

**SOURCES OF MARITAL STRESS OF PEOPLE IN POLYGAMOUS MARRIAGES IN
KWARA STATE: IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING**

By

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Abstract

The study investigated sources of marital stress of people in polygamous marriages in Kwara State. The researchers thus investigated whether or not there was a significant difference in the sources of marital stress of people in polygamous marriages in Kwara State on the bases of gender, religious affiliation and educational attainment. Descriptive survey research procedure was adopted for the study. The Multistage sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 600 respondents. The instrument for data collection was the Sources of Marital Stress Questionnaire (SMSQ). Research questions were raised while research hypotheses formulated were tested. The data collected were analysed through the use of frequency counts, percentages, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that inability of husbands/wives to meet the sexual demands of wives/husband was the major source of marital stress of people in polygamous marriage. Based on the findings, there is a need for proper enlightenment on marital counselling for the singles and the married on the stress associated with polygamous marriages.

Keywords: Stress, Marital stress, Polygamous marriage

Introduction

Marriage is a legally recognized union of man and woman. According to Duntoye, Bukoye and Rasaq (2008), it is a composition of two people coming together as husband and wife to re-define themselves. It is regarded as a medium through which individuals involved achieve better self-realization. Nwoye (1991) defined marriage as sacred and permanent contract which is assumed to be enacted when two people, a man and woman decide on their own accord and in the presence of at least two witnesses to exchange the formal consent to live a life of full of love and sharing with each other; for the purpose of promoting mutual growth and welfare as partners on their journey through life.

According to Ezukwu (1991), marriage is a partnership contract without an escape clause. This means that marriage ideally should be a lifelong agreement between the couples. The union of marriage is sanctioned by the society for a man and a woman to become husband and wife with social obligations being recognized and accepted by both partners. Jha (2001) sees the concept of marriage as a publicly recognized and culturally sanctioned union between a male and a female, which is intended to be enduring to give sexual right in each other and to fulfill further social functions.

The institution of marriage is a universal one because it is found all over the world, but the type of marriage differs significantly from one society to the other. Mahuta (2008) pointed out that the forms or patterns of marriage are dependent on the number of spouses involved in the marriage. Broadly speaking, there are two types of marriage, namely, monogamy and polygamy. These are the two types of marriage in Nigerian society but in other societies, various types of marriage exist. According to Mahuta (2008), monogamy is the type of marriage in which a person has only one wife at any given time. Polygamy, on the other hand, is the type of marriage in which a man marries more than one wife at any given time. In Islam, a Muslim is allowed to marry up to four wives depending on the financial position and other conditions that have to be satisfied which include, fair dealing and treatment among the wives, good feeding and clothing among others (Jawando, 1997).

There are several traditional and major functions of marriage across societies, cultures and religions of the world. From the Christian point of view, the functions of marriage according to the Holy Bible are for companionship, divine security, and fruit of the womb, divine protection from enemies, divine favour and spiritual strength. Oyedepo (2007) also explained that husband and wife will enjoy greater understanding when they put heads together to make decisions affecting their family. Also, the marriage union is expected to produce children.

That was God's plan from the beginning (Genesis 1:26 - 28). If it does not, grief and frustration often set in. Similarly, Adeoye (1995) listed some expectations or roles of marriage as follows; moral values and characters, security and self confidence, self control, sexual direction, future social capability e.t.c. Other functions of marriage identified by Bamisaiye (2000) are sexual functions, economic functions, reproductive functions and educational functions. However, it is relevant to mention that in a situation where all the expectations and functions of Marriage are not met, there is tendency for such a home to experience stress (Mahuta, 2008).

Amao and Aremu (2003) observed that stress is not necessarily a bad thing. If one always avoids it, one would never establish intimate relationship, have children, try new things or succeed at work. Also, stress simply cannot be completely avoided because pressure, concerns and strains of life are with people everyday which make them stressful, therefore there is no such thing as a stress free existence. A major factor in the maintenance of health is the ability to live in harmony with the community (Adeniran, 2006).

Marital stress manifests itself in various ways. According to Adeniran (2006), living and rearing a family in the present economic, political and social environment, family conflict, education and the struggle with daily workloads can be very stressful and lead to burn out. As a result of over load of responsibility, couples may be found yelling at each other over minor incidents such as not cooking food on time. Any working couple could relate to such an over load of responsibilities. Khan (1991) observed that marital stress is found among the working class wives who fail to pay due attention to and take care of their husbands and children, or fail to take as much interest and pride in motherly roles as the husbands want. He went further to observe that child rearing is the most important source of stress for women especially those in polygamous homes.

