

MARITAL BLISS OR MARITAL BIZARRE: SALVAGE FOR MARITAL CRISES IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

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Abstract

Marriage is a healthy institution 'programmed' for progress of individuals and for the race of mankind. The original scheme for marriage is for mutual and progressive cohabitation of the man and woman who come together in union as husband and wife. The twist in the essence of marriage in contemporary time is alarming and calls for intentional examination by stakeholders as its effect have been of adverse returns on the mental perception and social paralysis of the Nigerian society. In examining this reality of marriage, this study adopts the phenomenological research method and weighs the institution of marriage in light of its contemporary realities and provides rescue for the complexities discovered in marriages today. The study concludes that the wrong perceptions to which people enter into marriage is a fundamental factor for the alarming challenges and the study recommends that parents in conjunction with clergymen are to embark on intentional rescue for the challenges of marriage which is being rampant and against the cultural ideology of Nigerians.

Keywords: Marriage, Bliss, Bizarre, Salvage, Nigeria

Introduction

Marriage as an institution is position to be the bedrock for running a family and this is essential fundamental for a social constitution. Though its specific forms vary greatly from place to place, the family is a basic social structure that exists in all communities. According to Bahr (1981), the family serves four main purposes, which include the following: sexual interactions, group economic cooperation, reproduction, and education's role in fostering children's socialisation.

In advancing the thought about family, which is an offshoot of marriage, Amadi and Amadi (2014) posits that the family is the basic unit of a given society

which implies that a society is a reflection of how each family that constitutes her lives and relates, both attested that the society is to be seen as aggregate of the families. The advancement of the thought by Amadi and Amadi stresses the importance of marriage as it is not only limited to the two constituents (husband and wife), but the effect tells largely on the society. Various writers have developed different scholarly piece on the institution of marriage but this study is distinguished

The institution of marriage which was originally planned and meant to be for advancement of humanity tend to have experienced a significant twist in the negative with the popularity and rampant nature of divorce, separation

and murder among couples. The contemporary extent of these crises for keen attention with the understanding already establish that such families have effect on the society as a whole. These implications include both immediate and distant effect on the society.

In the quest to propose rescue for the institution of marriage based on the current realities in Nigeria, this study embarks on a phenomenological assessment of the marriage in its right perception, condemn the hullabaloo seen in today's marital relationship and proposes a rescue approach for the 21st century couples and intending couples. This stresses a redefinition of expectations in marriage, should couples expect marital bliss in its perfect sense or marital bizarre?

Institution of Marriage

The concept of marriage is broadly discussed by various writers and differing perceptions have been advanced over the years. Few of these positions will be discussed in this study with emphasis on the Christian perception of the idea of marriage, having in mind that marriage types are many.

Marriage is an institution created for mutual cohabitation of a man and woman with liberty to express intimacy and to provide companionship for each other (Asogwa, 2015). Male and female spouses get into a covenantal partnership when they get married. The covenantal aspect of marriage offers a solid basis and safe structure for partners' dedication to one another. The duties of a husband and wife to maintain and safeguard their marriage are outlined in the covenant. According to their covenant, the couple must put in a lot of effort to develop a bond that

shields the marriage from both internal and external threats (Zhekwo, 2009).

Moreover, it is impossible to ignore emotional problems in marriage. Intimacy is necessary for a partnership, according to Townsend (2009). It doesn't matter if it's emotional or physical intimacy. Couples are thought to be unable to establish physical closeness without first developing emotional connection. Many couples experience relationship issues as a result of their refusal to develop emotional connection. A tie that sustains a marriage is called an emotional relationship.

