



## PATRIARCHY AND MARITAL ISSUES AMONG PUBLIC SERVANTS IN SOUTHWEST, NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines the relationship between patriarchy and marital issues among public servants in Southwest Nigeria. Specifically, it determines the extent of patriarchy, assesses its influence on marital issues, and explores the impact of private and public patriarchy on marital relationships. A descriptive survey design was adopted, targeting married government-employed civil servants and secondary school teachers in three randomly selected states—Lagos, Ekiti, and Oyo. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 1,260 respondents from ministries and secondary schools. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, the Patriarchy and Marital Issues Questionnaire (PMIQ), which was validated and tested for reliability ( $r = 0.84$ ). Data analysis involved descriptive statistics and inferential techniques, including Pearson Product Moment Correlation and two-way ANOVA, tested at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that patriarchy among public servants was at a moderate level (60.8%). A significant positive relationship was found between patriarchy and marital issues ( $r = 0.750, p < 0.05$ ). Further analysis showed significant relationships between private patriarchy and marital issues ( $r = 0.487, p < 0.05$ ) and between public patriarchy and marital issues ( $r = 0.531, p < 0.05$ ). The study concludes that patriarchy, despite its historical prevalence, is evolving due to modern influences. It recommends increased advocacy by social workers and marriage counselors to mitigate the negative effects of patriarchy on marital relationships among public servants.*

**Keywords:** Patriarchy, Marital issues, Public servants, Southwest Nigeria, Gender dynamics

### **Introduction**

Marriage is a basic institution in every society. It is the recognized social institution, not only for establishing and maintaining the family, but also for creating and sustaining the ties of kinship. It is an institution in which interpersonal relationship; usually intimate and sexual are acknowledged in a variety of ways, depending on the culture. Such a union may also be called matrimony, while the ceremony that marks its beginning is usually called a wedding and the marital structure created is known as wedlock. In all marriages there is a legally and socially approved sexual relationship between the parties involved and normally, it has to be between opposite sexes for the purpose of procreation and companionship. According to Benstead (2021), marriage is a socially sanctioned relationship between men and women potentially enduring beyond the birth of offsprings.

Marriage is considered not only as one of the major pillars of any society but one of the most important societal institutions. In Nigeria,

traditionally and from time immemorial, marriage has been considered as sacred; and marriage for most Nigerians is not merely a sacrament but is sacrosanct. It is one of the most essential and strongest bond of affection human may develop since it provides a structure for establishing family ties and bringing up the coming generation. The seemingly decline in value attached to womanhood and the continuous loss of respect for women leadership without men's contribution in virtually all sphere of the society mostly in Nigeria has been a major issue to education stakeholders who have continued to express concerns over the continuous practice and subsequent effects of patriarchy on marriages mostly among public servants in Southwest, Nigeria.

Women are yet viewed as the second grade citizens whose survival is at times frequently unnoticed. The connotation of their deranged placing has turn into an oblige in the severance of the divisions in life into the "familial" segment and the "community" segment. Connel (2006) asserted that women are projected to be included in the familial



segment while male are positioned in the community segment, they are portrayed intimately with chauvinism and give the bulk of husbandry and youngster care, even as male devour these responsibility. This principles style has been authorized by diverse societal organizations which afterward develops into a communal actuality regarding the position and function women played (Sudarso, et al., 2019).

It appears that women both in ancient and contemporary marriages experience male dominance. Contemporary marriages are marriages of the modern-day society that is dissimilar from the ancient marriages between a man and a woman which tries to bring out the necessity and the importance of some women in the family setting. The effort to signify the importance of women and gender equality in contemporary marriage has resulted in various forms of domestic issues that have led to divorces and maltreatment among couples. The researcher observed that the contemporary or modern marriages are experiencing challenges of divorce and violence such as brutal killings because women in the current dispensation are not willing or ready to fully accept the long age practice of patriarchy. This seems to constitute problems for women who are educated or technologically exposed in many African families.

In the Southwest Nigeria, men seem to have been dominating women virtually in all facets of life most especially in marriage. Women have always been disadvantaged by the institution of marriage as African favours men over women thereby subjecting them to the will of their husbands. The belief of women being inferior to their men counterpart is not limited to races, ages, financial status position, political power or educational qualifications. It has been observed that there are some factors responsible for the disagreements in marriages which may have been associated with the culture of patriarchy on marital issues bothering on finance, child bearing, decision making, educational qualification, cultural belief, religion, family planning, ethnicity and socio-economic status. Women's status and rights are attracting much interest for academic investigation and making of policy. In literature, the general consensus is that the activities of men themselves have been esteemed greatly in all consignments and instances, as women and their efforts have been esteemed lesser (Lee, 2022).

