

**A STUDY ON THE CAUSES OF MARITAL INSTABILITY IN
CHRISTIAN HOMES IN IBADAN AND THE IMPLICATIONS
FOR PASTORAL COUNSELING**

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ABSTRACT

This work studied the causes of marital instability in Christian homes in Ibadan and its implications for Pastoral Counseling. Two hundred subjects were used for the gathering of data and student t-test statistical method was used for the analysis of the data.

The following are the findings:

- (a) There is no statistically significant difference in the causes of marital instability between those who were born again before marriage and those who were not
- (b) There is no statistically significant difference in the causes of marital instability between pastors' families and non-pastors' families.
- (c) There is no statistically significant difference in the causes of marital instability between the newly wedded couples and the old wedded couples.
- (d) There is no statistically significant difference in the causes of marital instability between couples who attended pre-marital counseling and those who did not.
- (e) There is no statistically significant difference in the causes of marital instability between couples from the Baptist denomination and the non-Baptist couples.
- (f) There is statistically significant difference in the causes of marital instability between couples of the same tribe and those who are of different tribes.

Implications for pastoral counseling are discussed as well as the results of the findings, some recommendations are stated and suggestions are made for further studies.

Conclusion

From the results of the findings in this research work, one can conclude that conversion at marriage does not predict marital stability neither does being a pastor determine stability in marriage. It can also be inferred that attending premarital counselling does not add any value to marriage relationship in comparison to those who did not. Duration of marriage does not automatically make a marriage to be stable as denominational affiliation does not make one's marriage more stable than the others' who are from another denomination. This work also found that Christianity does not hinder tribal differences from causing marital instability.

The results of this research work pose a serious challenge to the Church. The Christian home is supposed to be a strong instrument in God's hands to liberate and reconcile the world to Him. It is unfortunate that there is no significant difference between such Christians and those who were not Christians at marriage. How does one encourage youths not to marry non-Christians? Or how does the church present premarital counselling to intending couples if it would not add any value to their marriages? If the old wedded Christian couples experience crisis the rate as the newly wedded, where are the spiritual and experienced elders to guide and mentor the younger generation? It is also a sorry case to find that pastors' families do not show any significant difference in their ability to overcome the causes of marital instability. Pastors then have great tasks to carry out; first, to restore peace, harmony and stability

in to their homes; secondly, to help church members out of marital crisis. If tribal differences of Christian couples are contributing to the causes of marital instability in Christian homes, then it should not be a surprise when non-Christians dissolve their marriages because the same factor.

However, it sounds encouraging to discover that no significant difference exists in the causes of marital instability between the Baptist denomination members and the non-Baptists. This implies that the church is gradually moving to the level of unity of faith. Although she worked on interchurch marriages, Barkley (1990) suggested that interchurch couples can play a vital role in working toward full unity of those whose common bond is Jesus Christ. She concluded that interchurch couples model the church of tomorrow and lay the foundation for the reconciliation of churches. These two studies are related in the sense that they establish the fact that biblical doctrine is upheld across the various denominations. There should not be any fear then, when the young ones intend to marry from denominations different from theirs.

From the research work therefore, it is very pertinent for the pastors to take note of the implications for pastoral counselling and carry out their responsibilities to ensure peaceful and stable marriages in the church. Both old and young Christians have roles to play by allowing their spiritual growth add value to their marriage relationship in order to make for stable marriages and a lively church.

Recommendations

It can be inferred from the findings and discussions in this work that the causes of marital instability are evident even in Christian homes. The fact is established that there is no significant difference in the way they affect the various groups that were studied in this work except one. The following recommendations are

therefore identified to help the Church and Christian homes in particular out of their various challenges to experience peace and stability.

- Premarital counselling should be qualitative for intending couples and should be handled by experienced Pastor-Counsellors.
- Family enrichment programmes should be organized in churches on regular basis to help families that may be having crisis at particular times.
- Pastors should work towards making their families good models for church members.
- Inter-tribal marriages should not be discouraged among Christians rather; Christians should imbibe biblical teachings and work on their characters to make for peaceful coexistence.
- Pastors should organize singles' forum during which the singles would be exposed to proper teachings on marriage and family life and how to excel as Christians.