

## Socio-Economic Factors Influencing Marital Instability in Yobe State, Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

*Marital instability has been a significant issue in Yobe State, Nigeria, with high rates of divorce and separation with 10.8% (NBS, 2024). The main objective of this study is to examine the influence of socioeconomic factors (couples' economic status, spouse communication, couples parental background and couples in-law involvement) on marital instability in some selected local government areas of Yobe State, Nigeria. The research methodology employed was a survey. A sample of 384 respondents, aged 18 to 54, was gathered, comprising 189 males and 195 females. A self-administered questionnaire was used to gather the data, and SPSS software version 22 was used for analysis. The results showed that the socioeconomic factors (spouse communication and couples economic status) accounted for 69.5% of the variation in the dependent variable (marital instability). The standardized regression analysis showed that the respondents' economic status was the strongest predictor of marital instability, with the highest weight ( $\beta = 0.864$ ) among the independent variables. The results of present study can contribute to the body of knowledge and has remarkable implications for academicians and policy makers on how to enhance marriage stability in Yobe State and Nigeria at large. Finally, the findings also recommended that, financial literacy education of the couples should be improved, particularly young adults, which can help them manage their finances more effectively, reduce financial stress, and potentially improve marital stability.*

**Keywords:** *Socioeconomic factors, couples economic status, spouse communication, couples parental background and couples in-law involvement*

## **Introduction**

Marriage is an important and fundamental human relationship because it provides primary structure for establishing a family and rearing of children. The institution in society where a man and woman are connected in a unique sort of social and legal reliance to establish and nurture a family is called marriage, and it is defined as the union of a man and his wife in body and soul (Teachman, 2002). However, Wolfinger, (2003) described marriage as the state of being united with a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife; the institution whereby men and women are joined in a special kind of social and legal dependence for the purpose founding and maintaining a family; an act of marrying or rite by which the married status is affected. It is the building block of human society, and when the foundation of society is weakened, considerable damage results. Therefore, the growth of any society depends largely on the ability of the family institution to perform its role effectively. However, the risk of ambiguity around the issue of marital discontent has presented marriage therapists with significant difficulties. Greenwald (2019) argued that some marriage breakdown even before their first anniversaries. Age of marriage, spouse's educational attainment, religion, income, marital type, fertility status, couples' familial backgrounds, communication, culture, etc. are other aspects that jeopardize the stability of a marriage.

However, the process by which marriages disintegrate due to separation, desolation, or divorce is referred to as marital instability, and it is pertinent to the individual's eventual re-partnership while discussing this issue (Teachman, 2002). Legal divorce and separation are social phenomena that are brought about by the couples involved and may be the consequence of social, cultural, psychological, or economic factors. According to Ubangha et al. (2013), many marriages stay unstable for a very long

time; some of them regain their balance and unite once more, but this unstable phase may result in divorce. Hirschberger et al, (2009) further argued that almost every marriage begins with a high level of satisfaction with their bond and a great deal of hope for the future. However, many marriages end in divorce, and even more couples experience a decline in marital satisfaction over time. People also frequently succumb to confirmation bias, which is the tendency to interpret facts in a way that supports their preferred worldview and to be more optimistic about themselves than others. In today's world, there are hundreds of elements that contribute to marital instability. They encompass a variety of elements, including biological, emotional, spiritual, social, psychological, economic, cultural, and other difficulties. Some are even the consequence of two causes working together. "Marital instability" is a fairly broad word. and broad topic. Therefore, we can get a clear understanding of what is meant by "marital instability" by concentrating on a major contributing element because women's relationships with their spouses are based on a number of variables that they are most familiar with.

## **Problem Statement**

Marital instability has been a significant issue in Yobe State, Nigeria, with high rates of divorce and separation. However, little is known about the socio-economic factors that contribute to this instability. Understanding these factors is essential for promoting healthy and stable marriages in the region, and Nigeria at large because almost every home has their own personal problems leads to their marital instability which used to arise from time to time. Both or one of the couples may be the source of such problem where as in some relationships, couples may claimed of being cheated, neglected or uncared for. After suffering mistreatment from their spouses, some people choose independence

or seek a new partner who offers them genuine love, empathy, support, and effective communication. They long for someone who understands them, meets both their emotional and physical needs, and can truly care for them as a fiancé. Above all, some individuals wish to build a life on their own terms, without outside interference.