It is broadly assumed that women are deprived on marital issues. For example, in Southwest, Nigeria, it is observed that the majority of the current cultural practices accord men full influence and control over their wives and expect them to carry out marital assignments and sexual responsibilities correspondingly. The structure of marriage in

Southwest, Nigeria is typified of features of patriarchy that makes women un-liberated and contented because the educational setting in schools heartens men to govern, manage and utilize women. This seems to lead to oppression and abuse of women. The researcher observed that in traditional/ancient marriage setting most especially in African system, women are seen as inferior co-partner to their male counterparts as they were subjected to lots of rigorous work without being relevant in family decisions that may affect them and their children (Gbenga-Epebinu & Ogunrinde 2020). Culturally, they are anticipated to be acquiescent to their husbands even when it is not convenient. Hence, men take charge of every control in the family without giving considerations to the woman's advice. This has been the practice from ages in African marriage system and this situation of complete domineering of male over their female partners in marriage setting is tag "Patriarchy" (Seedall, 2024).

According to Makama (2013), patriarchy is a male supremacy, a classification by which the control is in the men's hands. In Nigerian society, patriarchy is tremendously deep-rooted in terms of standards, morals, and traditions and extricating it from more sand existence is unimaginable for numerous persons. The nature of patriarchy makes it difficult to have a generally acceptable definition for the term. However, many scholars have defined patriarchy in various dimensions. According to Wikipedia (2017), patriarchy is the communal classification through which males hold principal command and preponderate in responsibilities of political headship, ethical right, societal dispensation and the property' control. Napikoski (2019) defined patriarchy as a general structure that places power in man than woman in an organized society whereby there is in existence male dominated power in individual and in relationships. He emphasized that in patriarchy the father holds the authority and in addition, titles and property are inherited by the males. Regardless of whichever definition is agreed on patriarchy, it is obvious that it is a common practice in Nigeria as most societies endorsed the general beliefs of men supremacy over women from ages. Women are considered being born to be subjected to the control of a man in all spheres of life and thus women are viewed as a mediocre subject to men in terms of domestic decisions, works, finances, sexual activities and property sharing rights among others.

According to Abeda, (2011) patriarchy could be described as the arrangement by which women are reserved subsidiary in many means. In spite of the group we might fit in takes a variety of kinds for instance favoritism, ignore, affront, management, utilization, and domination, aggression in the family



unit, at the workplace and in the social system, resulting from the subordination that we see on every day. For example, a little illustration is given here to symbolize definite kinds of favoritism and special part of patriarchy. Examples are male child predilection, prejudice against food allotment for the girls, encumber of domestic labor on youthful girls and women, instructional chances for girls are shortage, lack of autonomy and movement for young women, wife mauling, men power on women and young women, sexual pestering at place of work, shortage of bequest or possessions civil rights for females, men have power over sexuality of the women, no power on reproductive or fruitfulness constitutional rights.

Patriarchy seems to take different dimensions such that it could manifest in various ways between couples at home. Some of the patriarchy practices includes male dominance, financial control, decision making and spouse abuse. Men often like to be in command at every period. This consists of directing the entire public and family state of affairs and being responsible for every decision concerning money and schooling. Males take every decision both in the community generally and the units of their family. They more oversize every part of (or the immense mainstream of) places of authority and influence and are regarded as greater. Hartmann (2010) opined that in Africa, the women confront challenges in trying to go through productively and persist previously male-subjugated job settings and other life facets originate from traditional gender hierarchies and standards that triumph in the society and the family.

Patriarchy could also be in two different forms viz: Private and Public Patriarchy. The private form of patriarchy is a system that excludes women from the public sphere, from social life outside their home. It could be noted that in private patriarchy, women are also not allowed voting right, and there was sturdy authorizes against non-marital sexual dealings for women, married women are denied of owning properties, while domestic violence against women were practically acceptable. The church and cultural institutions also agreed to the restriction of women to the domestic scenario alone. Despite that private patriarchy was a major practice; middle-class women experienced it more than their working class counterparts.

