

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND MARITAL STABILITY OF MARRIED WOMEN IN WOMEN CENTRES SOKOTO, SOKOTO STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

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### Abstract

*This paper explored relationship between socio-economic status and marital stability of married women in women centres Sokoto State, Nigeria. The study had four objectives, research questions and hypotheses which were tested using descriptive correlational design. A sample of 260 married women was selected from a population of 801 through proportionate sampling guided by a sample size determinations table (2006). Data were collected using two instruments were used to collect data for the study namely: Socio-economic Status Questionnaire (SESQ) and Marital Success Scale (MSS), for assessing marital stability these instruments were validated by experts with reliability indices of 0.79 and 0.75, respectively and were scored using a likert scale. The hypotheses were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The study found both educational attainments had positive and significant relationships with marital stability among married women in Sokoto State. The paper concludes that while educational attainment positively affects marital stability and significant, occupational prestige also has a positive and significant impact on marital stability. It recommends that women should be encouraged to pursue education, as it positively influences marital stability. Additionally, improving socio-economic status and encouraging married women to acquire skills can enhance family stability.*

**Keywords:** *Socio-economic Status, Educational Attainment, Occupational Prestige, Income Level and Marital Stability*

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### Introduction

The origin of marriage is often traced back to creation, with the biblical account of Adam and Eve, where Eve was created as a companion for Adam. Marriage is a culturally and often religiously recognized union between individuals, traditionally between a man and a woman. It is defined as a socially legitimate sexual union, publicly announced, with an understanding of permanence and a contract detailing reciprocal obligations between spouses and their future children (Nwoye in Abubakar, 2018).

Marriage, as described by Lefebure, Quirogon and Murphy (2014), is a fundamental relationship between a man and a woman that plays a significant role in defining many families. According to Akinade (2015), marriage is a state of union between individuals of the opposite sex, legally or traditionally recognized, involving mutual commitment. Osarenren, Nwadinigwe, and Anyama (in Abubakar, 2018) describe marriage as the coming together of two different individuals as husband and wife who plan and establish their own family. It is a comprehensive union involving emotional, mental, and physical aspects. Education,

historically seen as the transmission of cultural heritage, now encompasses goals such as personal liberation, modern skills, empathy, and vocational skills (Onyele in Nuhu, 2018). Education is a systematic process through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes, contributing to their civilization and refinement. It aims to develop understanding, rationality, kindness, and honesty. Critical thinking distinguishes education from indoctrination. Education can also refer to the outcomes of the educational process, including the knowledge and dispositions of educated individuals (Mustapha, 2021). Education level denotes the years of formal instruction completed, typically ranging from kindergarten through high school, and is structured according to developmental stages (Nuhu, 2018). Socioeconomic status (SES) describes an individual's position in society based on occupational, economic, and educational criteria, often presented in an ordinal scale. SES can be influenced by factors such as occupation, income, educational level, housing status, ethnicity, and cultural characteristics, and it significantly affects health (Bala, 2018). SES is a critical concept for understanding social hierarchy and life chances.

The age at which a woman marries is linked to marital stability, with older couples generally having more stable marriages compared to younger ones. Marital stability is characterized by a steady and balanced relationship, contributing to stable families and, by extension, a stable society (Qjukwu, 2016). Marital stability involves a firm, steady relationship where each partner fulfils their role, leading to a well-adjusted family and a progressive society. Marital stability reflects the balance of positive and negative behaviors within the relationship (Echebe, 2018). Nuhu (2018) views marital stability as a dynamic and evolving relationship rather than a static one, where periods of joy and conflict are both part of the growth process. Dada and Idowu cited in Adejare, (2018) note that before marriage, couples often have idealistic views about love and relationships.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Marital stability among married women in Sokoto State, Nigeria, is a critical issue that significantly impacts family well-being and societal harmony. The interplay between socio-economic status and marital stability remains inadequately explored, despite its potential to influence marital outcomes (Nuhu, 2018). Marital instability can have far-reaching consequences, affecting not only the individuals involved but also their children and broader social networks. According to recent data, marital instability is prevalent in Nigeria, with approximately 30% of marriages experiencing significant disruptions or dissolution within the first decade (National Population Commission, 2022). This rate reflects underlying issues related to education and socio-economic factors. The literacy rate among women in Sokoto State is relatively low compared to national averages, with only 45% of women having completed secondary education, as opposed to the national average of 60% (UNESCO, 2023). Low educational attainment has been linked to increased marital dissatisfaction and instability. Socioeconomic challenges are prevalent in Sokoto State, where about 60% of the population lives below the poverty line, and many families struggle with inadequate financial resources (World Bank, 2023). This economic strain contributes to marital stress and instability. Despite the apparent link between education, socio-economic status, and marital stability, there is limited empirical research focusing on these variables in Sokoto State. Understanding these relationships is crucial for developing effective counselling strategies that can address marital issues, support women, and foster family stability. Therefore, this study aims to explore the relationship between socio-economic status and marital stability among married women in women centres in Sokoto State. The findings are expected to inform targeted counselling interventions that can enhance marital stability and overall well-being of married women in the state.

