

# Age and Level of Education as Determinants of Men's Attitude towards Their Wives' Work Type in South-South Nigeria: Implications for Counseling Interventions and Practice

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## Abstract

This study explored how age and educational attainment influence men's attitudes toward the types of work their wives engage in within South-South Nigeria, with emphasis on the implications for guidance and counseling practice. Two research questions and two corresponding null hypotheses were formulated to guide the inquiry. The descriptive survey research design was employed for the study. Using a combination of purposive and simple random sampling techniques, three states—Rivers, Bayelsa, and Akwa Ibom—were selected, alongside a sample of 225 married men from these locations. Data were gathered through a structured instrument titled Men's Attitude towards Wives' Work Type Questionnaire (MATWWTQ). The reliability of the questionnaire was determined using the test-retest method, which produced a reliability coefficient of 0.74 via Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to answer the research questions, while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at the 0.05 significance level tested the hypotheses. Findings revealed that men's attitudes toward the types of work undertaken by their wives showed no significant variation across age groups or educational levels. Based on these results, it was recommended, among others, that professional counselors develop targeted interventions addressing the cultural, social, and psychological factors influencing men's perceptions of women's work roles. Policymakers should also strengthen or introduce labor and social policies aimed at fostering gender equity both in the workplace and within the family structure.

## Keywords:

Age, Level of Education, Determinants, Attitude, Wives' Work Types, South-South Nigeria

## Introduction

Men's attitudes toward their wives' participation in paid employment have remained a subject of significant intellectual inquiry and social discourse, reflecting broader dynamics of gender relations, socio-economic transformation, and cultural evolution. Across societies, both developed and developing, scholars have examined how men perceive and respond to their wives' involvement in the workforce, acknowledging that these perceptions are shaped by deep-rooted socio-cultural beliefs and prevailing economic realities. Such attitudes extend beyond personal preference, influencing marital relationships, household power dynamics, and broader societal conceptions of gender equity and family stability. Understanding men's orientations toward their wives' work types therefore provides critical insight into how changing economic conditions and evolving gender expectations interact within contemporary Nigerian households. Empirical evidence further suggests that these attitudes are mediated by socio-demographic variables such as age, education, and exposure to modern value systems—factors that often determine whether men exhibit traditional or egalitarian orientations toward gender roles within marriage. Kaufman and White (2014) provided a theoretical framework for understanding men's perceptions of their wives' employment, identifying four distinct typologies: traditional,

expectant traditional, egalitarian, and expectant egalitarian. The traditional attitude aligns with the male breadwinner ideology, which situates men as economic providers and decision-makers, while assigning women the primary responsibility for domestic care and child-rearing (Crompton, 2006; Salami, 2013; Nwosu, 2012). Men who exhibit expectant traditional attitudes maintain these gendered expectations but reluctantly acknowledge the necessity of women's paid employment in response to increasing financial pressures (Kaufman & White, 2014; White & Rogers, 2000; Lyonette, Kaufman & Crompton, 2011). In contrast, egalitarian men view their wives' employment as a source of mutual benefit that enhances family welfare, while expectant egalitarian men accept dual-income arrangements primarily for their emotional and financial advantages (Stanley, Stevens, Yeatt & Seward, 2005; Kaufman & White, 2014). These distinctions reveal the shifting nature of gender relations, where men's attitudes reflect the tension between enduring patriarchal norms and the modern realities of economic interdependence. In Nigeria, particularly in the South-South region, the issue of married women's employment remains both culturally and economically significant. Traditional expectations that define women primarily as homemakers continue to coexist with the realities of a changing economy, where dual-income households have become increasingly essential due to inflation, high living costs, and limited employment opportunities. Consequently, many married women now participate actively in various forms of work—including public and private sector employment, self-employment, and entrepreneurial ventures—to support their families' welfare. Despite women constituting nearly half of Nigeria's population and contributing immensely to national development (British Council, 2012; Makama, 2013), gender disparities in employment opportunities persist. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2008) and the National Bureau of Statistics (2011) report that women remain underrepresented in wage employment and managerial roles, reflecting structural inequalities that restrict their full participation in

theworkforce.

