

DIFFERENTIAL ASSAY OF DYADIC ADJUSTMENT AMONG NEWLY WED INDIVIDUALS IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the differences in dyadic adjustment of newly wed individuals based on some demographic factors. Descriptive survey approach was adopted for the study. One hundred and forty-six (146) newly wedded individuals selected through a purposive sampling technique participated in the study. Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale ($\alpha = 0.91$) was used to collect data. Independent t-Test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to analyse data. The findings revealed that significant differences existed in the marital adjustment of participants on the account of gender differences ($t = 4.24$; $P < 0.01$), age at marriage ($F_{(2, 145)} = 5.907$; $P = 0.003$) and educational level ($t = 2.207$, $P = 0.03$). The findings were discussed and it was recommended that attempts at enhancing marital adjustment should focus on women, people with early and late marriage, as well as low level of education who were found in this study to be more susceptible to marital maladjustment.

Keywords: *dyadic adjustment, maladjustment, age at marriage, gender, educational level, marital stability*

Introduction

Marriage in African setting is not only a must but also a means through which successful life achievement is measured. Hence, the beginning of a marriage is mostly marked with celebrations and lots of expectations by the partners involved. Those who fail to marry both voluntarily or otherwise are often looked at with pity by the society and viewed as socially unsecured. Therefore, to avoid all kinds of social diffidence, societal disparagement and meet societal expectations in life, people endeavour to marry. Even those who fail in one marriage attempt to remarry.

In spite of the importance attached to marriage globally and in Africa specifically, the wedlock of two people in heterosexual marriage is not without several challenges. Such difficulties encountered principally at early stage of marriage are largely traceable to heterogeneous makeup of man such that individuals who are joined together in marriage have to face the temperamental, cultural, social, economic, academic, sexual, communication disparities and the like in their partners. Apart from relational issues with spouse, other demands which are strange to partners in marriage also create

stress to marital relationship. Such demands include but are not limited to work-family strain, in-laws, childrearing and other social obligations which from time call for more time, energy, and resources. Such experiences repeatedly need behavioural modifications to achieve the desired satisfaction in marriage. It, therefore, follows that partners in marriage who are able to adapt to new demands of marriage are able to forge ahead and experience expected satisfaction. To those who do not meet their expectations in wedlock, the marriage becomes a phantasmagorical experience and can consequently affect the psychological wellness, marital stability, economic well-being and interpersonal relations. It could, therefore, be said that for marriage to be peaceful and blissful, some measures of adjustments are needed by partners in matrimony.

Researchers had in the past made efforts to give a clear-cut definition of the concept dyadic adjustment which is also known as marital adjustment. However, opinions of researchers seem to vary with each viewing the concept in relation to his/her field of study. This of course has affected the ways the psychological construct is measured and different outcomes obtained. Some researchers have used the term marital quality, satisfaction and adjustment synonymously and refer to it as a subjective appraisal of married couple's relationship (Lewis and Spanier, cited in Cited in Heydarian and Amanuelahi, 2015); a subjective contentment in the marriage union (Hendrick and Hendrick, cited in Raeisipoor, 2013); and the condition in which there is usually a sensation of delight and satisfaction among couples in their marriage and with each other (Hashmi, Khurshid and Hassan, 2007).

On the other hand, earlier researchers like Burgess and Cottrell (1939) defined marital adjustment as the amalgamation of the couples in marital relationship in which the two personalities involved are not just joined together or submerged, but interrelate to complement each other for mutual satisfaction and the achievement of common goals. In addition, Locke and Wallace (Makvan, 2014), conceptualised marital adjustment as accommodation of husband and wife to each other at a given time. Spanier and Cole (cited in Makvan, 2014) observed that marital adjustment is a course of action of which the end-product is contingent upon the amount of troublesome marital differences, interpersonal strains and personal anxiety, marital satisfaction, dyadic cohesion and consensus of matters of importance to marital functioning.

A careful perusal of the meanings of marital adjustment above and viewing the concept and a process as hypothesized by Spanier and Cole (Makvan, 2014), it could be deduced that some authorities defined marital adjustment in terms of its expected end, that is, the happiness married individuals derived from their union (Hendrick and Hendrick, in Raeisipoor, 2013; Hashmi *et al*, 2007). On the other hand, other researchers (Burgess and Cottrell, 1939, Locke and Wallace, in Makvan, 2014) focused on the processes involved in getting the desired satisfaction in marriage that is adaptation to situations surrounding marital relationship. The current study is in line with focusing on the extent at which the individuals in marriage are able to cope with problematic situations they experience in their marriage.

