



Research Article

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Social Roles, Employment and Spousal Adjustments of Married Women in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between social roles, employment and spousal adjustment of married women in Nigeria. A total sample of 1,582 married women from the two states selected through multi stage sampling procedure were selected from 17 of the 33 local government areas of the 6 senatorial districts of the two states. A questionnaire designed by the researcher and certified by experts was the main instrument utilized for the study. Data collated were analyzed. Pearson Product Moments Correlation was used to answer the research questions, while simple regression, multiple regression and ANOVA statistics were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that a significant relationship existed between women's employment and social roles of married women in Bayelsa and Delta States. It was recommended that couples should be enlightened on the importance of spousal adjustment in facilitating harmonious family life and by extension, proper societal function. Counsellors should guide couples in acquiring effective relationship skills. Some suggestions for further studies were made.

Keywords: Social Roles, Employment, Spousal Adjustment, Counsellors

1. Introduction

In Nigeria as in most other parts of Africa and the entire world, the role of the wife in a marriage is generally assumed to be primarily in child bearing and upbringing, home management which involves the preparation of meals, attending to husband's needs, caring for other dependants such as elderly relatives, as well as keeping the home clean. The men on the other hand, are considered to be the heads of the family. They are to love, protect and provide for their families (Aziza, 2010 & Okene, 2010). Acceptance and performance of these assumed roles by both sexes, is to a reasonable extent,

believed to have helped in the smooth running of families over the ages. It has also helped in promoting order and cohesiveness in the society thereby contributing to the overall well-being of the society (Okeke, 2006). Even with assumed perception of the contributory role of all family members in the smooth running of the home, in the Nigerian society, the onus appears to lie more on the woman to keep the marriage union going. She perseveres even in the face of difficulties (Aziza, 2008). As a wife, she is expected to be the companion, co-procreator, lover, confidant, caregiver, mother, helper, encourager, social escort and counsellor to her husband.

Today, with the empowerment of women via education and industrialization, as well as economic demands, women's roles in the home and in the society are gradually expanding. In addition to her traditional role, she now has other roles to play. Most prominent of these roles, is that of being an employee or self-employed worker, a responsibility that takes her out of the house for long hours. Many women now hold prominent positions outside their family businesses. Many are now career women working in banks, engineering or construction sites, big companies multi-nationals and government offices, some of which demand early resumption and late closing hours. Some delay childbearing or cut short their maternity leave for fear of losing their jobs, while some leave their children for their husbands and house-helpers while they travel out in search of economic benefits. Arising from the increasing high cost of living in the society, more than ever before, more and more women are now breadwinners carrying the financial responsibilities of their families partially, and in some cases, solely. Their absence at home creates some inconveniences for their husbands and other family members as their traditional responsibilities become difficult to attend to, or is delegated to others.

A number of men are uncomfortable with the attitude of an empowered woman, especially one who earns more than them. Their reaction sometimes is one of hostility towards the wife. Some empowered wives on their own, are unable to handle their successes in this regard. They become more independent and less respectful to their husbands. This causes friction in such homes. In addition to engagement in employment, most wives, as is the case in Nigeria, care for both their nuclear and biological families as well as in-laws. In carrying out this role, friction very often arises as a result of spousal displeasure with wife's level of commitment, cost of care-giving and loss of financial remuneration from employment during period of caregiving to aged relations. Many women now occupy other statuses and have other roles as community leaders, active church members or leaders, socialites, politicians, human rights activists etc. Interactions with others (male and female) outside the home, has an impact on spousal adjustments. Women's attitudes may be influenced by that of those they interact with. Sometimes the impact is beneficial to the woman and her matrimonial home, for example enlightenment on home management skills. At other times, such interactions have been detrimental to a couples' union. For example, contributing or encouraging in-subordination to spouse, non-commitment to filial and conjugal obligations, inclination to waywardness, expensive lifestyles, promiscuity, and general laxity. Engagement in social roles have resulted in many mothers just as fathers not having as much time as was the case in the past, to personally fulfil all their traditional obligations in the home. Many are still witnesses to the fact that in the past, fathers and mothers in addition to carrying out their primary responsibility as providers and home managers respectively, still spent quality time with each other, made out time to monitor their children's development and activities. They did these while together as a couple or family, such as at meal times, storytelling, evening relaxations, moving together as a family to visit friends and relations, while carrying out their family businesses or occupations together. They also did same while going through children's school books, attending meetings of the Parent / Teacher Association (PTA), interacting with their children's teachers and observing changes in their children's behaviour. This in turn gingered children to be of good behaviour and to take their studies more seriously (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). In fact, many in the earlier years of their marriages went out more together as a couple rather than with friends, colleagues and club members as it is commonly done today.

Women's outlook to performance of their traditional obligations is generally changing. There

also appears to be a modification in the roles actually being played by men and women depending on the peculiarities in their respective homes. Although many couples appear to be maintaining their sense of individual identity and participating in separate activities, they still get along well enough to stay together. Many men have either adapted or learnt to carry out some tasks for themselves which ordinarily, their wives would have done for them (Sheknews, 2007). In addition to their traditional role as providers and protectors of the home, many now support and collaborate with their wives in the home in acknowledgement of the fact that the women's employment are beneficial to the home. Present day realities often do not permit an elitist couple to adhere strictly to the traditional role expectations from their gender. Take for instance, a male teacher married to a female banker whose job schedule demands early resumption and late closing, would either have to share some of the domestic chores with the wife or agree on alternative arrangements for the smooth running of the home. The same may go for the husband of a high- ranking female politician, church or community leader or socialite. Another, with a highly literate and high-flyer wife, may have to adjust to a wife who is not as subservient as his unemployed mother who brought him up. Another yet, may have as wife, an assertive woman from an elitist home who insists on having more say in decision making in the home than the women of old. This often causes friction in marriage relationships, as sons groomed in male dominated families or environment, often want to assert their authority in the home and expect their wives to be submissive to them. Furthermore, either spouse may learn to fill the gaps for a partner who often has to spend days out of the home due to job or economic demands. This is to avert adverse consequences on their children's moral development.

