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SOCIAL INTERACTION AS PREDICTORS OF DIVORCE AMONG MARRIED SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN DELTA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the extent to which social interaction predict divorce among married secondary school teachers in Delta State, Nigeria. Furthermore, it examined whether the duration of marriage moderates this relationship. The research adopted a correlational design to assess the degree of association among the identified variables. The population comprised 8,526 married secondary school teachers, with 2,720 males and 5,806 females. A sample of 879 respondents was selected through a combination of stratified and simple random sampling techniques, followed by a convenience sampling approach to include only those available and willing to participate. The study utilised a self-developed instrument titled Social Interaction and Divorce Rating Scale Questionnaire (SIDQ) for data collection. The questionnaire underwent thorough validation using expert judgment and factor analysis procedures, including principal component analysis (PCA) and Varimax Kaiser Normalisation, yielding a cumulative variance explanation ranging from 64.9% to 77.0%. Reliability was confirmed through a pilot study with 100 teachers in Edo State, producing a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.72 and 0.64 for the Social Interaction and Divorce Rating Scale respectively. Data collection was achieved through direct administration of the questionnaire, ensuring a strong response rate. Analysis was conducted using Pearson's product-moment correlation and multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. The results revealed that social interaction had a statistically significant relationship with divorce among the target population. However, the study found that the duration of marriage did not significantly moderate the relationships between any of the predictor variables and divorce. Based on these findings, the study concluded that while deficiencies in social interaction significantly contribute to marital breakdown, the duration of the marriage does not necessarily shield couples from these challenges. The study recommends that married teachers engage in continuous personal development in communication and emotional bonding through structured counselling and enrichment programs.

Keywords: Social Interaction, Divorce, Secondary School Teachers

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INTRODUCTION

Marriage is widely regarded as a fundamental social institution that provides emotional, psychological, and economic support to individuals and contributes to the stability of society. In most cultures, including Nigeria, marriage is not only a personal union but also a social contract that binds couples, their families, and the wider community. However, the rising incidence of marital instability and divorce has become a growing concern, particularly among working-class adults such as teachers. Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual and socio-emotional development of learners. They are central to national growth because they transmit knowledge, foster critical thinking, and help students acquire lifelong values and competencies. UNESCO (2019) emphasizes that teachers remain the most influential school-based factor affecting student learning outcomes. Their effectiveness, however, is closely tied to their personal well-being. As Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) note, teachers who experience emotional stability and supportive home environments tend to demonstrate higher professional commitment, better classroom management, and improved instructional quality.

Beyond their professional responsibilities, teachers are members of family systems where marital relationships form a core aspect of their socio-emotional life. A stable marital relationship—characterized by effective communication, emotional intimacy, mutual respect, and shared responsibilities—contributes significantly to teachers' psychological balance and ability to manage classroom demands. Research shows that when marital relationships are healthy, individuals experience greater life satisfaction, reduced stress, and better work performance (Akintayo, 2010). However, the teaching profession in Nigeria is often associated with heavy workloads, extracurricular responsibilities, and time pressures, which may limit quality interaction between spouses. Such pressures have been found to strain marital communication and reduce emotional closeness among teachers (Eli & Ini, 2018). When these strains persist without effective resolution, they can erode marital satisfaction and set the stage for more serious marital instability that often leads to divorce.

Divorce is the legal dissolution of a marital union and one of the most significant disruptions to family life. Divorce may arise from prolonged conflict, communication breakdown, financial stress, emotional withdrawal, or other unresolved marital challenges (Amato, 2010). In Nigeria, divorce is recognized under statutory, customary, and religious laws. Couples facing a marriage break-up will have to cope with anxiety, anger, sadness, weariness, guilt, low self-esteem, worry, frustration, disappointment, loneliness, and distrust. Among estranged partners, these feelings are unavoidably present before, during, and after the divorce and, if not checked, could lead to hatred, a community of crime, psychological disorders, and other complications. Sometimes, in a bid to suppress these feelings or to spite the divorced person, the person enters into another marriage, which may suffer a similar fate as the previous marriage. For teachers, marital breakdown or ongoing marital disharmony may result in emotional distress, reduced concentration, lower job satisfaction, and diminished productivity, all of which can adversely affect their overall effectiveness in school settings. Consequently, it becomes imperative to examine the factors that may predict divorce among teachers, particularly those related to the quality of their social interaction.

