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EFFECT OF CHILD UPBRINGING AND HUSBAND SUPPORT ON SPOUSAL ADJUSTMENTS OF WOMEN IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate if there was any effect of child upbringing and husband support on the spousal adjustment of married women in southern Nigeria. Two (2) research questions were raised and two (2) hypotheses guided the study. An ex-post facto research design was employed in this study. A total sample of 1,582 married women was selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure as a sample size from an estimated population of 3, 346, 632 married women from the southern part of the country as stated in the 2015 Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) register. Findings revealed that a significant positive relationship existed between child upbringing and Spousal adjustment of married women in southern Nigeria. It was recommended amongst others that the government, married couples, intending couples, and society at large, should be enlightened on the importance of spousal adjustment in facilitating harmonious family life and by extension, proper societal functioning.

KEY WORDS:

Child Upbringing, Husband Support, Spousal Adjustment, Women.



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Introduction

Women's outlook to performance of their traditional obligations is generally changing. There also appears to be a modification in the roles actually being played by men and women depending on the peculiarities in their respective homes. Although many couples appear to be maintaining their sense of individual identity and participating in separate activities, they still get along well enough to stay together. Many men have either adapted or learnt to carry out some tasks for themselves which ordinarily, their wives would have done for them (Sheknews, 2007). Education and consequent empowerment of women appear to influence their perceptions and in some cases cause a sort of identity crisis. In the execution of their responsibilities in the family, they sometimes adopt home management styles which are completely alien to our African culture and detrimental to traditional or desirable family or societal functioning. Some women for instance, would now prefer to be formally informed and their consent tacitly sought in advance; of members of the extended family (especially in-laws) coming to spend days with them. This is often embarrassing and humiliating to the husband, as it portrays him as not being in charge of his home, or unaccommodating to his extended family. It is also at variance with the traditional African hospitality of one big boundary-free family where the wife is not only wife to her husband, but also wife to all his relatives (Otite, 2006).

A marriage characterized by poor spousal adjustment affects the mental health of the couple involved, as it is usually an agonizing experience for them and their families. It not only creates a feeling of loneliness, it also portrays the couple as unaccommodating, emotionally immature, poorly brought-up, or irresponsible. It could also affect their productivity at work and other areas in life. In addition, it affects the overall wellbeing of the society as composite families make up the society (Okobiah, 2008). Furthermore, while appreciating the numerous advantages of women's empowerment, there is also the observation and cry about the negative fall-outs of same (Oluakanwa, 2010). Very often, we hear people attributing the present day moral decadence in the society to lack of adequate parental care. Many children are denied the opportunity of adequate bonding with their parents in their formative years. A lot of mothers are not around long enough to observe their children's behaviour and counsel them. Many children are left to the care of housemaids or relatives who have their own mission and are sometimes deficient in one way or the other to take care of them effectively (Urien, 2009). Television and computers are becoming increased threats to family cohesion and bonding. With the prolonged absence of parents from the home, many school age children are likely to pay less attention to personal studies at home. They also now have unlimited access to watch television programs and movies; hook on to internet applications which may be detrimental to their upbringing. There is also ample room for physical and sexual abuse by house-helps and neighbours, as well as extensive peer group influences which may impact negatively on the children. The outcome of this is a myriad of social problems such as truancy, poor academic performance, underachieving students with great potentials, school drop-outs, emotional disturbance, cultism, armed robbery, kidnapping, prostitution and promiscuity (Nwolisa & Babatola, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Society generally perceives the marriage relationship as one in which both parties have their distinct roles to play. Specifically, the husband is expected to be the provider and protector, while the wife takes care of the husband, childbearing and child upbringing as well as general housekeeping. With developments in technology, education, religion and their exposure to other cultures, a lot of women are now empowered and emancipated. In this process some women are either now desirably or out of convenience, adopting western ways of thinking and living. Some appear also not to be mindful or appreciate their importance and traditional role in the marital union, nor its impact on the family, community, the world at large. The situation is further reinforced by the mentality that respects women more for their paid work and prominence outside the home than for their "unpaid" work within the family.

As a result of economic, social and religious demands today, we now have a lot of women who like their husbands, are compelled to spend much time outside their homes. Times for family interactions, performance of filial or conjugal responsibilities are reducing as more time is spent outside, or without the family, in the work place, religious house, societal organisations and pursuing business opportunities. These developments have some negative consequences on spousal relationships and spills over to general living

pattern in the home and the society at large. The focus of this study therefore was to ascertain the effect of child upbringing and husband support of women on spousal adjustment.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- * What is the relationship between women's child upbringing role and spousal adjustments of married women in Southern Nigeria?
- * What is the relationship between spousal support enjoyed by women and their spousal adjustments in Southern Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to be tested in the study:

- * There is no significant relationship between women's child upbringing role and spousal adjustments of married women in southern Nigeria.
- * There is no significant relationship between the level of support married women receive from their spouses and their spousal adjustments in Southern Nigeria.

