

Attitude of Men towards Their Wives' Work Type and its Influence on Marriages in South South, Nigeria: Implications for Guidance and Counseling

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Abstract

This study investigated men's attitudes toward their wives' work types and their influence on marital relationships in South-South Nigeria, with implications for guidance and counseling. Two research questions and one null hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. A descriptive survey design was adopted, employing both simple random and purposive sampling techniques to select three South-South states—Rivers, Bayelsa, and Akwa Ibom—and a sample of 225 married couples from these states. Two instruments, titled *Men's Attitude Toward Wives' Work Type Questionnaire (MATWWTQ)* and *Influence of Wives' Work Type on Marriages Questionnaire (IWWTMQ)*, were used for data collection. The reliability of the instruments was established through the test-retest method, with Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients of .74 and .79 for the MATWWTQ and IWWTMQ, respectively. Data were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviations for the research questions, while multiple regression analysis tested the null hypothesis at the .05 level of significance. Findings revealed that men's attitudes toward their wives' work types were predominantly egalitarian, expectant egalitarian, and expectant traditional. The study further established a significant influence of men's attitudes toward their wives' work types on marital relationships in South-South Nigeria. Based on these findings, it was recommended that men with traditional attitudes be sensitized to current economic realities that challenge the sole breadwinner model, thereby encouraging them to support their wives' gainful employment and contributions to family stability. In addition, working wives should be counseled on the importance of balancing occupational responsibilities

with family and parental roles, while husbands of women engaged in demanding occupations should be encouraged to provide greater domestic support to minimize marital conflicts and enhance family cohesion.

Keywords:

men's attitude, wives' work type, marital relationship, South-South Nigeria, guidance and counseling

Introduction

Men's attitudes toward the types of work their wives engage in have long been a subject of social and psychological inquiry, as such attitudes significantly shape marital dynamics and family stability. Attitude, generally understood as a learned predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably toward a person, object, or idea, is not static but evolves over time through individual experiences and social influences (Sarmah & Pari, 2014; Syeda, 2016). Within the marital context, men's perceptions of their wives' occupational engagement are often influenced by cultural expectations, socio-economic realities, and shifting gender norms.

Kaufman and White (2014) identified four major categories of men's attitudes toward their wives' employment—traditional, expectant traditional, egalitarian, and expectant egalitarian. The traditional orientation, rooted in patriarchal ideology, perceives the man as the principal breadwinner and assigns domestic and caregiving roles exclusively to the woman (Crompton, 2006; Salami, 2013; Nwosu, 2012). Expectant traditional men, however, while holding similar views, often allow their wives to work due to financial necessity rather than

ideological conviction (White & Rogers, 2000; Lyonette, Kaufman & Crompton, 2011). Conversely, egalitarian and expectant egalitarian men accept or even encourage their wives' participation in paid work, viewing it as mutually beneficial for the family's economic and emotional well-being (Buss, Shackelford, Kirkpatrick & Larsen, 2001; Schoen & Cheng, 2006; Stanley, Stevens, Yeatts & Seward, 2005). Over time, economic pressures, modernization, and women's educational advancement have transformed gender role expectations in many societies, including Nigeria. The increasing cost of living and expanding career opportunities for women have compelled a gradual redefinition of marital roles. Nigerian women now participate actively across diverse sectors—public, private, self-employment, and entrepreneurship—each carrying distinct implications for family stability and role performance (Lazzari, 2019; Dollarhide, 2020; Gaddefors & Anderson, 2017).

Marriage itself remains a vital social institution in Nigeria, embodying shared responsibilities, values, and expectations between partners (Animashaun & Fatile, 2011). A healthy marital relationship enhances psychological well-being and family cohesion (Edinyang, Ubi & Yaro, 2013). However, the intersection of occupational demands and domestic roles often generates conflict, especially where traditional expectations persist. Studies reveal that when wives engage in paid employment without corresponding spousal support, marital satisfaction tends to decline, particularly among men with traditional gender ideologies (Hoffman, 2004; Ghosh, 2016; Presser, 2010; Hemalatha & Suryanarayan, 2007; Sundaram, 2010).

