Barriers to Marital Expectation among Individuals with Hearing Impairment in Oyo State

Adebomi M. Oyewumi, Sunday Amaize

Abstract—The study was designed to examine the barriers to marital expectations among unmarried persons with hearing impairment in Oyo State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. Purposive sampling technique was used to select one hundred participants made up forty-four (44) males and fifty-six (56) females, all with varying degrees of hearing impairment. Eight research questions were raised and answered. The instrument used was Marital Expectations Scale with reliability coefficient of 0.86. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics tools of frequency count and simple percentage as well as inferential statistics tools of T-TEST and ANOVA. The findings revealed that there was a significant relationship existing among the main identified barriers (environmental barrier, communication barrier, hearing loss, unemployment and poor sexuality education) to the marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment. The joint contribution of the independent variables (identified barriers) to the dependent variable (marital expectations) was significant, F = 5.842, P < 0.05, accounting for about 89% of the variance. The relative contribution of the identified barriers to marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment is as follows: environmental barrier ($\beta = 0.808, t = 5.176, P < 0.05$), communication barrier ($\beta = 0.533, t = 3.305, P < 0.05$), hearing loss ($\beta = 0.550, t = 2.233, P < 0.05$), unemployment ($\beta = 0.431, t = 2.102, P < 0.05$), poor sexuality education ($\beta = 0.361, t = 1.985, P < 0.05$). Environmental barrier proved to be the most potent contributor to the poor marital expectations among unmarried persons with hearing impairment. Therefore, it is recommended that society dismantles the nagging environmental barrier through positive identification with individuals suffering from hearing impairment. In this connection, members of society should change their negative attitudes and do away with all the wrong notions about the marital ability of individuals with hearing impairment.

Keywords—Hearing impairment, marriage, marital expectations, barrier.

I. INTRODUCTION

HEARING impairment is a growing disability with far-reaching psychological and socio-economic implications. It is not evident to others until one tries to communicate and it has a pervasive influence on the victim’s total personality. The World Health Organization put the estimate of people with disabling hearing impairment globally at three hundred and sixty (360) million of whom about two-thirds live in developing countries including Nigeria. Generally, people with hearing impairment encounter daunting challenges in their effort to achieve a steady quality of life. Apart from facing education, economic, and career challenges, individuals with hearing impairment also find it difficult to access the marriage institution. Marriage, as a concept, is underscored by the coming together in agreement of a man and a woman who love each other and want to live together to fulfill their individual and corporate expectations from the union. It provides the family setting that serves as the nucleus of society and it creates the home environment which makes for the propagation of human species, the rearing of offspring, the emotional assurance of man’s peace of mind, the cultivation of moral values and the balance inter-exchange of love as well as security, succour and acceptance [1].

Expectations in marriage consist mostly of preconceptions about what behaviour should or should not occur within the marriage such as the extent to which partners should share values, how much time they should spend together, how disagreements should be handled and any other issues deemed important in marriage [2], [3]. Reverence [4] added that marital expectations are what partners see as appropriate roles within marriage and their beliefs about how marriage works.

A survey of research literature [5]-[11], [13]-[15] suggested that unmarried persons with hearing impairment have little or no positive expectations of marriage as a result of the existence of a number of intrinsic and extrinsic factors which include environmental barrier, communication barrier, hearing impairment, poor sexuality education and unemployment among other factors. The cumulative effects of hearing loss have been shown to be harmful to individuals in intimate relationships. For instance, in studies carried out by [10], [11], [13], [16] results documented psychosocial effects such as irritability, feelings of depression and personal inadequacy, low self-esteem, suspiciousness, anger, moodiness, fear, aggression, loneliness among others. Similarly, a study carried out by [5] revealed the vulnerability of intimate relationships to hearing loss through effects such as poor communication, feelings of resentment, frustration, tension, and guilt. Likewise, [17] showed that the life of a person with hearing impairment is fraught with communication problem, loneliness, relationship challenge, fear of appearing stupid, massive injury to self-esteem, under-achievement directly attributable to hearing loss rather than inability and the primary affliction in theory if not in practice with the normal hearing population. Evidence suggests that hearing impairment leads to poorer quality of life, shorter life expectancy, greater difficulty in social activities and a higher level of social isolation [18]. Evidence also suggests that hearing loss is related to lower likelihood of marriage. However, it was observed that men with hearing loss stand a
better chance of finding marital partners than women with hearing loss. This is because a large number of women are engaged in interpreting services. Thus, men with hearing impairment arguably may have a better opportunity to meet women who understand the situation of things with hearing impairment [17]. Also, [19] noted that adolescent girls with hearing impairment have less exposure to intimate relationships and less access to marital information than adolescent boys with hearing impairment.

