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**IMPORTANCE OF COMPATIBILITY ON MARITAL STABILITY AMONG HEALTH
PROFESSIONALS IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA**

BY

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Abstract

The marriage institution is sacred and has been the foundation of human society for a long time. The purpose of this study is to investigate the importance of compatibility on marital stability among health professionals. The study employed both descriptive and correlation survey designs. The total population of the study is 4167. The sample size of 996 were selected using random sampling and fish bowl techniques for the study. A self-structured questionnaire tagged: “Importance of Compatibility on Marital Stability among Health Professionals (ICMSAHP)” was the instrument used for data collection. The instrument was validated by two experts in Adult Education and Sociology from the University of Lagos. Cronbach’s alpha was used to assess the reliability of the instrument, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.95. The findings revealed a significant, strong, and positive relationship between couples’ compatibility and marital stability among health professionals. It was recommended that courtship is germane in laying the solid foundation for marriage. Intending couples should adopt it to reduce divorce rates. A better understanding of each other can be achieved by couple through long courtship. Also, prospective spouses should have gainful and sustained employment both prior to matrimony and throughout the course of the marriage.

Keywords: Compatibility, Marital stability, health professionals, Communication.

Introduction

Marriage as an institution is sacred and has been the foundation of human society for a long time Hammond, (2024). This institution as a result of changing times, the dynamics of marriage have also undergone significant transformation. Compatibility is one of the most crucial aspects of a successful marriage. The term compatibility refers to the ability of two individuals to co-exist harmoniously, sharing common values, beliefs and goals.

Compatibility includes various aspects such as interest, personality traits, social engagement, honest advice, core values, background (economic and social) hobbies, accountability, resourcefulness, sense of responsibility, sexual compatibility, educational background, religion, social status, self-control and affection. Research has identified several key components of compatibility including communication, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, financial management, sexual satisfaction and religious beliefs (Nzewuji, Uche, and Uche (2024.)). The understanding of importance of compatibility in marital stability can help couples to build a stronger and more resilient marriage.

The importance of compatibility in marital stability cannot be over-emphasised. Research findings have shown positive correlation between compatibility as a strong predictor of marital satisfaction and stability Narayan and Goyal, (2024). Couples that share similar values, interests and personality traits are more likely to communicate effectively, resolve conflicts and build a strong emotional bond Sanjaya, Utami and Mailool, (2024).

Incompatibility on the other hand among spouses has contributed significantly to instability in marriage and eventual divorce. Sander, Strizzi, Cipric, Overup, & Hald (2024), reported that inadequate sexual communication and poor emotion between couple's decreases satisfaction in marriage and relationship stability is affected. Also, Brkljacic, Brajsa-Zganec, Dzida& Kotria Topic (2024) discovered that increased conflict among couples are caused by differences in personality traits, and low levels of agreeableness.

In the same vein, Smith and Wolfinger (2024), research revealed that higher risks of marital instability are linked to differences in values, beliefs, and sexual behaviours. Similarly, marital

instability can be caused by religious differences, educational background, age, cultural orientation and finance. Additionally, research findings of Ogbowmen (2025), confirmed that failure of couples to develop effective communication, adaptive coping strategies and emotional understanding are more inclined to marital instability.

Compatibility of couple is the ability of the two individuals to co-exist harmoniously, share common values, beliefs and goals. According to Mohammed (2023), marital compatibility is defined as the successful psychological and emotional adjustment between couples that enables them to cope effectively with stress and maintain stable relationships. In the view of Evanurfitriani, (2025), spouse compatibility is described as a multidimensional alignment that involve religion, that is (spiritual), emotional (communicative) and socio-economic (cultural) compatibility.

Statement of the Problem

Marriage serves as a foundational institution within a society. Despite its recognized significance as a social institution, marital instability and divorce remain prevalent in the United States. Recent data indicate that approximately one – third of first marriages end in divorce, with cohort analysis showing rates of 42 – 47 % for marriages formed between the 1960s and 1980s and lower rates for more recent cohorts. Current projections estimate that about 40% of today’s marriages will ultimately end in divorce Wilcox and Wang, (2025), while the official crude divorce rate was 2.3 per 1,000 people in 2024. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, (2025). Although a lot of factors contribute to marital instability, compatibility, which is a crucial aspect, has been overlooked in many cases. Lack of compatibility between couples can lead to communication breakdown, conflict, and ultimately, divorce. Meanwhile, the significance of compatibility on marital stability is not fully understood, and there is a need for further research to investigate the relationship between marital stability, couples’ compatibility, and conflict resolution. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the importance of compatibility on marital stability among health professionals in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

1. identify the importance of compatibility between couples and marital stability among health professionals; and
2. examine the impact of compatibility on emotional intelligence in marriage.

