



*The Cradle of Knowledge: African Journal of  
Educational and Social Science Research  
AJESSR - ISSN 2304-2885-p, 2617-7315-e  
Volume 10, Issue 1, 2022  
P.O. Box 555 (00202) Nairobi. Kenya  
editor@serek.or.ke*

**SOCIETY OF  
EDUCATIONAL  
RESEARCH  
AND  
EVALUATION  
IN KENYA**

## **Quality of Life among Married Individuals in Nigeria: Does Marital Abuse and Marital Satisfaction Matter?**

Bushura A. Aroyewun\*, Tolulope E. Oyeyemi & Bolaji E. Omosipe  
Department of Psychology, University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos State, Nigeria  
\*Corresponding Author: Email: aaroyewun@unilag.edu.ng

### **Abstract**

*With a steady increase in abuse within marriages and the rate of dysfunctional marriages on the rise, this research aims to examine the influence of marital abuse and marital satisfaction on couples' quality of life. Two hundred and fifty-eight (258) married individuals purposefully selected through accidental sampling participated in the study. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. Composite Abuse Scale, Index of Marital Satisfaction, and Quality of Life Scale were used to collect data from the participants. The t-test and multiple regression results revealed a significant difference between the mean score of abused ( $\bar{X}=65.29$ ,  $SD=13.64$ ) and unabused ( $\bar{X}=83.75$ ,  $SD=21.81$ ) couples on quality-of-life measures  $\{t(258) = 4.79, P<.05\}$ . There was also a significant difference between maritally satisfied ( $\bar{X}=84.62$ ,  $SD=24.31$ ) and maritally unsatisfied ( $\bar{X}=76.00$ ,  $SD=15.75$ ) couples on quality-of-life measures  $\{t(258) = -03.14, P<.05\}$ , and marital satisfaction and marital abuse jointly predicted couples' quality of life ( $F(2, 255) = 25.668, p<.05, R^2=.168$ ). The study concluded that marital abuse and satisfaction influence a couple's quality of life. We recommend a need for awareness among couples or intending couples on the implications of our findings.*

**Keywords:** Lagos, marital abuse, marital satisfaction, quality of life, couples.

### **1. Introduction**

Striving to attain good quality of life is the goal of every individual, and it promotes people's ability to make significant contributions to their environment (Easterlin & McVey, 2007), especially among the couples in wedlock; most importantly, it is not an issue to be negotiated in marriage (Alsaker. et al. 2018). In as much as it can be generally assumed and accepted that being married improves a couple's quality of life (Taghani et al., 2017); the influence of marital satisfaction and marital abuse is yet to be adequately investigated (WHO, 2021; Kapiga, at al, 2017). Recently, marital abuse is becoming worrisome among married couples (Bamiwuye & Odimegwu., 2014; Onuoha, 2017), and it is gradually being perceived as the norm in marriages, as evidenced by some religious or cultural injunctions (Moore et al., 2021). Documentary evidence has it that every known culture is favourably disposed toward marriage (Aroyewun et al., 2017), and over 90% of the global population will marry at least once in their lifetime (Shakelford & Buss, 2000). The living together of the two individuals in marriage (couples) leads to some forms of influences on each other behaviours. Since the two individuals are not from the same background in the first place, they are likely not to have the same exposure and thereby react to situations differently (Sevinc & Garip, 2010). Therefore, understanding the dynamics in behaviours requires understanding each other in a marital relationship. Accordingly, in situations where the couples do not share a similar set of visions or values in behaviours, the possibility of conflict arises, and if not resolved with understanding, marital abuse is inevitable (Perlin & Diniz, 2005; Garcia & Tassara, 2003). On the other hand, when couples understand themselves, they will experience marital satisfaction (Lucas et al., 2008). The two concepts highlighted – marital satisfaction and marital abuse, are directly linked to how the couples would eventually feel in their marriage, whether they will enjoy peaceful and satisfying marriage or experience a turbulent, chaotic, and abuse-prone marriage.

