Optimal Performance of Couples in Marital Stability amongst Benin-Speaking People of Oredo Local Government Area Edo State

By

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Abstract

The study examined Optimal performance of couple in marital stability amongst Benin-speaking people in Oredo Local Government Area Edo State. The objective of the study was to examine how stability of marriage ensures family cohesion in Oredo Local Government Area. examine factors that affects marital stability among Benin-Speaking people in Oredo Local Government Area. The study adopted Eclectic theory as the theoretical framework this is because it can explain the phenomenon under investigation. The study population of Oredo Local Government area was a total of 374,671 persons (National population 2006). Population projection up to 2023 was 619,331 at 3% of population growth rate. The sample size for the study using Homogenous purposive sampling was 200 and was drawn from population of both men and women who were within ages of 18 – 60 years, married and are Benin speaking people. The findings of the study established that optimal performance among couples enhances marital stability and therefore has a significant impact on the socio-psychological wellbeing, emotional wellbeing and mental wellbeing. Similarly, non-performance affects marital stability which may lead to quarrel, separation and even divorce. The study recommended that couples should understand how external factors causes marital instability, communicate in a more constructive ways, visit professional marriage counselors. Government and communities should be practically involved by employing social workers and marriage counselors to follow-up couples facing challenges in marriage.

Key Words: Couples, Family, Instability Marriage, Optimal Performance

Background to the Study

Marriage is very important in the Benin Culture. When it comes to Marriage, maintaining a good balance is key to staying happy and healthy. Balancing family is a complex issue that involves financial values, gender roles, career paths, time management, and many other factors. Hidden values and models from our cultures, original families, and other sources influence our choices in ways that we often don't anticipate or understand and that have far reached consequences for our lives. Balancing family has no easy solution no –one-size-fits-all approach. Every couple will have their preferences and needs. (Adegoke, 2010).

Marriage is a unique institution as it is practiced by all ethnic groups, race or religious group. (Vincent-Osaghae, 2007). A successful marriage is a dynamic and a growing relationship based on love, dignity, respect, co-operation, humility and other centeredness. At such marriage involve a high level of satisfaction for each individual and helps make his/her life more abundant and meaningful. (Thomas & Anderson 1972) In a marriage union, the presence of love and submission cannot be overemphasized as rudimentary.

In ancient times, marriages in Oredo L.G.A among the Benin ethnic groups were greatly admired by neighboring areas. According to Iyi-Iweka (2012) Benin women were regarded as very faithful, trustworthy, honest and with strong fidelity to their husbands such that it was very difficult for other ethnic groups to get a Benin woman as wife. The Benin culture expects every married. woman to be submissive and obedient to her husband while in all condition the husband has to love the wife in return.

In Nigeria today, the influence of industrialization and urbanization has affected the social system of the country, a part of which is the marriage system. As new cultural patterns, new aspirations and behavioral norms have emerged and as the traditional social ties undergo changes, social control becomes weakened. Since the traditional family structure has been littered, the functions have equally been affected and many of its important roles are now known to be associated with many forms of instability.

According to Filani (2005) Marital instability is a breakdown in communication among couples resulting in constant arguments, verbal and physical separation and sometimes divorce. Thus, Lands (2005) explained that divorce becomes a climax to a long story of unhappiness and it provides a legal way out of a situation which one or both parties have considered intolerable. Hence it is clear that the African culture demands that a woman be respectful and submissive to her husband and in return the husbands should love and cherish the wife for a healthy and stable marriage. Healthy marriage is good for couple's mental, physical, educationally and social wellbeing. However, divorce often shatters the peace and harmony in the family (Kumar, 2011)..