Ubangha et al. (2013) highlighted that a significant issue couples face in marriage is their parental marital background. This background greatly influences the success or failure of many marriages in Nigeria today, as it is within the family setting that individuals learn and adopt core moral values and social behaviors. The attitudes and behaviors that couples exhibit in marriage are often shaped by how their parents acted or handled various life challenges. Furthermore, previous research has indicated that women whose parents experienced divorce or marital instability are more likely to encounter similar challenges in their own marriages (Seidman, 2017). Although individuals can choose which aspects of their upbringing to adopt or reject, these decisions shape their mindset and affect how they relate to their spouse, potentially leading to marital instability. Consequently, research on marital instability indicates that various factors contribute to challenges within marital unions. Thus, it is against this background, this study examines the influence of socioeconomic factors (couples' economic status, spouse communication, couples parental background, couples in-law involvement) on marital instability in Yobe State, Nigeria.

### **Research Question**

Which of the socioeconomic factors (couples' economic status, spouse communication, couples

parental background and couples in-law involvement) most influence marital instability in Yobe State, Nigeria?

### **Research Objective**

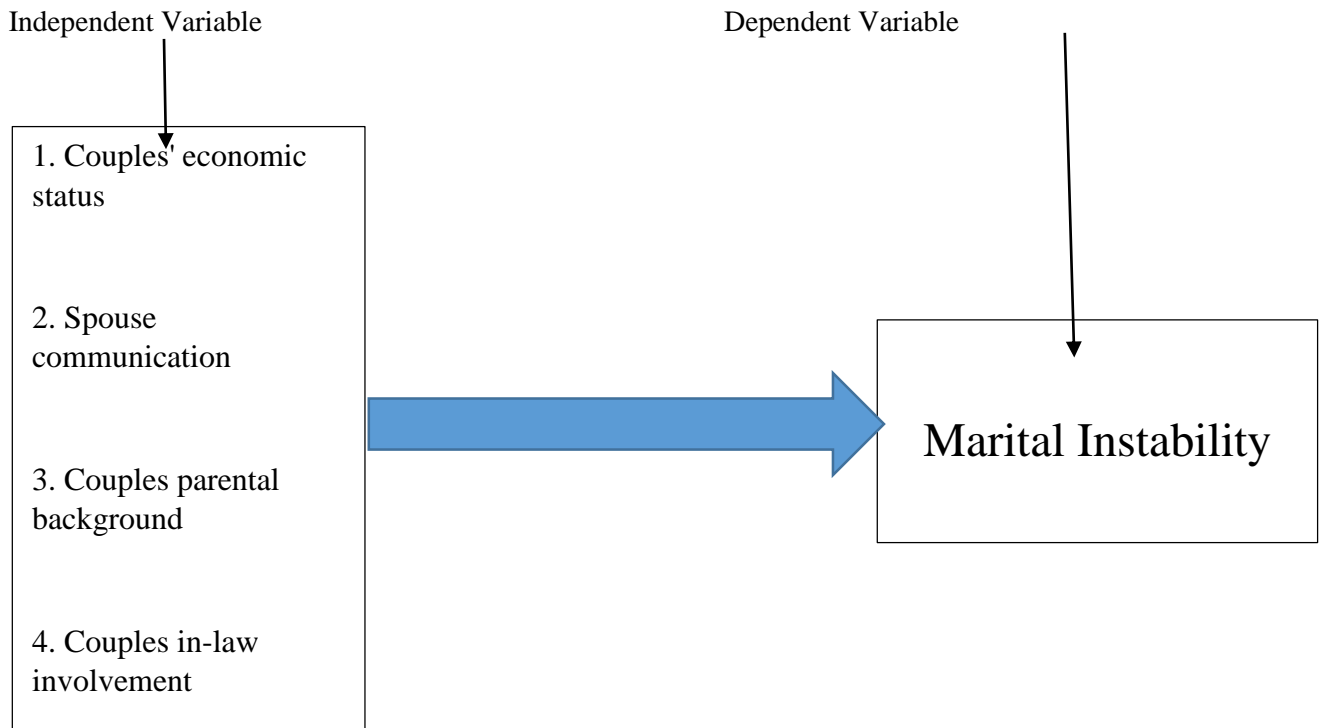
To examine the influence of socioeconomic factors (couples' economic status, spouse communication, couples parental background and couples in-law involvement) on marital instability in Yobe State, Nigeria.

