

Statistical Evaluation of Emotional and Social Stress Influence on Marital Adjustment among Married Couples in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Marital adjustment among couples is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that can be significantly influenced by various factors, including emotional and social stress. In Ekiti state, Nigeria, where cultural expectations and socioeconomic pressures can overwhelm couples, testing their marital resilience. This study evaluates the influence of emotional and social stress on marital adjustment among married couples in Ekiti state, Nigeria. A survey of 1000 married couples from 10 Local Government Areas, in Ekiti state was conducted. The instrument's reliability was validated using Cronbach's Alpha Index (0.75), which is considered moderately high. Data analysis was performed using SPSS Package (Version 23). The Mode and Percentage were used for the descriptive aspect, while the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test and Kruskal-Wallis Test, an alternative to T-test and ANOVA respectively were used in testing the hypothesis. Results reveal that married couples show resilience in handling emotional and social issues. They struggle with sleeping incomparability, adjusting to spouse's friends and managing fear of uncertainty. Married couples also face challenges balancing parenting responsibility, prioritizing job over relationship and adjusting to in-law interference. The study identified the following factors as contributors to the influence of emotional and social stress on marital adjustment. The factors include; age of Spouse, length of marriage, number of children, educational Status and occupation of spouse. Emotional and social stress play a critical role in marital adjustment. Couples, policymakers, and marriage counsellors can benefit from this research by promoting healthy marital relationships.

Keywords: Emotional and Social stress, Factors, Influence, Marital Adjustment

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INTRODUCTION

Marital adjustment is a critical aspect of married life, as it determines the quality of the relationship between spouses (Burr, 1973). According to Bertoni *et al.* (2020), marital adjustment is a multidimensional indicator of the quality of marital relationships. Sinha and Mukerjee (1990) define marital adjustment as, the state in which there is an overall feeling between husband and wife, of happiness and satisfaction with their marriage and with each other. It, therefore, calls for experiencing a satisfactory relationship between spouses characterized by mutual concern, care, understanding and acceptance. Sequel to these definitions, as Lasswell & Lasswell (1982) points out,

“understanding the individual trait of the spouse is an ongoing process in marriage; because even if two people know each other before or at the time of marriage, there is a possibility that people change during the life cycle. “Hence, marital adjustment calls for maturity from an individual and this process comprehends development, growth and change in the partner”. It also highlights the importance of the relationship itself, rather than individual characteristics or traits. It's about interactions, communication, and dynamics between partners. Navneet. (2022) opines however that, the disability of persons to adjust with their partners due to problems that

lead to inappropriate coping and marital issues may result in marital maladjustment, which according to Beeney *et al.* (2019), can be predicted by the presence of four negative interaction patterns, known as the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse": criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling. These patterns can lead to a decline in marital satisfaction and an increase in conflict. For example, Bradbury and Karney (2014) found that couples who experience high levels of stress, have poor communication skills, and lack emotional intimacy are more likely to experience marital maladjustment. In other words, when the husband-wife relationship is disturbed, the emotional relationship of the family is also affected.

Stress is generally a factor that is capable of prompting marital adjustment. Researchers over a long period have been studying the impact of stress on marital adjustment. In a research study carried out on marital adjustment, stress and depression among working and non-working married women, Hashmi, Khurshid and Hassan (2007) found a significantly higher relationship between marital adjustment, depression, and stress among women. In other words, stress and depression could stimulate marital adjustment among women. However, various factors can influence marital adjustment, including emotional and social stress.

Emotional stress refers to the psychological tension and anxiety that individuals experience in response to perceived threats or demands (Shadiya, 2015). A Couple's perception or thought of the negative attributes of their spouse may act as stressors. In this case, it results in a decreased feeling of closeness, and sharing, intimacy, and affection will be impaired.

Social stress, on the other hand, arises from interactions with others, including family members, friends, and the community (Cohen *et al.*, 2015). It is an important factor alongside emotional stress that influences adjustment among couples. For instance, the disparities in educational attainment among husband and wife may lead to adjustment difficulties. Navneet (2022) attributed infidelity, whether suspected or real, on the part of the wife, is especially prone to resulting in severe violence against women. A husband can go to any extent to punish his wife for this kind of act. Consequently, both emotional and social stress could influence marital adjustment among couples resulting in either temporary or permanent relationships among couples.

