



## **Family Background and Marital Instability among Married Teachers in Delta State**

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### **Abstract**

This study examined the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State. Three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses guided the study. The correlational research design was adopted in the study. The population comprised 8,526 married teachers residing in Delta State. A sample size of 879 married teachers was drawn from secondary schools across the state through a combination of proportionate stratified sampling and convenience sampling techniques. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. The psychometric properties of the instrument were established through expert judgement and factor analysis, while Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was used to check for the reliability of the items, and it yielded the following coefficients Family Background Rating Scale = 0.666; and Marital Instability Rating Scale = 0.838. The data obtained were analysed using Pearson coefficient of determination, regression, and fisher-z statistics. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers; that there is a significant moderating impact of gender in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers; that there is no significant moderating impact of number of years in marriage in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers. The study recommended amongst others that government should implement programs that provide support and resources to teachers from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as financial assistance, mentorship, and access to counselling services.

**Keywords:** Family Background; Marital Instability; Married Teachers; Secondary Schools.



## Introduction

Marriage is the oldest social institution ordained by God as a social contract between two individuals to become husband and wife. It is the state of being united with a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife for companionship, procreation, and maintaining a family. Marriage gives legitimacy to sexual relationships and reproduction for legitimate children, and it is linked to significant benefits in the areas of physical and mental health (Omoniye-Oyafunke, et al., 2014). The benefits of marriage stem from the economic advantages associated with the married status; from a social capital effect (the spouse provides support and helps integrate the individual into wider social networks); and from a regulative effect (marriage encourages healthy conduct partly because self-destructive behaviours impose negative externalities on the spouse).

Stable Marriage promotes emotional support and stability, protection and security, healthy life and elongation of life span, creating conducive atmosphere for raising healthy and stable Children. it serves as model and motivation for others to venture into the marriage institution. Stable marriages also lead to stable societies. As the society is made up of families. When these individual families are stable, the society in turn will be stable. The amount of gain associated with marriage varies across couples, depending on each partner's characteristics and the match's quality.

Despite the beautiful benefits of stable marriages, marriage and family life have undergone major changes globally during the past few decades. These changes have given rise to marital instability. According to Musau, et al. (2015), the marriage institution is witnessing instability globally. This has become a concern in contemporary society. The term marital instability refers to a sustained atmosphere of conflict, arising from communication gap and breakdown, differing views and ideas of parenting, financial challenges, lack of trust, infidelity, excessive negative influence and pressure from peers, difference and or conflicting couples family background (as it pertains to religious beliefs, cultural beliefs and traditions, family bonding; inter and intra personal relationships among family members, financial status, social status, educational status and leadership style or flow of authority of couples parents), substance addiction and abuse (Harold G. Koenig, et al 2001). Hussani and Adejare (2021) defined marital instability as the interpersonal difficulties within the marital relationship. Oyafunke, et al. (2014) referred to it as the process whereby marriages break down through separation, desertion or divorce.

Marital instability is continuously on the increase in Africa and other developing countries and is associated with separation and divorce (Duke-Natrebo, 2014). The increase in divorce rates is one of the most visible changes in African societies and family lives. For instance, In the year 2018 alone, Nigeria observed a 14% rise in separation rates, with approximately 3000 instances of divorce documented specifically in Badagry (NBS, 2018). Moving on to 2019, Kano state witnessed a staggering count of more than one million officially registered divorces. Furthermore, official records from the Federal Capital Territory High Court demonstrated that between 2019 and February 2020, there were more than 2000 cases of divorce filed, and approximately 30 cases were addressed daily (Yakubu, 2020). These findings also indicated a higher prevalence of divorce cases in customary courts and sharia customary courts. In the city of Enugu, Justice Pricilla Emehalu reported no fewer than 55 divorce cases annually during the legal year of 2018/2019, with a current backlog of 3,503 cases in the high court and 5,502 cases in the Magistrate courts (Eze, 2018). In most cases, it is unsettled marital instabilities that ultimately lead to divorces.

