

INFLUENCE OF GENDER ON PARENTAL INTERFERENCE ON MARITAL BONDING AMONG MARRIED TEACHERS IN KWARA STATE

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ABSTRACT

Parental interference in marital bonding has become a significant concern, as it may reduce one or both partners' self-efficacy, limit their ability to independently resolve marital issues, and weaken marital relationships, particularly within many Nigerian socio-cultural settings. This study investigated the influence of gender on parental interference on marital bonding among married teachers in Kwara State, Nigeria, with emphasis on the extent to which interference constitutes a problem in marital relationships. A descriptive survey design was adopted, using multistage and criterion sampling techniques across three Local Government Areas. The population comprised 8,876 junior secondary school teachers, while a sample of 350 married teachers was selected using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table. Data were collected using an adapted Marital Interference and Boundaries Scale (MIBS), with reliability coefficient of 0.76. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that parental interference on marital bonding is a prevalent problem, with 76.6% of respondents experiencing moderate interference, 16.6% high interference, and 6.9% low interference. This suggests that parental involvement, though sometimes beneficial, often disrupts marital autonomy and creates tension between spouses. The study also found no significant gender difference in parental interference on marital bonding. The study concluded that parental interference is a common and persistent issue that can undermine marital stability if not properly managed. It was recommended that couples establish clear boundaries with parents, counseling and community-based interventions be implemented to reduce excessive parental involvement in marital relationships.

Keywords: Parental Interference, Marital Bonding, Gender, Married Teachers.

Introduction

Marriage is a highly individualised institution. Couples experiencing parental interference may often develop maladaptive cognitive beliefs and anxiety which may lead to “gamophobia” (fear of marriage). Married individuals generally report better physical and mental health outcomes compared to unmarried peers. Marriage is associated with lower rates of depression, reduced stress, and improved longevity (OECD, 2024). In many cases, marriage is often viewed as a communal affair rather than solely a private union. In Nigeria societies, central to the success of marriage is marital bonding, which refers to the degree of emotional connection, mutual affection, and interpersonal trust that couples cultivate over time (Sunmonu *et.al.*,2025). Parental interference is a significant concept in family studies, sociological research, and social psychology, this may be referred to the extent to which parents influence or intervene in the lives of their adult children, particularly in their decision-making processes.

In some cases, parental interference may be beneficial by offering guidance, emotional support, and a sense of security. On the other hand, excessive or inappropriate parental interference can impede personal autonomy, foster resentment, and create conflicts within family and marital relationships (Suleiman et al., 2020). Ideally, couples are supposed to adopt a mature way in striking balance between their parents and immediate family owing to the fact that emotional equality between the couples and their parents should be independent of each other to achieve lasting marital bond.

Furthermore, Parental interference in Nigeria is a significant aspect of family dynamics which is often rooted in a collectivist mindset that prioritizes family cohesion, social status, and the continuity of lineage over individual autonomy (Ojo, 2018). This A study conducted found that excessive parental involvement in spouse selection or marital decisions significantly increases anxiety, emotional estrangement, and reduced marital satisfaction, especially for the couple’s autonomy and identity as partners setting a relational precursor to gamophobia (Safiudin. K. 2024). This coldness to marriage, if left unaddressed, may disrupt societal harmony, erode family structures, and undermine the natural human inclination to form loving, supportive relationships and produce future generations.

Several studies have shown that parental interference can significantly affect the quality and strength of marital bonds among couples. Nigerian couples, especially those in urban areas, are increasingly seeking independence in marriage, but this often conflicts with traditional parental expectations rooted in extended family norms and religious beliefs (Bello & Suleiman, 2020). On the other hand, Nigerian cultural expectations and family structures heavily influence marital relationships, often creating a situation where parental involvement becomes intrusive and detrimental to the marital bond (Adebayo & Okonkwo, 2021). According to Adebayo & Akande (2020) excessive parental interference in marital decisions can lead to dissatisfaction in marriages, resentment among partners, and even divorce. Urbanization, education, and exposure to globalized perspectives have altered the way younger generations view parental interference, leading to greater independence in decision-making (Okeke & Olowu, 2022). Despite these shifts, many Nigerian parents continue to assert their authority in a range of areas, particularly in marriage, where the concept of parental consent remains highly valued.

