



CAUSES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF MARITAL DISSOLUTION AS PERCEIVED BY MARRIED ADULTS IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Marriage is a highly valued institution in Nigeria; however, marital dissolution through separation and divorce has become increasingly prevalent. This study investigated the perceived causes and psychological consequences of marital dissolution among married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria, and examined the influence of gender and age on these perceptions. A descriptive survey design was adopted. The population comprised 2,823,440 married adults, from which 402 respondents were selected. Data were collected using the Causes and Psychological Impact of Marital Dissolution Questionnaire (CPIMDQ), which was validated for face and content validity and demonstrated satisfactory test-retest reliability coefficients of 0.78 and 0.81. Data were analyzed using percentages, mean scores, rank order, t-test, and ANOVA. Findings revealed that domestic violence, infidelity, unresolved conflicts, differences in values and beliefs, and sexual incompatibility were the major causes of marital dissolution. Respondents also perceived that marital dissolution contributes to children's low self-esteem, learning difficulties, behavioural problems, social stigma, and depression. Gender did not significantly influence perceptions of either the causes or psychological consequences of marital dissolution. However, age significantly influenced perceptions of its causes, though not its psychological effects. The study recommends that marriage counsellors provide conflict-resolution and emotional-intimacy interventions, implement child-centered counselling programmes, and encourage mutual emotional support among couples during marital challenges.

Keywords: *causes, psychological impact, marital dissolution, married adults*

1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage requires love, understanding, tolerance and sacrifice. It is expected to benefit the two parties involved, the society as well as the children both in health, growth and

happiness. It requires the couples to live in harmony in order to enjoy sustainable relationships but some marriages ended up in marital dissolution. Marital dissolution which is also known as divorce is defined by Meyer (2019) as a legal action between married people to terminate their marriage relationship. It can be referred to as termination of marriage and is basically, the legal action that ends the marriage before the death of either spouse. Cavanagh (2017) described marital dissolution as the formal termination of a marital union through legal means, primarily through divorce or annulment, leading to the cessation of marital rights and obligations between the partners.

Marital dissolution could be temporal or permanent. It is temporal when there is still hope of coming together after the relevant laws have been put in place. This is to ensure that issues that created the temporal separation are settled. But if the marital dissolution is permanent, it means there is no hope of coming together (Pilapil, 2019). Marital dissolution has to do with either one of the partners quitting or saying "bye-bye" to his/her spouse as a result of infidelity, pride, superstition, religion, disagreement, in-laws interferences, alcoholism, and disrespect for one another or bullying (Khosi & Ravhuhali, 2016; Pilapil, 2019).

Similar to marriage, divorce is a common social phenomenon across many cultures and societies, although the laws, requirements, and procedures governing it differ from one society to another (Singh & Bhandari, 2021; Zaman & Chavis, 2019). The occurrence of divorce also varies across socioeconomic groups, with patterns influenced by education, income level, and social standing. Divorce associated with migration and extramarital affairs tends to be more prevalent among newly affluent individuals, whereas marriages among professionals, administrators, and members of higher socioeconomic groups often demonstrate greater stability.

Conversely, individuals with lower educational attainment and reduced socioeconomic status are more likely to experience marital separation or abandonment. Economic security, access to resources, and opportunities for social advancement can enhance couples' ability to manage and resolve marital conflicts effectively. However, among individuals who possess substantial financial resources and social influence, marital instability may still arise due to factors such as extramarital involvement or the pursuit of alternative relationships, which can ultimately lead to divorce (Kavas & Gündüz-Hoşgör, 2016; Nazari, Mohammadkhani, Awissi & Davarniya, 2018).

Marital dissolution, encompassing divorce and separation, is a significant social issue in Nigeria, although scholarly research on this topic remains limited. Utilizing secondary data, drawing on data obtained from the 2006 Nigerian Population Census, the study presents a detailed examination of the prevalence of marital dissolution across various geopolitical regions, states, gender categories, and age cohorts. The analysis offers valuable insights into the distribution and patterns of marital dissolution within the country. It also reports the overall crude marital dissolution rate in Nigeria, providing a broad measure of the occurrence of marital breakdown nationwide. It was found to be 11 per 1000 population in 2006. Among the ever-married population, this rate increased to 29.5 per 1000 in 2018. Notably, there were significant regional variations: marital dissolution was most prevalent in the South-south and North-east regions, while the South-east region exhibited the lowest rates. Gender differences were also evident, with a higher number of females experiencing divorce or separation

compared to males. Age-specific rates further highlighted this trend, ranging The rates ranged from 24 to 132 per 1,000 ever-married women and from 15 to 24 per 1,000 ever-married men. The highest incidence of marital dissolution was observed among younger people aged 10–24 years (National Population Commission, 2023).

