



PERSONALITY TRAITS AND SELF-CONCEPT AS PREDICTORS OF MARITAL INSTABILITY AMONG MARRIED PERSONS IN BAYELSA CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT, BAYELSA STATE

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Abstract

This study examined how personality traits and self-concept predict marital instability among married individuals in Bayelsa Central Senatorial District, Bayelsa State. Using a correlational research design, data were collected from 370 married persons selected through multi-stage sampling. A self-developed, validated, and reliable instrument (PTSMIS) measured personality traits, self-concept, and marital instability. Simple regression analysis showed that conscientiousness, extroversion, openness to experience, neuroticism, self-image, and ideal-self significantly predict marital instability. However, agreeableness was not a significant predictor. The study recommends counseling interventions that address personality-related factors, enhance emotional regulation, support conflict resolution, and help individuals build healthier self-concepts to reduce marital instability.

INTRODUCTION

As human, individuals develop their values, beliefs and attitudes throughout the course of their lives. Families, friends, community and the experiences they have had all contributed to their sense of whom they are, how they view the world and how they respond to situations. No two human beings are exactly alike. Hence, individuals differ in how they receive process and react to information. These differences in individual behaviour exist from person to person and are better described or explained through the concept of personality and self-concept.

People view personality differently. Most often, the nonprofessional sees it as the extent to which a person impresses or attracts other people. Conversely, it is also seen as the extent to which a person is negatively perceived, and even misjudged by others. More appropriately, however, personality refers to that consistency of behaviour as exhibited by an individual. It includes, how an individual think, feels and acts on a consistent basis.

The big five personality traits are the most popular personality framework. It has its origins from Cattell's 16 factors framework and today has become the most acceptable model of personality theory. These five factors do not grant exhaustive explanations of personality, but they are acknowledged as the five-factor model due to the fact that they embody a large component of terms that are related to personality. In addition, the five factors are not necessarily traits in and of themselves, but factors in which many related traits

and characteristics fit. These factors are extroversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to experience, and Conscientiousness.

Conscientiousness individuals are purposeful and determined. They have the tendency to act dutifully, show self-discipline, and aim for achievement against a measure or outside expectation. Conscientiousness describes socially prescribed impulse control that facilitates task- and goal-directed behavior, such as thinking before acting, delaying gratification, following norms and rules, and planning, organizing, and prioritizing tasks capable of infusing in positive marital relationship. While married persons without conscientious traits are emotionally unstable, disregards for boundary, inconsistency, unreliable which lead to frustration and instability in marital union.

Neuroticism measures the continuum between emotion in marital adjustment or stability and emotion in marital maladjustment. Married persons who have the tendency to experience fear, nervousness, sadness, tension, anger, and guilt are at high end of neuroticism. Married persons scoring at the low end of neuroticism are emotionally stable and even-tempered. Neurotic married person is emotionally unstable, anxious, moodiness, hypersensitivity, obsessive thinking, insecure, as such causes marital instability by being over reactive, have intense mood swings.

Openness to experience is the tendency of the single parents to be imaginative, sensitive, original in thinking, attentive to inner feelings, appreciative of art,

intellectually curious, and sensitive to beauty. Such married persons are willing to entertain new ideas and unconventional values. Never the less, individual with high openness to experience trait can potentially cause marital instability due to his or her desire for novelty, unconventional beliefs, emotional intensity, curiosity and exploration, nonconformity behaviour, spontaneity life style, openness to new relationships, and diverse interest in daily activities. Damnabo (2023) argued that personality influences behaviour. Hence, educators, researchers and psychologists have constantly searched for sets of variables that predicts patterns of behavior. In this regard, many scholars have accepted the five-factor model of personality as a replicable and unifying taxonomy of personality and have found personality traits to be significantly related to marital instability amongst married persons.

Damnabo (2023), carried out a study on the relationship between personality traits and marital instability among couples in Ogbakwui. The findings of the study revealed that married couples who were insensitive to their environment were not able to relate well with others. Those who exhibited nervousness found it difficult to relate with others in the society, even with their children. Those who were unable to showcased self-discipline could not enjoy the company of others including their children and they experienced marital instability. Those who were harsh and stingy were relatively detested in the entire societal integration and hospitality, while those married persons who were cheerful showed positive relationship with their children and the financial support of their immediate family members.

Ackerman (2017) in Lin (2023) carried out a study to determine the influence of self-control and marital instability among married persons in Accra. Result showed that self-control positively influenced married persons' marital stability; hence, married persons who were able to control their emotions were able to do away with anger, and quarrel with people. In a marital union, most importantly, women are restricted to express their opinions, which may lead to marital instability, while in stable marital relationship, both men and women are respected and encouraged to express their opinions and participate in family conversations which grantee marital stability and enhance his or her daily life activities.