Overbearing interference undermines the autonomy of marital partners and can lead to emotional conflicts or breakdowns in the relationship (Ogunyemi & Adebayo, 2019). Sometimes, parents intervene in marital arguments and impose their own resolution methods which may exacerbate rather than resolve underlying issues. These forms of interference, while often well-

intentioned, can lead to marital instability, emotional strain, and a lack of trust or autonomy within the union (Olaleye & Adepoju, 2020).

Although some young couples benefit from their parents' financial support and emotional reassurance during periods of transition (Ibrahim & Bello, 2020). While parents often wish to provide guidance and support, their involvement can inadvertently lead to power imbalances and conflicts within the marriage (Reddy & Singh, 2022). Research also indicates that parental interference can offer guidance and support, it can also be a barrier to personal growth, self-expression, and independence (Ibrahim & Bello, 2020). While parents assert their opinions or preferences over significant decisions such as finances, child-rearing, or career choices this can create friction between partners, undermining their unity and sense of partnership (Kumar & Patel, 2023). Moreover, couples may feel pressured to align their values and decisions with those of their parents, which can lead to resentment and a diminished sense of agency within the marriage (Johnson et al., 2021). Understanding the nuances of parental influence is vital for couples as they navigate their identities and establish boundaries in their relationships.

Moreover, the role of gender adds another layer of complexity to this issue. Globally the influence of gender and parental interference on marital bonding is a significant concern in many cultural contexts, including Kwara State. This has gained increasing attention in recent scholarly discourse (Kalmijn, 2022; Yu & Johnson, 2024). Gender plays a critical role in shaping both the nature and impact of parental involvement in marital relationships, as it determines how spouses perceive, respond to, and negotiate interference from parents and in-laws (Bryant et al., 2023; Fingerman et al., 2020). Emerging research also identifies indirect mechanisms linking gender to parental interference. Health-related dependency has been shown to increase reliance on parental support, thereby reinforcing traditional gender roles and patterns of involvement (Umberson et al., 2010; recent updates in Abdullah et al., 2024). Additionally, the intergenerational transmission of gender norms continues to shape partner selection and marital expectations (Moen et al., 2023). These challenges highlight the need for a balance between traditional family values and modern expectations to foster healthy relationships and promote individual well-being (Ajayi & Ojo, 2020).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of the study is to investigate the influence of gender on parental interference on marital bonding among married teachers in Kwara State. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

1. determine the level of parental interference among married teachers in Kwara State
2. examine whether a significant difference exists in parental interference on marital bonding based on gender among married teachers in Kwara State

Research Hypothesis

Based on the research purpose, one null hypothesis was formulated

H0: There is no significant difference in parental interference on marital bonding based on gender among married teachers in Kwara State.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretically, parental interference in marital bonding draws on several established frameworks such as family systems theory, gender role theory and social learning theory. These frameworks examine the dynamics between individuals, families, and relationships, helping to explain how parental influence can affect marital functioning and bonding. According to Family Systems Theory developed by Murray Bowen (1978), this framework explains the foundational framework for how family members influence each other's behaviors and emotions. This theory

posits that family members are interconnected in such a way that changes in one part of the system (such as parental interference) affect the functioning of the entire system (the marital relationship). Within many Nigerian families, strong kinship ties and cultural expectations of respect for elders reinforce close family connections, sometimes at the expense of marital autonomy (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1994; Akanle et al., 2020). As a result, parents may feel entitled to intervene in marital decisions, conflicts, and roles, viewing such involvement as a continuation of their parental responsibility. Parental interference often leads to the creation of triangles, where one spouse may seek support or advice from their parents, creating tension and reducing the intimacy and autonomy in the marriage.