Research Hypotheses

This hypothesis is developed for the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between couples' compatibility and marital stability among health professional.

Literature Review

Marital compatibility is defined by researchers as the degree to which spouses are able to adjust, cooperate, communicate, and function harmoniously in important areas of married life such as values, personality, emotions, communication, sexuality, religion, and socioeconomic expectations.

In the view of Overup and Hald (2024), marital compatibility is defined as the ability of couples to reflect and communicate openly about emotional, sexual, financial, and other needs in order to enhance satisfaction in marriage that will lead to stability in marriage. The definition emphasized personality similarity and financial and emotional adjustment between spouses. Evanurfitriani (2025) sees spousal compatibility as a multidimensional alignment that involves religious, emotional, and socioeconomic compatibility, all of which strengthen marital harmony and reduce conflict. Muhammad (2023) established that marital compatibility is the successful psychological and emotional adjustment between couples that enables them to cope effectively with stress and maintain stable relationships.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Marital Stability

The role played by Emotional Intelligence (EI) on marital stability, marital adjustment, satisfaction, and effective conflict resolution among couples cannot be overestimated. According

to Narayan and Goyal (2024), research it discovered that emotional intelligence in marriage is the ability of spouses to perceive, understand, regulate, and appropriately express emotions in ways that foster healthy communication, empathy, and marital adjustment. They further revealed that emotionally intelligent couples tend to experience greater harmony and stability in marriage. Also, Ahiakwo (2024), discovered that emotional intelligence significantly predicts marital adjustment among married persons. The study affirmed that spouses with higher emotional intelligence manage interpersonal challenges better and maintain more marital stability.

Similarly, Nzewuji, Uche, and Uche (2024), identified emotional competence and other psychosocial variables as important factors enhancing marital stability among couples in South East Nigeria. Their study linked emotional maturity and effective emotional management with reduced marital conflict and stronger family relationships.

In the same vein, Parsakia, Rostami, and Saadati (2024) defined emotional intelligence as a protective factor against marital conflict. Their research confirmed that couples with higher emotional intelligence demonstrate healthier interaction patterns and lower levels of destructive conflict, thereby improving marital stability.

Furthermore, Sanjaya, Utami, and Mailool (2024), established that components of emotional intelligence, such as empathy, emotional regulation, self-awareness, and social skills, positively influence constructive conflict resolution styles in marriage, which strengthens marital stability. Likewise, Oteng (2024), pointed out that emotional intelligence contributes significantly marital satisfaction because emotionally intelligent spouses communicate more effectively, respond empathetically, and adapt better to marital demands. Onyekuru and Ugwu (2017), established that emotional intelligence is an essential ingredient of marital stability, arguing that emotionally intelligent spouses are more capable of understanding each other's emotional needs and sustaining peaceful relationships, thereby leading to marital stability.

Sexual Relationship and Marital Stability

Research findings have discovered that a healthy sexual relationship is strongly associated with marital satisfaction, emotional intimacy, and long-term marital stability. Consistently researchers have identified sexual satisfaction, sexual communication, and intimacy as major factors that enhance marital stability.

According to Nazari, Hosseinnia, and Najafi (2024), they reported that sexual satisfaction as a crucial component of marital quality and stability. They discovered that couples who experience higher sexual satisfaction demonstrate stronger commitment and lower tendencies toward marital infidelity and divorce. Likewise, Øverup, Hald, and Pavan (2024), established that effective sexual communication predicts relationship satisfaction, life satisfaction, and marital harmony. In their findings, they reported that couples who openly discuss sexual needs and expectations tend to maintain more stable marriages. Also, Lazar's (2024) research findings confirmed that positive sexual experiences strengthen emotional bonding, which enhances marital stability among married couples in their work of investigating the relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital stability.

