

Self-Esteem and Age Factor as Determinants of Marriage Separation among Residents of Namu District in Qua'an-Pan LGA, Plateau State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined self-esteem and age factor as determinants of marriage separation among residents of Namu District in Qua'an-Pan LGA. One hundred (100) divorced and separated couples were sampled for the study using a convenient sampling method. Their ages range from 18-60 years old and above. The study covers most of the tribes residing in Namu, and they include both Muslims and Christians. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. Two hypotheses were tested and the results revealed as follows: the first hypothesis which stated that participant self-esteem will have a significant influence on decision-making to be separated in marriage among the selected residents of Namu community was tested positive [$r(100) = .22$; $p < .05$]. In all, the study established that age has a significant influence on the decision to separate in marriage among residents of Namu District [$r(100) = .362$; $p < .05$]. On this note, the study recommended that there is a need to advocate and sensitize people on embracing good cultural practices that facilitate stability in marriages. This calls for intervention by professional cross-cultural counselors to cultivate and integrate a common faith through which common values can be attained among couples.

Keywords: Self-Esteem, Divorce, Age, Marriage, Qua'an-Pan.

Introduction

Divorce has to do with the legal dissolution of a marriage, but as an action, certain factors are believed to be responsible. One can only talk of divorce if there is marriage. Marriage to a human is more than any other ritual that signified a major change in the status of an individual's life, it is often a joyous and pleasant occasion that is once enjoyed in a lifetime by most human practice. Two people are legally and symbolically joined before their kin and friends. It is expected that their honeymoon will be pleasant and that they will live happily ever after. Coincidentally, something may happen and things may equally change, as expected marriage requires the two individuals have been weeded to adjust and adapt to the new environment they found themselves in. In the course of this adjustment, one may feel unsatisfied, and another may feel offended, which results in *marital instability* which causes divorce.

Divorce may be defined as the legal dissolution of marriage, either by the pronouncement of a judge in a legal court, the husband himself, or by implied action of the couple. For instance, in Islamic jurisdiction if a husband says to his wife: *if you step out of this house that*

is the end of our marriage. If the wife stepped out of the house, that implied divorce. According to Mitchell (1968), it is the process by which marriage which is recognized as valid, could be revoked in the lifetime of the partners who then revert to single status and are free to remarry. Abdullati (2007) viewed it as the dissolution of a marriage contract; it may be affected by the act of a husband or wife or by mutual agreement or by operation of law. Yahaya (2008) also defined divorce as a formal or legal termination of the marital relationship. Al-Varez (2008) considered divorce as a legal dissolution of the marriage contract;" Holmes (2018) observed that divorce is a climax to a long period of unhappiness and a legal way out of a situation which couples considered intolerable. He also sees divorce as "the legal termination of a marriage". It is a powerful weapon that is used to end a lawful marriage.

Literature has revealed several factors that lead to divorce in marriage but emphases have been on social and cultural factors such as age while paying attention to psychological factors such as one's *Self-esteem*, which is an individual's subjective evaluation of their worth. Self-esteem encompasses beliefs about oneself (for example, "I am unloved", and "I am worthy") as well as emotional states, such as triumph, despair, pride, and shame (Hewitt, John P., 2009). Self-esteem is an attractive psychological construct because it predicts certain outcomes, such as academic achievement, happiness, satisfaction in marriage and relationship happiness, and criminal behavior (Marsh, H.W. 2010). Self-esteem can apply to a specific attribute or globally. Often, some individuals are found to possess low self-esteem. Various research in psychology attributed low self-esteem with heavy self-criticism and dissatisfaction, hypersensitivity to criticism with resentment against critics and feelings of being attacked, chronic indecision and an exaggerated fear of mistakes, excessive will to please and unwillingness to displease any petitioner, perfectionism, which can lead to frustration when perfection is not achieved, neurotic guilt, dwelling on or exaggerating the magnitude of past mistakes, floating hostility and general defensiveness and irritability without any proximate to mistakes, pessimism and a generally negative outlook. An individual with this characteristic is highly under probability to maintain a marital relationship, which of course can predispose one divorce decision.