Social interaction among married teachers refers to the dynamic exchange of behaviours, communication, and emotional interactions that occur within the context of a marital relationship. It encompasses various aspects of interpersonal interaction, including verbal and nonverbal communication, shared activities, emotional support, and the

maintenance of social connections. Cutrona and Russell (2010) defined social interaction as the exchange of verbal and nonverbal behaviours between individuals within a social context. In the context of marriage, social interaction refers to how spouses communicate, engage in shared activities, and provide emotional support to each other. According to Kiecolt-Glaser and Newton (2011), it refers to the mutual engagement, communication, and shared activities between spouses, including the expression of thoughts, feelings, and needs, as well as the provision of emotional support and companionship. It encompasses the patterns of communication, shared experiences, and emotional support exchanged between spouses. It includes verbal and nonverbal behaviours that serve to establish and maintain connection, intimacy, and understanding.

The definitions highlight the multidimensional nature of social interaction among married teachers, emphasizing the importance of communication, shared activities, emotional support, and connection within the marital relationship. It plays a critical role in the dynamics of marital relationships. The quality of social interaction, including communication patterns, emotional support, and shared activities, significantly impacts marital satisfaction and stability. Here are some key points to consider: Effective communication is crucial for maintaining a healthy marital relationship. Poor communication, characterized by frequent arguments, criticism, defensiveness, and stonewalling, can erode the emotional connection between partners. Research has consistently shown that negative communication patterns increase the risk of divorce (Gottman & Levenson, 2012). Couples who struggle to resolve conflicts and express their needs and emotions constructively are more likely to experience marital dissatisfaction and potential separation.

Social interaction within a marriage involves providing emotional support to one's partner. Emotional support includes empathy, understanding, validation, and being available during times of stress or crisis. A lack of emotional support can lead to feelings of loneliness, isolation, and a lack of fulfilment within the relationship. Studies have shown that low levels of perceived emotional support contribute to marital dissatisfaction and are associated with an increased risk of divorce (Cutrona et al., 2012). Engaging in shared activities and maintaining common interests promotes bonding and connection within a marriage. Couples who engage in enjoyable activities together tend to have higher marital satisfaction and lower divorce rates. Sharing experiences and interests can foster a sense of companionship and strengthen the emotional bond between partners (Stanley et al., 2010).

The social network surrounding a couple can also influence marital stability. The support and influence of friends and family members can impact the couple's relationship positively or negatively. Couples with a supportive social network, where friends and family members validate and encourage the marriage, are more likely to have successful long-term relationships. Conversely, negative influences or lack of support from the social network can strain the marriage and increase the risk of divorce (Kurdek, 2005). Social interaction patterns established early in the marriage can set the tone for long-term relationship satisfaction. Couples who experience positive social interactions, effective communication, and emotional support early on are more likely to have stable and satisfying marriages (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). On the other hand, negative social interaction patterns can create a cycle of dissatisfaction and conflict that contributes to marital breakdown. It is important to note that while social interaction may be a significant predictor of divorce.

From the above discussion, it is evident that the relationship between social interaction and divorce among married individuals is complex and multifaceted. While

various dimensions of social interaction may influence the likelihood of marital stability or dissolution, the duration of marriage may also serve as a moderating factor, shaping how couples experience and respond to these interpersonal dynamics.Duration of marriage denotes the time married couples have stayed together, usually divided into early (1–5 years), middle (6–15 years), and long-term marriages (16 years and above). It is posited that marital ties go through different phases of development, and the social interaction impact on marital stability might be different within these stages (Adeyemi & Nwokolo, 2021; Hassan & Yusuf, 2023). Hence, the duration of marriage might be a moderator that either amplifies or reduces the effect of social interaction on divorce among married educators.During the first few years of marriage, partners are still getting used to the changes in their roles, meeting the expectations, taking the responsibilities, and establishing their communication. The couple that has limited or social interactions that lead to conflicts may have marital dissatisfaction and consideration of divorce expectations and partners building relational foundations (Okolie & Uzoma, 2022). Take newly married teachers, for instance; they may discover it really challenging to manage the burden of teaching, the influence of the extended family, and forming a bond with each other, which is why efficient social interaction is necessary for their marriage to last (Adeoye & Ibrahim, 2020).When marriage shifts to the mid-term stage, couples usually start to have more stable communication and conflict-resolution ways. At this stage, the role of social interaction in divorce may lessen as spouses have acquired emotional maturity and closeness; thus, they are better able to cope with work-related stress and social pressures (Abdulrahman & Olatunji, 2022). Given the above, this study aims to examine social interaction, sexual dysfunction, and financial management as predictors of divorce among married secondary school teachers in Delta State.