The incidence of intimate partner violence and abuse among married couples has been on the rise in recent years, with the Nigerian prevalence rate at 30.5% (Bamiwuye & Odimegwu., 2014), indicating that one out of every three



individuals in marriage or cohabiting relationship is experiencing abuse. Marital abuse is conceptualized as abnormalities present in a marital relationship which is capable of causing physical, psychological, or emotional harm to either of the parties in the relationship, often resulting from different value systems among the couples (Perlin & Diniz, 2005; Garcia & Tassara, 2003). Thus, marital satisfaction is construed as the period in marriage when the partners try to find satisfaction by consciously adjusting to situations, accommodating one another, avoiding conflicts, and resolving conflicts arising from their interaction in marriage (Taghani et al. 2019; Shahsiah et al. 2016). World Health Organization (WHO, 1997) conceptualized quality of life as personal dispositions collectively agreed upon as rights of the citizenship that enable them to realize their potentialities economically, politically, scientifically, culturally, environmentally, and in other spheres of life. Accordingly, the systems around them should be supportive enough for individuals to possess these qualities. In the marital context, the matrimonial atmosphere must be favourable enough for couples to have a good quality of life. Hence, this research intends to examine the matrimonial atmosphere - spousal abuse and marital satisfaction as they relate to the quality of life.

Evidence from the literature suggests that marital satisfaction and marital abuse have been studied extensively, but studies combining the three variables of interest in a study are scarce. Lucena et al. (2017) study on domestic violence and quality of life found evidence of a relationship between domestic violence and quality of life among women. While others have consistently indicated a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and quality of life, e.g., Pereira et al. (2011) found a relationship between adjustment in marriage, behavioural problems, and quality of life. In a similar study, Gameiro et al. (2011) found a relationship between pregnancy-induced changes in marriage and quality of life. Other studies, such as (Whisman et al., 2004), found a relationship between marital satisfaction and mental health among married couples.

Further still, (Alipour et al., 2013) found a relationship between marital satisfaction and mental health among married students. At the same time, Proulx et al. (2007) found evidence of a direct relationship between marital quality, psychological well-being, and positive individual well-being among married couples. In a retrospective study, Finkel and Hansen (1992) concluded that there exist gender differences in marital satisfaction. Hollist et al. (2007) found a robust predictive relationship between depression and marital dissatisfaction among Brazilian women.

Several psychological theories have been used to explain the quality of life. However, the present study adopted the integrative theory of quality of life and behavioural theory principle of reciprocal inhibition. While the principle of reciprocal inhibition is a behaviour theory that states that two contrasting emotions cannot exist simultaneously in an individual. The integrative theory emphasizes two distinct indicators of quality of life, with subjective quality of life being an internal state of being good and satisfied with things, and the objective quality of life is the ability to fulfil the sociocultural demand for material wealth, social status, and physical wellbeing (Quality of Life Research Centre, 2005).

Consequently, there is a gap in the literature as it relates to the role of marital satisfaction and abuse on a couple's quality of life. Thus, this study examined the influence of abuse in marriage and marital satisfaction on the quality of life among married couples in Nigeria. As a sequel to the reviewed literature, the following objectives and hypotheses were outlined:

### **Research Objectives**

1. To examine the differences in the quality of life of couples experiencing abuse in marriage and those who do not experience abuse in marriage.
2. To investigate the differences in the quality of life of couples who are satisfied in marriage and those who are unsatisfied with their marriage.
3. To find out whether marital abuse and marital satisfaction will jointly predict couples' quality of life.

### **Research Hypothesis**

1. There is a statistically significant difference between the quality of life of couples experiencing abuse in marriage and those who do not.
2. There is a significant difference between the quality of life of couples who are satisfied with their marriage and those who are not.
3. Marital abuse and marital satisfaction jointly predict the quality of life among married couples.



