

## **MARITAL ROLE ADJUSTMENT AND SATISFACTION AMONG IGBO MARRIED WORKERS IN MBAITOLI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF IMO STATE, SOUTH EAST NIGERIA**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between marital role adjustment and satisfaction among Igbo married workers in Mbaitoli Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. Two hypotheses were formulated to direct the study and the correlational research design method was adopted. Simple random sampling technique was employed in selecting the sample of 170 (85 males and 85 females) out of one thousand, seven hundred Igbo married workers (1700). Data collection was with the aid of a questionnaire titled “Marital Role Expectation Inventory (MREI) and were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The reliability coefficient with split-half ranged from 0.68 to 0.74. Findings revealed that a significantly positive but weak relationship existed between domestic role adjustment and marital satisfaction ( $r = 0.255$ ;  $p = 0.001$ , SD 3.03). The relationship between financial role adjustment and marital satisfaction was found to be significantly positive and moderate ( $r = 0.472$ ;  $p = 0.000$ , SD 2.48). Consequently, domestic and financial role adjustments can be said to have significant influence on marital satisfaction of Igbo married workers. It is recommended among others that the marriage counsellors in both private sectors should organize regular seminars, symposia, awareness programmes geared towards assisting married workers to acquire good marriage skills, through the introduction of good marriage therapies.

**Key words:** Marital Role, Adjustment, Satisfaction, Workers, Domestic role

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## INTRODUCTION

Marriage as an institution is as old as man and one of the most important stages in the development of personal and social lives of individuals. Marriage results from good interpersonal relationship between two individuals. Upon the successful performance of certain marital rites, a man and woman will come together to live and build a family (Amalu and Amalu, 2022). Marital life is believed to be the happiest and most important period in the life of an individual (Tolorunleke, 2013; Anyamene and Etele, 2020; Ozad, Jamo and Ayodele, 2020). The couples pledge to be loyal and faithful to each other and it is on this premise that a successful and fruitful marital life can be built. Marriage is not only an emotional relationship, but an economic partnership, social safety net, moral duty and consequently a moral safeguard. Income, employment, debt, assets and division of household labour, all shape the quality and stability of married life (Copur and Eker, 2014). Marital relationship is a lifelong and dynamic process which can be strengthened if the couples adhere to their role expectations. While marriage, as a bond between a man and a woman, is supposed to produce happiness and satisfaction, Anyamene and Etele (2020) and Akhter, (2021) stated that this may not always be the case as some couples experience dissatisfaction and unhappiness in their marriage. Being in a low quality and unhappy marriage can lead to psychological problems which may give rise to lower levels of self-esteem, health, happiness and overall life satisfaction

(Indrijati, 2018; Bleidon, Schwaba, Denissen, & Hopwood, 2021).

Among the Igbo of South-east zone of Nigeria (Demson and Amalu, 2018; Abia, Amalu and Ariche, 2021), marriage is highly revered and is taken very seriously. It is not just an affair of the husband and wife, but that of the immediate and extended families of the couple. In Igboland, marital rights have several stages and begin from finding of wife to asking for bride price and subsequently carrying of wine to meet the family of the would-be bride (Okafor, 2015). In Igbo culture, as in many others, the man is seen as the head of the house while the woman is the helpmate. Traditionally, the man's role is to take care of the home by providing the needed funds for the day-to-day running of the house including the payment of school fees, settlement of utility bills and so on, while the woman looks after the children, prepares food and cleans the house. However, in contemporary times, there is a paradigm shift as regards the role of husband and wife in a marriage as both parties now work and even take up roles that were not previously done by each gender (Oláh, Kotowska and Richter, 2018). The emergence of women as men's equal in every sphere of life has led to the growing campaign on gender equality and equity which has placed more strain on marriage.

