

Relationship Red Flags and Conjugal Satisfaction of Secondary School Teachers in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District, Nigeria

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Abstract

The researchers' investigated the difference in conjugal satisfaction of secondary school teachers based on red flags in their marital relationship in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District, Nigeria. Three research questions were raised for the study. Ex-post-facto design was adopted while the population comprised 2,895 teachers in the 89 public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District. A sample size of 340 legally married teachers was selected for the study through the use of a multi-stage sampling procedure. In one of the stages, balloting method of random sampling was used in the selection of 34 sampled schools as well as 10 married teachers from each of the sampled schools for instrument administration. The researchers' structured questionnaire titled "Relationship Red Flags and Conjugal Satisfaction of Teachers Questionnaire (RRFCSTQ)" was used for data collection, with the reliability co-efficient of .76 and .83 for relationship red flags and conjugal satisfaction of teachers respectively, using Cronbach Alpha statistics. Descriptive statistics (mean) was used to answer the research questions. All the findings revealed a low conjugal satisfaction of teachers based on verbal bullying, physical abuse and infidelity. Conclusion was drawn from the finding while the researchers' recommended among other things that, spouses should avoid insulting comments, name-calling and public embarrassment of their partner so that they and their children can grow up with high self-esteem.

Keywords: Relationship Red Flags, Conjugal Satisfaction, Verbal Bullying, Physical Abuse and Infidelity

Introduction

Conventional marriage is a legally and sanctioned union between a man and woman to which the society gives approval; and it places the spouses under conjugal status with legal and social obligations. It is the desire and wish of those under conjugal bond to have a united family in which children will not suffer any form of setbacks. These dreams and aspirations can only materialize if spouses do away with all forms of relationship red flags or behaviours that can cause marital distress.

Relationship red flags are warning signs in marriage that indicate unhealthy or manipulative behaviour (Porten, 2014). In this study, relationship red flags represent early warning of unhealthy traits between spouses that could cause potential damage to a

peaceful union. Examples of the red flags or warning signals in conjugal unions are faulty communication or verbal bullying, physical abuse, aggressive behaviour, substance abuse, lack of trust, infidelity, constant jealousy and unwillingness to compromise among others (Zarea and Safyari, 2015). When all these warning signs persist in marriage, there is bound to be severe challenges that may result in strong anticipation for divorce or breakup.

Every spouse needs satisfactory marital relationship because where two partners live happily and share consistent favourable interest, knowledge, values, emotions and beliefs, there is bound to be mental and emotional stability. Ojukwu (2014) affirmed that it is highly beneficial to the society when strong marriages are formed; and that putting away unhealthy marriage lifestyle is instrumental to any married life. Marriage comes with many benefits which make a satisfactory difference in one's life. It provides financial stability besides companionship and it allows one to have someone who will share one's feelings and experiences with. Marriage brings about healthy sex life, good marital health and companionship which can positively impact on children behavioural growth and development. Stable marriages will produce stable children and families which will in turn give rise to stable society and the world at large (Omeje, Ugwu and Ogidi, 2022).

Marriages do not go from being perfectly a happy one to the brink of divorce overnight. It usually takes a long process and slowly degrade the fabric of the relationship until one spouse develop the feelings of separation or divorce. However, there are many signals which can lead a happy marriage to a breakdown such that if spouses are able to identify some of the signs early enough and are willing to work at fixing the issues, such marriages can be rebuilt. Those "warning signals" are classified as in this study as red flags in marital relationship which can put marriages in jeopardy.

One of the red flags in marital relationship which may likely cause dissatisfaction to a partner is verbal bullying or abuse. Verbal bullying can affect a marriage partner emotional and psychologically. This is because words could be as powerful as actions as individual usually read meanings to every expression. Verbal bullying involved teasing, name-calling, labelling, and public embarrassment, yelling among others (Koller and Dariba, 2020). The uses of derogatory terms are sometimes used between spouses to lower the self-esteem and identity of one another. Spouses are expected to use compassionate and kind words in their daily interaction because the patterns of interaction between the spouses can affect how satisfied they are with their marriage.

Physical abuse between spouses may likely create potential harm on the satisfaction of a partner in the union. Physical abuse involves tweaking, slapping, hitting and kicking. According to Rosenthal, Byerly, Taylor and Martinovich (2018), teachers who are victims of physical abuse particularly the females, usually experience wounds, bruises, and bumps. Such teachers may long to withdraw from the surrounding environment to reduce the feeling of shame due to bodily injuries. Yun, Shim and Jeong (2019) noted that female teachers who get abused from their husband such as being beaten, scolded

and ignored usually experience low self-esteem, and low self-esteem can reduce one's confidence and satisfaction in marriage. Teachers who are mistreated by their marriage mates are most likely to fail in the development of peer relationships.