Education and consequent empowerment of women appear to influence their perceptions and in some cases cause a sort of identity crisis. In the execution of their responsibilities in the family, they sometimes adopt home management styles which are completely alien to our African culture and detrimental to traditional or desirable family or societal functioning. Some women for instance, would now prefer to be formally informed and their consent tacitly sought in advance; of members of the extended family (especially in-laws) coming to spend days with them. This is often embarrassing and humiliating to the husband, as it portrays him as not being in charge of his home, or unaccommodating to his extended family. It is also at variance with the traditional African hospitality of one big boundary- free family where the wife is not only wife to her husband, but also wife to all his relatives (Otite, 2006).

A marriage characterized by poor spousal adjustment affects the mental health of the couple involved, as it is usually an agonizing experience for them and their families. It not only creates a feeling of loneliness, it also portrays the couple as unaccommodating, emotionally immature, poorly brought-up, or irresponsible. It could also affect their productivity at work and other areas in life. In addition, it affects the overall wellbeing of the society as composite families make up the society (Okobiah, 2008). Furthermore, while appreciating the numerous advantages of women's empowerment, there is also the observation and cry about the negative fall-outs of same (Oluakanwa, 2010). Very often, we hear people attributing the present day moral decadence in the society to lack of adequate parental care. Many children are denied the opportunity of adequate bonding with their parents in their formative years. A lot of mothers are not around long enough to observe their children's behaviour and counsel them. Many children are left to the care of housemaids or relatives who have their own mission and are sometimes deficient in one way or the other to take care of them effectively (Urien, 2009). Television and computers are becoming increased threats to family cohesion and bonding. With the prolonged absence of parents from the home, many school age children are likely to pay less attention to personal studies at home. They also now have unlimited access to watch television programs and movies; hook on to internet applications which may be detrimental to their upbringing. There is also ample room for physical and sexual abuse by house-helps and neighbours, as well as extensive peer group influences which may impact negatively on the children. The outcome of this is a myriad of social problems such as truancy, poor academic performance, underachieving students with great potentials, school drop-outs, emotional disturbance, cultism, armed robbery, kidnapping, prostitution and promiscuity (Nwolisa and

Babatola, 2010).

The topic was prompted by the researcher's observation of the gradual expansion of women's roles and modification of family living patterns over the years. Furthermore the observation that many couples go through marriage without evidently sparing much thought on the importance of spousal adjustment, obligations of spouses to themselves or the seriousness of the subject matter of this study; and relating it to their lives or the impact on the society as a whole. With many men and women out of job, many women are significant or chief breadwinners for their families. In the course of all these, the researcher has witnessed weakened husband control of households, strained/break down in spousal relationships and more juvenile delinquents. These are all linked to husband's inability to adequately provide for the family, long absence of mothers from homes, or lack of parental control. This researcher realises that there are many communities experiencing this in modern day Nigeria. Another motivation for this study is the frequent fear or scepticism expressed by some men, of women's empowerment and social roles. This researcher ponders and is optimistic that considering the fact that the merits of women's empowerment are enormous, sceptics' fears on women's emancipation and social roles can be allayed. Furthermore, with the increased incidences of broken marriages, single parenthood being perceived as fall outs of women's employment, emancipation and social roles, this researcher was motivated for the love of family and its importance in societal well- being, to carry out this study.

2. Statement of the Problem

Society generally perceives the marriage relationship as one in which both parties have their distinct roles to play. Specifically, the husband is expected to be the provider and protector, while the wife takes care of the husband, childbearing and child upbringing as well as general housekeeping. With developments in technology, education, religion and their exposure to other cultures, a lot of women are now empowered and emancipated. In this process some women are either now desirably or out of convenience, adopting western ways of thinking and living. Some appear also not to be mindful or appreciate their importance and traditional role in the marital union, nor its impact on the family, community, the world at large. The situation is further reinforced by the mentality that respects women more for their paid work and prominence outside the home than for their "unpaid" work within the family.

As a result of economic, social and religious demands today, we now have a lot of women who like their husbands, are compelled to spend much time outside their homes. Times for family interactions, performance of filial or conjugal responsibilities are reducing as more time is spent outside, or without the family, in the work place, religious house, societal organizations and pursuing business opportunities. These developments have some negative consequences on spousal relationships and spills over to general living pattern in the home and the society at large. The focus of this study therefore was to ascertain the impact employment and social roles of women have on spousal adjustment.

3. Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between women's employment and spousal adjustment in Bayelsa and Delta States?
2. What is the relationship between women's social roles and their spousal adjustments in Bayelsa and Delta States?

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. There will be no significant relationship between maternal employment and spousal adjustment in Bayelsa and Delta States.
2. There will be no significant relationship between a woman's social roles and spousal adjustment in Bayelsa and Delta States.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Education and Spousal Adjustment

Education is seen as a means of attaining knowledge and power in economic, political and social arena. It is a useful and valuable tool for overcoming ignorance, poverty and disease. It is also a means for producing functional citizens with productive minds (Enaibe & Imonivwhera, 2009; Hunt, 2013). Women's education sensitizes women to appreciate the benefits of acquiring the basic skills and knowledge that will make them carry-on effectively in society and improves their social status as well as boasting their self-confidence (Enaibe & Imonivwhera, 2009; & Hunt, 2013). Education empowers a woman for employment (Sharma, 2013). Traditionally, a man is expected to be more successful and prominent than his wife (Aja-Okorie, 2013). It is universally acknowledged that women have been disadvantaged in educational acquisition all over the world. This acknowledgement prompted the United Nations Organization (UNO) to declare the years 1975 – 1985 as the decade for women. In the Beijing world conference held in China in 1995, the women specie was recognized as a deprived, underprivileged and disadvantaged group of people in the society. Apart from the traditional practice of keeping the girl child and women at home as much as possible, to protect their chastity and discourage promiscuity, they spend more time than men at home attending to chains of domestic duties. This leaves them with little or no time for educational pursuits as compared to their male counter parts (Enaibe & Imonivwerha, 2009).