In addition, Khoshkam, Khoshkam, and Honarparvatan (2025), identify that sexual satisfaction is the most reliable predictor of stable marriage. Their dyadic study showed that trust, emotional intelligence, and healthy sexual relationships jointly contribute to stable marriages. Furthermore, Eke, Ihejirika, and Ochonogor (2024), reported that interference with marital intimacy through excessive digital engagement negatively affects sexual intimacy and marital stability among couples in Nigeria. Additionally, Henson, Kot, and Tung (2024), affirmed that successful marriages are sustained through positive interaction styles, intimacy, and mutual emotional responsiveness, including healthy sexual relations between partners. In summary, a healthy sexual relationship in marriage involves mutual intimacy, sexual satisfaction, emotional connection, and effective sexual communication between spouses, which collectively promote marital satisfaction, commitment, and long-term stability in marriage.

Personality and Marital Stability

The research by Sayehmiri, Kareem, Abdi, Dalvand, and Gheshlagh (2020), identified that personality traits are strong predictors of marital satisfaction and stability. Their meta-analysis submitted that agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability positively influence marital satisfaction, while neuroticism negatively affects marital relationships.

Similarly, Brkljacic, Brajša-Žganec, Džida, and Kotrla (2024), discovered that both individual personality traits and similarity between spouses' personalities contribute significantly to marital satisfaction and stability. Couples with compatible personality patterns reported healthier and are more stable in marriage. Also, Hofmann and Krapf (2024), researched on the similarity in

personality among couples and submitted that similarity in Big Five personality traits reduces the likelihood of union dissolution and marital breakdown. Their study revealed that personality compatibility strengthens relationship endurance.

In the same vein, Munini, Asatsa, and Macharia (2024), established that the five main personality traits are significantly associated with stable marriage. They discovered that conscientiousness, agreeableness and emotional stability promote harmony and stability in marriage, while high neuroticism contributes to conflict and dissatisfaction. Furthermore, Costa and Mosmann (2021), reported that personality traits are important determinants of marital adjustment. Their research established that spouses' personality characteristics affect emotional interaction, communication, and adaptation to marriage. Additionally, Spikic and Mortelmans (2021), in a meta-analysis on personality and marital separation, discovered that neuroticism, extraversion, and openness were associated with higher risks of divorce, whereas conscientiousness reduced the likelihood of divorce.

In summary, personality and marital stability can be said to influence marital stability through enduring behavioural, emotional, and interpersonal patterns that affect communication, conflict management, emotional adjustment, compatibility and overall marital satisfaction between spouses.

Low Agreeableness and Marital Stability

According to Sayehmiri, Kareem, Abdi, Dalvand, and Gheshlagh (2020), in their meta-analysis on personality traits and stable marriage, they showed that agreeableness has a strong positive relationship with marital satisfaction and stability. Their findings showed that low agreeableness contributes to marital dissatisfaction, conflict, and divorce among couples.

Also, Brkljacic, Brajša-Žganec, Džida, and Kotrla (2024), explained that spouses with lower agreeableness experience poorer marital adjustment because they are less cooperative, less empathetic, and more argumentative in marital interactions. Their study indicated that personality compatibility, especially agreeableness, is important for sustaining stable marriages.

Similarly, Spikic and Mortelmans (2021), in a meta-analysis on personality traits and marital separation, noted that maladaptive personality characteristics increase the likelihood of marital instability and divorce. Although conscientiousness reduced divorce risk, lower interpersonal warmth and cooperation associated with low agreeableness contributed to relationship strain.

In addition, Abe and Oshio (2018), discovered that personality dissimilarity, including low agreeableness between spouses, negatively affects marital satisfaction over time. Their study affirmed that couples with less agreeable personality patterns are more likely to experience tension and reduced relationship quality.

Furthermore, Khalili (2016), expressed that agreeableness positively predicts marital adjustment because agreeable spouses tend to demonstrate tolerance, cooperation, and emotional support. On the other hand, low agreeableness weakens marital adjustment and harmonious interaction between partners.

In conclusion, low agreeableness and marital instability refers to reduced tendencies toward empathy, cooperation, trust, patience, and compromise in relationships, which increases interpersonal conflict, weakens marital adjustment, and negatively affects marital stability.

Income/Employment and Marital Stability

Employment and income have been identified in family and marital studies as major predictors of marital stability. Researchers over the years argue that economic resources influence couples' quality of life, stress levels, communication patterns, and overall satisfaction in marriage. Marital relationships are often strengthened by financial security, whereas unemployment, unstable income, and economic hardship may increase marital conflict and the likelihood of separation or divorce.