The importance of marital adjustment at the early stage of marriage could not be ignored. This is due to the fact that available research evidence has suggested that more

than half of marital breakups arise within the first seven and eight years of conjugal relationship (Snyder, *et al.* cited in Mihalceaa, Iliescub and Dinc, 2013). Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2002) gave a similar statistics with the claim that marriages are breaking up earlier than how it used to be with 38% breaking apart within four years and 50% within seven years. This possibly might be due to inability of the individuals in marriage to adjust to the experiences of emotional turmoil and relational hardship which often occur as couples live and get to understand each other in their new matrimonial atmosphere. In the view of Jalovaara (cited in Ghoroghi, Hassan and Baba, 2015), the price of marital breakup is high for couples who have lived together for a long time and have invested so much in their relationship. Therefore, a consideration of those investments can hinder such couples from separation.

In addition, researchers have found a U-shaped form of dyadic adjustment (Patrick, *et al.* cited in Ghoroghi, *et al.* 2015) suggesting that adjustment to marital relationship increases at early stage of marriage but weakens during the course of life and eventually picks up later in life. Likewise, the study of Jalovaara (in Ghoroghi, *et al.* 2015) as well as Peleg (cited in Karkhaneh, Farhang, Jazayeri, Soleimani, Bahrami and Fatehizade, 2016) revealed that duration of marriage significantly determines the level of dyadic adjustment. This implies that the longer the length of marriage, the higher the level of adjustment. It could, therefore, be inferred that therapeutic efforts toward marital adjustment is much needed at early stage of post-nuptials. Hence, adjustment at early stage of marriage is an issue and adequate research is needed in this regard.

While much research might have been carried out on the antecedents of marital adjustment and therapies have been developed towards enhancing marital qualities (e.g. Eбенуwa-Okoh, (2008), Esere Yusuf and Omotosho (2011), Jamabo and Ordu (2012); Ghoroghi, *et al.* (2015;), a study of some demographic difference in marital adjustment is believed to be essential in order to identify the vulnerable groups. Such identification would help the therapists and marriage counsellors develop corrective packages that will facilitate marital adjustment. As an adjunct to this, studies on most of these demographic variables are not conclusive as many research outcomes give conflicting results. In the light of this, more comparisons of demographic variables which underline marital satisfaction are needed.

Investigation of gender disparities in marital relationship has been recommended for researchers who are interested in studying marital relationship (Berscheid, cited in McGinley, 2009). This could be due to the fact that rigours of marital interaction are perceived to bite harder for one gender type than the other. Hence, researchers who support gender differences in conjugal relationship hinged their view on gender theory which submits that the difference in marital satisfaction or otherwise is not a function of biologically (sex) determined responsibilities attached to male and female individuals but a result of socially (gender) prescribed tasks allotted by the society which helps specify apposite roles for each gender (Zvonkovic, *et al.* cited in McGinley, 2009). It is the dominant culture of individuals that impose expected responsibility on male and female. Unfortunately, this culture often protects the interest of one group but put the other under submission and coercion (Ferree, 2010). For

instance, many cultures of the world have assigned authority to the men and made women to be helpmeets, home keepers and complementary income provider (McGinley, 2009). Therefore, adherence to such assumption may put women in undue marital stress than their male counterparts.

Research on gender difference in marital adjustment is not conclusive. For example, while Ebinuwa-Okoh (2008) found no significant association between marital adjustment and gender disparity, Ai Horany and Hassan (2011) discovered significant difference between male and female individuals in their marital adjustment. Particularly, Nema (2013) found significant difference in dyadic adjustment among middle age adults with men scoring high on the measure of marital adjustment. The study of Goel and Narang (2012) showed that although there might be dissimilarity in the marital adjustment of married individuals across gender, the difference lies on the indicators of marital adjustment. For instance, in their study, Goel and Narang found high level of recreational adjustment among women compared to men and better group oriented attitude among men in contrast to women.

There is equally diversity in research outcomes on the levels of educational attainment and dyadic adjustment. The study of Jamabo and Ordu (2012) among married women showed that the educational attainment of women did not affect their marital adjustment. This suggests a non-significant different result. Brown and Lin (2012), however, found inverse association between the level of academic attainment and marital dissolution. This means that individuals with higher level of education are less likely to divorce. Jose and Alfons (2007) equally found that the higher the level of academic attainment, the higher the

probability of sexual difficulties (an index of marital adjustment) among couples.