### **Research Hypothesis**

All the socioeconomic factors (couples' economic status, spouse communication, couples parental background and couples in-law involvement) contribute to marital instability in Yobe State, Nigeria.

### **Conceptual Framework of the study**

The conceptual framework of the study refers to the concept of socioeconomic factors on marital instability. The framework indicates the principle, concepts, constructs, or variables believed to be interconnected and have been explored by researcher (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Beneath is a theoretical structure that provides a foundation for understanding and analysing the idea behind the phenomenon under study. The framework indicates the relationship between independent variable (couples' economic status, spouse communication, couples parental background and couples in-law involvement) as they relate to dependent variable (marital instability).



**Figure 1.1** Conceptual framework for the socioeconomic factors influence marital instability in Yobe State.

### Empirical Studies

#### Couples' Economic status and Marriage Instability

Chopik and O'Brien (2024) conducted a study on economic instability and marital quality in the United States using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, a panel study that followed individuals from 1979 to 2014. The sample included over 6,000 married couples. Their findings showed that couples with higher and more stable income reported better marital quality compared to those with lower and more unstable income. The authors used longitudinal analysis and structural equation modeling techniques to examine the relationship between economic status and marital quality. Similarly, Venkat and Azevedo (2023) conducted study on financial stress and marital conflict in young couples in United States using data from a sample of 302 married couples who were participating in a larger longitudinal study. Their findings

suggested that financial stress predicted more negative interaction patterns and reduced marital satisfaction. Adepoju and Ojo (2022) conducted a qualitative study on economic hardship and marital discord in Lagos, Nigeria. They used semi-structured interviews with 20 married couples. The study found that economic hardship was associated with increased marital conflict, especially when one spouse was perceived as financially irresponsible or was unable to contribute to household expenses. Again, Enebechi and Okafor (2021) conducted a cross-sectional study in Enugu State, Nigeria, using a sample of 520 married couples. They found that economic stress was associated with decreased marital satisfaction in Nigerian couples, particularly for wives. Additionally, the study found that religious affiliation and gender played a role in the relationship between economic stress and marital satisfaction.

### **Spouse Communication and Marriage Instability**

Samphina (2017) conducted a study to examine how communication affects marital stability among couples in Surulere Local Government Area of Lagos Metropolis. The findings revealed that communication significantly impacts marital stability, and that contemporary issues also play an important role. However, the study found no significant relationship between the length of marriage and marital stability. Similarly, Esere et al. (2015) investigated the effects of poor communication and faulty cognition on marital stability among married adults in Owerri metropolis. Their results indicated that both poor communication and faulty cognition contribute to marital instability. Furthermore, the study found significant differences in responses based on gender, age, religion, occupational status, and educational background.

### **Spouse Parental Background and Marriage Instability**

Bumpass et al. (1991) investigated how family background and early marital factors influence marital disruption, finding that parental family disruption primarily impacts marital stability through factors such as age at marriage and prior cohabitation. In a separate study, Adegoke and Oladeji (2008) explored the effects of family violence on the psychosocial well-being of children in households with abused partners. Their results indicated a significant relationship between family violence such as infidelity and physical assault and the psychosocial health of children in these families. Webster et al. (1995) analyzed the influence of different single-parent childhood family structures on adult marital quality and perceived stability. While they found no significant differences in marital happiness based on family history, the study showed that adults from divorced families or those who never lived with their fathers were more likely to

consider divorce, especially among those in less than very happy marriages. Additionally, children of divorce were more likely to experience interaction patterns that strain marital relationships and to question the stability of their own marriages compared to those from two-parent families.

