



Consequences of Marital Conflicts among Spouses in Benue State, Nigeria: Implications for Counselling.

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the consequences of marital conflict among spouses in Benue State: Implications for Counselling. The study covered all married spouses who were identified with one form or the other of marital conflict in Benue State. The study aims to find the consequences of marital conflict among spouses in Benue State, the difference between male and female spouses as regards consequences of marital conflicts in Benue State, the consequences of marital conflicts among spouses of years of marital experiences. This study adopted a descriptive survey design. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents from three Local Government Areas. The population was unknown. But a sample size of 120 spouses was used for the study. A self-structured questionnaire titled: Consequences of Marital Conflict Questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The validity and reliability of the instrument were determined by experts in the field and test-retest technique was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. Data collected were analysed through frequency count and means scores, while the hypotheses were tested using t-test and ANOVA at 0.05 level of significance. Findings from the study revealed that there are high consequences including psychological trauma. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended that spouses should endeavour to resolve their differences critically without the third party or better still seek help from a professional counsellor for a proper guide.

Key Words: Consequences, Marital Conflict, Spouses

Introduction

Marriage is an entire duration of life union between a male and female which indeed stands as the oldest institution that has ever existed. The researcher was motivated to carry out this study on the alarming rate of separation and divorce among spouses in Benue State. Looking at the surrounding issues of marriages in Benue state, it is worthy to note that, if proper counselling (therapy) is not provided, the upcoming youth will find it hard to settle in their marital homes due to the peculiarity of their environment, culture, ideologies, and beliefs. As such, the training of children from these homes will become more difficult and can bring out societal challenges in the long run. Becoming one in marriage involves Sex, two people sharing their dreams, hopes, aspirations, fears, material possessions, thoughts, difficulties, joy, successes and failures (Collins, 2007).

Ibeh, Obidoa & Okere (2013) points out that marital conflict as a strain in the marriage, interaction among couples who are living together. The increasing rate of marriage and family conflict such as the incidence of divorce in society today justifies the fact that there are conflicts in marital homes. (Olaitan, 2003).

Animashaun (2014) posits that marital conflict is a phenomenon that destabilizes the couple, disrupt their joy and mostly felt by women yet, least recognized human rights abuse in the world. It is also a profound social problem, sapping women's energy, compromising their physical health and eroding their self-esteem.

Conflicts arise as an attempt to match the behaviour and expectations of one with the behaviour and expectations of the other. Marriage and the family system are threatened because disharmony sets in when husband and wife disagree on certain goals to achieve resulting in conflicts and confusion between them unless they come to terms on the goal to pursue. Conflicts and disagreements are inevitable in every close relationship including marital relationship. In every marriage, the degree of conflict is necessary to keep the marriage dynamic, rather than static (Ashford, LeCroy & Lortie, 2006).

Marital separation now comes in various forms, accompanied with their own myriad set of problems as individual families have their particular conflict situation(s); after all, no two marriages are the same as not all marriages fail for the same one reason, nor is there usually one main reason for the breaking down of a peculiar marriage. Some marriages are peaceful and relatively problem-free. However, crises overwhelm many others as findings have revealed that marital conflicts did exist, (Tolorunleke, 2014). There is a myriad of marital problems. They may arise from the premarital stage to the day of the wedding and subsequent events that follow as the marriage proceeds (Akinade, 2015).

Adjustment of character through marital odds plays a tremendous role in strengthening the marital relationship. For the sake of continuity, unity and stability in marital relationships, conflict should be identified and resolved positively (Zartman, 2011); as this is the sole purpose for which this study was conceived.

It is commonplace to understand that spouses at most times come to terms with their actions and behaviours with an understanding towards making purposeful or steady efforts to ensure an ambience of peaceful co-existence, no matter the cost.

This merely does not suggest the absence of problems/conflicts as regards individual family, as the strength of a marriage lies in its ability to always find reasons for continuity through marital attachment and adjustment. The

knowledge of marital life and modification of characters before marriage become an added advantage in narrowing down high expectations held by spouses which characterize conflict in homes. At this point, the marriage counsellor becomes a part of the process since it is from this backdrop that the counsellor is expected to maintain a far-reaching function in marriage counselling, by making sure that the spouses clarify and harmonize their various marital expectations (Uwatt, 2004).