Also, according to Udoka and colleagues (2019), it was mentioned that roughly 50% of marriages in the United States undergo conflict that culminates in divorce. Correspondingly,



Gonzalez and Viitanen (2009) asserted that over half of individuals who have re-married will encounter disharmony in their marriages and subsequently experience divorce for a second time. This pattern is evident in numerous countries worldwide. While the precise divorce rate in Nigeria remains undisclosed, Yahaya (cited in Udoka et al., 2019) indicated that media reports and evidence from customary courts and Social Welfare Offices point to a high incidence of divorce arising from marital instability. In a preliminary investigation, the researcher conducted visits to various courts in different regions of Delta State and found a significant number of marital distress cases. Showing a clear picture of marital instability in various marriages. Serving as an example, it was observed that between 2017 and 2022, more than 3,605 instances of marital issues were documented across the three senatorial districts of Delta State (Court Case file).

The consequences of marital instability on the people involved and their children are severe. The breakdown of family and conjugal ties has relevant consequences of demographic, psychological, social and economic nature for the persons involved. The repercussions of marital instability have far-reaching impacts on both the individuals directly involved and their children. The unravelling of family and marital bonds gives rise to a cascade of consequences that span various dimensions, including demographics, psychology, social dynamics, and economics. From a demographic standpoint, the breakdown of marriages contributes to shifts in population trends. Marital instability often results in separations and divorces, leading to changes in household compositions, family structures, and even fertility rates. These demographic shifts have implications for the overall composition and size of communities and societies.

Psychologically, the toll of marital instability is significant. The emotional stress, anxiety, and depression experienced by individuals going through relationship breakdowns can be profound. The sense of loss, betrayal, and uncertainty can lead to long-lasting emotional scars. Moreover, children caught in the crossfire of marital discord can face emotional challenges as well, which might affect their self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, and overall well-being. On a social level, the consequences of marital instability extend to broader networks. Marital conflicts and separations can strain relationships with extended family members, friends, and even colleagues. Social support systems might weaken, leading to feelings of isolation and disconnection for those experiencing marital troubles. Economically, the impact of marital instability is not to be underestimated. The presence of a chaotic and stressful atmosphere in the home can lead to decline in productivity at work; this might lead to loss of employment and decline in couple's finances. Marital instability also impact couple financially due to breakdown of cooperation among couple in the areas of proper planning and management of their resource which leads to poor financial management and financial stress.

Furthermore, marital instability when it leads to Divorces, often involve the division of assets and resources, potentially leading to financial hardships for both partners. The costs associated with legal proceedings, counselling, and adjustments to new living arrangements can place a strain on personal finances. For single parents, particularly mothers, the financial challenges can be even more pronounced, as they often take on the responsibilities of raising children alone. Early experiences of parental conflict (i.e., during childhood) have lasting consequences on the quality of relationship between children and their parents. According to Asa and Nkan (2017), the risk of marital instability is high among people who experience their parents' marital instability; children from intact families have better outcomes and a higher well-being than children from divorced families; and children from divorced parents have worse cognitive, behavioural and health outcomes in general than children born into more stable families (Duke-Natrebo, 2014).

Furthermore, an unstable home has an imbalance, and as a result, is detrimental to a child's socialization and personality adjustment. The resultant effect is that a child may be more



vulnerable to negative peer pressure and may ultimately commit delinquent acts not committed by children from stable families where there is a balanced structure of two parents who act as good role models to the child (Odebunmi, 2017). Children growing up in unstable families are at a greater risk of experiencing a variety of behavioural and educational problems, including; smoking, drug abuse, vandalism, violence, and criminal acts than children from stable families (Sheryln, 2018). According to Sheryln, changes in the family can affect the levels of self-control in children. The transitions in the family structure also led to changes in the organization, monitoring and disciplining of the children. If the changes are widespread, the resulting changes in the adolescent levels of self-control will likely lead to anti-social behaviours.

