

INFLUENCE OF INTIMACY AND PERSONAL HYGIENE ON MARITAL STABILITY OF MARRIED ADULTS IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of intimacy and personal care on marital stability of married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria. An ex-post facto research design was used in the study. The study used a sample of 352 respondents. Along with demographic data, these respondents completed questionnaires that included questions about intimacy, personal hygiene, and marital stability. Suitable, standard instruments were used to measure both the independent and dependent variables. Multiple regression and the independent sample t-test were used to assess hypotheses. The findings show that marital stability is highly predicted by intimacy. The findings indicate that spousal personal cleanliness strongly predicts marital stability whereas the number of children did not significantly influence marital stability. Additionally, the results demonstrate that the number of kids did not significantly predict marital stability. Furthermore, the results showed that, married adults' marital stability would fluctuate depending on their gender. However, there is no discernible difference in marital stability between men and women. We find that marital stability is predicted by both intimacy and personal hygiene. The study therefore concludes that spouse should consciously work on raising their standards of hygiene and marital love, among other things.

Introduction

The changes the institution of marriage has undergone over the past several decades make it imperative that we understand marital relationships (Niazi, 2019). The notion of "companionate marriage," which is a marriage characterized by a high degree of intimacy, affection, and empathy, allowing for a high quality and stable relationship, has emerged as a result of forces of modernization and globalization that are reshaping the nature and structure of marriage around the world (Bartelink, Longman and Bradley (2022); John, Seme, Roro and Tsui (2017). Family structures would alter in these civilizations when western economic systems were introduced through industrialisation in non-western contexts (Pesando, 2019). There will be an increase in "nuclear families," where the husband works for pay and the wife looks after the kids (Harijanto, A., Subanrio, Ma'akir and Susetyanto (2022). Families based on kinship and lineage systems will no longer exist. Similar to the west, global family patterns have undergone more complicated changes than a simple transition to a single

"nuclear family" Kuruczova, et al (2020). Interesting data, however, shows that the western family philosophy, with its focus on friendship and intimacy, is expanding around the world, even in environments with very little progress toward industrialization (Proctor, 2020). This is true despite all of these complexity.

The Sub-Saharan African environment is also showing more recent indications of changes in the character, structure, and function of marriage. For instance, the changes in the marital context that are currently being seen in some areas of Sub-Saharan Africa, such as later marriage as more women pursue higher education and careers, and increased involvement and say in mate selection, indicate significant shifts in social relations within the family, marriage, and labor market (Pondayi, 2020). The influence of the spouse is waning as a result of these adjustments, and marital relationships are more centered on love and friendship. Small-scale research that looked at the nature of marriage in Sub-Saharan Africa also came to the same conclusion. For instance, less conventional decision-

making and open communication were shown to be significant predictors of marriage quality in a research of Ghanaian males that examined correlates of marital stability (Bentil, 2021). A "modern marriage" is one in which, like in western marriages, individuals rather than families choose their spouses, despite the fact that there is still a lot of focus on traditionally families arranged marriages due to changes in economic arrangements and increased exposure to globalization Kuruczova (2020). In a similar vein, given earlier study findings, the gender variations shown in the structure of marital stability are likewise not entirely surprising. Gender disparities, as well as their absence, have been discovered in studies validating western scales in non-western contexts Lee and Han (2023) Jarvis, Gibby, Dufur and Pribesh (2021). Gender inequalities in the quality of marriage relationships have been documented in other contexts as well, despite earlier studies emphasizing the role greater equality has in boosting marital stability structures for the spouses. For instance, in western contexts, studies have emphasized how changes in gender roles and pressures from work and family life have made modern marriages difficult and contributed to the dissatisfaction of spouses, particularly the men (Flemming, 2019). In this vein, a research of Ghanaian women revealed that their improved socio-economic position and autonomy led to conflict between husbands, which in turn led to unstable marriages and divorce (Wuollah-Dire, 2020). A research from Taiwan underlines the complicated link between marriage relationship quality and egalitarian gender ideology (Chiang and Bai, 2022). According to the study, there is a weak link between gender equality ideology and married relationship quality that is moderated by gender equality in roles. In other words, gender equality ideology has an indirect effect on marital relationship quality through the execution of equal roles by spouses inside marriage.

Research has revealed that love is present everywhere and that it is essential to marriages. Marriages have succeeded when there is love and affection shown for one another (Walter, 2021). Numerous studies have found that

romantic relationships, especially marriage, can have both positive and negative effects on one's health.

