

Age Differences at Marriage Between Couples and the Risk of Divorce in Amassoma Community, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine whether age differences between married couples was a determinant in marital instability among married people in Amassoma community, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was used as the research frame for the study. Purposive sampling techniques were used to sample 22 respondents for the study. Three hypotheses were formulated to keep the study in focus. The results of the study revealed that age differences among marriage couples account for the high rate of divorce in our study area. Husband-older couples were significantly more dissatisfied and experience high rate of divorce than wife older, and same-age marriages. The study gives valuable insight to the future use of couple therapist in society. Family therapists can work with couples for nurturing their intimacy thereby control and handling couples conflicts by knowing about spouses differences based on Gender and age differences.

Key words: Married people; Religion; Marriage and marital satisfaction

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INTRODUCTION

Marriage is considered to be one of the major pillars of any society and as such is one of the most important

societal institutions. In Nigeria, traditionally and from time immemorial, marriage has been hallowed as sacred; and marriage for most Nigerians is not merely a sacrament but is sacrosanct. It is one of the most essential and strongest bond of affection human may develop since it provides a structure for establishing family ties and bringing up the coming generation (Larson & Holman, 1994). Hall (2006) demonstrated that these days couples are less happy with their marriages compared to many years ago. Furthermore, maintaining of a marital relationship is a difficult task for many couples in all cultures and societies (Tomic et al., 2006; Baker et al., 2009). Once the couple enters into the bond of marriage, the relationship is considered perpetual—till death does them apart. In other words, marriage used to be for life and it worked as a bulwark against social vulnerabilities. It had an inbuilt system of checks and balances, and roles and priorities were defined by the society for the couple. What distinguished marriage in Nigeria from marriage in the West was the sanctity attached to marriage: a sense of perpetual bonding and an element of divinity in it. Today, divorce is a quick way out for people who feel trapped in an unhappy marriage.

The problem of divorce, however, is not new to Nigeria, and it has existed at all times in known history. But it was resorted to only in extreme cases where there were unbearable cruelty, desertion, mental illness, impotence/infertility, and infidelity. But it is no longer so.

Currently researchers reminded that about 50% of couples resolve their own marital unhappiness over Divorce. In Iran, for example, statistics show that out of every one thousand marriages registered in the Country, roughly 200 ends up in divorce (Zarei & Younesi, 2009). In Nigeria, many studies on divorce show a similar trend of increase in divorce rates in the country. Divorce as being a social occurrence leads to considerable problems among families which enable it to have a distressing impact including excessive sense of damage, anger,

depressive signs, social isolation, and lack of time at their job function (Amato, 2004).

The worry here about the rise in the divorce rates is experienced by the fact that divorce had been and indeed would continue to be the ultimate result of people not being satisfied with their marriages. This article therefore examines the influence of age differences among couples on divorce in Amassoma Community in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Reflecting on such marital insecurities or the fact that some married people are not satisfied with their marriages, the research attempted to answer the following questions thus; "What is happening to marriages these days? Does age differences among marriage couples account for the high rate of marital instability? Is there any relationship between group differences in marital quality that can be found between husband-older, wife older, and same-age marriages?

Is there any relationship between age at marriage and quality of marriage/instability?

It is these and more questions that we shall attempt to answer in the course of this study. Answers to these questions will provide knowledge of important aspects of the marital relationship which will assist in developing a more successful marital enrichment programs and marital therapy, which in turn improve a family functioning and marriage satisfaction.

1. AGE AS PREDICTOR OF LOVE ATTITUDES AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

Studies have aimed to determine predictors of relationship satisfaction by evaluating attitudes and perceptions toward love. The relation of age vis-a-vis love attitudes or relationship satisfaction has not been explored as thoroughly as other individual traits such as sex or relationship experience (Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988; Hendrick et al., 1994; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1995). These studies have pointed to significant gender differences in love attitudes and beliefs about relationships (Hendrick, Hendrick, Adler, 1988; Worobey, 2000). Moreover, majority of the studies aimed at examining love attitudes or sexual attitudes have focused on the very young (Grote & Frieze, 1994; Gall et al., 2002). Social scientists have also generally drawn answers about love using samples of college students, but there have been studies that sought to examine interpersonal relationships and relationship satisfaction across the life span.