Statement Of Research Problem

Due to the cases studied during the researcher's field practicum experience at the ministry of women affairs (family welfare unit) it was observed that many couples who come for counseling had marital problems as a result of Educational status, occupations, financial problems, Extended family interference, lack of fun among couples, immaturity, Emotional problems, Psychological problems, e.t.c, and also at National Agency for the prohibition of Trafficking in person (NAPTIP) it was observed that marital instability is a root cause of human trafficking as women and children most especially becomes vulnerable as a result of negligence, lack of care and emotional imbalance. Likewise, a review of literatures on marriages in previous years which reveals that for couples to experience stability in marriage, there has to be a mutual understanding amongst them. From the background of study, the standpoint of the society at large on the issue of submission can be seen yet people still see submission as something domineering, degrading, and humiliating regardless of the sex gender be it male or female.

Marriages today seem to be a two–headed monstrosity because of a rebellious wife who refuses to submit to her husband's instructions as well as a culturally dominated man who manifest a supremacy over his wife and make the conditions of the woman like that of a colonized people. (living in a man's world) by battering, maltreating, disrespecting or abusing. Oredo in 21st century is almost frequently contesting the submission of wives to their husbands while married men make several excuses coupled with certain factors find it insulting and/or even out of place to love, honour and cherish their wives. This has led to several

social problems such as marriage instability, marriage failures, separation, infidelity, self-centeredness and even divorce. (Ministry of women affairs, welfare unit, 2016).

Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to determine the Optimal performances of couples in Marital Stability amongst Benin-Speaking People in Oredo Local Government Area Edo State. The specific objectives were to:

1. examine how stability of marriage ensure family cohesion in Oredo Local Government Area.
2. examine factors that affects marital stability among Benin-Seaking people in Oredo Local Government Area.

Literature Review

Marriage is a big step in life, in which a person plans to attain. In a society, the family must perform some basic functions involving conception and birth, regular intercourse, socialization and maintenance functions for providing economic support and physical protection. (Oforchukwu, 2010).. In Benin Tradition, marriage of a youth was parts of the responsibilities of the parents, the young man had no choices and no say but to accept his wife with joy and thanks. Marriages arranged by parents on the basis of family friendship ties rarely broke up in the past. Divorce in the Ancient times was also very rare, because of penalties of proven infidelity and fear of offending elders of both families in Nigeria. The purpose of marriage is to have children and establish a family. When these children eventually arrive, they are regarded as blessing from God and are social and economic assets to their parents. The family this time needs a home to live in and feel secured. Thus, home is a place where a family lives and secures love. It is a place which provides all individual needs in order to fit into the society successfully. A home not built on love and mutual understanding and good planning is bound to crack and fissure in all direction.

The African culture particularly in Nigeria expects every married woman to be submissive and obedient to her husband. In this light, Aina (1998) pointed to the dominance of patriarchy in the Nigerian family where husbands dictate for wives relating to the upkeep of the home and in most cases they have the final say in

issues relating to childbearing/ rearing in the home. Hence it is clear that the African culture demand that a married woman be respectful and submissive to their husbands. (Uyabame, 2013).

The prevalence of divorce cases in the world today cannot be overemphasized. (Plunkett, 2012) stated that divorce in US rose by 79% between 1970 to 1977 and that one third or more of the marriages of people aged 25 to 35years will end in divorce. (Golden, & Henderson 2007) also stated that in 1976, a National Centre for Health statistics study projected that by 1980s, 49% of all marriages would end in divorce and infact, in the U.S during 1983, there were 10.5 marriages per 1,000 people (National Centre for Health Statistics personal communication (2004).

Divorce and life in a one – parent family are becoming increasingly common experiences in the lives of parents and children. Prior to the 1960s, divorce in Canada was rare. However, following the adoption of the new Divorce Act in 1968, which made divorces more accessible in all provinces/territories and allowed marriage breakdown as grounds for separation, the number of divorces increased dramatically. According to Harden, (2004) Between the end of the 1960s and the mid 1980s, the divorce rate increased fivefold, in 1995, the most recent year for which data are available, there are approximately 77,000 divorces granted in Canada, a rate of 262 per 100,000 people (statistics Canada 1997).