## **Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study were to find out if there is:

1. Relationship between educational attainment and marital stability among

marriage married women in women centres in Sokoto State?

2. Relationship between occupational prestige and marital stability among married women in women centres in Sokoto State? '
3. Relationship between income level and marital stability among married women in women centres in Sokoto State.
4. Relationship among educational attainment, occupational prestige, income level and marital stability among married women in women centres in Sokoto State.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. Is there any relationship between educational attainment and marital stability among married women in Sokoto State?
2. Is there any relationship occupational prestige and marital stability among married women in Sokoto State?
3. Is there any relationship among income level and marital stability among marriage married women in women centres in Sokoto State?
4. Relationship among educational attainment, occupational prestige, income level and marital stability among married women in women centres in Sokoto State.

### Research Hypotheses

Based on the research questions, the following hypotheses are formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- Ho1. There is no significant relationship between educational attainment and marital stability among married women in women centres in Sokoto State.
- H02: There is no significant relationship between occupational prestige and marital stability among married women in women centres in Sokoto State.
- H03: There is no significant relationship between income level and marital stability among marriage married women in women centres in Sokoto State.
- Ho4: Relationship among educational attainment, occupational prestige,

income level and marital stability among married women in women centres in Sokoto State.

### Methodology

A descriptive method of correlational type was employed in this study. Correlational research focuses on determining or measuring the degree of relationship between two or more variables to make predictions about these relationships (Tambawal, in Nuhu, 2018). Purposive sampling was used to select married women from functional women centres in Sokoto State. The study targeted 14 out of 23 Local Government Areas in Sokoto State, due to the closure of some centres for security reasons, with a total population of 801 and a sample size of 260 married women from these functional centres. The sample size was determined using the Research Advisors (2006) table and a proportionate sampling technique was applied to ensure equal representation from each functional women centre. A total of 260 women were selected from the population of 801, with participants chosen via simple random sampling by using 'YES' and 'NO' ballots. Data collection was carried out using the Adopted Socio-economic Status Questionnaire (SESQ) by Nuhu (2018), and the Adopted Marital Success Scale Questionnaire (MSSQ) by Mustapha (2021) to assess marital stability among married women. The validity of these instruments was established by experts from the Faculty of Education, Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto, who reviewed and made necessary adjustments to ensure content and construct validity.

The reliability of the two adopted instruments was verified by their original authors, while the reliability of the adapted instrument was assessed by administering the questionnaires to 40 subjects, re-administering them after four weeks, and analyzing the results using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The reliability coefficients obtained were 0.78, and 0.75, respectively, indicating that the instruments were reliable for the study. Data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to ensure accuracy and proper conclusions. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was used to analyze

hypotheses 1, 2 and 3, while multiple regression analysis was applied to test hypothesis 4. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance

### Data Presentation and Analysis

#### Hypotheses Testing

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between educational attainment and marital stability among married women in Sokoto State

**Table 1: Relationship between Educational Attainment and Marital Stability**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	r-Cal	P- value	Decision
Educational Attainment	260	55.93	8.531	258	.057	.000	Significant
Marital Stability	260	65.22	13.132				

**Source:** Researcher's Field Work (2024)

From Table 1, it is observed that the relationship between educational attainment and marital stability is both positive and significant, with Pearson's  $r = .057$  and a p-value of  $< .05$ . Consequently, the hypothesis is rejected. This finding indicates a significant relationship between educational attainment and marital stability among married women in Sokoto State, as the p-value is below the 0.05 threshold for significance. This suggests that as the level of education increases, marital stability also tends to improve.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between occupational prestige and marital stability among married women in Sokoto State

**Table 2: Relationship between Occupational Prestige and Marital Stability**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	r-Cal	P-value	Decision
Occupational Prestige	260	60.12	12.735	258	.055	.000	Significant
Marital Stability	260	65.22	13.132				

**Source:** Researcher's Field Work (2024)

From Table 2, it is evident that the relationship between occupational prestige and marital stability is positive and significant, with Pearson's  $r = .055$  and a p-value of  $< .05$ . Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. This result indicates a significant relationship between

occupational prestige and marital stability among married women in Sokoto State, as the p-value is below the 0.05 level of significance. This suggests that an increase in occupational prestige is associated with increased marital instability.