In contrast to the old father authority pattern, the modern democratic marriage, which demands that both parties should be equally involved in decision and responsibility, is more difficult to operate and sustain at a consistent level. The capacity to compromise and to give and take, which is

essential in successful marital relationships, demands maturity of the parties involved. Furthermore, the right for women to enjoy a life of social and sexual satisfaction is now accepted as similar to that of men. This means that partners in contemporary marital relationships have to experience the satisfaction which was formerly the exclusive preserve of the man. This gives rise to stress in the relationship especially when there is a clash in the needs of the parties involved. Marital role adjustment includes domestic role adjustment, financial role adjustment, emotional role adjustment and extended family role adjustment.

Most important to this study was the relationship between domestic financial role adjustment and marital satisfaction of married workers in Mbaitoli LGA. Domestic and financial role adjustment are the willingness of the married couples to adapt in the performance of domestic chores and financial obligations respectively, at any given time without discrimination and unnecessary grudges. These involve distribution of household chores, paying bills, doing laundry etc. Couples have to be ready to divide responsibilities that are best functional between them. Sometimes one has to be flexible in doing what one's spouse ought to have done but could not for some reason-however, serious or inconsequential that might be. Also how well each partner perceives, understands and essentially agree with the role definition and expectations of the others are among those crucial aspects of marriage which require continuous adjustment and good communication (Ghoroghi, Hassan &

Baba (2015). Studies have shown that there is a link between marital role adjustment, which is the willingness of couples to undertake responsibilities which may not be expected of them in a normal situation, and marital satisfaction. A research carried out by Okpechi, Eloma and Bassey (2016) on the negative effects of domestic chores on performance of academic women in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria, showed that domestic chores had a negative effect on the performance of the academic duties of the women.

In the conventional model of the nuclear-conjugal family, the man is the head of the household and holds most of the power and authority in the house and marriage. This conventional model was inextricably joined to scientific ideologies that have defined the psychological and social structural bases of sex role differentiation and the prolonged dependency of children (Hutt, 2017). This model sees women's employment and career as violating the values and norms in marital happiness. However, as the number of women's participation in the labour force, during the nineteen eighties, experienced growth, the focus of researches changed. There are now more studies about dual-career couples (couples who are focused on advancing their careers instead of their being just one breadwinner, whereby both parties invest in their own professional endeavours) with a different outcome. For instance, on the division of family work, some studies observed that dual career couples facilitated the wives' career growth by changing the distribution

of duties and responsibilities within the family. Husbands are increasingly participating in some of the domestic and child care responsibilities which normally and traditionally were the exclusive responsibilities of the wives (Luke, Xu and Thampi, 2014; Lantara, 2015; Calub, 2018).

Carlson, Miller and Rudd (2020) examined the relationship between heterosexual partners' communication quality with the division of housework. They also investigated the role of partners' communication quality in the association between the division of housework and relationship satisfaction. Results revealed that the quality of women's communication with their male partners predicted how couples divided housework; the quality of men's communication with their female partners, however, appeared to be an outcome of domestic arrangements; men's communication quality mediated the association between the division of housework and women's relationship satisfaction, while women's communication quality confounded the association for men. This implies that couples who are satisfied with their relationships are more likely to stay together and less likely to exhibit symptoms of psychological distress. Although a number of factors shape relationship satisfaction, the manner in which couples divide housework appears to matter a great deal. While the association appears strongest for career women, research findings have shown that sharing housework is good for couples' overall relationship quality (Carlson, Miller and Rudd 2020). Cheng and Kim (2018) carried out a study to determine the role of domestic labour, attitudes and

women's marital satisfaction of Korean women. They examined the level of marital satisfaction of younger Korean women (in their 20s and 30s) and their older counterparts (in their 40s or older). Their results revealed that the time spent on domestic labour by younger wives, who do not hold traditional family attitudes, was negatively associated with their marital satisfaction. The younger women's gender-role attitudes did not moderate the relationship between their husbands' contribution to domestic labour and their satisfaction. On older women, no evidence was found for either interaction effect. The findings can be interpreted within the Korean context with attendant implications on the continued erosion of traditional familism in Korea. Accordingly, the burden of domestic labour may become more problematic for younger women's marriages.