The Public patriarchy as noted by Ntoimo and Isiugo-Abanihe (2014) does not exclude women from the public sphere but they are subordinated in all areas of life. Women of different classes are involved in paid work but are critically occupationally segregated through a wide margin of salary disparity between men and women. Cultural practice too allows women to feature in the public but restricted them from

holding some positions. They are to hold subordinated positions. Ntoimo and Isiugo-Abanihe (2014) continued in his opinion, that females are sanctioned against non-marital sexual acts while the males had less sanction. In the public patriarchy, it seems pornographic movies that degrades womanhood is allowed and divorce is more and more satisfactory and available to women as a means of liberation from the waves of oppression against them.

Public servants, particularly those in positions of policy implementation and service delivery, often reflect broader societal norms and ideologies, including those rooted in patriarchy. In many cases, patriarchal beliefs can permeate public institutions, influencing both the internal dynamics of the workplace and the professional conduct of individuals, especially in matters related to gender and marital roles. For instance, Yoon et al. (2019) found that patriarchal beliefs significantly shape attitudes and behaviours, suggesting that public servants from patriarchal cultures may carry these norms into both their professional and marital relationships. Moreover, the persistence of traditional gender ideologies in public service roles may reinforce imbalanced marital dynamics, where male dominance and female subordination are normalised. In environments where male public servants hold disproportionate power, this can lead to the marginalisation of women's voices, even in their own households, reinforcing the power structures that perpetuate gender-based conflicts (Sowan-Basheer & Winstok, 2022).

Additionally, public servants can both challenge and uphold patriarchal systems depending on their level of awareness and institutional backing. Stein et al. (2023) emphasised how state-led patriarchy often dictates the boundaries of acceptable gender roles, especially in public sectors where institutional culture can be resistant to change. However, public servants also have the potential to become agents of change, particularly when they adopt gender-sensitive approaches in handling cases of marital conflict or intimate partner violence. Winstok et al. (2024) argued that implementing gender motivation theory can help unravel the underlying power dynamics in intimate partner violence, highlighting the role of societal expectations and occupational influences. Furthermore, institutional settings like healthcare, where many women work as public servants, are not immune to internal conflicts rooted in patriarchal norms, as seen in the workplace bullying experienced by nurses (Yoo & Ahn, 2020). Thus, while public servants operate within a framework that can reinforce patriarchal marital expectations, they also hold critical leverage in

disrupting these patterns when empowered through policy, education, and advocacy

In Nigeria most especially in the Southwest, amidst several policies and programmes by various governments and non-governmental bodies to empower women, the domestic entity has a customary arrangement which makes men the prevailing sexual category in the entire life of human. Men ascendancy is yet prevailing and view in diverse facades of life- opinionated, societal, and artistic to mention but a few. Amusingly, several persons rationalize their prejudice d performances in opposition to females employing mores and belief (Prescott &Bogg, 2011).This has formed lopsided prospects and state of affairs which does not permit women contrasting their male equivalents to exploit their probable to task.It is a common long time practice in some communities in Southwest, Nigeria that a woman must not be involved in family decision and that husband's word is the final say. This might account for the reason why a man does not bother to seek his wife's opinion before taking any decision for the family (Aluko, et al., 2011). For example, the researcher came across a family in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, whose first son wanted to write Jamb examination as part of the process of gaining admission to the university. The young boy wish to study computer engineering but due to the ego of patriarchy in the husband and without considering the plea of the mother that the boy wish to study computer engineering, the father forced the boy to study medicine which eventually fall out to be a waste of resources which degenerated into physical abuse of the woman. Similarly, in some cultures, abusing and beating a woman may be considered acceptable and normal. For example, it is observed that among the Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria, women kneel in frontage of their spouses as a mark of honour and respect. Some men may seriously frown at their failure to do this.

Empirical research highlights the pervasive impact of gender-based domestic violence, with studies confirming that male violence is often more destructive than female aggression, instilling fear and severe harm in women (Jung, et al 2023). Patriarchy, as a structural force, perpetuates male control over women, with violence serving as a mechanism for dominance (Gunnur & Tamra 2012). Ezeah (2013) corroborates that gendered power imbalances sustain violence against women, often exacerbated by significant age gaps between spouses. However, formal education has empowered women to challenge patriarchal norms, fostering resistance in professional and political spheres.