Statement of the Problem

Marriage is still very much a huge pillar that provides emotional support for individuals, helps in family growth, and fosters peace in the society. The teachers in secondary schools especially need to have stable marriages for their mental well-being and commitment to the job which in turn, helps in the whole teaching and learning process being very effective. Unfortunately, in recent times, the number of couples quarreling and breaking up has been on the rise, and teachers, too, have not been left out of this problem. Communication, money problems, inability to balance work and family time, and love isolation are some of the issues that keep on coming up among the couples and threatening their relationships, but still, the part played by social interaction in this whole situation has not been studied much.Social interaction, which comes as the patterns of communication, shared activities, emotional attachment, and support among the partners, plays a crucial role in keeping the marriage healthy. When meaningful interaction between the spouses diminishes—whatever the reason may be; occupational stress, interference by extended family, distractions from technology, or unresolved conflicts—marital dissatisfaction may escalate and eventually lead to divorce or separation. Secondary school teachers that are married usually have to deal with different kinds of problems like heavy workloads, classroom pressures, extracurricular responsibilities, and administrative tasks, all of which might limit the time for them to bond and have healthy interaction with their spouses. It is still uncertain how far these interactions that have been reduced are contributing to the instability of marriages among the teachers. Divorce amongst teachers is a problem that goes beyond the domestic sphere. Teachers who are going through marriage troubles may find it hard to focus, show signs of emotional exhaustion, take more leave than usual, and be less committed to their work. These effects can detrimentally impact. The problem of this study, therefore, is: To what extent can social interaction predict divorce among married Secondary School tteachers in Delta State?

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the extent of the relationship between social interaction and divorce among married Secondary School teachers in Delta State?
2. What is the moderating impact of the duration of marriage in the relationship between social interaction and divorce among married Secondary School teachers in Delta State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level:

1. There is no significant relationship between social interaction and divorce among married Secondary School teachers in Delta State.
2. There is no significant moderating impact of the duration of marriage in the relationship between social interaction and divorce among married Secondary School teachers in Delta State.

Methods

This study adopted the correlational research design. The correlational research design was adopted in the study because it aimed to examine the extent of the relationship that existed among social interaction and divorce. The population of the study consisted of married Secondary School teachers in Delta State. The data obtained from the Post-Primary Education Board (PPEB) showed that the total number of married Secondary School teachers in Delta State was 8,526, comprising 2,720 male and 5,806 female teachers. The sample size of the study was 879 married Secondary School teachers from Delta State. The choice of 879 married Secondary School teachers as a sample size was based on the recommendation of Gill et al. (2010) that a sample size of 879 was suitable for a population of between 5,000 and 9,999 at a 97% confidence level. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the sample for the study.

The instrument used for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire titled the Social Interaction and Divorce Rating Scale Questionnaire (SIDQ). This instrument was carefully adapted from several previously validated scales to ensure comprehensive coverage of the constructs under investigation. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A captured demographic information, particularly the duration of marriage, categorised as 1–10, 11–20, 21–30, 31–40, and 41 years and above. Section B contained two subscales: The Social Interaction Scale (SIS) was adapted from the Social Interaction Scale developed by the Society for Implementation Research Collaboration. This scale, as described by Klein et al. (2001), assesses within- group agreement in employee perceptions and has been employed to evaluate social interactions within structured environments. The Divorce Scale (DS) was developed to assess attitudes and tendencies towards divorce, drawing from established marital satisfaction and instability measures used in divorce research. It was modelled in line with the work of researchers like Klein et al. (2001), who assessed agreement and relationship dynamics in interpersonal settings.

The validity of the instrument was established by the researcher's supervisor and two other lecturers who were experts in the Department of Guidance and Counselling. The experts assessed the instrument for appropriateness and suitability to the study, and their suggestions were implemented for corrections. The content and construct validation of the

instrument was conducted using factor analysis. The instrument was administered to 100 married Secondary School teachers in Edo State at Edo College, Benin City, and the data obtained were subjected to factor analysis.