A wider body of research has continually shown strong correlations between social relationships and physical health, and the association between marital stability, personal hygiene, and healthy behaviors is one of them Holden, Rollins, and Gonzalez (2022). The direction of causation is one of the biggest obstacles to understanding the connection between partner health and marital functioning. Chronic medical problems or other characteristics that predispose a person to poorer health may operate as permanent vulnerabilities that lead to reductions in marital happiness, whereas unhappy marriages may contribute to worsening health (Schiltz and Van Hecke, 2021). Without taking into account the actual circumstances of married life, it is impossible to attain the good features of personal hygiene (Greenhalgh et al., 2021). Being clean alone does not constitute good personal hygiene. It entails all of the many behaviors that promote and maintain health. Married spouses' activities and dietary choices are responsible for a large number of health issues (Lee and Han, 2023).

Hence, the study investigates the influence of intimacy and personal hygiene on marital stability of married adults.

Statement of the problem

Considering compatibility of spouses, whether or not they are able to maintain a happy relationship after marriage or making another commitment to one another largely relies on what happens following these events (Gattig and Minkus, 2021). According to Pinho and Pereira (2019) romance or love is considered to be the most romantic emotion a person may have. We receive love, vigor, and the crucial support we need from our relationships to help us confront the challenges of life. But sustaining a committed relationship is far from easy (Wong, 2020). There are circumstances where your love will need to endure the test of time. Should the marriage's inevitable troubles are not effectively handled, they may develop into far worse issues that might ultimately spell tragedy for the two parties involved. The most frequent challenge you

have while trying to solve your relationship troubles is knowing where to start. Because of their wide variety and complexity, discussing the most typical partnerships is a difficult task. It becomes challenging for one person to find a solution on their own. Fortunately, professional assistance is now available and can be sought, and the counsellors are also doing their best to assist.

Against this background, the present study seeks to investigate the influence of intimacy and personal hygiene on marital stability of married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria. The triangle theory of love provides an explanation for love in interpersonal relationships. The three sides of closeness, energy, and responsibility are utilized in clinician Robert Sternberg's hypothesis to sort various assortments of affection (Sternberg, 1986). Understanding that a connection based on two or more elements has a better chance of lasting than one based on just one.

The various stages and types of love can be explained using these three components. A developed love relationship, for example, sees a change in the general significance of every component with time.

There are three components to love, according to the triangular theory, which, when taken together, can be compared to the vertices of a triangle. The triangle is used metaphorically rather than as a precise geometric model (Sternberg, 1988). These three aspects are intimacy, passion, and decision-making or commitment. Each component brings love to life in a new way.

1. Intimacy: In adoring connections, closeness alludes to sensations of closeness, association, and family relationship. In this manner, it envelops inside domain those feelings eventually lead to the impression of warmth in a caring relationship.

2. Passion: The inspirations driving sentiment, actual fascination, sexual satisfaction, and other related peculiarities in committed organizations are alluded to as enthusiasm. The passion component encompasses the motivational and other arousal factors that cause a romantic relationship to feel passionate.

3. Decision/commitment: A person's decision to love someone in the short term and their commitment to uphold that love in the long run are referred to as decision and commitment. One can choose to love someone while not being devoted to the relationship over the long term, or one can be devoted to a relationship while not admitting that they love the other person in the relationship. These two aspects of the decision/commitment component do not necessarily go hand in hand.

The accompanying three parts of affection associate with each other: For example, more prominent enthusiasm or responsibility might result from more noteworthy closeness, similarly as more noteworthy closeness or, perhaps now and again, more noteworthy energy might result from more noteworthy responsibility. As a result, the components generally function independently of one another. Although each of the three components is essential to a loving relationship, their relative importance may shift from one relationship to another or over time. In fact, there are many different kinds of love that can be created by restricting the instances of various combinations of the elements. When taken together, the three components of love produce eight distinct types of love. Realizing that these types of love are, in fact, limited situations is essential: None of them are likely to be pure cases in a relationship.

The term "non-love" simply refers to the absence of all three aspects of love. When one only has the intimacy aspect of love and not the passion or decision-making/commitment aspects, this leads to liking. The experience of the passion component in the absence of the other components of love results in infatuated love. According to Sternberg (2006), the decision to love another person and to be committed to that love without the intimacy and passion of love is called empty love. Intimacy is the combination of closeness and passion. Closeness and the decision/responsibility parts of affection consolidate to make companionate love. When passion and decision/commitment are combined, fanciful love emerges

when the intimacy component is absent. The amount and balance of love have an effect on the geometry of the love triangle. The different parts of the love triangle represent various levels of affection: The triangle's region increments as the amount of adoration increments. The different shapes of triangles represent the various balances between the three kinds of love. An equilateral triangle, for instance, can be used to represent balanced love because it has roughly equal proportions of each component.