Psychological impacts of domestic violence are severe, with research indicating that 65% of battered

women experience clinical depression (Adebayo & Kolawole, 2013). Kalichman and Simbayi (2004) found that over 40% of women and 16% of men in South Africa reported sexual assault, underscoring that men can also be victims. Nonetheless, men commit most domestic violence, targeting women in intimate relationships (Hunnicutt, 2009; Michael & Tina, 2019). DeKeseredy (2011) and Sowun-Basheer and Winstok (2022) argue that domestic violence extends beyond physical abuse to financial, emotional, and religious coercion. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated violence against women, with increased family conflict and economic hardship (Berkowitz, Mehlhausen-Hassoen, & Winstok, 2024; Iman, et al., 2021).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to examine relationship between patriarchy and marital issues among public servants in Southwest, Nigeria. The study specifically:

1. determined the extent of patriarchy among public servants in Southwest, Nigeria;
2. examined the relationship between patriarchy and marital issues;
3. determined the relationship between private patriarchy and marital issues; and
4. determined the relationship between public patriarchy and marital issues.

### **Research Question**

One research question was raised for the study:

1. What is the extent of patriarchy among public servants in Southwest, Nigeria?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following research hypotheses were generated to guide this study:

1. There is no significant relationship between patriarchy and marital issues.
2. There is no significant relationship between private patriarchy and marital issues among public Servants
3. There is no significant relationship between public patriarchy and marital issues among public servants

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey design, focusing on public servants, including government-employed married men and women in state ministries and public secondary schools in Southwest Nigeria. The states covered in the study were Lagos, Ekiti,





Oyo, Ondo, Ogun, and Osun. The sample consisted of 1,260 public servants selected from three randomly chosen states in the region. The respondents comprised Civil Servants and Secondary School Teachers. A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed, starting with the random selection of three states. Subsequently, three ministries and six secondary schools were chosen from each state using a simple random sampling technique, resulting in a total of nine ministries and eighteen secondary schools. In the final stage, proportionate sampling was used to select 60 staff members from each ministry (30 males and 30 females) and 40 teachers from each secondary school (20 males and 20 females), yielding 1,260 respondents.

A structured questionnaire titled Patriarchy and Marital Issues Questionnaire (PMIQ) was used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: Section A gathered demographic information, Section B contained 20 items measuring patriarchy, and Section C included 20 items assessing marital issues. Both Sections B and C employed a four-point Likert-type scale, with response options ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). A criterion mean score of 2.5 was set for accepting or rejecting statements. The instrument was subjected to validity tests by experts in Social Studies, Guidance and Counselling, and Tests and Measurement. Face validity was ensured by having specialists review the questionnaire to confirm its relevance and clarity, while content validity was established by assessing the adequacy of the items in eliciting the required information. Based on expert recommendations, the initial 80 items were reduced to 40.

The reliability of the questionnaire was determined using the test-retest method. The PMIQ was administered twice within a two-week interval to 40 respondents who were not part of the main study sample. The correlation between the two sets of scores was computed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.84, which was considered high enough to establish the instrument's reliability. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher and six trained research assistants, one from each of the selected states. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and the completed questionnaires were collected for analysis.

The collected data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including simple percentages, mean, and standard deviation, were used to answer the research questions. Inferential statistics, specifically Pearson Product Moment Correlation and two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), were employed to test the

study's hypotheses. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test hypotheses 1 to 3, and all hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

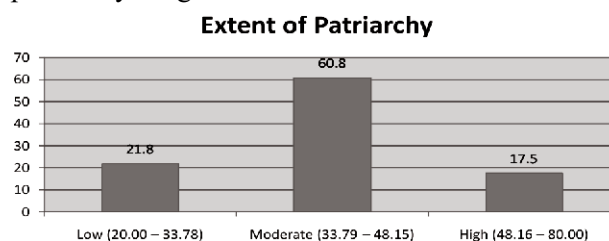
## Results

**Research Question 1:** What is the extent of patriarchy among public servants in Southwest, Nigeria?

**Table 1: Extent of patriarchy among public servants**

Extents of Patriarchy	No of Respondents	Percentage
Low (20.00 – 33.78)	270	21.8
Moderate (33.79 – 48.15)	754	60.8
High (48.16 – 80.00)	217	17.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1241</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 reveals the extent of patriarchy among public servants in Southwest, Nigeria. The score of the responses were used to determine the extents as either low, moderate or high. The low extent of patriarchy was determined by subtracting the standard deviation from the mean mark ( $40.97 - 7.19 = 33.78$ ). The moderate extent of patriarchy was determined by mean mark (40.97) while the high extent of patriarchy was determined by adding the standard deviation from the mean mark ( $40.97 + 7.19 = 48.16$ ). Therefore, the low extent of patriarchy ranges from 20.00 – 33.78 while moderate extent of patriarchy was 33.79 – 48.15 and high extent of patriarchy ranges from 48.16 – 80.00. The result shows that out of 1241 respondents, 270 of the respondents representing 21.8 percent agreed that the extent of patriarchy was low. Those who agreed that the extent of patriarchy was moderate were 754 respondents representing 60.8 percent while 217 respondents representing 17.5 percent agreed that the extent of patriarchy was high. This shows that the extent of patriarchy among public servants was moderate. Figure i further reveal the extent of patriarchy at a glance.



