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### Impact of marital discords on young couples in colleges of education in Nigeria

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#### Abstract

Marriage as a social and universal institution recognized and respected all over the world and which is usually contracted amidst joy, happiness and merry making among couples, family members and friends is face with lots of challenges. This research work investigated the impact of Marital Discords on Young Couples in Colleges of Education, Nigerian. Experimental research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study comprised of young couples in the 85 accredited Colleges of Education in Nigeria. Eight (8) Colleges were used as sample schools for the study and a total of 240 conflicted and devitalized young couples in the eight sampled Colleges served as sample size for the study; 120 served in the experimental group and another 120 for control group. Three sets of research instrument were developed and used for this study (a baseline questionnaire which assisted the researcher in selecting the devitalized and conflicted couples for the study, relationship education training manual, and a Pre-test Post test questionnaire were also used in answering the research questions and also tested the null hypothesis). Descriptive statistics were used in answering the research questions. The Null hypothesis was tested using Independent t-test statistics at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Findings from the study were presented and meaningful recommendations were made base on the results.

**Keywords:** Marriage, marital discord and young couples

#### Introduction

Marital Discord is a situation that disrupts or interferes with the smooth interaction and relationship among members of a family. This can be between the two parents or between parents and their children (Agboeze, 2004)<sup>[2]</sup>. Discord may be as a result of lack of trust, drunkenness, lack of dialogue, lack of respect, joblessness and idleness (Nwankwo, 2007)<sup>[14]</sup>. It comes in form of fights, quarrels, spouse battering, child abuses and child molestation. It can result to a bad atmosphere in the home, separation or even divorce. Kim and Leung (2000)<sup>[12]</sup> opined that the existence of marital discord in a family is not necessarily bad, because there are some discords which produce positive outcomes. Discord occurs between two or more people who disagree on certain issue that threatens their respective goal, values or needs. For instance, when the resources needed to meet the family needs and aspirations are not adequately made especially when the expenditure is greater than the income, this condition can result to conflict among family members. Marital discord allows relational partners to express important feelings and to devise creative solutions to problems. Rochlkepartain (2003)<sup>[17]</sup> noted that the family and its structure play a great role in children's academic performance, while a conflicting family is another factor that determines the children's level of academic performance.

Marital discord can be defined as an active quarrelling or conflict resulting from misunderstanding between a husband and a wife (DeMaris, 2000; Waite & Gallagher, 2000)<sup>[8, 19]</sup>. Discord among young couples is a strong predictor of marital dissolution that usually occurs due to general lack of emotional fulfillment (Ononuju, 2004)<sup>[15]</sup>. Coontz, (2005)<sup>[6]</sup> reported that marital discord occurs because the society has a set of unwritten norms that guide marital relationships and the responsibilities of the men and women in those relationships. Amato and Hohmann-Marriot, (2007)<sup>[3]</sup> and Bhatt (2008)<sup>[4]</sup> opined that any marriage contracted without proper guidance and planning may likely result in discord. However, when effective and adequate guidance are giving to young couples and to-be couples, this may help in reducing some of the marital discords that may likely occur among them.

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Young couples are seen as two persons of the opposite sex who agreed to live together for the rest of their life time as husband and wife and whose marriage life is between one to ten (1-10) years, whose life experience and maturity are considered as early, tender, having little experience (Adams, 2010; Tabat, 2019) <sup>[1, 18]</sup>. Looking at how in-experienced young couples are, the chances of experiencing discord are high. Hence the impact of such discords may have serious consequences on the marital relationship of couples, that is what this research study intends to investigate.

**Statement of the Problem**

The family institution (marriage) which is the basic unit of social organization is being threatened by marital discord particularly among young couples in Nigeria and this could be due to lack of adequate and effective discord management skills. Coontz (2005) <sup>[6]</sup> opined that any marriage contracted without proper guidance and planning may likely result in discord. Besides, marital discords in the study areas are causing serious damage in many homes as some of these parents produce off-springs that may likely pose danger to the society; this could be seen where children of these parents have become school drop-outs, some have given birth to out-of wedlock children while others indulged in other antisocial activities (Namka, 2008) <sup>[13]</sup>.

In fact, marital discord among young couples in the study areas has substantially contributed to social condition that threatened the foundation of the society, culture and potential for economic prosperity including dramatic increased in delinquent and illegal behaviours. Discord among couples in the study area has led to juvenile and adult incarceration, illegal drug use, and risky sexual activities, declining academic performance, physical and mental health concerns and also increase in poverty. This has ravaged and devastated many families and also permits little opportunity for respect among young couples. In addition to this, marital discord in the study area is causing great distress for couples thereby putting them at risk for developing higher levels of depression and anxiety and other diseases like hypertension (Tabat, 2019) <sup>[18]</sup>.

