Locus of Control and Self-Concept as Correlates of Marital Stability among Married Adults in Rivers State

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Abstract
This study investigated self-concept and locus of control as correlates of marital stability among married adults in Rivers State. The purpose of the study is to investigate whether self-concept and locus of control relate to marital stability of married adults in Rivers State. Five research questions were formulated to guide the conduct of the study while five corresponding hypotheses were tested. A correlational research design was adopted in the study. The population of the study consisted of 76,426 married adults. A multi-stage stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select 398 married adults in Rivers State as sample. The researchers designed instrument titled "Self-Concept, Locus of Control and Marital Stability Scale (SLMSS)" for data collection. Cronbach Alpha was used in determining the reliability of the instrument which yielded a coefficient of 0.88. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents by the researchers and five research assistants. The research questions were answered using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistical Method while the null hypotheses were tested using the Simple Linear regression analysis. The major findings of the study revealed that there is significant relationship between personal perception, personal conception, personal attitude, internal locus of control and external locus of control and marital stability among married adults in the area. The researchers therefore recommend as follows: that individual and group training programmes be organized through marriage counselling clinics to enable married adults modify their personal components. Government should create the needed awareness and enablement to married adults towards utilizing clinics and the benefits there of. This will mitigate marital conflicts and increase productivity in the workplace.

Keywords: *Locus of control, self-concept, correlate, marital stability, married adults.*

I. Introduction

Marriage is a basic and universal event. One of the challenges facing the institution of marriage is marital instability. Observation and literature (Jamabo, 2006) have revealed that this social institution is facing serious crises in present times. Marital dissolution is now common in many societies. It has been observed that in many dysfunctional marriages, couples were either physically separated or divorced or living together but emotionally separated. Experience has shown that young clients with emotional and psychological problems were traced to broken homes.

It has been observed by Dike (2009) and Nwobi (1997) that issues of divorce, marital breakdown, home desertion, juvenile delinquency, truancy, dropping out of schools, and indiscipline among others have become endemic in the society. These, they noted are manifestations of the ills of the society, traceable to family instability which results from marital discord and strife. Furthermore, Mba cited in Kanu and Anyanwu (2006) also opined that marriage in many parts of the world is so fraught with pain, disruption, heartbreak and anxiety that the family or family life appears to be on the brink of total collapse.

As a way of explanation, Iruloh(2008)stated that marital instability is viewed as a function of the comparison between an individual's marital expectation and his or her marital outcome. Iruloh asserts that while marital instability destroys society, marital stability builds and benefits society. Marital stability is viewed by Uwe (2000) as the blending of the efforts of partners in marriage, culminating into the bond of love and unity. This process of unity Uwe (2000) stated, involves the blending of spouses' mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical differences into a harmonious relationship within the marital bond. In line with the above, Nwoye in Okorodudu (2010) stated that unity involves the process whereby couples are engaged in mental, sexual, physical, emotional, spiritual, financial social and educational adjustment to themselves and children. It is a state

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of marital relationship which radiates love, sharing, companionship, happiness, joy and satisfaction. The couple involved in this kind of union enjoys each other's company, and share in each other's joy or sorrow. Such a relationship performs a mental hygiene function, for it provides a self-stabilizing feedback for the partners (Esere, 2007).

According to Filani (2004) marital stability involves series of behaviors used to cope with the demands of the marital relationship. Such behaviours include self-concept and locus of control. Self-concept, which is also called self-construction, self-identity or self-perspective is a multi-dimensional construct that refers to an individual's perception of "self" in relation to any number characteristics such as gender roles and sexuality. Otta and Ogbuokiri (2010) explained self-concept as an ideal relating to how one views oneself in its entirety. They concluded that the way individuals views themselves is sometimes attributed to the way and manner such an individual was reared. Thus self-concept is the set of knowledge and attitude that we have about ourselves, the perceptions that the individual assigns to himself and characteristics or attributes that we use to describe ourselves. It is understood to be fundamentally a descriptive assessment and has a cognitive nuance. The importance of self-concept stems from its notable contribution to personality formation.

