

## ***Lack of Intimacy and Poor Attitude as Marital Dysfunction Risk-Factors among Married Public Servants in Anambra State***

**<sup>1</sup>Juliana Azuka Akuezuilo, Ph.D**

[azukajulie@gmail.com](mailto:azukajulie@gmail.com), [ja.akuezuilo@unizik.edu.ng](mailto:ja.akuezuilo@unizik.edu.ng)

**<sup>1</sup>Uju Christiana Nwanna**

[ujunwanna@yahoo.com](mailto:ujunwanna@yahoo.com)

<sup>1</sup>Department of Guidance and Counselling

Faculty of Education

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

---

### **Abstract**

*Marital dysfunction has been a global issue which has given many people concern. This study thus examined lack of intimacy and poor attitude as a marital dysfunction risk factor among public servants in Anambra State. The study was conducted in Anambra State of Nigeria using descriptive survey design. Sample of 814 public servants was drawn from a population of 8,129 public servants using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Two research questions guided the study. A validated instrument titled “Marital Dysfunction Risk Factors Inventory (MDRI)” was used to collect data. Cronbach Alpha statistics was employed to obtain the internal consistency of the instrument. The values obtained from the clusters are 0.89 and 0.86. Range of scores was used to answer the research questions. The result from the analysis showed that lack of intimacy and poor attitude are marital dysfunction risk factor of public servants in Anambra State. Based on the findings, recommendations were made which include that marriage counsellors should carryout enlightenment programmes for public servants on marital dysfunction risk factors. They should also organize workshops where they will help the public servants to understand the adverse effects of attitude that contributes to dysfunctional marriages.*

**Keywords:** Lack, intimacy, poor, attitude, marital, dysfunction, risk-factors

### **Introduction**

Marriage can be described as an ageless contract designed by God for the purpose of unification of man and woman. It is for this reason that over the years, it has been acclaimed a sacred and venerable institution. It is also believed to be the fundamental aspect of the society since the family that emerges through marriage processes is a microcosm of the society (Iffih & Ezeah, 2004).

The value of marriage differs from culture to culture, from ethnic group to ethnic group, depending on the way each group perceives marriage. To some people, marriage is life-

long union, while some see it as a contract which gets broken when spouses get tired. The purpose of establishing the union of marriage is for life-long union. This is why Jesus told the Pharisees in the book of Mathew 19: 3 – 5 that God created the male and female and for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh (NKJV, Bible). In line with this, Odemelam, Chima, Justin, Ikpeazu and Igboanusi (2003) submitted that most Africans see marriage as lasting agreement between a man and a woman who have consented to live a life of devotion and sharing with each other for the purpose of promoting their mutual growth and welfare in their journey through life.

This is however contrary to what happens in some countries like Western Europe, United States of America and Australia where they practice same sex marriage which is the practice of marriage between men or between women. Although same sex marriage has been regularized through law in those countries, the legal and social responses have ranged from celebration in one hand to criminalization on the other hand. Nigeria, for example, recognizes neither same sex marriage nor civil unions for same sex couples. On 18th January 2007, the Federal Executive Council approved a law, same sex marriage (prohibition) Act 2014 prohibiting same sex marriage in Nigeria. The proposed bill calls for fourteen years imprisonment for anyone who undergoes, performs, witness, aids or abets same sex marriage. In view of the above, the researchers are not interested in same sex marriage but in marriage between a man and a woman which is the only marriage ordained by God.

Marriage is a socially legitimized sexual union, between a man and a woman, it is a life and death struggle maintained through the forces of law, companionship, friendship and romantic love. It is also maintained by bonding relationship which developed as couple share day to day routines such as feeding, bathing and taking responsibility of their children (Charlin, 2005). Marriage is a blending of two lives and union of two natures; it is like an egg in the hands of husband and wife which must be carefully cared for and nurtured to avoid breakage. It involves understanding, love, peace, patience, perseverance, trust, cordial relationship, free communication and forgiveness, among others (Akuezulo, 2018).