The causes of marital instability are numerous. Various studies have tried to identified some of these causes, with a view of providing lasting solution. For instance, Alireza and Bagher (2016) stated that the involvement of women in wage carrying is a threat in the family solidarity; couples hardly find time to stay together for interaction purposes. Child care which should be the responsibility of the parents is now shifted to the school and house help. Some social factors affect the instability of the marriage. According to Hussani and Adejare (2021), the idea of managing more than one wife might lead to the end of the family. The habits that either the wife or the husband is involved in extramarital affairs which are perpetuated by some men and some women might lead to marital instability. The habits that either the wife or the husband is addicted to smoking or drinking can also lead to marital dissolution. Lack of trust in many families amongst couples is wrecking marriages today. Peer influences also threaten marital solidarity if care is not taken by couples. As a result of outside influences, irrational decisions are made to the detriment of one's wish and this might lead to a marital crisis. Other factors such as education, illegitimate children, religion and infertility of the wife also initiate instability in the marriage. However, the focus of this study will be on family background.

Family is where we all belong and where our identity comes from. A person is valued based on his family and upbringing. Family is a bond, a long-lasting relationship that holds a bond with each other. According to Sabatelli and Bartle-Haring (2013), family background is equated with the level of differentiation found within the family system. Effective or well-differentiated systems are characterized by the ability to balance the ongoing tensions between separateness and connectedness. Within these families, members demonstrate respect and care for one another. Children are encouraged to develop respect for themselves, and the interpersonal skills necessary to effectively manage the ordinary difficulties encountered within intimate partnerships are modelled in how parents characteristically interact with their children. Parents are empathically responsive to their children. Conflicts between parents and children (and between spouses) are constructively managed. Individuality and autonomy are promoted through the respectful, warm, and caring connections that parents demonstrate to one another and to their children.

Less-differentiated systems are characterized by emotional fusion and a failure to effectively balance the needs for separateness and connectedness. Individuals growing up within these less differentiated families often will have difficulties negotiating boundaries in relationships and are easily made anxious about themselves and their ability to sustain intimate connections to others (Bartle & Rosen, 2014). These anxieties undermine the ability of individuals to respond in empathic and caring ways toward their spouses, particularly when dealing with stress and conflict in their marriages. During these stressful times, individuals may fuse with their spouse, becoming needy, overly dependent, and demanding.

Conversely, during these stressful times, individuals may reactively distance themselves from their spouses to protect themselves from real or imagined hurt. These multigenerational



perspectives, thus, highlight the connections between family background and marital instability and the connection that individuals bring to their marriage. Exposure to ineffective patterns and processes within the family does not stop individuals from forming adult partnerships. Such exposures do, however, infiltrate how these adult partnerships are structured and experienced. Individuals from less effective families are easily made anxious by the emotional demands of a marriage. Within these “fragile relationships” individuals are likely to doubt their capacity to develop and sustain an intimate relationship, and the neediness that they bring to their marriage creates barriers to the experience of intimacy and satisfaction. That is, individuals who grow up within a less-than-optimal family are thought to approach marriage in ways that undermine their own experience of intimacy. Bartle (2016), for example, found that a man’s family background, in particular, was predictive of his ability to trust his spouse. Bartle’s research, in other words, hints at some of the possible ways in which family background might influence how adult personal relationships are structured and experienced.

Given the above, this study aims to examine the relationship between family background and sexual satisfaction on marital instability. The researcher is particularly interested in the moderating impact of gender and years of marriage in the relationship that exists between family background and sexual satisfaction on marital instability among married teachers. It is evident in Nigeria that men and women have different concepts of marital satisfaction and the social support that is exchanged in marriage. For instance, in Nigeria, males generally view marriage as an institution of lordship over the opposite sex who ought to be seen and not heard. Here, a typical Nigerian married man believes that his wife is subject to his authority irrespective of her beliefs, opinions, feelings, and even academic background (Uwaoma, et al., 2016). He believes that a wife is his property and as such a part of his possessions rather than a partner. He also believes that a woman’s place is in the kitchen thus; her contributions are of little or no importance to him. The woman on the other hand tends to accept her place as described by the opposite sex as she believes it is the best option for her to preserve her matrimonial status even at the expense of her happiness. The relationship between years of marriage and marital instability evolves as couples progress through different stages of their relationship. Over time, various factors influence marital stability, and the trajectory of marital satisfaction often follows distinct patterns throughout the lifespan of a marriage. According to Lee and Koenig (2022), In the early years of marriage, couples often experience a phase of high marital satisfaction. This period is characterized by the excitement and novelty of the new relationship, where partners are typically optimistic and idealistic about their future together. During this time, the emotional connection is strong, and partners often engage in activities and experiences that reinforce their bond. This initial phase can create a sense of stability and fulfilment as couples build their life together.

