

Association Between Hearing Impairment and Marital Satisfaction Among Hearing Impaired Married Individuals in Isinya Kajiado County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT:

Hearing impairment is frequently perceived negatively as it emphasizes what some humans are challenged with, and as such is regarded as a hidden disability because it is not visible and may pass unnoticed unlike the physical disability. This study investigated the association between hearing impairment and marital satisfaction among hearing impaired married individuals in Isinya, Kajiado County, Kenya. The study was guided by the social model theory (SMT) of disability promoted by a collection of organizations of disabled people in Britain and the social exchange theory (SET) is attributed to Carl Gasper (1958).

Materials and Methods: The study employed the correlational research design. Simple random sampling technique was utilized to select 250 participants, using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula. Data was collected using standardized questionnaires (the Hearing Handicap Inventory for Adults (HHIA)) was used to collect information from the participants of the study and the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants were collected using a structured questionnaire. The pre-testing sample of this study was carried out, 15 equivalents 10% of the sample size (151) was used for the pre-testing. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) affirmed this procedure and recommended that 1-10% of pre-test sample was enough. Quantitative data collected was analyzed using SPSS version 26.

Results: The study captured a wide range of married individuals between 28-33 years old were at 43.1% (n = 69), while 1.9% (n = 3) were within the age range of 46-51 years old. The gender revealed that females were the highest participants at 55.6% (n = 89), while the males were at 44.4% (n = 71). On their level of education, 43.8% (n = 70) had certificate, while 26.3% (n = 41) had BA. The findings from descriptive statistical analysis demonstrated that 73% (n = 118) of the hearing-impaired married individuals in Isinya, Kajiado County Kenya, had a low score on marital satisfaction, while 5.6% (n = 2) of the hearing-impaired married individuals in Isinya, Kajiado County Kenya, had high level of marital satisfaction

Conclusion: The finding suggests that communication barriers, social isolation, and possibly unmet emotional or practical needs are contributing to marital dissatisfaction of the hearing-impaired married individuals in Isinya, Kajiado County in Kenya.

Keyword; Hearing Impairment, Marital Satisfaction, Emotion Recognition, Emotion Regulation.

INTRODUCTION

A meaningful human existence is one that comes with effective communication and understanding among humans of all ages. It is highly possible the case that every human being desires to hear, see, feel, touch, smell, and above all to be understood (Adugna & Ghahari, 2020). The reality of hearing impairment appears to be one of the obstacles militating against some of these human desires, and some people who are in marital relationship are faced with this challenge of hearing impairment. Mustapha (2009) submits that the term "disability" is used to denote hearing impairment. Hearing impairment is the total or partial loss of hearing in one or two ears, and

it can be mild, moderate and severe (WHO, 2013). West (2021) argues that hearing impairment reduces quality of life among married people.

The way marriage partners interpret behaviour seems to be connected to how satisfied they are with their marriage. Marital satisfaction matters for married partners. This is the bedrock of attaining marriage goals. Forms of interaction between partners (whether one is impaired or not) could have emotional impact on how fulfilled they are with their matrimonial relationship. The pattern most often related to marital dissatisfaction is one of too much demand or emotional withdrawal from a partner. A marriage partner who offers good social support for his or her spouse adds to the partner's marital satisfaction, and some indications of marital satisfaction may include social supports, regular communication, presence, faithfulness, cooperation, recognition of partner's emotion, and sexual satisfaction (King, 2019). Marital satisfaction is a positive as well as gratifying attitude that spouses have in diverse phases of marital relations like, conflict resolution, sexual relations, and consistent communication and bonding. Studies have pointed out that several constituents are part of marital satisfaction which are; seeking a companion, trustfulness, love and faithfulness, and intimacy. The constituents also include interaction, showing affection, sexual satisfaction, acknowledgment of emotions, understanding of emotions, their origin as well as management (Abedi et al., 2016; Pourheydari, 2013).