It implies that marriage is an institution which provides mutual benefits to both parties involved. Marriage further constitutes the stability of a given society since it forms a community

Marital crises in Nigeria

Every marriage is subject to both internal and external forces, which makes it somewhat inevitable that every marriage will experience marital crisis dynamics. Therefore, crises are a typical occurrence in any relationship or union of two or more people, and marriage is not an exception (Amadi and Amadi, 2014). This stems from the understanding that the two principal constituents in marriage (the man and the woman) are from different families and their perception, worldview and relational life are different which makes crises an inevitable factor in marriages.

Marriage in the actual sense is made to provide fulfilment and fulfillment for a couple in their individual lives and social interactions as noted by Prince (2006); but despite this original description of the intent of marriage, the following thoughts could be engaged that, why do couples fight and get scared it is bliss all through? Why are they

unable to simply live in peace? Did they not get married in order to live a better life together than as singles? Marital bliss does not imply a totally smooth journey void of pains and disputes instead the above are questions that verify that marital problems may not be so strange and abnormal after all. The reason why such small misunderstandings that define a happy marriage can escalate into a subject of contention may be a cause for grave concern.

The crises being discovered today to be rampant are as a result of failure to acknowledge and recognise these human and individual differences and to make adjustments where necessary which have inadvertently led to escalate issues in the modern day marriages. People will always have different expectations and beliefs, and how they respond or react to these divergent perspectives will define their marriages and lives. Envidable relationships which are seen today have discovered how to use these many shades of beliefs and viewpoints to help the union develop.

Sexual issues is so rampant and frequent in the society today and this have led to various broken homes. For example, Abubakar (2024), a columnist reported the situation of a woman in Ilorin, Kwara State, Wuraola Surajudeen who filed a suit against her husband, two weeks into her marriage with claim that she was starved of love and affection, the husband also protested that the court should grant her plea on the condition of refund of the dowry he paid; his decision being as a result of the failure of the wife to create room for sexual intimacy.

Another instance of disheartening family complexities is the record of Ayeleso (2025) who narrated the end of a marriage with a couple killing each other; the incident recorded to have taken place at Ado-Ekiti. This

occurrence is reported to be as a result of infidelity allegations which a police officer was battling with his wife. Their fights and disputes have been a frequent situation according to the columnist (Ayeleso, 2025), and the one that eventually saw led to their death was when the wife sliced the manhood of the man with a knife and in the pool of his own blood, the man also struggled to machete his wife to death. The condition of the couple made it already late to get help from neighbours and they had to leave four young children to grow without their parents.

Various marital crises are being documented on daily basis in Nigeria and this appear to be a twist in the original intention of the marriage institution which presents the need to make effort at investigating to know the factors responsible for this situations and to propose a way out of such scenario which have become so rampant in the society.

Contributing factors to marital crises in Nigeria

Marital crises are dominant in the country today and these have generated a lot of issues both implicitly and explicitly in the modern day Nigerian society. As earlier established, there is no marriage that is characterised as a problem-free marriage but marital crises have been of immense concern in recent times with the various instances around news outlets and social media pages. There is therefore the need to discuss some of the contributing factors to the challenges warring against marital bliss in the society today.

As perceived by this researcher, the most pressing complications in marriage is the challenge of poor communication between couples. Communication is foundational to the

success of any form of relationship and as such a marriage where communication is ineffective or weak will definitely have great crises as a product. One element that has taken centre stage in every discussion on a happy marriage is "marital communication" (Edger, 1996). The union is severely harmed when spouses are unable to communicate with one another. Effective marital communication entails that spouses discuss difficulties, answer to questions, call for explanations and accept same timely (when offered), as any delay may send out a false signal which a partner is guaranteed to interpret same manner. In actuality, many additional marital concerns can be resolved through effective communication before they become crisis situations. Other marital issues that have even resulted in divorce or separation of spouses have been attributed to poor communication between the couple. Incessant disputes about everything, everything, and nothing frequently replace intentional, open communication between spouses; misconceptions lead to misunderstandings; verbal abuse is repelled by silence, particularly on the husband's side. (Awake, 2008)

