

Effect of Childlessness on Marital Satisfaction among Married Couples: A Study of Ado Ekiti Local Government Area, Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study was designed to investigate the effect of childlessness on marital satisfaction among married couples in Ado-Ekiti L.G.A of Ekiti State. The independent variable is childlessness while the dependent variable is marital satisfaction; a descriptive survey design was utilized for this study. The study was carried out among married couples in Ado-Ekiti L.G.A of Ekiti State. A total number of Two hundred participants were used. The participant were also selected through random selection method, they were given a semi structured questionnaire that consist of three sections. Section A comprises of the demographic data of the participants, section B measures childlessness using Perceived Childlessness Scale and section C measures marital satisfaction using Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale. Two hypothesis were tested in the course of this research which include: There will be a significant effect of age on marital satisfaction, there will be a significant influence of childlessness on marital satisfaction. On the basis of these findings, conclusions are made that from the results of this research, that there is no significant influence of age on marital satisfaction. ($F(6,183) = .690$ $p > .05$) and that there is a significant influence of childlessness on marital satisfaction ($F(6,183) = 2.38$ $p < .05$). Findings were discussed according to literature and theories while recommendations were made, for instance, it was recommended that mass enlightenment of the public could help increase the knowledge of the causes of infertility among married couples and also to reduce feelings of inferiority complex among childless couples.

Keywords: Childlessness, Marital Satisfaction And Married Couples.

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I. INTRODUCTION

According to Merlo (2002), procreation is the function of the family; every man takes a wife apparently to have children for the continuity of his name and lineage and for general productivity and development in the society. In traditional Igbo society, many wives try to ensure the procreation of children to its fullest limit. Where this main purpose of marriage is not forth coming into fulfillment it results to tension. Zastrow (2001), identified reasons couples decided to have children, from the origin, biblically, having children is a blessed event and ranging from religion to ideology to economic necessity and cultural expectation.

The number of childless couples is tremendously on the increase, According to Ugwuanyi (2000), this is evident to the fact that attempts to initiate a move which would have been directed towards adoption is taken with serious resistance in some places like Nigeria mostly by couples without even a child.

According to Dike (2013) most couples are childless as a result of the degree of their waywardness when they were young or during their youthful age and unmarried, such as illicit use of drugs in order to avoid pregnancy, smoking of cigrates, cocaine, and marijuana e.t.c. The World Health Organization (2014) stated that married couples suffer from childlessness for so many reason such as drug abuse, hard drugs intake, contraception, numerous abortions, and genetically inherited sickness that could lead to low sperm count and most cases psychological problems.

According to Nwapa (2004), some couples attribute to their problem of childlessness to the supernatural, the hope in God that gives children to remember them at the appropriate time while some couples usually fall back to their fetish lifestyle consulting their gods to seek solutions to their problem or appealing their gods as a means to cleanse them from such predicament. Nwapa(2004) also outlined that childlessness can also be seen as consequences from the gods when an abomination or taboo has been committed, there can also

be death of existing children rendering the married couples childless (Nwapa 2004). Married couples faces a lot of problems and discrimination, from the society due to the fact that the married couples cannot procreate but in the same vein the society also suffer 30% of this childlessness problem, there will be low manpower and fluctuating number of people in the workforce and the social structure will not function properly (Hales 2000).

The researcher carried out a survey to find out the factors that generate childlessness, origin of childlessness in Ado-Ekiti and people's perception about childlessness and its effects, and implication on marital satisfaction among these married couples in Nigeria using Ado-Ekiti Local Government, Ekiti State Nigeria as a case study with the view of proffering solution by ways of recommendation and intervention.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the effect of childlessness on marital satisfaction among married couples in Ado-Ekiti L.G.A of Ekiti state. However, further objective to be treated is: To find out whether or not age will influence marital satisfaction in Ado-Ekiti L.G.A

Scope of the Study

This study will be carried out in the purview of Ado-Ekiti L.G.A, Ekiti State, Nigeria whereby 200 married couples were used as research participants.

Significance of Study

Theoretically, the study will provide the perceptions of people towards childless couples in Ado-Ekiti L. G.A. The study will provide the basic materials which the researcher in this topic will find valuable. This study will add to the existing body of knowledge on medical sociology. It will create room for further research on the socio-cultural impact of childlessness on marital satisfaction among married couples in other areas. It will also provide relevant data on how childlessness creates problems in the family and Ado-Ekiti L. G.A at large. It will help to expand their knowledge on the concept and impact of childlessness on married couples in Ado-Ekiti L. G.A and beyond. It will also provide materials for researchers to anchor their studies and also provide them with relevant literatures for analysis and review of relevant literature for analysis and review. Practically, the study will be of great relevance to students of Psychology. The study will provide useful information that can be used by health care providers. The research work is of importance to the researcher as it is a basic requirement for the award of a university Bachelor of Science degree. Findings of this study will provide useful information that will shade more light on the difficulties encountered by childless couple and proffer possible solutions to this problem.

Research Hypotheses

1. There will be a significant effect of age on marital satisfaction
2. There will be a significant influence of childlessness on marital satisfaction

Operational Definition of Terms

Childlessness: The absence of children in a family resulting from the inability to conceive a child by married couple or death of existing children as a measure of perceived childlessness scale developed by the researcher. Rowland (2001), Merlo (2002), and Zastrow (2001) described childlessness as the willingness to have children but they are not forthcoming and childlessness as the ability to have children but decide not to.

Marital satisfaction; this is the mental state that reflects the perceived benefits and costs of marriage to a particular person as a measure of Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire developed by Fournier (1983). According to Schoen, Astone, Standish, and Kim [2000] marital satisfaction is a global evaluation of the state of one's marriage and a reflection of marital happiness and functioning.