Couples' relationships are impacted by hearing loss, which can reduce marital satisfaction. Marriage satisfaction may suffer as a result of hearing loss. Marriage is one area of life where hearing loss may have a detrimental impact. Communication between spouses might be put at risk if one or both have hearing problem (Papp, 2018). Lehane (2017) also argued that hearing loss could have a detrimental effect on marital satisfaction of couples. Hearing impairment did endanger relationship and led to low emotional intimacy. The outcome of the research pointed mental health problems were prevalent among the hearing-impaired couples and prevalence level of marital dissatisfaction was as high as 40%. The hearing-impaired females showed low level in respects to marital satisfaction and personality characters. McCabe (2014) affirmed that inasmuch as lack of communication could enhance different possibilities among the hearing-impaired couples, he noted that violence rate was high in hearing-impaired couples, that 3 out of 4 partakers (71.7%) reported being victims of emotional misbehaviors and more than half (56.5%) were victims of physical violence in marriage, which led to low level (47%) of marital satisfaction.

Morgan (2013) in his research in the UK, showed that most participants (70%) revealed marital satisfaction with their overall relationships and their hearing-impaired partners, while only 9% of participants had low level of marital satisfaction with their hearing-impaired partner. Participants with the sense of satisfaction, had shown good compatibility. It was also found that lack of conflict solving skills decreases marital satisfaction and leads to divorce in 90% of hearing-impaired married people. In Iran, Abedi et al. (2018) carried out a study on marital satisfaction among deaf couples. It claimed that connection is a fundamental part of marriage and without it, marriage will be in danger of extinction. The study by Abedi et al. (2018) was specifically on the female hearing-impaired couples who are in their matrimonial relationship. This current study focused on the female and male hearing-impaired couples and investigate association between hearing impairment and marital satisfaction among hearing impaired spouses in Isinya, Kajiado County, Kenya.

In Nigeria, the concern whether the hearing-impaired couples experience marital fulfilment has become a subject of interest to many scholars. Asekun and Mojisola (2016) hold that many spouses find it challenging to express their rage, irritation, or even delight, which is especially challenging for hearing-impaired people. Communication pattern plays a vital role in determining the success of a marriage or satisfaction couples derive from their marriage. The marriage's goal is to assist partners develop into mature, ego adults who can take care of themselves and nurture others no matter their circumstances, which may be frustrating when aspirations are unattainable. It was noted that 40% lack of proficiency led in language issues among the hearing-impaired couples, and this cause irritation as well as other issues including aggressive behavior, anxiety, and social exclusion in marriage. There is a high likelihood for marriage with poor and unproductive communication to experience distress and low satisfaction (Ndlovu, 2013).

According to Carbone (2010), marital dissatisfaction abounds with the hearing-impaired couples due to disenchantment among partners. He pointed that in order to reach intimacy, a person must be: (a) inclined to value and pursue closeness; (b) able to endure the extreme feelings that are inevitably present in strong relations;

and (c) capable of self-disclosure, reciprocity, and sensitivity for others. A study was carried out by Asekun and Mojisola (2016) on psychosocial association of marital satisfaction among selected couples in Lagos Metropolis. Cases of dissatisfactions, separations and divorce married people were found to be on the increase in the recent time, particularly in Lagos metropolis. It was reported that depression, anxiety and stress have significant influence on the marital satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.03$, $F(3,337) = 3.71$, $p < .05$) obviously unpleasant experiences within marriage can account for high prevalence of marital dissatisfaction. Walker et al. (2013) discovered that depressive symptoms among married couples, whether they are impaired or not are related to their levels of marital satisfaction, whereby higher scores on depression predicted lower level of marital satisfaction scores for the individual. This study by Asekun and Mojisola (2016) gives an interesting finding, and it rather concentrated on married people who do not have any hearing impairment, and there is scarcity of studies in the Nigerian society regarding levels of marital satisfaction among hearing impaired married people.