**Figure i:** Bar Chart showing extent of patriarchy among public servants

## Testing of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between patriarchy and marital issues among public servants.

**Table 2: Relationship between patriarchy and marital issues**

Variables	N	Mean	Stand Dev.	r-cal	p-value
Patriarchy	1241	40.97	7.19	0.750*	0.000
Marital issues	1241	41.87	5.17		

\*P<0.05

Table 2 shows that r-cal value of 0.750 is significant because the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there was significant relationship between patriarchy and marital issues.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between private patriarchy and marital issues among public Servants

**Table 3: Relationship between private patriarchy and marital issues**

Variables	N	Mean	Stand Dev.	r-cal	p-value
Private Patriarchy	1241	13.09	1.25	0.487*	0.000
Marital issues	1241	41.87	5.17		

\*P<0.05

Table 3 shows that r-cal value of 0.487 is significant because the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there was significant relationship between private patriarchy and marital issues among public Servants.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant relationship between public patriarchy and marital issues among public servants

**Table 4: Relationship between public patriarchy and marital issues**

Variables	N	Mean	Stand Dev.	r-cal	p-value
Public Patriarchy	1241	8.08	2.88	0.531*	0.000
Marital issues	1241	41.87	5.17		

\*P<0.05

Table 4 shows that r-cal value of 0.531 is significant because the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there was significant relationship between public patriarchy and marital issues among public servants.

### Discussion

The study revealed that the extent of patriarchy among public servants was moderate. The probable cause for this finding might be due to the research setting used as most of the respondents are educated

and well-informed of the culture of patriarchy. The implication of this finding is that some features of patriarchy may not be put into practice due to the level of exposure of respondents. It was further revealed that the major effects of patriarchy are stress, bullying, depression, loneliness, withdrawal, moodiness which is taking a big toll on women. The likely reason for the limited effects of patriarchy might be because of the moderate extent of practice among public servants (Stein, Kursawe & Köhler, 2023).

The study showed that there was a significant relationship between patriarchy and marital issues. The probable cause for this finding might be women who are usually the victim of patriarchy practices will sometimes resolve to self-defense in the home which could lead to marital issues. This implies that patriarchy will degenerate into marital issues. Research has revealed that men consign the most acts of violence at household, aiming women as their fatalities (Michael & Tina, 2019). DeKeseredy (2011) concluded that patriarchy practices are related to marital issues and is an extensive display of domineering influence of men over women. He concluded that women abuse is frequently censured on patriarchy; on the other hands, mistreating women is alleged to be an intrinsic trait of all patriarchy traditions. Temple and Freeman (2011) pointed out that couples who have high levels of marital conflict also have high incidence of psychical abuse.

The study further revealed that there was a significant relationship between private patriarchy and marital issues among public servants. Likewise, a significant relationship was found between public patriarchy and marital issues among public servants. This implies that patriarchy occur in the public domain and likewise at home which usually result to marital issues. The probable cause for this finding might be because of the domineering nature of men which is reflected in their day to day activities. This finding is in line with Michael and Tina (2019) and DeKeseredy (2011) who concluded that both public and private patriarchy are related to marital issues.

### Conclusion

Sequel to the findings of this study, it was concluded that the extent of patriarchy among public servants was moderate while the major effects of patriarchy are stress, which is taking big toll on women. Patriarchy including private and public patriarchy influenced marital issues among public servants while patriarchy practices and marital issues were not influenced by age, religion, income status, family type and ethnicity. The researcher concluded that despite that patriarchy is a common culture among different ethnic groups in Nigeria, the practice has

been reduced as a result of modern trends among couples.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Social workers should be more involved in mass campaign on issue regarding healthy patriarchy and marital issues among public servants.
2. Marriage counselors should emphasize more on the resultant effects of Patriarchy on marriages
3. Policy makers such as National Assembly and State Assemblies should make policies that will reduce to the bearest minimum the practice of patriarchy in the society.
4. Campaigns on patriarchy should be intensified through popular mediums of communications, such as radio and television programmes and posters so as to create more awareness and provide accurate information.

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