The researcher was motivated into researching on this topic due to the frequent occurrence of discord among young couples in Nigeria. This was observed during the researcher’s internship experience. The researcher was impelled by the different marital cases that were handled among which includes the case of infidelity between an officer and his female staff, mistrust among couples, sexual assaults, lack of commitment and selfishness among couples to mention but a few. All these problems if allowed to go on uncontrolled, will not only affect the couples concerned but the whole society.

In the light of the cited problems, it can be asserted that young couples and to-be couples in the study area may be ignorant of the significance and impact of marital discord. Therefore, this research study is carried out in order to find out the

impact of marital discord among young couples in Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were answered:

1. What are the causes of marital discords among young couples in Colleges of Education in Nigerian?
2. What are the impacts of marital discords on young couples in Colleges of Education?

**Research Hypothesis**

This study formulated and tested one null hypothesis:

**Ho:** Marital discord has no significant impact on young couples in Colleges of Education

**Methodology**

Experimental research design was adopted for the study. A population of Eighty five (85) accredited Colleges of Education in Nigeria was used. Eight (8) out of the eighty five Colleges were used as sampled Colleges for the study. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting two hundred and forty (240) devitalized and conflicted young couples from the eight sampled Colleges and this served as sample size for the study. These subjects were randomly selected and assigned to experimental and control groups respectively.

A structured questionnaire was developed by the researcher and was also validated by experts. The questionnaire was designed to elicit quantitative information to address the said research questions and the hypothesis. A reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained. Data analyzed were based on two hundred and forty copies of the questionnaire that were correctly filled and returned. The questionnaire contained information on causes and impact of marital discord on young couples. The questionnaire was designed in a 4-point rating scale format with Strongly Agree = 4, Agree =3, Disagree =2 and Strongly Disagree =1. In the course of answering the research questions, “strongly agree” and “agree” were classified as “agree or significant”. Similarly, “strongly disagree” and “disagree” were also classified as “disagree or insignificant”. Descriptive statistics (frequency, mean and standard deviation) was used in analyzing the research questions. The hypothesis was tested using t-test statistics. For the smooth conduct of this research work, four trained research assistants were employed and these helped in the distribution and collection of the filled questionnaire.

**Results and Discussion**

**Research Question One**

What are the causes of marital discord among young couples in Colleges of Education?

The analysis of data generated to determine the causes of marital discord among young couples of Colleges of Education is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Analysis of Respondents on Causes of Marital Discord

S. No	Item/statements	Responses categories				Total Agree	Total Disagree	Mean	Decision
		SA	Agree	D	SD				
1.	Sex is the major cause of discord in my home	80	78	60	22	158	82	2.90	Agree
2.	Economic level of my spouse (finance problem)	116	64	4	56	180	60	3.10	Agree
3.	My spouse’s religious belief	16	24	74	126	40	200	1.71	Disagree
4.	Differences in educational level	22	18	104	96	40	200	1.86	Disagree
5.	Age differences	10	26	86	118	36	204	1.73	Disagree
6.	Poor communication skills	92	68	64	16	160	80	2.98	Agree
7.	Narcissistic personality style (having no regard for other	96	106	28	10	202	38	3.20	Agree

	people's feelings, absence of guilt)								
8.	My spouse's infidelity (cheating)	60	138	20	22	198	42	2.98	Agree
	Cumulative mean					1014	906	2.6	

Decision mean = 2.5

Table 1 results revealed that 1,014 was the total scores of couples who agree that sex, finance problem, religious belief, level of education, poor communication skills, narcissistic personality style of spouse and infidelity were some of the major causes of marital discord while those who were in disagreement had a total score of 906. Also the cumulative mean was 2.6 >2.5 benchmark of agree. This implied that sex, finance problem, poor communication skills, narcissistic personality style of spouse and infidelity were the main

causes of marital discord among young couples of Colleges of Education, Nigeria.

**Research Question Two**

What are the impacts of marital discord on young couples in Colleges of Education, Nigeria?

The analysis of data generated to determine the impacts of marital discord on young couples in Colleges of Education is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Analysis of Respondents on Impact of Marital Discord

S/No	Item/statements	Responses categories				Total Agree	Total Disagree	Mean	Decision
		SA	Agree	D	SD				
1.	Loss of spousal confidence	80	78	60	22	158	82	2.90	Agree
2.	Poor emotional health of spouse	116	64	4	56	180	60	3.00	Agree
3.	High rates of juvenile challenges	96	106	28	10	202	38	3.20	Agree
4.	Escalation of social vices	60	138	20	22	198	42	2.98	Agree
5.	Physical assaults	140	56	32	12	196	44	3.35	Agree
6.	Negative mentoring for children	72	72	60	36	144	96	2.75	Agree
7.	Poor academic achievement by children	92	68	64	16	160	80	2.98	Agree
8.	Poor nutritional status of children	64	104	60	12	168	72	2.92	Agree
9.	Cumulative mean					1406	514	3.01	

Decision mean = 2.5

Table 2 showed results on analysis of respondents on impact of marital discord among young couples. The result indicated that all the respondents agreed that loss of spousal confidence, poor emotional health of spouse, high rates of juvenile challenges, escalation of social vices, physical assaults, negative mentoring for children, poor academic achievement by children and poor nutritional status of children are some of the possible consequences of marital discords among young

couples in Colleges of Education, Nigeria.