Self -concept is a psychological construct, which refers to a cluster of ideas, and attitudes a married person holds about him or herself, it may be positive or negative. In this study, marital instability is perceived as the main outcome of the self-believe. Each of the married persons has a self- concept, a set of characteristics that reflect the type of person he or she is (Lin, 2023). By enabling them to define who they are a self-concept is central to married persons. Existence as human beings, it shapes their thoughts and actions, it serves as a lens through which they interpret the environment and their experiences, and it drives them to behave with some consistency across a variety of

situations. Traditionally, studies have focused on married persons commitment as the primary precursors of voluntary as distinguished from involuntary satisfaction. Increasingly, however, researchers have suggested in investigating possible marital feelings variables that may help explain even more variance in marital instability (Lim, 2023).

In recent decade, researchers have placed an increasing emphasis on multiple dimensions of self-concept . Self-concept refers to the totality of a complex, organized, and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true above his or her personal existence. In other words, self-concepts are cognitive structure that can include content, attitudes or evaluative judgments used to make sense of the world, focus attention on one's goals and protect one's sense of basic worth (Bakare & Musa, 2023).

The term marital instability refers to the process whereby marriages break down through separation, desertion or divorce and where relevant to the subsequent re-partnering of the individual are concerned. Separation and legal divorce are psychological phenomenon caused by the married persons involved, and which could either result from personality, self-concept, lack of intimacy or cultural phenomenon. Many marriages remain shaky for a very long time; some of them recover equilibrium and become cohesive again, this shaky period may lead to separation. The term 'marital instability' is a very vast and broad concept (Linddgrer, 2023). Therefore, focusing on a key factor responsible for marital instability can give us a good guide on what the term "marital instability is all about. The purpose for marriage is far more important than the mere legalized sexual relationship among spouses.

The study Aim to investigated personality traits and self-concept as predictors of marital instability among married persons in Bayelsa Central Senatorial District, Bayelsa State. Specifically, the study sought. The study would be of immense benefit to parents, married persons, in-laws, couples and families, divorced and separated, counsellors, pastors and priests, and future researchers

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted a correlational research design to examine the predictive power of personality traits and self-concept on marital instability among married persons in Bayelsa Central Senatorial District, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The area of study covered three Local Government Areas: Kolokuma/Opokuma, Southern Ijaw, and Yenagoa.

The population consisted of 10,128 married persons, from which a sample of 370 respondents was selected using the Fluid Survey online calculator at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed. First, the three LGAs were randomly selected, followed by the selection of four churches. Stratified random sampling was then used to

Table 1: Simple Linear Regression for Conscientiousness and Marital Instability

Analysis of Variance						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value
1	Regression	436.075	1	436.075	66.131	.000
	Residual	2248.607	341	6.594		
	Total	2684.682	342			
Coefficients						
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	p-value
	Constant	36.274	1.839		19.720	.000
	Conscientiousness	.899	.111	.403	8.132	.000
R	R Square (R²)	Adjusted R²				
.403	.162	.160				

a. Dependent Variable: Marital Instability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Conscientiousness

Table 2: Simple Linear Regression for Extroversion and Marital Instability

Analysis of Variance						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value
1	Regression	517.213	1	517.213	81.371	.000
	Residual	2167.469	341	6.356		
	Total	2684.682	342			
Coefficients						
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	p-value
	Constant	37.399	1.535		24.366	.000
	Extroversion	.853	.095	.439	9.021	.000
R	R Square (R²)	Adjusted R²				
.439	.193	.190				

a. Dependent Variable: Marital Instability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Extroversion

choose 182 males and 188 females, making a total of 370 participants.

Data were collected using a self-designed instrument titled *Personality Traits, Self-concept and Marital Instability Scale (PTSMIS)*. The instrument had two sections: Section A for demographic data and Section B containing three subscales—Personality Traits Scale (5 items), Self-concept Scale (5 items), and Marital Instability Scale (10 items). All items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale.

The instrument was validated by experts in Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling. Reliability was established through the test-retest method with 30 married persons outside the study area, yielding high reliability coefficients ranging from 0.80 to 0.87 for the various subscales.

The researcher, assisted by two research assistants, personally administered and retrieved the questionnaires. Data were analysed using simple regression analysis to answer seven research questions and test seven null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance with SPSS version 25,

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of data centered on describing the Personality Traits and Self-Concept as Predictors of Marital Instability among Married Persons in Bayelsa Central Senatorial District, Bayelsa State.

In Table 1, the regression coefficient of .44 for conscientiousness and marital instability revealed a positive relationship. The R² of .193 revealed that conscientiousness predicted marital instability by almost 19 percent while the Adjusted R² of .190 shows the goodness-of-fit of the model. In the analysis of variance table, F-value is 81.371; p-value is .000 and the chosen alpha level is 0.05. The p-value of .000 is less than the alpha level ($p < 0.05$). This revealed that conscientiousness does significantly predict marital instability among married persons in Bayelsa central senatorial district, Bayelsa State.

