

Spousal Involvement in Extended Family Decision-Making: Evidence from Southwest Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

Marriage within the Yoruba socio-cultural setting extends beyond the nuclear family to include a strong network of in-laws whose influence often shapes household decision-making. While in-law involvement in marriage has been widely studied, the effects of spousal involvement in in-laws' household affairs remain largely underexplored. This study determined the effects of spousal involvement in in-laws' household decision-making in Southwest Nigeria. A multistage sampling procedure was used to select 240 respondents across Oyo and Ogun States. Data on socioeconomic characteristics, decision domains, level of involvement, influencing factors, conflict areas, and constraints were analysed using descriptive statistics, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation, Chi-square, and Regression analysis were used to test four research hypotheses. Findings revealed that spouses were most actively involved in financial and agricultural decisions. Cultural factors (GMS=2.20), social support networks (GMS=2.15), and personal beliefs (GMS=2.07) were the dominant determinants of involvement. Feeling overburdened emotionally (WMS=2.67), frequent spousal conflicts (WMS=2.63), and breeding tension and distrust (WMS=2.62) were the leading effects. Age ($r=0.487$, $p=0.001$), years in marriage ($r=0.401$, $p=0.001$), sex, and education level significantly influenced spousal involvement. The study recommends promoting healthy family communication, mutual respect, and inclusive decision-making within extended family structures.

Keywords: Spousal Involvement, Extended Family Decision-Making, In-Law Relationships, Yoruba Family System, Southwest Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is an ancient institution that has endured throughout human history, binding two individuals from distinct backgrounds to form the foundation of a family (Gheorghe, 2021). Within the context of marriage, spouses become integral parts of each other's lives, and with this union comes the concept of in-laws — the relatives of one's spouse — who often play a significant role in family dynamics and decision-making processes within the extended family (Amoo et al., 2022). In many societies, spouses also exert a certain level of influence on their partner's extended family, making the dynamics of in-law relationships a subject worthy of academic inquiry (Yang and Veall, 2020).

The extended family structure is especially prominent in Nigeria, particularly in the Southwest, encompassing an intricate network of relationships that includes parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, in-laws, and other close relatives (Alabi and Olonade, 2022). This structure significantly influences various aspects of life, including household decision-making, and has made family dynamics complex and ever-evolving, shaped by cultural norms, societal expectations, and individual beliefs (Ohazulike, 2023). In Southwest Nigeria specifically, cultural heritage plays a crucial role in shaping familial relationships. The region is known for its rich traditions, strong communal ties, and deep respect for elders, which means spousal involvement in in-laws' affairs is not always considered appropriate or welcome (Ajani and Fakunle, 2021). Some families actively

discourage any attempt by their child's spouse to participate in family decisions, viewing it as a form of disrespect. Yet, the level and nature of such involvement can vary significantly and may, in certain family contexts, be accepted in good faith (Piechota et al., 2022).

Spousal involvement in in-laws' households can take several forms. Spouses may offer unsolicited advice, express preferences, or actively participate in discussions concerning extended family affairs (Machette and Ioana, 2023). Such involvement carries both positive and negative consequences, potentially affecting power dynamics, interpersonal relationships, and the overall well-being of the family unit. Financially, spouses may influence decisions regarding investment choices, budgeting, and resource allocation — involvement that can either enhance family financial stability or generate conflict and tension (Dew et al., 2021). In healthcare, spouses may offer opinions or make decisions regarding their in-laws' medical care, which can be appreciated by some and perceived as meddling by others (Memon et al., 2023). Similarly, in educational matters, spouses may express preferences on school choices, educational pursuits, and related investments that impact the lives of their in-laws (Eskridge and Riano, 2020).

Beyond these domains, spousal involvement can also extend to agricultural practices a dimension of particular significance in Southwest Nigeria, where agriculture forms the backbone of rural livelihoods. Spouses often participate in decisions related to crop selection, farming methods, and resource allocation, and their input can drive the adoption of innovative agricultural techniques and improve household productivity (Ojeleye, 2018; Kuponiyi et al., 2024). However, such involvement can equally generate conflict when perceived as undermining traditional methods or the authority of senior family members.