Marital dissolution in Nigeria, like in many other parts of the world, is driven by a complex interplay of various factors. One of the primary causes is economic stress. Financial instability and disagreements over money management are significant contributors to marital discord. According to Adigun (2018), economic hardships can exacerbate tensions between spouses, leading to increased conflict and, eventually, separation or divorce. The pressure to meet financial obligations often strains relationships, particularly in contexts where traditional gender roles place the burden of financial provision on men. Infidelity is another critical factor contributing to marital dissolution. Extramarital affairs can severely undermine the trust and emotional bond between spouses, leading to irreparable damage to the relationship. Studies have shown that infidelity is a common reason for divorce across different regions in Nigeria, as it challenges the foundational trust that marriages are built upon (Oladeji & Bamidele, 2017).

Communication issues also play a pivotal role in the breakdown of marriages. Effective communication is essential for resolving conflicts and maintaining a healthy relationship. However, many couples struggle with poor communication skills, which can lead to misunderstandings and unresolved conflicts. According to Adeoye and Oyeniyi (2019), the inability to communicate effectively often results in feelings of frustration and emotional disconnection, which can ultimately lead to divorce. Cultural and societal changes have also influenced marital stability. The increasing acceptance of divorce and changing attitudes towards marriage have made it more socially acceptable to end an unhappy marriage. This shift is particularly evident among younger generations, who may prioritize personal happiness and fulfilment over traditional marital obligations (Nwoke, 2017). Additionally, domestic violence is a significant cause of marital dissolution. Physical, emotional, and psychological abuse creates an unsafe and unhealthy environment for the victim, making it difficult to sustain the marriage. The prevalence of domestic violence in Nigeria has led many affected individuals to seek divorce as a means of escaping abusive relationships (Eze-Anaba, 2017).

The termination of a marital relationship can result in numerous emotional and psychological difficulties for those involved. Many individuals go through profound emotional distress, including sadness, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and feelings of isolation (Amato, 2016). The breakdown of a marriage often disrupts an individual's emotional stability and overall mental well-being disrupts the emotional stability and security that many derive from their relationships, leading to a profound sense of loss and failure. This emotional turmoil can negatively impact mental health, sometimes necessitating professional intervention to cope with the distress. The sense of loss can trigger intense feelings of grief, akin to the grief experienced after the death of a loved one (Sbarra & Coan, 2018). The emotional upheaval can manifest in various forms, including depression, anxiety, and loneliness, as the individual struggles to adjust to their new reality without their former partner (Amato, 2016).

The emotional turmoil that often accompanies the end of a marriage can have far-reaching impacts on an individual's mental health and well-being. The disruption to one's emotional stability and security can exacerbate existing mental health conditions or trigger the onset of new ones (Amato, 2016; Sbarra & Coan, 2018). The stress and upheaval associated with divorce can also contribute to the development of unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as substance abuse or unhealthy eating habits (Sbarra & Coan, 2018). Moreover, marital dissolution frequently affects social relationships and networks. Divorced individuals might find themselves isolated as mutual friends choose sides or withdraw from the conflict (Sbarra, Law, & Portley, 2016). This social isolation can exacerbate feelings of loneliness and depression, making it more difficult for individuals to recover from the emotional upheaval. Furthermore, the stigma associated with divorce in some cultures and communities can lead to social ostracism and a reduction in social support, which is crucial for emotional recovery (Lambert & Dollahite, 2018). Research indicates that children may experience emotional and behavioural issues, including anxiety, depression, and academic difficulties (Harper, 2018).