Apart from domestic labour roles, monetary matters play a role in the cordiality of the relationship between husband and wife. Studies on financial role and marital satisfaction suggest that marital satisfaction increases with income which in turn plays a key role in the quality of life. However, some studies have shown that the magnitude of couples' income is not the most important factor in marital satisfaction rather it is their level of contentment and perception about the security of their future. Many couples have various ways of managing their finances. Prior to getting married, a man or woman may not know their attitude or habits regarding money and its use, until they are faced with real life situations

which require critical financial decisions. The expenditure patterns and choices of individuals and families tell a great deal about their priorities and values.

Copur and Eker (2014) in a study of the relationship between financial issues and marital relationship revealed that 40.4 percent of the individuals agreed that it is easier to make financial decisions when a couple's money is in a joint account but 41.1 percent of the individuals preferred a separate account for each spouse. Additionally, they found that financial and marital satisfaction enhanced the quality of life of the parties involved. Conversely, financial difficulties and dissatisfaction with one's financial status can lead to marital conflict and divorce. The way and manner a person manages his or her personal finance has been shown to be a major factor contributing to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one's financial status. It has been suggested that good financial management skills may reduce the chance for marital disagreement, while the lack of such skills may actually create crises situation.(Amalu, 2013).

Warmath, Piehlmaier and Robb (2019) studied the impact of shared financial decision making on over confidence for married adults. Their findings showed that shared decision making within a marriage had the potential to reduce over confidence when making financial decisions. This possibility is further enhanced when married individuals have a psychological sense of sharing as regards ownership and use of household financial resources. Karney and Bradbury (2016) carried out a study on financial decision

making in households and noted that the second most difficult problem centred on the making and spending of family income. Both the husbands and wives acknowledged this as a difficult hurdle in their effort to achieve a happy marriage. However, after some years, most of the couples were able to reach a good understanding concerning the use of their money; they had succeeded in adjusting and compromising for harmony. Furthermore, in a study on agreement in marriage, Copur and Eker (2014) reported that married couples; couples undergoing counselling and divorced people, were found to have financial cooperation as either the most serious or the second most serious problem that had arisen. From the findings above, it is pertinent to note that many couples have no idea of their attitude or habits regarding money and its use before marriage. It is only after they are confronted with making actual choices and decisions, and cooperating to manage their income, that they discover their areas of discontent.

It can be seen that from the literature reviewed, marital role adjustment has become a front burner in recent times. It can also be seen that married persons constantly have conflict as a result of the changing realities of life where a woman becomes the bread winner as a result of the husband losing his job or the husband on the other hand becoming a stay-on home dad and doing domestic chores. The traditional mode of the husband working alone and bearing the financial burdens, while the woman manages the home has become outdated and gradually changing.

Nevertheless there are no literature focusing on marital role adjustment and satisfaction among married workers in Mbaitoli LGA in Imo state.

Marital adjustment is increasingly becoming common among Nigerian working couples and is a serious factor in the social and economic stability of Nigeria. Marital dissolution has become common place in many societies. Over the course of the past decades, the rate of desertions, separation or even divorce in Nigeria has risen tremendously ( Arebi, 2022). Disturbed by the grim statistics, there is fear among young people about getting married and there are also doubts as regards marital joy and bliss. An overview of researches on unhappy marriages seems to indicate that a combination of interpersonal variables, cognitive and behavioural variables are associated with marital dysfunction. Among these variables are congruity of perceptions and expectations; emotional stability and flexibility, self-concept; positive and negative reinforcements; socio-economic status and age.

There are concerns by people about marital instability which have given rise to calls for appropriate steps to be taken to address the causative factors. Government have organized seminars, workshops for married couples on the issue of role adjustment in marriage, marital stability, marital satisfaction and its effect on psychological well being and mental health of individuals Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and churches are not left out in the campaign to see that marital satisfaction is maintained. Married individuals have tried to sort out their differences in domestic and

financial role adjustment by engaging in meaningful dialogue, consultation with marriage counsellor. But their efforts have not yielded any positive result. It was on this premise that this study was undertaken to investigate marital role adjustment and satisfaction among Igbo married workers in Mbaitoli Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria.