Killewald (2016), observed that employment and income significantly shape marital stability through gender roles and economic expectations within marriage. She further discovered that husbands' lack of full-time employment increased the risk of divorce, particularly in modern marriages. She argued that despite social changes, the traditional expectation of men as economic providers still influences marital outcomes. The study further showed that total household income contributes positively to marital continuity, while financial strain increases instability.

In the same vein, Schmid (2021), investigated employment situations and marital separation in Germany among spouses. He reported that higher household income couples were more likely to maintain marital stability than couples experiencing precarious employment conditions or

economic insecurity. The study suggested that stable employment reduces financial stress and promotes stronger marital commitment.

Cooke and Gash (2010), research in Great Britain, West Germany, and the United States of America on wives' employment and marital stability revealed that wives' part-time employment enhanced marital stability in societies where work-family balance policies were supportive. But, in countries with more demanding labour markets, wives' employment had little effect on marital stability. They concluded that the relationship between employment and marital stability is influenced by economic and social contexts.

Likewise, Keldenich and Lücke (2018), investigated the impact of job loss on marital stability. Their study revealed that involuntary unemployment, especially among husbands, significantly increased the likelihood of marital instability. They explained that unemployment often creates financial pressure, emotional distress, and reduced self-esteem, all of which negatively affect marital stability.

Conclusively, employment and income play critical roles in marital stability. Stable employment and adequate income generally promote marital satisfaction and continuity, while unemployment, economic insecurity, and financial stress are associated with marital instability and divorce.

Theoretical Framework

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

SET posits that individuals evaluate their relationships based on the costs and rewards they receive from their partner. In the context of marriage, compatibility can be seen as a crucial factor that influences the costs and rewards of the relationship. When couples are compatible, they are more likely to experience rewards such as emotional support, intimacy and effective communication, which can strengthen their relationships. This theory addresses the efforts of two or more individuals to fulfil basic needs. One of the key concepts of this theory is rewards or benefits, which consist of pleasures, gratifications, and satisfaction. Satisfaction in a marital relationship to some extent, contributes to marital stability.

Methodology

The study adopted both descriptive and correlation survey designs. Descriptive survey was considered appropriate because it has ability to analyse two or more variables without manipulating any of them while correlation survey investigates relationships and association between two or more phenomena in order to predict the degree of relationship and association.

The target population of the study comprised of selected health professionals in state hospitals in Lagos State. To be involved, the participants must meet the following criteria: they must be married and had been living together for at least seven years with their spouses, must be working as any of the following: Medical Doctors, Nurses, Pharmacists, Physiotherapists and Laboratory Scientists. The total population of these categories of health professionals in Lagos State is 4167.

The sample for the study consisted of 17 General Hospitals, 165 Primary health Centres. Also, 1 Teaching Hospital (Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) was included.

The researcher employed simple random sampling technique of fish bowl in selecting the hospitals that were included in the study. In doing this, names of all General Hospitals and Primary Health Centres were written on cards separately and shuffled. The top card was taken each time the cards were shuffled. The sample size of health professionals for the study was picked using simple random sampling and the population are as follows: Medical Doctors, 311; Nurses, 340; Pharmacists, 150; Physiotherapists, 63 and Laboratory Scientists, 132 totalling 996.

The instrument used for data collection was a researcher-developed questionnaire titled: "Importance of Compatibility on Marital Stability among Health Professionals in Lagos State Nigeria (ICMSAHP)". The instrument was divided into two parts, A and B. Part A consists of 15 items to find out about respondents' demography and section B consists of 15 items that measure the importance of compatibility on marital stability. The items of the questionnaire were measured on a 4-point modified Likert-type. The face and content validity of the instrument was ensured by giving out copies of the questionnaire to experts in the field of Adult Education and Sociology, all in the University of Lagos. Their feedback was incorporated into the final version. Instrument reliability was assessed using the Split- half method. The instrument was then administered to 100 health professionals according to our sample size in Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Yaba and National Orthopaedic Hospital, Igbobi in Lagos State. 90% of the data were collected from the respondents. The internal consistency of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha,

yielding a .95 for the overall scale. The reliability coefficient was high enough and the instrument was considered reliable.

RESULTS

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis one – There is no significant relationship between couples’ compatibility and marital stability among health professionals.