The psychological impact of marital dissolution can vary significantly depending on various factors, including gender and age. Gender plays a crucial role on how individuals cope with the emotional and practical challenges of divorce. Kalmijn (2020) reported that women often experience greater emotional distress and a more significant decline in overall well-being compared to men following a divorce. This may be attributed to societal expectations, financial considerations, and the traditional roles women often assume within marriages (Zheng, Kang & Huang, 2022). However, it is important to note that men are not immune to divorce can have significant psychological effects on individuals, and people may face distinct difficulties when it comes to expressing their feelings and obtaining emotional support (Kalmijn, 2020). In addition, age plays an important role in shaping how individuals experience and cope with the emotional consequences of marital dissolution. Older individuals who experience marital dissolution may grapple with feelings of loneliness and social isolation, particularly if they have been married for an extended period (Zheng, Kang & Huang, 2022). After years of sharing their lives with a partner, the sudden absence of that companionship can leave a profound void and contribute to a sense of disconnection from their social environment. Furthermore, older individuals may face challenges in adapting to changes in their living arrangements and routines after a divorce (Rhoades, Kamp-Dush, Atkins, Stanley & Markman, 2016).

The impact of divorce on children can have long-lasting consequences, including emotional and behavioural problems, academic difficulties, and strained relationships with one or both parents (Amato, 2016). As a result, parents must navigate the delicate task of providing emotional support and stability for their children while also managing their struggles and adjustments (Zheng, Kang & Huang, 2022). For couples who have been married for a significant amount of time and have children, the dissolution of their marriage can be an incredibly complex and emotionally taxing experience. The emotional investments, shared experiences, and the well-being of children all contribute to the psychological challenges individuals face during and after the divorce process (Rhoades et al., 2016; Amato, 2016; Sbarra & Coan, 2018). It is in light of this that the researchers investigated the

causes and psychological impact of marital dissolution as perceived by married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Marital dissolution is a pervasive issue that affects individuals across various social strata in Nigeria, including celebrities, pastors, politicians, musicians, medical doctors, lecturers, lawyers, law enforcement agents, traditional rulers, farmers, and fishermen. This widespread occurrence underscores that marital dissolution is not confined to any particular socioeconomic or professional group. Instead, it highlights the universal challenges faced by marriages across diverse backgrounds and occupations. Celebrities and public figures often experience high levels of divorce, likely due to the pressures and scrutiny associated with their public lives. Pastors and religious leaders are not immune, facing personal and professional challenges that can strain their marital relationships. Politicians, with their demanding careers and public expectations, also show significant rates of divorce. Similarly, musicians and entertainers, who often lead dynamic and itinerant lifestyles, may find maintaining stable marital relationships challenging. The breakdown of a marital union can have profound psychological and social consequences not only for the couple involved, but also for their children, extended families, and communities. Despite the cherished position of marriage in many tribes of Nigeria especially Oyo State which is predominantly Yoruba tribe, little is known about the specific factors contributing to the rising rates of marital dissolution in this region. This study examined the causes and psychological impact of marital dissolution as perceived by married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria.

2. OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. OBJECTIVE

The main objectives of the were to:

- investigate the causes of marital dissolution as perceived by married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria.
- identify the psychological impacts of marital dissolution as perceived by married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria.

The following research questions were raised to guide the conduct of this study:

1. What are the causes of marital dissolution as perceived by married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria?
2. What are the psychological impacts of marital dissolution as perceived by married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria?

2.2. HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study:

H1: There is no significant difference in the causes of marital dissolution as perceived by married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria based on gender.

H2: There is no significant difference in the psychological impacts of marital dissolution as perceived by married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria based on gender

H3: There is no significant difference in the causes of marital dissolution as perceived by married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria based on age.

H4: There is no significant difference in the psychological impacts of marital dissolution as perceived by married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria based on age.

3. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised all married adults in Oyo State, estimated at 2,823,440 according to the National Population Commission (2023). However, the study focused specifically on literate married adults within the state as the target population.

According to Research Advisors (2006), a sample size of 383 was recommended for a population of this magnitude at a 95% confidence level and 2.5% margin of error. The researcher added 5% of the sample size which was 19, therefore the sample size used for this study was 402 to take care of attrition.