In the words of Nkwocha, Onyemerekeya, Ekeada, Ogwudire, and Emenogu (1997) self-concept is defined as "composite of thoughts and feelings which constitute a person's awareness of his individual existence, his conception of who and what he is". Corroborating, Oladele (2004) explains that self-concept shows the picture or image a person has of himself. It means that self-concept is the sum of what a person believes to be the true description of himself, together with the importance he attaches to those beliefs. He explained further that self-concept is made up of perceptions, memories, values, attitudes, interests, experiences, self-esteem, ideals, goals, ambitions. Hersild cited in Oladele (2005) pointed out that self-concept comprises three components; (i) how a person views himself/herself (perceptual) (ii) how a person thinks of himself or herself (conceptual) (iii) a person's attitude towards himself/herself (attitudinal). Self-concept generally refers to individual's perception of himself or herself. In this study, self-concept is viewed as the totality of knowledge an individual has about himself/herself, which include his/her physical appearance, personality traits, beliefs and values. It is the basic feelings people have about themselves, their abilities and self-worth.

Self-concept is a personality determinant which to a great extent influences an individual's behaviour. How one perceives oneself greatly influences one's behaviour, (Gale, 1969). An individual's idea and feelings about himself/herself in relation to his/her environment yields a degree of self-acceptance or rejection, which has the tendency of influencing his/her behaviour.This implies that a person's perception of his identity, his worth, and what he might be, in relation to other person's will probably influence his social functioning. Hence Asagwara in Ngban and Effiong (2004) observed that many difficulties which individuals experience through life are intricately meshed with their perception of both themselves and the world in which they live. A person's self-concept can be high or low depending on his perception.

The higher his self-concept, the more positive his attitude towards life, while a person with low self-concept will tend to have a negative attitude towards life, thus, self-concept can be a factor to contend with in terms of marital relationship, since ones attitude determines the efforts one puts towards the success or failure of any venture one is involved in. It would appear therefore, that a spouse with a high self-concept may tend to have positive attitude towards his or her marriage, and this will enhance his or her efforts towards its success, while the attitude and efforts of the one with low self-concept will be the contrary.

Locus of control is another determinant of marital stability. Locus of control is a personality construct which explains the extent to which an individual perceive the outcome of events as determined by his efforts and ability, or by chance, fate or external circumstances. The concept was developed from the social learning theory of personality developed by Rotter (Oliver, Jose and Brough 2006). It is a cognitive dimension of the human personality which is believed may influence an individual's reaction to life's events. Locus of control has two aspects: internal and external dimensions. Individuals who tend to attribute outcomes of events to their own control are regarded as having internal locus of control, while the externals are those who attribute such outcomes to external circumstances. Thus, while the internals attribute success to ability and efforts, the externals attribute it to luck, fate or chance (Zimbardo, 1985). Zimbardo (1985:275) stated that "a locus of control orientation is a belief about whether the outcomes of our actions are contingent on what we do (internal control orientation) or on events outside our personal control (external control orientation). Thus, locus of control is conceptualized as referring to a uni-dimensional continuum, ranging from external to internal.

Locus of control is an individual's perception about the underlying main causes of events in his or her life. The level of control a person has over life's events determines his or her satisfaction, hence their success. The spouse whose locus of control is internal will likely work towards the stability of the marriage based on internal control orientation since he or she believes that the success can only be achieved through his efforts and ability. On the other hand, spouses with external locus of control may rely on external help, fate and chance; since for them, success is dependent on powerful others, fate and chance. Such spouses may believe that they have little or no control over events and personal circumstances, their marriage inclusive.

Is the high rate of marital instability, marital conflict, marital discord, separation, divorce in Rivers State a factor of self-concept (personal perception, conception and attitude), and locus of control (internal and external), especially among married adults? Married adults face various pressures that are likely to affect their marital stability. Do these pressures also affect their ability to cope with contending issues in their marriage? These the study intends to find out.

Purpose of the Study
Generally, this study is designed to investigate whether self-concept and locus of control relate to marital stability of married adults in Rivers State. Specifically this study sought to:
1. Determine the relationship between personal perception and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State.
2. Establish the union between personal conception and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State.
3. Ascertain the relationship between personal attitude and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State.
4. Find out the relationship between internal locus of control and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State.
5. Determine the relationship between external locus of control and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State.

Research Questions
The following research questions were posed to guide the study.
1. What is the relationship between personal perception and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between personal conception and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State?
3. What is the relationship between personal attitude and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State?
4. What is the relationship between internal locus of control and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State?
5. What is the relationship between external locus of control and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State?

