

IN-LAWS PRESSURES ON MARRIAGE AS PERCEIVED BY MARRIED COUPLES IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

By

Dr. Isiaka Ibrahim JAWONDO

jawondoi@gmail.com / jawondoi85@gmail.com 08060809796 / 08075335959 /
08184422594

Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria;
&

Hikmot Oluwatoyin SUNMONU

Guidance and Counselling Unit. Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin.

**Corresponding author email address: jawondoi@gmail.com*

Abstract

This study was carried out to examine in-laws pressures on marriage as perceived by married couples in Kwara state. The purpose is to find solutions to the problems of in-laws pressures on marriage as perceived by married couples in Kwara state. The variables considered in the research include Religion and Gender, while the samples for the study consisted of 300 married couples, spread across Kwara state. Two research questions were formulated with research hypotheses which were tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance using t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The data collected were analyzed with the use of frequency counts, simple percentages and rank ordered. The In-Laws Pressure on Marriage Questionnaire (ILPMQ) was adopted for this study to gather the data. Experts in the field of Guidance and Counselling validated the instruments for both pre-test and post-test. A test retest was employed at interval of two weeks to test for the reliability co-efficient of the instrument. Cronbach's alpha statistic method was used to test the result. A coefficient value of 0.80 was obtained. Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that gender and religion difference had no significant in perception of in-laws influence on marriage and married couples should endeavour to improve on their in-laws relationship and communication styles, so that their in-laws pressure and marital adjustment will be mitigated. It was recommended that counsellors should dispense inter-personal relationship counselling among couple.

Keywords: In-laws, Pressure, Married couples

Introduction

Marriage is meant to be a life-time relationship, terminable only by death. "Till death do us part" is a very familiar marriage vow which should be true of every marriage. When two opposite sex adults decide to marry, each makes a pledge that the other will be the most important person in their life. "You're the one" and "You come first" are common phrases that seal this promise. It is thus expected that partner will be on each other's side when the going gets rough. Couples may fight between themselves, over big things and small, but expect a partner to stick up when someone else threatens, criticizes, and makes one feel bad. The last thing expected, as complain about the events of the day, is to have a spouse side with the colleague, friend, they are complaining about, and say, "The guy was right." If that happens regularly, they would give up talking about their day-to-day problems and conclude there was

something rotten in the state of their marriage. But this, couples have found, precisely what happens, over and over again, when conflict arises between them and the in-laws.

The word marriage means a lot to various people. Marriage, also called matrimony or wedlock, is a socially or ritually recognized union between spouses that established rights and obligations between those spouses, as well as between them and any resulting biological or adopted children and affinity (in-laws and other family through marriage). The definition of marriage varies around the world not only between cultures and between religions, but also throughout the history of any given culture and religion, evolving to both expand and constrict in who and what is encompassed, but typically it is principally an institution in which interpersonal relationships, usually sexual, are acknowledged or sanctioned. In some cultures, marriage is recommended or considered to be compulsory before pursuing any sexual activity. When defined broadly, marriage is considered as a culture universally. A marriage ceremony is known as a wedding. Individuals may marry for several reasons, including legal, social, libidinal, emotional, financial, spiritual, and religious purposes. Whom they marry may be influenced socially by determining rules of incest, prescriptive marriage rules, parental choice and individual desires.

In some areas of the world, arranged marriage, child marriage, polygamy, and sometimes forced marriage, may be practiced as a culture and tradition. Conversely, such practices may be outlawed and penalized in parts of the world out of concerns of the infringement of women's rights, or the infringement of children's rights (both female and male children), and because of international law. In the African context, (with particular reference to the Nigeria), in-laws are the relations of each of the spouses brought into closer contact with the other spouses as a result of the marriage. Such relations include the immediate and extended families of each of them. For example, the immediate relations of the husband, such as father, mother and other siblings now become the father-in-law, mother-in-law, brothers or sisters-in-law of the wife. While members of the extended family like aunts, uncles, close or distant cousins all become in-laws to the wife.