## 2. Methods

The study adopted a cross-sectional research design. A cross-sectional design was adopted because it seeks to gather information from many participants across many variables at once. It also helps a researcher to observe many variables without influencing any, and the information gathered through cross-sectional design can be employed in different types of research.

Two hundred and fifty-eight (258) couples, Male = 118 (45.7%) & Female = 140 (54.3%), purposely selected through accidental sampling from Okota in Oshodi - Isolo local government area of Lagos State, form the participants for this study. With approval from the psychology research ethics committee of the University of Lagos, participants were approached in their respective homes and business premises by the authors. The researchers explained the nature of research, confidentiality, and freedom of participation to the participants. Those who gave consent were issued a copy of the questionnaire.

Four norm-referenced psychometric tools were adopted to elicit information from the participants in this study, namely; the Composite Abuse Scale (CAS; Hegarty et al., 1999) used to measure abuse within a marriage, the Index of Marital Satisfaction (IMS; Hudson, 1982): to measure problems associated with marital satisfaction, and Quality of Life Scale (QOLS; Flanagan, 1978) measure quality of life in marriage. The instruments have good psychometric properties and have been previously adapted for use in Nigeria. Furthermore, the data analysis was done using a t-test and regression analyses.

## 3. RESULTS

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the respondent's socio-demographic characteristics**

Variable	Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	118	45.7
	Female	140	54.3
	Total	258	100.0
Age	18-25 years	55	21.3
	26-33years	65	25.2
	34-41 years	46	17.8
	42 above	92	35.7
	Total	258	100.0
Marital Status	Married	258	100.0
Religion	Christianity	178	69.0
	Islam	71	27.5
	Traditional	9	3.5
	Total	258	100.0

The results of the data analysis in table 1: showed that 118(45.7%) of the respondents were male, while the remaining 140 (54.3%) of the respondents were female. Therefore, the majority of the respondents for this study were female. 55(21.3%) respondents were within the age range 18-25 years: 65(25.2%) of the respondents were within the age range of 25-33 years: 46(17.8%) of the respondents were within the age range of 34-41 years, and 92(35.7%) of the respondents fell into the age range of 42 and above years of age. Furthermore, all respondents selected for this study were married at the time of collecting the data 258 (100%). Finally, the analysis showed that 178(69.0%) of the respondents were Christians, 71(27.5%) of the respondents were Muslims, and 9(3.5%) of the respondents were traditionalists. Therefore, the most significant percentages of the respondents were Christians at the time of collecting the data.

**Hypothesis One:** There is a significant difference between the quality of life of couples experiencing abuse in marriage and those who do not.



**Table 2: Compares the quality of life of Abused and Unabused Couples**

Variable	Couple	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	Sig	Pv
Quality of life	Unabused	224	83.75	21.81	256	4.789	.001	<0.05
	Abused	34	65.29	13.64				
	Total	258						

Table 2: The results of data analysis revealed that there was a significant statistical difference between the mean of unabused couples ( $\bar{X}=83.75$ ,  $SD=21.81$ ) and that of abused couples ( $\bar{X}=65.29$ ,  $SD=13.64$ ) on their quality of life { $t(256) = 4.79$ ,  $P<.05$ }. The analysis showed that the unabused couples are more likely than others to experience a good quality of life.

**Hypothesis Two:** 2. There is a significant difference between the quality of life of couples who are satisfied with their marriage and those who do not.

**Table 3: Test comparison of satisfied and unsatisfied couples on quality of life**

Variable	Couple	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	p
Quality of life	Unsatisfied	99	76.00	15.75	256	-3.141	.002
	Satisfied	159	84.62	24.31			
	Total	258					

Table 3: The results of data analysis showed that there was a significant statistical difference between the mean of unsatisfied ( $\bar{X}=76.00$ ,  $SD=15.75$ ) and that of satisfied ( $\bar{X}=84.62$ ,  $SD=24.31$ ) couples on quality of life { $t(256) = -03.14$ ,  $P<.05$ }. The result revealed that couples who are satisfied with their marriage are more likely to experience a good quality of life than their counterparts who are unsatisfied with marriage.