Furthermore, sexuality of the partners in marriage is of serious concern and has been an actor in the marital crises being experienced today in the Nigerian society. A marriage partner's lack of sexual fulfilment can exacerbate a marital crisis that, if not identified and addressed promptly, may result in extramarital encounters, which, if left unchecked, can cause disenchantment and a breakdown in trust. The matters of sexual imbalance have been of immense concern in contemporary times as seen in the case of the woman who wanted divorce after

about six years in marriage as discussed in Vanguard (2025) and a host of others. It is not peculiar to women being the less active, in some cases the women are the one overtly active in their sexual prowess and this have caused crisis in many families, due to poor management of such scenario.

Furthermore, a contributory factor to marital crises and challenges in contemporary times can be traced to the 'input' of extended families and in-laws. Some marriages experienced conundrums due to the involvement of their extended families in the running of the affairs of their nuclear family and this is a serious challenge in Nigeria. Amadi and Amadi (2014) advanced further that some formerly happy couples have had their marriages shattered due to their incapacity to handle extended family issues. Women typically struggle to make room for their husbands' relatives, particularly mothers and sisters-in-law, and some husbands struggle to do the same, which is a situation that most marriage partners may find challenging to accommodate. Some men and women frequently argue with spouses whose only concern is improving their own relationships.

In addition, the absence of mutual respect for one another is a challenge which has complicated marital fulfillment for many homes and families. Mutual respect for one's spouse is essential to the survival of a marriage, and its absence can cause a crisis that can upend even the most solid marriages in previously happy households. Prince (2006) advanced the biblical teaching in Ephesians 5:21-25 by stressing that both a man and woman, who make up a marriage must recognise their essential contributions to the advancement and growth of their home. The failure of many to realise their individual roles in

the progressiveness of their families and marriage has led to catastrophe in many marriages in contemporary time.

Also, the problem of dishonesty and moral decadence is a crisis triggering factor in modern days. Typically among Africans, moral decadence and dishonesty is frowned at due to its huge hazards over the society. Being obtainable in the family makes it impossible to avoid crises when it boomerangs. Buckwell (2010) avers that, A situation in which a couple cannot tell each other the simple truth is unhealthy for the union; once such a morality gap is found in one of the spouses, mistrust sets in and confidence gradually erodes with crisis eventually taking over the home front; poor morality or decadent moral culture may unintentionally be imbibed by the children of such a family, in which case the entire family fabric weakens due largely to an atmosphere of mutual mistrust that eventually envelops it.

Lastly on this note, advancement in knowledge and modernization have had negative effect on some marriages today. The complexities of social media have been abused where the wrong approach to using the various platforms among other paraphernalia of modernisation have caused many families result in shambles. Abayowa (2009) advanced that, the abuse of modernisation in marriages can be seen for instance in negative comparison between other people and one's spouses, importing uncultured practices into a marriage comprising of cultured persons, these factors among others have led to disputes and complications in marriages today.

Marital Bliss or Marital Bizarre: New Approach to Marriage

The challenges of various kinds discovered in marriages today as weighed by this study appears to be traceable to perceptions of individuals about the institution of marriage, the orientations of young couples and intending couples about marriage tend to be one sided. There is the stress pattern of expectation about bliss in marriage rather than having a holistic view about the institution. The need for having a rethink about the concept of marriage as an institution to be referred to as "marital bizarre" rather than "marital bliss" is essential.

When "bliss" as expectation in marriage is discussed, what does it mean? The Merriam Webster dictionary defines bliss as complete happiness. For a clearer understanding a direct explanation was made to bliss being something to be enjoyed in heaven with emphasis on the fact that, there is no perfect happiness on earth, due to carrying challenges that mankind can experience at different times of their lives.