Age could also be a significant factor in how partners measure relationship satisfaction and in characterizing relationship behaviors that lead toward it which could predict divorce. The general assumption is that passionate love declines with age, although this assertion has been challenged (Hendrick 1988). Some studies suggest that intergenerational attitudes toward love are similar.

Reedy, Birren, and Schaie (1981) concluded that older and younger partners in marriage differ in perceptions of satisfaction. The study concluded that older partners in a relationship generally equate satisfaction in love and relationships with traits such as mutual dependability, commitment, and loyalty. Younger generations, on the other hand, value long-term commitment and loyalty less and emphasize honest communication.

Family being the origin of all human beings is regarded as an important social institution in every human society because it is regarded as a source of every happy society. One can only

talk of divorce when there is marriage, unfortunately, divorce has become an integrated part of society as a result of the inability to control and manage our differences as a married couple. Our orientation or privileges to divorce particularly by men in marriage as taught by Islamic tradition. This contributed to our inability to accommodate individual differences, as well as manage our anger, or unable to control ourselves, particularly among married couples which led to divorce in marriage among many individuals in our society in the whole world and Namu is not an exclusion.

Divorce rates have in recent times increased leading to the formation of a new association "{Divorcees Association}" It is a rare phenomenon before the 19th century and early 20th century to hear of divorce, but it has become a common act today, particularly among people from the northern part of this country, especially residents of Namu District of Plateau state. It is being done freely as if it has no negative effect on children and society. Today in Namu District, about half of those wedded in every year divorced within the first 3 three years of their marital engagement.

Again, the high prevalence rates of single parenting in Namu District today appears to have led to a negative effect on the side of the production of children resulting from broken families, such that the children are seemingly demanding to know the value and essence of marriage when they are neither cared for nor do they have a model to copy from. Divorce has suddenly become a precipitator of moral decay and insecurity in Namu District. Laha (2007) laments that if children have no good moral examples to copy from and no moral values are inculcated into them, they turned around to develop their own, divorce can lead to children growing as half-beak trained children. The situation seemingly gives rise to social vices and psychological trauma, which require immediate attention.

In the light of the above, there is little or no empirical evidence to suggest the factors responsible for the high rate of divorce in Namu District, thus the current research intends to find out the major reasons for divorce among residents of Namu District, thus it behooves to ask the following questions:

1. Does self-esteem significantly influence the decision to divorce among residents of Namu District?
2. What is the relationship between age and the decision to separate in marriage among residents of Namu District?

The general objective of this study is to investigate the predictive influence of age and self-esteem on the decision to separate in marriage. The specific purpose includes the following:

1. To explore the impact of self-esteem on the decision to separate in marriage among residents of Namu.
2. To ascertain the influence of age on the decision to divorce among residents of Namu District.

Self-esteem is referred to the self-evaluation of the worth and capabilities that one hold for himself, studies on self-esteem as it relates to divorce suggested that low self-esteem has a negative correlation with divorce. Moderate self-esteem on the other hand has a positive correlation with divorce. Surprisingly, high self-esteem appeared to have a negative