Similarly, Tukundane (2020) conducted a study on communication satisfaction, marital satisfaction and relationship maintenance in marriages in Uganda. He argued that marital satisfaction was not a static and stable concept, and many of the spouses whether they are hearing impaired or not do experience some changes in the amount of satisfaction during their common life as couples. It was found that marital satisfaction involves factors such as sexual satisfaction, communication and attachment. Also, it was reported that the lesser the communication skills in marriages, the more the challenges faced by the married people. Specifically, in person communication, nonverbal cues, tone of voice, and time committed to communication are needed to accelerate meaningful interaction and satisfaction in matrimonial relationship. As interesting as this study is, there was no report on marital satisfaction among the hearing-impaired couples. It also did not investigate the levels of marital satisfaction among its intended population. There is scarcity of studies around the East African region with regards to the levels of marital satisfaction among the hearing-impaired couples. Limited research has been conducted focusing on the association between hearing impairment and marital satisfaction among hearing impaired spouses. Therefore, this current study filled this knowledge gap.

In Kenya, Kariuki (2018) brings to light that a pleasing and highly contented marital life can be one of the most serious factors in achieving happiness in one's marital relationship. On the other hand, at present, marital satisfaction is still a dream to be reached by some married people. Inasmuch as some married people are in good marital satisfaction, some, especially among the hearing-impaired couples are in pain and in total dissatisfaction of being married to their partner. The resultant effects of dissatisfaction in marriage are enormous. Building on this, Kariuki (2018) study among the married couples in Murang'a County revealed that 3 out of 10 couples would not choose to marry their present spouse again. Furthermore, 29% of married Kenyan were on the position that their nuptials are going for the rocks, and 31% were uncertain whether they were in a happy or unhappy marital relationship, indicating generally low levels of marital satisfaction.

Moreover, marital dissatisfaction has been found to predict increases in depressive symptoms, with poor communication between partners being significant contributing factor. Additional influences included ethnicity, mental maturity, life expectations, and emotional intelligence of the couple. The high prevalence of divorces and separations show low level of marital satisfaction among the married people (Mungai, 2017). In a related study, Junius (2020), noted that according to Kenya's 2009 population census, 12.6 million people were married, yet by 2016, 15. % of these marriages had ended in divorce. Importantly, Kariuki's (2018) research focused on married individuals without impairments. Therefore, there appeared to be limited studies with regards to marital satisfaction among the hearing-impaired married individuals in Kenya. It was upon this gap, this current study was aimed at investigating the association between hearing impairment and marital satisfaction among hearing impaired spouses in Isinya, Kajiado County, Kenya.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Model Theory

The social model theory (SMT) of disability has its background in the struggle of disabled humans for the attainment of their public rights. The theory has been promoted by a collection of organizations of disabled people in Britain since its first articulation by the Union of Physically Impaired People Against Segregation (UPIAS) in the year 1976 and by many tutors working in the field. It offers a way of conceptualizing the serious

life struggles experienced by people with impairments that stresses the social, economic and environmental barriers to participate in meaningful activities in society. The health and welfare systems made the impaired persons feel unfairly treated and socially excluded. As a result of the lack of options, the limitations placed on their ability to exercise their right to free choice and self-determination, and the inability to exert control over the support systems in their lives, they started to question the fundamental tenets of the healthcare model's long-standing superiority (UPIAS, 1976). Finkelstein (2001) alludes that humans are by nature frail, exposed, and physically deficient. Throughout history, those with abilities have worked so hard to achieve perfection, while the hearing-impaired vulnerability is perceived as a condition that divides the impaired people from what is regarded as normal (Finkelstein, 2001).

Further, the theory pointed that society was what renders those with physical disabilities disabled. This is based on the reason that when they are unnecessarily isolated and denied the opportunity to fully participate in society, disability is something that is added on top of their deficiencies (UPIAS, 1976). Through the prism of the SMT, disability is seen as an uneven bond within a society where people with disabilities' needs are typically given little to no respect. Nevertheless, the socialists argued that being impaired or handicapped does not diminish who they are as a human person Mladenov, (2017). The people with disability movement (PWD) contends that changing society, rather than concentrating on each person's handicap, is the "solution" for the disability problem, and this is very crucial. Also, when hearing impaired married couples are confronted with the situations of deprivation and restriction in social engagements, upon their conditions, it may build up to meaninglessness with life, and this could hinder marital satisfaction that may induce extreme consequence on their marriage.