According to the report in the late 1980s, approximately 74,000 children became children of divorce. Statistics records of marital instability are not compiled in Nigeria as yet but newspaper often report cases of marital disruption on weekly basis in Lagos and its environs. For example (Okpara & Mezieobi ,2007) reported the case of kids (aged 12 to 16 years) who were of broken homes in the weekend concord of September 22nd 1990 and how they have become a nuisance at the Lagos City hall during parties. In Kwara State, the Ministry of Information and Culture recorded that 1,697 marriages were registered for both the churches and Marriage registry from 1984 – 1988. During the same periods there were 12,104 divorces (court case file, child welfare centre and Oja-Oba Area courts Ilorin). According to these records, the rate of divorces over marriages is at 71% approximately 7 divorces in every marriage (7.1) Ahmed (1990) has opined that the rate of divorce is increasing at an alarming rate and should strike counselors as a problem worthy

of serious therapeutic attention because it is one of the terrifying sources of psychological, social and educational problems in the society.

In Edo state, there has been an increase in the rate of marital instability especially among the Benin people resulting to separation and divorce thereby leaving the children of the home homeless, destitute and emotionally destabilized and thus making them vulnerable to human traffickers. (Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, 2015). Hence there is the need for this study to find means of ensuring marital stability so as to avoid the constant breakages in marital relationship.

Theoretical Framework: Eclectic Theory

Thorne (1952), eclectic theory of counselling is designed to preserve married couples mental health by assisting him to prevent or modify causal factors that produced maladjustment or marital disorder in the client. This is essential in managing a scenario including marital strife. Here, the client's problem is diagnosed according to its causes and symptoms, and a client-centered approach is frequently used to assist the client with non-directive problem-solving. Thorne (1950) went on to suggest five techniques that can be used in solving problems. determining the root of a client's personality maladjustment; planning to change or prevent the incidental causes of the client's issue; ensuring the right conditions and environment for the client to learn effectively; enhancing the client's intellectual capacity to practice the newly learned technique of adjustment; giving the client instructions on how to appropriately address adjustment-related issues. Okobiah and Okorodudu (1997) expatiated that the eclectic theory attempts the systematization of counselling through the application of procedures, techniques and concepts of various theories of counselling. The term "eclectic" stands for picking, balancing, and deciding on the best system or ideologies. This suggests that applying a single paradigm to difficulties linked to marriage may be restricted in orientation, leading to couples experiencing minor interpersonal troubles while living together. Clients may occasionally need a learning process where the counselor applies a number of learning theories to help the person develop desired behaviors that can address their unfavorable interpersonal behaviors. To affirm this assertion, Shertzer and Stone (1980), Essuman (1988) Iwuana (1991) and Unachukwu (1991) contend that most human behaviours could be learned and

unlearned. This makes it possible to change behaviors in the desired way. Every person has the capacity to assess and adjust their behavior, therefore the counselor takes advantage of this chance to clarify the client's issue, create counseling objectives, and implement the necessary interventions to promote harmony, especially in distressed or unhappy couples.

Methodology

The research design adopted was the cross-sectional design method also known as the one-time or status studies. The choice of this research design adopted is because of the systematic advantage it has in describing the nature of phenomenon under investigation and this method collect data to make inferences about a population of interest (the universe) at a given point in time. The study population of Oredo local government area was a total of 374,671 persons (National population 2006). Population projection up to 2023 was 619,331 at 3% of population growth rate This study targeted the population of married men and women who are Benin-speaking people in Oredo local Government Area of age 18years above, the age specify is a legal age to marriage. Age is vital component in this study since it can give coherent responses and true experiences comfortably. The reason for the choice of 18 years is that it meets up to the cultural standard of the Benin people in terms of age at which the youth get married.

The sample size for the study using Homogenous purposive sampling was 200 and was drawn from population of both men and women who are within their ages of 18 – 60years and are married and are Benin speaking people. The numbers of male respondent were 55 while the female respondent was 145 respectively. The sample size was arrived at through selection as Oredo Local Government is a metropolis with many ethnic groups.

