

Full Length Research Paper

Marital adjustment of working class and non-working class women in Port Harcourt metropolis, Nigeria

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Accepted 18 September, 2012

This paper examines the marital adjustment of working class and non-working class women in Port Harcourt metropolis in Rivers State, Nigeria. The survey research design was used for the study. The sample consisted of three hundred (300) subjects selected through multi-stage random sampling procedure from four selected suburbs- Oroworokwo, Rebisi, Ogbunabali, and Orogbum in the Port Harcourt metropolis. Data was collected using the Marital Adjustment Questionnaire that was constructed by the researchers. Independent t-test statistics was used to test the first and second hypotheses while analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the third hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Results showed that both working class and non-working class women exhibit no clear difference in their marital adjustment. The educational attainment of women does not affect their marital adjustment. Women who are of low income status exhibit the same degree of marital adjustment as those of high income status. The implications of the findings are discussed.

Key words: Nigeria, working class women, marital adjustment, educational attainment.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria as a nation is striving to maximise its potential by the year 2020 thus, is undergoing series of transformations in socio-economic, cultural, scientific and educational spheres as well as in the traditional roles of women. This transformation has affected the traditional roles of women; the traditional roles expected of Nigerian women over the years have been childbearing and domestic roles. Nigeria women have been involved in the labour force in occupations such as farming, trading, weaving. Others who had acquired some skills through training or apprenticeship before marriage, through use of these skills earn a living that assists their families, when they become married; they become self-employed or enter into partnership with their husbands (Ordu and Igbude, 2006).

Wadri (2010) asserts that one of the reasons behind polygamous families in some African societies was the desire for wives and children who will serve as cheapest

form of labour in the responsibilities and demands in the home. Girls learn how to cook and take care of the little ones and also acquire domestic skills from their mothers. It has been observed that from the traditional setup of the family that economic activities was closely connected to the home, in recent times, some changes have taken place which have affected the administration of the family. Whether women are farmers or traders or have paid employment, their economic and administrative role in the family forms a vital part of their self image. They are no longer just "housewives" or "mothers" alone but attached to specific economic activities which give them security and autonomy. These changes have created new economic opportunities for women, thus the status of women have been affected and is now increasingly receiving attention globally (Ordu and Igbude, 2006).

Adegoke (1987) asserted that there is sufficient evidence in literature to show that there are drastic changes in female labour force involvement in developing countries, Nigeria inclusive. The launching of women educational programme in 1987 has demonstrated its commitment to the cause of women to have equal

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opportunities in their educational and national aspirations. Education has led to the acquisition of new values and ideas, which in turn led to a change in both the family structure and social system hence enables them to be gainfully employed and subsequently become income earners thereby assisting their husbands financially, participate in various endeavours outside the home and finally assist in planning for their families. Estimates from the 1991 census gives the statistics that at least 25% of Nigerian women are in the work force (Osiruemu, 2004a), women are now involved in various facets of human endeavour such as teaching, nursing, banking, health workers, doctors and a host of others as a result of educational attainment. Smart and Smart (1980) in their study of couples with varying education levels found that educated couples place higher value on talking things through with their spouses and children, they believed in the importance of expressing and accepting the feelings and opinions of spouses and children. Orden and Bradburn (1968) had a different view, they found that among less educated there is an increase in tension and sociality.

In the traditional African society, the woman is seen in the traditional role of childbearing/rearing and prowess at the domestic front (Osiruemu, 2004b), thus, it is erroneously believed in some quarters that educated women tend to be proud, disrespectful to their husbands and parents, do not make good wives and are not interested/committed to their homes. The reverse is the case, the education of a woman not only improves her occupation-farming, fishing, weaving and pottery skills but it also improves her childbearing and rearing roles leading to greater marital adjustment. It is the opinion of Chikezie (1992) that education and employment opportunities for women give rise to proper education, discipline, training and care of the children, while Ordu and Igbude (2006) asserts that the more highly educated a woman is, the more she can command a higher market value, earn a better wage and get more interesting/challenging jobs which in turn can impact on the woman's self-esteem. According to Bartley et al. (2007), two sources of income from the couple in a marriage relationship makes for greater economic stability, greater protection from against financial disaster, relieves husbands from the responsibility of being sole breadwinners and provides the wives with satisfaction from work outside of the home. However it is their view that work-family demands can place a strain on the marriage relationship.

Most non-working mothers are full time housewives who spend most of their time at home attending to their children, husband and domestic chores, they have the freedom to go about their day at will and can come home whenever they like to attend to their home, this is where they differ from working class women/mothers who are under the authority of a boss at work hence, cannot go home at will. According to Rogers and May (2003), the

quality of marriage and job satisfaction is inter-related; increase in marital happiness is significantly related increase in job satisfaction and increase in marital unhappiness significantly related to decreasing job satisfaction. Nathawat and Mathur (1993) found that in respect of marital adjustment, working women reported significantly better marital adjustment and subjective well-being than housewives; they also scored higher than housewives in general health, life satisfaction and self-esteem measures. Lloyd (1980) that found that socioeconomic status is a contributing factor to marital adjustment, they believed that the higher the income, the lower the chance of a divorce. Within the working class women, Kausar (2003) in a study of personality traits and socioeconomic status as predictors of marital adjustment in working women discovered that the difference between marital adjustment of working women of low, middle and high socioeconomic background was not statistically significant thus, it can be deduced that marital adjustment of working class women was not dependent on their socioeconomic background, rather the personality trait of the woman was a factor in her marital adjustment.