Evidence gathered by [17] indicated that people with disability including those with hearing impairment experienced considerable difficulty in navigating intimate relationships and in exercising their right to establish a family. Obstacles are raised by relatives, local authorities, the state and religious leaders. Examples include the forced sterilization to control the fertility of disabled people and forcible segregation of the sexes. One notable effect of hearing impairment which can affect intimate relationships is loneliness and isolation which in turn lead to the inability to participate in social activities and fewer opportunities to learn about sexual issues from peers, to engage in sexual experimentation and to develop social skills to build sexual relationship or to initiate sexual communication. As a consequence, unmarried persons with hearing impairment may not be able to achieve sexual harmony with future marital partners when they eventually get married. Furthermore, because of their inability to interact with others, individuals with hearing impairment lack the social cues that normal hearing people rely on to relate with others, to make decision, to forge personal and social identity, to work and to form intimate relationships. The stress of hearing loss include the fear of not being able to react or respond appropriately in a given situation, the fear of living unsuccessful married life and the fear of having a would-be partner who may not be committed to the relationship. All these fears can cause depression which may interfere with the ability to pay attention to partners in relationships [20], [21] and to improve the relationships. There is a wide body of literature suggesting a robust association between depressive symptoms and relationships functioning. Among individuals with hearing impairment, relationships in which one member is depressed have been found to be characterized by more tension, hostility and negative expressiveness than that in intimate affairs where neither partner experiences depressive symptoms. Anger and aggressiveness are natural consequence of hearing impairment. There is a tendency for individuals with hearing impairment to overreact to situations and this in turn can complicate their intimate relationships. A person with hearing impairment who constantly exhibits traits of anger and aggression may be seen as lacking the needed skills to establish and sustain an intimate relationship. Additionally, potential suitors may be scared away by unbridled display of anger and aggression. Nevertheless, though hearing impairment is one major challenge to the marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment, its influence appears to wane when viewed against the backdrop of environmental barrier. This is because society erects the

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

(1) What are the marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment?
(2) What are the identified barriers to the marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment?
(3) What are the ranks of the identified barriers?
(4) What are the impacts of the identified barriers on marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment?
(5) What is the joint contribution of the identified barriers
(environmental barrier, communication barrier, hearing impairment, unemployment, and lack of sexuality education) to the marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment)?

(6) What is the relative contribution of each of environmental barrier, communication barrier, hearing impairment, unemployment, and lack of sexuality education to the marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment?

(7) What is the significant difference in the identified barriers to marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment on the basis of gender?

(8) What is the significant difference in the identified barriers to marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment on the basis of educational attainment?

III. METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive survey research design the choice of which allowed the researchers to find out the present state of relationships among the variables in the study without manipulating any of them. The population of the study consisted of all unmarried persons with hearing impairment in Oyo State. The study employed purposive sampling technique to select participants based on their unique attributes. On the whole, participants for the study were one hundred (100) unmarried persons with hearing impairment. They were drawn from diverse backgrounds, roles, geographical locations and perspectives, and they include students, teachers, self-employed workers, civil servants and those in private sectors, all with varying degrees of hearing impairment.

IV. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Marital Expectations Scale adapted from [23] Marital Perception Scale was employed for data collection. The validation of the instrument was determined with the assistance of test experts. The instrument was also subjected to the Cronbach’s Alpha method of reliability measure. This was done by administering the research instrument to twenty unmarried persons with hearing impairment outside the scope of the study as a pilot test. The result yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.86.

V. METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The researchers engaged and trained a research assistant versed in America and Local Sign Languages to assist in administering the instrument to places where cluster of the participants were identified. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics tools of frequency counts and simple percentage as well as inferential statistics tools of ANOVA/T-test.

VI. RESULTS

The implication is that most unmarried persons with hearing impairment envisage good marital relationship as the quality they desire most in their future marriages followed by sharing of interest and hobbies, spending time together, and openness to each. The implication of this is that individuals with hearing impairment believe that environmental barrier is the most obvious challenge to their marital expectations followed by communication barrier, hearing impairment, unemployment, lack of sexuality education and so on.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>SA%</th>
<th>A%</th>
<th>D%</th>
<th>SD%</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marriage is a sacred (holy) act</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>.815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage provides psychological and emotional security for both partners</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>.668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early marriage holds much promise for marital success</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular communication is essential in marriage</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>.792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners must be good lovers</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>.911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In marriage partners totally accept each other</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>.766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage is a social responsibility</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>.711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete happiness is impossible in marriage</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>.953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money is as important as love in marriage</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>.832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your partner must be your best friend</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>.899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In any situation, marital relationship should not break up</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>.820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing interests and hobbies keeps relationship healthy</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>.723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners must spend time together</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>.699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners must be open to each other</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>.817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual intercourse is important in marriage</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>.804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage is for procreation only</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>1.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There must not be conflict in marriage</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>.812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict free marriage will not last</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>.856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce is a way out of bad marriage</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>.884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A good relationship is strong enough to survive anything</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>.689</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The result shows that environmental barrier ranks higher than other barriers to marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment. It was followed by communication barrier, hearing loss, unemployment, poor sexuality education and so on.