Fadairo (2002) identified the following conditions that may induce stress among couples;

- a. Unaffectionate disposition
- b. Unforgiving attitude
- c. Communication gap
- d. Inability to find quality time for each other
- e. Poor handling of monetary affairs
- f. Extramarital relationships
- g. Conjugal infidelity (lack of trust between husband and wife).
- h. Dealing with in-laws.

People experience stress from the moment they are conceived until the day they die. Stress is then an essential and normal part of people's daily lives. When people are dealing with dangers, fear, and emotional issues in their personal lives, stress can produce fight or flight responses (Duntoye, 2006). Couples in polygamous marriages who are experiencing stress cannot function effectively at work due to the emotional instability hence, leading to poor productivity. Likewise, children from these families usually have poor emotional development and find it difficult to cope with academic work hereby having poor academic performance (Nwobi, 2004)

Many researches have been conducted on the issue of stress. Amao and Aremu (2003) researched into the sources of stress and coping strategies among sandwich students of University of Ado-Ekiti. Adeoye (1995) also investigated the effects of stress on students' academic performance in University of Ibadan. Fadairo (2002) studied the influence of polygamous family on students' academic performance secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis. While, Adeniran (2006) focused mainly on marital stress with special attention on monogamous couples. Findings from the study of Amao and Aremu (2003) revealed that combination of domestic and academic works are stressful, while Fadairo (2002) showed that inadequate funds and attention in the polygamous families have negative effects on children's academic performance. Adeniran (2006) found that family conflicts, education and the struggle with daily workloads can be stressful. All these studies did not specifically address the nature and stress inherent in polygamous marriages. Against this background therefore, the main concern of people in polygamous marriages in Kwara State is imperative.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised based on the statement of the problem:

1. What are the sources of marital stress of people in polygamous marriages in Kwara State?
2. Are there differences in the sources of marital stress of people in polygamous marriages in Kwara State on the bases of gender, educational attainment and religious affiliation?

Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the sources of marital stress of people in polygamous marriages in Kwara State on the basis of gender.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the sources of marital stress of people in polygamous marriages in Kwara State on the basis of educational attainment.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in the sources of marital stress of people in polygamous marriages in Kwara State on the basis of religious affiliation.

Methodology

The researchers adopted the descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey provides an opportunity for the researcher to present information about the characteristics within a particular field of study with the purpose of providing a picture of situations, as they naturally exist (Burns & Grove, 1995). The population for the study comprised all married people in polygamous marriages in Kwara State. The researchers employed multi-stage sampling procedure to select the respondents.

At stage one, simple random sampling technique was used to select two Local Government Areas from each of the three Senatorial Districts that make up Kwara State. From Kwara South, Offa and Irepodun Local Government Areas were chosen. From Kwara North, Edu and Kaima Local Government Areas were chosen while Ilorin West and Ilorin East were chosen from Kwara Central. In all, a total number of six Local Government Areas constituted the target population for the study.

At stage two, cluster sampling technique was used to select people from each of the selected Local Government Area. Cluster sampling technique is used in situations when it is difficult to obtain a complete listing of the element of a given target population (Daramola, 2003). Respondents were drawn from three main centers viz teachers in secondary schools, workers in the Local Government Secretariat and members of churches and mosques. At stage three, stratified sampling technique was used to stratify the sample into stratum. Ibrahim, Landu and Opadokun (2004) described stratified sampling technique as a process in educational research whereby variables are classified into groups according to desired characteristics of the variables such as sex, age group etc. In this study, stratification becomes necessary so as to enable the researcher to select married people from polygamous homes.

At stage four, simple random sampling technique was used to select one hundred respondents from each of the six Local Government Areas. In all, a total number of six hundred married people in polygamous marriages participated in the study.

For the purpose of this study, the researchers developed a questionnaire tagged "Sources of Marital Stress Questionnaire" (SMSQ) and it was responded to by people in polygamous marriages. The instrument has two sections, A, and B. section "A" deals with personal data about the respondents such as gender, religious affiliation and educational attainment. Section "B" consists of 9 items on the sources of marital stress in people with polygamous marriages. The items on sections "B" was rated as follows:

VT = Very True of me; T = True of me; RT = Rarely True of me; NT = Not True of me.

Respondents ticked from the options that best represent their opinions.

In order to ascertain the validity of the instrument, the draft of the questionnaire was given to four lecturers in the Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin for vetting and advice. Sequel to their suggestions, necessary amendments were made.

The reliability of the instrument was ascertained by using the test re-test reliability method.

The instrument was administered to a group of twenty (20) people in polygamous house in Ilorin, who do not form part of the respondents for the study and after an interval of four weeks; the same instrument was re-administered to the same group of people. The two sets of scores were correlated using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient formula.