correlation with divorce. In a survey by UK Essay (2018), findings reveal that Self-esteem in adults is highly correlated with many other factors. For example, success in friendships, family relationships, body image, and sexual relationships. When someone has low self-esteem, it means they are not confident enough in themselves to believe they can "achieve" what they want. If you lack self-esteem for instance and don't think one is smart enough you will not apply to a "far-reach college". One would stick with colleges that they easily will be admitted to. Self-esteem in relationships works the same way. If one cannot love themselves, they would rarely let anyone else love them. Relationships and the self are inextricably interdependent. According to Johnson, Galambos & Finn (2017), higher satisfaction reported by men was linked to higher self-esteem levels and in female partners higher baseline levels of self-esteem, more frequent support for both partners and fewer depressive symptoms." A review of the available literature suggests that individuals with low self-esteem are more prone to seek for divorce than individuals with high self-esteem. On the influence of age, although evidence on the causal link has been more limited. Wilson & Smallwood (2008) examined the age difference between marrying and divorcing couples, calculated by subtracting the wife's age from the husband's age. The age difference is of interest in the study of families and partnership behavior. It is also important because of its link with broader socio-demographic changes, such as population aging, delayed fertility, and the provision of care. The main finding in their study is that between 1963 and 2005, the distribution of age differences for all marriages is very similar in each year to the distribution of age differences for the subset of couples who married in that year, but have since divorced. While there is some evidence of small variations in the proportion of marriages that end in divorce by age difference, there does not seem to be evidence of a strong association.

Several theories have been postulated to explain the divorce, for instance, the *family conflict perspective* posits that conflicts occur in family relationships due to factors such as differing goals, personalities, and behavioral styles of family members. If these family conflicts involve aggression, socialization to aggression occurs. Once socialized to aggression, participants then resort to using aggressive tactics to resolve conflicts in their romantic relationships. Physical aggression is viewed mainly as a system product rather than the result of individual pathology (Straus, 1973). Processes within families can maintain, escalate, or reduce levels of physical aggression. Much work based on this perspective has involved phone surveys that, in particular, seek to establish the topography of couple aggression (e.g., prevalence, types, and association with individual characteristics including gender and other demographic characteristics). Findings from these studies indicate that women engage in physical aggression toward a partner at rates similar to men's (Archer, 2000). Work from this perspective has increased our understanding of the ubiquitous nature of aggression within couples and some associated risk factors that are common to both men and women. A significant contribution of this perspective is that it led to the recognition of the possibility that partner aggression might involve a complex process in which both men and women partners may play roles. However, most studies

based on this approach have been descriptive and have not adequately addressed the influence of both partners and interactions between partners on partner aggression and how the pattern and degree of aggression change over time. Below are some of the hypothesis that guided the study;

1. There will be a significant relationship between self-esteem and the decision to divorce in marriage among residents of Namu District.
2. Age will significantly influence a decision to separate in marriage among residents of Namu District.

Method

An ex-post factor Survey design was adopted in this study. The choice of the design was informed by the objectives of the study as outlined in chapter one, the ex-post factor was chosen because the event (divorce) has already occurred and the researcher did not make any attempt to manipulate the variables. Also, the survey design is adopted in this study due to the broadness of the study area, with a high density of population that is dispersed. It is cumbersome to study the whole of divorced people in Namu district. The application of survey design was also appropriate for the study because it focuses on vital facts about people, their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and motivation.

Setting

The setting for this study is Namu District of Qua'an-pan Local Government Area of Plateau State.

Participants

A total of 100 divorced couples were sampled for the study. Demographic characteristics of the participants revealed that gender 40 (40%) were males, while 60 (60%) were females; on the Religion belief, 35 (35%) were Christian, 60 (60%) were Muslim, and 5 (5%) were Traditional; on the occupation for the income, 45 (45%) were unemployed, 25 (25%) were farmer, 5 (5%) were petty trader, 15 (15%) were government workers, 3 (3%) were employed with private sector, 2 (2%) were big business, 5 (5%) were self-employed professionals.

Instruments

Questionnaires were used to collect relevant information from the participants of the study. The questionnaire was divided into sections, each of the sections tapping information based on the identified variables of interest. It comprised two (2) sections; A, and B. The structure of the questionnaire is outlined below;

SECTION A: Contains demographic information, the items here cover Sex, Religion, Age, occupation, Marital Status, and Educational Attainment.