Research has shown that emotional and social stress can have a significant impact on marital adjustment. For instance, a study by Kelley *et al.* (2018) found that financial stress, a type of emotional stress, was negatively related to marital quality. Similarly, a study by Karimi *et al.* (2017) found that social stress, including conflicts with in-laws, was a significant predictor of marital adjustment among Iranian couples. In Nigeria, where the present study is situated, research has also highlighted the impact of emotional and social stress on marital adjustment.

For example, a study by Adebowale (2017) found that emotional stress, including anxiety and depression, was a significant predictor of marital satisfaction among Nigerian couples. Despite these Results, there is a dearth of research on the specific impact of emotional and social stress on marital adjustment among married couples in Ekiti State, Nigeria. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the influence of emotional and social stress on marital adjustment in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Objectives

Many researchers, including, Aroyewun *et al.* (2017) paid attention to psychological factors in marital satisfaction among married couples in Benin City, Nigeria. However, this study is purposely carried out to:

1. Reveal how couples adjust to social and emotional stress in Ekiti State, Nigeria.
2. Determine the influence of age of couples, age of couples at the time of marriage, length of marriage, number of children by couples, educational status and occupation of spouse on marital adjustment among couples in Ekiti state.
3. Determine the significant difference between emotional and social stress influence on marital adjustment among couples in Ekiti state.

Hypothesis statements

H₀₁: There is no statistical significance between the influences of the age of couples, the age of couples at marriage, length of the marriage, number of children by couples, educational status and occupation of a spouse on marital adjustment among couples in Ekiti state.

H_{A1}: There is statistical significance between the influences of the age of couples, the age of couples at marriage, length of the marriage, number of children by couples, educational status and occupation of a spouse on marital adjustment among couples in Ekiti state.

H₀₂: There is no statistical significance between emotional and social stress influence on marital adjustment among couples in Ekiti state.

H_{A2}: There is statistical significance between emotional and social stress influence on marital adjustment among couples in Ekiti state.

Research questions

1. How do married couples adjust to social and emotional stress in Ekiti State, Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of the age of couples, the

age of couples at the time of marriage, length of the marriage, number of children by couples, educational status and occupation of a spouse on marital adjustment among couples in Ekiti state?

3. What is the influence of emotional and social stress on marital adjustment among couples in Ekiti state?

METHODOLOGY

Population of the study

The target population of this study contains all married couples who are living together in Ekiti State. Ekiti State is in southwest, Nigeria, bordered to the North by Kwara State, to the Northeast by Kogi State, to the South and Southeast by Ondo State, and to the West by Osun State. Ekiti State was formed from a part of Ondo State in 1996 and has its capital as the city of Ado-Ekiti (Ekiti State, 2023). One of the smallest states in Nigeria, Ekiti is the 31st largest in area and 30th most populous with an estimated population of nearly 3.3 million as of 2016 (Population 2006-2019", (List of States by Population, 2023). The State enjoys a tropical climate with two distinct seasons. These are the rainy season (April–October) and the dry season (November–March). Temperature ranges between 21° and 28 °C with high humidity. The southwesterly wind and the northeast trade winds blow in the rainy and dry (Harmattan) seasons respectively. Tropical forest exists in the south, while savannah occupies the northern peripheries. (Ekiti State, 2023). Ekiti State consists of sixteen Local Government Areas. They are: Ado-Ekiti, Ikere, Oye, Aiyekire, Efon, Ekiti East, Ekiti South-West, Ekiti West, Emure, Ido-Osi, Ijero, Ikole, Ilejemeje, Irepodun/Ifelodun, Ise/Orun, and Moba.

Sample and sampling techniques

The population under study included civil servants, private individuals and self-employed that are in the state. The sample selected covered ten (10) local government areas out of the Sixteen (16) local government areas in the state. 1000 individuals i.e. 500 couples were sampled. From the 10 local government areas, 5 towns were selected randomly and 20 individuals (i.e. 10 married couples) from each town were also selected using both Multi-stage and Convenience sampling techniques. A total of 1000 individuals were taken and questionnaires were administered.

Instrument for data collection

Adapted Questionnaires on marital adjustment based on the influence of emotional and social stress were used. Information on age, gender, age at marriage, number of

children, length of marriage, level of education and occupation of couples were collected. Modified Likert-type questions with 4-point responses which included "Always", "Frequently", "Occasionally" and "Rarely" were contained in each of the Likert-scale questions for respondents to pick. These responses were coded 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The questionnaires were subjected to a validation process by a number of experts in the area of marriage counseling.

Validity and reliability test

A pilot survey of 100 questionnaires was carried out for a reliability test using the Cronbach Alpha method. The reliability index was 0.75 which was considered moderately high enough.