Obviously, when a man and woman come together in marriage, they come from different background and with different mindsets and benefits, built up based on their background experience. The expectation is that they would, in the course of living together, adjust to each other and get deeper in love and oneness, thereby increasing the stability of their marital relationship. Often, this expectation is not realized in many marriages; consequently instead of the marriage relationship becoming stronger, more cohesive and stable, it becomes weak and drifting apart sets in. In some cases, this situation sets in soon after their honeymoon, they begin to drift apart, losing cohesiveness, becoming selfish and self-centered, unfaithful, impatience and disrespectful to each other. Their

trust for each other reduces, they become progressively cold towards each other; this is an indication that marital dysfunction is creeping into the marriage.

According to Agha and Obika (2007), marital dysfunction is marriage that lacks some or all the good qualities expected to be in marriage, such as love, peace, understanding, tolerance, patience and trust. George (2002) also saw marital dysfunction as a marriage where the rate of marital exchange and benefits are lower than mutual punishment. This implies that the level of understanding, sharing of love, kindness and selflessness is lower than the level of selfishness and self-centeredness exhibited in the marriage by spouses. Marital dysfunction, as affirmed by Akuezuilo (2018), is marital disharmony as a result of lack of love, care, trust, protection, free communication, among others.

Marital dysfunction can come in different ways or sources. These sources of marital dysfunction are referred to as risk factors of marital dysfunction. These risk factors are potential causes of marital dysfunction which include lack of intimacy, poor/selfish attitude, irresponsibility, financial tussles (selfish attitude towards finance), hardship and other challenges. When these deficiencies persist and spouses begin to work as two separate individuals living together but just for their own personal goals, then dysfunction has set in.

Marital dysfunction manifests itself in a number of different ways and is very often marked by deficit in commitment to the relationship, low level of mutually caring behaviours between the partners, problems with communication and corrosive conflict resolution skills. All these depends on the level at which the spouses are experiencing them. If the level at which they experience it is mild, the dysfunction will be mild but if the level at which they are experiencing it is high, then the dysfunction will be high.

According to Akuezuilo (2018), marital dysfunction risk factors can be grouped into five main groups namely lack of intimacy, poor attitude, irresponsibility, financial tussle, hardships/challenges. This study focuses on lack of intimacy and poor attitude as a marital dysfunction risk factor among public servants in Anambra State. This study tried to find out how lack of intimacy and poor attitude contribute to marital dysfunction. Umezuike and Njumog (2014) noted that lack of communication contributes to marital dysfunction risk factors. In line with this, Arowolo (2014) also confirmed that there is significant relationship between marital stability and the level of communication among spouses. Ogulade, Ogundokun and Oluranti (2014) portrayed that communication gap, lack of love and incompatibility between couples are among the major factors that threaten family security.

Lack of intimacy in the marriage shows itself when spouses do not care for each other, lack sexual satisfaction, lack love, spouse not yielding to advice, not spending time together, lack of trust and sleeping outside without informing the spouse among others.

Poor attitude on the other hand shows itself as flirting, consuming too much alcohol by spouses, accepting wrong counsel by spouse, always preferring to eat outside, frequent nagging, engaging in making charms or juju, being selfish and inability to control emotions, among others. When these things happen in the family, it is obvious that the marriage is suffering from marital dysfunction. Meye (2011) revealed that undesirable behaviour and poor habits are among the variables that contributes to marital dysfunction risk factors.

Marital dysfunction being a social problem affects a significant number of people in the world today. It affects people socially, physically and emotionally. Emotionally, the spouse will not be happy, no more feeling of intimacy in the family, no feeling of love, no confidence, among others. It also affects the child/children psychologically. The children become ashamed of the behaviours of their parents especially when the poor attitude becomes obvious. Socially, the children isolate themselves from public. Some of them may decide to become stubborn and disobedient both to their parents and other significant individuals. Physically, these children may not grow well and may look sickly, since their parents do not have time to feed them well. Orji (2013) observed that children from dysfunctional marriage sometimes become wayward, disobedient, school dropout, cultist, armed robbers, among others.