### **In-law's Involvement in Spouse Marriage and Marriage Instability**

Fingerman et al. (2012) explored the importance of relationships with in-laws, finding that both positive and negative expectations before marriage influence the quality of in-law ties after the wedding. The study showed that when individuals had direct, positive contact with future in-laws before marriage, their relationships post-wedding tended to be stronger. Conversely, negative expectations prior to marriage were predictive of poorer relationship quality afterward. These patterns were consistent among husbands, wives, and mothers-in-law.

Bryant et al. (2001) investigated the impact of in-law discord on the long-term success of marriages, following couples married for nearly two decades. Their findings revealed that conflicts with in-laws can erode marital stability, satisfaction, and commitment, even in long-term unions. The study highlighted that for wives, disagreements with mothers- and fathers-in-law predicted their later perceptions of marital success, while for husbands, and only discord with fathers-in-law had a similar effect. Interestingly, only for husbands did greater marital success lead to reduced discord with in-laws over time.

McClain and Brown (2017) investigated whether low levels of fathers' involvement and co-parenting both indicators of traditional gender roles were linked to negative trends in relationship quality among mothers and fathers following the birth of their first child, whether born into marriage or cohabitation. The study tracked couples over five years, considering

various union transitions, such as remaining married, remaining cohabiting, transitioning from cohabitation to marriage, or experiencing separation. The results showed that higher levels of fathers' involvement and effective co-parenting were positively associated with better relationship quality for both parents, with a stronger effect for mothers, particularly those who were cohabiting. These findings suggest that increased father engagement can help buffer the typical decline in relationship quality after having a child. The study emphasizes the importance of the father's role not just for the child's well-being, but also for the health of the parents' relationship, advocating for policies and programs that support fathers' active participation in parenting.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Social Exchange Theory**

Social exchange theory is a social psychological framework that explains social change and stability through negotiated exchanges between individuals. The theory suggests that every interaction involves potential costs and benefits, prompting people to weigh the risks and advantages before engaging. In the context of marriage, social exchange theory describes ongoing exchanges of valued resources both tangible and intangible between partners, with each partner considering the rewards and costs associated with these interactions (Miller, 2015). Similarly, Crossman (2020) describes social exchange theory as viewing society through interactions driven by anticipated rewards and punishments. According to this perspective, individuals' behaviors are shaped by their expectations of outcomes, which they assess through a cost-benefit analysis, either consciously or subconsciously.

However, the theory suggests that interactions receiving approval from others are more likely to recur, while those met with disapproval are less likely to be repeated. This means we can

anticipate whether an interaction will happen again by weighing the rewards (approval) against the punishments (disapproval) it brings. If the rewards outweigh the punishments, the behavior is likely to persist. Rewards can range from social recognition, money, and gifts, to subtle gestures like a smile or nod. Punishments can also vary, from severe consequences like public humiliation or physical punishment, to minor signals such as a frown or raised eyebrow (Crossman, 2020). This theory is relevant to this research because it shows that rewards and punishments play a crucial role in marital relationships. The way couples manage conflicts by choosing constructive actions at the right moments can promote marital stability if the responses are positive, or lead to instability if negative actions dominate.

#### **Methodology**

Research design is a plan or a blueprint strategy of investigation in which researchers engaged in order to obtain answer to research questions (Kothari, 2004). This study used survey method because it is a rather rapid and inexpensive way to collect data from a big sample of people. (Ary, et al., 2010). The population of the study comprise Six Local Governments of Yobe State in which the researchers selected two-two local governments from each Zone through multi-stage sampling technique that comprise; Geidam and Damaturu from Zone (A) Potiskum and Nangere from Zone (B) and Gashua and Nguru from (C), which sum to 1,299,200 population. Furthermore, Kreciej and Morgon (1970) published sample size table was used in calculating the sample size. Based on the table, the sample size is 384. However, simple random sampling technique was applied in drawing the respondent from the various LGAs. Finally, Questionnaire was used for the data collection and SPSS Version 22 was used for the data analysis