Marriage has been seen as a centre of all human endeavours in recognition of its influence on almost all of the human activities. On this note, instabilities and disharmonious experiences in marital life will not only affect the principal agents of marriage (the couple) as it also affects other parts it serves. Undiyaundeye and Reaman (2002) stressed that conflict has a way of adding undesirable outcome on the spouses.

The lingering result of marital conflict usually end up in separation and finally the total collapse, which may be interpreted as liberation but has been viewed by counsellors as a traumatic psychologically difficult condition; as the marriage worsens, sincere, constant and instant moves should be made to remedy it, considering its undesirable consequences on the entire family and the society at large as the products of that relationship begins a new phase of life which excludes one of the parents from their lifelong training, making them lose a substantial part of the bond which is present in a complete family system. It is a fact that no activity of mankind is devoid of marriage and family influence(s) since they remain the centre of all activities in man's existence.

Several studies have asserted the consequence of marital conflicts sources, which include:

Idakwo, (2002) conducted a study on conflict resolution practices among spouses in Benue state. The findings revealed that there are both physical, social, economic and psychological causes and consequences of marital conflicts among the spouses. Uwatt, (2004) studied conflicts in marriages among couples in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The finding indicated that there are different types of conflicts prevalent among spouses; physical, social, economic and psychological conflicts. Also, the consequences of marital conflict are found to include extra-marital relationships, stress and inability to control children, drug abuse, separations and divorces.

Nwoke (2008), in his study on the status of marital stability among Nigeria Custom and Immigration officers. The findings show that there is a significant difference in marital stability of custom and immigration officers with different marital status, indication that there is more marital stability within immigration officers than custom officers.

Statement of the Problem

In Benue State, problems such as drunkenness, mismanagement of money, poor communication among spouses, domestic violence, infertility etc.; among others have caused serious breakdown of a marital relationship. Spouses have lost their love, patience, and respect for one another and what it takes to build up a strong and lasting marital commitment to each other; as the state at which these problems breakdown God's ordinance calls for quick attention. On a wider perspective, these factors create instabilities and disharmony in marriages, thus subjecting spouses to serious emotional trauma. Ironically, most spouses are unaware of these situations. They feel these problems are insignificant and not worth tackling, as they tend to live with it or remain indifferent to it.

Most marriages experience stressful emotional conflicts when there are situations within the family that give rise to a lot of pressure leading to disagreement and eventually resulting in deep hatred, grief and fear. In Benue State, some marriages have been faced with numerous conflicts which have been occasioned by the economic recession and various social ills.

There is a shortfall of financial capacity to meet family needs, due to either unemployment, retrenchment, inflation, extended family responsibilities, poverty and pressure from acquaintances. These myriads of problems constitute enormous forms of pressure on the family. It is worthy of note to emphasize the link between the family and the society as the future generation rests squarely on the family unit as the need for the societal (Benue State) transformation and reconstruction through marital and family unity and stability becomes pertinent for an area of study by the researcher. What inspired the researcher for this study is the collapse of many marriages in recent time and the high rate of crime among the youth.

On this note, this study may provide ample and suitable recommendations towards avoiding conflict or reduce marital conflicts among spouses in Benue State with a mandate looking at arising implications of marital conflicts in regards to the profession of counselling.

The following questions are raised to guide the research:

1. What is the consequence of marital conflict among spouses in Benue State?
2. What is the difference between male and female spouses as regards the consequences of marital conflicts in Benue State?
3. What is the consequence of marital conflicts among spouses of years of marital experiences?

The following hypothesis was used to guide the study:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the consequences of marital conflict between male and female spouses in Benue State.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the consequences of marital conflicts among spouses with different years of marital experience in Benue State.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents from three L.G.A. The population was unknown. But a sample size of 120 spouses was used for the study. A self-structured questionnaire titled: Consequences of Marital Conflict Questionnaire (CMCQ) with 25 items was used to collect data for the study.

The CMCQ was subjected to both face and content validity by consulting with experts. The reliability coefficient of the MBQ was found to be 0.89 using a test-retest method.