The study examined the relationship between marital role adjustment and satisfaction among Igbo working couples in Mbaitoli, Imo State. Specifically, the study sought to:

(1).examine how domestic role adjustment of Igbo married workers relates to marital satisfaction  
(2).examine the relationship of financial role adjustment of workers and their marital satisfaction.

The following hypotheses were stated in null form to guide the study.

(1). There is no significant relationship between domestic role adjustment of Igbo workers and their marital satisfaction.

(2). There is no significant relationship between financial role adjustment of Igbo workers and their marital satisfaction.

## **METHODS**

The study employed the Correlational research design because it investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them. It involves observing two variables in order to establish a statistically corresponding relationship between them. The research design was appropriate because the study investigated the

relationship between role adjustment and marital satisfaction. The population of the study consist of one thousand, seven hundred (1700) Igbo married workers in government parastatals in Mbaitoli Local Government Area of Imo State. Mbaitoli was chosen as the study area because the people uphold the sacredness of marriage. They take marriage to be very important and ensure that they live together and happy. Marriage in Mbaitoli is not just an affair between the future husband and wife with the parents, the extended family and villages. Marriage is based on a careful study of the behavioural traits of the would-be husband and wife. There was no rushing of people who were ripe for marriage for marriage needed the advice from their parents, uncles, aunts and well-wish wishers.

The population of Igbo married workers was 1700. The sample for this work was drawn from the population size of 1700, using 10% of the population, an approximation sum of 170(85 females and females) sample size was derived, which means 170 married workers were randomly selected using simple random sampling method. The researchers selected respondents from departments and units in government parastatals in the LGA. It is extremely difficult to study the whole population located in the local government area due to time constraints, finance and some unforeseen problems. This study therefore used simple random sampling techniques to select the sample in the research. A self report questionnaire titled "Marital Role Expectation Inventory" (MREI) that

assesses domestic, financial role adjustment and satisfaction within married individuals' relationship using the scale of evaluation of the marital areas of life was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by experts in Test and Measurement and Educational Psychology in the University of Calabar. It consist of three sections A, B, C with 38 items.

Section A of MREI comprised items which borders on the bio- data of the respondents such as sex, age, length of marriage and mode of entry into marriage, while section B consist of 18 items which dwelt on issues on domestic role (when sweeping and cleaning the house, when I am doing the family laundry, when I am washing the plates etc) and financial role adjustment (when I pay the bills, when I spend on personal items, when I maintain separate accounts). This section had options for each of the statement made, which is measured in the modified 4-point Likert scale of Very Happy(VH)= 4points, Happy(H)=3 points, Un Happy (UH) = 2, Very Un Happy(UH)= 1point. And the C sections, which consist of 20 items was designed to measure the level of satisfaction of the respondents with their present marriage. All the items in this section were measured on a four-point modified Likert type scale ranging from Very Satisfied (ES)=4points, Satisfied(S)=3points, Dissatisfied(D)= 2points,Very Dissatisfied(VD)= 1point. These were scored 4,3,2, and 1 points respectively on the scale. The items were constructed in positive and negative manner(statement) which attract positive and negative scoring

as the case or response demands (4,3,2, and 1 or 1, 2, 3, and 4) scoring respectively. The split-half method was used to determine