**H03:** There is no significant relationship between income level and marital stability among married women in Sokoto State

**Table 3: Relationship between Income Level and Marital Stability**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	r-Cal	P-value	Decision
Income Level	260	52.07	10.35	355	.261	.000	Significant
Study Habit	260	55.27	10.07				

**Source:** Researcher Fieldwork (2024)

From Table 3, it is evident that the relationship between income level and marital stability is positive and significant, with Pearson's  $r = .261$  and a p-value of  $< .05$ . Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. This result indicates a significant relationship between income level and marital stability among married women in Sokoto State, as the p-value is below the 0.05 level of significance. This suggests that an increase in income level is associated with increased marital instability.

**H04:** Level of education is not more significant in predicting marital stability of married women in women centres in Sokoto state than socio-economic status.

This hypothesis was tested by subjecting the scores of early marriage, level of education, socio-economic status and marital stability to a regression analysis and the result was presented in table 4

**Table 4: Level of education and socio-economic status prediction of marital stability.**

Variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	SE	$\beta$	F	T	p-value
EA	.069	.005	.003	13.152	.058	.607	.920	.358
OP	.078	.006	.003	12.765	.078	2.15	1.468	.143
IL	.194	.038	.035	12.560	.044	1.90	.452	.000

**Source:** Researcher's Field Work (2023)

EA: Educational Attainment

OP: Occupational Prestige

## IL: Income Level

### Dependent Variable: Marital Stability

From Table 4, a look at the squared part correlations revealed that educational attainment accounted for 6.9% of the variance in marital stability,  $R^2_{adj} = .005$ ,  $F(1, 257) = .607$ ,  $p > .05$ ; occupational prestige accounted for 19.4% of the variance in marital stability,  $R^2_{adj} = .008$ ,  $F(2, 256) = .728$ ,  $p > .05$  and income level accounted for 7.8% of the variance in marital stability,  $R^2_{adj} = .035$ ,  $F(3, 255) = .194$ ,  $p > .05$ . Thus, the significant results of the procedure indicated that the combination of the predictor variables were able to account for a significant amount of variance in the dependent variable. Educational attainment and occupational prestige are explanatory variables of marital stability, analysis of regression coefficients indicated that income level,  $\beta = .044$ ,  $t = .452$ ,  $p > .05$  emerged as the significant predictor when the variables were in the model. Therefore,  $H_{04}$  is not accepted. Thus, it is concluded that income level was a better predictor of marital stability.

### Summary of Findings

In view of the hypotheses tested and interpreted the following summaries of the findings;

1. There is a significant relationship between educational attainment and marital stability among married women in women centres in Sokoto State.
2. There is a significant relationship between occupational prestige and marital stability among married women in women centres in Sokoto State.
3. There is a significant relationship between income level and marital stability among married women in women centres in Sokoto State.
4. Income level a better predictor of marital stability than educational attainment and occupational prestige of married women in women centres in Sokoto State.

### Discussion of Findings

This section presents a discussion on the major findings of this study.

Hypothesis one proposed that there was a positive and significant relationship between educational attainment and marital stability among married women in Sokoto State, with Pearson's  $r = .057$  and a  $p$ -value  $< .05$ . This hypothesis is accepted, as the findings align with other studies, such as Ibrahim (2018), which examined the influence of parental education, socio-economic status, and marital stability among married secondary school students in Taraba State, Nigeria. Ibrahim's study found that parental education

significantly influences marital stability. In contrast, Mensch (2016) researched marriage and childbirth factors in schools and reported different findings for various parts of Africa. However, the current findings are consistent with Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that human relationships are evaluated based on a cost-benefit analysis. According to this theory, if the benefits of a relationship outweigh the costs, the relationship will remain stable; otherwise, it may dissolve. Costs can include effort, financial expenses, time, or diminished self-esteem, while rewards might involve pleasure, satisfaction, and financial support.

Additionally, the theory incorporates elements from behavioural theories, which propose that behaviors are learned through conditioning, and cognitive theories that consider psychological factors like attention, memory, and reproduction. Bandura's concept of reciprocal determinism highlights that behavior and the environment influence each other, moving beyond the notion that behavior is solely a response to environmental conditions.