The multi-stage sampling technique was used in the selection of the sample. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used to select the sample. At stage one, the simple random technique was employed to choose two local government areas from each of the three senatorial districts in Oyo State. which are Oyo Central (comprises of Afijio, Akinyele, Atiba, Egbeda, Lagelu, Ogo Oluwa, Oluyole, Ona Ara, Oyo East, Oyo West, and Surulere Local Government Areas), Oyo North (comprises of Atisbo, Irepo, Iseyin, Itesiwaju, Iwajowa, Kajola, Ogbomosho North, Ogbomosho South, Olorunsogo, Orelope, Ori Ire, Saki East, and Saki West Local Government Areas) and Oyo South (comprises of Ibadan North, Ibadan North-East, Ibadan North-West, Ibadan South-East, Ibadan South-West, Ibarapa Central, Ibarapa East, Ibarapa North, and Ido Local Government Areas). In total, six local government areas were selected from the thirty-three local government areas in Oyo State using a dip-hat sampling technique. This method involved writing the names of all local government areas on separate pieces of paper, placing them in a container, thoroughly mixing them, and then randomly drawing entries to determine the selected areas. Using this approach, two local government areas were chosen from each of the three senatorial districts in the state.

In addition, purposive sampling was employed to identify locations with a high concentration of literate married adults, such as schools, churches, mosques, ministries, and market environments. Finally, simple random sampling was used to select 67 married adults who participated in the study. Therefore, the total of respondents that were sampled for the study were 402 (67 x 6) married adults.

The instrument used in collecting data for this research was a researcher-designed questionnaire titled "Causes and Psychological Impact of Marital Dissolution Questionnaire (CPIMDQ)." The instrument has three sections, A, B and C. Section A contains respondents' demographic information of gender and age. Items in the questionnaire especially, sections B and C were derived from information obtained from the review of related literature. Section B focused on causes of marital dissolution while Section C focused on psychological impact of marital dissolution. Sections B and C were patterned after four-point Likert-type of Strongly Agree (SA): Agree (A): Disagree (D): and Strongly Disagree (SD) with scoring

points of 4-1. The instrument was validated by 5 experts in Counselling. The instrument was later subjected to test re-test reliability and the results of the reliability test showed coefficients of 0.78 for the scale measuring causes of marital dissolution and 0.81 for the instrument assessing the psychological effects of marital dissolution

The collected data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The results obtained from the demographic data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentages while mean and rank order were used to answer the research questions. Inferential statistics of Analysis of Variance and t-test statistical techniques were employed to examine the formulated null hypotheses. Specifically, hypotheses one and two were analysed using the t-test, while hypotheses three and four were evaluated using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). All tests were conducted at a 0.05 level of significance.

4. RESULTS

The instrument was administered to 402 married adults and all the questionnaire forms were retrieved. The results revealed that 173 (43.0%) of the respondents were male, while 229 (57.0%) of the respondents were female. This implies that there were more female respondents than males in this study. A total of 227 (56.5%) of the respondents were between 20-35 years of age, 126 (31.3%) of the respondents were between 36-50 years of age, while 49 (12.2%) of the respondents were 51 years of age and above. This means that respondents aged between 20-35 years participated more in the study.

Research Question 1: What are the causes of marital dissolution as perceived by married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and Rank Order Analysis of the Respondents' Perceptions on Causes of Marital Dissolution

Item No	As far as I am concerned, the following are the causes of marital dissolution among married adults:	Mean	S.D.	Rank order
7	domestic violence	3.25	.674	1st
2	infidelity	3.22	.750	2nd
8	unresolved conflicts	3.21	.800	3rd
4	differences in values and beliefs	3.20	.655	4th
10	sexual incompatibility	3.19	.795	5th
13	high level of jealousy	3.19	.722	5th
6	unrealistic expectations	3.18	.713	7th
15	health issues such as HIV/AIDS	3.17	.694	8th
5	lack of emotional support	3.15	.625	9th
14	unmet expectations	3.14	.667	10th
3	financial problems	3.10	.710	11th
11	inability to manage stress	3.08	.633	12th
12	different parenting styles	3.06	.622	13th
1	ineffective communication	3.04	.835	14th
9	lack of trust	3.03	.689	15th

Table 1 indicates the mean, standard deviation and rank order analysis of the respondents' perceptions on causes of marital dissolution. The table indicates that items 7, 2 and 8 which state that causes of Domestic violence, infidelity, and unresolved conflicts were

identified as the leading causes of marital dissolution among married adults, ranking first, second, and third respectively, with mean scores of 3.25, 3.22, and 3.21. In the same vein, items 12, 1, and 9 indicated that differences in parenting approaches, poor communication, and lack of trust also contribute significantly to marital breakdown among couples, thus ranked 13th, 14th and 15th with mean scores of 3.06, 3.04 and 3.03 respectively were ranked the least factors. Since all the fifteen items have a mean score that is above the 2.50 cut-off point, it can be said that married adults attested that there are many causes of marital dissolution but the most prominent are domestic violence; infidelity; unresolved conflicts; differences in values and beliefs; and sexual incompatibility are the main causes of marital dissolution.