Method of data analysis

Data entry, editing, cleansing, coding and analysis were done by SPSS version 23.0. Descriptive Statistics (Average, Mode and Percentage), Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, an alternative to the T-test and Kruskal-Wallis Test, an alternative to ANOVA (because of the categorical nature of the Likert-scale data) appropriately engaged in the hypothesis testing, were employed to achieve the objectives of this research.

Kruskal-Wallis Test

Kruskal-Wallis Test (Kruskal & Wallis, 1952) is a non-parametric statistical test used to compare more than two independent groups to determine if there are significant differences between them. This test is an extension of Wilcoxon rank-sum test (Wilcoxon, 1945) and is used when the assumptions of parametric tests, such as normality and equal variance in One-Way Analysis of variance (ANOVA) are not met. The test assumes observations are independent and measured on an ordinal scale.

Model of Kruskal-Wallis Test

Kruskal-Wallis test model can be represented as follows:

H_0 : There is no significant difference between the groups.
 H_1 : There is significant difference between at least one pair of groups.

The test statistic, H , is calculated using the following formula:

$$H = \frac{12}{N(N+1)} \sum \frac{R_i^2}{n_i} - 3(N+1);$$

Where:

N is the total sample size;

Table 1: General demographic details of respondents.

Characteristics		Frequency	Percent %	Mode	Average
Age	Under 20	2	0.2		
	20-30	124	12.4		
	31-40	355	35.5		
	41-50	412	41.2	Mode	-
	Over 50	107	10.7		
Gender	Male	500	50.0		
	Female	500	50.0	No mode	-
Age at marriage	Under 20	186	18.6		
	20-30	408	40.8	Mode	-
	31-40	361	36.1		
	Over 40	45	4.5		
Length of marriage	Less than 1 year	47	4.7		
	1-5 years	257	25.7		
	6-10 years	192	19.2		-
	11-15 years	172	17.2		
	More than 15	332	33.2	Mode	
Education level	Primary Certificate	105	10.5		
	Senior School Certificate	184	18.4		-
	Tertiary Certificate	711	71.1	Mode	
Occupation	Self-employed	325	32.5		
	Private worker	240	24.0		-
	Public worker	435	43.5	Mode	
Number of Children	0	16	1.6		
	1	115	11.5		
	2	223	22.3		
	3	339	33.9	Mode	2.91
	4	234	23.4		
	5	41	4.1		
	6	32	3.2		

R_i is the sum of ranks for the i th group;
 n_i is the sample size of the i th group.

Demographic details of respondents

Details of the socio-demographic backgrounds of the respondents are presented in (Table 1). 41.2% which represents the highest percentage of respondents were drawn from the age 41-50 years. This represents the middle age for both spouses and at this period, the spouses are becoming better experienced in the dynamics of emotional and social stress, which can impact marital adjustment. The gender was balanced at 50% each (500 husbands and 500 wives) in line with the composition of the respondents for the study. It also reflected no gender bias.

Meanwhile, a significant number of respondents married between 20-30 years suggesting achieving better results because of its relatively higher chance of influencing emotional and social stress in the marriage impacting marital satisfaction and adjustment. A higher percentage of respondents (33.2%) had been married for more than 15 years. Married couples for longer periods might have better-coping mechanisms for stress due to their experience. Again, the majority of respondents have a tertiary certificate which might often equips individuals with better communication and problem-solving mechanisms.

It can support handling social stress and improving marital adjustment, thereby helping in achieving purposeful results on the study. Furthermore, it was revealed that the majority of respondents (43.5%) were public workers. Being a public worker might provide job stability, reducing financial stress which positively impacts marital adjustment. However, occupational stress might set in which also affects marital harmony. All these details about the demographic variables were supported in the study by Kamp Dush *et al.* (2008) in psychological well-being across the life course.

RESULTS

The percentage and modal responses by the respondents about how they adjusted to emotional stress is shown in (Table 2). It showed that the respondents frequently adjusted to emotional stress relating to items i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, ix and xi, as indicated by both modal and percentage responses to the items. Nonetheless, it was shown that they rarely adjusted to emotional stress regarding items vii, x, and xii. Items "vii" and "x" indicated that they found it hard adjusting to the sleeping patterns of their spouses and prioritized their relationship with their spouse although they didn't dislike the company of some of their spouse's friends while items "xii" indicated that they rarely adjusted to fear of uncertainty in the next stage in the relationship, particularly during empty nest transition (children leaving

Table 2: Modal and percentage responses of the respondents regarding how couples adjust to emotional stress.