The result shows that isolation and societal alienation are the greatest impacts of the barriers to the marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing loss. Other impacts are depression, indecision, anxieties, worry, lack of confidence, and so on as shown in Table II.
It was shown in Table V that the joint contribution of the identified barriers to the marital expectations was significant ($F(2,97)=5.842; R^2=0.108, Adj R^2=0.089; p<0.005$). About .089% of the variation was accounted for by the independent variables. The table also shows that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded a $F$-ratio of 5.842 (significant at 0.05 level). This implies that when all the variables are taken together, they contribute significantly to the marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment. It was also shown that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

Table VI reveals the relative contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable, expressed as beta weights. It was shown that the identified barriers are significant. Environmental barrier ($\beta = 0.808, t = 5.176, p<0.05$) is the most potent contributor to the prediction followed by communication barrier ($\beta = 0.533, t = 3.305, p<0.05$), hearing loss, ($\beta = 0.550, t = 2.233, p<0.05$), unemployment, ($\beta = 0.431, t = 2.102, p<0.05$) and poor sexuality education, ($\beta = 0.361, t = 1.985, p<0.05$) is the most potent contributor to the prediction followed by other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

The results in Table VIII shows that there was a significant difference in the identified barriers to marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment on the basis of educational attainment, ($F(3/96) = 4.556; That is F-Cal=4.556 greater than F-Critical=2.10, (P = 0.046 < 0.05$). The mean values also show the educational attainment as follows; Primary six has higher value of 56.30, followed by SSSCE at 55.33, other qualifications have mean value of 54.00 and First degree has mean value of 53.23. The result shows that there was a significant difference in the identified barriers to marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment on the basis of educational attainment.

VII. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings revealed that many of the participants identified good and enduring marital relationships as their most desired marital expectations followed by sharing of interests and hobbies as well as spending time together. This submission is in consonance with the findings of [2] who stated that effective intimate relationships such as sharing values, spending time together and solving disagreements together enhance positive marital expectations. Evidence suggests that partners who do things in common are less likely to engage in activities that breed conflicts. Besides, they have the chance to strengthen their relationships. Other desired marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment are regular communication, acceptance of each other, constant love and so on. The findings also revealed that environmental barrier, communication difficulty, hearing loss, unemployment and poor sexuality education are the most pronounced barriers. Environmental barrier encompasses attitudinal issues, labelling and the societal degradation of unmarried persons with hearing impairment on the basis of gender. It was also shown that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

Table VII shows that there was a significant difference in the identified barriers to marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment on the basis of gender. It was observed that the $t$- Calculated value was greater than $t$-Critical values ($t-Cal=4.783> t-Crit =1.990$), (P<0.05). Also, the mean shows little difference. Males have mean value of 55.52 while females have mean value of 54.03. Therefore it was concluded that, there was a significant difference in the identified barriers to marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment on the basis of gender.
people with disability. The findings thus agree with [9], [12] who noted that society tends to view people with hearing impairment as asexual that have different sexual aspirations from their normal hearing peers. The findings also support the views of [22] who contended that the cause of oppression usually exists in the social or the constructed environment and not in the impaired body. Furthermore, the findings corroborate the submissions of [14], [20] that both communication difficulty and hearing loss posed significant barriers to marital expectations of individuals with hearing impairment.

The study ranked of the perceived barriers to marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment and found that environmental barrier ranked higher than other barriers which lends credence to the view expressed by [17] that individuals with disability including those with hearing impairment viewed inability to find the right marital partner as a result of the persistent environmental-induced barrier as the major challenge to their marital expectations. Environmental barrier was followed by communication barrier, hearing loss, unemployment and poor sexuality education among others. Findings of this study revealed isolation and societal alienation as the most significant impacts of the barriers to marital of people with hearing impairment. This is supported by [18] that hearing loss arising from difficulties in communication can give rise to isolation, reduced social activity and the feelings of being excluded. Other impacts include depression, indecision, anxieties, lack of confidence and worry. The findings showed that there were both composite and relative contributions of the identified five independent variables to marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment. The result supports the findings of [17] who pointed out that the life of a person with hearing impairment is fraught with communication problem, loneliness, relationship challenge, the fear of appearing stupid, the massive injury to self-esteem and underachievement directly attributable to hearing loss rather than inability.

The study found a significant difference in the identified barriers to marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment on the basis of gender. The results support the findings of [19] who explained that while knowledge deficit arising from parental boundaries, lack of access to information and lack of exposure to intimate relationships would complicate the ability of adolescents with hearing impairment to establish romantic relationships, these constraints may be more prevalent for young adolescent girls with hearing impairment. The findings of research question seven also agree with the submission of [17] and [19] who noted that men with hearing impairment stand a better chance of finding marital partners than women with hearing impairment. It was also revealed that there was a significant difference in the identified barriers to marital expectations of unmarried persons with hearing impairment on the basis of educational attainment and this is consistent with [5] who stated that hearing loss-induced low educational attainment has considerable effects on future life goals including marriage. It was observed from the synthesis of research literature that girls with hearing loss tend to record lower academic performance than boys with hearing loss.

REFERENCES

Oywumi Adebomi (Ph.D) is an Associate professor in the Department of Special Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. Her research interest is in psychosocial development of persons with hearing loss and general education of students with special needs. She has a Ph.D. in Special Education (2004), Masters Degree in Early Childhood Education (1997) and Bachelors Degree in Special Education (1989). She is a member of the National Council for Exceptional Children (Nigeria) and a member of the Society for Disability Studies (USA).