The findings for hypothesis two revealed that relationship between occupational prestige and marital stability among married women in Sokoto State was positive and significant. This result is in line with the observation by Nuhu (2018), who noted that nature of occupation is prevalent in urban area where people do better job to improve their socio-economic status of the family. Nuhu's study suggested that family in the urban settlement are better in term of economic status than those in the rural settlement. However, the findings contrast

with Bala (2018), who highlighted that occupational prestige can force young girls into sexual activity before they are physically and emotionally mature, leading to severe health consequences.

Despite this, the result aligns with Social Exchange Theory, which posits that relationships are assessed through a cost-benefit analysis. According to this theory, if the perceived rewards from a relationship outweigh the costs, the relationship is likely to be maintained; otherwise, it may dissolve. Costs in a relationship might include effort, financial expenditure, time, or diminished self-esteem, while rewards might involve pleasure, satisfaction, and financial support. The theory integrates elements from behavioural theories, suggesting that behaviors are learned through conditioning, and cognitive theories, which account for psychological factors such as attention, memory, and reproduction. Bandura's concept of reciprocal determinism asserts that behavior and the environment influence each other, moving beyond the idea that behavior is solely shaped by the environment, and suggesting that behavior can also impact one's surroundings.

Finding from hypothesis three revealed that there is a relationship between income level and marital stability among married women in Sokoto State was positive and significant. This result is in line with the observation by Adejare (2018), who noted that socio-economic status determines stability of many couples in order to improve their standard of living of the family. Similarly, the findings contrast with Bala (2018), who highlighted that occupational prestige can force young girls into sexual activity before they are physically and emotionally mature, leading to severe health consequences.

Despite this, the result aligns with Social Exchange Theory, which posits that relationships are assessed through a cost-benefit analysis. According to this theory, if the perceived rewards from a relationship outweigh the costs, the relationship is likely to be maintained; otherwise, it may dissolve. Costs in a relationship might include effort, financial expenditure, time, or diminished self-esteem, while rewards might involve pleasure, satisfaction, and financial support. The theory

integrates elements from behavioural theories, suggesting that behaviors are learned through conditioning, and cognitive theories, which account for psychological factors such as attention, memory, and reproduction. Bandura's concept of reciprocal determinism asserts that behavior and the environment influence each other, moving beyond the idea that behavior is solely shaped by the environment, and suggesting that behavior can also impact one's surroundings.

The findings from hypothesis four indicated that income level is a more effective predictor of marital stability compared to the educational attainment and occupational prestige among married women in women's centers in Sokoto State. This observation aligns with Giyan's (2014) study on parental socio-economic status and marital adjustment, which revealed that socio-economic factors significantly impact marital adjustment, while educational attainment negatively affects it. Adejare's study, conducted in Ido/Osi Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria, utilized a descriptive design to demonstrate that socio-economic status (income level) plays a crucial role in marital adjustment. This finding supports Social Learning Theory Model (SLTM) proposed by Bandura (1977), which emphasizes the importance of observation, imitation, and modeling in learning behaviors. Bandura's theory integrates elements from both behavioral and cognitive theories, focusing on how behaviors are learned through conditioning and psychological factors such as attention, retention, reproduction, and memory.

The findings are consistent with Mensch's (2016) research, which highlighted that in many parts of Africa, including Nigeria, factors like educational attainment, occupational prestige and income level significantly influence marital arrangements. Mensch's study noted that these cultural and economic factors could lead to marital stability. However, these results diverge from Social Exchange Theory, which posits that relationships are maintained based on a subjective cost-benefit analysis. According to this theory, if the perceived rewards outweigh the costs of being in a relationship, it is likely to be sustained; otherwise, it may end. In this context, socio-economic status and its impact

on marital stability may not align with the cost-benefit framework outlined by the theory.

## Conclusions

Conclusion drawn from this study showed that relationship between educational attainment and income level was positive and significant. Based on the findings there is need for parents' to encouragement and empowerment of girls into education and skills for self-confidence, assertiveness, speaking out, decision making and negotiation. On the part of the family members, counsellors have to make them realize the importance of giving their children equal opportunities in life, and the danger involved in giving the male child proximity against the female.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings from the analyzed data, the researchers made the following recommendations;

1. Parents should be encourage their female children to be educated since educational attainment has positive and also significant relationship with marital stability.
2. Public members of the society and government can contribute by organizing forum and talk shows on media like TV, Radio and other social media platforms encourage married women to participate in better occupation since it has influence in marital stability.
3. Since income level is not a better predictor of marital stability, married women should be encourage to involve in one skill or the other to contribute and improve their family social economic status.

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