As marriages progress into the midlife stage, couples often face increased stressors that can lead to marital instability. This period can bring about significant life changes, including parenting responsibilities, career pressures, and the “empty nest” phenomenon. Parenting can be demanding, requiring extensive time and energy, which can strain the relationship. Career-related stress and the pursuit of professional goals may further contribute to marital tension. Additionally, as children leave home, couples may struggle with a shift in their roles and the need to redefine their relationship dynamics without the constant focus on parenting. As couples enter their later years, the dynamics of their marriage can change once again. Health issues, financial adjustments, and the transition into retirement become prominent factors that can impact marital stability.



## Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State?
2. What is the moderating impact of gender in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State?
3. What is the moderating impact of number of years in marriage on the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State?

## Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State
2. There is no significant moderating impact of gender in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State
3. There is no significant moderating impact of number of years in marriage in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State

## Methods

A correlational research design was adopted in this study. The population of the study consists of 8,526 married teachers residing in Delta State. The sample size for this study is 879. The sample was drawn from the 25 Local Government Areas of Delta State using a combination of proportionate stratified sampling technique. The researcher selected 10.31% of the total population of married individuals in each Local Government Area. The sample was proportionately stratified by first identifying the total number of married individuals in each of the 25 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Delta State. Each LGA represented a distinct stratum in the sampling frame. The researcher then calculated 10.31% of the married population within each LGA to determine how many individuals would be selected from that particular stratum. This ensured that the sample size of 879 reflected the relative population sizes of the LGAs, thereby maintaining representativeness and reducing sampling bias. By using this proportionate stratified sampling technique, the researcher ensured that larger LGAs contributed more respondents to the overall sample, while smaller LGAs contributed fewer, but all in accordance with the same proportional ratio.

The research instrument that was used in the study is a questionnaire, which comprises five sections; section A contains the demographic data of the respondents including their gender and age of marriage. Section B contains the Family Background Rating Scale (FBRs). It was adapted from the Family Background Questionnaire, developed by Melchert and Kalemeera (2009). This instrument was originally designed to test the family background of students in the United States of America. it contains 68 items, for the study; only items that are relevant to this study were adapted. A total of 20 items were adapted as presented in the instrument. In adapting the instrument, the researcher modified the items to suit the language of the respondents by changing the tune to reflect adult and married respondents as against the tune that was meant for teenagers and school students as contained in the original instrument. These



items aim to gather information about the family histories, values, and experiences of married persons. The items are structured on a 4-point scale, ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 4 for strongly agree. The items were however reduced to 13 after the validation. Section C contains the Marital Instability Rating Scale (MIRS). The scale was adapted from the Developing and Standardizing Marital Instability Measurement Test for Couples by Taremi (2019). The original instrument contains 21 items that were designed for Iranian couples. In adapting the instrument, the researcher modified the language and made it simpler for the local respondents. A total of 21 items were adapted and 9 items were constructed. Items 1 to 21 were adapted, while items 22 to 30 were constructed. This makes the items a total of 30 items. Items were structured on a 4-point scale, ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 4 for strongly agree. However, the items were reduced to 25 items after validation.

The questionnaire was presented to experts in the Guidance and Counselling Department, Delta State University, Abraka for face validity. These experts assessed the instruments for appropriateness and suitability to the objective of the study. Some of the items were corrected in terms of language choice, to suit the purpose of the study. The face validity was therefore considered adequate through experts' judgment. Factor analysis was used to ensure the content and construct validity of the instrument. The principal component analysis of the extraction method was used to estimate the content validity of the instrument. It yielded the following cumulative variance percent: Family Background Rating Scale = 63.31%; and Marital Instability Rating Scale = 63.96%. To estimate the construct validity of the instruments, the rotated factor loading of the varimax method was done. It yielded the following range of scores: Family Background Rating Scale = 0.56-0.85; and Marital Instability Rating Scale = 0.51-0.85. The type of reliability used for the study is measure of internal consistency. To ascertain the reliability of the research instrument, the questionnaire was administered to 100 married teachers in Edo State. The data were analyzed using Cronbach alpha reliability. The following coefficients were obtained: Family Background Rating Scale = 0.666; and Marital Instability Rating Scale = 0.838.