II. METHODS

Research Design

Descriptive survey design was used through the administration of a designed questionnaire. This study selected both married couples that are blessed with child/children and those that are childless for its sample population from the selected Yoruba communities.

Sampling Techniques

The selected communities were big communities in south-west, Nigeria, where people from different ethnic spheres are found. Therefore, the communities were purposively selected for this study. Out of the 106 copies returned, 2 copies were not duly completed and so could not be used for analysis. A total of 104 copies which were duly completed, were analysed for this study. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and chi-square test statistics at 5% level of significance, while qualitative data were content analyzed.

Research Instruments

Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale

The EMS Scale is a 15-item scale comprising the Idealistic Distortion (5 items) and Marital Satisfaction scales (10 items). Each of the 10 Marital Satisfaction items represents one of the areas of the marital relationship assessed by the full-length ENRICH Inventory (e.g. communication or sexual relationship). Thus, the EMS Scale provides a 1-item sampling of the 10 dimensions of marital satisfaction found to be most important by Fournier et al. (1983), whose conclusions about the important domains of marital satisfaction provide an indication of the content validity of the EMS Scale. The 5 items from the Idealistic Distortion scale constitute a marital conventionalization scale. It is a modified version of the Edmonds Marital Conventionalization Scale (Edmonds, 1967). It correlates highly with other scales that measure marital conventionalization and has an alpha coefficient of .92 and a 4-week test-retest reliability of .92 (Olson et al., 1987). The score on this scale is used to correct the Marital Satisfaction scale score on the basis of the degree to which the respondent portrays the marriage in an impossibly positive way. The EMS Scale provides a score for each partner. This score is derived by first scoring the Marital Satisfaction and Idealistic Distortion scales, then correcting the Marital Satisfaction score downward on the basis of the person's idealistic Distortion score. The PCA score is the percentage of items on which both partners evaluate the marriage positively. Thus, the individual EMS scores include both the Marital Satisfaction and Idealistic Distortion items, and the couple score is a combination of both partners' Marital Satisfaction responses.

Perceived Childlessness Scale

This consist of 10 items which aim to measure childlessness, the scale reported a validity Of .75 and .72 and a coefficient of reliability .78. High score revealed perceived childlessness.

Procedure for Data Collection

Respondents intentions were duly seek and copies of questionnaire were distributed to them and their responses were scored for interpretation

Statistical Analysis

Hypotheses one and two were tested using one way ANOVA statistics

III. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Table 1.1: Distributive table showing the age of the respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20-25	59	31.1
26-30	72	37.9
31yrs&above	59	31.1
Total	190	100.0

Table 1 revealed that 31.1% of the respondents fall in age bracket 20-25yrs, 37.9% fall in age bracket 26-30yrs while 31.1% of the respondents fall in age bracket 31yrs& above.

Table 1.2: One way-ANOVA table showing the effects of childlessness on marital satisfaction

ANOVA
Childlessness

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.150	6	1.525	2.38	<.05
Within Groups	116.850	183	.639		
Total	120.000	189			

The table above revealed that there is a significant effect of childlessness on marital satisfaction (F(6,183) = 2.38 p<.05)

Table 1.3: One way ANOVA table showing the influence of age on marital satisfaction

ANOVA

Age

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.732	6	.455	.690	>.05
Within Groups	120.721	183	.660		
Total	123.453	189			

Table 1.3 above revealed that there is no significant influence of age on marital satisfaction. ($F(6,183) = .690$ $p>.05$)

IV. DISCUSSION

Result from hypothesis two revealed that childlessness has a significant influence on marital satisfaction. This result is consistent with the work of Cerami (2013) who opined that women infertility is the major cause of infertility among childless couples. This state of childlessness goes in a long way in influencing their marital satisfaction. In Nigeria culture, especially the Yoruba's community, they believe having a child is a product of fruitfulness and marital bliss in any marital settings.

Social consequences faced by childless couples are stigmatization, disrespectful attitude from spouse and family. Childless couples are also denied the opportunities to perform certain cultural practices. Also, Peralli (2015) findings also supported the result of the study which revealed that there is a relationship between spirituality and childlessness, and because of this, they tend to believe that anything that happens in the physical has been established in the spiritual.

Respondents in the study area are predominantly farmers who hardly meet up with their basic needs due to low income level and therefore, most of them cannot afford the medical bills in solving the problem of childlessness. Few respondents see a different impact of childlessness on childless couples reason being that couples that got married for the sake of companionship will not really feel the absence of children but couple that got married for the sake of procreation will greatly feel the absence of children.

Result from hypothesis one showed that age does not have a significant influence on marital satisfaction. This result was supported by Santrock (2016) who opined that there is no difference between old and young adults in relation to how satisfied they are in their marital life. Studies has shown that many old couples are enjoying their marital life even more than younger couples. This could be likened to wealth of experience gotten through their marital relationships in recent years and this has a strong proposition in understanding other partners better, This wealth of experience may not be found in younger couples due to their low level of commitment and managing relationship.

V. CONCLUSION

This research has been able to X-ray empirically the effect of childlessness on marital satisfaction among married couples in Ado-Ekiti L. G. A. Ekiti state. Based on the findings of the study, it can be perceived that there is a negative effect of childlessness on marital satisfaction among married couples and fewer number of respondents see positive effect of childlessness on marital satisfaction. Also, it can be concluded that age does not have an effect on marital satisfaction.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, one of the perceived causes of childlessness is infertility and it has stigmatization as the major consequence which makes the lives of the childless couple bitter. Therefore, averting the stigmatization problem calls for the attention of the federal government and responsible bodies to exert a great deal of effort in creating awareness on the medical causes and treatments of infertility.

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