Despite the far-reaching implications of spousal involvement in in-laws' household decision-making, existing literature on Nigerian family dynamics has largely concentrated on decision-making within nuclear families, leaving the dynamics of extended family involvement substantially underexplored (Alabi and Olonade, 2022). Among the Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria, decision domains such as financial planning, healthcare, educational arrangements, agricultural work, and domestic responsibilities are often shared or contested among multiple adults (Adebayo, 2020), yet few studies have specified which of these domains spouses actually influence, or to what degree. Furthermore, the specific factors that drive or constrain spousal involvement — including cultural norms, personal beliefs, and economic capacity — have not been comprehensively analysed within the Nigerian context, limiting understanding of the mechanisms through which socio-cultural characteristics translate into greater or lesser participation (Funminiyi and Abidemi, 2026; Ibeh et al., 2023).

Spousal involvement also carries the potential to generate interpersonal tension, particularly in settings where cultural expectations and family hierarchy are deeply rooted (Bawuah et al., 2025). When spouses are perceived as overstepping boundaries or when their opinions conflict with those of senior family members, misunderstandings can escalate into serious disputes that affect marital harmony and emotional well-being (Ibeh et al., 2023). Constraints such as financial dependence on in-laws, rigid traditional authority structures, and limited decision-making autonomy can further restrict meaningful spousal participation (Nolte, 2020). It is against this backdrop that this study determined the effects of spousal involvement in in-laws' household decision-making in the Southwest States of Nigeria, with the aim of filling the existing research gap and offering evidence-based insights into one of the most nuanced dimensions of extended family dynamics in the Nigerian socio-cultural context.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area

This study was conducted in Oyo and Ogun States, located within the Southwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The Southwest zone is predominantly inhabited by the Yoruba ethnic group and is characterised by a strong extended family system that significantly shapes household dynamics and decision-making processes (Kayode, 2022). The region encompasses both urban and rural communities, offering a useful contrast in examining variations in spousal involvement across different settlement types. Urban centres such as Ibadan serve as economic hubs with evolving societal norms, while rural areas maintain more traditional ways of life that

preserve deep-rooted cultural values. This diversity made the Southwest an appropriate setting for studying the socio-cultural dimensions of spousal involvement in in-laws' household decision-making.

Research Design and Sampling Procedure

A multistage sampling technique was employed to select the 240 respondents for this study. In the first stage, two states, Oyo and Ogun states, were randomly selected, representing 35% of the six states in the Southwest region. In the second stage, 50% of the agricultural zones within each selected state were randomly chosen: Ibadan/Ibarapa and Ogbomoso zones for Oyo State, and Abeokuta and Ilaro zones for Ogun State. In the third stage, four Local Government Areas (LGAs) were randomly selected from each state's chosen zones, with selection guided by settlement type which includes urban and rural, to ensure representativeness. The LGAs selected for Oyo State were Ogbomoso North and Surulere (Ogbomoso zone) and Ibadan North and Egbeda (Ibadan/Ibarapa zone). For Ogun State, Abeokuta North and Odeda (Abeokuta zone) and Yewa South and Ado-Odo/Ota (Ilaro zone) were selected. In the fourth and final stage, 30 respondents were randomly selected from each LGA, yielding a total sample size of 240 respondents.

Data Collection

Data were collected using a well-structured questionnaire and interview schedule, designed in alignment with the study's objectives. The instrument covered seven thematic sections: respondents' socio-economic characteristics; types of decisions spouses are involved in at in-laws' households; level of spousal involvement; factors influencing spousal involvement; areas of potential conflict; constraints to spousal involvement; and the perceived effects of spousal involvement.

Validity and Reliability

The instrument was validated by the researcher's supervisor and other professionals in the fields of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology. A pre-test was conducted outside the target population to assess clarity, relevance, and appropriateness, and necessary revisions were made based on expert feedback. Reliability was established using the split-half method through a test-retest procedure administered two weeks apart on the same pre-test respondents, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.82, confirming the instrument's consistency and suitability for the study.