Nevertheless, empirical evidence demonstrates that women's increasing involvement in paid employment has produced substantial socio-economic benefits for families. Data from the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) reveal that over 70% of married women were employed in the preceding year, although their earnings often remain lower than those of their husbands (FRN, 2013). Furthermore, urban women are more likely to earn higher incomes than their rural counterparts. In the South-South region, specifically, the 2008 NDHS indicated that 63.9% of married women were engaged in economic activities at the time of the survey (FRN, 2013). These statistics underscore the growing significance of women's work in sustaining household economies and national productivity.

Despite these positive developments, men's attitudes toward their wives' employment continue to vary. While some men acknowledge the economic necessity and mutual benefits of women's paid work, others perceive it as a threat to marital stability, domestic harmony, and traditional gender hierarchies (Wang, Parker & Taylor, 2013). Empirical studies confirm that husbands' attitudes play a decisive role in shaping women's participation in paid employment. In many instances, women have either limited or discontinued their professional engagement due to overt or subtle discouragement from their spouses (Glass, 1998; Kuperberg & Stone, 2008; Stone & Lovejoy, 2004). Such attitudes not only reflect the persistence of patriarchal values but also demonstrate how socio-demographic factors such as education and age influence men's openness to non-traditional gender roles. Broadly, employment is conceptualized as any productive activity undertaken in exchange for financial or material compensation (Steers, 2001; Akpala, 2002). Within this conceptual framework, this study investigates age and level of education as critical determinants of men's attitudes toward their wives' work types in South-South Nigeria. It further explores the implications of these attitudes for counseling interventions and practice, emphasizing the need for counseling professionals to design gender-

sensitive programs that promote positive spousal support, equitable role negotiation, and marital harmony in the face of evolving socio-economic realities.

### Statement of the Problem

In contemporary Nigeria, the evolving dynamics of gender roles continue to reshape perceptions of men's and women's positions within the family and the broader socio-economic structure. Traditionally, Nigerian society has been characterized by a patriarchal orientation that assigns men the role of breadwinners and women that of homemakers. This cultural framework has historically influenced societal expectations regarding the types of work deemed appropriate for married women. Consequently, women's participation in paid employment, particularly in occupations perceived as male-dominated or culturally inappropriate, has often attracted skepticism and resistance from their spouses.

However, the advent of modernization, education, and economic globalization has increasingly challenged these traditional gender constructs. Many women now pursue careers in diverse fields as a response to economic necessity, educational empowerment, and personal ambition. Despite this progress, prevailing attitudes among men toward their wives' work types often remain deeply entrenched in socio-cultural and demographic factors such as age and educational attainment. Empirical observations suggest that younger and more educated men tend to exhibit egalitarian and supportive attitudes toward women's employment, while older and less educated men often uphold traditional views that limit women's occupational choices. In the South-South region of Nigeria—a culturally heterogeneous area with strong traditional values, religious influences, and rapid urbanization—these attitudes assume a particularly complex dimension. The interplay between cultural conservatism and socio-economic change has created a tension between traditional marital expectations and contemporary realities of dual-income households. As such, men's perceptions of their wives' work types may have far-reaching

implications for marital harmony, gender equality, and family stability within the region. Despite the growing importance of women's economic participation, limited empirical evidence exists on how men's age and educational level shape their attitudes toward their wives' occupational engagement in South-South Nigeria. This lack of localized data constrains the development of effective counseling and policy interventions aimed at promoting gender-equitable relationships and enhancing marital adjustment in the face of evolving gender norms.

It is against this backdrop that the present study investigates age and level of education as determinants of men's attitude towards their wives' work type in South-South Nigeria. The study seeks to generate evidence-based insights that will inform counseling practice and interventions designed to foster healthier marital relationships, promote gender inclusivity, and support the socio-economic empowerment of women within the region.

### Objectives of the Study

#### Specifically, the study aims to:

- i. Find out the attitude of men towards wives' work type in South South, Nigeria in relation to their age range.
- ii. Find out the attitude of men towards wives' work type in South South, Nigeria according to their level of education.

### 1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the difference in men's attitude towards their wives' work type based on age in South South, Nigeria?
2. What is the difference in men's attitude towards their wives' work type based on level of education in South South, Nigeria?

### Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in men's attitude towards their wives' work type based on age in South South, Nigeria.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference in men's attitude towards their wives' work type based on level of education in South South, Nigeria.

### Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research design. The population comprised 37,326 married couples (husbands and working wives) who were either employed in the public/private sector or engaged in entrepreneurial activities, residing in Rivers East Senatorial District (Rivers State), Bayelsa Central Senatorial Zone (Bayelsa State), and Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial Zone (Akwa Ibom State). Population data were sourced from the respective state marriage registries (Rivers, 2019; Bayelsa, 2018; Akwa Ibom, 2020), with occupational details confirmed through registry records.

A sample of 225 married couples (75 from each senatorial district) was selected using purposive sampling, based on participants' relevance to the study focus. The three participating states were drawn from the six South-South states of Nigeria

using simple random sampling, representing 50% of the region.

Data were collected using the Men's Attitude Towards Wives' Work Type Questionnaire (MATWWQ). The instrument's validity (face, content, construct) was verified by experts from the Department of Guidance and Counselling, University of Abuja, while a test-retest reliability procedure involving 30 respondents produced a coefficient of 0.74, determined using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation.

Frequency counts and percentages summarized demographic data, mean and standard deviation addressed research questions, and ANOVA tested hypotheses at 0.05 significance level.

### Analysis and Results

**Table 1: Distribution of Male Respondents According to Age Range**

Age Range	Number		Percentage (%)	
	Male		Male	
21 – 25	19		8.4	
26 – 35	48		21.3	
35 – 40	65		29.0	
41yrs and above	93		41.3	
Total	225		100.0	

Table 1 presents the age distribution of the male respondents. A total of 8.4% fall within the 21–25 age category, 21.3% are aged between 26 and 35 years, 29.0% are within the 35–40 age range,

while the largest proportion, 41.3%, comprises those aged 40 years and above.

**Table 2: Distribution of Male Respondents according to Level of Education**

Level of Education	Number	Percentage (%)
No schooling	14	6.22
Primary	48	21.33
Secondary	75	33.33
Tertiary	88	39.11
Total	225	100.0

Table 2 illustrates the educational attainment of the male respondents. The findings reveal that 6.22% had no formal education, 21.33% completed primary education, 33.33% attained

secondary education, while 39.1% held tertiary qualifications. These results suggest that a significant proportion of the male respondents had achieved education at the tertiary level,

indicating a relatively high level of educational attainment within the group.

### Research Question One

What is the difference in men's attitude towards their wives work type based on age in South South, Nigeria?

**Table 3: Analysis of Difference in Men's Attitude towards Wives' Work Type Based on Age in South South, Nigeria**

Men's Attitude Towards Wives' Work Types	(N = 225)	Age Range of Male Respondents	$\bar{x}$	S.D	Decision
Traditional Attitude	19	21 – 25 years	2.10	1.05	Disagreed
	48	26 – 35 years	2.02	1.07	Disagreed
	65	35 – 40 years	2.08	1.00	Disagreed
	93	41 years and above	2.14	1.09	Disagreed
<b>Section Mean</b>			<b>2.10</b>	<b>1.05</b>	<b>Disagreed</b>
Egalitarian Attitude	19	21 – 25 years	3.02	.87	Agreed
	48	26 – 35 years	2.90	.82	Agreed
	65	35 – 40 years	2.92	.79	Agreed
	93	41 years and above	2.94	.74	Agreed
<b>Section Mean</b>			<b>2.94</b>	<b>.81</b>	<b>Agreed</b>
Expectant Traditional Attitude	19	21 – 25 years	2.80	.84	Agreed
	48	26 – 35 years	2.72	.90	Agreed
	65	35 – 40 years	2.90	.81	Agreed
	93	41 years and above	2.84	.89	Agreed
<b>Section Mean</b>			<b>2.82</b>	<b>.86</b>	<b>Agreed</b>
Expectant Egalitarian	19	21 – 25 years	2.94	.88	Agreed
	48	26 – 35 years	2.90	.82	Agreed
	65	35 – 40 years	2.92	.80	Agreed
	93	41 years and above	2.90	.84	Agreed
<b>Section Mean</b>			<b>2.92</b>	<b>.84</b>	<b>Agreed</b>
<b>Overall Mean</b>			<b>2.70</b>	<b>.89</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

Table 3 presents the comparative analysis of men's attitudes toward their wives' work types across various age groups in South-South Nigeria. The results show that respondents across all age categories demonstrated a negative mean score (2.10) for the traditional attitude dimension, indicating a general disagreement with traditional views. In contrast, positive mean scores were observed for the egalitarian (2.94), expectant traditional (2.82), and expectant egalitarian (2.92) dimensions, reflecting a more favorable disposition towards these perspectives. These findings suggest a predominant rejection of traditional attitudes and an endorsement of more progressive or mixed

views on wives' employment. Furthermore, the overall mean score of 2.70, which surpasses the decision threshold of 2.50, implies a consistent pattern in men's attitudes toward their wives' work types regardless of age group.