Age could be a significant factor on how partners measure relationship satisfaction and on characterising relationship behaviours that lead toward it. The general assumption is that Eros or passionate love declines with age, although this assertion has been challenged (Hendrick 1995). Some studies suggest that intergenerational

attitudes toward love are similar. Inman-Amos, Hendrick, and Hendrick (1994) used the Love Attitudes Scale to determine where significant differences can be observed on the attitudes of parents and their adult children toward love. The study reported that younger and older generations do not differ significantly in describing relationship satisfaction in terms of passionate love (Eros) and friendship-oriented (Storge) love. In a similar fashion, Contreras et al. (1996) wanted to examine love attitudes in a cross-cultural sample of participants who were 30 to 60 years old. All age groups indicated that passionate love (Eros) is strongly predictive of satisfaction in close relationships (Contreras et al., 1996, p.412).

On the other hand, Reedy, Birren, and Schaie (1981) concluded that older and younger partners in a 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 emphasise on honest communication.

Grote and Frieze (1994) examined love as a predictor in marital satisfaction across the middle-aged married population. Comparing it with the perceptions of younger couples, the study concluded that age leads to differences on how couples attributed marital satisfaction on love styles. Younger couples were more endorsing of game-playing styles than middle-aged couples. Younger couples considered game-playing love as a positive predictor in relationship satisfaction whereas middle-aged couples viewed game-playing love as a negative predictor. The older couples attributed friendship-based love and passionate love as positive predictors of relationship satisfaction. Game-playing styles are considered negatively correlated to the length of a close relationship, meaning couples are less likely to endorse game playing as the years go by (Frazier & Esterly, 1990, p.343). The propensity to endorse game-playing styles are suggested to be found among persons inclined to form only brief relationships with a certain a person until another person convinces them otherwise.

Frazier and Esterly (1990) also determined the influence of age along with several factors such as gender, personality, and relationship experience in evaluating relationship attitudes. Using a sample of 337 subjects aged 19 to 47 years old, the study utilised a combination of instruments, including the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) to assess relationship beliefs, relationship experience, gender-specific personality attributes, and relationship satisfaction. Sex and relationship experience were highly predictive of relationship beliefs. The study found that men engaged in more game-playing in their relationships than women because they emphasise on sex more than women and place less importance on the emotional aspect of their intimate relationships.

Montgomery and Sorell (1997) conducted an assessment of love styles using the Love Attitudes Scale across four age groups a) single college-age adults b) married participants below 30 years old who are childless c) married persons aged 20 to 40 years old and d) older married adults aged more than 50 years old. Significant differences in love styles were observed among different age groups. Major differences were concluded on explanations of love across young participants and other participants. Younger persons tended to report higher manic love (Mania) and higher game-playing love (Ludus) than all the other age groups. Younger persons also reported less altruistic love (Agape) than the rest of the participants.

Butler et al. (1999) explored the relationship between age and love attitudes. Using the Love Attitudes Scale (LAS) as primary measure, the researchers used a sample of college-aged and middle-aged subjects and wanted to address two issues a) the age generalisability of responses produced by the LAS and b) the relation of age and scores of subjects on the subscales of the LAS. Butler et al. (1999) concluded that responses on the especially on the Mania and Agape subscales among college-aged and middle-aged subjects were generalisable, specifically on the female subgroup. Although there were significant relations between certain love styles and age, the study indicated that based on the data, general perceptions of love among people remain constant until the middle age.

Age can also be considered as a predictor of sexual attitudes, which forms a significant component in relationship studies. Gall et al. (2002) conducted an exploratory study on the relationship of sexual attitudes with variables such as age and religiosity. The researchers used a sample of 800 adult participants with ages ranging from 18 to 87 years old. The sample was grouped into four young adults (mean 22.2) adults (mean 37.24) middle-age adults (mean 56.27) and older adults (mean 70.84). The study utilised the 43-item Sexual Attitudes Scale (Hendrick & Hendrick 1987) which divided sexual attitudes into four subscales, namely permissiveness, instrumentality, sexual practices, and communion. Gall et al. (2002) concluded that age is a significant predictor of sexual attitudes, particularly in terms of Permissiveness and Instrumentality attitudes. Younger participants reported higher permissiveness than older participants. Younger men appeared more instrumental in sexual attitudes than older men. This finding supports the results of studies which conclude that sexual activity declines with old age (Brubaker & Roberto, 1987 cited in Johnson & Booth 1998, p.220; Levine, 1998, p.79).