Measurement of Variables

The dependent variable level of spousal involvement in in-laws' household decision-making was measured on a 3-point rating scale: Fully Involved (2), Partially Involved (1), and Not Involved (0). Independent variables included socio-economic characteristics such as age, sex, educational level, years married, occupation, monthly income, household size, and residence type. Types of decisions spouses engage in were measured on a nominal scale of Yes (1) or No (0). Factors influencing spousal involvement were rated on a 3-point scale of Major Factor (2), Minor Factor (1), and Not a Factor (0). Similarly, constraints and effects of spousal involvement were each assessed on a 3-point scale ranging from Major to Not a Constraint/Effect respectively.

Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Descriptive statistics including frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarise the socio-economic profile of respondents and describe patterns across the study variables. Inferential statistics were applied to test the four research hypotheses: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Chi-square were used to examine the relationship between socio-economic characteristics and spousal involvement; Chi-square was used for the relationship between decision types and involvement; Regression Analysis examined the influence of determining factors on spousal involvement; and PPMC tested the relationship between spousal involvement and its perceived effects on in-laws' households. All analyses were conducted at a 1% significance level.

RESULTS

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Respondents

The study surveyed 240 respondents drawn equally from Oyo and Ogun States, and as showed in Table 1, the pooled data revealed that 52.9% of respondents were male and 47.1% female, reflecting a fairly balanced gender distribution with slight male dominance. The mean age of respondents was 39.1 years, with the majority (37.5%) falling within the 31–40 age bracket, indicating that most were in the prime stages of family life where in-law interactions are most intense. Regarding marital status, 84.2% were married, 9.6% widowed, and 6.3% divorced. The mean years spent in marriage was 10.8, with the largest proportion (29.2%) having been married between 6–10 years.

In terms of education, 43.8% had completed secondary education and 32.5% had uncompleted secondary education, meaning 76.3% had attained at least some secondary-level schooling. On occupation, 37.1% were self-employed and 32.9% were employed in the public sector. Monthly income distribution showed that 25.4% earned above ₦200,000, while 24.6% earned between ₦100,001 and ₦150,000, placing the majority within middle-income brackets. The mean number of children was 3.2, with 89.6% of respondents having between one and five children. Christianity was the dominant religion (60.8%), followed by Islam (35.8%). Yoruba respondents constituted 88.8% of the sample, consistent with the ethnic composition of the study area. The mean household size was 4.9, with 61.3% of households having fewer than five members, reflecting the growing prevalence of smaller family units in the region.

Table 1: Key Socioeconomic Profile of Respondents (n=240)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	127	52.9
	Female	113	47.1
Age (years)	Less than 30	51	21.3
	31–40	90	37.5
	41–50	70	29.2
	51–60	29	12.1
	Mean age = 39.1 years		
Marital Status	Married	202	84.2
	Widowed	23	9.6
	Divorced	15	6.3
Years in Marriage	1–5	52	21.7
	6–10	70	29.2
	11–15	65	27.1
	16–20	32	13.3
	21–25	20	8.3
	Mean = 10.8 years		
Education Level	No formal education	12	5.0
	Primary completed	23	9.6
	Primary uncompleted	22	9.2
	Secondary completed	105	43.8
	Secondary uncompleted	78	32.5
Occupation	Self-employed	89	37.1
	Public sector	79	32.9
	Private sector	49	20.4
	Unemployed	16	6.7
	Retired	7	2.9
Monthly Income (₦)	Less than 50,000	18	7.5
	50,001–100,000	54	22.5

	100,001–150,000	59	24.6
	150,001–200,000	48	20.0
	Above 200,000	61	25.4
Religion	Christianity	146	60.8
	Islam	86	35.8
	Traditional/Other	8	3.4
Household Size	Less than 5	147	61.3
	6–10	92	38.3
	Mean = 4.9		

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Types of Decisions and Level of Spousal Involvement

The pooled results revealed that spousal involvement extended across all major decision domains. The most commonly reported decision areas were agricultural practices and farming decisions (88.8%), financial planning and budgeting (87.9%), investment and savings (86.3%), and crop selection and cultivation (85.8%). Educational decisions such as children's schooling (82.9%) and healthcare decisions (80.8%) were also prominent. Domestic household decisions were reported by 80.4% of respondents, while extracurricular activity decisions recorded the lowest participation at 74.6%.