The content and construct validity of the instrumentSocial Interaction Scaleand Divorce Scale Questionnaire (SIDQ)were estimated using factor analysis. The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used to estimate the content validity. The Varimax Kaiser Normalization extraction method was utilized in estimating the content and construct validity. The content validity for each scale in the instrument was established by the total cumulative variance of all the items in each scale.This was done using an orthogonal solution with the Varimax method. The results indicated strong content validity for all subscales, with total percentages of 72.8%and 77.0%, for Social Interaction Scaleand Divorce Scale respectively.A pilot test of the instrument was carried out on 100 married Secondary School teachers. The result of the test was used to compute the reliability of the instrument. The Cronbach Alpha was applied for the computation of the reliability coefficient of the subscales of the instrument.The Social Interaction Rating Scale had a reliability coefficient of 0.72, with a range of 0.54 - 0.84. and the Divorce Rating Scale had a reliability coefficient of 0.64, with a range of 0.50 - 0.97. The administration of the research instrument was carried out directly by the researcher in collaboration with six carefully trained research assistants. The instrument was distributed to a total of 879 married secondary school teachers, who constituted the study participants. The data collected were analysed using Pearson's product-moment correlation and regression statistics. Pearson's coefficient of determination was used to answer the research questions. Regression statistics were used to test the null hypotheses formulated for the study. All the null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the extent of the relationship between social interaction and divorce among married Secondary School teachers in Delta State?

Table 1: Pearson's product-moment Correlation and Coefficient of determination of social interaction and divorce among married Secondary School teachers.

Variable	***N***	**Mean**	***SD***	***R***	r^2	r^2**%**	**Decision**
Social interaction	879	43.94	6.70	0.530	0.281	28.0	Positive
Divorce		60.06	8.21				Relationship

Table 1 shows insights into the relationship between social interaction and divorce among married secondary school teachers in Delta State. The results indicate that social interaction has a moderate positive correlation with divorce, as reflected by a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.530. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (r^2) is 0.281, meaning that 28.0% of the variation in divorce rates among the teachers can be attributed to differences in social interaction. Overall, these findings suggest that social interaction and divorce are positively related.

Research Question 2: What is the moderating impact of the duration of marriage in the relationship between social interaction and divorce among married Secondary School teachers in Delta State?

Table 2: MultipleCorrelation and Coefficient of determination of the moderating impact of the duration of marriage in the relationship between social interaction and divorce among married Secondary School teachers

Variable	*N*	Mean	*SD*	*r*	r^2	r^2%	Decision
Duration of marriage		2.42	0.88				
Social interaction	879	43.94	6.70	0.534	0.285	29.0	
Divorce		60.06	8.21				

Table 2 assess the moderating impact of the duration of marriage on the relationship between social interaction and divorce among married secondary school teachers in Delta State. The multiple correlation coefficient (r) of 0.534 indicates a moderate positive relationship, suggesting that social interaction continues to have a notable influence on divorce even when the duration of marriage is considered. Additionally, the coefficient of determination (r^2) is 0.285, meaning that 29.0% of the variation in divorce rates can be explained by the combined effect of social interaction and duration of marriage. Overall, these results suggest that the duration of marriage moderately influences the relationship between social interaction and divorce.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between social interaction and divorce among married Secondary School teachers in Delta State

Table 3: Regression Analysis on social interaction and divorce among married Secondary School teachers

Model	Sum of Square	*Df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig
Regression	16266.520	1	16266.520	335.778	.000
Residual	41565.214	877	48.444		
Total	57831.734	878			
Variables in Equation					
Model	**Unstandardized Coefficient**		**Standardised Coefficient**	***T***	**Sig**
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
Constant	31.502	1.577		19.982	.000
Social interaction	.650	.035	.530	18.324	.000

$\alpha = 0.05$, $R = 0.530$, R-Square = 0.281

a. Dependent Variable: Divorce

b. Predictors (Constant): Social interaction

Table 3 investigates the relationship between social interaction and divorce among married secondary school teachers in Delta State. The regression model was statistically significant, as demonstrated by an F-value of 335.778 and a p-value of 0.000 (which is below the 0.05 threshold). This indicates that social interaction significantly predicts divorce. The unstandardised coefficient (B) for divorce is 0.650, meaning that for every unit increase in social interaction, divorce increases by 0.650 units. The t-value of 18.324 with a p-value of 0.000 further confirms the statistical significance of this predictor. Since the p-value is below 0.05, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between social interaction and divorce is rejected. This implies that social interaction statistically impacts divorce among married secondary school teachers in Delta State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant moderating impact of the duration of marriage in the relationship between Sexual dysfunction and divorce among married Secondary School teachers in Delta State**.**

Table 4: Regression Analysis on the moderating impact of the duration of marriage in the relationship between Sexual dysfunction and divorce among married Secondary School teachers in Delta State