Uneducated parents are more likely to place less premium on educating their children than the educated ones and even in cases when they so desire, they may not have the means to sponsor them. Such impoverished parents often marry off their daughters early to bail the family out of poverty, thus such girls and some wayward ones due to idleness become school drop outs, unable to complete their education (Enaibe & Imonivwerha, 2009; Rani, 2011). According to Venker (2017), the days when mothers indoctrinated their daughters not to outshine men with their intelligence and smartness is over. She however realises that a situation where women outshine men educationally and sometimes even financially raises some issues of concern for the marriage institution especially considering the fact that ideally, women prefer to marry men who are more highly placed and in good position to be providers. She stated that marriages in which the traditional gender roles are reversed, have the tendency to be less stable. A study conducted at Coventry and Aberystwyth confirmed the strong existence of hypergamy (Venker, 2017; & Weng, 2017).

Women's higher education in Nigeria started witnessing significant growth in the early part of the twentieth century with the setting up of some government and missionary girls colleges like Queens College, Lagos, St. Louis Colleges in Ibadan, Jos, Kano and Akure, St Theresa's Colleges in Ibadan and Ughelli, St. Anne College, Ibadan, Our Lady's High School, Effurun and Anglican Girls Grammar School, Ughelli. This brought about a gradual change from the traditional perception of a woman's place being solely in the home. Today education is considered an asset for a woman in marriage as she needs it for the enhancement of the living standard and management of her home. She also requires it for her confidence and social standing, child upbringing and decision making skills as well as facilitating her contribution to national development. Akubiulo (2012) and Nnamdi (2016) opined that there is a tendency for more educated people to make more success out of their marriages than the less educated ones. They attributed this to the fact that educated people are often older before marriage and thus more likely to understand the behavioural traits of their intended spouse as well as better able to cope with marital challenges. This view was corroborated by Luscombe (2014) and Sneed (2014).

One other asset perceived to be owned by educated women, is their exposure to the use of modern technology especially the instruments of mass media. For instance, they are able to spice up their love life by conveying sensuous feelings through the use of text messages and other instruments of social networks, thereby keeping the relationship alive and interesting even when the spouses are far apart. Without such means, a good number of long distance relationships may have fizzled out

(Ewherido, 2018; & www.pageafterpage.org, 2018). While some men are not well disposed to women being highly educated, thinking that they will oppress and control their husbands (Nnamdi, 2016), others believe that so long as, educated women play their roles dutifully in the home and to their husbands, there is likely to be harmony in the relationship (Nnamdi, 2016). It is probably with the realization of this fact that there is a current consciousness amongst the well-educated or better- paid wives to fulfil their traditional roles at home in order to please their husbands and change cultural negativity regarding highly educated wives (Dahlgren, 2010; & Weng, 2013).

There are findings that spouses with similar educational level are more likely to have common interests and values than those with different educational background. Interestingly, Miller and Bui (2016) report that in the American society, there are now more marriages of equals as men of substance marry their fellow executives rather than their secretaries. Researchers report on the effect of certain demographic characteristics on spousal adjustment revealed that differences in educational level were more significant in maladjusted couples (Milhalcea, 2013; Sabre, 2016). It has also been observed that variations whereby husbands have higher education and income than their wives or vice versa, conflicts sometimes arise which need to be understood and adjusted to by the spouses themselves in order to achieve marital success (Ayub, 2012; Dahlgren, 2010; & Zaheri, 2016). For instance, a Ph.D. holder whose wife is a first school leaving certificate holder, may find a gap in the relationship arising from their varying social status, circle of friends and values that cannot match. However, some wealthy men who have little education go out for more educated women who they expect to assist them in making up for their inadequacies (Nnamdi, 2016). Report has it that in the USA today, women are generally now more educated than men and many are in fact 'marrying down'. This fact was attributed to more women graduating from colleges at all levels (Bachelors, Masters and Ph.D) and not necessarily that they are more intelligent than the men (Fielder, 2014; & Luscombe, 2014). Furthermore, the gradual shift of adult attitude towards having more egalitarian views on gender roles have been linked with higher educational attainment and increased efficiency for women (Buchannan & Selmon, 2008 & Cunningham, Beutel, Barbar & Thorntol (2005) as cited in Stanik & Bryant, 2012)

The United Nations enacted Convention for Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as cited in Okobiah (2008) is among other things, the only human rights treaty which affirms the reproductive rights of women and targets culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations. Article 5 of the convention provides that State parties shall take all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to eliminating prejudices, customs and all other practices which are based on the notion of the inferiority or superiority of the sexes or on stereotyped roles. The convention provides the basis for achieving equality between women and men by ensuring that women have equal access to, and equal opportunities in political and public life. All these go to show the formal backing given to women to carry out other roles and to operate on equal terms with men outside their traditional constituency of the home.

4.2 *Social Roles and Spousal Adjustment*

Riamela (2009) enlighten that Nigerian women have from time been allowed to participate in decisions relating to the community or family. For instance, the Urhobo traditional women, have always been allowed to exercise a sort of pressure group system (Eghweya Council/Court) that adjudicate over civil offenses like stealing and issues violating their right of womanhood. In Edo and Yoruba cultures, certain power wielding titles like "Queen Mother" were reserved for women. There are also legends speaking of heroines like Queen Amina of Zaria and Moremi of Ile- Ife. It is thus obvious that women have played social roles over the ages. It appears also that more than ever before, women are now engaged in more social roles outside the home in addition to employment proper. For instance, in addition to very familiar ones such as being the only child among her siblings living in the close vicinity of her aged parents, most senior daughter or daughter-in-law of an

incapacitated parent or parent-in-law, “neighbourhood mother” and counsellor to younger couples, they also occupy other statuses and have other roles to play such as being a colleague at work, Woman leader or active member of a political, social, religious, community or alumni group, business associate, etc. Just as maternal employment often takes up a good proportion of a woman’s time and energy, so also does her engagement in all these social roles. These multi- roles are likely to have impacts on spousal adjustments as they reduce the quantity and quality of time spouses have to spend together. Women’s absence from their families also places more responsibility on their husbands and children (Dyson, 2001; Presser, 2001; Rattani, 2018 & Wikipedia, 2012) as they have to stand the gap for things to move on smoothly in the home.