Regarding the level of involvement, as shown in Table 2, pooled Weighted Mean Scores (WMS) showed that financial planning and budgeting ranked highest (WMS=2.41), followed closely by agricultural practices and farming decisions (WMS=2.40). Using Grand Mean Scores (GMS), financial decisions ranked 1st (GMS=2.4), livelihood decisions 2nd (GMS=2.3), while domestic and education decisions jointly ranked 3rd (GMS=2.2 each). These results indicate that spouses are most actively and deeply involved in economic and productive decision domains within their in-laws' households, while involvement in domestic and lifestyle decisions remains comparatively moderate.

Factors Influencing Spousal Involvement

Analysis of factors influencing spousal involvement across the pooled data identified cultural factors as the most dominant, recording the highest GMS of 2.20 and ranking 1st. As shown in Table 3, within this category, respect for elders recorded the highest WMS of 2.28, followed by cultural expectations regarding involvement (WMS=2.18) and cultural traditions encouraging involvement (WMS=2.15). Social support networks ranked 2nd with a GMS of 2.15, with relationship with in-laws being the most influential item (WMS=2.21). Personal beliefs and values ranked 3rd with a GMS of 2.07, while economic factors consistently ranked lowest (GMS=1.53), indicating that financial capacity was not a primary driver of spousal involvement.

Areas of Potential Conflict

The pooled results revealed that experiences of insults and embarrassment from in-laws (80.4%) and spousal conflict (80.4%) were the most prevalent conflict areas, followed closely by trust issues between spouse and self (80.0%). Resistance and opposition from in-laws were reported by 78.8% of respondents, while tension at family gatherings was indicated by 75.4%. Disrespect from in-laws was reported by 74.2% and physical violence from in-laws by 72.9% of respondents. Less frequently cited conflicts included blame for household problems (34.6%), alienation from spouse's family (33.3%), and verbal altercations (27.9%).

Effects of Spousal Involvement

The pooled effects data revealed that negative consequences dominated respondents' experiences. Feeling overburdened emotionally ranked 1st with a WMS of 2.67, followed by frequent conflicts with spouse (WMS=2.63) and breeding tension and distrust within the nuclear family (WMS=2.62). Negative impact on mental well-being ranked 4th (WMS=2.58), while reduction in the level of respect received from in-laws and financial strain on the immediate family ranked 5th and 6th with WMS of 2.57 and 2.55 respectively. Loss of autonomy in family life and increased likelihood of insults or criticisms both recorded WMS values of 2.51.

Positive effects, though acknowledged, ranked comparatively lower — promoting mutual respect (WMS=2.45), enhancing effective communication (WMS=2.14), and strengthening emotional support (WMS=1.99).

Hypothesis Testing

The summary of Hypothesis Testin is as shown in Table 4. H_{01} was tested using PPMC and Chi-square analyses. PPMC results revealed significant positive relationships between age ($r=0.487$, $p=0.001$) and years spent in marriage ($r=0.401$, $p=0.001$) and the level of spousal involvement, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis for these variables. Monthly income was not significant ($r=-0.081$, $p=0.209$). Chi-square results further showed that sex ($\chi^2=24.215$, $p=0.050$) and level of education ($\chi^2=16.314$, $p=0.006$) were significantly associated with spousal involvement.

Table 2: Level of Spousal Involvement Across Decision Domains (Pooled, n=240)

Decision Domain	Decision Type	WMS	Rank	GMS	Rank
Financial	Financial planning & budgeting	2.41	1st		
	Loans & financial assistance	2.36	3rd		
	Investment & savings	2.34	5th	2.4	1st
Livelihood	Agricultural practices & farming	2.40	2nd		
	Livestock management	2.35	4th		
	Crop selection & cultivation	2.32	6th	2.3	2nd
Domestic	Allocation of household expenses	2.30	7th		
	Healthcare & medical decisions	2.19	11th		
	Domestic household decisions	2.18	12th	2.2	3rd
Education	Children's schooling decisions	2.22	9th		
	School selection	2.20	10th		
	Extracurricular activities	2.11	13th	2.2	3rd