The impact of age in relation to the dyadic environment has also been studied. Johnson and Booth (1998) utilised the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) and found that dyadic interactions are highly determinant of marital stability but does not discount the influence of individual qualities such as age, sex, and mental health that could affect the quality of marriage (Johnson & Booth, 1998, p.219).

Schmitt, Kliegel, and Shapiro (2007) endeavoured to investigate the impact of dyadic interactions in long-term marriages involving couples belonging to middle- and old-age groups. The study focused on how stable and dispositional factors in marital interaction predict satisfaction in long-term marriages. Using measures that include the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, data from 588 married men and women in the middle- and old-age levels were gathered and the differences in age and gender were examined across several determinants of marital satisfaction, including personality, socio-economic status, and marital interaction. The study found that personality and socio-economic variables such as age play a minimal role in predicting satisfaction. Dyadic interactions were found to be significant in determining satisfaction. Women valued high quality marital interactions to be positive determinants of marital satisfaction. However, negligible age differences were noted among the responses of participants (Schmitt, Kliegel, & Shapiro 2007, p.290).

At present, there is little research that focuses on so-called age gap relationships or relationships wherein the difference in ages between partners in a close relationship is substantially high. However, there have been several studies on relationship satisfaction that have suggested how age influences love attitudes and measurements of satisfaction among couples. Findings have however produced contradictory results. Some studies assert that love styles and sexual attitudes could be generalised within age groups. Specifically, they purport that younger partners are more likely to view game-playing and possessive love positively while older partners view game playing negatively. Older persons were also found to emphasise more on altruistic love and passionate love, commitment, and loyalty, while younger persons place a lesser value on these relationship variables. Some studies also suggest that age is not a significant factor in satisfaction. Findings from the literature reviewed will assist in outlining and setting the framework for examining whether or not age gap or age difference impacts level of relationship satisfaction among couples.

2. THEORISING AGE AT MARRIAGE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE RISK OF MARITAL DISSOLUTION

Changes in the effect of age at marriage on the risk of dissolution depends in part upon how the effect of age at marriage is theorised (Glenn, Uecker, & Love, 2010:), and, specifically, whether it is thought to be a reflection of the absolute characteristics or of the relative characteristics of different ages at marriage. Becker, Landes, and Michael (1977) commented that a secular trend in age at marriage may not lead to a trend in the risk of divorce if the risk reflects relative characteristics.

Glenn, Uecker, and Love reflected in some detail on the ways in which specific theoretical interpretations of the relationship between age at marriage and marital outcomes tend, often implicitly, to view effects as reflecting *either* absolute *or* relative ages at marriage, with the former typically being the case for maturity-related explanations and the latter for interpretations focusing upon marriage markets or upon selection effects (2010, pp.789-790).

Glenn, Uecker, and Love (2010), moving on to a more detailed consideration of theoretical explanations of the relationship between age at marriage and marital outcomes, discuss the commonly posited “maturation thesis”. While they refer to this primarily in terms of psychological maturation, they also mention the development of relationship skills and of earning ability, and the stabilization of expectations. Similarly, Booth, and Edwards (1985) paint a picture of maturity as a multi-dimensional explanation of the relationship. Achieving maturity before marrying is often viewed as reducing the likelihood that an individual will change in some pertinent way, or that their assessment of the suitability of their partner will change (Oppenheimer, 1988; Becker, Landes, & Michael, 1977). It is also frequently suggested that individuals who marry early may be disproportionately likely to perform marital roles ineffectively, lacking familiarity with these roles and adequate role models. Booth and Edwards found that marital instability within early marriages reflected inadequate role performance for relationship features linked to communication and intimacy, and in relation to sexual exclusivity (1985).