In addition, Barikani, Ebrahim and Navid (2012) discovered higher level of marital maladjustment among people with lower level of education. Also, the study of Heaton (2002) revealed that more educated women were less likely to experience marital breakups (which might result from lack of adjustment). Based on the study of Hashmi, Khurshid and Hassan (2007), highly educated (above graduate) individuals sustained less stress and were free from depression arising from marital relationship than educated (graduate) women. Contrary, Harkonen and Dronkers (2006) found that women with higher formal education were liable to marital maladjustment compare with their equals of lower level of education. Still in the opposite, Tucker and O'Grady (cited in Juhari, Sahrani and Mastor, 2014) found that the marital satisfaction among couples on the basis of educational level is a consequence of if the two married individuals have similar level of education regardless of whether their level of their educational attainment is high or low. This contradiction in empirical reports of marital adjustment and educational level, therefore, calls for further investigation.

The necessity of considering the age at marriage while studying marital relationship was spelled out by Burchinal (cited in Alder, 2010) why postulating that factors which have inverse correlation to marital satisfaction such as low education, premarital pregnancy, shorts period of courtship, personality maladjustment and low socio-economic background are associated with age at time of marriage. Hence, researchers who also compared the marital relationship of individuals in marriage on the basis of age at marriage concluded that the age at marriage predicts

the stability of marriage (Vaishnavranja 2010; Arshad, Mohsin and Mahmood (2014)). Specifically, among women, Akhani, Ratthi and Mishra (1999) found that women who married at advance age showed enhanced marital adjustment than women who marry early. Rotz (2011) also found strong association between age at marriage and likelihood of marital breakup.

The study of Vaishnavranja (2010) found dissatisfaction to be higher for individuals who married at early age. In addition, Arshad *et al.* (2014) found a significant difference on the marital adjustment of married individuals on the account of age at marriage. People who married very early were found to elicit low dyadic adjustment on the measure of marital adjustment. The study conducted by Booth and Edwards (cited in Alder 2010) found curvilinear correlation between stability in marriage and age at marriage such that those who married early (below the age of twenty) sustained high level of marital maladjustment. Those who married in their twenties showed lowest level of marital maladjustment while those who married later than twenties scored high in measure of marital maladjustment similar to those with early marriage.

On the contrary, Jose and Alfons (2007) found an inverse association between age at marriage and marital adjustment such that the older the individual at the first marriage, the lesser the adjustment towards the marriage. Hence, middle aged adults were suspected to demonstrate greater adjustment problems. Alder (2010), however, found no statistically significant correlation between age of marriage and marital adjustment.

The current study, therefore, sought to examine differences in dyadic (marital) adjustment of newly wed individuals across some demographic factors vis-a-vis gender,

age at marriage and level of educational attainment.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of alpha.

1. There is no significant difference in the dyadic adjustment of newly wed individuals with respect to sex differences.
2. There is no significant difference in the dyadic adjustment of newly wed individuals on the account of age at marriage.
3. There is no significant difference in the dyadic adjustment of newly wed individuals on the basis of level of educational attainment.

METHODOLOGY

The design employed in this study was descriptive survey method in which the opinions of the respondents were collected. This method gives opportunity of eliciting information from a large sample of participants without necessarily manipulating any variable.

The participants engaged in the study were one hundred and forty-six (146) married literate individuals in Oyo State, Nigeria, whose date of marriage fell within five years (sixty months). A purposive sampling technique was adopted for selecting the participants. A breakdown of participants' bio-data information showed that 63(43.2%) were male while 83(56.8%) were female. Their age ranged between 18 years and 43 years with the mean age of 29.8. Based on age at marriage, 24(16.44%) married at age 20 years and below, 78 (53.42%) married between ages 21 and 30 years while the rest 44(30.14%) married at age 31 years and beyond. In addition, 69(47.26%) and 77(52.74%) of the respondents were of Islamic and Christianity

religions respectively. Based on level of educational attainment, 57 (39.04%) and 89(60.96%) had Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) and below and NCE and above in that order. In relation to their job status, 17(11.64%) were yet to be employed, 28(19.18%) were self-employed, 92(63.01%) were salary earners while 9(6.16%) fell within “others” category.