Data Presentation and Discussion of findings

Table 1- Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Measurements	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	55	27.5
	Female	145	72.5
	Total	**200**	**100.0**
Age	18-22 years	6	3.0

	23-27yrs	23	11.5
	28-32yrs	25	12.5
	33-37yrs	46	23.0
	38-42yrs	28	14.0
	43-47yrs	24	12.0
	48-52yrs	46	20.0
	53yrs and above	8	4.0
	Total	**200**	**100.0**
Level of Education	None	9	4.5
	Primary	17	8.5
	Secondary	43	21.5
	Tertiary	127	63.5
	Others	4	2.0
	Total	**200**	**100.0**
Marital status	Married	162	81.0
	Divorced	26	13.0
	Separated	10	5.0
	Co-habiting	2	1.0
	Total	**200**	**100.0**
Duration of Marriage	5-10yrs	96	48.0
	11-20yrs	76	38.0
	21years above	28	14.0
	Total	**200**	**100.0**
Religion	Christianity	171	85.5
	Islam	18	9.0
	Traditional Religion	8	4.0
	Others	3	1.5
	Total	**200**	**100.0**

Employment Status	Student	20	10.0
	Civil servants	104	52.0
	Self employed (farmers)	32	16.0
	Non farmers	16	8.0
	Unemployed	18	9.0
	Retired	2	1.0
	Others	8	4.0
	Total	**200**	**100.**

Source: Field work, 2024

The result on table 1 revealed that 55 respondents representing 27.5% were males while 145 respondents from the total respondents that participated in the research were females. From the result it can be deduced that majority of the respondents were females. On the age distribution of respondents, the result indicated that 6 (3.0%) of the respondents were within 18-22 years age interval, 23 (11.5%) of the respondents were within 23-27 years age bracket while 25 (12.5%) of the respondents fall within 28-32years, the result further revealed that 28 (14.0%), 24 (12.0%), 46 (20.0%) and 8 (4.0%) of the respondents fall within 38-42 years, 43-47 years, 48-52 years and 53 years and above age brackets respectively.

Table 2 -Analysis of Objective One: To examine how stability ensure family cohesion in Oredo Local Government Area, Edo state.

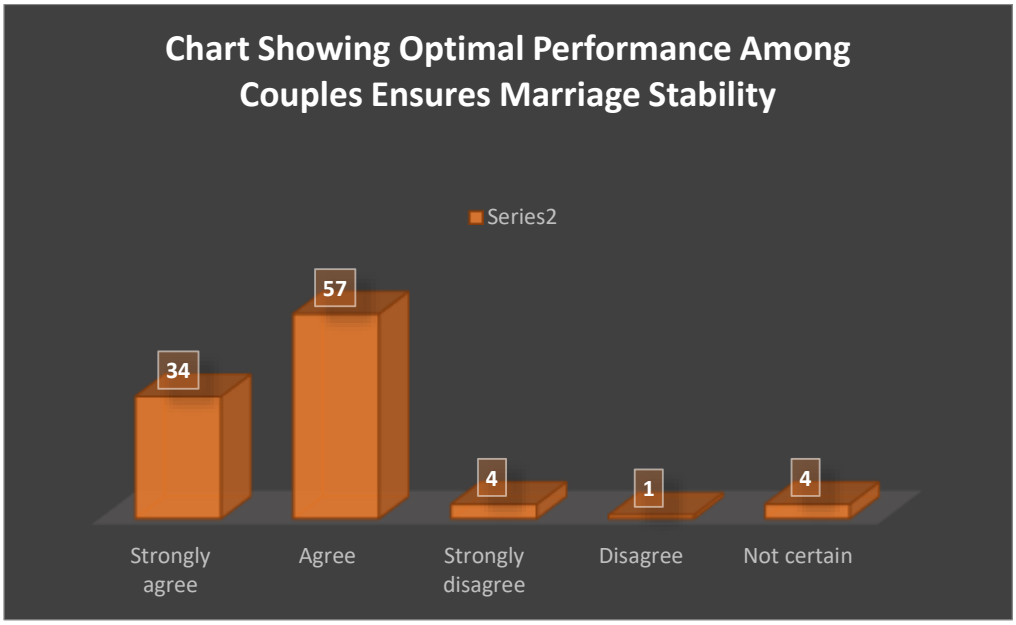
Variables	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Optimal performance among couples ensures marriage stability	Strongly agree	68	34.0
	Agree	114	57.0
	Strongly	8	4.0
	disagree	2	1.0
	Disagree	8	4.0
	Not certain	**200**	**100.0**
	Total		