Conversely, shared domestic responsibilities and mutual understanding between partners contribute positively to marital stability (Saxena & Habbouba, 2007; Sandhu & Mehrotra, 2010). Women's employment has also been associated with both empowering and disruptive marital outcomes—enhancing autonomy and reducing exposure to domestic violence in some contexts, while contributing to marital strain in others (Olusegun, 2015; Vignoli et al., 2018; Omolayo et al., 2013).

In recent decades, Nigerian women have increasingly transitioned from traditional homemakers to active economic contributors, pursuing higher education and professional aspirations (Animashaun & Oladeni, 2012; Davison & Burke, 2011; Kahkha et al., 2014; Bankole & Adeyeri, 2014). Nonetheless, tensions persist between career advancement and family responsibilities, particularly where societal expectations still demand that women prioritize domestic obligations (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2013; Obamiro & Obason, 2013; Eze, 2017).

In the South-South region of Nigeria, these dynamics are especially pronounced. Reports indicate increasing marital tensions arising from the dual burden of employment and home management among working wives, as many men continue to perceive domestic chores as women's exclusive duty (Ntoimo & Akokuwebe, 2014). The region's relatively high rate of marital disruption underscores the urgency of addressing these attitudinal and role-based conflicts through evidence-based counseling interventions.

Despite growing scholarship on gender roles and marital satisfaction, limited empirical studies have specifically examined how men's attitudes toward their wives' types of work influence marital relationships in South-South Nigeria. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by investigating the nature and implications of men's attitudes toward their wives' work types, providing insights relevant for guidance and counseling professionals in promoting marital harmony and gender-inclusive support systems.

Statement of the Problem

In many patriarchal contexts, particularly in Nigeria, the employment of married women remains a subject of social contention shaped by entrenched cultural norms and traditional gender expectations. While some men maintain that women should prioritize domestic roles and child-rearing, others acknowledge their wives' participation in paid employment as beneficial to family welfare and economic stability. However, despite the rising number of educated and employable women in South-South Nigeria—especially in Bayelsa and Rivers States—many still encounter opposition from their husbands

regarding active participation in the workforce. This opposition is often rooted in conservative gender ideologies that define women's work as secondary to men's economic roles. Consequently, there exists a persistent tension between men's perceptions of their wives' ideal responsibilities and the realities of modern family life, where economic survival often necessitates dual-income households. Such conflicting expectations have been associated with increasing incidences of marital discord, including domestic violence, separation, and divorce.

Empirical evidence suggests that many marital conflicts stem from disputes over gender role expectations, particularly when men perceive their wives' financial independence as a threat to traditional male authority. These negative attitudes not only undermine marital harmony but also perpetuate emotional strain and instability within families. Hence, understanding men's attitudes toward their wives' work types and the resulting implications for marital relationships is crucial for developing counseling strategies that promote gender harmony, mutual respect, and marital stability in the South-South region of Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the attitudes of men toward their wives' work types in South-South Nigeria.
2. To determine the influence of men's attitudes toward their wives' work types on marriages in South-South Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the nature of men's attitudes toward their wives' work types in South-South Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of men's attitudes toward their wives' work types on marriages in South-South Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

H₀: There is no significant influence of men's attitudes toward their wives' work types on marriages in South-South Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive correlational research design, which, according to Fowler (2013), belongs to the quantitative research tradition and focuses on identifying and explaining relationships between variables without manipulation. This design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to examine existing attitudes and behaviors of the study population concerning the variables under investigation. It also facilitated the use of structured questionnaires to obtain accurate, dependable, and generalizable data, thereby enhancing the external validity of the study.

The population of the study comprised 37,326 married couples—specifically husbands and their employed wives—working in public, private, or entrepreneurial sectors across three senatorial districts in South-South Nigeria: Rivers East (Rivers State), Bayelsa Central (Bayelsa State), and Akwa Ibom North East (Akwa Ibom State).

A sample of 225 married couples (225 husbands and 225 wives) was selected using a combination of sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was applied to include only couples in which both partners were married and employed, while simple random sampling ensured equal representation of states within the region. Consequently, Rivers, Bayelsa, and Akwa Ibom States were selected, representing 50% of the states in the South-South geopolitical zone.