Maternal Child Upbringing and Spousal Adjustment

Omar (2014) confirmed the assumption that African-American couples are happier in and with their marriages after the birth of a child in their wedlock. They however found that this was not the case for white couples who were hypothesized to experience decrease in relationship satisfaction. In strong Welfare States or Cultures such as that of the former Socialist countries, and also in traditional African countries where care of the elderly is largely the responsibility of the family, parenthood is as expected associated with higher chances of well-being as one approaches old age,(Rattani, 2018). However, there is little evidence that parenthood has psychological benefits or advantage over childlessness among elderly widowed people (Hansen, 2011). This was attributed to the fact that the dependent children themselves have a number of inter-related costs such as psychological costs, marital costs, financial costs and opportunity costs (Becchetti et al., 2010). The desire to have children is so strong that many couples readily spend huge sums of money to adopt children or seek fertility treatment. Husbands could face the temptation to kill a wife that is unable to bear children. Although motherhood specifically confers upon a woman, the responsibility of raising children (Poduval & Poduval, 2009), it is actually a responsibility requiring the commitment of both spouses (Ohuakanwa, 2010; Okobiah, 2008). Consequently, when people are blessed with children, they often do all they can to bring them up properly (Nwandinigwe & Anyama, 2010).

Child upbringing is about the most celebrated role of a married woman in Nigeria and Africa in general. The society looks forward to a marriage being blessed with children and the woman being the primary caregiver (Otite, 2006). The woman's child upbringing role very often, extends to grandchildren, especially when the grown-up daughter or daughter-in-law is a career woman. Although a number of scholars opine that child upbringing is a combined responsibility of both parents, in reality the bulk of the work falls on the shoulders of women or is expected to be more of the woman's responsibility than the man's. It is no wonder then that a number of artists and musicians like the late, popular Nico Mbaga (1976) and Christie Essien-Igbokwe (1981), have either re-echoed this fact or eulogised the role of mothers in their songs "Sweet mother" and "Omo mi seun rere" respectively. Consequent on the above, it is no wonder that the Essay UK (2013) is not comfortable with women now having to spend more time outside their homes. They feel that it leads to a distraction in attention given to their primary responsibilities of child bearing, child upbringing and housekeeping. A lot of adults think that children are better off with a wife or mother at home who personally attends to the needs of family members, than one who is often unavailable due to job demands, and thus unable to keep a close watch on activities in the home front (Wang, Parker & Taylor, 2013).

Demographic and social changes in the last three decades have given rise to families that are more diverse and complex in their structure. More couples are cohabiting and becoming parents, though the likelihood of parental separation among this group is higher than among married parents; divorce rates have remained

relatively constant and the number of stepfamilies is growing fast. Consequent on these developments, children now have a higher probability of experiencing parental separation, having a single parent, and being part of a stepfamily, than was once the case (Mooney, Oliver & Smith, 2009). The result of Ohuakanwa's (2010) study revealed that most respondents strongly believe that both parents are significant and have the responsibility of child upbringing and that no one parent should be blamed for any bad behaviour displayed by a child. Despite such findings, it appears however, that the society still expects more commitment from the women. The lyrics of Christie Essien- Igbokwe's song "Seun rere" illustrate this. According to Igbokwe (1981), while enjoining children to be of good conduct, so that it would be well with them, she goes on further to draw attention to the popular view that when a child does well, the credit is given to the father, while if he/she misbehaves, the blame is placed on the mother.

The traditional African mother cherishes her children and is expected to play about the most significant role in their up-bringing. According to Otite (2006) for instance, the Urhobo (a tribe in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria) mother loves her children and brings them up to be of good behaviour. She is particularly close to her daughters. They both confide in themselves. As the daughters marry, she takes up the new role of counsellor to them. When her sons marry, she has the additional role of mother-in-law / counsellor for her daughters –in-law (Otite, 2006). Children's needs are vulnerable and often have to be handled with dispatch. Ewherido (2018) considers it so important, that he enjoined young parents not to contemplate out-sourcing it. According to Lamb, Bornstein & Tefi (2002) infancy period in particular, demands more parental attention and investment than at any other time. Mothers seeing themselves as the primary caregiver, take on more of the responsibility at this period. Volling, Oh, Gonzalez, Kuo and Yu (2015) observed that as the number of children increased, erstwhile less involved fathers are likely to become more involved with parenting older children. It is obvious that the woman's involvement in child upbringing takes up a significant proportion of her time. It requires the cooperation of her spouse for her to fulfil that role; in addition to other domestic, filial and conjugal obligations expected to be met. Some husbands feel neglected and lonely as a result of lesser time spent together, their wife's focus on childcare, and when the wife also pays lesser attention to her appearance than what she was doing before the arrival of the children. There are also allegations of decreasing interest in sexual activity ((Ewherido, 2017). So cherished and attention demanding is motherhood to women that some observers deep down are of the view that a business enterprise that is serious about making profit, need not employ women. They observe that unlike men who take their jobs very seriously, women on becoming mothers, leave their careers at the back stage and focus their attention on childrearing (Venker, 2016).