The society no longer see anything wrong among couples who do not show accommodation between each other in marriage	Strongly agree Agree Strongly disagree Disagree Not certain **Total**	31 84 33 34 18 **200**	15.5 42.0 16.5 17.0 9.0 **100.0**
Couples ought to love and respect each other to make their marriage a success.	Strongly agree Agree Disagree Not certain **Total**	139 56 3 2 **200**	69.5 28.0 1.5 1.0 **100.**

Source: Field work, 2024

The result on the table the responses of the respondents on factors that ensures stability and family cohesion in marriage. The result revealed that 34.0% of the respondents strongly agreed to the fact that optimal performance among couples ensures marriage stability, similarly, the result showed that over half of the respondents which constitute 57.0% also agreed to the aforementioned assertion. On the other hand, the result revealed that 5.0% of the respondents disagreed while 4.0% were not certain about how optimal performance among couples ensures marriage stability. From the findings, it can be deduced that marital stability can be attained when couples share same ideology and values so as to promote healthy and stable relationship within the household which in turn also led to balanced psychological wellbeing of the children.

Fig 1 Chart on optimal performance among couples ensures marriage stability



The result also revealed that 31 respondents representing 15.5% strongly agree to the fact that the society no longer see anything wrong among couples who do not show accommodation between each other in marriage, 84 respondents which constitute 42.0% also affirmed the above assertion while 33 respondents which represent 16.5% strongly agreed to the fact that the society doesn't frown at couples that don't accommodate each other, 34 respondents (17.0%) disagreed while 18 respondents were not certain. The result further revealed that majority of the respondents representing 195 with 97.5% affirmed that couples must endeavor to show love and respect to one another so as to ensure a stable and successful marriage. On the other hand, a very minute fraction of the respondents 3 (1.5%) had a different notion and disagreed to the aforementioned assertion while 2 respondents (1.0%) were indifferent to the postulation. From the foregoing, it can be deduced that some salient factors such as tolerance, love, support and respect were identified as the factors that influence the stability and cohesion of marriages. Hence it is clear that the African culture demands that a woman be respectful and submissive to her husband and in return the husbands should love and cherish

the wife for a healthy and stable marriage. Healthy marriage is good for couple's mental, physical, emotional and social well-being.

Table 3 -Analysis of Objective Two: examine factors that affects marital stability among couples in Benin-Speaking people in Oredo Local Government Area.