Social Exchange Theory

The social exchange theory (SET) is attributed to Carl Gasper (1958), who holds that almost all relationships are focused on "give and take". This possibly vary in regards to the degree of the relationship. He argues that humans engage in a relationship with expectations from their partners. Here, feelings, emotions, and material gifts are to be reciprocated for relationship to last (Nyutu, 2016). For example, the hearing-impaired couples may expect a "deeper understanding" from each other since they are all in similar condition. Inability to give or reciprocate such need may pave way for marital dissatisfaction among the couples.

Additionally, this theory proposed that human beings in social contexts would act in ways that would best serve their own interests. Social exchange theory functions on the supposition that individuals are generally sensible and engage in calculations of costs and benefits in social exchanges, even in marriage. Humans may actively seek out relationships and interactions that advance their wants, but they can also become targets of other people's needs when they are trying to satisfy their own needs. The person with fewer to gain in terms of meeting their basic needs through social exchange has a tendency to hold more power in that exchange (Gasper, 1958). For example, in terms of basic structural gains, a hearing-impaired married couple who is working and earning a good amount of money has less to gain from the other hearing-impaired partner who is always sitting at home and depending on the other partner. This constant reliance on the other partner for provision may lead to some degree of marital disenchantment in their marital relationship.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a correlational research design to determine the association between hearing impairment and marital satisfaction among hearing impaired married individuals. The study specifically focused in Isinya kajiado county in Kenya. The study had a target population of 250. Simple random sampling technique was used to identify the individuals who took part in the study. A sample size of 151 was determined with the use of Yurice and Morgan (1970) formula. Quantitative data was gathered using a standard questionnaire (The hearing handicap inventory for adults (HHIA)) and structured socio-demographic questionnaire which comprised of age, gender, levels of and education. The pre-testing sample of this study was carried out, 15 equivalents 10% of the sample size (151) was used for the pre-testing. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) affirmed this procedure and recommended that 1-10% of pre-test sample was found to be reliable. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences; SPSS version 26 was used for data analysis. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings were presented in summary tables. The respondents were diverse in terms of gender, with 44.4% being male and 55.6% female. This balanced representation ensures that a range of perspectives is

considered. Notably, the highest number of respondents were females. The study also captured a wide range of age groups, with the 28-33 age group being the largest at 43.1%, followed closely by the 46-51 age group at 1.9%. This suggests active participation from individuals in their twenties and thirties. Level of education revealed that 43.8% (n = 70) had certificate, while 26.3% (n = 41) had BA

FINDINGS

Levels of Marital Satisfaction among Hearing Impaired Married Individuals in Isinya, Kajiado County, Kenya

The second objective of this study was to measure the levels of marital satisfaction among hearing impaired married individuals in Isinya, Kajiado County, Kenya. Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted in this regard, and the data gathered from the participants were computed and scored in order to measure the levels of marital satisfaction. Couples' Satisfaction Index is a 22 items tool. The scale is designed to measure satisfaction in marital relationship. It is a Likert scale of 0-6, where; 0 = to never agree, 1 = almost always be in conflict, 2 = commonly disagree, 3 = sometimes disagree, 4 = nearly always concur, 5 = always concur. The scores range from low marital satisfaction (0-49), moderate marital satisfaction (50-89), then high (90-150) marital satisfaction. The results from the analysis are given in Table 6.

Table 1; Levels of hearing impairment among hearing impaired married individuals

Levels	Frequency	Percentage
Low marital satisfaction	118	73.75%
Moderate marital satisfaction	40	25.0%
High marital satisfaction.	2	1.25%
Total	160	100%

As seen in Table 6, findings from descriptive statistical analysis demonstrated that 73% (n = 118) of the hearing-impaired married individuals in Isinya, Kajiado County Kenya, had a low score on marital satisfaction, while 5.6% (n = 2) of the hearing-impaired married individuals in Isinya, Kajiado County Kenya, had high level of marital satisfaction. This outcome pointed that the hearing-impaired married individuals may be struggling in their marriage, and this requires a critical attention on this population of the hearing impaired in marital relationship. The finding suggests that communication barriers, social isolation, and possibly unmet emotional or practical needs are contributing to marital dissatisfaction. Addressing this issue would require a multifaceted, psychologically and culturally sensitive intervention to support both the individuals with hearing impairment and their partners.