In the African culture just like some others in the world it is obligatory for children to take care of their elderly parents or relations or in- laws whether the child involved in caregiving is married or not. An aged parent often times requires more attention from their children especially after the death of their spouse (Dykstra & Hagestad, 2007; Frugal Asian Finance, 2017; Funk, Stajduhar, Toye, 2010; Garde, & Kerzer, Dykstra & Poorman, 2009 & National Alliance for Caregiving and American Association of Retired Persons (NAAARP), 2004). Even when the children of the elderly are overburdened, they feel obliged to attend to the aged parents’ needs first since the aged are unable to care for themselves. Caring for the aged parents not only makes them feel wanted and useful, but also gives them and their caregivers joy (Funk et al., 2010 & Schmitz & Schmitz, 2009). In fact, some societies frown at the idea of children transferring the care of aged relations to nursing homes (Funk et al, 2010 & Meyer, 2001). Women no doubt offer enormous amount of caregiving in families and the society at large (Chesley & Poppie, 2009). On the whole they spend more time offering care to their parents than men do (Chumbler, Pienta and Dwyer, 2004 & Espino et al., as cited in Herrera, Lee, Palosos & Torres-Vigil, 2008). This is to be expected since they are usually groomed to identify with home management (Hodges & Park as cited in Croft, 2016).

Care for elderly family members reflects social norms of reciprocity. That is to say, parents support children when they are young and are in turn supported by their children when they can no longer support themselves. This is usually prevalent in developing countries. Another reason for providing support to elderly family members is that apart from allowing younger members of the household to work outside the home, they are still useful in spite of age. For example, they are repository of valuable experience and social history, which provide useful insights when certain incidences occur. Support for the aged in developed countries, are not always in the form of co-residency since government operated retirement homes exist, though often with financial cost on the part of the beneficiary. In these later cases, the affected are by that time, less useful, relevant and children not physically available (Fafchamps & Quisumbing, 2007). Women not only play significant roles in their families of origin but also often strive to be relevant in their husband’s families of origin (Otite, 2006). In the course of carrying out this traditional role, either party may have to compete with their parents and siblings-in-laws and in some cases, even their own relations; for their spouse’s attention and devotion (Apter, 2009; Daly, 2013 & Mills, 2014).

Marriage in Africa is taken as a union of the two families of the couple. A Nigerian adage says that, “when a woman marries, she marries the entire family. It is only when she goes to bed at night that she marries her husband”. Most other cultures to a significant extent, value relationships with in-laws (Kim & Pillerman, 2011; Santos & Levith, 2007; Serewicz & Hosmer as cited in Fingerman, Gilligan, VanderDrift & Fitzer (2012). Marriage requires each spouse coming in contact with in-laws from time to time (Gabriel, 2013). People do not have a choice about who their family members are. They are ‘stuck’ with in-laws and this sense of obligation could lead to resentment. Just as no two people are the same, so also are the families of origin different in their beliefs, attitudes, values, mores and myths. These differences could lead to major conflicts within a couple or between the couple and their in-laws ((Apter, 2009; Carey, 2018; Feurman, 2018 & Rozakis, 2018). It is a long standing assumption that people have problem relating with their in-laws and that relationship with in-laws is one of the greatest source of stress and conflict in marriages (Apter, 2009; Chapman & Denzin, 2010). This conflict is often traceable to the couple’s inability to establish boundaries in their relationship

with in-laws (Adler, 2018; Kirshernbaum, 2016 & Willies, 2015); as well as the fact that the differences in the manner of operation in both families makes conflict resolution difficult (Merill, 2007; Carey, 2018 & Streib, 2015). In addition, Larry, Chung and Canavan (2011) point to studies that suggest that new couples may unconsciously be influenced by cultural stereotype. There are however objections to these perceptions as some studies reveal that the relationship between mothers- in- law and children- in- law is not always characterized by conflict or difficult as portrayed by media stereotypes (Fingerman, Gilligan, VanderDrift & Fitzer, 2012 & Orbuch as cited in Kirshenbaum, 2016)

When a couple have good communication and empathized with themselves, the pains concerning families of origin can in fact bring them closer and the opposite if otherwise. Disillusionment in one's partner is almost inevitable universally because people falling in love are often blind to each other's weaknesses. Once they realize this, disillusionment with their in-laws sets in. Relationships between couples improve when feelings are no longer displayed unto the other partner or to one's in-laws (Schmitz & Schmitz, 2009). Caregiving has its toll on caregivers (Aguilo, 2017; Baidar & Surbone, 2014 & Cavanaugh, Blanchard & Fields, 2018). Caregiving not only reduces the time available for nuclear family and spousal relationship, it affects job performance and progression. A study of women involved in caregiving found that the impact of caregiving on them in terms of wages and social benefits they forfeit was \$324,044 (Metlife, 2011). In the United States, caregivers are 2.5 times more likely to live in poverty 5 times more likely to receive Government assistance, than non-givers. A good number of studies have revealed that they not only suffer from stress, they also have limited time for family and friends, increased use of medications, mis-use of prescribed drugs, increased likelihood of suffering from coronary heart disease and depression as well as other long term needs of the caregiver (Borchard, 2010; Metlife, 2011; & Taibbi, 2011). This concern on the long run is transferred and becomes the concern of the spouses and nuclear family.

4.3 Employment and Spousal Adjustment

Employment as defined by Wikipedia (2016) is a relationship between two parties where one (the employer) pays the other (the employee) for services rendered. It is often guided by employment laws or legal contracts. Being employed thus provides a source of livelihood for the employee. The role of the husbands in Nigeria and Africa in general can be described as not just provider and protector, but also Master and Controller. Men strive to sustain this perception at all times and avoid anything militating against it, or that would portray them as weaklings. With technological development, women's empowerment, social roles and financial demands a lot of women are gainfully employed outside their homes; unlike it was in years of old. Even with this development, men still want to be seen as being in charge at all times; and re-assured that they have control over their women and entire household. Psychological well-being may suffer when their work and family identities conflict with the conventional gender roles (American Psychological Association, 2017; Brown, 2014 and Dako-Gyke, Diekman, 2011 & Ibrahim, 2012).