WMS = Weighted Mean Score; GMS = Grand Mean Score

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3: Factors Influencing Spousal Involvement (Pooled, n=240)

Factor Category	Key Item	WMS	GMS	Rank
Cultural Factors	Respect for elders	2.28		
	Cultural expectations regarding involvement	2.18		
	Cultural traditions encouraging involvement	2.15	2.20	1 st
Social Support Networks	Relationship with in-laws	2.21		
	Spousal support	2.13		
	Support from other family members	2.11	2.15	2 nd
Personal Beliefs & Values	Personal beliefs on involvement	2.12		
	Alignment of values with in-laws	2.08		
	Self-entitlement to involvement	2.01	2.07	3 rd
General Influence	Trust from in-laws	1.73		
	Overall family harmony	1.68		
	Previous experiences with in-laws	1.59	1.67	4 th
Economic Factors	Economic stability	1.63		
	Economic expertise	1.48		
	Financial contribution	1.47	1.53	5 th

WMS = Weighted Mean Score; GMS = Grand Mean Score

Source: Field Survey, 2025

marriage ($r=0.401$, $p=0.001$) and the level of spousal involvement, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis for these variables. Monthly income was not significant ($r=-0.081$, $p=0.209$). Chi-square results further showed that sex ($\chi^2=24.215$, $p=0.050$) and level of education ($\chi^2=16.314$, $p=0.006$) were significantly associated with spousal involvement.

H_{02} was tested using Chi-square analysis. All 16 decision types tested showed significant associations with the level of spousal involvement at $p<0.001$, including financial planning ($\chi^2=114.821$), allocation of household expenses ($\chi^2=123.503$), agricultural input decisions ($\chi^2=125.296$), healthcare decisions ($\chi^2=99.072$), children's education ($\chi^2=85.138$), and domestic household decisions ($\chi^2=99.747$), leading to rejection of H_{02} .

H_{03} was tested using regression analysis. The model returned $R=0.928$, $R^2=0.862$, indicating that 86.2% of the variation in spousal involvement was explained by the factors considered. Significant predictors included cultural expectations ($t=5.668$, $p=0.000$), support from other family members ($t=5.646$, $p=0.000$), relationship with in-laws ($t=4.279$, $p=0.000$), personal beliefs on involvement ($t=4.053$, $p=0.000$), and cultural traditions encouraging involvement ($t=3.587$, $p=0.000$), leading to rejection of H_{03} .

H_{04} was tested using PPMC. All four decision domains showed significant positive correlations with the effects of spousal involvement: livelihood decisions ($r=0.880$, $p=0.000$), domestic decisions ($r=0.852$, $p=0.000$), financial decisions ($r=0.825$, $p=0.000$), and educational decisions ($r=0.797$, $p=0.000$), confirming that higher levels of involvement correspond with stronger — whether positive or negative — outcomes within the extended family. H_{04} was therefore rejected.

Table 4: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Statistical Tool	Key Result	Decision
H01: Socioeconomic characteristics & spousal involvement	PPMC	Age ($r=0.487$, $p=0.001$); Years married ($r=0.401$, $p=0.001$); Income not significant	Rejected
	Chi-square	Sex ($\chi^2=24.215$, $p=0.050$); Education ($\chi^2=16.314$, $p=0.006$)	Rejected
H02: Decision types & spousal involvement	Chi-square	All 16 decision types significant at $p<0.001$	Rejected
H03: Influencing factors & spousal involvement	Regression	$R^2=0.862$; Cultural expectations ($t=5.668$); Family support ($t=5.646$); In-law relationship ($t=4.279$)	Rejected
H04: Spousal involvement & its effects	PPMC	Livelihood ($r=0.880$); Domestic ($r=0.852$); Financial ($r=0.825$); Education ($r=0.797$)	Rejected

Source: Computed Data, 2025

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive insight into the dynamics of spousal involvement in in-laws' household decision-making within the Southwest States of Nigeria. The discussion that follows interprets the key results presented in the Results section, situating them within existing literature and the broader Yoruba socio-cultural context.