The Roles of Parents-in-law in Marriages

The role of in-laws in marriage according to Abati (1990) in Ibrahim (2011) described the in-laws as a factor that is an inevitable one in marriage since a husband and wife do not drop from the sky like snowflakes, but are, by natural biological fact, children of other individuals and families. He further opined that marriage is a contract or union between two individuals and two families, but often, the couple encounters a lot of problems from the latter, particularly from the female in-laws who, by their own instructions, tend to turn a marriage into a competition of vanities. The in-laws influence in marriage according to Okuku (1990) in Ibrahim, (2011) described in-laws as very influential and powerful in the home. He sees in-laws as not only capable of intervening in times of misunderstanding in the home, but also in the case of the death of the husband is capable of inheriting the properties of their deceased son (his wives and children inclusive). With all these in mind, perhaps it would not be too farfetched to say that culture of the society has opened up the opportunity for in-laws to play a decisive role in the marriage of their relations. Daodu (1990) opine that because culture does

not give a marked distinction between the immediate and extended families of the individual and the degree of involvement of these in the individual's life, it has caused a lot of complications in the family network relations in the society.

The African child has many fathers and mothers, therefore the individual in the extended household and family system feels it is a right that they have a say in the decisions concerning children they regard as their own, even when they are old enough to make such decisions themselves. Commenting on the types of decisions influenced by family members, Ibrahim (2011) opined that the decision of who to marry in the past, was not a personal one, neither was it the sole responsibility of the immediate families, rather, it was the interest of the extended families and the society at large that the relatives of both parties saw that the choices made were socially approved.

In the Nigerian culture, parental role is clearly defined. Mothers combine child care with economic responsibilities. Fathers have mainly economic and disciplinary responsibilities. Such definitions of parental roles might be expected to affect the warmth of the relationships between fathers and their children, and between mothers and their children, on the other hand (Ibrahim, 2011). Indeed, many Nigerian adages imply that children are generally closer to their mothers than to their fathers. Suffice to say that this mother-child bond which has been established from childhood extends till adulthood, even after the child is married. Perhaps, this is why most parental issues raised in marriages are usually related to mothers-in-law. There is a local parlance that says, "Blood is thicker than water". In this part of the world, we have what could be called close family ties in the family set-up. Ibrahim (2011) opined that the problem of mothers-in-law in marriages is universal, but it takes a peculiar twist in Nigeria in view of the persistence of the extended family nature. He further stated that this parents-child bond could be used to an advantage. If the wife (daughter-in-law) understands and tries to establish a good relationship with her parent-in-laws, the latter could then take the wife's side whenever there is conflict between the wife and husband. However, some parents, in most cases mothers-in-law take advantage of the parent-child bond to cause trouble for the couple, especially if they do not like their daughter or son-in-laws.

Statement of the Problem

Marriage entails obligations of support and nurturance that must be fulfilled – whether or not one wishes to fulfill them. It is no longer an option; the changed relationship demands turning the activities in marriage from options into responsibilities. It is those who refuse to follow such expectations that usually marry, but for a short time (Oniye, 2000). Relating to one another in a marital relationship is inevitable because man is gregarious in nature. Two people may be living together under the same roof and may refuse to communicate with each other. This is supported by Cohn (2010) who asserted that unless two people who are living together turned to each other's wavelength, they might be (psychologically) miles apart. In many marriages, quite many husbands and wives seem to live like strangers or co-tenants with one another.

The rate at which couples seek divorce in recent times has been alarming, currently in the society, this is not so, because only few marriages live that long. Marital mortality is now

growing rapidly as the society witnesses the increasing deaths of young marriages. The society is filled with wreckages of many ill-fated marriages. Many homes are suffering from marital problems and most marital relationships are not working as they should (Ibrahim, 2011). The stories from the mass media confirm the incidence of marital crises and divorce, which is of high increase in the society. It is difficult to provide accurate statistics on the actual rate of divorce in Nigeria due to the fact that not all cases of divorce are reported and recorded but literature and media reports indicates a high rate of divorce. Yahaya, (2008) stated that divorce rates have increased markedly in United States, Britain, South Korea, Canada, Brazil, Nigeria and South Africa to mention but few countries. In Nigeria, more than ten percent of the marriages conducted every year, ended up in divorce (Ibrahim, 2011). It is this increasing rate of divorce cases reported all over the country that made Filani (1984) in Ibrahim (2011) described marriages in Nigeria as being terminated in an unprecedented manner. On investigation, most of the causes leading to these divorce cases have perceived pressures from in-laws as a root cause.