Infidelity, which is often described as adultery may likely pose severe influence on satisfaction of teachers with conjugal rights. Infidelity in marriage is a violation of a couple's emotional and / or sexual rights that commonly results in feeling of anger, sexual jealousy and rivalry (Fletcher and Kerr, 2010). In recent times, it has been observed that some couples are separated because of one reason or other, married teachers in secondary schools are not exempted from this increasing rate of divorce. Infidelity in marital relationship can cause psychological damage including feelings of rage and betrayal, low sexual and personal confidence and emotional breakup.

The increasing relevance of marital stability and its effects on conjugal satisfaction of teachers calls for more intensive research and analysis of data in order to understand the warning signs or red flags that instigate feelings of dissatisfaction in marital relationship among teachers. It is against this backdrop that the researchers sought to investigate relationship red flags and conjugal satisfaction of secondary school teachers in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Theoretical Review

The theory of social dominance which was propounded by Sidanius and Pratto in 1999, emphasized motivation for verbal bullying or abuse. The social dominance theory (SDT) focuses on group-based social hierarchies. The fundamental tenet of SDT is that all societies consist of group based social hierarchies that are based on gender, age, and arbitrary-set system. The gender has to do with the males having more power than females; age involved adults having more power than children while arbitrary-set system is concerned with a socially significant group differences such as ethnicity or social class that create hierarchies. These group-based social hierarchies are formed through the mechanisms of oppression, discrimination, and injustice.

Dominant groups oppress less-powerful groups to form a hierarchy with one or a few dominant groups at the top while subordinate groups are forced to the bottom. The dominant group possesses a disproportionate amount of positive social value, whereas the subordinate groups possess disproportionate amounts of negative social value. In group-based social hierarchies, the social status and power that individual possess is influenced by group members' ideologies. Interpersonal traumas, such as verbal abuse, erode victims' abilities to form social and emotional attachments to others such as an inability to successfully attach to a peer group or to a school (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). Further, verbal abuse threatens the physical well-being of victims, who often report feeling afraid and helpless.

The relevance of this theory to this work is that it has explained the causes and effects of verbal bullying on teachers conjugal satisfaction. It is observed from this theory that the

urge to maintain social dominance between spouses increases the tendency of verbal abuse or bullying. Verbal abuse exacerbates interpersonal conflicts and results in strong, negative emotions. The fear of becoming a victim of verbal bullying or abuse creates atmosphere of trepidation and mistrust that further erodes relationships and disrupts social cohesion.

Conjugal Satisfaction of Teachers

Satisfaction is the pleasure an individual have for successfully achieving what he or she desired for. A good marriage provides individual with a sense of meaning and identity in life. Teachers with conjugal rights are those who are legally married with legal and social obligations. Conjugal satisfaction is a complex and multi-dimensional construct which has different interpretations. According to Rebello, Silva and Brito (2014), conjugal satisfaction is a global evaluation of the state of one' s marriage and a reflection of marital happiness and functioning.

From an evolutionary perspective, Zainah, Nasir, Hashim and Yusof (2012) described conjugal satisfaction as a psychological state of regulated mechanisms that monitor the benefits and more cost of marriage to a particular person. The implication of this definition is that, the more cost a marriage partner inflicts on another, the less satisfied one would be with the marriage partner, but the greater the perceived benefits, the more satisfied one would be with the marriage mate. After marriage, individual seek a life full of promising future, happiness and satisfaction. A decrease in conjugal satisfaction not only creates an atmosphere of rancour but may also lead to separation or divorce. Therefore, conjugal satisfaction of teachers is defined in this study as the pleasure and comfort married teachers have towards their own marital relationship. The experience of emotional bonds created by significantly spouses through mutual relationship is significant for reaching the state of marital satisfaction and personal needs fulfillment.

Verbal Bullying and Conjugal Satisfaction of Teachers

Verbal bullying or abuse between spouses are slanderous statements or accusations that cause the victim undue emotional distress. Perpetrators of verbal abuse use derogatory words such as name-calling, labelling, inappropriate sexual comments, accusation and other insulting comments to gain power and control over a target (Ada and Anake, 2015). From the above, verbal bullies use relentless insults to belittle, demean and hurt another person. Abuses are often used to control, exploit, or maltreat a receive person without respecting his integrity and feelings.