**Hypothesis Three:** 3. Marital abuse and marital satisfaction jointly predict the quality of life among married couples.

**Table 4: Joint contribution of marital abuse and marital satisfaction to couple's quality of life**

Predictors	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	P	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P
(Constant)	61.901	9.997		6.192	.000				
Marital Abuse	-.415	.067	-.358	-6.206	.000	.409	.168	25.668	.001
Marital Satisfaction	.367	.134	.157	2.733	.007				

Table 4: The result of the data analysis in Table 4 revealed that there was an independent and significant prediction of marital abuse on quality of life ( $t=-6.206$ ,  $\beta=-0.358$ ,  $P<.05$ ) among couples. The result showed a negative relationship ( $\beta=-0.358$ ) between the variables, suggesting that the variable relates in the opposite direction. Therefore, as abuse increases in marriage, the quality of life of couples tends to decrease. The result also showed a significant and independent prediction of marital satisfaction on the quality of life ( $t=2.733$ ,  $\beta=0.157$ ,  $P<.05$ ) among couples. The result table also showed a weak but positive relationship ( $\beta=0.157$ ) between marital satisfaction and quality of life among the couples. Thus, the higher the level of marital satisfaction among the couples, the higher their quality of life.



Finally, the results of the data analysis showed that marital satisfaction and marital abuse significantly and jointly predict the quality of life ( $F(2, 255) = 25.668, p < .05, R^2 = .168$ ) among the couples. Also, the analysis showed that marital abuse and marital satisfaction jointly accounted for a 16.8% variance in the quality of life of the couples.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

This study aimed to examine the influence of marital abuse and marital satisfaction on a couple's quality of life. Three hypotheses were formulated based on the study's objectives, and the result of the analyses revealed some facts about the variables investigated in this study.

Findings from the first hypothesis indicated a significant statistical difference between the quality of life of couples experiencing abuse in their marriage (abused couple) and couples whose marriage is free of abuse (unabused couple). The result revealed that couples not experiencing abuse in their marriage are likely to have a better quality of life than those experiencing abuse in their marriage. This finding is similar and consistent with Lucena et al. (2017) on domestic violence and quality of life. Their work provided evidence of an association between domestic violence against women and quality of life but not for men. However, this finding further supports the principle of reciprocal inhibition, a behaviour therapy principle that states that two contrasting emotions cannot exist simultaneously in an individual. Consequently, marital abuse, like other forms of abuse, often creates negative emotions that encumber effective communication and self-isolation among couples. Self-isolation within marriage can precipitate dysfunctional negative emotions and mental health issues that reduce a couple's quality of life.

The second hypothesis revealed a significant statistical difference between the quality of life of couples who are satisfied with their marriage and those who are not. The study indicated that the couples who experienced marital satisfaction are more likely to experience a better quality of life than those dissatisfied with their marriage. This result finds support in (Pereira et al., 2011; Gameiro et al., 2011; Rostami et al., 2013), which found a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and quality of life. Additionally, Waite & Gallagher (2000) revealed that the well-being of couples and their children could be affected negatively by poorly functioning marriage, thereby reducing the quality of life of couples.

Finally, the last hypothesis also revealed that marital satisfaction and marital abuse significantly and jointly predict the quality of life among the couples. Although no previous study supports our findings, evidence that marital abuse has a negative relationship with quality of life while marital satisfaction has a positive relationship with the quality of life of couples abounds in the literature. Similarly, the result of the first two hypotheses in this study also revealed a significant and independent influence of marital abuse on the quality of life among couples; This indicates that a couple's quality of life is a function of their experience - both negative and positive experiences resulting from either marital satisfaction or marital abuse. Thus, the likelihood is that the higher the experience of marital abuse, the lower the quality of life of the couple or vis versa.