There are a few triangles engaged with affection. Instead, there are a lot of triangles involved, but only a few of them have a lot of theoretical and practical value. For instance, real and ideal triangles can be compared. One has a triangle that addresses either their affection for the other individual and the best accomplice for that association. In conclusion, it is important to distinguish between action and sentimental triangles.

Intimacy and Marital stability

Haack and Falcke (2014) looked into the connection between love and marital stability in intimate relationships that were mediated and unmediated by the internet. 86 Internet users, 43 in a relationship mediated by the Internet and 43 in a physical relationship, were the subjects of their study, which looked at the three aspects of love and marital stability. Intimacy, decision/commitment, and the overall dimension of love, as well as marital stability, were found to be significantly different between couples in a physical relationship and those in an internet-mediated connection. McDonald et al. (2020) took a gander at what empathy and values mean for the soundness of relationships between accomplices in three US states. In an effort to reduce response bias and impression management, respondents were asked to evaluate their spouse's morality and compassion as well as provide information on their own marital stability. 28% of the group's variation in marital stability was attributed to compassion and self-transcendent principles. However, the predictive power of self-transcendent values and compassion varied by region. Particularly, these factors were responsible for 32% and

19% of the variation in marital stability in Utah and Vermont, respectively, in Arkansas. Along these lines, empathy played a bigger part in cultivating conjugal security when an accomplice's apparent self-extraordinary standards were lower. This suggests that compassion is a behavioral response to deeply held beliefs and provides evidence of regional and cultural differences.

Bradford and others (2020) examined how attachment behaviors affected the quality of marital relationships in response to social disapproval. The findings revealed that men's and women's self-reported relationship quality was influenced more by their own attachment behaviors than by the disapproval of their own parents and friends. All kinds of people self-announced relationship quality are directed by their accomplices' connection ways of behaving; additionally, that test eliminated the major effect of the partner's parents' and friends' disapproval. The findings indicate that a relationship's capacity to withstand the negative effects of rejection from social networks is influenced by the attachment behaviors of both partners.

Rohmah et al. also looked at how intimacy, passion, and commitment affect marital stability in the early years of marriage. 2017). As indicated by consequences of different relapse, the beginning stages of a marriage are when conjugal security is probably going to be anticipated by closeness, enthusiasm, and responsibility. R square = 0.432 indicates that the level of commitment, desire, and intimacy in a marriage can vary up to 43.2%. Closeness is the component that most precisely predicts conjugal soundness out of the three components of affection ($\beta = 0.152$, $p = 0.000$). Marriage solidness was not altogether anticipated by different parts of adoration, specifically responsibility and want ($\beta = 0.072$, $p = 0.069$) ($\beta = 0.029$, $p = 0.396$).

Van de Edge et al (2018) conducted additional research on the relationships, sexual pleasure, and body image of romantic partners. Better sexual pleasure was linked to a higher reported romantic relationship quality, according to the findings of the study. Sexual pleasure and body image appear to be significantly correlated with people's

perceptions of the quality of their relationships because there were no gender differences. The discoveries showed no connections between an individual's sexual joy and self-perception and their accomplice's view of the nature of their relationship. According to these findings, treatments that work to improve and maintain a positive body image may help people have happier relationships and a more fulfilling sexual life.

Personal hygiene and marital stability

There is not much research on the link between maintaining good hygiene and maintaining a stable marriage. However, research has shown that spouses' health and the health of their homes may interact with one another and be linked. In the fields of medicine and public health, personal hygiene is a common concept. It entails maintaining clean clothing and our bodies (Nurudeen and Toyin, 2020). Knowledge and practice of personal hygiene are necessary for all of our day-to-day activities. In addition to its cosmetic benefits and the prevention of faecal-oral-transmitted diseases, personal hygiene has a positive social impact. Body hygiene (skin care), oral hygiene (oral care), hand washing (hand care), face hygiene (nail care), ear, hair, and foot care (nail care), armpit and bottom care (nail care), clothing care (nail care), and menstrual hygiene are all components of personal hygiene, according to Bastos (2010). He went on to say that this should be taken into consideration because many relationships have ended because both spouses didn't clean properly.