Hypotheses
The following null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study.
H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between personal perception and marital stability among married adults.
H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between personal conception and marital stability among married adults.
H_{03}: There is no significant relationship between internal attitude and marital stability among married adults.
H_{04}: There is no significant relationship between internal locus of control and marital stability among married adults.
H_{05}: There is no significant relationship between external locus of control and marital stability among married adults.

II. Methods

A correlational survey design was adopted in this study. In this study, the researchers used correlational survey design which is a relationship study. Correlational studies seek to establish the relationship that exists between two or more variables, including the direction and magnitude of such relationship (Nworgu, 2006). The population of the study comprised all married men and women in Rivers State, which is a total of 76,426 (Rivers State Employment Bureau, 2016).A sample of 398 working class couple was used for the study. This figure was derived through cluster sampling technique. Each of the 23 local government area of Rivers State make up a cluster. (Each of the Local Government Areas in Rivers State constitutes an Education Zone). Cluster sampling technique is appropriate for this study due to the nature of the study.

The instrument used for data collection is a questionnaire designed by the researcherstitled "Self-concept Locus of Control and Marital Stability Scale (SLMSS)". The sources of the information used in structuring the items for the instrument were collated from the various literature on the concepts and theories on the specified variables.The instrument is organized in four sections; A, B, C, & D. Section A elicits information on the respondents bio-data; gender. Section B sought information on the respondents' self-concept (personal conception, personal perception and personal attitude). The sub-scale on Personal Conception has 10 items, Personal Perception has 13 items while Personal Attitude has 10 items. Thus, Section B has 33 items. Section C

has 25 items (Internal Locus of Control has 12 items while External Locus of Control has 13 items). Finally, Section D dealt with data on marital stability. It has 35 items describing the internal climate of a stable marriage. It covered several fields of life like activities, money, children, faith, food, relationships, sex, values and role playing.

A trial testing of the instrument was carried out to establish its reliability. Using the Cronbach alpha to establish the internal consistency of the instrument the alpha values are 0.82 for personal conception, 0.87 for personal perception, 0.86 for personal attitude, 0.91 for internal locus of control, 0.91 for external locus of control and 0.91 for marital stability. The overall reliability coefficient of the instrument is 0.88 which is a strong indication that the instrument is quite reliable for use in the study. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Method was used in answering the five research questions while t-test and regression analysis were used in testing the five hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

III. Results

Research Question One: What is the relationship between personal perception and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State?

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between personal perception and marital stability among married adults

Table 1: Calculate r and R^2 of the Relationship between Personal Perception and Marital Stability among Married adults

Variable	N	$\overline{X}$	S	Cal r	Cal R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	Transformed t	Sign
Marital Stability (x)		95.14	38.74						
Personal Perception (y)	398	32.45	6.76	0.411	0.168	0.151	0.411	2.501	0.00

Data on Table 1 indicates the relationship that exists between personal perception and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State. The calculated r of 0.411 shows a positive relationship between personal perception and marital stability. The calculated Beta value of 0.411 and the transformed t of 2.501 at 0.05 level of significance. This transformed t suggests a significant relationship between personal perception and marital stability. Thus, the null hypothesis of no statistical significant relationship is rejected.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between personal conception and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State?

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between personal conception and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State.

Table 2: Calculated r and R^2 of the Relationship between Personal Conception and Marital Stability among Married adults

Variable	N	$\overline{X}$	S	Cal r	Cal R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	Transformed t	Sign
Marital Stability (x)		95.14	38.74			0.162	0.403	1.852	0.00
Personal Conception (y)	398	27.23	5.56	0.403	0.162				

Data on table 2 indicate the relationship that exists between personal conception among married adults and marital stability. The calculated r of 0.403 shows a positive relationship between personal conception among married adults and their marital stability. The calculated Beta value of 0.403 and the transformed t of 1.852 at 0.05 level of significance. The calculated t is significant at 0.05 level of probability. This transformed t suggests a significant relationship between personal conception and marital stability. Thus, the null hypothesis of no statistical significant relationship is rejected.

Research Question Three: What is the relationship between personal attitude and marital stability of married adults in Rivers State?

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between personal attitude and marital stability among married adults.