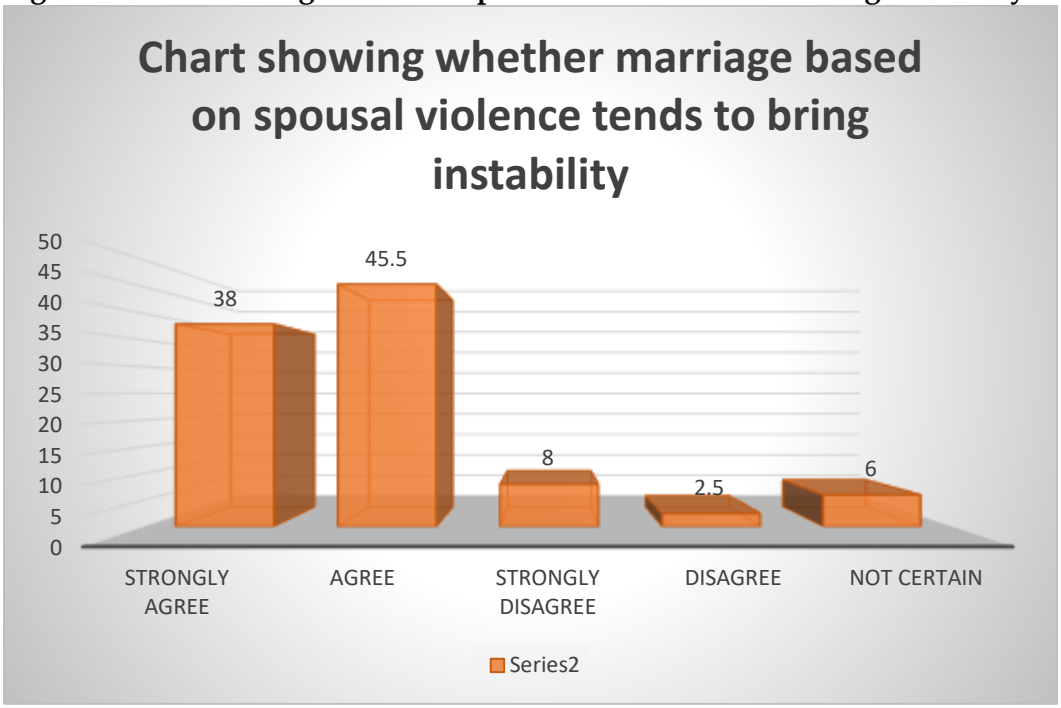
Variables	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Rise in women liberation activities tends to encourage instability in marriage	Strongly agree	15	7.5
	Agree	109	54.5
	Strongly disagree	29	14.5
	Disagree	37	18.5
	Not certain	10	5.0
	Total	**200**	**100.0**
Marriage based on spousal violence tends to bring instability.	Strongly agree	76	38.0
	Agree	91	45.5
	Strongly disagree	16	8.0
	Disagree	5	2.5
	Not certain	12	6.0
	Total	**200**	**100.0**
Lack of fun in marriage lead to marriage instability.	Strongly agree	72	36.0
	Agree	97	48.5
	Strongly disagree	12	6.0
	Disagree	9	4.5
	Not certain	10	5.0
	Total	**200**	**100.0**

Source: Field work, 2024

The result in table 3 shows the responses of the respondents with regards to factors affecting marital stability among Bini speaking people of Edo state, the respondents were of the view that the rise in feminist activities propel marital instability as the women becomes less submissive to their husbands; 124 (62.0%) of the respondents affirmed this aforementioned statement, more so, 66 respondents with 33.0% disagree with the fact that the campaign for women liberation affect the stability of marriages, on the other hand, 10 respondents which constitute 5.0% were not certain. The result further revealed that 76 respondents

(38.0%) strongly agreed to the fact that spousal violence leads to marriage instability while 91 respondents with 45.5% agreed to the assertion that any marriage based on spousal violence have a great tendency of experiencing marital stability; on the other hand, 21 respondents with 10.5% disagreed to the fact that spousal violence leads to marital instability while 12 respondents (6.0%) were uncertain.

Fig 2: Chart on Marriage based on spousal violence tends to bring instability



Similarly, 72 respondents with 36.0% identified lack of fun as a cause of marriage instability when couples are not very intimate, the relationship began to wear out; 97 respondents with 48.5% also agreed to the aforementioned assertion, 12 respondents with 6.0% and 9 respondents (4.5%) strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively to the fact that lack of fun in marriage lead to marital instability, 5.0% which constitute 10 respondents were uncertain. Marital instability could arise as a result of lack of sexual gratification, sexual rigidity or denial of sex on demand. The study therefore conclude that couples should endeavor to resolve any

negative factor that can result to marital instability and must also maintain a right attitude towards each other.