There has been disagreement as to the impact of transition to parenthood on marital adjustment. It is however acknowledged to be an important milestone in the life of any individual (Omar, 2014). Furthermore, Acquati (2018) assert that the transition is a period of stressful and sometimes maladaptive change for a good number of parents. A good number of studies found out that relationship satisfaction declines significantly after the arrival of a couple's first child (Johnson, 2016). Houston and Holmes (2004), on the contrary, concluded that the preponderance of data suggests the contrary. Doss (2010) attributes this divergence in views on the different methodologies adopted by the researchers. Despite the obvious inconveniences of parenthood, childbearing is still cherished in most cultures and by many couples. This may be an act of social conformity to social norms (Hansen, 2012). It is interesting to note that while most young or intending couples feel that having children will strengthen their marriage, research has proved this assumption to be a myth (Doss, 2010). Although the number of couples deliberately opting for childlessness is increasing in some western countries, studies reveal that it remains rare (2-6%). What is actually common is a state of childlessness as a result of voluntary or delayed marriages and childbearing age (Petter, 2017). Even though most women generally look forward to motherhood and families often rejoice at the birth of a new child, the common observation however is that as the mother/child bond grows, so also does the mother's other relationships deteriorate. Probably most significant of these deteriorating relationships is that with her spouse. If the decline in spousal relationship is particularly steep, it could lead to divorce (Johnson, 2016).

Husband Support and Spousal Adjustment

We have very often heard it said that behind every successful man is a woman. These days we also hear another version, that is, behind every successful woman is a supportive husband (Trenowden, 2017). In

today's world, we are not just witnesses to women's employment outside the home, but also witnesses to high-profile women who are leaders in government and big corporate organisations like Dr.(Mrs) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the former Nigerian Minister for Finance and Vice- President of World Bank, Mrs Theresa May; the Prime Minister of Britain, Mrs Christine Lagarde a French lawyer and the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund; Senator Hilary Clinton, the most credible female candidate during the last Presidential election in the United States, and Chief (Mrs) Folorunsho Alakija, business mogul and, the acclaimed richest woman in Nigeria. According to EssayForum (2016), it is possible to have a successful career and happy home if one chooses his/her employers and spouse wisely. Current research reveal that attitudes are changing, young men and women now have greater understanding of the challenges associated with juggling work and family life. Young men today appear to have a greater sense of shared responsibility for domestic life (Olah, Richter & Koslowski, 2014). This revelation notwithstanding, Rhoads and Rhoads (2016) observed that even married women who have supportive husbands still experience continual strain. There are still compromises all around, negotiations are continuous about which spouse takes responsibility for which task and to what extent. Some men resist full blurring gendered parenting roles. Men tend to prefer traditional masculine activities in the home, to retain power (Olah et al., 2014).

A study that examined the effect of marital roles on career women came to the conclusion that neither their employment nor child bearing roles were impediments to marital harmony, but that rather, emotional support received from the husband was the crucial factor in the union (Carter, 2016). Mrs Theresa May confirms this fact by testifying that her husband Mr Philip May has been the cornerstone of support that has allowed her to progress in her career (Trenowden, 2017). Research evidences also reveal that absence of husband's support in spousal relationships, leads to stress and conflict (Ravenscrat, 2016). It is also capable of disintegrating the entire marital union. In the opinion of Adeshinola, (2012) the financial benefits accruing from the woman's employment demands the cooperation of the husband in helping to relieve the woman of some domestic burden. Some studies found that employed wives had higher marital satisfaction than non- employed (Vaghela, 2014). They also had a higher sense of independence and higher self- esteem. This is similar to what Ebenuwa- Okoh and Osho (2015) found out from their study on spousal support and marital satisfaction among married female bankers in Warri metropolis.