Similarly Gender Role Theory which explains how socially constructed roles and expectations assigned to men and women influence behavior within family and marital relationships (Eagly, 1987; Wood & Eagly, 2012). The theory posits that individuals internalize gender-specific roles through socialization processes, particularly within the family, and these roles shape attitudes, authority patterns, and interpersonal relationships in adulthood (Eagly, 1987; Ridgeway, 2011). Within the Nigerian socio-cultural context, studies confirm that traditional beliefs about gender roles remain deeply embedded despite modernization. These beliefs continue to influence family organization, expectations of spouses, and perceptions of appropriate marital conduct (Akanle et al., 2020; Fapohunda, 2023). Similarly, cultural preferences, including gender bias in family expectations, reflect enduring patriarchal values that shape family dynamics and interactions (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1999; Amadiume, 1987).

Also, Social Learning Theory provides a relevant framework for understanding how parental interference in marital relationships is learned and sustained within the Nigerian context. The theory, developed by Albert Bandura (1977), posits that individuals acquire behaviors through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within their social environment. In Nigeria, the family serves as the primary agent of socialization, where children are exposed to patterns of interaction between parents, extended family members, and the wider kinship network. These observed behaviors are internalized and later reproduced in adulthood. This theory explain how boys and girls are socialized differently through observation and reinforcement. The boys are often encouraged to be independent, authoritative, and decision-makers, while girls are socialized to be nurturing, submissive, and family-oriented (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). These learned gender roles significantly influence how individuals respond to parental interference in marriage across many Nigerian ethnic groups. Individuals who grow up in homes where parents or extended family members frequently intervene in marital issues are more likely to replicate similar patterns in their own relationships. Research indicates that such intergenerational transmission of behavior is common in family systems where hierarchical authority and respect for elders are emphasized (BMC Psychology, 2024). Individuals who grow up in homes where parents or extended family members frequently intervene in marital issues are more likely to replicate similar patterns in their own relationships. Research indicates that such intergenerational transmission of behavior is common in family systems where hierarchical authority and respect for elders are emphasized (BMC Psychology, 2024).

Empirical Review

Jawondo and Sunmonu (2023) investigated In-Laws Pressures on Marriage as Perceived by Married Couples in Kwara State. The findings of the study indicated that gender and religious differences had no significant impact on the perception of in-laws' influence on marriage and it was concluded that parental religion may not significantly affect marital

bonding among couples. The need to embark on this study arises from the growing recognition of how parental interference affects marital relationships of teachers. Ibrahim and Adeyemi (2020) researched on the Role of Parental Influence in Shaping Marital Expectations among Nigerian Couples. The findings of the study indicate that couples who experienced parental interference had unrealistic marital expectations. The study concluded that, parental expectations significantly shape couples' perceptions of marriage. The study also recommended that, open communication between parents and couples is essential for realistic expectations.

Another study by Soenens et al. (2021) on cross-national empirical study examined how gender influences perceived parental involvement and parental control. Results indicated that women perceived higher levels of parental involvement than men in both countries, and men perceived more behavioral control than women in Portugal. Furthermore, gender was found to moderate the association between perceived parental involvement and perceived psychological and behavioral control differently in each country. Taken together, our findings suggest that gender-differentiated socialization patterns persist during emerging adulthood and that these patterns may be affected by the sociocultural context.

In addition, a dynamic work by Emelah and Kebbi (2025) who examined the extent to which extended family interference (in-law interference) influences marital adjustment among secondary school teachers in Bayelsa State. The study found that there was no significant difference by gender in the extent of this influence, indicating that both male and female teachers experience similar interference effects in their marital lives. Findings revealed that both men and women express vulnerability differently. Hence, it was recommended that couples should be encouraged to explore their vulnerabilities and attachment needs.

Lastly, on the other hand, Olofintoye and Faluyi (2017) who investigated the Influence of Parents-In-Law's Interference on Marital Stability among Young Couples, Findings revealed that mothers-in-law were reported to exert more influence on female spouses, while fathers-in-law influenced male spouses more strongly. It was therefore suggested that gender plays a role in how interference is perceived and experienced, unlike the Kwara State study where no significant gender difference was found.

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was employed in this study to examine the influence of gender on parental interference on marital bonding among married teachers in Kwara state. The population of this study were all 8876 teachers from the junior secondary schools in Kwara State because teachers from these schools are likely to fall within early marital duration, making them more likely to be navigating foundational marital challenges including issues relating to parental interference. Also, the sample of the study was limited to married teachers from three public junior secondary schools in Kwara State. Three (3) Local Government Area in Kwara State were purposefully selected for efficiency and feasibility reasons.