In marriage, verbal abuse is not about a harsh word spoken in a fit of anger or even an insult thrown off-handedly. It is the systematic use of language in an abusive manner, specifically used to make the spouse feel inferior, insecure, and ran down. The patterns of communication between spouses can determine the success or failure of marriages because communication is the creation, exchange and interpretation of meaningful messages. According to Esere, Yusuf and Omotosho (2011), marriage depends on many

different things to be successful, which include trust, love, time, friendship, understanding, honesty, loyalty, sincerity and above all effective communication.

The happiness of a couple depends largely on the effectiveness of their communication. How a couple communicates can make or mar their relationship. Communicating effectively will allow the couple to negotiate problem areas, fulfill needs, avoid misunderstandings, and develop intimacy. In an empirical study on the causes and effects of communication breakdown in marriages, Uwom-Ajaegbu, Ajike and Fadolapo (2015), found that abusive languages between couples is the bane to marital satisfaction. Haris and Kumar (2018) also found that effective use of compassionate and kind words in communication is associated with marital satisfaction.

Physical Abuse and Conjugal Satisfaction of Teachers

Physical abuse could also have serious harm to conjugal on marital satisfaction of teachers. Physical abuse involves tweaking, slapping, hitting and kicking. According to Igbokwe, Ukwuma and Onugwu (2012), the physical effects experienced by some female teachers are wounds, bruises, and bumps. Such teachers may long to withdraw from the surrounding environment to reduce the feeling of shame due to bodily injuries. The act is mostly perpetrated by husbands against their wives under the justification of putting them under control. As noted by Oladepo, Yusuf and Arulogun (2011) some husbands physically abuse their wife by way of hitting, pushing, holding down, flogging, acid bath and throwing of objects at the victim. Such behaviour seriously inhibits women's ability to enjoy rights and freedom on the basis of equality with men in marriage as well as reduces their satisfaction.

Onwe, Odio and Eze (2019) conducted a study on socio-cultural factors associated with wife beating in Nigeria: A review of key issues. The authors reviews in one of findings that physical abuse perpetrated by husbands against their wives is significantly associated with marriage dissatisfaction of female spouses. The authors added that sometimes, victims of physical violence are usually unable to seek redress due to traditional believes that make the incident to remain invisible and condone as a social norm. Igbokwe, Ukwuma and Onugwe (2012) earlier discovered in one of their findings that women in both rural and urban areas are most likely to be dissatisfied with their marital relationship due to wives beating by their husbands.

Infidelity and Conjugal Satisfaction of Teachers

Infidelity is a violation of the mutually agreed rules or boundaries of an intimate relationship which constitutes an outright default, on the inherent good faith contract of a relationship, or a betrayal of core shared values with which the integrity and nature of the relationship is defined (Anyanwu, 2017). It is seen as unfaithfulness on the part of spouses. Infidelity is one of the identified “red flags or warning signs” in marital relationship which can lead to poor satisfaction on the part of marriage teachers. According to Marie (2012), some women in their husband houses are no more ashamed

to say they have male friends, while some husbands begin to see the ugliness of their wives and weakness of their character particularly when such husbands get richer. This attitude of unfaithfulness may either affect the husband or wife even the children. This could cause separation and divorce of marriage.

What makes infidelity so painful is the fact that it involves someone deliberately using deception to violate established expectations within a relationship. As noted by Clark (2011) infidelity in marriage has recently caused dissatisfaction between couple such that while the cheat enjoys intimacy out of wedlock, the other mate faces crying spells, elevated blood pressure, chest pains, sleep disturbance and other physical and emotional effects. In a study conducted by Mahmood and Najeeb (2013) on personality traits, infidelity and marital satisfaction among married men and women, the authors found that infidelity is the major cause of marital dissatisfaction among married men and women. Marie (2012) earlier discovered that indulgence in sex out of wedlock inhibits marital satisfaction.

Statement of the Problems

Red flags or strains in marriage interaction between couples living together are becoming common. In Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District, the researcher observed that marital disharmony is on the rise because of communication issues, culture and tradition, infidelity, lack of trust, physical and verbal abuse among couples including married teachers. As a result, anger, resentment, dissatisfaction, frustration and hopelessness take control of relationship and at times break down the marriage irretrievably. These could threaten societal values as well as inhibits the satisfaction of teachers with conjugal rights. In other to present some useful recommendations on how to reduce incidences of red flags in marriage, the researcher sought to investigate the difference in satisfaction of teachers' with conjugal rights (legally married teachers) based on red flags in marital relationship in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study

1. What is the difference in conjugal satisfaction of teachers based on verbal bullying between spouses in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District?
2. What is the difference in conjugal satisfaction of teachers based on physical abuse between spouses in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District?
3. What is the difference in conjugal satisfaction of teachers based on infidelity between spouses in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District?