The issue of in-laws pressure in marital set-up is very important. Hence, a look into it will help to promote marital adjustment. Studies by Ibrahim (2011) revealed that the marital communication of the couple does have a greater influence on the marital adjustment. Therefore, the need for conducting a research to find out the in-laws pressures on marriage as perceived by selected married couples in Kwara state.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 levels of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents on in-laws Pressures on Marriage on the basis of gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents on in-laws Pressures on Marriage on the basis of religion.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey method. Abdullah (1995) in Sunmonu (2011) posited that descriptive survey research requires systematic collection of data or information from population or sample of population through the use of personal interview and, or scale of opinion questionnaire. A sample of 300 married couples were selected from the three (3) senatorial districts of Kwara state namely, kwara central Central, Kwara North and Kwara South respectively using the stratified random sampling technique according to the desired characteristics of gender and religion family type was adopted for the study. From each of the stratified selected senatorial district, respondents were randomly drawn from public organizations such as schools, secretariats, churches, mosques, N.Y.S.C Secretariat, hospitals, and local government headquarters. A hundred (100) of newly married adults were selected from each of the senatorial districts, and eventually, three hundred (300) respondents were drawn from the three senatorial districts in Kwara State as sample for the study.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in collecting data for this study was a researcher-constructed questionnaire tagged “The In-Law Pressure on Marriage Questionnaire (ILPMQ). The questionnaire is a 20-items instrument, subdivided into two major sections A and B. Section A requires the respondents to give background information such as gender and religion. Section B focused on items eliciting respondents’ view on pressures of in-laws on marriage. The respondents were expected to respond to the 20 items on in-laws pressure on marriage using the four-point rating scale of SA-Strongly Agree, A - Agree, D - Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree. The data obtained were subjected to statistical analysis. The statistical methods employed in this research study are both descriptive and inferential. Descriptive analysis was used to explain the data in the demographic section (Section A), that is frequency count and simple percentage. The data collected was subjected to mean, standard deviation, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), to compare the mean score of the variables and determine if there would be any significant differences between the variables at 0.05 alpha levels.

Results

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents on in-laws Pressures on Marriage on the basis of gender.

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of respondents’ expression on In-laws Pressures on Marriage on the Basis of Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value
Male	150	58.1200	5.658	298	-.97	1.960
Female	150	58.7933	6.290			

*significant, $p > 0.05$

The result of the t-test in Table 1 indicated that the calculated t-value is -.97 which is less than critical t-value of 1.960. This hypothesis is therefore accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the perceptions of married couples on the in-laws pressures on marriage on the basis of gender.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents on in-laws Pressures on Marriage on the basis of religion.

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of respondents’ expression on In-laws Pressures on Marriage on the Basis of Religion

Religion	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value
Within groups	150	98.73	1.662	298	0.15	1.96
Between groups	150	92.41	1.683			

*significant, $p > 0.05$

The result of the t-test in table 2 indicated that the mean scores of respondents who share the same religious belief with their spouse were 98.73, while that of respondents with different religious beliefs with their spouse was 92.41. The table also indicates that the calculated t-value was 0.15 which is less than the critical t-value of 1.96, it then there is no significant difference in in-laws pressure as perceived by married couples who share the same religion and those who do not. The hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of hypothesis one stated that there was no significant difference in the expression of male and female respondents on the in-laws pressures on marriage as perceived by married couples based on gender. This hypothesis was accepted in its null form. As indicated in table 2 that the calculated t-value is -.97 which is less than critical t-value of 1.960 level of significance; this means that there was no significant difference in the perception of in-laws pressure as viewed by subjects of gender. One would have expected a difference in the perceptions of female respondents since they are more involved in the relationship with parents-in-law, and they feel the pinch more, this finding has also proved otherwise. Therefore, the assertions of Elman, Press and Rosenkrantz (1970) in Ibrahim (2011) which stated that the perceptions of male and female respondents differ are contradicted. This finding also contradicted the statement in the Oniye, (2008) who found that sex and age are important variables identified to be responsible for differences in perceptual functioning.