Gender and Marital stability

Contradictory findings have been found in the research on men and women's relationship and health experiences. According to certain studies, men and women who are in relationships have comparable mortality risks to those who are alone (Roth and Peng, 2022). But studies have shown that the protective effects of marriage vary by gender, with non-married men dying more frequently than married men and non-married women dying more frequently than married women (Ramezankhani et al., 2019; Gyasi et al.,

2019). According to further research by Ntoimo et al. (2019), men's health is negatively impacted by divorce more than women's is. Therefore, some researchers contend that men may benefit more from romantic relationships than do women in terms of their health, but more research is needed to determine how differently romantic relationships affect men and women in terms of various health domains. Men and women may positively influence each other's health in different ways. For instance, women may encourage their male partners to visit the doctor when they are ill, while men may encourage their female partners to engage in physical activity (Markey et al., 2007). Additionally, it appears that married women may have better mental health (e.g., less depression) compared to married men, who may have better behavioral health (Escudero-Castillo et al., 2021; Nienhuis & Lesser, 2020).

Methodology

Ex-post facto research design used in the current study, aims to clarify study variables after the fact. Additionally, the research does not intend to manipulate any of the study's variables. Here, information was obtained via the responses of study respondents to a formal questionnaire. Personal hygiene and intimacy are the predictor variables, while marital stability is the dependent variable.

The study was carried out on a group of married adults in Oyo. Oyo is a town in the Nigerian state of Oyo. The research only included individuals who were available at the time of the study. Respondents in the study were visited at their offices and residences, and relevant information was obtained from them.

A total of 352 married couples were chosen for the research. According to data on religious affiliation, (88.4%) of respondents are Christians, (6.0%) are traditional worshippers, and (13.6%) are Muslims. According to ethnicity, Igbos (30.4%), Yorubas (52.8%), Hausas (13.4%), and people from other tribes (3.4%). Gender revealed that (48.9%) were males and (51.1%) were females.

In this study, two different sampling techniques were used. The purposive sampling technique and the convenience sampling approach. Only married spouses in Oyo were chosen for the study using the purposive sampling approach. This indicates that unmarried spouses were not chosen for the study.

The research instrument was a standardized and tested psychological instrument that was used to test respondents. The research equipment for the investigation were separated into three components. The study instrument was designed to elicit information about the variables from research respondents after the event. Section A contains demographic information about the research respondents. Gender, which is a variable in this study, is recorded as male and female. Other demographic statistics in this area include age, ethnicity, religious affiliation and highest educational qualification, number of children and years of marriage. In addition, research respondents were requested to provide information on their marital experiences.

Section B is Rubin (1970) scale which is a 13-item that measure intimacy aiming to capture three components of love: affiliation and dependent need, a proclivity to help, and an orientation of exclusivity and absorption. Respondents rate each item on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all true, entirely disagree) to 9 (certainly true, completely agree). The current study, on the other hand, used a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

Section C was the personal hygiene scale (PH). The PH scale, as it is commonly known, is a 21-item scale developed by Saffari et al. (2014). The answers range from 0 (never) to 3 (always). The researcher reported a Cronbach's alpha of .85 in the study. A uni-dimensional structure in the scale was also shown by principal component analysis.

Section D, the John Marital stability scale was used to measure marital stability. Cult health sex released the scale in 2017. The answers range from 1 (always) to 5 (never).

The females' psychometric characteristics were .94, whereas the males' were .89.

Ethical Consideration

Prior to the research, the research respondents received assurances about the level of secrecy and anonymity, which were made evident in the research instrument before the research respondents responded to research instruments. In case they felt uncomfortable with any of the research's components, respondents were also given the option to stop participating. To avoid any kind of unauthorized use of the respondents' information, the research's findings will only be shared with the academic community.

The Statistical Package for Social Science statistical software (SPSS) version 23 was used to analyze data collected from administering research instruments. Using descriptive statistics like the mean and basic percentages, demographic data including sex, years of marriage, and the number of children were examined. However, inferential statistical techniques were used to test the hypotheses.

Hypotheses testing

Hypothesis one: Intimacy will significantly predict marital stability

Table 2: Simple linear regression analysis showing the influence of intimacy on marital stability

	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	R^2	<i>F</i>
Intimacy	.38	2.30	.40**	.16	66.46**

***p* < .001

Table 2 indicates that intimacy ($\beta = .40$, $p < .001$) significantly predict marital stability [$F(1, 350) = 66.46$, $p < .001$]. The model explained 16% variance in marital stability. Specifically, an increase in intimacy predicted increased marital stability. Therefore, hypothesis one was accepted.

Hypothesis two: Personal hygiene of spouse will significantly predict marital stability.