### **Statement of Problem**

Marriage is a relationship between two persons; male and female, with an obligation to love, care and promote each other's development, emotionally, socially, psychologically and spiritually. The major purpose of marriage is for the couple to be united, work together to raise godly children by ensuring that they instill moral values into them for the benefit of the family and the society. However, these days marriage has largely deviated from the biblical injunctions and societal expectations apparently because of the present day hardships and pressure of work, which cause some parents to be largely unavailable at home to maintain functional marriage; spouses appear to be very committed to their jobs for security reasons and to make ends meet. The situation apparently has adverse effects on the spouses' inter-personal relationship and bonding in the marriage, which inevitably results in high risk of marital dysfunction. Many scholars, authors and researchers such as Ibe, Obidua and Uzochina (2013) conducted research on marital disharmony, causes and resolution strategies among couples in Enugu State. Also Onwuasoanya and Okeke (2004) in a similar study conducted a study on family counselling for management skills and marital stability among literate couples in Awka South Local Government Area. They discovered that management, communication, social and sex related skills enhance marital stability.

Despite all these efforts made by scholars and other stakeholder in education, marital dysfunction risk factors apparently persist in Anambra State. This, however, needs to be empirically ascertained in order to find solution to such situation. It is because of this that

the researchers embark on this study to determine the extent at which lack of intimacy and poor attitude/habit contribute to marital dysfunction of marriage of public servants in Anambra State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to determine empirically the extent lack of intimacy and poor attitude/habit contribute to marital dysfunction risk factors in the marriage of public servants in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to determine,

1. The extent of lack of intimacy as a marital dysfunction risk factor among public servants in Anambra State.
2. The extent of poor attitude/habit as a marital dysfunction risk factor among public servants in Anambra State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the extent of lack of intimacy as a marital dysfunction risk factor among public servants in Anambra State?
2. What is the extent of poor attitude/habit as a marital dysfunction risk factor among public servants in Anambra State?

### **Methodology**

The study was carried out in Anambra State of Nigeria using descriptive survey design research method. The sample size was 814 public servants drawn from population of 8,129 public servants using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. A validated instrument known as Marital Dysfunction Risk Factor Inventory (MDRFI) was used to collect data. The instrument contains 16 items which were grouped into two clusters with eight items in each cluster. For example, lack of intimacy contains eight items while poor attitude contains eight items too. The items were patterned on a five point scale of very severe effect (5 points), severe effect (4), moderate effect (3 points), mild effect (2 points) and slightly mild effect (1 point). Cronbach alpha statistics was employed to obtain the internal consistency of the instruments which was scored cluster by cluster. The value obtained from the cluster was 0.89 and 0.86 respectively. Eight hundred and fourteen (814) copied of the instrument were administered to the respondents and were collected instantly after filling. Range of scores was used to answer the research questions. The baseline for the instrument was that scores ranging from 8 – 24 are low risk factor while scores ranging from 25 – 40 are high risk factor. This decision was arrived at based on the mean of 3.0 since the questionnaire has eight items on each cluster, measured on 5 – point rating scale.

### **Presentation of results**

The data collected from the field for this study were analyzed and the summaries are as presented in tables to highlight the findings.

**Research Question 1:** What is the extent of lack of intimacy as marital dysfunction risk factor among public servants in Anambra State?

**Table 1:** Range of scores on lack of intimacy as a marital dysfunction risk factor

Range of Scores	N	%	Remarks
8 – 24	140	17.2	No risk factor
25 – 40	674	82.80	High risk factor

Table 1 shows that 674 (82.80%) of the respondents with scores ranging from 25 - 40 experience lack of intimacy as a marital dysfunction risk factor, while 140 (17.2%) of the respondents whose score ranged between 8 - 24 do not experience lack of intimacy as a marital dysfunction risk factor.

**Research Question 2:** What is the extent of poor attitude as marital dysfunction risk factor among public servants in Anambra State?

**Table 2:** Range of scores on poor attitude/habits as a marital dysfunction risk factor

Range of Scores	N	%	Remarks
8 – 24	169	20.8	No risk factor
25 – 40	645	79.20	High risk factor

Table 2 shows that 645 (79.2%) of the respondents with scores ranging from 25 – 40 experience poor attitude as a marital dysfunction risk factor, while 169 (20.8%) of the respondents whose score ranged between 8 - 24 do not experience poor attitude as marital dysfunction risk factor.