**Test of Null Hypothesis**

**Null Hypothesis One:** Marital discord has no significant impact on young couples.

Independent t- test statistics was used to test this hypothesis and the results are shown in Table 3

**Table 3:** Analysis of respondents on impacts of marital discord on young couples (Experimental vs. Control)

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	Std. Err	df	T calculated	T critical	Sig (p)
Impact of marital discord	Experimental	120	9.7833	3.41031	.44027	118	3.603	1.96	0.000
	Control	120	7.7667	2.67675	.34557				

Calculated p < 0.05, calculated t > 1.96 at df 118

Table 3 analyses revealed that, calculated p value of 0.000 was lower than 0.05 alpha level of significance and also the calculated t value of 3.603 was greater than 1.96 critical t value at df 118. The calculated mean value of the two groups also confirms this difference where 9.7833 and 7.7667 were recorded for experimental and control groups respectively, their respective standard deviations also indicated this difference. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that marital discord has no significant impacts on young couples was therefore rejected.

**Discussions of Major Findings**

The research study was to determine the impacts of marital discord on young couples in Colleges of Education, Nigeria. Two groups of respondents were used in relation to the causes and impact of marital discord among young couples. In order to achieve the stated objectives of the study, two research questions were raised and a null hypothesis was postulated and tested. The interpretations of both the descriptive and inferential analyses were done, and detailed discussions of the findings were enunciated thus:

The findings in Table 1 revealed that main causes of marital discord among young couples in the study areas were sex related issues, finance problem, poor communication skill, narcissistic personality style and infidelity.

The findings in Table 2 and 3 revealed that loss of spousal confidence, poor emotional health of spouse, high rates of juvenile challenges, escalation of social vices, physical assaults, negative mentoring for children, poor academic achievement by children and poor nutritional status are some of the impacts of marital discords among young couples in Colleges of Education.

Brody, Stoneman and McCoy, (1994) [5]; Erel and Burman (1995) [7] pointed out that marital discord is associated with poorer parenting, poorer child adjustment problematic attachment to parents, increased likelihood of parent-child conflict, and conflict between siblings (Kerr, 2010; Owen & Cox, 1997) [16]. Marital discord is also associated with negative health and mental health outcomes for children, including depression, poorer health, poorer academic performance, and increased problems with aggression (Fincham & Beach, 1999) [9]. Marital discord has negative

influence on children; in fact it is associated with increased risk of future marital discord for offspring (Grych & Fincham, 2001)<sup>[10]</sup>. Children from discord family naturally lack interest and love for others. They grow up to be aggressive because their growing home has never showed them love; hence aggression is all they know. Most of them are never law abiding as they never saw law and order in their homes at their growing stage (Ononuju, 2004)<sup>[15]</sup>.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that marital discord has negative impact on the marital relationship of young couples. Hence, couples who experienced intense marital discord exhibited high negative or loss of spousal confidence, poor marital communication, lack of mutual respect between partners, decrease honesty between partners, intense argument, poor emotional health of spouse, high rates of juvenile challenges, escalation of social vices, physical assaults, negative mentoring for children, poor academic achievement by children and poor nutritional status.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommendation made:

1. Religious leaders should enact effective laws on all intending couples on the need to undergo thorough and effective marital training before getting married so as to equip them with adequate skills in managing marital discord.
2. Marriage seminars, workshops and talk-show should be conducted regularly by specialist and religious leaders on possible causes and impact of marital discords among couples.
3. The Government at all level should enact law where regular and free seminar on marital relationship be held so as to enable couples manage or curb with some of the marital discord that may likely arise in their marriage homes.
4. Curriculum planners should include marital issues in the curriculum of tertiary institutions as some of these couples married within this period of schooling. This will go a long way in equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills on marital discord and ways of resolving discords before graduating.
5. Parents should provide effective marriage guidance to their children even before getting into marriage contract. Also, children needs to be well matured in age and experienced in marital issues before contracting any marriage so as to avoid premature divorce resulting from complications from discords.
6. Couples who are experiencing intense marital discords should open up and also try to share their ordeal as doing that will help in addressing the problem and also serve as a guide to other couple that may likely experience similar problems in their marriage lives.

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