Table 3: Simple linear regression analysis showing the influence of spousal personal hygiene on marital stability

	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	R^2	F
Spousal hygiene	personal.19	.04	.28*	.08	29.59**

***p* < .001

Table 3 shows that personal hygiene of spouse ($\beta = .19, p < .001$) significantly predict marital stability [$F(1, 350) = 29.59, p < .001$]. The model explained 8% variance in marital stability. Specifically, an increase in personal hygiene of spouse predicted increased marital stability. Therefore, hypothesis two was accepted.

Hypothesis three: Years of marriage will significantly predict marital stability.

Table 4: Simple linear regression analysis showing the influence of years of marriage on marital stability

	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	R^2	F
Years of marriage	-.01	.06	-.001	.00	.02

Table 4 shows that years of marriage ($\beta = -.001, p = .88$) did not significantly predict marital stability [$F(1, 350) = .02, p = .88$]. The model explained 0% variance in marital stability. Therefore, hypothesis three is rejected.

Hypothesis four: Number of children will significantly predict marital stability.

Table 5: Simple linear regression analysis showing the influence of number of children on marital stability

	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	R^2	F
Number of children	-.02	.25	-.004	.00	.005

Table 5 shows that number of children ($\beta = -.004, p = .94$) did not significantly predict marital stability [$F(1, 350) = .005, p = .94$]. The model explained 0%

variance in marital stability. Therefore, hypothesis four was rejected

Hypothesis five: There will be gender difference in marital stability.

Table 6: An independent sample t-test examining gender difference in marital stability

	Men		Women		t(350)	p-value
	M	SD	M	SD		
Marital stability	29.07	8.04	27.97	8.74	1.22	.22

The result in table 6 shows that there is no significant difference in the level of marital stability [$t(350)=1.22, p = .22$]. Therefore, hypothesis four was rejected.

Discussion

This study investigated the influence of intimacy and personal care on marital stability of married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study supported the first hypothesis, which claimed that intimacy would significantly predict marital stability. Therefore, marital stability increases as intimacy increases. The study's findings are consistent with those of Haack and Falcke (2014), who claimed that long-lasting partnerships and a pleasant and prosperous marital life show a strong closeness and commitment. According to Haack and Falcke (2014), romantic partnerships are marked by an even greater degree of deep care for each spouse than friendships. The study's findings were also consistent with those of McDonald et al. (2020), who looked at the impact of compassion and values on spouses' capacity to maintain stable marriages. According to the findings of their study, 28% of the variation in marital stability may be accounted for by compassion and self-transcendent principles. Compassion was more crucial in supporting marital stability than self-transcendent principles, but there were disparities in the predictive power of both. The common proverb "a family that prays together stays together" from Nigerian society illustrates the study's findings. The more time married couples spend together and work toward each other's satisfaction, the less likely it is that they will

consider divorcing, and the greater the peace and harmony in the family.

According to the study's findings, good personal hygiene indicated a stable marriage. The study's findings are consistent with those of Feinberg (2002), who demonstrated that healthy behaviors and cleanliness were more likely to increase marital success, happiness, and satisfaction. In his study, Feinberg (2002) noted that lack of good hygiene and nonchalant attitudes by either spouse about caring for their body and sexuality can lead to marital conflict and the alienation of one partner from the other. It may be incredibly irritating to be with a spouse who hardly takes care of themselves, especially a responsible person. Personal hygiene is crucial, and a spouse who doesn't practice it makes marriage difficult and exhausting. The study's findings, however, conflicted with Sprecher and Reagan's (2012) assertion that unhygienic behavior had little effect on the stability and contentment of marriages between spouses. More than 65% of the participants in their survey said they were more interested in relationships for the sake of love and affection than they were with their partner's hygiene habits.

Conclusions

On the basis of the study's findings, the following conclusions was made:

Marriage stability among married couples in Oyo is predicted by intimacy. Personal hygiene also predicts marital stability. Personal hygiene and intimacy work together to forecast stability of marriage. The marital stability of married adults is unaffected by gender differences, the number of children or the years of marriage.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends that:

1. People should consciously work on increasing intimacy and maintaining good personal hygiene in

their unions.

2. Individuals ought to try to spend more time with their spouses. To improve the durability of their marriages, people should make sure to do activities with their spouses.
3. It was also recommended that couples who lack intimacy in their relationship should set aside time to go on vacation and have romantic dinners together. All of these passionate encounters rekindle the couple's love.
4. It was recommended that Partners need to understand how to properly take care of themselves in terms of cleanliness and should be concerned about how they look.

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