There are divergent views on the actual roles women played in times past in Africa. It is however certain that parents teach their boys and conditioned them right from birth to be the "boss" according to the cultural expectations (Aziza, 2010 & Okobiah, 2008), while the girls are conditioned to look up to the males as their heads or protectors. This fact can be clearly discerned from the two types of prayers offered among the Turkana people of Northern Kenya at the birth of either a boy or girl:

*"When you grow
May you have a rich and good husband
And remember all of us here at home
And continue to help us (Turkana song for a girl)
And for a boy:
When you grow up you will take care of the home, the property*

*And protect your mother and sisters.”
(When You Grow. (nd). Cited in Ngoyi, 1989).*

Okene (2010) and Okobiah (2008) clearly observe that the preference for a male child is transferred on to the prejudices in which they are raised as “first class” citizens, while the females are raised as “second class” citizens. This traditional perspective is obviously now undergoing modification in many homes. The growing number of women receiving higher education and those joining the labour market is an indication that their sex roles differ from those of their mothers and grandmothers. Economic demands have made many women major financial contributors in the home (Adeniyi & Enilolobo, 2010; Dako-Gyke & Ibrahim, 2012 & Nwandinigwe & Ayanma, 2010). The implication of this is that, women generally now have to spend more time out of the home than was the case in years past. This makes it impossible for an employed woman to perform all her domestic roles personally. This does not only relate to household chores, but also to the amount of quality time spent with husband and children. Thus today, there are a number of variables impacting on how well expected spousal roles are being played or obligations being met.

Qualls (2015) revealed that, unlike women in most western countries who had to fight for the right to work, the middle class Nigerian woman has since pre-colonial days retained certain economic opportunities within the social system and played a more significant role in the society. They have been significant wage earners in the family. This economic freedom still exists today in Nigeria. However, according to Okobiah (2008) and Qualls (2015), despite the economic contribution of their wives, Nigerian men do not appreciate their wives’ efforts and consistently take them for granted. The women still lack certain rights. As a rule, men do not have any legal responsibility for their offspring and they often abandon their women, expecting them to shoulder the financial burden of the family (Qualls, 2015).

Studies confirm that in Nigeria, the husband has generally been the highest authority in the family except in domestic matters where the wife is in charge (Awe, 2016 as cited in Oladiti & Oyewole (2017) & Otite, 2006). Furthermore, Nigerian men and women are brought up in their culture to accept these complimentary positions and duties in the family. A woman’s independence is demonstrated more in polygamous homes where the wives often have more responsibility for the feeding and upkeep of their own children. She engages in economic activities on her own, to raise funds for the upkeep of her children. The husband assists her with supplementary funds (Awe, 2016 as cited in Oladiti & Oyewole (2017) & Otite, 2006). He cannot prevent her from engaging in economic activities unless he can provide all her needs; this is often impossible (Otite, 2006). On the contrary Okobiah (2008) points out that even in the home; women cannot take certain simple actions without seeking the approval of their husbands. Wikipedia (2018) however goes on to reiterate that in Africa generally, the economic role of women were public as well as private. They worked outside the home in order to meet up with their obligations as mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, members of guilds, chiefs or citizens. Women in Yoruba land were in fact central to trade which offered them wide opportunity for accumulation of wealth and titles like the “Iyalode” - a position of great privilege and power. They were also active in politics (Falola, 2017) as cited in Britannica (2018).

4.4 Spousal Adjustment of Married Women

According to Rao (2017), spousal adjustment is one adjustment that every individual encounters upon getting married. Any adjustment made by a husband or wife in the course of their spousal relationship is prompted by their consciousness of the expected life-long duration of their marital union and the desire to make it worthwhile (Makvana, 2014). Spousal adjustment is an indication of emotional stability, intellectual efficiency and social effectiveness (Sabre, 2016). It is an evolutionary process (Aminjafari, 2012). Being that the relationship is one of interdependence, it undergoes transformation to accommodate changes in the partner’s health and behavioural status. Accommodations are made in the areas where conflict may exist. It is related to personality, job and

home stresses, mental illness, depression, education, sex role, attitude, happiness and success in life (Alford, 2017 & Hashmi, Khurdshid & Hassan, 2007).

Marriage which is the foundation for spousal adjustment is considered by many in the African culture as one of the most important steps most adults take in life (& Ebebuwa-Okoh, 2007; Mustapha, Mburza & Goni, 2010 & Nwandiolu, 2009). It is so highly priced (Popenoe, 2007) that any adult of marriageable age who fails or delays in doing so, is regarded as irresponsible or unworthy of honour (Mustapha, Mburza & Goni, 2010). In the Nigerian society, women are from early childhood groomed towards being successful housewives, any woman of marriageable age and fairly educated, who is not married, is frowned at, perceived to be frustrated and unfulfilled; and is a cause for anxiety to her parents (Nnamdi, 2016). Even though both spouses just like every other member of the family have their expected role to play in the smooth running of the home, in the traditional African society, a lot more is expected from the wife to cultivate intimacy, sustain the warmth and ensure the sustenance of her marriage. In fact, women are conditioned to endure the challenges that confront them in their marriages; as divorced women are not respected in the traditional African society, neither is divorce celebrated even when there is an obvious need for it (Mwantok, 2017 & Okobiah, 2008). All these point to the fact that the level of adjustment and quality of relationship that exists between the spouses should be of utmost importance to them.

Amara (2015) and Opara (2015) cautioned that, anyone anticipating marriage should understand that it is a commitment that can determine one's destiny and satisfaction in life. It is the coming together of a man and a woman with different personalities for the purpose of developing common interests for the common good for a supposedly life-long relationship (Edukugho, 2014). The state of the relationship determines the synergy with which the couple handle issues confronting their union. It makes a positive or negative impact on the children. For instance, a father providing love and companionship to the mother gives her emotional support which can be transferred to the children and helps to stabilize the family (Nwandinigwe & Anyama, 2010). When both spouses work towards having good rapport and a warm relationship, they both take responsibility and equally share in the harmony jointly created by them. It helps in the holistic development of the children (Awolugutu, 2017; Fox, 2017).