S/N	Items	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Always	Modal Response	Remarks
		Percent %	Percent %	Percent %	Percent %		
i	You and your spouse do communicate effectively	8.4	22.8	34.1	33.9	Frequently	Frequently
ii	Trusting your spouse completely	6.4	22.6	45.7	25.3	Frequently	Frequently
iii	Having a satisfying intimate relationship with your spouse	8.1	24.0	34.1	33.8	Frequently	Frequently
iv	Resolving conflicts peacefully with your spouse	6.6	14.3	41.7	37.4	Frequently	Frequently
v	You and your spouse Support each other during difficult times	16.2	15.0	36.5	32.3	Frequently	Frequently
vi	Feeling your spouse is better parent than you	17.8	24.0	35.0	23.0	Frequently	Frequently
vii	The Sleeping pattern of your spouse	56.3	10.8	17.2	15.7	Rarely	Rarely
viii	Feeling of loneliness whenever you and your spouse are separated for a few days	14.4	26.5	37.1	22.0	Frequently	Frequently
ix	Having feeling that you could have more happily married to somebody else apart from your spouse	9.9	18.6	66.9	4.6	Frequently	Frequently
x	Dislike some of your spouse's friends, but only indulge them because of your love for your spouse	43.7	23.1	20.4	12.7	Rarely	Rarely
xi	Feeling unhappy whenever you think of the future with your spouse	3.3	16.0	68.7	12.0	Frequently	Frequently
xii	Having fear of uncertainty in the next stage in the relationship as the children are growing up and about to be out of the house	64.3	16.3	10.9	8.5	Rarely	Rarely

Table 3: Modal and percentage responses of the respondents regarding how couples adjust to social stress.

S/N	Items	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Always	Modal Response	Remarks
		Percent %	Percent %	Percent %	Percent %		
i	Your extended family's opinions impact your relationship	9.3	31.7	55.0	4.0	Frequently	Frequently
ii	Balancing time between your families is a challenge to you	15.2	40.9	41.0	2.9	Frequently	Frequently
iii	Your cultural backgrounds affect your marital adjustment	18.4	35.5	40.3	5.8	Frequently	Frequently
iv	Respect for each other's cultural traditions	18.0	20.8	40.0	21.2	Frequently	Frequently
v	Financial stress impacts your relationship	17.1	30.1	38.0	14.0	Frequently	Frequently
vi	Able to manage finances together effectively	27.1	23.7	29.3	19.9	Frequently	Frequently
vii	Support from friends and family positively influences your marriage	15.2	32.6	43.6	8.5	Frequently	Frequently
viii	Meeting societal expectations adds pressure to your relationship	39.2	46.8	8.5	5.5	Occasionally	Occasionally
ix	Your spouse prioritizes your relationship over external expectations	22.5	23.8	35.9	17.8	Frequently	Frequently
x	Going to parties/clubs with my spouse	25.4	30.4	30.2	14.0	Occasionally	Occasionally
xi	Making time for each other despite your busy schedules	25.5	26.4	27.7	20.4	Frequently	Frequently
xii	Your spouse liking his/her job more than he/she likes you	57.3	19.3	16.1	7.1	Rarely	Rarely
xiii	Your mother-in-law who lives around interferes in your family affairs	5.0	19.4	70.6	5.0	Frequently	Frequently
xiv	Your father-in-law who lives around interferes in your family affairs	82.0	12.1	3.7	2.2	Rarely	Rarely
xv	Your brother-in-law who lives around interferes in your family affairs	80.1	14.5	2.7	2.7	Rarely	Rarely
xvi	Your sister-in-law who lives around interferes in your family affairs	3.2	14.4	79.0	3.4	Frequently	Frequently

Source: SPSS Output

home). Results in (Table 3) show that respondents indicated that they frequently adjusted to the social stress in items i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, vii, viii, ix, x, xi, xiii, and xvi. However, the respondents rarely adjusted to social stress relating to items xii, xiv, and xv as given by the modal and percentage responses in the table. In other words, the

respondents rarely adjusted to social stress such as adjusting to a spouse liking his/her job more than he/she likes his/her partner, and father-in-law or brother-in-law who lives around interfering in the family affairs. The Significant difference (at 0.05) of the influence of age, gender, age at marriage, length of marriage, number of

Table 4: Summary of hypothesis test of the influence of demographic characteristics on marital adjustment of couples in Ekiti State with respect to emotional stress.