### Discussion of the findings

The result of the study revealed that greater number of public servants have lack of intimacy as marital dysfunction risk factor. This implies that many of the spouses have low intimate relationship in their marriage. This could be as a result of not coming home from their work place, not caring for each other and not having sexual intercourse as well as not spending time together, among others. The implication of low intimacy in marriage is that dysfunction exists and this can lead to divorce or other forms of separation. In marriage, love, care and trust are the keywords in preventing dysfunction and promoting stability. This finding is in line with the findings of Arowolo (2014) who revealed that there is a relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital stability. The result also supported the findings of Ogulade, Ogundokun and Oluranti (2014) who portrayed that communication gap, lack of love and incompatibility between couples are among the major factors that threaten family security.

The study also indicated that a large number of married public servants have poor attitude or poor habits as marital dysfunction risk factors. This means that these habits could affect the marriage negatively and bring in dysfunction in the marriage. This finding is in line with that of Meyer (2011) who revealed that undesirable and poor habits are among the variables that contribute to marital dysfunction risk factors.

### **Conclusion**

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that public servants in Anambra State lack intimacy in their marriage, they also form some attitude that negatively affect their marriage. The implication is that something must be done less their marriage will collapse.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, these recommendations are made:

1. Marriage counsellors should carry out enlightenment programmes for public servants in particular through radio, television talks and panel discussion by experts to educate these public servants on the dimension of dysfunctional risk factors that threaten their marriage cohesion and stability; this should be addressed urgently by learning and using appropriate adjustment strategies so as to curtail dysfunction in their marriage.
2. Marriage counsellors should also organize workshop where they can help public servants understand the adverse consequences which marital dysfunctional behaviours such as poor attitude and lack of intimacy among couples generate for children and society at large.
3. Other stakeholders in education as well as in the life of citizens such as the church, the government and media can all be involved in this campaign against dysfunction. Schools through parents' teachers' association meetings can bring in counsellors to educate parents on the importance of preventing dysfunctional attitude amongst spouses and the use of appropriate adjustment strategies at least for the sake of the children, the future generation.

### **References**

- Agha, N. E. & Obika, J. A. (2007). Marital stability as perceived by educated spouses in Onitsha Urban in Anambra State. *Unpublished B.Ed project*, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Akuezuilo, J. A. (2018). Marital dysfunction, risk factors and adjustment strategies among public servants in Anambra State. *Unpublished PhD dissertation*, NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka.
- Arowolo, D. O. (2014). Correlates of marital stability among married couples in Ise-Oru Local Government Area of Ekiti State. *The Counsellor, 33(1)*.
- Charlin, R. (2005). American marriage in early twenty-first century. *The Future of Children, 15(2)*, 33 – 35.

- Federal Republic of Nigeria FRN (2011). *The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria with Amendment 2011*. Retrieved April, 2017 from [www.nigeria.law.org.constitution](http://www.nigeria.law.org.constitution).
- George, I. N. (2002). Marital role adjustment and satisfaction among Ibibio workers in Akwa Ibom State. *Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation*, University of Calabar.
- Ibe, U. O. & Obidua, M. A. & Uzochina, G. O. (2013). Marital disharmony: Causes and resolution strategies among couples in Enugu State. *Research on Humanities Social Sciences*, 3(22). Retrieved from [www.iiste.org](http://www.iiste.org).
- Iffih & Ezeah (2004). *Sociology of the family*. Enugu, Nigeria: John and Jacob Classic Publishers Limited.
- Meyer, C. (2011). Causes of marital discord. Retrieved on Sept. 25<sup>th</sup> 2013 from <http://www.ezinneartcilescomm/1170017>
- Odemelam, A., Chima, I., Justin, J., Ikpeazu, V. & Igboanusi, V. (2003). *Reviewing the Joy of Marriage*. Owerri: Joe Nwankpa Publisher.
- Ogulade, O. O., Ogundokun, M. A. & Oluranti, S. (2014). Emotional intelligence and marital communication as a determinant of family well being among young couples. In A. A, Adegoke & O. Aluede (Eds.), *Perspective in Guidance and Counselling*.
- Onwuasoanya, P. N. & Okeke, N. U. (2004). Family counselling for management skills and marital stability among literate couples in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. *Conference Proceedings for 34<sup>th</sup> Annual National Conference of the Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON)*, 42-48.
- Orji, C. C. (2013). Family instability: Causes and consequences.
- Umezuike, R. O. & Njumog, M. N. (2014). Counselling intervention for family security in Anambra State. In A. A, Adegoke and O. Aluede (Eds.), *Perspective in Guidance and Counselling*.