Table 1: Correlation between couples’ compatibility and marital stability

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	P
Couples compatibility	996	45.60	8.204		
Marital stability	996	193.82	26.076	0.855*	.000

P < 0.05

Table 1 shows that there existed a significant, high and positive relationship between couples’ compatibility and marital stability among health professionals (r = 0.855, P < 0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implied that there was a significant relationship between couples' compatibility and marital stability among health professionals.

Table 2: Correlation between couples’ compatibility and marital stability among health professionals by occupation

	Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	P
Medical Doctor	Couples compatibility	311	46.69	7.22		
	Marital Stability	311	193.84	22.66	.841*	.000
Laboratory Scientist	Couples compatibility	132	45.75	9.11		
	Marital Stability	132	195.39	29.94	.909*	.000
Physiotherapist	Couples compatibility	63	44.25	7.18		
	Marital Stability	63	191.10	24.26	.849*	.000
Nurses	Couples compatibility	340	45.01	8.71		
	Marital Stability	340	192.82	28.86	.873*	.000
Pharmacist	Couples compatibility	150	45.11	8.33		

Marital Stability	150	195.82	23.08	.802*	.000
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*P < 0.05

Table 2 shows that the relationship between couples' compatibility and marital stability among Medical Doctors ($r = 0.841, P < 0.05$), Lab. Scientists ($r = 0.909, P < 0.05$), Physiotherapists ($r = 0.849, P < 0.05$), Nurses ($r = 0.873, P < 0.05$) and Pharmacists ($r = 0.802, P < 0.05$) was high, positive and statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance in each case.

Discussion of Findings

Findings on how Compatibility between Couples Influenced Marital Stability among Health Professionals

This hypothesis was adopted to seek whether there is no significant relationship between couples' compatibility and marital stability among health workers. The analysis was done using Pearson Product Moment Correlation with level of significance set at 0.05. The outcome of the analysis indicated that there exists a significant, high and positive relationship between couples' compatibility and marital stability among health professionals at 0.05 level of significance ($r = 0.87, P < 0.05$). In addition, the results revealed that the relationship between couples' compatibility and marital stability among Medical Doctors ($r = 0.841, P < 0.05$), Nurses ($r = 0.873, P < 0.05$), Laboratory Scientists ($r = 0.909, P < 0.05$), Pharmacists ($r = 0.802, P < 0.05$) and Physiotherapists ($r = 0.849, P < 0.05$) was high, positive and statistically significant at 0.05 level in each case.

The result is in line with the research submissions of Narayan and Goyal (2024), submitted that emotional intelligence couples tend to experience greater harmony and stability in marriage than couples with lower emotional intelligence. Likewise, Nzewuyi et al (2024), linked emotional maturity and effective emotional management with reduced marital conflict and stronger family cohesion. Additionally, Overup et al. (2024), affirmed the findings of the study by establishing that effective sexual communication predicts relationship and life satisfaction, with marital harmony. They reported that couples who openly discuss sexual needs and expectations tend to maintain more stable marriages.

Similarly, Nazari et al (2024), research findings confirmed the outcome of the research that couples who experience higher sexual satisfaction, demonstrate stronger commitment and lower tendencies toward marital infidelity and separation. The research findings confirmed the study of Khoshkam et al (2025), that trust, emotional intelligence, and healthy sexual relationships jointly

contributed to stable marriages. Furthermore, Eke (2024), corroborated the findings of the research by establishing that successful marriages are sustained through interaction styles, intimacy, and mutual emotional responsiveness, including healthy sexual relations between partners.

The findings of the study supported the submission of Killewald (2016), who reported that total household income contributes positively to marital continuity, while financial strain increases instability. Also, Cooke and Gash (2010), affirmed that the relationship between employment and marital stability is influenced by economic and social contexts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study found a significant, positive relationship between couples' compatibility and marital stability among health professionals. Courtship is germane in laying the solid foundation for marriage. Intending couples should adopt it to reduce divorce rates. A better understanding of each other can be achieved by couples through long courtship. A reasonable period of courtship is necessary for couples to know themselves before marriage is consummated. The importance of this is to lay good foundation for the relationship. However, they will continue to know themselves better as the marriage ages.

Empirical evidence suggests that financial stability is a salient determinant of marital longevity. Consequently, it is advisable for prospective spouses to attain gainful employment both prior to matrimony and throughout the course of the marriage to have stability.

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