Table 3: Calculated r and R² of the Relationship between Personal Attitude andMarital Stability among Married adults

Variable	N	X̄	S	Cal r	Cal R²	Adjusted R²	Beta	Transformed t	Sign
Marital Stability (x)		95.14	38.74						
						0.169	0.421	2.668	0.00
Personal Attitude (y)	398	28.46	6.18	0.421	0.178				

Data on table 3 reveals that the relationship that exist between personal attitude among married adults and marital stability. The calculated r of 0.421 show a positive relationship between personal attitude and marital stability among married adults. The calculated Beta value is 0.421 and the transformed t is 2.668 at 0.05 level of significance. This transformed t suggests a significant relationship between personal attitude and marital stability. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship is rejected.

Research Question Four: What is the relationship between internal locus of control and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State?

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant relationship between internal locus of control and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State.

Table 4: Calculated r and R² of the Relationship between Internal Locus of Control and Marital Stability among Married adults in Rivers State

Variable	N	X̄	S	Cal r	Cal R²	Adjusted R²	Beta	Transformed t	Sign
Marital Stability (x)		95.14	38.74						
						0.146	0.392	1.102	0.00
Internal Locus of Control (y)	398	34.05	5.73	0.392	0.153				

Data on table 4 indicates the relationship that exists between internal locus of control and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State. The calculated r of 0.392 shows a positive relationship between internal locus of control and marital stability. The calculated Beta value is 0.392 and the transformed t is 1.102 at 0.05 level of significance. This transformed t suggests a significant relationship between internal locus of control and marital stability. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship is rejected.

Research Question Five: What is the relationship between external locus of control and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State?

Hypothesis Five: There is no significant relationship between external locus of control and marital stability among married adults.

Table 5: Calculated r and R² of the Relationship between External Locus of Control and Marital Stability among Married adults in Rivers State

Variable	N	X̄	S	Cal r	Cal R²	Adjusted R²	Beta	Transformed t	Sign
Marital Stability (x)		95.14	38.74						
						0.134	0.368	1.939	0.00
External Locus of Control (y)	398	30.64	7.45	-0.368	0.135				

Data on Table 5 indicates the relationship that exists between external locus of control and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State. The calculated r of -0.368 shows a negative relationship between external locus of control and marital stability. The calculated Beta value is -0.368 and the transformed t is 1.939 at 0.05 level of significance. This transformed t suggests a significant relationship between external locus of control and marital stability. Thus, the null hypothesis of no statistical significant relationship is rejected.

IV. Discussion Of Findings

The findings of the study reveal that there is a moderate relationship between marital stability and personal perception among married adults in Rivers State (Table1). However, when the data was subjected to t-test analysis, the result of the hypothesis reveals that there is significant relationship between marital stability and personal perception among married adults in Rivers State.

While positive personal perception of married adults relates to marital stability of married adults, negative perception relates to the marital instability of married adults. This is because when scores on personal perception increases, there is corresponding increase on the scores on marital instability. On the other hand, when scores on personal perception decreases, there is corresponding decrease on the scores on marital stability. This means that low scores on the personal perception relates with marital instability among married adults. This result is in congruence with Sotonade (2012) that there is significant relationship between positive personal perception and marital stability among married adults in Lagos State. Study findings were supported by the alternate hypothesis which indicates that there is significant relationship between personal perception and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State. However, the finding of this study is in disagreement with Baadjies (2004) that there is no significant correlation between self-concept and marital stability of newly wedded. The difference between these studies is that while Baadjies (2004) investigated newly wedded, the present study is on married adults.

Furthermore, it was discovered that there is a moderate relationship between marital stability and personal conception among married adults in Rivers State (Table 2). However, when the data was subjected to t-test analysis, the result of the hypothesis shows that there is significant relationship between marital stability and personal conception among married adults in Rivers State.Thus, when scores on personal conception increases, there is corresponding increase on the scores on marital stability. On the other hand, when scores on personal conception decreases, there is corresponding decrease on the scores on marital stability among married adults. The positive significant relationship between personal conception among married adults means that married adults whose scores are high on personal conception also scored high on marital stability. Again, the positive significant relationship between personal conception among married adults means that married adults whose scores are low on personal conception also scored very low on marital stability. This result is in congruence with Echebe (2010) that there is significant relationship between personal conception and marital stability among couples in Imo State, Nigeria. The study findings were supported by the alternate hypothesis which indicates that there is significant relationship between personal conception and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State.