In Table 2, the regression coefficient of .40 for extroversion and marital instability revealed a positive relationship. The R² of .162 revealed that extroversion will predict marital instability by almost 16

Table 3: Simple Linear Regression for Openness to Experience and Marital Instability

Analysis of Variance						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
1	Regression	549.018	1	549.018	87.661	.000
	Residual	2135.664	341	6.263		
	Total	2684.682	342			
Coefficients						
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	p-value
	Constant	35.829	1.646		21.765	.000
	Openness to Experience	.921	.098	.452	9.363	.000
R	R Square (R²)	Adjusted R²				
.452	.205	.202				

a. Dependent Variable: Marital Instability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Openness to Experience

Table 4: Simple Linear Regression for Neuroticism and Marital Instability

Analysis of Variance						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
1	Regression	916.375	1	916.375	176.714	.000
	Residual	1768.307	341	5.186		
	Total	2684.682	342			
Coefficients						
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	p-value
	Constant	33.574	1.331		25.227	.000
	Neuroticism	1.052	.079	.584	13.293	.000
R	R Square (R²)	Adjusted R²				
.584	.341	.339				

a. Dependent Variable: Marital Instability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Neuroticism

percent while the Adjusted R² of .160 shows the goodness-of-fit of the model. In the analysis of variance table, F-value is 66.131; p-value is .000 and the chosen alpha level is 0.05. The p-value of .000 is less than the alpha level ($p < 0.05$). This revealed extroversion does significantly predict marital instability among married persons in Bayelsa central senatorial district, Bayelsa State.

In Table 3, the regression coefficient of .45 for openness to experience and marital instability revealed a positive relationship. The R² of .205 revealed that openness to experience will predict marital instability by almost 21 percent while the Adjusted R² of .202 shows the goodness-of-fit of the model. In the analysis of variance table, F-value is 87.661; p-value is .000 and the chosen alpha level is 0.05. The p-value of .000 is less than the alpha level ($p < 0.05$). This revealed that openness to experience does significantly predict marital instability among married persons in Bayelsa central senatorial district, Bayelsa State.

In Table 4, the regression coefficient of .58 for

neuroticism and marital instability revealed a positive relationship. The R² of .341 revealed that neuroticism will predict marital instability by almost 34 percent while the Adjusted R² of .34 shows the goodness-of-fit of the model. In the analysis of variance table, F-value is 176.714; p-value is .000 and the chosen alpha level is 0.05. The p-value of .000 is less than the alpha level ($p < 0.05$). This revealed neuroticism does significantly predict marital instability among married persons in Bayelsa central senatorial district, Bayelsa State.

In Table 5, the regression coefficient of -.48 for agreeableness and marital instability revealed a negative relationship. The R² of .23 revealed that, agreeableness will predict marital instability by almost 23 percent while the Adjusted R² of .22 shows the goodness-of-fit of the model. In the analysis of variance table, F-value is 99.667; p-value is .321 and the chosen alpha level is 0.05. The p-value of .321 is greater than the alpha level ($p < 0.05$). This revealed that agreeableness does not significantly predict marital instability among married persons in Bayelsa central senatorial district, Bayelsa

Table 5: Simple Linear Regression for Agreeableness and Marital Instability

Analysis of Variance						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
1	Regression	607.201	1	607.201	99.667	.321
	Residual	2077.482	341	6.092		
	Total	2684.682	342			
Coefficients						
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	p-value
	Constant	37.705	1.357		27.781	.000
	Agreeableness	.813	.081	.476	9.983	.000
		R	R Square (R²)	Adjusted R²		
		-.476	.226	.224		

a. Dependent Variable: Marital Instability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Agreeableness

Table 6: Simple Linear Regression for Self-Image and Marital Instability

Analysis of Variance						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
1	Regression	579.071	1	579.071	93.780	.000
	Residual	2105.611	341	6.175		
	Total	2684.682	342			
Coefficients						
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	p-value
	Constant	36.850	1.487		24.785	.000
	Self-Image	.873	.090	.464	9.684	.000
		R	R Square (R²)	Adjusted R²		
		.464	.216	.213		

a. Dependent Variable: Marital Instability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Self-Image

State.

In Table 6, the regression coefficient of .46 for self-image and marital instability revealed a low positive relationship. The R² of .22 revealed that, self-image will predict marital instability by almost 22 percent while the Adjusted R² of .21 shows the goodness-of-fit of the model. In the analysis of variance table, F-value is 93.780; p-value is .000 and the chosen alpha level is 0.05. The p-value of .000 is less than the alpha level ($p < 0.05$). This revealed self-image does significantly predict marital instability among married persons in Bayelsa central senatorial district, Bayelsa State.