SECTION B: Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES): Developed by Rosenberg, M. (1965). The RSES measures self-esteem using ten items answered on a four-point Likert-type scale —

from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Scoring and interpretation of the scale are explained below:

The minimum total score is 0 and the maximum is 30, with higher scores representing higher self-esteem. Results consist of four raw scores and four percentiles:

- Total self-esteem
- Self-competence (sum of first five items)
- Self-liking (sum of second five items)
- Self-competence minus Self liking (SC-SL).

Procedure

The researcher employed two research assistants who were trained in how the instrument is administered. They distributed the questionnaires to all the participants in the villages where the study was conducted. The respondents were requested to fill out the questionnaire on the same day they were given, to avoid loss or external influence. Though, the majority of the respondents were illiterates. Therefore, in such a situation, the research experts in the Hausa language translated the questionnaire for them in Hausa and other native languages understood by the people and they were able to fill them successfully.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using SPSS. Hypotheses one and two were analyzed using Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Hypothesis one: There will be a significant positive relationship between divorce and the self-esteem of the participants in Namu community. This was tested using Pearson product-moment correlation analysis and the result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Showing the Relationship Between divorcing behavior and Self-esteem

Variable	Mean	SD	R	df	P
Divorcing Behavior	23.12	11.15	.22	98	<.05
Self-esteem	22.77	10.72			

As it is shown in Table 1, there exists a significant relationship between Divorcing Behavior and Self-esteem [$r(98) = .22$; $p < .05$]. This result indicates that low self-esteem predicts divorce. Though it has shown a slight difference in the mean score; Divorcing Behavior ($M = 23.12$; $SD = 11.15$) and Personality ($M = 22.77$; $SD = 10.72$). This partially confirms the stated hypothesis, as such accepted in this study.

Hypothesis Two: Age will significantly influence the decision to separate in marriage among residents of Namu District.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Showing the influence of age on divorcing behavior

Variable	Mean	SD	R	Df	P
Divorcing Behavior	25.7	13.15			
			.362	98	<.05
Age	20.82	8.72			

As shown in Table 2 above, the age of the respondents has a significant relationship with divorcing behavior, [$r(98) = .362$; $p < .05$]. This confirmed our hypothesis that thus, the age of an individual couple influences his/her decision to divorce and therefore, this hypothesis was retained in the study.

Discussion

Investigation from the study found that hypothesis one, which stated that, participant self-esteem will significantly influence his decision-making to be separated in marriage among the selected residents of Namu community. The result of hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant relationship between self-esteem and decision-making to be separated in marriage. Hence this hypothesis was accepted. This is per the findings of UK Essay (2018) which revealed that Self-esteem in adults is highly correlated with many other factors, including success in friendships, family relationships, body image, and sexual relationships. When someone has low self-esteem, it means they are not confident enough in themselves to believe they can "achieve" what they want.

The second hypothesis stated that there will be a significant positive relationship between age and divorcing behavior of married couples in Namu. The result of the findings revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between age and decision-making to separate in marriage. Hence the hypothesis was supported. This finding is in line with the findings of Wilson & Smallwood (2008) which suggested that, while there is some evidence of small variations in the proportion of marriages that end in divorce by age difference, there does not seem to be evidence of a strong association.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn; the study identified some important variables which are responsible for the high rate of divorce in Namu District. The study finds out that self-esteem significantly influences divorce or the decision to separate from marriage, the study also identified the age of the couples as one of the factors leading to divorce.

Recommendations

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

1. There is a need to advocate and sensitize people on embracing good cultural practices that facilitate stability in marriages. This calls for intervention by professional cross-cultural counselors to cultivate and integrate a common faith through which common values can be attained among couples.
2. The independent effect of age on the decision to separate in marriage makes it necessary for the government to make policies that will address early marriage because such practices only contribute to a high rate of divorce which is negative for our society. Experts are encouraged to carry out awareness programs that will increase individual self-esteem in Namu community.

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