Two research instruments were developed for data collection: the Men's Attitude Towards Wives' Work Type Questionnaire (MATWWQ) and the Influence of Wives' Work Type on Marriages Questionnaire (IWWTMQ). The instruments were validated for face, content, and construct validity by experts in the Department of Guidance and Counselling, University of Abuja. To ensure reliability, a pilot study was conducted using the test-retest method, and the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) yielded reliability indices of 0.74 for the MATWWQ and 0.79 for the IWWTMQ, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

For data analysis, mean scores and standard deviations were employed to answer the research questions, revealing patterns in respondents' attitudes and perceptions. To test

the null hypothesis, multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive influence of men's attitudes toward their wives' work types on marital outcomes in South-South Nigeria.

Data Analysis and Results

Research Question One

What is the nature of men's attitude towards their wives type in South South, Nigeria?

Table 1: Analysis of the Nature of Men's Attitude towards Wives' Work Type in South South, Nigeria

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	S.D	Rank	Decision
A	Traditional Attitude								
6	I prefer my wife staying at home and caring for the children.	43	34	48	100	2.09	.84	2	Disagreed
7	I prefer my wife staying at home and performing domestic work.	32	41	29	123	1.92	.93	5	Disagreed
8	I do not want my wife to be employed.	28	39	67	91	2.02	1.03	4	Disagreed
9	I do not prefer my wife working and earning a salary because I earn enough for the upkeep of the home.	30	43	68	84	2.08	.96	3	Disagreed
10	Financially, I am able to provide for my wife and children's needs so she doesn't have to work.	45	33	82	65	2.26	.91	1	Disagreed
	Section Mean					2.07	.93		Disagreed
B	Egalitarian Attitude								
11	I prefer my wife working and earning a salary, although I earn enough for the upkeep of the home.	94	59	44	28	2.97	.72	3	Agreed
12	Financially, I am able to provide for my wife and children needs but I encourage her to work.	88	77	29	31	2.99	.86	2	Agreed
13	I prefer my wife working and earning a salary to provide another source of income in the home.	80	84	32	29	2.96	.73	4	Agreed
14	I appreciate my wife's working status because it makes the home front balanced.	83	72	38	32	2.92	.82	5	Agreed
15	I encourage my wife to engage in economic activities that can improve the level of income in the family.	95	76	30	24	3.08	.80	1	Agreed
	Section Mean					3.00	.80		Agreed
C	Expectant Traditional Attitude								
16	I prefer my wife staying at home and caring for the children but she has to work.	75	62	38	50	2.72	.83	5	Agreed
17	I prefer my wife staying at home and performing domestic work but she has to work.	70	73	42	40	2.76	.90	4	Agreed
18	My marital home is not balanced in terms of domestic chores because my wife has to work.	69	89	31	36	2.85	.92	2	Agreed
19	I do not prefer my wife working to earn a salary but I can't sustain the home alone based on my earnings.	70	87	30	38	2.84	.87	3	Agreed
20	I wish my wife does not work but the family needs require her financial input.	79	84	35	27	2.96	.83	1	Agreed

	Section Mean					2.83	.87		Agreed
D	Expectant Egalitarian								
21	I prefer my wife to have a means of earning income but employment opportunities are limited.	74	76	34	41	2.81	.90	5	Agreed
22	I wish my wife is working because it will take away the burden of managing all financial responsibilities at home.	89	70	32	31	2.94	.87	2	Agreed
23	My wife does not mind being a housewife although I encourage her to find employment and support the home.	83	77	34	31	2.94	.87	2	Agreed
24	I expect my wife to find employment and support the home even though my income can sustain us.	76	84	30	35	2.89	.82	3	Agreed
25	I encourage my wife to work or establish a business but she prefers spending time raising the kids.	81	69	36	39	2.85	.79	4	Agreed
	Section Mean					2.90	.84		Agreed
	Overall Mean					2.70	.86		Agreed

Table 1 presents the analysis of men's attitudes towards their wives' work types in South-South Nigeria. The section mean scores were 2.07 for traditional attitude, 3.00 for egalitarian attitude, 2.83 for expectant traditional, and 2.90 for expectant egalitarian. These results indicate that, while the traditional attitude fell below the criterion mean of 2.50, the other attitudes scored above it. This suggests that men in South-South Nigeria predominantly exhibit egalitarian,

expectant egalitarian, and expectant traditional attitudes towards their wives' work types.

Research Question Two

What is the influence of men's attitude towards their wives work type on marriages in South South, Nigeria?