The findings of the study revealed that there is a moderate relationship between marital stability and personal attitude among married adults in Rivers State (Table 3). Personal attitude refers to the aspect of self-concept that deals with an individuals' disposition towards himself/herself and to others. It was hypothesized that the attitude of an individual towards himself/herself may relate with his/her marital stability.The moderate positive relationship between marital stability and personal attitude of married adults means that as scores on personal attitude increases, there is corresponding increase in Marital Stability scores. Also, as scores on personal attitude decreases, there is corresponding decrease in marital stability scores. This revealed that married adults whose scores are high on personal attitude, earn high scores on marital stability, while those whose scores are low on personal attitude earn low scores on marital stability. Implicitly, high scores on personal attitude relates with marital stability. This result is in congruence with Otta and Ogbuokiri (2010) that the personal attitude of couples relates significantly with their marital stability in Bayelsa State. The study findings were supported by the alternate hypothesis which indicates that there is significant relationship between personal attitude and marital stability among married adults in Rivers State.

From research question four and hypothesis four the findings showed that there is a low relationship between marital stability and internal locus of control among married adults in Rivers State (Table 4). However, when the data was subjected to t-test analysis, the result of the hypothesis was found to be statistically significant at 0.05 level of probability. The low positive relationship between internal locus of control and marital stability among married adults means that as scores on internal locus of control increases, there is corresponding increase in marital stability scores and also as scores on internal locus of control decreases, there is corresponding decrease in marital stability scores. This means that married adults whose scores are high on internal locus of control, earn high scores on marital stability. On the other hand, married adults whose scores are low on internal locus of control, earn low scores on marital stability.

This result is particularly relevant in Nigeria where marriage serves a social function. Marriage helps to integrate individuals. The extended family members although is not expected to hijack decision making in the marriage but exerts pressure subtly which also makes each spouse to be alive to their responsibilities. However, it should be admitted that while unnecessary pressure from significant others may not be good for the health of the marriage, leaving the couples entirely to themselves without appropriate guidance will mean postponing the doomsday. Thus, while significant others play tremendous role in complementing the efforts of the couples in maintaining marital stability, the willingness of the couples in ensuring marital stability is equally important. This result is in congruence to Miller, Lefcourt, Holmes, Ware and Saleh (2011) that there is significant relationship between internal locus of control and marital stability among couples. The study findings were supported by the alternate hypothesis which indicates that there is significant relationship between marital stability and internal locus of control among married adults in Rivers State.

The findings of the study showed that there is a low but negative or inverse relationship between Marital Stability and external locus of control among married adults in Rivers State (Table 5). However, when the data was subjected to t-test analysis, the result of the hypothesis was found to be statistically significant at 0.05 level of probability. The low but negative or inverse relationship between external locus of control and marital stability among married adults means that as scores on external locus of control increases, there is corresponding decrease in marital stability scores and also as scores on external locus of control decreases, there is corresponding increase in marital stability scores. This means that married adults whose scores are high on external locus of control, earn low scores on marital stability. On the other hand, married adults whose scores are low on external locus of control, earn high scores on marital stability.

It should be emphasized that unwholesome acceptance of influence of others into a marital relationship without weighing the consequences of such influence may greatly harm the stability of the marriage. Furthermore, not taking the needed steps or actions at the appropriate time but leaving it for chance factors may also attract marital instability rather than marital stability. This result is in congruence to Miltby, Day, and Macaskill (2007), that there is significant relationship between external locus of control and marital stability among couples. The study findings were supported by the alternate hypothesis which indicates that there is significant relationship between marital stability and external locus of control among married adults in Rivers State.

V. Conclusion

The study investigated the locus of control and self-concept as correlates of marital stability among married adults in Rivers State. The variables investigated include: Relationship between personal perception and marital stability among married adults; Relationship between marital stability and personal conception among married adults, relationship between marital stability and personal attitude among married adults; Relationship between marital stability and internal locus of control among married adults and Relationship between marital stability and external locus of control among married adults in Rivers State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested.

1. Individual and group motivational programmes should be organized for married adults with low self-concept (low personal, conception and attitude components of self-concept) and those with external locus of control through marriage counselling clinics in an attempt to modify such personality concerns.
2. Working class bachelors and spinsters should be assisted by counsellors to benefit from motivational programmes that will enable them maintain high self-concept and internal locus of control in order to assist them enjoy stable marital relationship when they get married.
3. There should be awareness of the existence and benefits of marriage counselling clinics among married adults that can enable them resolve personality problems that affect the stability of their marriage.

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