The study utilised a criterion sampling technique to select 350 married teachers as sample size using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula to determine the sample size for the study. The instrument to be used for collection of data was an adapted scale on Marital Interference and Boundaries Scale (MIBS). The development of the MIBS (Goldstein, 2015) is an important step in assessing marital interference, support, and boundaries. The original MIBS consisted of 28 items across three factors: 15 interference items, eight support items, and five boundary items, on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) using Cronbach alpha to determine the reliability for Interference, Support and Boundaries to be .94, .94, and .89, respectively. These values support the homogeneity and

demonstrate an adequate to excellent reliability of the subscales. MIBS). Reliability is the degree to which an instrument or test would yield the same result if administered on the respondents on different occasions. The split half reliability method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument on 60 married teachers selected from another L.G.A Kwara State who are not part of the sample of the study with the use of Cronbach's alpha with a reliability coefficient of 0.76. at 0.05 level of significance. The data collected from this study were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics while testing null hypothesis formulated at 0.05 level of significance.

Result and Discussion

Table 1:

Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender data	Freq.	%
Male	93	26.6
Female	257	73.4
Total	350	100

Table 1 shows the gender characteristics of 73.4% (257) of the respondents are female, while 26.6% (93) are male.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics showing Level of parental interference on marital bonding among married teachers in Kwara state.

Level of parental interference on marital bonding	Range of Score	Frequency	%
Low level	20-40	24	6.9
Moderate level	41-60	268	76.6
High level	61-80	58	16.6
TOTAL		350	100

The result from Table 2 shows the score of parental interference among married teachers computed as a single measure, with minimum, moderate and maximum scores obtained. The minimum and maximum obtained scores were 20 and 80 respectively. The scores from 20-40 were categorized as "Low level" 41-60 were categorized as "Moderate level", while 61-80 was categorized as "High level" respectively. From the result given in Table 2, majority of the married teachers in Kwara state (76.6%,268) have moderate level of parental interference on marital bonding while (10%,58; 24%,4) have high and low level of parental interference on marital bonding respectively.

Table 3:

Independent Samples T-test showing significant difference of gender on parental interference on marital bonding among married Teachers in Kwara State

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	p
Parental interference	Male	93	55.05	6.96	348	.516	0.506>0.05
	Female	257	54.53	8.86			

The result from Table 3 shows that there is no significance difference of gender on parental interference among married Teachers in Kwara State. Given the t (.516), p value > 0.05 which means that the null hypothesis was not rejected. Hence it is therefore concluded that there exist no significance difference of gender on parental interference on marital bonding among married Teachers in Kwara State.

Discussion of findings

The findings from the research question one revealed that 268 (76.6%) out of the 350 respondents reported moderate level of parental interference on marital bonding, while 58 respondents indicating 16.6% reported high level of parental interference on their marital bonding and 24 indicating 6.9% reported low level of parental interference on their marital bonding respectively. This implies that Parental interference on marital bonding is a common experience among the respondents, with the majority dealing with it at a moderate level, while relatively few experience either very high or very low interference among married teachers in Kwara State. This outcome is consistent with studies of (Singh & Shanbhag, 2025; Suleiman et al., 2020) which linked moderate parental involvement to marital conflict and reduced autonomy.

Notwithstanding the unequal gender distribution in the sample, the results showed that most respondents (76.6%, n = 268) experienced a moderate level of parental interference in their marital relationships, whereas 16.6% (n = 58) and 6.9% (n = 24) reported high and low levels of parental interference on marital bonding, respectively. The findings from hypothesis one revealed that there is no significant difference of gender on parental interference on marital bonding among married teachers in Kwara State. This finding corroborates Jawondo and Sunmonu (2023) and Emelah and Kebbi (2025), who found that in-laws’ pressures and extended family interference affect both genders similarly. It implies that within the sociocultural context of Kwara State, parental interference is a shared challenge across genders.