In the direct relatedness to the concept of marital bliss as the society understands, it implies having happiness in a marriage relationship. For some intending couples, mental structures and imaginations are already created for them to enjoy in marriage and entering into marriage should simply provide the reality of the images they have mentally structured. In marital bliss, things being wished for are to be made available as at when due, as a matter of emphasis, marital bliss in some individual's mental structure could be to create an atmosphere of comfort without taking any major step at attaining that feat.

What does Bizarre means? The Merriam-Webster dictionary defined the term first as striking out of the ordinary such as being odd or involving

sensational contrast. This implies that Bizarre is an irregular situation which is seen as unconventional or lack of conformation with regulars. In the quest to set the orientation of marriage straight, this study proposes adopting the use of "marital bizarre" in place of marital bliss because of the distinctive complexities that each marriage has. Abayowa (2009) clarifies that no two marriages are the same which attest to the peculiarities for each marriage.

A rethink and review of marriage as an institution which is in the initial viewed with prospects by those venturing into it have to be corrected and straightened for balance in the perception about marriage. Marital bliss as many young men promise their wives before marriage turned out to be an irony of the reality being experienced in the relationship and this have served intently as the trigger for proposing temporary separation, divorce or murdering each other on the extremes.

This study does not turn down the reality of happiness in marriage, as a matter of fact, happiness and fulfillment is one of the major driving force of an individual to venture into marriage, but the orientation of a perfect home have to be properly defined to young and intending couples in order to aid their perception about marriage and to stress more their roles in upholding their passion at working towards happiness and joy in marriage. The misconception of automated marital bliss should be altogether avoided and redirected at making a bizarre (peculiar) marriage, where happiness and fulfillment in marriage is dependent on the major actors of each marriage. When the orientation is rightly set from the initial, the mental preparedness and physical stamina must have been created by the individual.

Conclusion

Conflicts are more than just differences in viewpoints or methods, and couples must acknowledge this. Conflicts arise when partners fail to effectively communicate their divergent points of view. Sometimes, even at the smallest provocation, spouses can become quite nasty and mean. However, it is also evident that those situations provide us with chances to grow closer to God and our partners. According to Buckwell (2010), God has given everyone of us a window of opportunity where we can choose not to engage in conflict. This is why Proverbs 20:3 states that "keeping away from strife is an honour for a man, but any fool will quarrel."

The Bible also recognises that married people are prone to experience suffering and loss (1 Corinthians 7:28), no pair or marriage is exempt from these inescapable issues. Relationships that begin as joyful and promising might turn into the most difficult and stressful endeavours of a person's life (Amadi and Amadi, 2014). Every couple eventually faces a major crisis that may jeopardise their emotional stability and maybe even their marriage's future but their responses and reactions to such situation matters a lot. This implies that, couple are to be mentally prepared for negatives in marriage and to approach with progressive and positive mindset. The failure of couples to accept negative situations with positive mindsets have led to the various crises in the society today.

This study therefore encourages that a positive mindset of workability accompanied with intentionality on the part of the man and the wife should be put in place. Marital bliss is not an automated benefit of marriage, it is

surrounded with lot of sacrifices, hope, perseverance and mutual love. These are contributing factors to enviable marriages in the society today and this could be engrafted in the mindset of Nigerians to have the right perception towards marriage and to define marital bliss in the right perspective rather than a mirage being held mentally by many young ones entering into marriage.

Recommendations

This study recommends the following in the quest to ensure that marital bliss is set in the right perspective and to be experienced by Nigerian couples in contemporary times.

1. Clergymen are key players in providing right orientation to young couples and intending couples on the expectations and commitments of marriage. They can organise premarital and post-marital counselling for intended couples and young couples respectively.
2. Parents are also to set the orientation of their children straight about what marriage is about, which can be done from years of experience in the institution especially from the cultural understanding and peculiarities of each local culture.
3. Lastly, couples experiencing little hitch more frequently can contact their clergymen and marital therapist for help. If quickly combated, it will minimise the number of marital hazards like divorce, depression, murder among others in the society.

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