The measuring instrument adopted for data gathering is the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale developed by Locke and Wallace (1959) to measure the level of marital adjustment. The scale has been widely used and cut across the ages with cultural adaptability (Sperry, 2004). It is a 15-item instrument designed to measure involvement of married individuals in joint activities, demonstration of affection, frequency of marital complaints, level of loneliness and wellbeing as well as partners agreement on significant issues. The 15-items were answered on a variety of response scales with maximum score 158 and minimum score 36. Higher score indicates well adjusted marital relationship. It is a validated instrument. The internal consistency reliability of the instrument using Cronbach alpha is 0.91. Demographic information of the participants was sought at the section A of the instrument.

The study was carried out in Ogbomoso and Oyo area of Oyo State,

Nigeria. The participants were approached in their various offices with letter of consent. The inclusive criteria include being married within five years of which marriage should not be less than six months. Also, the level of education should not be below senior secondary school certificate. In addition, participation was voluntary. In relation to age, participants should not be younger than 18 years. Two friends of the researcher who were trained in the administration of the instrument served as the research assistants. The administration and collection of the research instrument took a total period of two weeks. Out of one hundred and sixty (160) questionnaires sent out, 146 were properly filled while others may either not be returned or not properly filled. The researcher, therefore, had 91.25 percent of instrument administration. Two major statistical methods were used to process the information obtained for the study. They were Independent t-Test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Results

The first hypothesis stated that “There will be no significant difference in the dyadic adjustment of newly-wed individuals with respect to their sex differences”

The hypothesis was subjected to statistical scrutiny. The result is as stated in Table 1.

Table 1: Showing comparison of Dyadic Adjustment of Newly-wed Individuals Based on Gender

Variable	No.	X	SD	F	t.cal	Mean diff.	T.sig
Male	63	93.52	14.63	14.4	4.24	9.37	p < 0.01
Female	83	84.16	12.03				

Going by the result in Table 1, significant difference occurred in marital adjustment of participants based on their gender differences. This is because the calculated t-value ($t_{\text{cal.}} = 4.24$) is significant at 0.05 level of alpha. Male participants scored higher ($\bar{x} = 93.52$; $SD = 14.63$) than the female ($\bar{x} = 84.16$; $SD = 12.03$). The hypothesis of non-significance could, therefore, not be upheld. The

implication is that males are more easily adjusted than females in their dyadic relationship.

The second hypothesis “there will be no significant difference in the marital adjustment of newly-wed individuals based on age at marriage” is also tested using ANOVA. The result is presented in Table 2(a).

Table 2 (a): Showing differences in Marital Adjustment based on Age at Marriage

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2157.997	2	1078.999	5.907	.003
Within Groups	26119.242	143	182.652		
Total	28277.240	145			

The Table 2(a) above shows that age at marriage constituted a significant variation in dyadic adjustment of newly-wed participants. This is due to the fact that calculated value ($F_{(2,145)} = 5.907$; $p = .003$) is significant at alpha level of .05. Therefore,

the hypothesis of no significant could also not be confirmed.

To ascertain where differences lie on the marital adjustment of participants based on age at marriage, a Post hoc analysis was carried out with the help of Scheffe. The result is shown below.

Table 2(a): Showing post hoc Analysis of Differences in Marital Adjustment based on Age at Marriage

S/N	Age of Marriage	No	X	SD	1	2	3
1.	20 years and below	24	81.42	11.48		*	
2.	21 – 30yrs	44	91.50	13.61	*		
3.	31 years and above	78	86.05	12.09			

NB * Significant difference exists.

The post hoc analysis shows that significant difference in marital adjustment existed between individuals who married between the age of 20years (early marriage) and those who married between 21 and 30 years. However, no significant difference existed between those who married between age 20 years and below and those who married between age 31 years and above. Also those who married between age 21 and 30 years and 31 years and above were not significantly varied in their marital

adjustment. These findings suggest that individuals with early marriage and those who married very late found it difficult to adjust to their marriage compared with those who married at their middle age.