S/N	Emotional Stress Influence on Marital Adjustment	Significance	Age of Spouse	Gender of Spouse	Age at Marriage	Length of Marriage	No of Children	Education Status of Spouse	Occupation of Spouse
i	You and your partner do communicate effectively	p-value Remark	0.000 Sig.	0.062 N. Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.
ii	Trusting your partner completely	p-value Remark	0.000 Sig.	0.0512 N. Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.
iii	Having a satisfying intimate relationship	p-value Remark	0.000 Sig.	0.927 N. Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.
iv	Resolving conflicts peacefully	p-value Remark	0.000 Sig.	0.081 N. Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.
v	Supporting each other during difficult times	p-value Remark	0.000 Sig.	0.229 N. Sig.	0.001 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.
vi	Feeling your spouse is better parent than you	p-value Remark	0.000 Sig.	0.238 N. Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.018 Sig.	0.000 Sig.
vii	Sleeping pattern of your spouse	p-value Remark	0.002 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.
viii	Feeling of loneliness whenever you and your spouse are separated for a few days	p-value Remark	0.006 Sig.	0.011 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.
ix	Having feeling that you could have more happily married to somebody else apart from your spouse	p-value Remark	0.000 Sig.	0.050 N. Sig.	0.003 Sig.	0.006 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.
x	Dislike some of your spouse friends, but only indulge them because of your love for your spouse	p-value Remark	0.001 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.352 N.Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.
xi	Feeling unhappy whenever you think of future with your spouse	p-value Remark	0.000 Sig.	0.891 N. Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.018 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.019 Sig.
xii	Having fear of uncertainty in the next stage in the relationship as the children are growing up and about to be out of the house	p-value Remark	0.000 Sig.	0.018 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.305 N. Sig.

Source: SPSS Output; **Note:** "N. Sig" and "Sig" means "Not Statistically significant" and "Statistically significant" respectively

children, education status and occupation of spouse on marital adjustment of couples with respect to emotional stress using Kruskal-Wallis test at 5% significance level is shown in (Table 4). The table showed that the age of the spouse, age at marriage, length of marriage, number of children, education status and occupation of the spouse were all statistically significant influences of emotional stress on marital adjustment of couples in Ekiti state. However, the gender of a spouse is not statistically significantly different from adjusting to items (i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, ix, and xi) of emotional stress.

It is only significant to items vii, viii, x, and xii i.e. the sleeping pattern of your spouse, feeling of loneliness whenever you and your spouse are separated for a few days, sleeping pattern of your spouse, feeling of loneliness whenever you and your spouse are separated for a few days and having fear of uncertainty in the next stage in the relationship as the children are growing up and about to be out of the house; Again, influences of a number of children by couples and occupation of a spouse on adjusting to issues of disliking some of their spouse friends, but only accommodate them because of their love for their spouse and having fear of uncertainty in the next stage in the relationship as the children are growing up and about to be out of the house respectively, were not significant. Test of significant difference (at 0.05 significance level) between

influences of age of spouse, gender of spouse, length of marriage, number of children, education status and occupation of spouse and marital adjustment of couples with respect to social stress using Kruskal-Wallis test at 5% significance level is shown in (Table 5).

The results revealed that influences of age at marriage, length of marriage, education status and occupation of spouse were statistically significantly different from all items of social stress on marital adjustment itemized in the table. While, the influence of the age of spouse and age at marriage were statistically significantly different from all items except items iii, and ix respectively. Number of children is not statistically significantly different from items xi and xv. However, the influence of gender of spouse was not statistically significantly different from items i, iv, v, vi, vii, viii, ix, x, xiii, xiv, xv, xvi and xvii but statistically significant from items ii, iii, xi and xii.

Table 6 reveals a test of significant differences of emotional stress on marital adjustment among couples using One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test, at significance level of 0.05. It indicated that all items of emotional stress examined here have significant differences from marital adjustment at a 0.05 significance level. This implied that the influence of emotional stress is significant in marital adjustment among couples in Ekiti state.

Table 5: Summary of hypothesis test of the influence of demographic characteristics on marital adjustment of couples in Ekiti State with respect to social stress.