Table 2: Analysis of Influence of Men's Attitude towards Wives' Work Type on Marriages in South South, Nigeria

S/ N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	S.D	Rank	Decision
4	I have little time for intimacy with my husband due to the nature of my work and this causes tension in our home.	36	63	66	60	2.30	1.12	6	Disagreed
5	I work longer hours and my husband is not happy about it and this often results in disagreements.	72	81	29	43	2.81	.97	4	Agreed
6	My marriage is intact although my husband wants me to spend more time with the family after working hours.	78	69	47	31	2.90	.89	3	Agreed
7	My husband complains bitterly about the limited time I spend with him and the children due to the nature of my work.	70	72	68	44	2.80	.94	5	Agreed
8	Working and earning a salary has changed my behaviour towards managing the home and my husband is upset about it.	35	44	82	64	2.22	1.10	7	Disagreed
9	My husband is not bothered whether I work so many hours and come home late to handle domestic work.	39	42	52	92	2.12	1.02	9	Disagreed

10	My marriage is facing challenges because of the number of hours I have to work to earn an income.	31	29	88	77	2.06	1.04	10	Disagreed
11	My husband is not pleased with the nature of my work and it shows in his attitude towards me.	28	52	66	79	2.13	1.09	8	Disagreed
12	My marriage is working out smoothly even though I have little time to handle domestic chores.	77	86	37	25	3.00	.79	1	Agreed
13	I usually engage in quarrels with my husband due to misunderstandings from the role conflicts between the home and my work.	85	68	38	34	2.91	.86	2	Agreed
	Overall Mean					2.53	.982		Agreed

Table 2 presents the analysis of how men's attitudes toward their wives' work types influence marriage in South-South Nigeria. The results indicate that female respondents largely disagreed with statements suggesting that limited intimacy due to work, negative effects of salary earning on home management, or extended work hours significantly strain their marriages (Means = 2.06–2.30). However, they agreed that long work hours often lead to disagreements (Mean = 2.81), that husbands express concern over reduced family time (Mean = 2.80), and that marital stability persists despite minimal domestic involvement (Mean = 3.00). The overall section

mean of 2.53—slightly above the 2.50 benchmark—suggests a moderately positive influence of men's attitudes toward their wives' work types on marital outcomes in the region.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant influence of men's attitude towards their wives' work type on marriages in South South, Nigeria

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis of Influence of Men's Attitude towards their Wives Work Type on Marriages in South South, Nigeria

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient Beta (β)	t	Sig.	Rank
	B	SE				
(Constant)	3.852	2.763		2.197	.069	
Traditional	.207	.128	.189	2.324	.037	4 th
Egalitarian	.296	.137	.496	5.317	.000	1 st
Expectant Traditional	.248	.117	.393	3.671	.020	3 rd
Expectant Egalitarian	.271	.189	.429	4.932	.006	2 nd
α Dependent Variables = marriages						

In Table 3, the multiple regression analysis was interpreted using the Beta (β), t, and p-values of each independent variable. Among the four dimensions of men's attitudes towards wives' work types, Egalitarian attitude emerged as the strongest predictor of marital quality ($\beta = .496$, $t = 5.317$, $p = .000$), followed by Expectant egalitarian attitude ($\beta = .429$, $t = 4.932$, $p = .006$), Expectant traditional attitude ($\beta = .393$, $t = 3.671$, $p = .020$), and Traditional attitude ($\beta = .189$, $t = 2.324$, $p = .037$) in descending order of

influence. This indicates that while egalitarian attitudes have the greatest impact on marital quality, traditional attitudes have the least. Furthermore, since all p-values were below the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected. This confirms that men's attitudes towards their wives' work types significantly influence marriages in South-South Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that men's attitudes toward their wives' work types in South-South Nigeria are predominantly egalitarian, expectant egalitarian, and expectant traditional. This aligns with Kuruvilla and Seema (2014), who found that male employees in India exhibited significantly positive attitudes toward women's employment. Similarly, Tobins (2018) reported that men's attitudes toward their wives' employment in the FCT, Abuja, were largely egalitarian and expectant egalitarian. In the same vein, Adam, Ahmad, Khan, Ali, Bibi, and Abdullah (2021) observed that men's egalitarian attitudes were significantly associated with working wives who contribute to family expenses.