The questionnaire was administered directly on the respondents by the researchers. The use of descriptive statistics of frequency counts, mean scores and percentages were employed for the analysis of demographic data and research questions. The hypotheses were tested using t-test and One-Way ANOVA. All computations were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

Results

Research Question One: What is the consequence of marital conflict among spouses in Benue State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Consequence of Marital Conflict among Spouses in Benue State, Nigeria.**N = 120**

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	My lack of confidence is as a result of marital conflict.	2.56	Agree
2	My children suffer trauma as a result of the conflict in my marriage.	2.59	Agree
3	Marital conflict has put me into deep stress and anxiety.	2.68	Disagree
4	My nature of job frustrates my spouse.	2.50	Agree
5	My spouse always beats me so hard that I must seek medical help.	3.81	Agree
6	I withdraw from people due to shame as a result of the conflict in my marriage.	3.91	Agree
7	Mismanagement of money by my spouse results in the inability to pay children's bills or school fees?	2.32	Disagree
8	My friends avoid me due to crises in my home.	1.92	Disagree
9	Maltreatment from my spouse has made me lose weight.	1.93	Disagree
10	Pressure from my mother-in-law for my inability to conceive has caused me severe ill-health.	2.53	Agree
11	Verbal abuse from my spouse has affected my health	1.97	Disagree
Sectional Mean		2.61	

Table 1 shows the consequences of marital conflict of spouses in Benue State. The mean score for consequences of marital conflict among spouses is 2.61 indicating agreement since the mean is above 2.50 (midpoint on a 4-point Likert scale). This implies that the respondents agreed on the consequences of marital conflict among spouses in Benue State.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the consequences of marital conflict between male and female spouses in Benue State.

Table 2: t-test on the difference between the difference in the consequences of marital conflict between male and female spouses in Benue State, Nigeria.

Gender	Number	Mean	S. D	t-value	df	Sig(2-tailed)	Decision
Male	73	2.06	.649	-1.926	84.469	.047	Rejected
Female	47	2.32	.790				

The analysis in Table 2 was carried out to determine the difference in consequences of marital conflict between male and female couples. A significant value of .047 (less than the 0.05 level of significance) shows that there is a significant difference between male and female spouses. The hypothesis that says that there is no significant difference in the consequences of marital conflict between male and female spouses in Benue State is therefore rejected.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the consequences of marital conflicts among spouses with different years of marital experience in Benue State.

Table 3: One-way ANOVA for Difference in the consequences of marital conflict in River State based on marital experience.

Marital Experience	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	3.460	2	1.730	3.517	.033	Rejected
Within Groups	57.556	117	.492			
Total	61.016	119				

The analysis on Table 3 was carried out to establish whether there is a significant difference in the consequences of marital conflict based on years of marital experience in Benue State. With a significant value of .033 (less than the 0.05 level of significance), the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the consequences of marital conflicts among spouses with different years of marital experience in Benue State is rejected. Spouses, therefore, does differ significantly in the consequences of marital conflict in Benue State based on the years of experience.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that there is marital conflict and consequences of marital conflict in the study area and these conflicts are caused by parental upbringing, childlessness, lack of financial stability, religious differences etc. and the consequences of marital conflicts are stress, anxiety, insomnia, suicidal thoughts as well as hatred/fear of the opposite sex. This is line with the study of Uwatt (2004) who reported that there are different types of conflicts prevalent among spouses; physical, social, economic and psychological conflicts.

Also, the consequences of marital conflict are found to include extra-marital relationships, stress and inability to control children, drug abuse, separations and divorces. There is variation in the consequences of marital conflicts alongside gender. With a significant value of .047 (less than the 0.05 level of significance), it was concluded that it is statistically significant.

More so, the study found that there is a significant difference in the consequences of marital conflicts in Benue State-based years of marriage. With a significant value of .033 (less than .05 level of significance), it was concluded that consequences of marital conflicts differ significantly among spouses with different levels of marital experiences.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The researcher concludes that marital conflicts exist and have consequences in the study area irrespective of gender and years of marital experience. The consequences of marital conflicts do not have any statistically significant differences alongside gender and level of education. The consequences of marital conflicts differ significantly among couples with different years of marital experience.

From the result of the findings, the following recommendations are made.

1. Counsellors should sensitize couples on the consequences of marital conflicts, irrespective of their level of education or gender.
2. School guidance counsellors should design seminars on marriage to enlighten and educate the youth on possible causes and prevention of marriage violence regularly.
3. There is no formula for marriage, thus every marriage is a unique marriage. Therefore, spouses should be sensitive to the consequences of marital conflicts is not gender-based.
4. It is recommended therefore that spouses should ensure that the unique marital relationship is placed above any prejudice, irritations and should never allow sentiments to tear it apart.

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