Model	**Variables in Equation**			***t***	**Sig**
	Unstandardized Coefficient		**Standardised Coefficient**		
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
Constant	35.547	1.612		22.050	.000
Sexual dysfunction	.497	.277	.054	1.795	.073
Duration of marriage	.658	.040	.486	16.290	.000

$\alpha = 0.05$, $R = 0.488$, R-Square = 0.238

c. Dependent Variable: Divorce

d. Predictors (Constant): Duration of marriage, Sexual dysfunction

Table 4 examined whether the duration of marriage moderates the relationship between sexual dysfunction and divorce among married secondary school teachers in Delta State. The model accounted for approximately 23.8% of the variance in divorce, reflecting a moderate explanatory power. Looking at the individual predictors, the coefficient for sexual dysfunction was positive (B = 0.497) but not statistically significant (p = .073) at the conventional 0.05 level. This suggests that sexual dysfunction alone does not significantly predict divorce within the context of this model. Conversely, the duration of marriage showed a significant positive effect (B = 0.658, p = .000), indicating that the length of the marriage plays a significant role in divorce outcomes. This implies that the duration of marriage has no significant moderating effect on the relationship between sexual dysfunction and divorce, though the effect size is relatively small.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding,which revealed that social interaction significantly relates to divorce among married secondary school teachers in Delta State, suggests that the quality and nature of social relationships play a crucial role in marital stability. Poor social interaction, characterised by a lack of effective communication, emotional detachment, or external social pressures, may contribute to marital dissatisfaction and eventual dissolution. Teachers, given the demands of their profession, often face high workloads and stress, which can limit quality time for meaningful interaction with their spouses, thereby straining their marriages. Additionally, social networks, including colleagues, friends, and extended family, can either support or undermine marital stability, depending on the nature of influence exerted on the couple.

This aligns with Markman et al. (2010), who emphasized that communication breakdown is one of the leading causes of marital distress, as couples who struggle to express their emotions and resolve conflicts effectively are more likely to experience marital dissatisfaction. Similarly, Buyukkececi and Leopold (2021) highlighted the role of external social environments in shaping marital outcomes, noting that societal expectations and peer influences can either reinforce or weaken marital commitment. Furthermore, Cipric et al. (2020) found that social support within and outside the marriage significantly affects

relationship satisfaction, with inadequate support networks correlating with higher divorce rates.

The second findingrevealed that the duration of marriage does not significantly moderate the relationship between social interaction and divorce among married secondary school teachers, which suggests that the influence of social interaction on marital stability remains relatively consistent regardless of how long a couple has been married. This isbecause social interaction, including communication patterns and emotional connection, is a fundamental aspect of marriage that does not necessarily improve or deteriorate solely based on the length of the relationship. Couples who experience poor social interaction early in marriage may continue to struggle with it over time, while those with strong communication and social support may maintain their stability regardless of marital duration.

This aligns with Hassanin et al. (2019), who found that while social dynamics in marriage evolve, the impact of social interaction on marital satisfaction remains significant throughout different stages of marriage. Similarly, Bühler et al. (2021) emphasized that long-term marital success is more dependent on the quality of interaction rather than the number of years spent together, as ineffective communication and social disconnection can persist across all marriage durations.

CONCLUSION

The present research explored the role of social interaction as a predictor of divorce among married secondary school teachers in Delta State. The results from the statistical analysis indicated that social interaction was in a significant relationship with the divorce of spouses who were teachers. Thus, the interaction between spouses which is of good quality, frequent, and of a certain type can have a large impact on marital stability; while on the other hand, poor or strained social interaction can increase the chances of divorce among married secondary school teachers in Delta State. Moreover, the research also revealed that the duration of marriage was not a significant factor that moderated the relationship between social interaction and divorce among married secondary school teachers. This means that it does not matter for how long the couples are married-they can be newly married or belong to the long-term union-the social interaction's effect on divorce is still the same. To put it differently, the social interaction effect on divorce among married secondary school teachers in Delta Stateis not dependent on the time that the couples have been married. To sum up, the research suggested that social interaction is a major aspect that impacts divorce rates of married secondary school teachers in Delta State, while the number of years in marriage does not change this association.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Marriedteachersshould engage in continuous personal development in communication and emotional bonding through structured counselling and enrichment programmes.
2. Marriage counselors and school-based family support units to turn to schools for their support through effective communication and healthy social interaction among married teachers.
3. Education stakeholders and policy makers should ensure that interventions are offered to both newlyweds and long-term partners by providing continuous marital support programmes aimed at enhancing social interaction throughout the marital life cycle.

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