Methodology

The ex-post-facto (after the fact) design was adopted for the study. According to Nassaji (2015), the ex-post facto design is useful in educational research as a means of undertaking studies in which independent variables already existing cannot be manipulated or controlled. This makes the design different from experimental study where variables of interest can be controlled or manipulated. This design allowed the researcher to determine the difference in conjugal satisfaction of teachers' based on pre-existing variables of red flags in marital relationship (verbal bullying, physical abuse and infidelity) in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District, Nigeria.

The main population of the study comprised 2,895 teachers in the 89 public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District. A sample size of 340 legally married teachers was selected for the study through the use of a multi-stage sampling procedure. At the first stage, the sample size was determined statistically using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling procedure, which states that any population that ranges from 2,000 to 3,000, a sample of 340 will be representative of the population. At the second stage, balloting method of random sampling was used to select 34 secondary schools for the study. Therefore, in using this method, the population of schools were assigned numbers and mixed up with other numbered schools on slips of paper, blindfolded into a hat for random selection by group of teachers. Hence, schools pick by teachers that bears the assigned number 1 to 34 were selected as sampled schools for the study. At the third stage of the procedure, 10 married teachers each were selected from the sampled schools randomly using the same balloting method, which gave a total of 340 sampled respondents.

The researchers' structured questionnaire titled " Relationship Red Flags and Conjugal Satisfaction of Teachers Questionnaire (RRFCSTQ)" was used for data collection. The items were framed in line with the research questions. The instrument had three parts. Section (A) contained 5 items each on verbal bullying, physical abuse and infidelity while section (B) contained 10 items measuring conjugal satisfaction of teachers' . RRFCSTQ was measured in a four point rating scale of Very High Satisfaction (VHS) = 4; High Satisfaction (HS) = 3; Low Satisfaction (LS) = 2; Very Low Satisfaction (VLS) = 1. The respondents were requested to give their own opinions or views to the instrument using the symbol (\surd). Thereafter, responses for very high and high satisfaction were grouped to represent "high marital satisfaction" while responses for low and very low satisfaction were grouped to represent "low marital satisfaction" .

To ensure the face validity of the instrument, draft copies of the RRFSTCRQ were given to two experts to assess the suitability or otherwise of the items in the instrument. The experts were all from the Department of Educational Psychology and Measurement, University of Uyo. These experts deleted some of the items that were not good, modified some, while the good items were allowed to remain. The inputs and corrections made by these experts were used to form the final copy of instrument before administration.

To establish the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach Alpha reliability technique was used. Here, the instrument was administered on 30 married teachers in a selected school not included in the sample size. Data were subjected to Cronbach Alpha statistics which was applied for test of internal consistency of the instrument. The overall reliability coefficient of .76 was obtained for relationship red flags and .83 for items measuring conjugal satisfaction of teachers. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions. In answering the research questions, where the mean difference between the two groups' lies was the rationale used to determine whether the respondents have high conjugal satisfaction or low based on relationship red flags.

Results

Research Question One: What is the difference in conjugal satisfaction of teachers based on verbal bullying between spouses in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on the difference in conjugal satisfaction of teachers based on verbal bullying between spouses

Verbal Bullying	n	Mean	SD	Mean Difference
High	115	11.61	1.69	7.03
Low	225	18.64	2.86	

Source: Field data (2022)

The result in Table 1 indicates the mean difference in conjugal satisfaction of teachers based on verbal bullying between spouses in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District. From the table, the mean of teachers with high conjugal satisfaction based on verbal bullying between spouses was 11.61 while that of teachers with low satisfaction was 18.64. The mean difference between the two groups was 7.03 in favour of teachers with low conjugal satisfaction based on verbal bullying in their relationship. This is an indication that teachers differ in conjugal satisfaction based on verbal bullying. Hence, this result implies that if verbal bullying is high in marital relationship, teachers with conjugal status would likely not be satisfied in their marital unions and vice versa.

Research Question Two: What is the difference in conjugal satisfaction of teachers based on physical abuse between spouses in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on the difference in conjugal satisfaction of teachers based on physical abuse between spouses

Physical Abuse	n	Mean	SD	Mean Difference
High	91	8.31	1.01	7.91
Low	249	16.22	2.62	

Source: Field data (2022)

The result in Table 2 indicates the mean difference in conjugal satisfaction of teachers based on physical abuse between spouses in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District. From the table, the mean of teachers with high conjugal satisfaction based on physical

abuse between spouses was 8.31 while that of teachers with low satisfaction was 16.22. The mean difference between the two groups was 7.91 in favour of teachers with low conjugal satisfaction based on physical abuse in their relationship. This is an indication that teachers differ in conjugal satisfaction based on physical abuse. Hence, this result implies that if physical abuse is high in marriage, teachers with conjugal status would likely not be satisfied in their marital relationship and vice versa.