Furthermore, our finding in the third hypothesis can be explained through the behavioural principle of reciprocal inhibition, a principle that states that two contrasting emotions cannot exist simultaneously in an individual. Consequently, marital abuse, like other forms of abuse, creates negative emotions that inhibit effective communication and encourage self-isolation among couples, and satisfaction in marriage enhances effective communication and discourages self-isolation within marriage. Thus, marital abuse and marital satisfaction affect couples' quality of life negatively or positively. These, therefore, support the result of the third hypothesis, which states that marital satisfaction and marital abuse significantly and jointly predict the quality of life among the couples.

#### **5. Conclusion**

The study indicated that marital abuse and satisfaction jointly influence couples' quality of life. Marital abuse was associated with a decrease in couples' quality of life. In contrast, marital satisfaction positively affected couples' quality of life.

This study implies the need for couples to be aware of the danger of marital abuse, the benefit of marital satisfaction in marriage, and how they relate to couples' quality of life or vice versa. The finding is significant for professionals in the business of marriage counselling, couples therapy, and mental health professionals to be aware of this impact while in session with their clients.





Nevertheless, there is a need for caution in generalizing the results of this study because there was no baseline data with which to compare the findings. Also, participants for this study were all recruited from one local government, the study is a cross-sectional study, and most of the literature used to discuss the findings in this study is foreign.

## 6. Recommendation

We recommend that the couples receive orientation or counselling before marriage to gain insight into the likely causes of abuse in marriage and things that enhance marital harmony and satisfaction. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to move this research further by expanding the scope of this study in terms of participants, research setting, or possibly making it a longitudinal study to enable the result to be generalised.

## 7. References

- Alipour, A., Rahimi, A., & Zare, Z. (2013). The relationship between mental health and marital satisfaction of married students, payment nor the University of Tehran. *The Journal of Urmia University of Medical Sciences*, 24(7), 557-565.
- Alsaker, K., Moen, B.E., Morken, T. Baste, V. (2018). Intimate partner violence associated with low quality of life - a cross-sectional study. *BMC Women's Health* **18**, 148. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-018-0638-5>
- Aroyewun, B. A., Adeyemo, O. S., Ezemokwe, C. O., & Oyeyemi, T. E. (2017). Psychosocial Factors in Marital Satisfaction among Married couples in Benin-City: An Implication for Couple's therapy. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 4(10) 177-182.
- Bamiwuye, S. O., & Odimegwu, C. (2014). Spousal violence in sub-Saharan Africa: does household poverty-wealth matter? *Reproductive health*, 11, 45. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1742-4755-11-45>
- Easterlin, R. A., & McVey, L. A. (2007) *Modern Economic Growth and Quality of Life: Cross-Sectional and Time Series Evidence*, published in Kenneth C. Land (2011) (ed.). *Handbook of Social Indicators and Quality-of-Life Research*, New York and London: Springer, 2011
- Finkel, J. S., & Hansen, F. J. (1992). Correlates of retrospective marital satisfaction in long-lived marriages: A social constructivist perspective. *Family Therapy*, 19(1), 1–16.
- Flanagan, J. C. (1978). A research approach to improving our quality of life. *American Psychologist*, 33(2), 138–147.
- Garcia, M. L. T., & Tassara, E. T. O. (2003). Problemas no casamento: Uma análise qualitativa. *Estudos de Psicologia (Natal)*, 8(1), 127-133. doi:10.1590/S1413-294X2003000100014
- Gameiro, S., Nazaré, B., Fonseca, A., Moura-Ramos, M., & Canavarro, M. C. (2011). Changes in marital congruence and quality of life across the transition to parenthood in couples who conceived spontaneously or with assisted reproductive technologies. *Fertility and Sterility*, 96(6), 1457-1462. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.fertnstert.2011.09.003>
- Hegarty, K., Fracgp, Bush, R., & Sheehan, M. (2005). The composite abuse scale: further development and assessment of reliability and validity of a multidimensional partner abuse measure in clinical settings. *Violence and Victims*, 20(5), 529–547.
- Hollist C. S., Miller R. B., Falceto O. G. & Luiza C. F. (2007). Marital Satisfaction and Depression: A Replication of the Marital Discord Model in a Latino sample. *Family Process*.46(4),485–498.
- Hudson, W. W. (1982). A measurement package for clinical workers. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 18(2), 229–238. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002188638201800209>
- Kapiga, S., Harvey, S., Muhammad, A.K. et al. (2017) Prevalence of intimate partner violence and abuse and associated factors among women enrolled into a cluster-randomized trial in northwestern Tanzania. *BMC Public Health* **17**, 190 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-017-4119-9>
- Lucas, T., Parkhill, M. R., Wendorf, C. A., Olcay Imamoglu, E., Weisfeld, C. C., Weisfeld, G. E., & Shen, J. (2008). Cultural and Evolutionary Components of Marital Satisfaction: A Multidimensional Assessment of Measurement Invariance. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 39(1), 109–123. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022107311969>
- Lucena, K., Vianna, R., Nascimento, J., Campos, H., & Oliveira, E. (2017). Association between domestic violence and women's quality of life. *Revista latino-americana de enfermagem*, 25, e2901. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1518-8345.1535.2901>
- Moore, T. J., Chaney, C., & Skipper, A (2021) "Put God above All [and He] Will Glorify Your Marriage." *Relational*