The study sampled a total of 200 respondents who are 18 years and above, married and are Benin speaking people. With respect to the Demographic data, the study revealed that there were 145 female respondent and 55 male respondents respectively. Looking at the age bracket, the highest number of respondents were within the ages of (33 – 37) and (45- 52) and 162 were married.

The duration of marriage was within 5-10years and with respect to the educational qualification the highest number of respondents were graduates and 104 of the respondents were civil servants. Looking at the religion of the respondents, the highest number of respondents with 171% were christians,18 Islam, 8 African Traditional Religion and 3 had no option.

In measuring performance and Marital stability in relation to the objectives of the study, 57% which represent 114 respondents agreed that optimal performance among couples ensures marital stability, 68 respondents strongly agreed while only 8 strongly disagreed, 2 respondents disagreed and 8 respondents were not certain. The study revealed that 31 respondents strongly agreed and 84 respondents agreed that the society no longer see anything wrong among couples who do not show accommodation between themselves. 139 respondent strongly agreed and 56 respondents also agreed to the view that couples ought to love and respect each other.

In respect to activities of women liberation movement, 15 respondents strongly agreed and 109 agreed that the rise in women liberation movement tends to encourage marital instability looking at spousal violence,76 respondents strongly agreed that spousal violence which includes wife battering, using insulting and abusive words at each other, nagging, fighting, e.t.c. affects marital stability. 91 respondents also agreed to this assertion. Similarly, the study also found out that lack of fun among couples can distort marital stability as 48% which represent 97 respondents agreed to this question.

The study also gathered that children are mostly affected in marriages experiencing marital instability as 66.5% of the

respondent strongly agreed and 49.5% which represent 99 respondents also strongly agreed that marital instability distort family cohesion. The study also gathered that environmental factors and upbringing are a determinant of a successful marriage among couples as 67.5% of the respondents agreed to this fact. From the ongoing, it is crystal clear that optimal and a balance performance is required by couples to maintain and have a healthy relationship to ensure marital stability.

Conclusion

Evidence from the literature reviewed, and questionnaires analyzed showed that optimal performance is necessary for marital stability. This means that for a marriage to be successful spouses should be willing to act positively to make things work out through understanding regardless of Educational status, Religion, Age, Family background, financial status, e.t.c. . This is because no one has the power to change another person. Instead focusing on learning what you contribute to your marital problems and changing your own attitude, behaviour and skills. The study has revealed that majority of the Respondents agrees that accommodation in marriage among couples is not a sign of weakness but rather understanding and compatibility.

The study also revealed that marriage based on spousal violence tends to bring instability in marriage which means couples ought to understand and know each other's' strength and weakness, state of mind at a particular time, know when, and how to act or react in every situation and circumstances. This is because some problems within a relationship may reach beyond the scope of therapy, i.e, relationships in which physical or sexual abuse is an issue requires more forms of intervention. The study also revealed that instability in marriage tends to encourage human trafficking by endangering the lives of the women and children most especially, by making them vulnerable to social vices and human traffickers. The study also revealed that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that couples ought to love and respect each other and also have fun by fondly themselves, talking and listening to each other, involving in romantic and foreplay, sharing of gifts, giving of surprise packages, e.t.c. to make their marriages enjoyable and successful. This is very important as love they say covers

a multitude of sin. When there is love among couples, forgiving one another becomes very easy. The study also revealed that the Benin culture demands that wives must show respect to their husbands, and a lot of the Benin women attested they respect their husbands and does not find it difficult to submit to them. From the study so far, we can conclude that the general performance of the couples among Benin speaking people towards marital stability is positive and balanced (optimal). The performance is rated to be positive and should be encouraged so as to ensure a continuous balanced life, family, marriage, and high level of socio-psychological wellbeing in terms of happiness, personal growth, and positive relationships. The study therefore concludes that when couples understand themselves and perform well in marriages, marital stability is rest assured.

Recommendations

Based on the following recommendations were made

1. Couples should understand how external factors such as family values, religion, lifestyles and culture affect marital relationship.
2. Couples should communicate in a more constructive way and express their feelings to one another

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