Research Question Three: What is the difference in conjugal satisfaction of teachers based on infidelity between spouses in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation on the difference in conjugal satisfaction of teachers based on infidelity between spouses

Infidelity	n	Mean	SD	Mean Difference
High	132	12.21	2.40	Conjugal Satisfaction of Teachers 8.52
Low	208	20.73	3.13	

Source: Field data (2022)

The result in Table 3 indicates the mean difference in conjugal satisfaction of teachers based on infidelity between spouses in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District. From the table, the mean of teachers with high conjugal satisfaction based on infidelity between spouses was 12.21 while that of teachers with low satisfaction was 20.73. The mean difference between the two groups was 8.52 in favour of teachers with low conjugal satisfaction based on infidelity in their relationship. This is an indication that teachers differ in conjugal satisfaction based on infidelity. Hence, the implication of this result is that if infidelity occurs in marriage, teachers with conjugal status would likely not be satisfied in their marital relationship and vice versa.

Discussion

Result from the research question one shows the mean difference between teachers with high and low conjugal satisfaction respectively based verbal bullying in marriage. The result shows that the mean difference between the two groups was 7.03 in favour of teachers with low conjugal satisfaction based on verbal bullying in their relationship. This implies that the higher the occurrence of verbal bullying in marriage, the greater the possibility those teachers with conjugal status would likely not be satisfied in their relationship. This finding is in agreement with the finding of Uwom-Ajaegbu, Ajike and Fadolapo (2015), that abusive language between couples is the bane to marital satisfaction. This finding also corroborates the finding of Haris and Kumar (2018), that effective use of compassionate and kind words in communication is associated with marital satisfaction. Hence, it is noted from this finding that the use of verbal bullying (as a red flag in marital relationship) would likely result in marital dissatisfaction.

Result from the research question two shows the mean difference between teachers with high and low conjugal satisfaction respectively based on physical abuse in marriage. The result shows that the mean difference between the two groups was 7.91 in favour of teachers with low conjugal satisfaction based on physical abuse or violence in marital

relationship. This result therefore implies that the presence of physical violence between spouses can lead to poor marital or conjugal satisfaction. This finding is in agreement with the earlier finding of Igbokwe, Ukwuma and Onugwe (2012) that women in both rural and urban areas are most likely to be dissatisfied with their marital relationship due to wives beating by their husbands. This finding is also in tandem with the finding of Onwe, Odio and Eze (2019), that physical abuse perpetrated by husbands against their wives is significantly associated with marriage dissatisfaction of female spouses. The authors added that sometimes, victims of physical violence are usually unable to seek redress due to traditional believes that make the incidence to remain invisible and condone as a social norm. Therefore, the researchers' wish to observe from this finding that physical abuse is a major bane to marital satisfaction.

Result from the research question three shows the mean difference between teachers with high and low conjugal satisfaction respectively based on infidelity in marriage. The result shows that the mean difference between the two groups was 8.52 in favour of teachers with low conjugal satisfaction based on infidelity in marital relationship. This result therefore indicates that infidelity in marriage is a major warning sign or red flags to marital satisfaction. Hence, this finding agrees with the finding of the study conducted by Mahmood and Najeeb (2013), that infidelity is the major cause of marital dissatisfaction among married men and women. This finding also conforms to the earlier finding of Marie (2012), that indulgence in sex out of wedlock inhibits marital satisfaction. Hence, it is therefore observed that sexual affair out of wedlock is strongly connected with marital dissatisfaction.

Conclusion

Based on the finding of the study, it is therefore concluded that secondary school teachers experience low conjugal satisfaction based on red flags in marital relationship, which include physical violence, verbal bullying as well as infidelity.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were drawn from the findings:

1. Spouses should avoid insulting comments, name-calling and public embarrassment of their partner so that they and their children can grow up with high self-esteem.
2. Family counselors, educators and other respected authority should open up enlightenment programmes to both newly marriage couples and the older ones on the need to avoid physical violence in their marital relationship so as to have a strong bond for the better family function and wellbeing of members.
3. Married couples should maintain faithfulness to their partners while avoiding every forms of external relationship that could deepen the urge for extra-

marital affairs. When all these red flags in marriage are creatively handled, they will be peace in the hearts, love among spouses and joy in the home.

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