Research Question 2: What are the psychological impacts of marital dissolution as perceived by married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and Rank Order Analysis of the Respondents' Perceptions on the Psychological Impacts of Marital Dissolution

Item No.	As far as I am concerned: marital dissolution:	Mean	S.D.	Rank order
8	could make children develop low self-esteem	3.04	1.06	1st
9	could create learning difficulties for children.	2.94	.992	2nd
11	may cause behavioural problems among children	2.91	1.08	3rd
15	may often cause social stigma	2.89	.998	4th
4	can trigger depression	2.88	1.09	5th
1	lead to long-term emotional distress	2.82	1.00	6th
7	may lead to difficulty in trusting others	2.81	1.05	7th
12	often results in feelings of long-lasting resentment among discoured couples	2.80	1.06	8th
5	can lead to a high level of anxiety	2.80	1.01	8th
2	can lead to sleepless night	2.79	.942	10th
10	could lead to a weakened bond between children and parents	2.73	1.03	11th
3	can result in a loss of self-esteem	2.73	1.04	11th
13	typically causes intense feelings of grief and loss	2.70	.973	13th
14	create difficulty in maintaining mutual friendships	2.68	1.04	14th
6	can strain relationships with friends and family	2.54	1.10	15th

Table 2 indicates the mean, standard deviation and rank order analysis of respondents' perceptions of the psychological impacts of marital dissolution. The table indicates that items 8, 9 and 11 which state that marital dissolution: could make children develop low self-esteem; could create learning difficulty for children; and may cause behavioural problems among children ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd with mean scores of 3.04, 2.94 and 2.91 respectively. On the same note, items 13, 14 and 6 which state that marital dissolution: typically causes intense feelings of grief and loss; creates difficulty in maintaining mutual friendships; and can strain relationships with friends and family ranked 13th, 14th and 15th with the mean scores of 2.70, 2.68 and 2.54 respectively were ranked the least. Since all the 15 listed items have a mean score that is above the 2.50 cut-off point, it can be said that married adults attested that marital dissolution could make children develop low self-esteem; could create learning difficulty for children; may cause behavioural problems among children; may often cause social stigma; can trigger depression and among others.

H1: There is no significant difference in the causes of marital dissolution as perceived by married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria based on gender.

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value showing differences in the Respondents' Perceptions on Causes of Marital Dissolution Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
Male	173	46.93	8.54	400	.623	1.96	.534
Female	229	47.45	7.94				

Table 3 shows that the calculated t-value of .623 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 with a corresponding p-value of .534 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated p-value is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, thus hypothesis accepted.

H2: There is no significant difference in the psychological impacts of marital dissolution as perceived by married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria based on gender

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value showing differences in the Respondents' Perceptions on the Psychological Impacts of Marital Dissolution Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
Male	173	42.21	10.47	400	.263	1.96	.793
Female	229	41.93	11.15				

Table 4 shows that the calculated t-value of .263 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 with a corresponding p-value of .793 which is higher than the 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, thus hypothesis accepted.

H3: There is no significant difference in the causes of marital dissolution as perceived by married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria based on age

Table 5: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showing differences in the Respondents' Perceptions on Causes of Marital Dissolution Based on Age

Source	SS	df	Mean Squares	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	P-value
Between Groups	1946.497	2	973.248	15.51*	3.00	.000
Within Groups	25023.354	399	62.715			
Total	26969.851	401				

* Significant, $p < 0.05$

Table 5 shows the calculated F-ratio of 15.51 is greater than the critical F-value of 3.00 with a corresponding p-value of .000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated p-value is less than 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is rejected. thus hypothesis rejected. To ascertain where the significant difference lies, Scheffe Post-Hoc was carried out and the output is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Scheffe post-hoc where the significant difference lies based on Age

Year	N	Subset for Alpha = 0.05		
		1	2	3
20-35 years	227	45.92		
36-50 years	126		47.39	
51 years and above	49			52.86
Sig.		.431	1.000	1.000

Table 6 reveals that respondents who were between the ages of 20-35 years have a mean score of 45.92 (in subset 1), those who were between 36-50 years have a mean score of 47.39 (in subset 2), while those who were 51 years of age and above have a highest mean score of 52.86 (in subset 3) and thus, contributed to the significant difference.