### Research Question Two

What is the difference in men's attitude towards their wives work type based on level of education in South South, Nigeria?

**Table 4: Analysis of Difference in Men's Attitude towards Wives' Work Type Based on Level of Education in South South, Nigeria**



Men's Attitude Towards Wives' Work Types	(N = 225)	Level of Education of Male Respondents	$\bar{x}$	S.D	Decision
Traditional Attitude	14	No schooling	2.02	1.08	Disagreed
	48	Primary education	2.14	1.05	Disagreed
	75	Secondary education	2.09	1.12	Disagreed
	88	Tertiary education	2.00	1.07	Disagreed
Section Mean			2.06	1.08	Disagreed
Egalitarian Attitude	14	No schooling	2.84	.92	Agreed
	48	Primary education	2.93	.89	Agreed
	75	Secondary education	3.03	.77	Agreed
	88	Tertiary education	2.82	.80	Agreed
Section Mean			2.91	.85	Agreed
Expectant Traditional Attitude	14	No schooling	2.76	.82	Agreed
	48	Primary education	2.80	.90	Agreed
	75	Secondary education	2.90	.74	Agreed
	88	Tertiary education	2.82	.80	Agreed
Section Mean			2.81	.82	Agreed
Expectant Egalitarian	14	No schooling	2.80	.91	Agreed
	48	Primary education	2.91	.88	Agreed
	75	Secondary education	2.84	.89	Agreed
	88	Tertiary education	2.90	.78	Agreed
Section Mean			2.86	.87	Agreed
Overall Mean			2.66	.87	Agreed

Table 4 presents the analysis of variations in men's attitudes toward their wives' work types according to educational attainment in South-South Nigeria. The findings indicate that men who held traditional attitudes reported a lower mean score of 2.06. In contrast, those categorized as having egalitarian, expectant traditional, and expectant egalitarian attitudes recorded higher mean scores of 2.91, 2.81, and 2.86, respectively. The overall mean score of 2.66 surpasses the benchmark value of 2.50, suggesting that, on average, attitudes toward wives' work types tend to be favorable.

However, this result implies that educational level does not produce a statistically significant difference in men's attitudes within the region.

### Test of Hypotheses

H0<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference in men's attitude towards their wives' work type based on age in South South, Nigeria

**Table 5: Analysis of Variance in Men's Attitude towards their Wives Work Type based on Age in South South, Nigeria**

Variable	Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.
Age	Between Groups	2796.613	3	932.204	3.647	.089
	Within Groups	56495.386	221	255.635		
	Total	59291.99	224			

In Table 5, the p-value of 0.089 is greater than the alpha level of 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in men's attitude towards their wives work type based on age in South South, Nigeria.

H0<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant difference in men's attitude towards their wives' work type based on level of education in South South, Nigeria

**Table 6: Analysis of Variance in Men's Attitude towards their Wives Work Type**

**based on Level of Education in South South, Nigeria**

Variable	Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.
Level of education	Between Groups	1897.724	3	632.575	2.816	.073
	Within Groups	49639.573	221	224.613		
	Total	51537.297	224			

In Table 6, the p-value of 0.073 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that there is no significant difference in men's attitude towards their wives work type based on level of education in South South, Nigeria.

**Discussion of Findings**

The study revealed no significant difference in men's attitudes towards their wives' work type based on age in South South, Nigeria. This aligns with Tobins (2018), who similarly reported no significant difference in husbands' attitudes towards wives' employment based on age in FCT, Abuja. However, Adam et al. (2021) found a strong positive relationship between women's employment and men's attitudes based on age, though they also identified a misleading association between women's participation in the public sphere and men's attitudes by age.

Similarly, the study found no significant difference in men's attitudes towards their wives' work type based on educational level in South South, Nigeria. This corroborates Tobins (2018), who reported a comparable finding in FCT, Abuja. Adam et al. (2021) also observed a significant link between women's employment and men's attitudes based on educational attainment, but again noted a false relationship between women's public engagement and men's attitudes relative to education.