The correlation co-efficient obtained was 0.70 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Based on this, the instrument was adjudged reliable for the study.

The researchers personally administered the instrument on the selected respondents with the help of trained research assistants. The questionnaire was collected back immediately. The personal involvement of the researchers according to Best (1981), is necessary because of the advantage of establishing rapport between the researcher and the respondents and the opportunity of explaining items that might not be so clear to the participants. Section A which consists of three items dealing with demographic data were scored and analysed statistically using frequency counts and percentages with no point assigned to the items.

Percentages were used to analyze the demographic data while the hypotheses generated for the study were analyzed with t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Results

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender, Educational Attainment and Religious Affiliation

No.	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Male	43.3
		Female	56.7
	Total	600	100.0
2	Educ. Attainment	Primary	11.7
		JSSC	18.3
		SSSC	26.7
		OND/NCE	25.0
		First Degree/HND	13.3
		Master's/PhD	5.0
	Total	600	100.0
3	Religion	Christianity	36.7
		Islam	63.3
	Total	600	100.0

Table 1 shows that 600 respondents participated in the study, of these, 260 were males while 340 were females with 43.3 and 56.7 percentages respectively. The table further reveal that a total of 70 respondents had primary school certificate only, 110 respondents had Junior Secondary School Certificates, 160 respondents had Senior Secondary School Certificates, 150 respondents were OND/NCE holders, 80 respondents were First Degree/HND Holders and 30 respondents had their Masters/Doctorate degree with 11.7, 18.3, 26.7, 25.0, 13.3 and 5.0 percentages respectively. Also, 220 respondents were Christians (36.7%) and 380 respondents were Muslims (63.3%).

Table 2: Rank Order Analysis of Sources of Marital Stress

S/N	Item No	As far as am concerned, marital stress originates from:	Mean	Rank
1.	9	Inability of the husband/wives to meet the sexual demands of wives/husband.	3.55	1 st
2.	6	Constant quarrels among the wives.	3.47	2 nd
3.	2	Shouting and yelling treatment of spouses.	3.18	3 rd
4.	4	Failure of spouses to freely communicate ideas among each other.	3.18	3 rd
5.	1	Lack of proper marital communication among spouses.	3.07	5 th
6.	3	Cold shoulder treatment by husband of one or more of the wives.	3.07	5 th
7.	5	Inability of husband to meet the financial needs of the wives.	3.05	7 th
8.	7	Unequal division of labour among wives.	2.98	8 th
9.	8	Interference of extended family members in family affairs.	2.67	9 th

Table 2 shows that item 9 ("Inability of the husband/ wives to meet the sexual demands of wives/ husband") had the largest mean value (3.55) and was ranked 1st. It was followed in second place by item 6 ("Constant quarrels among wives") with a mean value of 3.47. Item 2 ("Shouting and Yelling treatment of spouses") with a mean value of 3.18 was ranked 3rd. Item 8 ("Interference of extended family members in family affairs") had the lowest mean (2.67) and was therefore ranked the least i.e. 9th.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in the sources of marital stress as perceived by married people in polygamous marriages on the basis of gender.

Table 3: Means, Standard Deviation and t-value of Respondents' on Sources of Marital Stress Based on Gender.

Group	No	Mean	SD	DF	Cal t- value	Critical t-value
Male	260	27.7885	8.84254	598	1.05	1.96
Female	340	28.5353	8.40399			

Table 3 shows that the calculated t-value of 1.05 is lesser than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis was accepted. This means that gender has no significant influence on the sources of marital stress of people in polygamous marriages.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference in the sources of marital stress as perceived by married people in polygamous marriages on the basis of educational attainment.

Table 4: Result of Analysis Of Variance (ANOVA) on sources of marital stress as perceived by married people in polygamous marriages on the basis of educational attainment.

Sources	DF	Sum of squares	Mean square	Cal F-value	Critical F-value
Between groups	5	461644	92.329	1.25	3.00
Within groups	594	43814.475	73.762		
Total	599	44276.118			

Table 4 reveals that the calculated F-ratio of 1.25 was less than the Critical F-ratio of 3.00 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis was accepted. This means that educational attainment has no significant influence on the sources of marital stress of people in polygamous marriages.

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant difference in the sources of marital stress as perceived by married people in polygamous marriages on the basis of religious affiliation.

Table 5: Means, Standard Deviation and t-value of Respondents' on Sources of Marital Stress Based on Religion.

Group	No	Mean	SD	DF	Cal t- value	Critical t-value
Male	220	28.4591	8.56472	598	0.54	1.96
Female	380	28.0684	8.62441			

Table 5 shows that the calculated t-value of 0.54 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis was accepted. This means that religion has no significant influence on the sources of marital stress of people in polygamous marriages in Kwara State.