#### **Results and Discussions**

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The study is on socioeconomic factors influencing marital instability in Yobe State, Nigeria. This admirable goal was accomplished by employing the stepwise method of multiple regression, which is a statistical tool for determining the relationship between an outcome variable (dependent variable) and multiple predictors (independent variables) that best represent the relationship in a population. The benefit of using stepwise multiple regression analysis was that only the variables that have a significant influence would be included in the model; according to the stepwise method, only two of the four predictors' variables were found to have a significant influence in predicting marital instability in Yobe State.

Table 1.1 illustrated the result of stepwise multiple regression analysis for the prediction of

the marital instability, as well as the influence of each factor in the model. As depicted in the (Table 1.1) couples economic status significantly contributes by 66.6% of variance ( $R^2= 0.666$ ) towards marital instability for the total of 384 respondents in this study. This means that, couples economic status ( $\beta= 0.846, P<0.05$ ) is the main contributor that caused the respondents to have instability in their marriage. However, with the combination of predictor between couples economic status ( $\beta= 0.846, P<0.05$ ) and spouse communication ( $\beta= 0.643, P<0.05$ ) the contribution value of variance towards marital instability was increase to 69.5%. Therefore, the increment is 5.2% ( $64.3-69.5= 5.2\%$ ). Whilst the factor which is not significantly contributes to academic performance in this study couples parental background and couples in-law involvement.

**Table 1.1 Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of Influence of Socioeconomic Factors on marital instability.**

Model		B	Beta	T	Sig. Value
1	(Constant)	1.376		8.200	0.07
	Couples economic status.	1.019	0.786	9.629	0.000
2	(Constant)	1.002		5.936	0.000
	Couples economic status.	0.13	0.846	6.412	0.000
	Spouse communication.	0.004	0.643	4.287	0.000
		R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R R Change
1		0.806	0.666	0.627	5.2%
2		0.864.	0.695	0.683	

Based on the outcome of this analysis as indicated in Table 1.1, it can be concluded that not all the prediction factors are contributing to academic

performance. But, on the other hand, it could be reported that only couples economic status and spouse communication are the two main

independent variables that contributes towards marital instability in some Local Governments of Yobe State. Thus, this findings were supported by O'Brien, (2004); Venkat & Azevedo, (2023); Adepoju & Ojo, (2022); Okafor, (2021); Samphina, (2017) and Esere et al., (2015) who reported some socioeconomic variables such as couple's economic status as responsible for influencing marital instability in their studied. Additionally, the finding of this stepwise multiple regression analysis revealed that, the most significant factor that predicted marital instability was couples economic status. Hence based on this findings it can be concluded that couples economic status is positively related with marital instability. Furthermore, the results of this study emphasized the sound economic stability of couples will really help marriage stability and reduce the rate of divorce in our society.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The results of this study revealed that couples economic status and spouse communication were the predictors of marriage instability among the couples in Yobe State, Nigeria. But couples economic status ( $\beta= 0.846, P<0.05$ ) emerged as a strongest influence of marital instability. Thus, it's recommended that Improving financial literacy education to couples, particularly young adults, can help them manage their finances more effectively, reduce financial stress, and potentially improve marital stability. Also, the couples should enhancing their communication skills more effectively, resolve conflicts in a healthy way, and improve their overall relationship satisfaction. Consequently, future research on influence of socioeconomic factors on marital instability should be expanded to include more Local government areas. This would help in identifying the real factors that influence marital instability in Yobe State, Nigerian. Finally, there are other socioeconomic factors that contribute to marital instability which were not examined in this study such as abuse,

age difference, extra marital affairs etc. Therefore, more research should be carried out to justify the real socioeconomic factors that influence marital instability considering the fact that, the independent variables (couples economic status and spouse communication) can only explained 69.5% of the variability of marriage instability in Yobe State.

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