However, Olofintoye and Faluyi (2017) present contrasting evidence that highlighted the role of gender in shaping marital experiences under parental influence. The study reported that mothers-in-law exerted stronger influence on female spouses, while fathers-in-law had greater impact on male spouses. This suggests that gender specific dynamics exist in how interference is perceived, contradicting the neutrality observed in Kwara State. Taken together, these studies suggest that while the Kwara State findings point to gender neutrality within its sociocultural context, other cultural settings reveal gender specific vulnerabilities. This contrast underscores the importance of considering sociocultural variations when interpreting the role of gender in parental interference. It may be that in Kwara State, strong communal norms and extended family traditions create a shared experience of interference across genders, whereas in other contexts, gendered expectations and socialization patterns amplify differences.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of gender on parental interference on marital bonding among married teachers in Kwara State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that parental interference is a prevalent experience among married teachers, with the majority reporting a moderate level of

interference. This suggests that while such interference may not be extreme, it remains sufficiently significant to influence marital dynamics and potentially affect the quality of marital bonding. Furthermore, the study established that there is no statistically significant difference in the experience of parental interference based on gender, indicating that both male and female teachers are similarly affected within the sociocultural context of Kwara State. From a theoretical standpoint, the findings lend support to family systems theory, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of family relationships and the influence of extended family members on marital functioning. The absence of gender differences also provides a nuanced contribution to gender role theory, suggesting that traditional gender expectations may be less influential in determining experiences of parental interference in this specific context. Additionally, the findings align with social learning theory, highlighting how culturally embedded family interaction patterns are sustained across generations regardless of gender. Practically, the study underscores the need for interventions that promote healthy boundary-setting between couples and their extended families. The results highlight the importance of fostering open communication, mutual understanding, and autonomy within marriages while still respecting cultural values. The gender-neutral nature of the findings suggests that marital counseling programs, educational initiatives, and support interventions should be designed to address both partners equally rather than targeting a specific gender. In summary, the findings revealed that most respondents experienced a moderate level of parental interference, indicating that while interference is common, it is not overwhelmingly disruptive but still significant enough to affect marital relationships.

Limitation of the Study

Despite the valuable insights generated from this study, certain limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample size of 351 respondents is relatively small, which may limit the generalizability of the findings beyond the studied population. Additionally, the study was restricted to married teachers in selected public junior secondary schools in Kwara State; therefore, the findings may not adequately represent married individuals in other professions, private institutions, or different cultural and geographical settings. Secondly, the study employed a descriptive survey design, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships between parental interference and marital bonding. The reliance on a cross-sectional approach also means that changes in marital dynamics over time were not captured. Furthermore, the instrument (MIBS) used in collection of data may be subject to response bias, including social desirability bias or inaccurate self-assessment by respondents. Participants may have underreported or over reported their experiences of parental interference due to cultural sensitivities surrounding family relationships. Lastly, the study focused primarily on gender as the independent variable without considering other potentially influential variables such as duration of marriage, age, educational background, religious orientation, and socioeconomic status, which may interact with parental interference and marital bonding.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Counseling interventions should be gender-inclusive, focusing on shared experiences rather than assuming one gender is more affected thereby addressing both spouses equally, given that parental interference affects men and women similarly. Counselors should emphasize shared coping strategies, communication skills, and joint decision-making.
2. Couples should be encouraged to establish and maintain clear boundaries with parents and in-laws. This can be achieved through premarital and postmarital education programmes that focus on balancing cultural expectations with marital autonomy.

3. There is a need for community-based awareness programmes to educate parents and extended family members on the potential negative effects of excessive interference in marital relationships. Promoting respect for couples' independence can enhance marital stability.
4. Educational institutions and relevant government agencies should consider integrating marital and family life education into teacher welfare programmes to support married teachers in managing work–family dynamics effectively.

Suggestions for Further Study

Future studies should:

1. Use larger and more diverse samples across multiple professions and regions.
2. Employ longitudinal designs to examine changes over time.
3. Incorporate qualitative methods (e.g., interviews, focus groups) to gain deeper insights into couples' lived experiences.
4. Explore additional variables such as length of marriage, cultural background, and socioeconomic status as potential moderating factors.

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