In Table 7, the regression coefficient of .50 for ideal-self and marital instability revealed a moderate positive relationship. The R² of .25 revealed that, ideal-self will predict marital instability by almost 25 percent while the Adjusted R² of .24 shows the goodness-of-fit of the model. In the analysis of variance table, F-value is 132.101; p-value is .000 and the chosen alpha level is 0.05. The p-value of .000 is less than the alpha level ($p < 0.05$). This revealed that ideal-self does significantly predict marital instability among married persons in

Bayelsa central senatorial district, Bayelsa State.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings showed that conscientiousness, extroversion, openness to experience, neuroticism, self-image, and ideal-self all had positive and significant relationships with marital instability, indicating that they significantly predict marital instability among married persons in Bayelsa Central Senatorial District, Bayelsa State. Agreeableness, however, had a negative relationship with marital instability but did not significantly predict marital instability. This suggests that higher agreeableness may reduce marital instability, although its effect was not statistically significant in this study.

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

The findings revealed that conscientiousness had a negative but non-significant relationship with marital

Table 7: Simple Linear Regression for Ideal-Self and Marital Instability

Analysis of Variance						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
1	Regression	634.322	1	679.302	132.101	.000
	Residual	2321.563	341	8.678		
	Total	2955.885	342			
Coefficients						
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	p-value
	Constant	39.128	1.879		23.857	.000
	Ideal-Self	.821	.096	.485	9.848	.000
		R	R Square (R²)	Adjusted R²		
		.498	.248	.244		

a. Dependent Variable Marital Instability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Ideal-Self

instability, suggesting that responsibility and commitment may support marital stability, although its predictive power was not statistically significant. Extraversion showed a positive and significant relationship with marital instability, indicating that high social engagement may increase the likelihood of marital conflicts. Openness to experience also had a positive and significant relationship with marital instability, possibly due to a desire for novelty and emotional variability that challenges long-term relationship stability.

Neuroticism was found to have a positive and significant relationship with marital instability, showing that emotional instability, anxiety, and mood swings strongly contribute to marital problems. Agreeableness showed a negative but non-significant relationship with marital instability, implying that cooperative and compassionate traits may reduce instability, though not significantly in this study.

Regarding self-concept, self-image had a positive and significant relationship with marital instability, suggesting that negative self-perceptions and low self-confidence can strain marital relationships. Similarly, ideal-self showed a positive and significant relationship with marital instability, indicating that unrealistic expectations and unmet personal ideals can lead to frustration and dissatisfaction in marriage.

SUMMARY

The study investigated Personality Traits and Self-Concept as Predictors of Marital Instability among Married Persons in Bayelsa Central Senatorial District, Bayelsa State. It was observed that marital instability may arise from couples' lack of understanding and poor application of personality traits and self-concept. The study examined the extent to which traits such as openness to experience, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, as well as self-image and ideal-self predict marital instability.

Relevant concepts including marriage, marital instability, personality traits, and self-concept were

reviewed. The study also drew on key psychological theories such as Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory, Rogers' Humanistic and Control Theories, Bandura's Self-Regulation Theory, and Bowen's Family Systems Theory. Empirical studies related to the variables were reviewed to support the research framework.

A correlational research design was adopted, using a self-designed instrument titled Personality Traits, Self-Concept and Marital Instability Scale (PTSMIS) to collect data from 370 married persons selected through multi-stage sampling. Data were analyzed using simple linear regression and SPSS version 25. Hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

The findings revealed that while some personality traits and aspects of self-concept significantly predicted marital instability, others did not. These findings were discussed in relation to existing literature and previous studies.

CONCLUSIONS

The study explored Personality Traits and Self-Concept as Predictors of Marital Instability among Married Persons in Bayelsa Central Senatorial District, Bayelsa State. Findings showed that personality traits such as neuroticism and agreeableness significantly influence marital stability. High neuroticism was linked to greater instability, while high agreeableness supported stable relationships. Self-concept, particularly when weak or negative, was also found to predict marital instability. The study concludes that both personality traits and self-concept are key contributors to marital challenges in the study area.

Recommendations include counseling tailored to traits like openness and neuroticism, marital education focusing on emotional intelligence, workshops to raise awareness on personality compatibility, and targeted interventions such as CBT. Development of traits like empathy and cooperation was encouraged, while mental health professionals are advised to guide individuals in building positive self-image and realistic expectations in

marriage.

Contribution to Knowledge: This research provides localized, empirical evidence on how personality traits and self-concept affect marital stability within Bayelsa's cultural context. It adds to the body of marital studies by connecting psychological factors to relationship outcomes and offers a useful framework for similar socio-cultural settings.

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