H4: There is no significant difference in the psychological impacts of marital dissolution as perceived by married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria based on age.

Table 7: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showing differences in the Respondents' Perceptions on the Psychological Impacts of Marital Dissolution Based on Age

Source	SS	df	Mean Squares	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	P-value
Between Groups	175.388	2	87.694	.743	3.00	.476
Within Groups	47063.617	399	117.954			
Total	47239.005	401				

Table 7 shows the calculated F-ratio of .743 is less than the critical F-value of 3.00 with a corresponding p-value of .476 which was more than 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated p-value is more than 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is not rejected. Hence, there is no significant difference in the psychological impacts of marital dissolution as perceived by married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria based on age.

Using the statistics reported in the Results section, the effect sizes for the inferential analyses can be estimated as follows.

Hypothesis	Test	Test Statistic	Effect Size	Magnitude
H ₁ : Causes of marital dissolution by gender	Independent samples <i>t</i> -test	$t(400) = 0.623, p = .534$	Cohen's $d \approx 0.06$	Trivial
H ₂ : Psychological impacts by gender	Independent samples <i>t</i> -test	$t(400) = 0.263, p = .793$	Cohen's $d \approx 0.03$	Trivial
H ₃ : Causes of marital dissolution by age	One-way ANOVA	$F(2,399) = 15.51, p < .001$	$\eta^2 = 0.072$	Medium
H ₄ : Psychological impacts by age	One-way ANOVA	$F(2,399) = 0.743, p = .476$	$\eta^2 = 0.004$	Trivial

Interpretation and Discussion of the Effect Sizes

Hypothesis One

Although no statistically significant gender difference was found in perceptions of the causes of marital dissolution ($t(400) = 0.623, p = .534$), the effect size was **Cohen's $d \approx 0.06$** ,

indicating a **trivial practical effect**. This suggests that male and female married adults held almost identical views regarding the causes of marital dissolution. Therefore, even with a larger sample size, any gender difference would likely remain of little practical importance.

Hypothesis Two

The gender difference in perceptions of the psychological impacts of marital dissolution was also non-significant ($t(400) = 0.263, p = .793$), with **Cohen's $d \approx 0.03$** . This represents a **negligible effect**, indicating that the psychological consequences of marital dissolution are perceived similarly by both men and women. The extremely small effect size reinforces the conclusion that gender contributes very little to differences in these perceptions.

Hypothesis Three

The ANOVA examining age differences in perceptions of the causes of marital dissolution yielded a statistically significant result ($F(2,399) = 15.51, p < .001$). The corresponding effect size was $\eta^2 = 0.072$, indicating that approximately **7.2% of the variance** in perceived causes of marital dissolution was explained by age group. According to Cohen's (1988) guidelines (0.01 = small, 0.06 = medium, 0.14 = large), this represents a **medium effect size**. This finding suggests that age is not only statistically significant but also has meaningful practical importance. Older respondents (51 years and above) perceived the causes of marital dissolution differently from younger respondents, as confirmed by the Scheffé post hoc analysis.

Hypothesis Four

For perceptions of the psychological impacts of marital dissolution, age differences were not statistically significant ($F(2,399) = 0.743, p = .476$). The estimated effect size was $\eta^2 = 0.004$, indicating that age accounted for only **0.4% of the variance** in respondents' perceptions. This constitutes a **trivial effect**, demonstrating that age has virtually no practical influence on how married adults perceive the psychological consequences of marital dissolution.