Subjecting the third hypothesis “There will be no significant difference in the marital adjustment of newly-wed individuals based on level of educational attainment” into statistical examination, the result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Showing comparison of Marital Adjustment Based on Levels of Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	No.	X	SD	Df	t.cal	Mean Difference	Sig
Low (NCE and Below)	57	85.05	11.86	144	2.207	5.16	0.03
High (Above NCE)	89	90.21	14.88				

Hypothesis 3 is not accepted because the calculated t-value ($t_{\text{cal}} = 2.207$; $p = 0.03$) is significant at 0.05 level of alpha. The participants with higher level of education (above NCE) showed more evidence of marital adjustment ($x = 90.21$; $SD = 14.87$) than those equals with low level of education (NCE and below; $x = 85.05$; $SD = 11.86$). This implies that dyadic adjustment is a function of level of education such that individuals with higher level of education would be more adjusted than those with lower level of education

Discussion of Findings

The major aim of this study was to find out whether notable variation exists in the marital adjustment of newly married individuals based on some demographic variables (gender, age at marriage and educational level). The outcomes of this study revealed that significant difference occurred between males and females in their expression of dyadic adjustment with male participants scoring high on the measure of marital adjustment. The outcome of the study confirmed the earlier study of Ai Horany & Hassan (2011) and Nema (2013) which found differences in the marital adjustment of married individuals. The study, however, contradicted Ebenuwa-Okoh (2008) who found no significant association between marital adjustment and gender differences. The outcome of the current study could be linked to traditional gender role ideology which places undue stress and responsibilities on women in terms of home keeping, maternal care and assistant resource

provider with men given only the duty of mainly breadwinning. This traditional ideology is still being much observed in the part of the world where the study was carried out. Men seem to enjoy much of the dividends of marriage while women bear the brunt of its rigours. Besides, women most often are still blamed for most of the malfunctions noticed in the family. These might have accounted for the differences observed in the dyadic adjustment of couple who are newly-wed on the account of disparity.

The study equally found that differences exist in the marital adjustment of newly-wed individuals on the basis of age at marriage. The outcome of the study is in tandem with Vaishnavranja (2010) and Arshad *et al.* (2014) who found that age at marriage determines the status of marital relationship. It, however, negated the finding of Alder (2010) who discovered no significant association between age at marriage and marital adjustment. Specifically in this study, the difference revealed a curvilinear type such that marital maladjustment was high for individuals who married early, low for individuals who married at marriageable age of between 21 and 30 years and eventually begin to pick up for individuals with late marriage (30 years and above). This form of difference is in consonance with the study of Boot and Edwards (in Alder 2010) who established a curvilinear relationship between age at marriage and marital stability.

The low level of marital adjustment found among individuals who married early (20 years and below) could be linked to both emotional competence and the level of Intelligent Quotient (I.Q). Normally, people in this category are just graduating from adolescence with notable emotional dwindling feature; limited level of experience and mental ability that cannot cope with rigours associated with marriage. This might constitute the reason for poor ability to adjust to dyadic relationship. However, the reduction in the level of marital adjustment of individuals with late marriage compared to those who married at “normal age” (21 – 30 years) could be linked to frustration which might be encountered in the process of their marriage. Normally, individuals with late marriage might have encountered a considerable number of breakups in courtship and may be *forced* to marry their spouses not necessarily because of love but because of age not being in their favour. In addition, the length of courtship of those who married late may be too short such that they may not find time to study each other’s behaviour for the fear of further breakups of relationship. On the other hand, the courtship may be too long to give rooms for unresolved conflict which could be further brought into marital relationship. All these are potential reasons why maladjustment may be experienced among people with late marriage.

It was also found in the current study that the level of education constituted a difference in the level of marital adjustment among newly-wed individuals. The study differs with Jamabo and Ordu (2012) that no significant difference occurred on marital adjustment of individuals in relation to their educational level. The study nevertheless agreed with Heaton (2002), Jose and Alfons (2007), Brown and Lin (2012) and Barikani

et al (2012) that the level of marital relationship of individuals are not statistically the same on the account of educational level. Individuals who are more educated are assumed to develop higher level of intelligence to cope with stress relating to marital affairs. In addition to this, the educational attainment is believed to influence certain factors that may have direct influence on marital adjustment. Such factors include financial adequacy, social-exposure, effective communication, division of household chore, emotional intelligence, and acceptance or rejection of traditional stereotypes and such others. This might form the basis of differences observed in the current study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The outcomes of this study shows that significant differences occur on the basis of gender differences, age at marriage as well as educational level on dyadic adjustment of newly-wed individuals. Specifically, couples with early and late marriages and individuals with lower level of education are found to be more predisposed to dyadic maladjustment. Hence, therapeutic measure at enhancing marital adjustment should be targeted at these vulnerable groups. Behaviour change agents and marriage counsellors should enlighten individuals on the negative side-effects of early and late marriage on future of the marriage. Furthermore, traditional gender role ideology believed to place women under undue disadvantage in relation to their marital happiness should be discouraged.

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