**Conclusion**

The study concluded that men's age and educational attainment did not significantly influence their traditional, expectant traditional, egalitarian, or expectant egalitarian attitudes toward their wives' work types in South-South Nigeria. These findings indicate that neither age nor education serves as a determinant of men's

attitudes toward their wives' participation in paid employment. This outcome implies that men's perceptions of their wives' work are shaped more by enduring socio-cultural values and contextual norms than by demographic characteristics. Consequently, counseling interventions aimed at fostering positive spousal attitudes toward women's employment should address underlying cultural and relational dynamics rather than focusing solely on demographic differences.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for counselors, policymakers, and government agencies to address the underlying factors influencing men's attitudes towards their wives' work type in South-South Nigeria:

1. Professional counselors should design and implement targeted interventions that address the cultural, social, and psychological underpinnings of men's attitudes toward women's work roles. Since educational attainment and age were not significant predictors, counseling efforts should focus on challenging traditional gender role stereotypes, promoting mutual respect, and encouraging shared marital responsibilities. These interventions should be context-specific and culturally sensitive to effectively influence attitudes at the family and community levels.

2. Policymakers should formulate or enhance existing labor and social policies that promote gender equity in the workplace and within family settings. Policies such as flexible work schedules, paternity leave, affordable childcare services, and incentives for organizations that support family-friendly practices should be prioritized. Additionally, public campaigns

should accompany these policies to raise awareness about the importance of shared family responsibilities and the value of women's economic participation.

3. Government agencies, such as the Ministry of Women Affairs and the National Orientation Agency, should collaborate with traditional rulers, religious leaders, and community-based organizations to implement comprehensive gender sensitization programs. These programs should particularly target men, challenging entrenched cultural beliefs and fostering more egalitarian attitudes toward women's participation in the workforce. Culturally appropriate communication strategies should be employed to ensure acceptance and effectiveness.

### **Implications for Counseling Interventions and Practice**

The findings of this study, which indicated that men's age and educational level did not significantly influence their traditional, expectant traditional, egalitarian, or expectant egalitarian attitudes towards their wives' work type in South-South Nigeria, have important implications for guidance and counseling interventions. These implications can be organized into four key areas:

#### **1. Counseling Interventions for Value Reorientation and Attitudinal Transformation**

The minimal predictive influence of demographic variables such as age and educational attainment on men's attitudes toward women's work roles underscores the necessity for counseling interventions to prioritize value reorientation and attitudinal change. Counseling practitioners should develop structured interventions aimed at addressing the cultural ideologies and entrenched societal norms that perpetuate traditional gender role expectations. Through reflective counseling processes, clients can be guided to critically evaluate the implications of rigid gender roles and to internalize more egalitarian perspectives on women's participation in professional and economic spheres.

#### **2. Community-Based Counseling and Collaborative Engagement with Stakeholders**

Given that individual characteristics alone do not sufficiently explain variations in attitudes, there is a critical need for community-based counseling interventions. Counseling practitioners should proactively engage with key community stakeholders, including traditional leaders, religious organizations, and cultural institutions, to promote collective reflection and dialogue on gender dynamics within marital contexts. Embedding counseling initiatives within established community structures can facilitate gradual cultural transformation, encouraging broader societal acceptance of diverse occupational roles for women across various social groups.

#### **3. Family Counseling and Couple-Focused Therapeutic Interventions**

The findings further highlight the relevance of family counseling and couple-based interventions in challenging and reshaping gender role expectations within the family setting. Counseling practitioners should facilitate therapeutic spaces that foster open communication between partners concerning occupational responsibilities, mutual respect, and shared household roles. Such interventions are essential in supporting couples to negotiate flexible and egalitarian marital arrangements, irrespective of the husband's demographic profile. By promoting adaptive role negotiations, counseling interventions can contribute to improved marital relationships and overall family functioning.

#### **4. Capacity Building and Continuous Professional Development for Counseling Practitioners**

Effectively addressing the complexities associated with gender-related attitudes necessitates sustained professional development for counseling practitioners. Training programs should emphasize cultural competence, gender sensitivity, and evidence-based counseling strategies for addressing gender issues. Furthermore, practitioners should be encouraged to participate in advocacy efforts and policy engagements that promote gender equity both within familial contexts and the broader workplace environment. Such professional



commitments are essential for ensuring that counseling interventions remain relevant, transformative, and socially impactful.

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