An important body of theoretical ideas has a socio-economic, employment-related focus (e.g., Becker, Landes, & Michael 1977; Oppenheimer 1988; Becker 1991). Oppenheimer emphasises the importance of men’s career development and, in particular, their transitions into stable work and achievement of career maturity (Oppenheimer, Kalmijn, & Lim, 1997), but acknowledges that the increasing similarity of women’s labour market involvement to men’s will have increased the importance of the point at which a woman’s career has stabilised enough for her long-term economic characteristics to be apparent (Oppenheimer & Lew, 1995, p.108). In Britain, Kiernan and Eldridge (1987) found that, for most occupational groups, “the timing of [women’s] marriage is compressed into a narrow range of years” (1987), with this range depending upon the occupational group, suggesting a marked impact of career stage upon marriage timing.

Theoretical analyses of marriage timing often view a lack of maturity as increasing the likelihood of a poor match, reflecting, for example, a shortfall in relevant information (Becker, Landes, & Michael, 1977, p.1156). The concept of mismatches also resonates with theoretical ideas relating to the search process and length of search involved in acquiring a partner (Glenn, Uecker, & Love,

2010): Individuals for whom search costs are high may, initially, be more likely to accept a mismatch (Becker, Landes, & Michael, 1977). Despite being sceptical about the impact of women’s growing economic independence on age at marriage trends (Oppenheimer, 1988, 1994; Oppenheimer, Kalmijn, & Lim, 1997), Oppenheimer nevertheless suggests that greater economic resources may subsidise lengthier searches, encouraging women to risk setting a higher level of minimum acceptability for a partner’s characteristics (Oppenheimer & Lew, 1995).

Notwithstanding their advocacy for the relevance of inadequate role performance when evaluating theoretical explanations of the relationship between age at marriage and marital stability, Booth and Edwards (1985, p.67) found little empirical support for explanations focusing on maturity or on poor matches. They also considered a number of context-related explanations: it has been suggested that the marriage market may provide those marrying early with more opportunities to form relationships with alternative partners, and that their social networks may provide more reasons to leave marriages than barriers to doing so (1985). However, in practice they found neither of these explanations useful. Their findings also suggest that stratification-related differences should not necessarily be attributed to *socio-economic* maturity; they found higher *qualifications* were associated with delayed marriage, and that highest qualification was a stronger predictor of age at marriage than terminal age of education (1987). Theoretical accounts focusing on maturity, poor matches, and marriage markets have also been used to explain any upturn in the risk of dissolution or in instability for late marriages. Booth and Edwards (1985) noted that single people may develop independent lifestyles rooted in broad social networks, suggesting that this can make achieving “interpersonal harmony” difficult. As such, mature identities do not necessarily promote coupledness. Poor matches may become more frequent at higher ages at marriage, either because criteria have been revised downwards (Becker, Landes, & Michael 1977), or because of a more restricted choice of partners (Booth & Edwards, 1985); a selection process may render such partners disproportionately likely to lack important attributes such as interpersonal skills.

As evident above, the literature examining the relationship between age at marriage and the risk of marital dissolution incorporates a diverse range of material, with economic, cultural, social, demographic, interpersonal, and biosocial dimensions. However, it has only recently begun to engage explicitly with the idea of a Second Demographic Transition (SDT) (Lesthaeghe, 1995), and with parallel discussions of changes relating to intimacy and coupledness in contemporary advanced industrial societies. Lesthaeghe views delayed entry into marriage as part of a broader set of demographic changes, driven as much by ideational change as by changes in female economic autonomy or male opportunity structures

(1995). Lehrer (2008) considers this delay as one of the salient aspects of the SDT with regard to trends in marital dissolution.