To complement the significance tests, effect sizes were computed to determine the practical significance of the findings. The independent-samples t -test comparing male and female respondents on perceived causes of marital dissolution yielded a trivial effect (Cohen's $d \approx 0.06$), while the comparison on perceived psychological impacts also produced a negligible effect (Cohen's $d \approx 0.03$). For the ANOVA analyses, age differences in perceived causes of marital dissolution produced a medium effect ($\eta^2 = 0.072$), indicating that approximately 7.2% of the variance in perceptions was attributable to age. Conversely, the effect of age on perceived psychological impacts was trivial ($\eta^2 = 0.004$), showing that age explained less than 1% of the observed variance. These findings indicate that, although age meaningfully influences perceptions of the causes of marital dissolution, neither gender nor age has substantial practical influence on perceptions of its psychological impacts.

5. DISCUSSION

The finding of the study revealed that married adults attested that domestic violence; infidelity; unresolved conflicts; differences in values and beliefs; and sexual incompatibility are the main causes of marital dissolution. The finding highlights that both severe relationship violations (like violence and cheating) and ongoing compatibility issues (like value differences and sexual incompatibility) can be equally destructive to marital stability. The reason for this finding could be that domestic violence or infidelity introduces emotional and relational challenges that couples may find difficult to overcome which could push them toward dissolution as a means of relief or self-preservation. This finding aligns with a study by Karney, Bradbury and Lavner (2017) revealed that domestic violence remains a primary predictor of marital instability, particularly among younger couples. Levine, Medina and Barrera (2018) found that infidelity is commonly cited as a cause of marital breakdown due to its impact on trust and emotional security. Furthermore, research by Jung and Young (2020) found that value and belief differences contribute to marital conflicts, especially in cross-cultural marriages. Heffner and Lodi-Smith (2019) found sexual incompatibility as a frequent issue leading to dissatisfaction and, ultimately, dissolution in marriages where sexual fulfilment is a key expectation.

The finding of the study further revealed that married adults attested that marital dissolution could make children develop low self-esteem; could create learning difficulty for children; may cause behavioural problems among children; may often cause social stigma; can trigger depression among others. The finding indicates that marital dissolution can have significant negative effects on children, potentially leading to low self-esteem, learning difficulties, behavioural problems, and social stigma. The reasons for these findings may likely stem from the emotional turmoil and instability that children experience during and after marital dissolution, which can lead to feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. This finding supports the study of Sandler, Wolchik, Winslow and Schenck (2019) who found that the cumulative stress from family instability contributes significantly to depressive symptoms in children, as they struggle to cope with changing routines and emotional divides between parents. Similarly, Jackson, Rogers and Sartor (2016) found that children from divorced families showed higher rates of externalizing behaviours, such as aggression and defiance, compared to children from intact families.

Another finding indicates that both male and female married adults perceived the causes of marital dissolution similarly. The reason for the lack of significant gender-based difference could be that both men and women are aware of and affected by similar factors in marital challenges, which may point to a shared understanding of what contributes to the dissolution of marriages. The finding relates to the study of Jackson and Coker (2019) reported that both males and females tend to cite comparable factors as reasons for divorce. In a related study, Oladeji (2019) also established that there was no meaningful gender difference in spouses' perceptions of the determinants of marital satisfaction and marital breakdown in South-western Nigeria.

Finding further revealed that The findings indicated that gender did not significantly influence the psychological effects of marital dissolution among married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria. This implies that both male and female respondents tend to undergo comparable levels of emotional and psychological distress following the end of a marriage. The reason for this finding could be that in contemporary Nigerian society, both men and women invest

significantly in their marriages emotionally, socially, and financially. When these marriages dissolve, both parties face similar challenges in terms of social stigma, family restructuring, and emotional adjustment. The finding relates to the study of Adejumo and Okoiye (2016) who found that Nigerian men and women showed comparable levels of depression and anxiety following divorce, particularly in urban areas. Similarly, Mohammed and Ibrahim (2019) discovered that gender did not significantly influence post-divorce adjustment patterns among adults in Northern Nigeria, with both men and women reporting similar levels of emotional distress and coping challenges.

Another finding revealed that there was significant difference in the causes of marital dissolution as perceived by married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria based on age. This finding suggests that married adults of different age groups have varying perspectives on what leads to marriage breakdown. The result of Scheffe's post-hoc revealed that respondents who were 51 years of age and above contributed more to the significant difference. This could be that older adults, who might have experienced decades of marital dynamics, might view issues like prolonged unresolved conflicts, differences in values and beliefs, or sexual incompatibility as more significant factors. The outcome of this study relates to the study of Agunbiade and Ayotunde (2018) who stated that younger adults emphasize immediate relational issues such as infidelity and communication problems on the issue of marital dissolution, whereas older adults were more concerned with sustained interpersonal and value-based incompatibilities.