S/N	Social Stress Influence on Marital Adjustment	Significance (2-sided)	Age of Spouse	Gender of Spouse	Age at Marriage	Length of Marriage	No of Children	Education Status of Spouse	Occupation of Spouse
i	Your extended family's opinions impact your relationship	p-value Remark	0.000 Sig.	0.666 N. Sig.	0.021 Sig.	0.004 Sig.	0.053 N. Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.
ii	Balancing time between your families is a challenge to you	p-value Remark	0.002 Sig.	0.014 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.038 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.008 Sig.	0.000 Sig.
iii	Your cultural backgrounds affect your marital adjustment	p-value Remark	0.141 N. Sig.	0.015 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.012 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.002 Sig.	0.002 Sig.
iv	Respect for each other's cultural traditions	p-value Remark	0.000 Sig.	0.541 N. Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.001 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.
v	Financial stress impacts your relationship	p-value Remark	0.011 Sig.	0.281 N. Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.032 Sig.	0.000 Sig.
vi	Able to manage finances together effectively	p-value Remark	0.009 Sig.	0.370 N. Sig.	0.015 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.
vii	Support from friends and family positively influences your marriage	p-value Remark	0.000 Sig.	0.071 N. Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.001 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.
viii	Meeting societal expectations adds pressure to your relationship	p-value Remark	0.008 Sig.	0.128 N. Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.001 Sig.	0.011 Sig.
ix	Your spouse prioritizes your relationship over external expectations	p-value Remark	0.000 Sig.	0.300 N. Sig.	0.114 N. Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.
x	Going to parties/clubs with my spouse	p-value Remark	0.000 Sig.	0.377 N. Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.003 Sig.
xi	Making time for each other despite your busy schedules	p-value Remark	0.003 Sig.	0.009 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.002 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.
xii	Your spouse liking his/her job more than he/she likes you	p-value Remark	0.000 Sig.	0.020 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.047 Sig.
xiii	Your mother-in-law who lives around interferes in your family affairs	p-value Remark	0.000 Sig.	0.082 N. Sig.	0.001 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.021 Sig.
xiv	Your father-in-law who lives around interferes in your family affairs	p-value Remark	0.000 Sig.	0.638 N. Sig.	0.008 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.069 N. Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.025 Sig.
xv	Your brother-in-law who lives around interferes in your family affairs	p-value Remark	0.000 Sig.	0.140 N. Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.077 N. Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.001 Sig.
xvi	Your sister-in-law who lives around interferes in your family affairs	p-value Remark	0.001 Sig.	0.546 N. Sig.	0.008 Sig.	0.012 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.004 Sig.	0.000 Sig.
xvii	Your overall satisfaction with your marital relationship	p-value Remark	0.000 Sig.	0.852 N. Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.002 Sig.	0.006 Sig.	0.000 Sig.	0.000 Sig.

Source: SPSS Output. **Note:** "N. Sig" and "Sig" means "Not Statistically significant" and "Statistically significant" respectively

Table 6: Summary of hypothesis test of significance of emotional stress influence on marital adjustment in Ekiti State.

S/N	Emotional Stress Items	P-value	Decision	Remark
i	You and your partner do communicate effectively	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
ii	Trusting your partner completely	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
iii	Having a satisfying intimate relationship	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
iv	Resolving conflicts peacefully	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
v	Supporting each other during difficult times	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
vi	Feeling your spouse is a better parent than you	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
vii	The Sleeping pattern of your spouse	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
viii	Feeling of loneliness whenever you and your spouse are separated for a few days	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
ix	Having a feeling that you could have more happily married to somebody else apart from your spouse	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
x	Dislike some of your spouse friends, but only indulge them because of your love for your spouse	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
xi	Feeling unhappy whenever you think of the future with your spouse	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
xii	Having fear of uncertainty in the next stage in the relationship as the children are growing up and about to be out of the house	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant

Source: SPSS Output

The Test of Significant difference of social stress on marital adjustment among couples using One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test, at significance level of 0.05 is shown in (Table 7). It was discovered that social stress items were all statistically significantly different from marital adjustment among couples in Ekiti state.

DISCUSSION

Emotional stress impacting marital adjustment

Given the results regarding Table 1, respondents frequently adjusted to emotional stress relating to items i,

Table 7: Summary of hypothesis test of significance of social stress influence on marital adjustment in Ekiti State.

S/N	Social Stress Items	P-value	Decision	Remark
i	Your extended family's opinions impact your relationship	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
ii	Balancing time between your families is a challenge to you	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
iii	Your cultural backgrounds affect your marital adjustment	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
iv	Respect for each other's cultural traditions	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
v	Financial stress impacts your relationship	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
vi	Able to manage finances together effectively	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
vii	Support from friends and family positively influences your marriage	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
viii	Meeting societal expectations adds pressure to your relationship	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
ix	Your spouse prioritizes your relationship over external expectations	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
x	Going to parties/clubs with my spouse	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
xi	Making time for each other despite your busy schedules	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
xii	Your spouse liking his/her job more than he/she likes you	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
xiii	Your mother-in-law who lives around interferes in your family affairs	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
xiv	Your father-in-law who lives around interferes in your family affairs	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
xv	Your brother-in-law who lives around interferes in your family affairs	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant
xvi	Your sister-in-law who lives around interferes in your family affairs	0.000	Reject the null Hypothesis	Significant