Discussion

Part A of the questionnaire dealt with respondents' demographic data and the analysis of the items was done. Part B of the questionnaire was used to collect data on the sources of stress. Section B contains 9 items. The result showed that item 9 ("As far as I am concerned marital stress originate from inability of the husband/ wives to meet the sexual demands of wives/ husband") had the largest mean score of 3.55 and was ranked 1st. This means that people in polygamous marriages do experience stress from inability to meet the sexual demands of their spouses more than from any other sources. This findings conforms to the previous findings of Al-kre the study investigated the sources of marital stress of people in polygamous marriages in Kwara State.

The result also showed that item 6 ("As far as am concerned marital stress originates from constant quarrels among the wives") was ranked 2nd with mean 3.47. This means people in polygamous marriages according to Adeniran (2006) most of the time quarrel. Adeniran opined that one of the reasons why most people run away from polygamous family is constant quarrel among the wives especially when they live together.

The result showed that item 2 ("As far as am concerned marital stress originates from shouting and yelling treatment of spouses") with a mean score of 3.18 was ranked 3rd. This finding confirms the findings of Duntoye (2002) that lack of proper marital communication among spouses in polygamous marriage is a serious determinant of marital stress among couples. Poor communication style among spouses in polygamous marriage is a serious

determinant of marital stress among couples. Some of the difficulty areas in the communication realm of some couples include the silent treatment, the shouting and yelling treatment, constant talking, confidence problem and cold shoulder treatment.

Hypothesis one stated that there is no significant difference in the sources of marital stress as perceived by people in polygamous marriages on the basis of gender. The hypothesis was tested using t-test. The result showed that, gender has no significant influence on the sources of marital stress of people in polygamous marriages since the calculated t-value of 1.05 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Hypothesis two stated that, there is no significant difference in the sources of marital stress as perceived by people in polygamous marriage on the basis of educational attainment. The hypothesis was tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results showed that educational attainment has no significant influence on the sources of marital stress, since the calculated f-value of 1.25 is less than the critical f-value of 3.00 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. This finding contradicts the study of Martha (2006) who observed that poorly educated women from rural areas and with low socio-economic status are much more likely to experience stress in a polygamous marriage

Hypothesis three stated that, there is no significant difference in the sources of marital stress as perceived by people in polygamous marriage on the basis of religious affiliation. The hypothesis was tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results showed that religion has no significant influence on the sources of marital stress, since the calculated t-value of 0.50 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. This finding confirms the finding of Gregory (2005) that people pursued plural marriage because of their sexual appetite rather than sincere religious conviction. As against (Senegal-polygamy, 2012) that, the main social factors underlying the high polygamy rates are religion, high mortality and levirate. He further said that, having more than one wife is authorized under Islamic law and men often invoke their religious beliefs to explain the practice of polygamy. This finding contradicts the study of Miriam (2008) that in Islam, the Quran clearly states that men who choose this route (polygamous marriage) must deal with their wives justly.

Implications of the Findings for Counselling Profession

The study investigated the sources of marital stress of people in polygamous marriages in Kwara State. The findings of this study have far reaching implications for counselling such as:

- There is the need for Counsellors to include marital counselling to secondary students just as it is done on vocational counselling. This will prepare the minds of both males

and females at their early stages of life that marriage be in polygamy or polygamy can be stressful, hence, they need to enter into it and also cope with it.

- There is a need to propagate the establishment of counselling centers in all the towns in Nigeria where people in polygamous marriages and those who are planning to enter into it will be counselled on what to expect in it and make a good living.
- Counselling centers also should be established and utilized in churches and mosques to cater for those couples that are going through stress in polygamous marriages.
- Counsellors should be prepared to let his/her clients know that life itself is full of stress therefore they should be ready to face and overcome the challenges.
- Counsellors should note that counselors-in- training should be equipped with knowledge and skills to help people/clients with their marital stress.

Conclusion

Perusing the analysis of data and interpretation of the findings, there were evidences to show that gender, educational attainment and religious affiliation confirmed speculations that people in polygamous marriages experience stress from multiplicity of sources. The fact is that people in polygamous marriages in Kwara State go through stress.

The greatest source of marital stress of people in the polygamous marriage in Kwara State was inability of the husband/wives to meet the sexual demands of husband/wives.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research work, the researchers present the following recommendations:

There should be proper enlightenment for the singles and the married on the stress associated with polygamous marriages.

The general public should be enlightened on the prones and cones of polygamy and the benefits of maintaining average sized family so as to ensure that people set up the families that are capable of caring for.

Both religions (Christianity and Islam) should play their roles in ensuring that they practice this type of marriage in any acceptable manner.

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