Finding also revealed that there was There was no statistically meaningful difference in how married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria perceived the psychological consequences of marital dissolution based on age. This outcome may indicate that the mental and emotional toll of marital dissolution affects individuals similarly across different age groups. This could be that when marital bonds dissolve, it can create a universal emotional void, regardless of whether one is a younger adult dealing with potential changes in plans or an older adult grappling with a sense of late-life upheaval. This universality of emotional distress may explain why age does not notably alter perceptions of psychological impact. The finding supports the study of de Vaus, Gray, Qu and Stanton. (2017) found that the mental health impacts of separation and divorce are pervasive across different age groups, with little variation in emotional strain, life satisfaction reduction, and increased anxiety. Similarly, Amato and Previti (2018) reported that age did not significantly differentiate the psychological outcomes experienced by divorced individuals.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study highlights that married adults in Oyo State perceive domestic violence, infidelity, unresolved conflicts, differences in values and beliefs, and sexual incompatibility as primary causes of marital dissolution. These factors underscore the complexity of marital relationships and the need for interventions that address both relational and individual challenges within marriage. Additionally, married adults recognize that marital dissolution can have profound effects on children, including low self-esteem, learning difficulties, behavioural issues, social stigma, and risk of depression. These insights suggest a

need for support systems and interventions that consider the broader family impacts of marital dissolution, particularly for children's psychological and social well-being.

The study also revealed nuanced perceptions of The study examined the causes and effects of marital dissolution among married adults in relation to demographic characteristics. The results showed that there was no significant variation in respondents' perceptions of the factors responsible for marital breakdown. based on gender, there was a significant difference based on age. This indicates that individuals' perceptions of marital challenges may evolve with life stage and marital experience. Furthermore, perceptions of the psychological impacts of marital dissolution were consistent across gender and age suggesting a uniformity in how the emotional consequences of marital dissolution are experienced across diverse demographic groups. This finding emphasizes the pervasive psychological toll of marital dissolution, regardless of individual differences, highlighting the need for universally accessible mental health support for those experiencing the end of a marital relationship.

Implication for Counselling

The findings of this study have implications for counselling practice. Given that married adults universally recognize issues like domestic violence, infidelity, unresolved conflicts, differences in values and beliefs, and sexual incompatibility as primary causes of marital breakdown, counsellors can focus on pre-marital and marital counselling strategies that address these specific risk factors. By proactively discussing these challenges and offering tools for conflict resolution, empathy-building, and effective communication, counsellors can equip couples with the skills needed to navigate these common causes of marital distress. Additionally, counsellors may incorporate interventions that target stress management and coping strategies to help partners address unresolved conflicts before they escalate into reasons for dissolution.

For children affected by marital dissolution, the reported psychological impacts—including low self-esteem, learning difficulties, behavioural problems, social stigma, and depression—highlight the need for family-focused counselling practices. Child counselling, particularly around divorce or separation, can provide supportive spaces where children learn to process complex emotions, manage stress, and build resilience. Counsellors working with families should prioritize the emotional and social needs of children and consider implementing group therapy sessions for children from divorced families, which could help reduce the effects of social stigma and provide peer support networks. This approach not only aids in building self-esteem and positive behavioural outcomes but also minimizes the likelihood of learning difficulties stemming from emotional distress.

Recommendations

The study recommended the following:

1. Marriage counsellors should organize workshops and counselling sessions focused on conflict resolution, emotional intimacy, and managing differences in values.
2. Marriage counsellors should design child-centered interventions, such as family counselling, to mitigate the psychological impacts on children.
3. Marriage counsellors should develop gender-neutral counselling programs that address common concerns of married adults.

4. Married adults should support one another emotionally during marital challenges, as the psychological impacts affect both genders equally.

5. Marriage counsellors should create age-specific programs to address the unique challenges faced by younger and older couples

6. Married adults of all ages should seek psychological support to cope with the emotional challenges of marital dissolution.

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