Source: SPSS Output

ii, iii, iv, v, viii, ix, and xi as indicated by both modal and percentage responses of the items but rarely adjusted to items vii, x, and xii. Item "vii" indicated that they found it difficult to adjust to the sleeping incompatibility and style differences among the couples. There is the tendency to have sleeping disturbances which can negatively impact marital relationships among couples.

This is correlated with the study according to Laurel and Brittany (2014), in "Sleep pattern and marital satisfaction: *Journal of Student Research*", there is a significant association between better marital satisfaction and sleep pattern. Item "x" indicated that couples found it difficult to change their positive feeling towards the company of some of their spouses' friends because they love their spouses. This is in line with Fowers *et al.* (2015) in "social influence on marital satisfaction", who identified that social networks enhance marital satisfaction. Item "xii" indicated that couples hardly ever adjust to fear of uncertainty in the next stage of the relationship particularly during significant life transitions or empty nest transitions (children leaving home).

This implied that couples were adaptable and resilient in the face of change. In support of this, Chaudhary *et al.* (2020) in "empty nest syndrome, marital adjustment and coping strategies among mid-life Indian Couples", asserted a positive correlation found with coping strategies in males and females. However, item "vi" indicated that couples occasionally felt their spouses are more parenting than they are. This further entrenched the feeling of adequacy or equality in parenting responsibility between husband and wife in the state.

Social stress impacting marital adjustment

Results presented in Table 2 show that respondents indicated either frequently or occasionally adjusted to the social stress in items i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, vii, viii, ix, x, and xi, xiii, and xvi. However, the respondents rarely adjusted to social stress relating to items xii, xiv, and xv as given by

the modal and percentage responses in the table. These mean, that the respondents rarely adjusted to a spouse liking his/her job more than he/she likes his/her partner, and father-in-law or brother-in-law who lives around interfering in the family affairs. These statements suggest that spouses struggled to adapt to their partner prioritizing their job over their relationship, and their spouses found it difficult to cope with interference from their father-in-law or brother-in-law who lives around them.

In support of the above assertions, Vinayak *et al.* (2024) in "work-life Balance and Marital Satisfaction among Married Working Men and Women", discovered couples who manage their time very well will have better marital satisfaction. About father-in-law or brother-in-law who lives around interfering in the family affairs, Terry (2001) in in-laws and marital relationships, identified a negative correlation between fathers-in-law interference and marital adjustment while Kadiri & Akinkulolere, (2022) in "the effect of in-law interference on marriage: a case study of selected couples in Owo and Akure Local Government Areas, Ondo State, Nigeria", averred that in-law interference can lead to marital instability particularly when in-law overstepped their boundaries or offered unsolicited advice.

Significance of demographic characteristics on marital adjustment related to emotional stress

Age of spouse, age at marriage, length of marriage, number of children, education status and occupation of spouse were chief influences of emotional stress on marital adjustment of married couples (Table 4; P-value <0.05). This result correlates with the study by Orathinkal & Vansteewegen (2007), where the effects of certain demographic characteristics like age differences, education, occupation, socio-economic status, duration of marriage and number of children on marital adjustment were considered. However, the gender of a spouse is not

statistically significantly different from adjusting to effective communication between a couple ((Table 4; P-value >0.05), a sense of trusting the partner completely, having a satisfying intimate relationship, resolving conflicts peacefully and supporting each other during difficult times. Others include a feeling of having unequal parental responsibility, having a feeling of being more happily married to somebody else apart from one's spouse and feeling unhappy whenever thinking of the future with one's spouse comes up.

This shows that the gender of the spouse might not be the key influence of emotional stress even though it is significant in the sleeping patterns, feeling of loneliness whenever a married couple is separated for a few days and having fear of uncertainty in the next stage of the relationship as the children are growing up and about to be out of the house.

Also, the influence of a number of children is not key to adjusting to disliking some of their spouse's friends, but only accommodate them because of their love for their spouse. In the same manner, the effect of the occupation of a spouse on adjusting to fear of uncertainty in the next stage in the relationship as a result of an empty nest transition on marital adjustment is not also important.