Furthermore, the study established a significant influence of men's attitudes toward their wives' work types on marital relationships in South-South Nigeria. This finding is consistent with Cetinkaya and Gencdogan (2014), Desai, Chugh, and Brief (2014), and Lee (2022). Cetinkaya and Gencdogan (2014) identified gender role attitude as a predictor of marital quality, indicating a positive and significant relationship between marital satisfaction and egalitarian gender role attitudes. Desai, Chugh, and Brief (2014) reported that traditional marriage structures negatively correlated with men's attitudes toward women's workforce participation, while Lee (2022) demonstrated that traditional attitudes toward wives' employment diminish marital quality, whereas egalitarian attitudes enhance family cohesion and marital satisfaction.

Conclusion

The study revealed that, in order of descending magnitude, men's attitudes toward their wives' work types were egalitarian, expectant egalitarian, and expectant traditional. This suggests that a majority of men in South-South Nigeria demonstrate increasing openness and adaptability toward women's participation in the workforce, reflecting a gradual shift from rigid traditional gender norms to more balanced and equitable perspectives on spousal roles. The predominance of egalitarian and expectant egalitarian orientations indicates that many men acknowledged the socio-economic and

psychological value of their wives' employment and view such participation as complementary rather than competitive within the marital relationship.

In conclusion, the study established that men's egalitarian, expectant egalitarian, and expectant traditional attitudes toward their wives' work types exert a positive and significant influence on marriages in South-South Nigeria. This finding implies that men who support or partially support their wives' occupational engagement are more likely to experience higher levels of marital satisfaction, cooperation, and stability. The results further underscore that evolving gender role perceptions contribute to improved communication, shared responsibilities, and mutual respect between spouses, thereby enhancing marital harmony and overall family well-being.

Recommendations

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

1. Married men with traditional attitudes towards their wives' work types should be sensitized about the present economic realities, which tend to hinder the workability of the male breadwinner norm in their marriages. This will help create opportunities for their wives to be gainfully employed and contribute meaningfully to the upkeep and stability of the home.
2. Working wives should be educated on the need to pay adequate attention to their gender roles and parental commitments. This will help create a balance between work life and family demands, which ultimately influences their marriages positively.
3. Married men with working wives should be encouraged to support their wives who are engaged in demanding work types that limit their involvement in domestic chores. This support will help forestall marital conflicts that may promote marital dissolution and disrupt the family structure.
4. Married men should prioritize the engagement of their wives in various work types to enhance their economic and social value to the home and the larger society. This, in turn, plays a vital role in the actualization of their wives' strategic gender needs.

Implications for Guidance and Counseling

The findings of this study revealed that married men in South-South Nigeria exhibit egalitarian attitudes towards their wives' work types regardless of demographic factors such as age, educational attainment, income level, and duration of marriage. This observable trend reflects emerging economic realities occasioned by several socio-economic factors. These include changes in economic dynamics leading to job losses and low job security in the labour market, lack of sufficient monetary capital to initiate entrepreneurial ventures, the ever-increasing cost of providing for family needs, poor salary structures in most public and private establishments, and the unsustainability of the traditional breadwinner-homemaker model typically associated with patriarchal societies.

Given these realities, the implication for guidance and counseling is the need for continuous sensitization and enlightenment of married men on the economic, social, and emotional benefits associated with their wives being secondary income earners. Such awareness empowers families economically, improves the overall quality of family life, and helps to strengthen the marital union by fostering greater stability, cohesion, and satisfaction.

Furthermore, since men's egalitarian attitudes towards their wives' work types were found to have a moderate and positive influence on marital relationships, guidance and counseling interventions should include targeted educational programmes and workshops for married couples. These programmes should aim to equip couples with the knowledge and skills necessary to optimize the advantages of a dual-income household while ensuring a healthy balance between occupational responsibilities and family obligations.

Equally important is the need for guidance practitioners to educate working wives on sustaining family harmony by actively participating in domestic responsibilities and childcare duties. This will help mitigate potential sources of marital conflict that may arise from role conflicts or neglect of family obligations. By promoting shared responsibilities within the family unit, guidance and counseling efforts can contribute significantly to reducing the risk of

marital instability and fostering stronger, more fulfilling marital relationships.

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