Prevalence rates of age-differentiated marriages have been inconclusive from the existing literature on the topic. Atkinson and Glass (1985) measured age-differentiated marriages of four years or more. They concluded that such marriages had declined steadily from 1900 to 1980, with a high of nearly 63% of marriages being age-differentiated in 1900 to a low of 30.1% in 1980. They attributed this decline to an increasing level of social objections. However, a more recent study by Amato et al. (2003) countered that age-differentiated marriages, defined as six years or more difference, had actually increased during part of this same time period, the period from the 1960s to the 1990s, particularly for older wives/younger husbands. They cited as the primary reason for a “relaxation of prohibitive social attitudes toward intermarriage” (p.2). Yet the question remains, are age-differentiated marriages increasing or decreasing in number? The U.S. Census Bureau (2001) examined the average age gaps and percentages for all marriages in five-year increments from 1940 to 1989. They found that while the average age gap remained consistently within a range of 2.1 to 2.7 years difference for the entire time period, this average gap fluctuated from time period to time period, with the lowest age gap occurring in the period between 1985 and 1989. At the same time, the percentages of marriages in which spouses were five or more years apart also fluctuated until 1965, at which point it increased each time period from 14.7% in the period of 1965 to 1969 to 18.6% in the final period examined 1985 to 1989. Using data from the 2000 Current Population Survey, Fields and Casper (2001) reported the current percentage of age-differentiated couples (a gap of 6 or more years) was 19.6 percent for men older and 3.3% for women older, both of which were substantial increases from the 1989 data. Based on these statistics, we can conclude that agedifferentiated marriages have been increasing percentage-wise since about 1965. If these statistics accurately portray the current upward trend for age-differentiated marriages, then the topic of age differences can play a potentially important role in identifying characteristics of marital quality and stability. However, even the very notion of age differences is difficult to explain and research is ambiguous as to what constitutes an age difference between spouses. Studies by Atkinson & Glass (1985), Amato et al. (2003), and the work with the most recent census (Fields & Casper, 2001; U.S. Census Bureau, 2001) used gaps of either four or six years’ difference. Current literature has defined an age difference as anything between an one-year difference to a 20-year difference (Shehan et al., 1991). One study even used couples with as much as 25 years’ difference between spouses (Barnes, 2005). The lack of a consistent

definition in age difference has often resulted in conflicting or inconclusive results. To address previous inconsistencies, researchers have tried to categorize age differences by placing participants into specific groups. Heaton (2002), for example, divided participants into one of four groups: (a) husbands older than 5 years, (b) husbands between 2-4 years older, (c) husbands between 0-2 years older, and (d) all wives older than their husbands. Using these categories, Heaton observed that marriages in which husbands were older than their wives were more stable, yet age differences themselves were not viewed as leading to more or less marital dissolution. Various researchers have also used similar categorization techniques (e.g., Chan & Halpin, 2003; Lehrer, 2008; Vera et al., 1985), which certainly have value in identifying differences between the varying groups, yet such techniques do not identify at what point, or even if, age differences become an important factor in marital quality and stability. Realizing that using age differences as a continuous scale may have some value, Lehmler and Agnew (2008) used it during their post-analysis, in which they divided their participants into two groups, women-older or women-younger, and compared these groups using age-differences. They were not able to observe any differences in outcomes, such as satisfaction or commitment, when using a continuous scale of age differences until the age gap became sizable (for them, this gap was ten years, which also coincided with the original age difference they selected for finding their study participants). One concern of the nature of this study by Lehmler and Agnew is that it did not include married women. The women were defined as being within a romantic relationship, which could include a dating, cohabiting, or marital relationship. A recent study by Krippen et al. (2010) measured age difference as a categorical variable. When asked why they did not measure age differences as a continuous scale, Krippen responded that they were looking for the hazard ratios created by age differences (R. Krippen, personal communication, February 19, 2010). By using a categorical variable, they were able to compare groups by these hazard ratios. Krippen also indicated using age differences as a continuous variable would require a transformation of the scale that would have made the results more difficult to explain.

Although Groot and Van Den Brink (2002) did not find an increase in marital instability due to age differences, Booth and Edwards (1992), Heaton (2002), and Krippen et al. (2010) all found age-differentiated couples exhibited a greater propensity towards divorce proneness than did couples more similarly aged. Furthermore, Bumpass and Sweet (1972) reported higher than expected rates of divorce or separation in which age differences were large, particularly when wives were older than husbands. Bumpass and Sweet (1972) explained age differences may promote more marital instability for three reasons: (a)

value consensus may decrease as age differences increase, (b) age differences may cause an imbalance in the power structure, particularly if the wife is older than the husband, and (c) broad age differences may be a result of personal characteristics that are not conducive to long-term marital stability.