Socioeconomic Characteristics and Spousal Involvement

The socioeconomic profile of respondents (Table 1) revealed a mean age of 39.1 years and a mean marital duration of 10.8 years, suggesting that most respondents were in the active and formative phases of marital life where in-law interactions are most pronounced. The PPMC results confirmed that age ($r=0.487$, $p=0.001$) and years spent in marriage ($r=0.401$, $p=0.001$) were significantly and positively related to spousal involvement, supporting the rejection of H_{01} . This implies that older and more experienced spouses are more confident and trusted within the extended family structure, making them more likely to be included in household decisions.

This finding aligns with Xia et al. (2024), who reported that age and marital duration often correlate with increased social responsibility and integration within extended family networks, and with Pettay et al. (2020), who observed that longer marital experience enhances mutual trust and decision sharing among family members.

The Chi-square results further revealed that sex ($\chi^2=24.215$, $p=0.050$) and education level ($\chi^2=16.314$, $p=0.006$) were significantly associated with spousal involvement. The significance of sex reflects how gender roles within Yoruba households shape participation in different decision domains, with males more prominent in financial and agricultural matters and females in domestic and childcare decisions. The significance of education corroborates Abiola et al. (2020), who reported that higher educational attainment improves individuals' capacity to analyse issues, communicate effectively, and contribute meaningfully to family discussions, with educated spouses more likely to assert their opinions in both nuclear and extended family decisions.

Types of Decisions and Level of Involvement

As shown in Table 2, spousal involvement was widespread across all decision domains, with agricultural practices and farming decisions (88.8%) and financial planning and budgeting (87.9%) being the most commonly reported. The level of involvement analysis further showed that financial decisions recorded the highest GMS of 2.4, ranking 1st, followed by livelihood decisions (GMS=2.3). This pattern is consistent across both Oyo and Ogun States, underscoring that financial and productive decision domains remain the most prominent areas of spousal engagement in in-law households. This finding corroborates Wusu and Isiugo (2024), who emphasized the economic centrality of family decision-making in Yoruba extended family systems, and Ajani and Fakunle (2021), who reported that extended family systems in Southwestern Nigeria emphasize the economic interdependence of kin and the centrality of collective financial and farm decisions to family survival. The Chi-square analysis confirmed that all 16 decision types were significantly associated with spousal involvement at $p<0.001$ (Table 4), reinforcing the view that spousal involvement is not domain-specific but reflects a broader pattern of integration into extended family life (Banjo et al., 2018).

Factors Influencing Spousal Involvement

Table 3 reveals that cultural factors were the dominant influence on spousal involvement, recording the highest GMS of 2.20, with respect for elders (WMS=2.28) and cultural expectations regarding involvement (WMS=2.18) being the leading items. Social support networks ranked 2nd (GMS=2.15), while personal beliefs and values ranked 3rd (GMS=2.07). Economic factors consistently ranked last (GMS=1.53), indicating that financial capacity was secondary to cultural and relational considerations. The regression analysis (Table 4) confirmed these patterns, with cultural expectations ($t=5.668$, $p=0.000$), support from other family members ($t=5.646$, $p=0.000$), and relationship with in-laws ($t=4.279$, $p=0.000$) emerging as the strongest significant predictors, together explaining 86.2% of the variation in spousal involvement ($R^2=0.862$). These findings are consistent with Fatimilehin and Hassan (2015), who stated that the extended family structure in Southwestern Nigeria is sustained by cultural expectations of mutual involvement and deference to senior kin. The dominance of cultural influence also agrees with Izzett (2018), who emphasized that Yoruba families place great value on deference to elders and collective decision-making traditions that reinforce family unity and authority structures. Similarly, Ajala (2006) asserts that cultural beliefs reinforce norms of obedience and respect, shaping the pattern of spousal behaviour within kin-based decision frameworks.

Conflict Areas and Effects of Spousal Involvement

The study revealed that spousal involvement in in-laws' household decision-making frequently generates significant interpersonal tension. Experiences of insults and embarrassment from in-laws and spousal conflict were each reported by 80.4% of respondents, while trust issues were indicated by 80.0%. These findings reflect the deeply entrenched cultural hierarchy and patriarchal orientation of Yoruba families, where decision-making authority is traditionally controlled by elders and senior family members (Ogundare, 2010). As noted by Banjo (2024), in Yoruba culture, the extended family wields substantial influence over marital affairs, and deviation from established hierarchical norms is often met with resistance.

