

Evaluation of Marital Commitment and Divorce Tendency among Pentecostal and Orthodox Church Members in Rivers state and Its Counselling Implication

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ABSTRACT

This study examined marital commitment and divorce tendency between Pentecostal and Orthodox Church members in Nigeria. The sample of the study consisted of 300 married men and women drawn from selected Pentecostal and Orthodox Churches using simple random sampling technique. Data for the study was through a questionnaire. The data was analyzed with mean, standard deviation, and independent t-test statistics. The findings of the study revealed that there is no significant difference in the marital commitment of Pentecostal and Orthodox church members. Further analysis of the result showed that there exist significant difference in the divorce tendency of Pentecostal church members and Orthodox church members. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that religious marital matters should be held more seriously in the church especially in Orthodox churches as this will go a long way in preserving the bonds of marriages, families and the entire nation. Moreso, religious leaders should be trained in counseling psychology, because evidence abound that some issues that are spiritualized, need not to be spiritualized but be addressed psychologically.

Keywords: Marital, Commitment, Divorce, Tendency, Pentecostal, Orthodox, Churches.

INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of culture and human relationships have made researchers to observe many influences, manifestations, happenings and occurrences in marriage stability within the African society. These manifestations and occurrences have significant impact on marriage within the African modern society. The impacts have been both positive and negative. However, a recent observation on people's attitude to marriages in African modern society, suggest an alarming negative effect of these impacts (Borgatta Edgor, 2000). According to Gove (2006), marriage is described as the state of being united with a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife; the mutual relation of the husband and wife; the institution whereby men and women are joined in a special kind of social and legal dependence for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family; an act of marrying or rite by which the married status is affected.

From a societal level of analysis the institution of marriage represents all the behaviours, norms, roles, expectations, and values that are associated with legal union of a man and woman. It is the institution in society in which a man and woman are joined in a special kind of social and legal dependence to found and maintain a family. For most people, getting married and having children are the principal life events that mark the passage into mature adulthood. Marriage is considered to represent a lifelong commitment by two people to each other and it is signified by a contract sanctioned by the state (and for many people, by God). It thus involves legal rights, responsibilities, and duties that are enforced by both secular and sacred laws. As a legal contract ratified by the state, marriage can only be dissolved with state permission (Borgatta & Edgor, 2000; Asana, 1990).

The great majority of Christian denominations in Nigeria affirm that marriage is intended as a lifelong covenant. They consider marriage as a sacred act that originates from God or as the union of souls or spirits with the sacred realm. Harald (2006) explained that Christian marriage is viewed as a sacred union between the man and woman in which the bride and groom is joined into one spirit in union

with Christ and God, Marriage is also a metaphor for the marriage of the church to Christ. In this sense, the bride and groom became the “bride” of Christ and are heirs together of the grace of life through the Spirit of Christ (Eliade, 1993). As sacred as marriage may seem, tendencies of infidelity and divorce is on the increase especially among some churches in Nigeria.

Marital commitment is essential for a stable marriage and family. Rob & Lou (2016) maintained that one of the fundamental cornerstones of a successful marriage is commitment, an unwavering allegiance to a relationship and a partner. Chesney (2007) described marital commitment as involving making choices, protecting choices from other options, and arriving at decisions that reflect the priorities one’s commitments. Commitment in marriages comes in different forms. Rob & Lou (2016) suggested marital commitment basically result in three forms; (1) Commitment based on moral reasons. Some couples typically have religious beliefs or social norms that compel them to stay in their marriage. They can feel a sense of duty, being concerned about how a divorce would be judged by others, or feel obligated to follow the guidelines of their religion. (2) Marital commitment resulting from an intermingling of resources. Married couples pool money and other material possessions, have children, and establish a social life together. In doing so, their lives can become entangled to such an extent that it can be easier to stay in a relationship than to leave it. (3) Personal commitment which is based on emotions. Personally committed partners see their relationship and their emotional bond as the most important thing in their lives, and stay married because they want to, not out of necessity or a sense of responsibility (Groom, 2001). Call & Heaton (1997) explained that marital commitment is often threatened by infidelity, sexual incompatibility and domestic violence. As hard as any married couple may try not to, if they are not committed to their partner, they are at greater risk of divorce, than couples who are committed to their spouse (Abane, 2003).