Regarding marital problems, several authors have suggested that age differences are likely linked to greater marital problems due to social disapproval, as well as potential caregiving and financial issues (Bytheway, 1981; Hancock, Stuchbury, & Tomassini, 2003; Proulx et al., 2006). Other studies have failed to find significant associations between age differences and negative outcomes (Barnes, 2005; Vera et al., 1985). However, those studies did not include older couples, and so further research is needed to examine trends into later life. While conflict in marriage is extensively studied, little research has examined marital conflict as it relates to couples in age-differentiated marriages. One researcher has speculated that from theoretical grounds heterogamous relationships were more prone to marital conflict, particularly as a result of social disapproval (Udry, 1974). Likewise, Proulx et al. (2006) observed that age differences were likely to affect disagreements in areas such as power struggles, interests, or fertility. Thus like marital problems, disagreements may be related to age differences, yet research has not been able to conclusively determine this association. To capture the essence of this study, the current study focused on age differences in marriage between couples and the risk of divorce.

Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses for this study are as follows:

- a) There is a correlation between age differences and marital instability.
- b) Group differences in marital quality can be found between husband-older, wife older, and same-age marriages.
- c) There any relationship between age at marriage and quality of marriage/instability?

3. METHODOLOGY

This is an exploratory case study on early marriage and divorce among Amasoma women in Bayelsa State using in-depth interview and survey questionnaires. The researchers prepared questionnaires and administered them to the 22 respondents in different places in the Community. These respondents were Amasoma women who were married before they reached the age of 19 and who were divorced later. The researchers selected them according to their availability. Snowball technique was employed by asking friends and relatives who knew Amasoma women married when they were young and later divorced. Twenty-two respondents were identified.

From the 22 respondents, 7 of them went through depth interviews. The researchers asked about their personal experiences in marriage and divorce. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and content analysis was used in analyzing the data. Pseudonyms were assigned to the interviewees to protect their identity.

Test of Hypothesis 1

H₁ There is a significant relationship between age difference and marital instability of marriage couples in Amassoma Community.

x² Is Calculated for Hypothesis 1

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positively related	12	55
Negatively related	6	27
Don't know	4	18
Total	22	100

Source: Field Work.

From the above table, the Chi-square x^2 calculated value for Hypothesis 1 is as follows:

$$\text{Chi-square } x^2 = 2e$$

Where O = Observed frequency
 e = expected frequency

Expected value is calculated by multiplying the row total by column total for each response and then dividing by the total number of respondents.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Chi-square } x^2 &= 2e \\ &= \frac{(12 - 55)^2}{55} + \frac{(6 - 27)^2}{27} + \frac{(4 - 18)^2}{18} \\ &= 33.6 + 16.3 + 10.8 = p 60.7 \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{Chi-square } (x^2) \text{ calculated value} = 60.7$$

To compare calculated value with table value, Degree of Freedom (DF) is ascertained thus:

$$\begin{aligned} DF &= (R - 1) (C - 1) \\ &= (2 - 1) (3 - 1) \\ &= 1 \times 2 \end{aligned}$$

$$DF = 2$$

At 2 DF, the table of x^2 at 0.005 level significance = 5.991

Decision Rule: The general acceptable decision rule for application of the Chi-square test states thus: accepts null hypothesis if the calculated value is less than the table value and reject null hypothesis if the calculated value is greater than the table. In this study, since the calculated value of x^2 is 60.7, the hypothesis which states that there is significant relationship between age difference and marital instability in Amassoma Community is hereby accepted because the calculated value 60.7 is greater than the table value 5.991.

The assertion that there is a relationship between age difference and marital instability in Amassoma community is positively related.

Test of Hypothesis 2

H₁ Group differences in marital quality can be found between husband-older, wife-older, and same-age marriages in Amassoma community.

χ^2 Is Calculated for Hypothesis 2

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Husband older	14	64
Wife older	5	23
Same-age marriages	3	13
Total	22	100

Source: Field work.