The effects of spousal involvement were predominantly negative, with feeling overburdened emotionally ranking 1st (WMS=2.67), followed by frequent conflicts with spouse (WMS=2.63) and breeding tension and distrust within the nuclear family (WMS=2.62). These findings are consistent with Amoo (2022), who reported that spousal involvement can lead to mistrust, quarrels, and loss of marital cohesion, and with Okediji and Olaniran (2024), who found that supporting extended families often results in resource depletion and tension between couples. The financial strain observed (WMS=2.55) further corroborates these findings, as participating in in-law affairs often involves material obligations that burden the nuclear household.

The PPMC results for H04 (Table 4) revealed that all decision domains were significantly and positively correlated with the effects of spousal involvement, with livelihood decisions recording the strongest correlation ($r=0.880$, $p=0.000$). This confirms that as the level of spousal involvement increases, the intensity of its effects — whether positive or negative — increases correspondingly (Ajayi and Toyin, 2013). Positive effects, though acknowledged — such as promoting mutual respect (WMS=2.45) and enhancing communication (WMS=2.14) — ranked considerably lower, suggesting that the adverse consequences of involvement are more strongly perceived by respondents. This aligns with De Backer et al. (2021), who noted that insults and perceived boundary violations are common in extended households where power imbalances persist.

CONCLUSION

This study determined the effects of spousal involvement in in-laws' household decision-making in the Southwest States of Nigeria, with specific focus on Oyo and Ogun States. Using a multistage sampling technique, data were collected from 240 married respondents and analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, Chi-square, and Regression analysis.

The findings revealed that spouses were actively engaged across diverse household decision domains, including financial planning, agricultural practices, healthcare, education, and domestic affairs. Financial and livelihood decisions emerged as the domains with the highest level of spousal involvement, reflecting the economic interdependence that characterises extended family systems in Yoruba culture. The level of involvement, however, varied by decision domain, with high engagement in financial and agricultural matters and comparatively moderate to low involvement in domestic and welfare-related issues.

Cultural factors, social support networks, and personal beliefs were identified as the most significant determinants of spousal involvement, while economic factors, though statistically significant, exerted a negative influence, suggesting that financial dependence on in-laws reduces rather than enhances meaningful participation in household decisions. The regression model explained 86.2% of the variation in spousal involvement, with cultural expectations and relational support systems emerging as the strongest predictors.

Spousal involvement was also found to generate significant relational and emotional consequences. Feeling overburdened emotionally, frequent conflicts with spouse, and breeding tension and distrust within the nuclear family were identified as the leading effects. Key constraints to involvement included family conflict between spouses and in-laws, spousal opposition to involvement, and fear of creating tension — all of which reflect the complex power dynamics and hierarchical structures embedded within the Yoruba extended family system. Increased spousal involvement was further found to significantly influence family dynamics, communication patterns, and relational outcomes within in-law households, with higher involvement corresponding to stronger effects across all decision domains.

Based on these findings, this study recommends that married couples, family counsellors, and community leaders promote structured conflict resolution mechanisms, trust-building practices, and inclusive decision-making processes within extended family systems. Pre-marital and marital counselling programmes should integrate modules on extended family relationships, boundary setting, and emotional intelligence to better prepare couples for real-life family interactions. Economic empowerment of both men and women is equally recommended, as financial independence enhances decision-making confidence and reduces dependency-related conflicts. Government agencies and non-governmental organisations should further support family development interventions and mental health services that address the emotional and relational pressures arising from extended family involvement.

The findings of this study contribute to a growing body of knowledge on spousal dynamics within extended family systems in Nigeria, filling a critical gap in the literature by specifically examining the involvement of spouses in in-laws' household affairs — a dimension that has received limited scholarly attention. Future research should explore gender differences in spousal involvement, compare patterns across rural and urban households, and investigate how spousal participation in family decision-making influences agricultural productivity and rural livelihood outcomes.

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