Significance of demographic characteristics on marital adjustment related to social stress

In like manner, it was revealed that the influences of the age of the spouse, length of marriage, occupation and education of the spouse were all key factors of social stress (Table 5; P-value <0.05). This suggests that age of the spouse, length of marriage, occupation and education of the spouse have a significant influence on adjusting to social stress on marital adjustment among couples in Ekiti state. Meanwhile, the influence of gender of the spouse was not key in adjusting to respect for each other's cultural traditions and financial stress impacts on the marital relationship, additional pressure meeting societal expectations on relationship, going to parties/clubs with a spouse, interference of father-in-law or brother-in-law who lives around in family affairs (Table 5; P-value >0.05). In other words, gender may not necessarily be a significant factor in marital adjustment. This correlates to the studies by Kagitcibasi & Sunar, (1992) in cultural differences and marital satisfaction: a study of couples from different cultural backgrounds; Ebeunuwa-Okoh (2008) in personality variables as correlates of marital adjustment among married persons in Delta state, Nigeria and Dew & Bradford, (2017) in financial stress coping, and marital satisfaction: a longitudinal study. Similarly, age at marriage influence was not an important factor for spouse prioritizing their relationship over external expectations. A number of children was not a significant influence on the extended family's opinions on marital relationships and the father-in-law or brother-in-law who lives around in family

affairs (Table 4; P-value >0.05). This implies having more or fewer children does not necessarily lead to more or less interference from in-laws, and that other factors may be more influential in determining the level of external pressure on the marital relationship.

Significance of emotional and social stress on marital adjustment

It was revealed that the influence of emotional and social stressors examined were significantly different on marital adjustment (Table 6 & 7; Pvalue =0.000. ie. Pvalue < 0.05). This suggests that emotional and social stress are significant influences on marital adjustment among couples in Ekiti state. It means the issue of emotional and social stress must be taken seriously between husband and wife in order to have a peaceful home and marital satisfaction.

Conclusion

The Results presented in this study highlight the significant impact of emotional and social stress on marital adjustment. Couples show varying levels of adaptability to different stressors, with certain areas posing more challenges than others. It also highlights the interplay between emotional and social stress and marital adjustment among couples in Ekiti State. Married couples demonstrated a high ability to adjust to emotional stress associated with specific factors but faced difficulties with sleeping incompatibility and style differences, modifying their feelings towards their spouses' friends, reflecting the complexity of interpersonal relationships and fear of uncertainty, especially during significant transitions (empty nest transitions). It is also identified as a challenge for couples, the perception of unequal parenting responsibilities highlights an area that may require further exploration.

Again, married couples frequently face social stress such as the impact of extended family opinions, cultural background challenges, financial stress, and the pressure to meet societal expectations. These factors significantly affect their marital relationships, emphasizing the need for effective communication and mutual respect for cultural traditions. However, couples often navigate these challenges by prioritizing their relationship over external pressures, making time for each other, and seeking support from friends and family. In contrast, they struggle with issues such as spouses prioritizing their job over the relationship and interference from father-in-law or brother-in-law.

The study further identified factors such as the age of the spouse, length of the marriage, number of children, education status and occupation of spouse major contributors to influence of emotional and social stress on marital adjustment. Interestingly, gender did not show any

significant influence on the stressors. Age at which a person gets married does not significantly impact their ability to prioritize their relationship over external expectations. In other words, whether married at a young age or old age does not necessarily influence their ability to put their relationship first and resist external pressures. Also, number of children a couple has is not a significant factor in shaping extended family's opinions on marital relationship or the level of interference of in-laws in family affairs.

The study also underscores the critical role that emotional and social stress play in marital adjustment. It recognizes that addressing the stressors is essential for promoting healthier marital relationships. In conclusion, improving marital adjustment requires a focus on managing emotional and social stress, fostering open communication and supporting one another in navigating the complexities of marital relationships. Policymakers, mental health professionals and couples can benefit from these research by developing strategies to mitigate the effects of emotional and social stress on marital adjustment.

Recommendations

Consequent upon the Results, the following are hereby recommended:

1. Married couples experiencing emotional and social stress should seek therapy to develop coping strategies and improve their marital adjustment.
2. Married couples should prioritize communication and conflict resolution skills to manage emotional and social stress.
3. Married couples should also establish clear boundaries with extended family members to prevent undue interference and promote marital adjustment.
4. Married couples should strive for a healthy work-life balance to prevent prioritizing work over the relationship.

Suggestions for Future Research

In view of this study, subsequent study should increase the size of respondents. In addition, other factors such as environmental and economic stress should be included in the investigation.

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