Research shows that the Orthodox Church and some Pentecostal churches does recognize that there are occasions when it is better for couples to separate, and permit remarriage even with a surviving former spouse in church, although their rules are generally more restrictive than the civil divorce rules applicable in most countries. Both the Orthodox Church and Pentecostal churches discourage divorce except as a last resort, however they do not actually prohibit it through church doctrines. For the Orthodox church, marriage is “indissoluble” as in it should not be broken, the violation of such a union which is perceived as holy, resulting from adultery or the prolonged absence of one of the partners, is considered an offense. Thus, permitting remarriage is an act of compassion of the Church towards sinful man (Athenagoras, 2005). The Pentecostal churches on the other hand would preach that God hates divorce, but loves people even divorced ones. Hence they will support groups, counselling, and will help people put back their lives back together after the tragedy of divorce even if the divorce was their fault (Call & Heaton, 1997). To this end Larson (2002) claimed that religiosity does have a significant effect on divorce rates. In supporting this claim DeVaus & Wolcott (1997) reported that church members are more likely to believe that divorces are too easy to obtain. It is in light of these that this study will comparatively investigate marital commitment and divorce tendency among the members of Pentecostal and Orthodox churches in Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine marital commitment and divorce tendency among the members of Pentecostal and Orthodox churches in Rivers State, the study intends to achieve the following objectives;

1. To find out whether marital commitment of Pentecostal church members differ from Orthodox church members.
2. To find out whether divorce tendency of Pentecostal church members differ from Orthodox church members.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does marital commitment of Pentecostal church members differ from Orthodox church members?
2. To what extent does divorce tendency of Pentecostal church members differ from Orthodox church members?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the marital commitment of Pentecostal church members and Orthodox church members,

2. There is no significant difference in the divorce tendency of Pentecostal church members and Orthodox church members,

METHODOLOGY

The design of the study is ex-post facto research design. The target population of this study included 156 and 144 married men and women randomly selected from both Pentecostal and Orthodox churches respectively using simple random sampling technique. Data was collected through the use of questionnaire hand-delivered to the participants. The questionnaires were filled out by participants and returned to the researcher. The questionnaire asked participants to express their agreement or disagreement with the items of the questionnaire designed on a four point Likert- scale. The options are Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: *To what extent does marital commitment of Pentecostal church members differ from Orthodox Church members?*

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the marital commitment of Pentecostal church members and Orthodox Church members

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation and independent t-test analysis showing the difference of marital commitment among Pentecostal church members and Orthodox church members

Marital Commitment	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t	Sig.
Pentecostal church members	156	37.24	4.60	298	0.343	0.732
Orthodox church members	144	37.42	4.83			

In table 1, the data analyzed revealed that, Pentecostal church members had \bar{X} score of 37.42 and a standard deviation of 4.83. On the other hand the Orthodox church members had the \bar{X} score of 37.24 and SD of 4.60. Based on their mean scores it is deduced that Orthodox church members have more marital commitment as compared with their counterparts from Pentecostal Church by a mean difference of 0.19. However when these mean difference was subjected to an independent t-test, a calculated t-value of 0.343 was obtained at a degree of freedom of 298 at 0.732 significant levels. Thus since the p-value of 0.732 is greater than 0.05, the chosen level of probability is decided that there is no significant difference in the marital commitment of Pentecostal church members and Orthodox church members.

Research Question 2: *To what extent does divorce tendency of Pentecostal church members differ from Orthodox Church members?*

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the divorce tendency of Pentecostal church members and Orthodox church members.

Table 2: Mean, standard deviation and independent t-test analysis showing the difference in divorce tendency among Pentecostal church members and Orthodox church members

Divorce Tendency	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t	Sig.
Pentecostal church members	194	36.31	4.11	298	5.27	0.000
Orthodox church members	106	39.18	5.16			

In table 2, it is shown that Orthodox church members had \bar{X} score of 39.18 and standard deviation of 5.16 while Pentecostal church members had \bar{X} score of 36.31 and a standard deviation of 4.11.

Based on their mean scores it is deduced that Orthodox church members are more prone to divorce than their counterparts (Pentecostal church members) by a mean difference of 2.86.

Furthermore, when the mean difference was subjected to an independent t-test statistics, a calculated t-value of 5.26 at the degree of freedom 298 at 0.000 level is lower than 0.05, the chosen level of probability, it is then decided that there exist significant difference in the divorce tendency of Pentecostal church members and Orthodox church members.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study clearly compared the differences in commitment and divorce tendency among Pentecostal and Orthodox Church members in Rivers State. It has shown that divorce tendency is higher among Orthodox Church members than Pentecostal church members. The reason for this may be that the Orthodox Church is lax in discouraging divorce; hence its members see divorce as being easy to obtain. It is therefore recommended that religious marital matters should be held more seriously in the church especially in Orthodox churches as this will go a long way in preserving the bonds of marriages, families and the entire nation. Moreso, religious leaders should be trained in counseling psychology, because evidence abound that some issues that are spiritualized, need not to be spiritualized but be addressed psychologically. This will enable religious leaders acquire some professional counselling skills and thus be better equipped to counsel their members effectively.

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