The reliability coefficient with split-half. Thirty (30) non-Igbo married workers who were not part of the study was used for the reliability. The reliability coefficient with split-half ranged from 0.68 to 0.74. One hundred and seventy copies of the questionnaire were administered by the researchers and the research assistants from each department and unit were trained by giving them a sample of the instrument and with that the researchers explained what was expected from respondents. Statistical calculation was performed on raw data. The items consist of positive and negative questions. These of course were scored accordingly. The most favourable dispositions from the respondents carried 4-points, while the least favourable one carried a score of 1 point. Also, positive item was expected to match with positive response to attract positive score of 4marks, while the negative item was expected to match with negative response and negative scoring. In other words, the scoring was reversed for all negative response. The researchers were confronted with questions by some respondents who complained about the task and stress of filling out the questionnaire. Some respondents confessed that the instrument covered so many private areas) that hitherto was not to be talked about but only personal thought provoking questions that borders on inter-personal relationship between spouses and

some other important marital issues that were raised which formerly must never be discussed by married individuals.. Generally, it was judged interesting and informative but cumbersome. With the help of the research assistants, all completed copies of the questionnaires were retrieved. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation using SPSS statistics which determines the degree to which a relationship is linear was employed to analyse data generated.

## RESULTS

The study was on the relationship between marital role adjustment and marital satisfaction of Igbo married workers in Mbaitoli Local Government Area of Imo State. The independent variable was marital adjustment and the sub- variables identified under it were domestic role adjustment and financial role adjustment. Data for all the sub-variables under the independent were collected under section B” of the questionnaire continuously using eighteen items modified of four point Likert scale. The dependent variable of the study was marital satisfaction. This variable was measured using twenty items of modified four point Likert scale. The result was presented hypothesis by hypothesis.

### Hypothesis one

There is no significant relationship between domestic role adjustment of Igbo married workers and their marital satisfaction. To test this hypothesis, Igbo married workers’ domestic role adjustment was compared to their marital satisfaction using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis. The result is presented in table 1.

**Table 1**

**Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between domestic role adjustment of Igbo married workers and their marital satisfaction (n-170)**

Variable	Mean	SD	r	p-value
Domestic role	15.48	3.03	.255*	.001
Marital	23.73	3.35		

\*Significant at 0.05 level of significance

The result in Table 1 revealed that there is significant relationship between domestic role adjustment and marital satisfaction. This is because the calculated P value of 0.001 is lower than the 0.005 level of significance at a correlation index r level of 0.255 at df 168. The result further showed that relationship between domestic role adjustment and marital satisfaction of Igbo married workers in Mbaitoli LGA is statistically significant. With the obtained r-ratio of .255 obtained, the significant level is low. Hence, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant correlation between domestic role adjustment and marital

satisfaction was rejected. Accordingly, the domestic role adjustment of Igbo married workers and their marital satisfaction are significantly and weakly positively correlated ( $r = .255, p = .001$ ).

#### **Hypothesis two**

There is no significant relationship between financial role adjustment of Igbo workers and their marital role satisfaction. To test this hypothesis, Igbo married workers' financial role adjustment was compared to their marital satisfaction again using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

**Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between financial role adjustment of Igbo married workers and their marital satisfaction (n-170)**

Variable	$\bar{X}$	SD	r	p-value
Financial role adjustment	19.86	2.48	.472*	.000
Marital Satisfaction	23.73	3.35		

\*Significant at 0.05 level of significance

Table 2 reveals that there is significant moderate positive relationship between financial role

adjustment and marital satisfaction of Igbo working couples. This is because the calculated P value of 0.000 is

lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance at a correlation index  $r$  level of 0.472 at  $df$  of 168 ( $r = 0.472$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis that says there is no significant relationship between financial role adjustment of Igbo married workers and their marital satisfaction is rejected. Consequently, the domestic role adjustment of Igbo married workers and their marital satisfaction are significantly and moderately positively correlated ( $r = .472$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the test result of hypothesis one, there is weak positive correlation between domestic role adjustment and marital satisfaction among Igbo married workers in Mbaitoli Local Government Area. This finding is in consonance with the works of Luke, Xu and Thampi (2014); Lantara (2015); Calub, (2018) which showed that there is significant relationship between domestic role adjustment and marital satisfaction. Luke, Xu and Thampi, 2014 observed that although women were mainly doing domestic labour, more than half of husbands usually or sometimes helped their wives with domestic chores like cooking, fuel wood collection, and child care. According to Garcia and Tomlinson (2020), there is usually a negotiated division of labour that allowed women to compensate for the time they spent away from their family, which allowed men to choose the family work they felt less threatening. This implies that since both couples are working and contributing to the needs of the house, couples should, therefore, divide the house chores so as not to put the burden on the