Research has also revealed that in a bid to meet up with financial demands and challenges in the home, new patterns of role playing are emerging as a result of women's employment and empowerment (Pew Research Centre, 2015). There are now variations in the dominance-submission pattern. Sometimes the husbands may be 'weak' and the woman takes the active leadership role either subtly or overtly. Some of such couples end up in conflict with themselves because of the dictates of the society and their consequent expectations of themselves. The society generally does not affirm a 'passive male' and an 'aggressive female'. However, studies have found that in modern day families, husbands and wives are so close in power and status, that their relationships can be said to be equalitarian and democratic (Miller, 2016). This may be linked to the participation of women in wage employment and other high income oriented enterprises as well as the equalitarian ideology in favour of women (Yusuf, 2000). Researchers have also discovered that there is a greater likelihood of household chores being shared when wives are employed (Lyonatte & Crompton, 2015). Friction may develop if the wife expects her husband to share the house work. If the husband considers this "woman's work" and the wife resents the "lazy husband syndrome". The reality today is that men are no longer just providers but also active participants in their children's development. Today's fathers even realize that they are t closer to their children than their own fathers were to them (BabyCenter, 2017). Research reveals a positive relationship between marital satisfaction and involvement of fathers in child upbringing (Green, 2018). The current norms encourage young men to be more involved in family relationships (Meeussen, 2016). Fathers that are unhappy with their spousal relationship tend to be withdrawn from partaking in child upbringing; while those experiencing marital satisfaction tend to do otherwise (Buckley & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2010). Christensen and Jacobson (2016) described closeness and power as major issues that need to be resolved in marriages. They reiterate that no two marriages are the same. They however warned that couples should verify their level of closeness that fulfils their needs for companionship and intimacy without robbing their partners of their need for independence. In all these perceptions and manifestations, Olah, Richler and Kotowska (2014) also observed that dual career couples had higher expectancy of both husband and wife being equally responsible for the provider and housekeeper roles.

Wives were more favourable in the provider role and husbands in the housekeeper role. Both Single career and Double career couples also derived greater happiness in their marriages when they were satisfied with the housekeeper roles and evaluated their husbands favourably in the provider role.

Methodology

This study employed ex-post facto research design, including descriptive survey and correlation design. The population for this study consisted of all married women in South-South, Nigeria with an estimated population of 3, 346, 632 which comprised of Bayelsa State, Delta State, Rivers State, Cross River State, Akwa Ibom State and Edo State respectively (Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) 2015). A sample size of 1,582 was selected via the multi stage sampling procedure. This study employed a questionnaire – Spousal Adjustment Scale, for data collection. Data collected were collated, organised and analysed. Pearson Products Moments of Correlation and regression were employed to answer the research questions and hypotheses.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the relationship between women's child upbringing role and spousal adjustments of married women in Southern Nigeria?

Table 1: Correlation and coefficient of determination of maternal child upbringing and spousal adjustment of married women

Variable	N	r	r ²	r ² %	Decision
Maternal child upbringing	1582	.360	.129	12.9	Positive relationship
Spousal adjustment					

Table 1 indicates r-value of .360 which is the extent of the relationship between maternal child upbringing and spousal adjustment in Southern Nigeria. The coefficient of determination was .129 and the amount of contribution was 12.9%. This showed a positive relationship between maternal child upbringing and spousal adjustment in Southern Nigeria. This indicates that maternal child upbringing contributes 12.9% to spousal adjustments of married women in southern Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between maternal child upbringing role and spousal adjustments of married women in Southern Nigeria.

Table 2: Regression Analysis of maternal child upbringing and spousal adjustment of married women

Model Summary			
R	R-Square	Adjusted R-square	Std Error of the Estimate
0.360	0.129	0.129	12.939

ANOVA

	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	39327.39	1	39327.39	234.896	0.000
Residual	264530.6	1580	167.424		
Total	303858.0	1581			

	Coefficient				
	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	45.440	1.324	0.360	34.315	0.000
Maternal child upbringing	0.377	0.025		15.326	0.000

Table 2 showed the regression output of a linear relationship between maternal child upbringing and spousal adjustment of married women. The computed $f(1,1581)=234.896, P < .05$ level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. That is there is significant relationship between maternal child upbringing and spousal adjustment of married women. The R-square value of 0.129 showed that 12.9% of variance in spousal adjustment of married women was accounted for by maternal child upbringing. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for predicting spousal adjustment of married women from maternal upbringing was 0.377, the standardized coefficient (β) for maternal child upbringing was 0.360, $t = 15.326$. Therefore, maternal child upbringing was significant at $p < 0.05$.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between husband support enjoyed by women and their spousal adjustments in Southern Nigeria?