DISCUSSION

Levels of Marital Satisfaction among Hearing Impaired Married Individuals in Isinya, Kajiado County, Kenya

The objective of this study was to measure the levels of marital satisfaction among hearing impaired married individuals in Isinya, Kajiado County, Kenya. Findings demonstrated that a majority (n = 118, 73%) of the hearing-impaired married individuals in Isinya, Kajiado County Kenya, had a low score on marital satisfaction, while 5.6% (n = 2) of the hearing-impaired married individuals in Isinya, Kajiado County Kenya, had high level of marital satisfaction.

These findings confirm the findings of Morgan (2013) in the UK, which showed that 9% of the participants had low level of marital satisfaction with their hearing-impaired partner, while most participants (70%) revealed marital satisfaction with their overall relationships and their hearing-impaired partners. The participants of the study with the sense of satisfaction, had shown good compatibility and further reported marital satisfaction. The outcome of this study corroborated the findings of McCabe (2014) in the USA. The study found that 47% of the hearing-impaired married couples had low level of marital satisfaction; this low marital satisfaction manifested

in several behavioral ways such that 3 out of 4 partakers (71.7%) reported being victims of emotional misbehaviors and more than half (56.5%) were victims of physical violence in marriage.

The findings of the current study pointed that some of the hearing-impaired married individuals could be having a fulfilling marital relationship, while the others are yet to meet the need for marital satisfaction in their marital relationship. The low score of marital satisfaction among the hearing-impaired married individuals underscore the possibility that they are not happy in their marriage. Marital satisfaction implies a couple's subjective feeling of contentment in conjugal relationship. It is a state where married men and women experience stability and happiness in their marriages (Tavakol et al., 2017).

Further, it is likely that the hearing-impaired married individuals are confronted with several difficulties that may be negatively impinging in their lives. Soltani (2015) posits that marriage requires a meaningful relationship, therefore hearing impairment and other socio-environmental factors can have debilitating consequences for hearing impaired partners. This was further amplified by Lehane (2017) who argued that hearing loss could have a detrimental effect on marital satisfaction of couples. It is important that the hearing-impaired individuals' device ways of enhancing satisfaction in their marital life.

CONCLUSION

This study established that hearing impairment negatively affects marital satisfaction among hearing-impaired married individuals in Isinya, Kajiado County, Kenya. The conclusion is that there was a negative relationship ($r = -.015$, $p = .854 \geq 0.05$) between hearing impairment and marital satisfaction among hearing impaired married individuals in Isinya, Kajiado. Marital satisfaction is a psychological state that could hardly be experienced without the application of emotional intelligence. By recognizing the importance of physical disability and its relationship with marital satisfaction, couples could continually work towards developing skills of enhancing communication, recognizing and regulating emotions in order to facilitate the building of healthier, meaningful and satisfying conjugal relationship. The findings indicate that higher levels of hearing impairment correlate with lower marital satisfaction, emphasizing the communication challenges and emotional strain that hearing-impaired couples face, hence hearing impairment comes with its challenge, such that it may interfere with the holistic functioning of a person who is living with hearing impairment.

RECOMMENDATION

This study recommends that couples should be encouraged to attend mental health seminars on psychological topics like self-awareness, emotion recognition, and emotion regulations for couples in order to broaden their understanding and also consider using assistive communication tools (e.g., sign language interpreters, hearing aids, or written communication) to improve relationship interactions. Hearing-impaired organizations should organize workshops on marriage enrichment, communication strategies, and coping mechanisms for hearing-impaired couples. Lastly, future research on a comparative study to compare hearing-impaired men and women to assess how gender differences impact marital satisfaction

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