From the table above, the Chi-square χ^2 calculated value for hypothesis 2 is as follows:

$$\text{Chi-square } \chi^2 = 2e$$

Where O = Observed frequency

e = expected frequency

Expected value is calculated by multiplying the row total by Colum total for each response and then dividing by the total number of respondents.

$$\text{Chi-square } \chi^2 = 2e$$

$$= \frac{(14 - 64)^2}{64} + \frac{(5 - 23)^2}{23} + \frac{(3 - 13)^2}{13}$$

$$= 39.0 + 14.0 + 7.6 = 60.6$$

$$\text{Chi-square value} = 60.6$$

To compare calculated value with table value, degree of Freedom (DF) is ascertained thus:

$$DF = (R - 1) (C - 1)$$

$$= (2 - 1) (3 - 1)$$

$$= 1 \times 2$$

$$DF = 2$$

At 2 DF, the table of χ^2 at 0.05 level of significance = 5.991

Decision Rule: The general acceptable decision rule for application of the Chi-square test states that accept null hypothesis of the calculated value is less than the table value and reject null hypothesis of the calculated value χ^2 is 60.6, the hypothesis which states that group differences in age will lead to a high level of marital dissatisfaction of marriages in Amassoma community is hereby accepted because the calculated value 60.6 is greater than the table value 5.991

Therefore, group differences in marital quality found between husband-older, wife older, and same-age marriages lead to a high level of marital dissatisfaction of marriages in Amassoma community when the husband is older.

Test of Hypothesis 3

There is a relationship between age at marriage and quality of marriage/instability.

χ^2 Is Calculated for Hypothesis 3

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agree	16	73
Undecided	2	9
Disagree	4	18
Total	22	100

Source: Field work.

From the above table, the Chi-square χ^2 calculated value for hypothesis 3 is as follows:

$$\text{Ch-square } \chi^2 = 2e$$

Where O= Observed frequency

e = expected frequency

Expected value is calculated by multiplying the row total by column total for each response and then dividing by the total number of respondents.

$$\text{Chi-square } \chi^2 = 2e$$

$$= \frac{(16 - 73)^2}{73} + \frac{(2 - 9)^2}{9} + \frac{(4 - 18)^2}{18}$$

$$= 44.5 + 5.4 + 10.8 = 60.7$$

Chi-square χ^2 calculated value with table value, Degree of Freedom (DF) is ascertained by:

$$DF = (R-1) (C - 1)$$

$$= (2 - 1) (3 - 1)$$

$$= 1 \times 2$$

$$DF = 2$$

At 2 DF, the table of χ^2 at 0.05 level of significance = 5.991

Decision Rule: The general acceptable decision rule for application of chi-square test states thus, accept null hypothesis if the calculated value is less than the table value and reject null hypothesis if the calculated value is greater than the table value. In this study, since the calculated value of χ^2 is 60.7, the hypothesis which states that there is a relationship between age at marriage and quality of marriage/ stability in Amassoma community is hereby accepted because the calculated value 60.7 is greater than the table value 5.991.

Therefore, there is an agreement that there is a relationship between age at marriage and quality of marriage/instability in marriages in residents of Amassoma community.

DISCUSSION

Using data from the fieldwork obtained from representative sample of 22 married adults from the study area, this study explored the association of age differences between spouses and devoice. Three groups (husband-older, wife older, and same-age marriages) were compared to see how marital quality was associated with age difference, as moderated by gender of the older spouse, after controlling for several related variables. Relationship was found between age differences and marital satisfaction or dissatisfaction. It was specifically found that marital conflict was more in marriages where the husband is older than the wife and not vice-versa. The reason for this is that in a situation where the wife is older than the husband, in most cases, the wife tend to be the bread winner of the family and the role of the man has been taken over by the wife, the husband has no option than to cooperate. Invariably, it might be said that spousal interactions increased among wife-older marriages than among husband older marriages. An increased level of husband participation in household labor was related to an increase in marital happiness and a decrease in marital problems. The age at marriage and quality of marriage

was equally found to be related to marital satisfaction and divorce.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from this study that age differences between marriage couples have significant correlation with marital stability and intimacy among couples. Age differences were found to be greatly influential in predicting either negative factors of marital quality. Specifically, husband-older marriages experienced greater marital instability than wife older marriage. The study gives valuable insight to the future use of couple therapist in society. Family therapists can work with couples for nurturing their intimacy thereby control and handling couples conflicts by knowing about spouses differences based on gender and age differences in marital relationships can improve treatments of distressed marriage and influence the prevention and control of mental conflicts.

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