Research has shown that a higher level of marital intimacy is correlated with a more secure father-infant attachment relationship, while deteriorating marital intimacy is the reverse (Huges, 2002). Furthermore, most societal norms recommend that children should be brought up in in-tact families with both parents seeing to the physical and moral needs of the child (Anderson, 2014 & Emman & Harkonem, 2017). The quality of interaction that takes place in composite families eventually shapes the pattern of social interaction that prevails in the larger society. Amato and James (2010) as well as Bernadi and Boertain (2007) however have their reservation about this view. They do not agree that children being raised in an in-tact family is always the best for the child, or necessarily predicts their future or that of the society. All the same, there is an obvious universal belief that an accumulation of faulty marriage and family life leads to deterioration in the larger society. In other words, the family is the foundation of society, described by Benedict XVI, 2009 as the first consideration in the building of a well-functioning society as it has a responsibility to educate and nurture her members to flourish within acceptable standards of existence.

People marry for various reasons and to satisfy various needs. The needs could be physical, emotional, spiritual, financial or merely social (Ihe- Okuneye, 2015). Whatever be the needs of any couple, they are by virtue of their union, placed under legal and social obligations to their partners and the society (Abubakar, 2009 & Ebebuwa-Okoh, 2007). A Separate Sphere Ideology (SSI) has been in operation from time immemorial even though not being operationalized or modelled in social psychology (Lewis, 2017 & Rationalwiki, 2018). This ideology is primarily based on the belief that there are biologically/ religiously determined gender roles that basically dictate that women should keep away from the public (work) sphere which should be the domain of men. These obligations have guided spousal relations over the ages and to a great extent have helped to stabilize the marital union. Men are expected to provide for and protect the family, while the women are expected to take

care of childbearing, the husband and general housekeeping (Okobiah, 2008). Today, there are a number of variables impacting on how well these expected roles are being played. In this study, the researcher is specifically concerned about how variables such as maternal employment, women's social roles, maternal child up-bringing, women's education, husband's support, residential location and duration of marriage affect spousal adjustments.

Having children is one of the major reasons couples marry in the African society. Motherhood specifically confers upon a woman, the responsibility of raising children (Otite, 2006; Poduval & Poduval, 2009 & Sun, 2014). It is actually a responsibility requiring the commitment of both spouses (Oluakanwa, 2010; Okobiah, 2008), no wonder then that when people are blessed with children, they often do all they can to bring them up properly (Nwandinigwe & Anyama (2010). Furthermore, more than ever before, women are now engaged in various social roles outside the home and employment proper (Poduval & Poduval, 2009 & Sun, 2014). For instance, some are politicians, some socialites, and some either very active church members or leaders. All these multi- roles are likely to have impacts on spousal relationships as they reduce the quantity and quality of time spouses have to spend together. Women's absence from their families also places more responsibility on their husbands and children (Wikipedia, 2012). It also deprives the family of other "softer" benefits associated with having women around. For example, they are described as the heart and soul of every family, teaching and nurturing children; as well as encouraging their husbands (Wikipedia, 2012).

Re-echoing the views of Nwandinigwe and Anyama (2010), Amara (2015) opined that to ensure a well-adjusted relationship, intending couples should be matured and prepared emotionally, psychologically and spiritually in order to effectively manage the challenges and obstacles married life may present. In the same vein, Ihe- Okuneye (2015) , advised spouses to be emotionally available to each other in order to close any gap and to build the kind of love that will keep them together forever. While Abubakar (2010) believes that marital conflict over values and needs are most likely to be resolved if the partners are willing to understand and respect each other's values and needs.

Both partners in a marital union have their individual needs. When needs are not met, they manifest in disputes and disappointments between the partners. The prevalence of this determines the level of marital harmony (Gadoua, 2009). Abiodun's (2001)'s research on extra marital affairs among couples found out that spouses who engaged in such, did so out of their emotional needs not being met by their spouse and not primarily for sexual needs. Reasons mentioned for spouses engagement in extra marital affairs included dissatisfaction with marital relationship, emotional emptiness, feeling of being neglected and non-appreciation by spouse, as well as inability to resist new sexual experience. He observed that many people enter the marriage relationship ill prepared, believing that physical attraction alone will see them through and forgetting that compatibility is paramount. He stated further that the ability of couples to communicate with themselves is crucial to the success of their union and that marriage is only as healthy as the level of communication transpiring within it.

Randall and Bodenmann (2008) recognized the important role stress plays in the quality and stability of close relationships like marriage. Bodenmann (2005) described dyadic stress as a stressful event or encounter that always concerns both partners, either directly when both are confronted by the same stressful event, or when the stress originates inside the couple, or indirectly when the stress of a partner spills over to their close relationship and affects both of them. In either case, the result is joint appraisals as well as joint coping efforts of the couples or cooperative use of common resources, referred to as dyadic coping (Bodenmann, 2005). The reaction of either partner to a variety of variables outside their close relationship may often cause stress in the relationship (internal stress), and in turn increase the likelihood of conflicts and poor marital outcomes (Bodemann et al, 2007& Karney, Story & Bradbury, 2005).

The stress- divorce model proposed by Bodemann et al. (2007) had their main focus on the impact of daily stress on couples functioning. This stress model suggests that external stress affects relationship quality by reducing the time couples spend together, which invariably results in reduction of joint experiences, weakening feelings of togetherness, decreased self- disclosure and

poor dyadic coping. Also decreasing the quality of communication by eliciting less positive interaction and more negative interaction and withdrawal, increasing the risk of psychological and physical problems like sleep disorders, and furthermore, increasing the likelihood that problematic personality traits will be expressed between partners in such forms as rigidity, anxiety and hostility. All these processes could lead to alienation. This model presumes that deterioration in marital quality is often related to chronic everyday stress that is poorly handled. Apart from biological or genetic vulnerability to stress other factors of vulnerability to stress could manifest in poor skills (such as coping or problem solving abilities) or personality traits acquired during human socialization and interplaying with genetics (neuroticism, rigidity, intolerance, or the concept of monitoring or blunting. Stress in couples and families could lead to alienation (Bodenmann, 2017; Randall & Bodenmann, 2008).