The finding of hypothesis two indicated that there is no significant difference in in-laws pressure as perceived by married couples who share the same religion and those who do not. This hypothesis was accepted in its null form. As indicated in table 3, the t-value calculated was less than the critical value at 1.96 levels of significance; this means that there was no significant difference in the perception of in-laws pressure as viewed by subjects who share the same religious beliefs and those who do not. This finding contradicts that of Oniye (2008) whose findings revealed that uniformity of religion between husband and wife tends to foster marriage stability. He further explains that a family that prays together tends to stick together. Ogundeji, (2010) also tends that in extreme difficulties, a couple may offer joint prayers to solve their problems.

Counselling Implications

The implication of this study is that counselling is an important aspect of human life without which the society will be in a confused state. Counselling enables people (especially couples) live a well-adjusted and happy life. The findings of this study will no doubt be of great advantage to counsellors in carrying out their work more effectively. Newly married couples will be properly guided on how to manage other social problems and discourage broken homes and as such raising a prosperous family. More so, couples between the ages of 20 years to 35 years should be enlightened more on the need and importance of good communication and relations with in-laws in marriage through programmes like workshop, seminar, and symposiums. This study will be of help in reducing divorce rates in our societies and also correct the notion that marriage today is an institution of woe and grief.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that as far that married couples were no significant differences in the perceptions of in-laws pressures on marriage on the basis of gender. To this end, in the study that there was no significant difference in the perception of in-laws pressure as viewed by couples who share the same religious beliefs and those who do not. But the assertion that uniformity of religion between husband and wife tends to foster marriage stability and the family that prays together tends to stick together and When ever extreme difficulties, a couple may offer joint prayers to solve their problems. But when it is a strong love, patience, endurance and high sense of understanding existed between married couples in order to enable them handle any arising situation that seems unpleasant.

Recommendations

In-laws have a vast role to play in the success of marriage because of the close relationship their influence has on a couple. This has made it possible because of the cultural or societal expectations placed on them which make them to have a say in the family of their relations. Therefore, considering the above, the study wishes to suggest the following recommendations to help reduce in-laws pressures in marriages:

1. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that married couples should always seek for marital counseling toward establishing and maintaining a healthy marital life. Since gender cannot be ruled out of marital life. There is a need to lay more emphases on marital communication and its effect on marital life. Various techniques that can promote effect communication between married couples should also be inculcated in the males and female children since they are going out to establish their new life.
2. And also it was recommended that married couples' religion and communication should be placed in its rightful position in marriage for it would enhance marital satisfaction, problem free marriage, peaceful home and society since the family is the foundation of the human society. This study will be of help in reducing divorce rates in our societies and also correct the notion that marriage today is an institution of woe and grief.

References

- Abdullahi, O. E. (1995). Typology of research. In S. A. Jimoh (Ed), *Research methodology in education: An interdisciplinary approach*. Ilorin: Unilorin Library and Publication Committee.
- Cohn, S. M. (2009). *Marriage communication*. Retrieved from <http://www.familydynamic.com>.
- Daodu, A. (1990). Marriage problems in Africa. New York: Continental Services.
- Ibrahim, I. J. (2011). *Communication styles and marital adjustment of adults married in Kwara state*. Unpublished M.Ed project submitted to the University of Ilorin.
- Ogundeji, J. (2010). The secret of my 40 years old marriage. Unilorin Bulletin, April 12, 2010, Vol.4, No 13.
- Oniye, A. O. (2000). *A cross-ethnic study of stress level support system and adjustment strategies among widows in Nigeria*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Guidance and Counselling, University of Ilorin.
- Oniye, A. O. (2008b). Relevance of religion to marriage and marriage in Islam. In L.A. Yahaya, M.O. Esere, J.O. Ogunsanmi & A.O. Oniye (Eds). *Marriage, sex and family counseling*. Ilorin: University Press.
- Sunmonu, H. O. (2011). Causes and Consequences of *Communication Breakdown Among Newly Married Adults in Kwara state*. Unpublished M.Ed project submitted to the University of Ilorin.
- Yahaya, L. A. (2008). Inter-personal relationship in marriage. In L.A. Yahaya, M.O. Esere, J. O. Ogunsanmi & A.O. Oniye (Eds). *Marriage, sex and family counselling*. Ilorin: University Press.