The questionnaire was administered to the respondents directly by the researchers with the help of five research assistants. The researchers and the research assistants visited the schools of the respondents and work to administer the questionnaire after obtaining informed consent from them. The completed questionnaire was retrieved immediately to avoid loss of data. The data obtained were analysed using Pearson coefficient of determination, regression, and fisher-z statistics. Pearson coefficient of determination was used to answer the research questions. Hypotheses 1 was tested with linear regression statistics while hypotheses 2 and 3 were tested with Fisher-z statistics. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 26 was used for the data analysis.

## Results

**Research Question 1:** What is the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State?

**Table 1:** Pearson's correlation coefficient and coefficient of determination of the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State

| Variable            | N   | r     | r <sup>2</sup> | r <sup>2</sup> % | Decision              |
|---------------------|-----|-------|----------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Family Background   |     |       |                |                  |                       |
| Marital Instability | 879 | -0.96 | 0.92           | 92               | Negative Relationship |



Table 1 shows the result of a correlation and coefficient of determination which was used to examine the nature of the relationship that exists between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State. The result shows that  $r = -0.96$  and  $r^2 = 0.92$  which indicates a negative relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State. The  $r^2$  value of 0.92 shows that family background accounted for 92% variability in the marital instability among married teachers in Delta State.

**Research Question 2:** What is the moderating impact of gender in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State?

**Table 2:** Multiple correlation analysis of the moderating impact of gender in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State

| Sex    | Variables                                | N   | r     | r <sup>2</sup> | r <sup>2</sup> % | Remark                   |
|--------|------------------------------------------|-----|-------|----------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Male   | Family Background<br>Marital Instability | 403 | -0.95 | 0.90           | 90               | Negative<br>Relationship |
| Female | Family Background<br>Marital Instability | 476 | -0.97 | 0.94           | 94               | Negative<br>Relationship |

Table 2 shows a multiple correlation coefficient, which was used to determine the moderating impact of gender in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State. The result revealed a positive relationship between family background and marital instability ( $r = -0.95$ ;  $r^2 = 0.90$ ;  $r^2\% = 90$ ) for male married teachers and ( $r = -0.97$ ;  $r^2 = 0.94$ ;  $r^2\% = 94$ ) for female married teachers. The result further showed that family background contributed 90% and 94% to the variance in marital instability among male and female married teachers respectively.

**Research Question 3:** What is the moderating impact of number of years in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State?

**Table 3:** Multiple correlation analysis of the moderating impact of number of years in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State

| Number of Years | Variables                                | N   | r      | r <sup>2</sup> | r <sup>2</sup> % | Remark                   |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------|-----|--------|----------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Late Marriage   | Family Background<br>Marital Instability | 421 | -0.960 | 0.92           | 92               | Negative<br>Relationship |
| Early Marriage  | Family Background<br>Marital Instability | 458 | -0.956 | 0.91           | 91               | Negative<br>Relationship |

Table 3 shows a multiple correlation coefficient, which was used to determine the moderating impact of number of years in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State. The result revealed a positive relationship between family background and marital instability ( $r = -0.960$ ;  $r^2 = 0.92$ ;  $r^2\% = 92$ ) for married teachers with late marriage and ( $r = -0.956$ ;  $r^2 = 0.91$ ;  $r^2\% = 91$ ) for married teachers with early marriage. The result further showed that family background contributed 92% and 91% to the variance in marital instability among married teachers with late and early marriage respectively.