Knowledge of this is important as relationship quality is considered one of the best predictor of life satisfaction (Friedman, 2015). Alford (2017) notes that the choice of a marital partner is the most crucial thing in making a marriage succeed. Unrealistic expectations from marriage may be the major reason for most early divorces. Many people enter the marriage relationship with the belief that their spouse will meet all their needs and that the honeymoon period will last forever, not realising a successful marriage requires a great deal of work, patience and endurance (Rao, 2017). Nwandinigwe and Anyama (2010) stated that marital success to a considerable extent, depends on the willingness and ability of the couple to adjust to the realities of their marital life e.g. their new needs and environmental circumstances. Demands of a situation only become stressful based on the negative appraisals of the persons involved (perceiving the demands of the situation as a threat, loss or damage or evaluating one's coping responses as insufficient to deal effectively with those demands (Bertinelli, 2011 & Jordan & Vogt (2017).

Nwandinigwe and Anyama (2010) are of the view that for a marriage to be well adjusted, the couple have to adopt a series of behaviours to cope with the demands and challenges they encounter in the marriage. A well-adjusted marriage is one in which the husband and wife have agreement on the basic issues of the marriage such as how their finances should be handled, children upbringing etc. Also, the spouses are a source of emotional support, companionship, sexual satisfaction and economic support for themselves. Some causes of marital maladjustment have been identified to include early marriage, brief courtship, educational status, financial matters, poor parental modelling, communication gap and influence of in-laws (Gabriel, 2013 & Barikani, Ebrahim & Navid, 2012). Sadeghi, Khedmati and Yousfi (2008) sought the effect of life orientation and job stress on marital adjustment among Guilian Office of Education staff. Using a randomly selected sample of 100 people, it found out that a significant relationship exists between life's orientation and job stress with marital adjustment. Furthermore, that life's orientation and job stress were capable of predicting 21% of variances in marital adjustment. It concluded that the higher the optimism one had concerning life; and the lower the stress received from one's job, the higher the marital adjustment among couples.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

This study employed ex-post facto research design, including descriptive survey and correlation design. Whawo (1992) discusses ex-post facto design as involving variables that cannot be manipulated by the researcher (e.g. age, sex, marital status) as the events being investigated have taken place before the commencement of the study. It thus involves the researcher working backward to establish 'cause' and 'effect' relationship. This study examined employment, social roles and spousal adjustment of married women in Bayelsa and Delta States.

5.2 Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of all married women in Bayelsa and Delta States. It is an infinite population. According to Okorodudu (2013) a population is said to be infinite when it is not definite or cannot be counted. The study dealt with a population size that was unknown since not all marriages are recorded in the governments' marriage registry. However, a population estimate was derived from the 2006 census and Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) 2015 voters register. The register usually covers a population of persons above the age of 18 years which is the normal age bracket for married persons. Population of Bayelsa State according to 2006 census was 1,704,516 (made up of 874,083 males (51%) and 830,432 females (49%); while that of Delta State according to 2006 census was 4,112,445 (2,069,309 (51%) males, 2,043,136 (49.6%) females. The total number of registered voters in 2015 according to INEC was 610,373 for Bayelsa State and 2,275,264 for Delta State. Using the population ratio of male and females in the census, the figure arrived at a total estimate of 1,427,614 married women for both states i.e. 299,083 in Bayelsa State (21%) and 1,128,531 in Delta State (79%). The above figures enabled the researcher to draw up a sample size of 1,700 that was considered representative of the population. This figure gives an acceptable generalization of this investigation.

5.3 Instrumentation

This study employed a questionnaire for data collection. An 83 item questionnaire designed by the researcher was given to experts in the field of research to ascertain its appropriateness for the study. The questionnaire – Spousal Adjustment Scale (SAS) and social Roles Scale (SRS) was drawn up using the hypotheses and research questions. It was administered on the subjects with a view to eliciting the information desired for the study. The instrument was given to experts in the field of Guidance and Counselling for the purpose of correction. Some of the items were either corrected or rephrased to ensure that they match with the research questions and hypotheses. The face, content and construct validity of the instrument (SAS) were estimated using factor analysis. To ensure that the Spousal Adjustment Scale (SAS) and Social Roles Scale are consistent and dependable in terms of measuring what it was intended to measure, it was subjected to a reliability test, where a reliability index of 0.95 and 0.91 was obtained, giving credence to the relevance of the instrument to this study. The Pearson Products Moments of Correlation was used to answer the research questions, while Simple Regression, Multiple Regression and Anova statistics were used to test all the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

6. Result

6.1 Research Question One

What is the relationship between women's employment and spousal adjustment of married women in Bayelsa and Delta States?

Table 1: Correlation and coefficient of determination of women's employment and spousal adjustment of married women

Variable	N	r	r ²	r ² %	Decision
Women's employment	1582	.227	.051	5.1	Positive relationship
Spousal adjustment					

Table 1 indicate r-value of .227 which is the extent of the relationship between women's employment and spousal adjustment in Delta and Bayelsa State, The coefficient of determination was .051 and the

amount of contribution was 5.1%. This revealed that there exists a positive relationship between women’s employment and spousal adjustment in Bayelsa and Delta States. This showed that women’s employment contributed 5.1% to spousal adjustment in Bayelsa and Delta States.

6.2 Research Question two

What is the relationship between social roles and spousal adjustment of married women in Bayelsa and Delta States?

