexual and marital stability and religious orientation. In their conclusion it was indicated that religious commitment was predictive in promoting sexual pleasure and marital stability, increasing religious commitment, sexual satisfaction, and marital satisfaction. Aman et al. (2019) in their study of Pakistani couples found that religious commitment and practice strengthened and promoted marital stability.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised in the study.

- 1) What is the extent of relationship between age and marital adjustment among married teachers in Delta State?
- 2) What is the extent of relationship between religion and marital adjustment among married teachers in Delta State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance.

- 1) There is no significant relationship between age and marital adjustment among married teachers in Delta State.
- 2) There is no significant relationship between religion and marital adjustment among married teachers in Delta State.

Method and Procedure

The study adopted the correlational research design. The population of the study comprises of 12,426 married teachers in public secondary schools in Delta State. The sample of this study consists of 389 married teachers in public secondary schools in Delta State, representing (9) local government area each in the 3 senatorial district. Multi-stage and stratified sampling technique was used. The instrument for this study was a questionnaire titled: "Marital Adjustment among Married Teachers (MAAMT) Questionnaire.

For content and construct validity of the instrument, factor analysis was used. On the basis of the calculated reliability coefficients using Cronbach Coefficient Alpha, the instrument was considered reliable for the study as the computation yielded an alpha of 0.94 for marital adjustment. Thus, the scale had good psychometric property of reliability. The questionnaire was administered with the aid of five research assistants. Correlation and Coefficient Determination was used in answering the research questions while F-test (ANOVA) Statistic associated with linear regression statistics were used in testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. All statistical analysis was computed using SPSS.

Presentation of Result

Research Question 1

What is the extent of relationship between age and marital adjustment among married teachers in Delta State?

Table 1: Pearson product moment correlation and coefficient determination of age and marital adjustment among married teachers.

Variable	N	r	r ²	r ² %	Decision
Age					Low Positive
	389	0.036	0.001	0.1	Relationship
Marital Adjustment					

*Significance: $P \leq 0.05$

Table 1 indicate the r-value of 0.036 as the extent of relationship between age and marital adjustment among married teachers. The coefficient of determination was 0.001 and the amount off contribution of age to marital adjustment was 0.1%, this shows low positive relationship between age and marital adjustment among married teachers in Delta State.

Research Question 2

What is the extent of relationship between religion and marital adjustment among married teachers in Delta State?

Table 2: Pearson product moment correlation coefficient and coefficient of determination of religion and marital adjustment among married teachers.

Variable	N	r	r ²	r ² %	Decision
Religion					Low Positive
	389	0.104	0.011	1.1	Relationship
Marital Adjustment					

*Significance: $P \leq 0.05$

Table 2 revealed the r-value of 0.104 as the degree of relationship between religion and marital adjustment among married teachers in Delta State. The coefficient of determination was 0.011 and the contribution of religion to marital adjustment was 1.1%. These indicate low positive relationship between religion and marital adjustment among married teachers in Delta State.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between age and marital adjustment among married teachers in Delta State.

Table 3: Linear regression analysis of age and marital adjustment among married teachers.

	r	r ²	Adjusted r ²	SEE	
	.036 ^a	.001	-.001	3.008028	
ANOVA					
Model 1	SS	Df	MS	F	P
Regression	4.837	1	4.837	.510	.476 ^b
Residual	3671.914	387	9.488		
Total	3676.751	388			
Variables in the Equation					
	Unstandardized Coefficient		standardized Coefficient		
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-Ratio	P
(Constant)	52.840	.735		71.930	.000
Age	.210	.294	.036	.714	.476

Dependent variable: Marital Stability

Table 3, revealed the linear regression output of age and marital adjustment among married teachers in Delta State with the F-value of .510 and P-value of .476. Testing the null hypothesis at an alpha level of .05, the P-value of .476 was greater than the alpha level of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. This shows that there is no significant relationship between age and marital adjustment among married teachers in Delta State.

The R-square value of 0.001 shows that 0.1% variance in marital adjustment among married teachers was accounted for by age. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for predicting marital adjustment among married teachers from age was .210. The standardized coefficient (B) for age was .036, $t = .714$. However, age was not significant at an alpha level of 0.05.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between religion and marital adjustment among married teachers in Delta State.