Much has not been done to enhance and protect marital adjustment of women, whether working class or not, thus, there have been threats to family structures and peaceful family existence. It is worthy of note that for Nigeria to move forward, its core values within families hence, communities must be preserved and secured. It is against this background that the researchers have undertaken this study to investigate the implications of different levels of education of a woman and her working outside her home on her marital adjustment.

For the purpose of this work, working class women refer to women who have paid employment outside the home while non-working class women refer to women who are full time housewives.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses have been formulated to guide the study.

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the marital adjustment of working class and non-working class women.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the marital adjustment of women with low or high income status.

Ho₃: There is no significant difference in the marital adjustment of women with different educational levels.

METHODOLOGY

Design

A survey research design was used for the study to assess the marital adjustment of working class and non-working class women in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Table 1. t-test analysis of difference in marital adjustment between working class and non-working class women.

Group of women	N	X	SD	df	Calculated t value	Critical t value
Working class	150	68.76	25.61			
Non-working class	150	70.56	22.71	298	-3.16	1.96
Total	300					

Table 2. t-test analysis of difference in marital adjustment between women with low and high income status.

Income status	N	X	SD	df	Calculated t value	Critical t value
Low	125	72.50	59.14			
High	175	80.65	24.56	298	-10.32	1.96
Total	300					

Population

The population consisted of 96,000 working class and non-working class women in Port Harcourt (Local government population and census bureau, Port Harcourt City Council, 2009).

Sample

From the population, a sample size of three hundred (300) subjects were randomly selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure from four suburbs- Oroworokwo, Rebisi, Ogbunabali, Orogbum in the Port Harcourt metropolis.

Instrumentation

The researchers designed a marital adjustment questionnaire to collect data for the study, the instrument was pilot tested in Etche, a local government area in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The test-retest reliability gotten was 0.86 and the content validity 0.88. There are 30 items in the questionnaire, it has a four point scale ranging from strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree.

Administration

The questionnaires were administered and collected by the researchers after been filled by the respondents.

Data analysis

Data was analysed using independent t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical technique.

RESULTS

The calculated t-value is (-3.16) is less than the critical value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance, $df = 298$. The null hypothesis is thus accepted. The implication is that there is no significant difference in the marital adjustment of working class and non-working class women.

The calculated t-value is (-10.32) is less than the critical value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance, $df = 298$. The null hypothesis is thus accepted. There is therefore no significant difference in the marital adjustment of women with low and high income status. Both groups show a high degree of marital adjustment.

The calculated f value is (1.795) is less than the critical f value (1.85). The result shows that there is no significant difference in the marital adjustment of women with different educational levels. Thus the null hypothesis is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The result of the first research hypothesis (Table 1) showed that there is no difference in the marital adjustment of working class and non-working class women as measured by the marital Adjustment Questionnaire. Wright (1978) in his research supports this finding; he concluded that both women who work outside in the home and full time housewives have benefits and costs attached to them. However, Adegoke (1987), Nathawat and Mathur (1993) and Rogers and May (2003) are of the view that working class women are generally more satisfied with their lives and marriage than non-working women. The difference between these findings could be attributed to cultural differences.

The second hypothesis sought to find out if there was any difference in marital adjustment of women with low and high income status. The results (Table 2) revealed that there was no significant difference in the marital adjustment of both categories of women. The work of Kausar (2003) found that within the working class women, the socioeconomic background was not a statistically significant factor in their marital adjustment; it is deduced from this study that their personality traits played a greater role in their marital adjustment than their socioeconomic background. This finding does not agree

Table 3. One way analysis of variance in marital adjustment of women of different educational qualifications.

Source of variance	SS	df	MS	Calculated f value	Critical at 0.05
Between groups	1504.24	109	315.65		
Within groups	42125.41	290	171.82	1.795	1.85
Total	43629.65	299			

with the studies of Lloyd (1980) that found that socioeconomic status is a contributing factor to marital adjustment. They believed that the higher the income, the lower the chance of a divorce. A woman who shares the responsibilities of the home with her husband is more likely to develop a philosophy of life that favours higher degrees of personal freedom of thought, expression, action and social relationships.

The third hypothesis examined if there is no significant difference in the marital adjustment of women with different educational levels. The results showed that women irrespective of their educational qualification enjoy equal marital adjustment (Table 3). Thus this means that all educated women, working class or not are equally stable to marital issues. This agrees with the study of Smart and Smart (1980) that educated couples place higher value on talking things through with their spouses and disagrees with the finding of Orden and Rradburn (1968) that among less educated there is an increase in tension and sociality.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study are useful information that can identify important dimensions of marital adjustment as it affects working class and non-working class women, their level of education and their income status.

The findings of this study have implications for working class and non-working class women, their husbands, parents, counsellors and the society. One of the findings of this study is that working class and non-working class women enjoy equal marital adjustment. This implies that having paid employment either in the public or private sector, been a business person or a full time house wife does not disrupt a woman's family; thus a woman's degree of marital adjustment depends on how she handles her family such as attention to her husband, her children and communication/interaction in the home and the society at large. Working class or non-working class women despite the environmental pressures in the home can always create a good atmosphere for their marital adjustment.

It was found that women of various educational qualification attainments enjoy equal marital adjustment. This implies that education enhances marital adjustment of women; it also implies that literacy contributes to marital adjustment. Education enhances marital adjust-

ment, it enhances their communication skills enabling them talk over their problems/sources of conflict, enhance their reasoning ability and ability to logically arrive at solutions to conflicts. Counsellors can use this information to assist couples with marital difficulties.

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