**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State

**Table 4:** Regression analysis of the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State

| Model             | SS        | df        | MS        | F        | p                 |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| Regression        | 90358.297 | 1         | 90358.297 | 9772.303 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
| Residual          | 8109.063  | 877       | 9.246     |          |                   |
| Total             | 98467.361 | 878       |           |          |                   |
| Coefficients      |           |           |           |          |                   |
| Model             | B         | Std Error | Beta      | t        | Sig.              |
| Constant          | 13.842    | .572      |           | 24.179   | .000              |
| Family Background | 1.505     | .015      | .958      | 98.855   | .000              |

$\alpha = 0.05$ ,  $R = 0.958$ ,  $R\text{-Square} = 0.918$

**a. Dependent Variable:** Marital Instability

**b. Predictors (Constant):** Family Background

Table 4 shows the result of a regression analysis, which was used to examine the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State. The result shows that  $F(1, 878) = 9772.303$ ,  $p < 0.05$  level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that there is a significant relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State. The  $R^2$  value of 0.918 shows that 91.8% variance in marital instability among married teachers is accounted for by family background. The unstandardized regression coefficient (B) for predicting marital instability from family background is 1.505. The standardized coefficient ( $\beta$ ) is 0.958,  $t = 98.855$ . Family background is significant at an alpha level of 0.05.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant moderating impact of gender in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State

**Table 5:** Correlation and Fisher's Z statistics of the moderating impact of gender in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State

| Gender | Variables           | n   | R     | Fisher-z | Remark      |
|--------|---------------------|-----|-------|----------|-------------|
| Male   | Family Background   | 403 | 0.947 | 4.608    | Significant |
|        | Marital Instability |     |       |          |             |
| Female | Family Background   | 476 | 0.972 |          |             |
|        | Marital Instability |     |       |          |             |

Table 5 showed a correlation and Fisher's Z statistics which were used to determine the moderating impact of gender in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State. The result revealed a significant moderating impact, ( $R [m] = 0.947$ ;  $R [f] = 0.972$ ;  $Z = 4.608$ ). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, which means that there is a significant moderating impact of gender in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant moderating impact of number of years in marriage in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State



**Table 6:** Correlation and Fisher's Z statistics of the moderating impact of number of years in marriage in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State

| Number of Years in Marriage | Variables           | <i>n</i> | <i>R</i> | Fisher-z | Remark          |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------------|
| Late Marriage               | Family Background   | 421      | 0.960    | 0.886    | Not Significant |
|                             | Marital Instability |          |          |          |                 |
| Early Marriage              | Family Background   | 458      | 0.956    | 0.886    | Not Significant |
|                             | Marital Instability |          |          |          |                 |

Table 6 showed a correlation and Fisher's Z statistics which were used to determine the moderating impact of number of years in marriage in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State. The result revealed a significant moderating impact, ( $R$  [Late Marriage] = 0.960;  $R$  [Early Marriage] = 0.956;  $Z$  = 0.886). Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted, which means that there is no significant moderating impact of number of years in marriage in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State.

## Discussions

The first finding revealed that there is a significant relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State. This finding suggests that the environment and dynamics within which individuals are raised play a pivotal role in shaping their marital experiences. Family background encompasses factors such as parental marital stability, socio-economic status, values, communication patterns, and emotional support systems. These elements collectively influence an individual's expectations, attitudes, and behaviours within marriage, which can either promote or undermine stability. One possible reason for this finding is the influence of parental marital models. Individuals raised in families where marital instability, such as frequent conflicts or divorces, was prevalent might develop maladaptive coping mechanisms or negative perceptions about marital relationships. These attitudes could manifest in their marriages, making them more susceptible to instability. Conversely, individuals from stable family backgrounds are likely to have observed effective conflict resolution, emotional intimacy, and mutual respect, equipping them with the tools to sustain their own marriages.

Socio-economic factors also play a role in this relationship. Teachers, who may already face financial and professional stress, might be further affected if their family background involved economic hardship. Such backgrounds could lead to financial insecurities or unrealistic marital expectations, which could strain relationships. On the other hand, individuals from financially stable families may have developed better financial management skills and expectations, fostering greater marital harmony. Additionally, the value systems and communication patterns learned from one's family influence how conflicts are handled in marriage. A family background that encourages open communication and mutual respect is likely to foster healthier marital interactions. In contrast, backgrounds characterized by rigid hierarchies, secrecy, or conflict avoidance can result in ineffective communication patterns that exacerbate marital tensions.