Table 4: Linear regression analysis of religion and marital adjustment among married teachers

Dependent variable: Marital Stability

	r	r²	Adjusted r²	SEE	
	.104 ^a	.011	.008	3.06569	
ANOVA					
Model 1	SS	Df	MS	F	P
Regression	39.543	1	39.543	4.207	.041 ^b
Residual	3637.208	387	9.398		
Total	3676.751	388			
Variables in the Equation					
	Unstandardized Coefficient		standardized Coefficient		
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-Ratio	P
(Constant)	51.780	.782		66.229	.000
Religion	.716	.349	.104	2.057	.041

Table 4 shows the linear regression output of religion and marital adjustment among married teachers with an F-value of 4.207 and a P-value of 0.041. Testing the null hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the P-value of 0.041 was less than the alpha level of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that there is significant relationship between religion and marital adjustment among married teachers in delta state.

The r-square value of 0.011 shows 1.1% variance of marital adjustment among married teachers was accounted for by religion. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for predicting marital adjustment from religion was .716. The standardized coefficient (B) for religion was .104, $t = 2.051$. Therefore, religion was significant at an alpha level of 0.05.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of the study shows that there was no significant relationship between age and marital adjustment among married teachers in Delta State. This study implies that age is not a good predictor of marital adjustment, that is, marital adjustment among couples is not dependent on age. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Gündoğdu and Bulut (2022) who pointed out that age at marriage had no significant effect on marital adjustments of married couples. Haotanto (2016), however, disagreed with the findings of this study. According to Haotanto (2016), late marriage declines the possibility of divorce (marital maladjustment), and the data reveals that each supplemental year of age at the time of matrimony diminishes the divorce by eleven percent. Because of age, the level of maturity in people's thinking and behaviour increases; therefore, people deliberate more virtually on what they desire from a lifetime relationship as they grow older. Hence, those who married late possessed the ability to adjust to marital issues than couples who married early. Hence, Haotanto (2016) found age to be a predictor of marital adjustment.

The second finding of the study shows that there was significant relationship between religion and marital adjustment among married teachers. This implies that religious affiliation plays an important part in a couples' marital life. Religion, thus, can determine the success of a couple's marital adjustment positively or negatively. This finding is in line with Wilson and Filsinger (2016) who found that religious rituals, experiences, and beliefs were correlated with marital satisfaction and stability. Of note, Sullivan (2001) in line with the above study revealed that attitudes towards commitment, divorce, marital stability and seeking marital help when in conflict were associated with religiosity. Also, in line with the above finding, Lambert and Dollahite (2016) revealed that religious beliefs and practices can benefit couples during times of disagreement leading to better marital stability and that religion was helpful in preventing problems, resolving conflict, and also reconciling after a conflict. Bozhabadi *et al.* (2020) in line with the above study revealed that there is a good and robust correlation between sexual and marital stability and religious orientation. It was also observed that religious commitment was

predictive in promoting sexual pleasure and marital stability, increasing religious commitment, sexual satisfaction, and marital satisfaction. A study among Pakistani Muslim couples found that religious commitment and practice strengthen and promote marital stability (Aman *et al.*, 2019).

Conclusion

Based on the findings the following conclusions were made; the study revealed that age had no impact on marital adjustment among couples and that religion had a significant impact on marital adjustment among married teachers in Delta State.

Recommendations

With regard to the finding, the following recommendations were made:

1. Counsellors should organize a workshop for married teachers to enhance their understanding of the interplay between educational background, sexual satisfaction, occupational stress and marital adjustment.
2. Counsellors should encourage the involvement of mental health professionals, marriage counsellors and employee assistance programme in secondary schools.
3. Counsellors should provide professional development opportunities that focused on stress management time management and work-life balance strategies designed for married teachers.
4. Counsellors should provide supports network that allow married teachers connect and learn from one another.
5. Counsellors should encourage school administrators and leaders to create a positive and school culture that prioritizes the well being of married teachers.

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