Table 3: Correlation and coefficient of determination of husband support and spousal adjustment of married women

Variable	N	r	r ²	r ² %	Decision
husband support					
Spousal adjustment	1582	.324	.105	10.5	Positive relationship

Table 3 indicates r –value of .324 which is the extent of the relationship between spousal support and spousal adjustment in Southern Nigeria. The coefficient of determination was .105 and the amount of contribution was 10.5%. The result revealed a positive relationship between spousal support and spousal adjustment in Southern Nigeria. This indicated that spousal support contributes 10.5% to spousal adjustment in Southern Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between the level of support women receive from their husbands and spousal adjustments of married women in Southern Nigeria.

Table 4: Regression Analysis of level of support a woman receives from her husband and spousal adjustment of married women

Model Summary			
R	R-Square	Adjusted R-square	Std Error of the Estimate
0.324	0.105	0.104	13.120

ANOVA

	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	31883.22	1	31883.22	185.221	0.000
Residual	271974.7	1580	172.135		
Total	303858.0	1581			

Coefficient

	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	45.359	1.488		30.474	0.000
Husband support	0.372	0.027	0.324	13.610	0.000

The result in Table 4 revealed the regression output of a linear relationship between the level of support women receive from their husbands and spousal adjustments in Southern Nigeria. The computed $f(1,1581)=185.221$, $P < .05$ level of significance. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected; this showed that there was a significant relationship between the level of support women receive from their husbands and spousal adjustments of married women. The R-square value of 0.105 indicated that 10.5% of variance in spousal adjustment of married women was accounted for by the level of support women receive from their husbands and spousal adjustments of married women. The unstandardized coefficient (β) for predicting spousal adjustments of married women from the level of support a woman received from her husband was 0.027. The standardized coefficient (β) for level of support a woman received from husband was 0.324, $t= 13.610$. Hence, the level of support a woman received from her husband was significant at $p < 0.05$.

Findings

- a. There was a significant relationship between maternal child upbringing and spousal adjustment of married women in Southern Nigeria.
- b. There was a significant relationship between the level of support a woman receives from her husband and spousal adjustment of married women in Southern Nigeria

Discussion

Hypothesis 1 was rejected. The results indicated that a linear positive significant relationship exists between maternal child upbringing and spousal adjustment of married women in southern Nigeria. This is not surprising considering the value women in these states placed on motherhood. This upholds the view by Ewherido (2017) that once women start having children, their attention shifts to childcare while their physical appearance and husband's needs tends to be ignored. It also corroborates many studies carried out on transition to parenthood like those of Doss et al (2009); Johnson (2016) that observed decreasing interest in sexual activities and decline in marital satisfaction among couples after the arrival of children in their marriages.

Hypothesis 2 was rejected. The findings revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between the level of support a woman receives from her husband and spousal adjustment of married women in Southern Nigeria. The findings of this rejected hypothesis indicates that married women in southern Nigeria enjoy the support of their husbands. That implies that their husbands do not stick rigidly to traditional gender norms in their spousal relationships and this was found to be beneficial. This finding in the view of the researcher, reveals that couples bond better when they collaborate in running the affairs of their home rather than holding on to traditional gender roles. Bonding better from the researchers' observation often reveals a husband who relates to the wife with tenderness, consideration and places value on the relevance of the woman in the marital union.

This supports the assertion by Trenowden (2017) that every successful woman needs the support of her husband. It also lends credence to the findings of Adeshinola (2012); Carter (2016); Ravenscraft (2016) & Rodman (2015) that neither employment nor child bearing roles were impediments to marital harmony but that rather, emotional support received from the husband was the crucial factor in the union. Furthermore, that absence of husband support causes stress capable of leading to divorce. It is also in line with Venker (2017)'s observations that happiness in marriage requires a husband that is not rigidly masculine in approach to matrimonial issues. This approach create a conducive environment for spousal adjustment (Carter, 2016)

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, the conclusion was arrived at; that women's child up-bringing can predict spousal adjustment. In addition, husband's support, have a moderating effect on spousal adjustment. Considering the value of family wellbeing to societal functioning, it is expedient that couples and the society at large should celebrate, encourage and nurture the sustenance of good spousal relationships and adjustment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings above, the following recommendations were made:

- a. Government, religious leaders, professional counsellors and the society at large should appreciate the value of spousal adjustment in family stability and nation building and should all strive to celebrate, nourish and encourage same.
- b. There is need to guide couples so that they realize early enough, their expected gender role, imbibe the tenet of cooperation, joint participation in activities, or sharing of experiences. They should furthermore, demonstrate reverence and concern for the well-being of each other.

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