The above finding is in line with Dada, et al. (2023), who examined the relationship between personality traits and marital stability among married teachers in Delta and Edo States. Their findings indicated significant relationships between certain personality traits and marital



stability, suggesting that individual characteristics, potentially shaped by family background, play a role in marital stability. The finding is also in line with the study of Onyekeshini, et al (2024), who explored the role of marital expectations in marital harmony among married teachers in Delta State. The research found a significant positive relationship between marital expectations and marital harmony, indicating that aligning expectations between spouses contributes to marital stability. While this study did not directly address family background, it highlights the importance of pre-existing beliefs and expectations, which are often influenced by one's upbringing and family environment.

The second finding showed that there is a significant moderating impact of gender in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State. This finding suggests that the influence of family background on marital stability may vary depending on whether the individual is male or female. This suggests that men and women are affected differently by their upbringing, values, and family dynamics, and these differences shape how they navigate marital relationships. One reason for this finding could be the gendered socialization processes that occur within families. In many cultures, including parts of Nigeria, men and women are often raised with distinct expectations regarding their roles in marriage. For instance, men may be socialized to prioritize financial provision and decision-making authority, while women may be expected to emphasize nurturing and emotional support. These gendered expectations, learned from family background, can influence how individuals perceive and respond to marital challenges. For example, a man from a family with rigid hierarchical structures may struggle to adapt to a more egalitarian marital relationship, potentially leading to conflict and instability.

Additionally, the coping mechanisms and conflict-resolution strategies learned from family background may be applied differently by men and women in marriage. Women often emphasize emotional connection and communication, while men may adopt more pragmatic or avoidant approaches. If the family background did not model effective communication or emotional support, women might experience more significant marital dissatisfaction, while men might suppress or dismiss issues, exacerbating instability. Cultural norms often place different pressures on men and women in marriage. Men may face societal expectations to provide and lead, creating stress if financial or relational challenges arise. Women, on the other hand, may experience societal pressure to maintain harmony in the home, even at the expense of their emotional well-being. These pressures, shaped by family upbringing, can intensify gendered differences in how marital instability is experienced and managed. The above finding is in line with the finding of Olasehinde-Williams (2018), who found that gender significantly influenced the impact of socio-economic factors on marital satisfaction. This suggests that gender could play a moderating role in the relationship between family background and marital outcomes.

The third finding revealed that there is no significant moderating impact of number of years in marriage in the relationship between family background and marital instability among married teachers in Delta State. This finding suggests that the duration of marriage does not alter the strength or direction of the relationship between family background and marital instability. In other words, the influence of family background on marital instability appears to be consistent across different stages of marriage. One possible reason for this finding is that the factors associated with family background that contribute to marital instability may be relatively stable over time. For example, if individuals from certain family backgrounds are more likely to enter marriage with specific personality traits, relationship skills, or expectations



that increase their risk of marital instability, these factors may persist throughout the marriage, regardless of its duration.

Another possible reason is that the factors associated with family background may interact with other factors, such as individual differences or relationship dynamics, in ways that are not significantly influenced by the duration of marriage. For example, if individuals from certain family backgrounds are more likely to experience specific stressors or challenges in their relationships, these stressors or challenges may have a consistent impact on marital instability regardless of how long the marriage has lasted. The above finding is at variance with the finding of Adegboyega and Owolabi (2017), which revealed that the duration of marriage significantly influenced marital satisfaction, suggesting that the number of years in marriage could potentially moderate the relationship between other factors and marital instability.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it could be concluded that marital instability among married teachers in Delta State is a complex issue influenced by family background. Gender plays a moderating role in how these factors impact marital stability, suggesting that men and women may experience these influences differently while the duration of marriage does not appear to moderate the relationship between family background. In view of this, the study recommended the following:

- i. government should implement programs that provide support and resources to teachers from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as financial assistance, mentorship, and access to counselling services
- ii. guidance counsellors should develop gender-sensitive interventions that address the specific challenges and needs of male and female teachers in relation to marital stability.



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