woman who will also come back home exhausted only to face massive domestic chores and child care. This division may be disproportionate as the women still undertake a larger share of the unpaid work at home like cooking, taking care of the children and cleaning, while the man does male gendered domestic chores such as switching on and off the generator, disposing of house refuse, fetching water and so on. These roles can be alternated when the other partner is sick or not available. Hence, it is imperative that couples adjust and complement each other in domestic chores so that marital satisfaction can be attained.

Test result of hypothesis two showed a significantly moderate positive relationship between financial role adjustment and marital satisfaction of Igbo working couples ( $r = 0.472$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). This is consistent with the findings of Coelho (2014); Copur and Eker (2014). According to Copur and Eker (2014), financial satisfaction enhances marital satisfaction, and by extension life's satisfaction. They further found that financial difficulties and dissatisfaction with one's financial status could lead to marital conflict and divorce. Karney and Bradbury (2020) discovered that the issue of couples making and spending the family income was a critical issue in attaining marital satisfaction. Both the husbands and wives agreed that these were difficult hurdles in their effort to achieve happy marriages. However, after some years, most had reached a good understanding concerning the use of their money by adjusting and compromising for harmony.

It could, therefore, be inferred that many couples had no idea of their

attitudes or habits regarding money and its use prior to marriage. It was only after they were confronted with making actual financial choices and decisions and cooperating to manage their income, that they discovered areas of agreement and disparity. Also, most women feel their income is for themselves, thereby leaving the man to carry the entire household financial burden which puts the man under pressure leading to anxiety and frustration. In some cases where the women take up financial responsibilities, some men tend to relax and assume that they have the money to take care of the family. Nevertheless, there is need for married couples to continually adjust their financial roles and be financially matured so that they can provide for all their needs and enjoy their marriage.

### **CONCLUSION**

The issue of marital role adjustment has always attracted interest from various stakeholders due to its relevance in the attainment of marital success among working couples. However, the achievement of marital satisfaction, which is the feeling of comfort, enjoyment and acceptance by (working) couples in all spheres of their marriage, rests on their ability to adjust their domestic and financial roles to suit their circumstances. Domestic and financial role adjustments are prerequisites for marital satisfaction. Accordingly, couples are enjoined to pay attention to role adjustments in order to achieve marital bliss.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were offered:

1. The marriage/ family counsellors in public sectors should organize regular seminars, symposia, awareness programmes geared towards assisting married workers to acquire good marriage skills through the introduction of marriage therapies. Also the employers of labour, government both at the local, state and national levels should make deliberate effort towards organizing marital awareness programmes for staff members irrespective of their grade level, for better adjustment in marriage.
2. Married workers should utilise this piece of work as a complementary reading to other literature on marriage guides. They should make out time to attend marital counselling for and other organized programmes by professionals, to help improve the quality of workers' marriage. Of course, workers should be able to display readiness to learn, make sacrifices were necessary and love their spouses unconditionally.
3. Couples should invest in their marriage effectively, financially, mentally, physically. Couples should work out family budget system that will be prudent, fair and equalitarian. Husband should help their wives in sharing the house duties either equally or compensating the spouse that sacrifice to handle chores solely, this will strengthen marriage. The role of dialogue should not be underestimated between couples.
4. Religious leaders have a lot to contribute to adherents' welfare in this regard. It is true that most religious centres organize pre-marital counselling sessions for

would be couples but efforts should be geared towards a regular and functional marital counselling session which would be managed by a professional family/pastoral counsellor for a more productive exercise. Where this is not possible, a well trained personnel in the religious centre is better and not just any worshipper. Also, home visitation of members by family counselling team, will go a long in helping married couples to live a stable marital life.

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