Table 2: Correlation and coefficient of determination of social roles and spousal adjustment of married women

Variable	N	r	r ²	r ² %	Decision
Women’s Social roles	1582	.169	.029	2.9	Positive relationship
Spousal adjustment					

Table 2 indicate r-value of .169 which is the extent of the relationship between women’s social roles and spousal adjustment in Delta and Bayelsa State, The coefficient of determination was .029 and the amount of contribution was 2.9%. This revealed a positive relationship between women’s social roles and spousal adjustment in Bayelsa and Delta States. This implied that women’s social roles contributes 2.9% to spousal adjustment in Bayelsa and Delta States,

6.3 Hypothesis One

There will be no significant relationship between women’s employment and spousal adjustment of married women in Bayelsa and Delta States.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of women’s employment and spousal adjustment of married women Model Summary

R	R-Square	Adjusted R-square	Std Error of the Estimate			
0.227	0.051	0.051	13.507			
Anova						
	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F	Sig	
Regression	15605.14	1	15605.14	85.536	0.000	
Residual	288252.8	1580	182.439			
Total	303858.0	1581				
Coefficient						
	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient		t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	71.934	0.812			88.594	0.000
Women’s Employment	-3.220	0.348	-0.227		-9.244	0.000

The result in Table 3 revealed the regression output which showed a linear relationship between women’s employment and spousal adjustment of married women. The computed $f(1,1580)=85.536$, $P<0.05$ level of significance. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicated that there was significant relationship between women’s employment and spousal adjustment of married women in Bayelsa and Delta States. The R-square value of 0.051 showed that 5.1% of variance in spousal adjustment of married women was accounted for by the women’s employment. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for predicting spousal adjustment of married women from women’s employment was -3.220, the standardized coefficient (β) was -0.227, $t = -9.249$. Hence, women’s employment was

significant at $p < 0.05$.

6.4 Hypothesis Two

There is no significant relationship between women’s social roles and spousal adjustment of married women in Bayelsa and Delta States.

Table 4: Regression Analysis of women’s social roles and spousal adjustment of married women

Model Summary					
R	R-Square		Adjusted R-square	Std Error of the Estimate	
0.169	0.029		0.028	13.668	
Anova					
	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	8708.735	1	8708.735	46.620	0.000
Residual	295149.2	1580	186.803		
Total	303858.0	1581			
Coefficient					
	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	55.023	1.517	0.169	36.268	0.000
Women’s Social Roles	0.196	0.029		6.828	0.000

Table 4 showed the regression output of a linear relationship between women’s social roles and spousal adjustment of married women. The computed $f(1,1580) = 46.620$, $P < 0.05$ level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implied that there was significant relationship between women’s social roles and spousal adjustment of married women in Bayelsa and Delta States. The R-square value of 0.029 showed that 2.9% of variance in spousal adjustment of married women was accounted for by women’s social roles. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for predicting spousal adjustment of married women from women’s social roles was 0.196, the standardized coefficient (β) was 0.169, $t = 6.828$. Therefore, women’s social roles were significant at $p < 0.05$.

7. Discussion

Hypothesis 1 was rejected. The findings revealed a linear positive significant relationship between women’s employment and spousal adjustment. This is not surprising coming from a region where the standard of living is low and cost of living too high for most families. Most families in this region are experiencing serious financial difficulties due to unemployment or underemployment of husbands who are traditionally supposed to be the bread winners. Women here like other similar places today are constrained to spend more time outside the home in search of livelihood for their family sustenance. This research finding is in line with the findings of so many researchers that wives employment, though beneficial to the family has a negative impact on spousal adjustment; if initiatives are not taken by the spouses to work out suitable operating guidelines (Poduval & Poduval, 2009; Sun, 2014; Venker, 2017) . This is because employed wives are torn between satisfying their employers, providing financial security for their families as well as fulfilling maternal and conjugal roles. Furthermore, as noted by Ani, (2017); Bradshaw et al (2013); Sun (2014); Venker (2017) and Weng (2017), the difficulty men have in accepting the consequent implications sometimes causes a strain capable of leading to divorce.

Hypothesis 2 was not accepted. The results revealed that there is a significant positive linear relationship between social roles and spousal adjustment. This is to be expected. Social roles like employment usually leave a woman with reduced time to spend with her spouse while giving more

opportunities for interaction with people outside the home. It is obvious that if a woman has too many social roles, it could create a problem for her spousal adjustment. The situation in the geographical area under study encourages a lot of social activities e.g. partying and social club membership. A good number of women are also involved in politics and caregiving of relatives. These could reduce availability to spouse, shared experiences, quality time and opportunity to share intimate information and bond better. At the same time, women are exposed to more interactions and relationships outside the home. This could be to the detriment of their spousal adjustment. The gain of one becomes the loss of the other.

This supports earlier findings on same by Apter, 2009; Denza, 2010, Maclead, 2012 & Sun, 2014. It is not surprising since social roles like employment, take women out of their homes for much longer than was the case in the days of our great grandmothers, when traditional gender roles were being adhered to. This places more responsibility on their husbands in the home and in some cases, their psychological well being may suffer as identified by Dyson (2001); Presser (2001), Sheknows (2017) & Wikipedia (2018). Furthermore, the findings appear to confirm that such women are unable to concentrate on having very intimate relationship with their husband because their engagements and responsibilities outside their homes takes up most of their time, mental and physical energy. At the end of the day, they are too exhausted to be affectionate, time for filial or conjugal responsibilities are reduced (Sheknows, 2007; Dako-Gyke, 2012; Brown, 2014; Carter, 2016; Ravenscraft, 2016 & Rodman, 2015).

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

On the basis of the findings in this investigation, conclusion was arrived at; that women's employment, social roles can predict spousal adjustment. On the basis of the findings above, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government, religious leaders, professional counsellors and relevant stake holders should develop a keen interest in marital and pre-marital counselling, considering the importance of stable and happy families in nation building.
2. The importance of spousal adjustment to the family stability and consequently to society should be recognized, nourished and encouraged by all.
3. Counselling centres and clinics should be provided by government and institutions with the objective of promoting stable families and harmonious living between couples.

9. Implications for Counselling

The prevalence of marital crisis and its attendant challenges today, coupled with the findings of this study, establishes the pressing need for counselling intervention. The findings reveal an apparent understanding that spousal adjustment is a significant determinant of marital stability and harmony. This implies that counsellors, religious leaders, social workers and parents should assume more active role in encouraging their clients and wards to appreciate importance and benefits as well as striving to be well adjusted to the ways of one's spouse.

The findings make marriage counsellors and those in training aware of the impact of employment and social roles on spousal adjustment. With this awareness comes the motivation to plan for intervention programmes to develop adequate skills in managing spousal relationships and adjustments. Such intervention programmes should include both preventive and curative strategies.

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