- Spirituality in Black Couples, *Marriage & Family Review*, 57:8, 673-699, DOI: [10.1080/01494929.2021.1887048](https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2021.1887048)
- Onuoha, C., (2017), *New trend domestic violence*. Vanguard News, 30<sup>th</sup> Nov. pg. 31
- Pereira, R. F., Daibs, Y. S., Tobias-Machado, M., & Lima Pompeo, A. C. (2011). Quality of life, behavioural problems, and marital adjustment in the first year after radical prostatectomy. *Clinical Genitourinary Cancer*, 9(1), 53-58. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.clgc.2011.05.005>
- Perlin, G., & Diniz, G. (2005). Casais que trabalham e são felizes: Mito ou realidade? *Psicologia Clínica*, 17(2), 15-29. doi:10.1590/S0103-56652005000200002
- Proulx, C. M., Helms H. M, Buehler C. (2007). Marital Quality and Personal Well-Being: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*.69(3): 576–593
- Rostami, M., Abolghasemi, A., & Narimani, M. (2013). The effectiveness of treatment based on improving quality of life on psychological welfare in incompatible couples. *Quarterly of counselling and Family Psychotherapy*, 1, 105.
- Sevinç, M., & Garip, E. (2010). A study of parents' child-raising styles and marital harmony. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2, 1648-1653.
- Shackelford, T. K., & Buss, D. M. (2000). Marital satisfaction and spousal cost-infliction. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 28(5), 917–928. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(99\)00150-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(99)00150-6)
- Shahsiah, M., Bahrami, F., Etemadi, O., Mohebi, S. (2016), Effect of Sex education on improving couples' marital satisfaction. *Isfahan Journal of Health-System Research*, 6: 690 -697
- Taghani, R., Ashrafizaveh, A., Ghanbari Soodkhori, M., Azmoude, E., & Tatari, M. (2019). Marital satisfaction and its associated factors at reproductive age women referred to health centres. *Journal of education and health promotion*, 8, 133. [https://doi.org/10.4103/jehp.jehp\\_172\\_18](https://doi.org/10.4103/jehp.jehp_172_18)
- Waite, L.J., Gallagher, M. (2000). *The case for marriage: Why married people are happier, healthier, and better off economically*. New York: Broadway Books.
- Whisman, M. A., Uebelacker, L. A., & Weinstock, L. M. (2004). Psychopathology and marital satisfaction. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology*, 72(5), 830-838. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.72.5.830>
- World Health Organization (1997) WHOQOL measuring the quality of life. *Programme on mental health*. WHO/MSA/MNH/PSF/97.4.
- World Health Organization (2021) *Violence against Woman Fact sheets* <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

