



Assisted pregnancy and marriage stability among educated working class reproductive age women in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

Social transformations in the society through advancement in technology have brought about various ideas and innovations which impacts can be positive and negative to humans. As most families battle with infertility which in turn devalued women's status in the marriage institution, have led to broken homes. Problems emanating through this led to this study on assisted pregnancy and marriage stability among educated working class reproductive age women in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Methodologically, the study being a quantitative research collected data through both primary and secondary sources. Sample size of the study is 50 respondents, whereas the mean and standard deviation were used as methods of data analysis. Becker Lands and Michael (1977) economic model of marriage and George Homan Social exchange theory were reviewed. Thus, the findings revealed that assisted reproductive technology pregnancy enhances working class women single parenthood and that lack of understanding between couples is the core driving force for marriage instability in the face assisted pregnancy for working class educated reproductive age women. Based on this, the work recommend intense marriage enlightenment programme for couples among others.

KEYWORDS: Assisted Reproductive Pregnancy, Educated Women, Marriage Stability

I. INTRODUCTION

Society is always evolving; thesis, antithesis and synthesis are inherent in nature. In this regard, family as a social institution have had monumental contradictions in its roles which facilitated change in society. One of such is procreation function, the supply of personnel to the society (Ekpenyong, 2003). Of a truth, family perform a number of functional roles which must be met if society must function maximally. Of these functions, procreation

function is in the apex, failure to perform this role, automatically mark the end of humanity. For this reason, infertility in marriage is not taken for granted in African as children constitutes the reason d'être of marriage. Not having children is costly in Africa. It is considered a curse and a real tragedy for the couple, the entire family and community (Odike and Igwe, 2002).

In some parts of Nigeria women's status is dependent on the number of children she has. In Emohua kingdom in Rivers State Nigeria, for example, Nwobueze, meaning, child is wealth. For this reason, women is desirous of her status in Igboland, as she can continue to have children even at the detriment of her health (Ebong, 1998). Acknowledging this, Elem (2015) observed that multiple pregnancy is the cause of the sustained rise in maternal mortality in Rivers State of important in this child bearing function is over preference for male child and every family member want a child (a replacement) or one who will take care of him at old age. This thesis among other reasons, makes it imperative for scientist to develop Assisted Pregnancy Technology, not only to avert the above named scenarios but to also provide happiness to the family.

Imperatives for Assisted Pregnancy

The imperativeness of assisted pregnancy also called Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) is invaluable irrespective of the society as the evolution has given hope to childless couples to have children (Sheriff, 2019). This is more as infertility is a major public health concern in developing and underdeveloped nations (Sherrif, 2019). Furthermore, Carmong-Ruiz and Espana (2018) claim that infertility affects between 8 -12% of couples of reproductive age around the world. In most sub-Saharan African countries, infertility carries a social stigma and is one of the key factors for break-up of marriages. As a new innovation in



fertility treatment, ARTs method of operation is such that a women's eggs are removed from her body and the eggs thereafter mixed with sperm to make embryos which after mixture are clinically taken or put back into the woman's body.

Many methods exists, but the most common is in vitro fertilization (IVF). In some instances ART use donor eggs, sperm or previously frozen embryo. In other instances, it makes use of a surrogate women who become pregnant with sperm from the male partner of the couple. That is, ART is a concept used to describe collectively a number of conceptions that are used to treat infertility with donor or non-donor eggs or sperm including IVF, gamete intrafallopian transfer (Un-Sis-ted REE-Proh-Duk-tivtek- NAH- Ioh- fee).

In rural Nigeria, children are seen as wealth and more values are placed on male child as they are seen as the one to keep the family lineage. In most Nigeria rural societies, infertility is one premise for polygamous marriage. Apart from social stigmatization, such womensuffer economic deprivation. This inform why Inhorn and Patrizio (2015) observe that such woman is not only ostracized and rejected by the society, but are seen as inferior and sterilized. In Emohua kingdom in Rivers State, Nigeria, a woman's access to land is exclusively tied to her husband or her son's own. In this respect, she cannot own any piece of land except for farming, the traditional economic activity of the people.

A widow in Emohua cannot access her husband's property traditionally if she does not have a male child. The husband's relative that stand as the son during the woman's husband burial own everything including the woman. In this, the woman cannot object to this.

Generally, women suffer what Anele (1999) call women devaluation. In this respect, child birth is a security in marriage and most women who have children find it very difficult to separate or quite their marriage because of the children even in the face of obvious need to separate. For example, infidelity in marriage is accepted for men, but is a valid reason to separate or divorce a women. It can equally deepen the stigmatization of the woman as irresponsible women. In fact, women keep her marriage and is expected to do it irrespective of the adverse effect to her life. Keeping marriage become more obvious for women if the woman economic status is low and cannot sustain she and her children outside her husband's economic support. In real sense, the world is menis world and women are necessary subordinate.

For men to achieve this hegemony over women, child marriage is rampant because younger girls according to Anele (1999), is easily subdued during intercourse and such woman cannot interrogate the authority of the man. In this regard, any women who dear interrogates is seen as disrespectful women. In some cases, once the young girl is married, such girl is not expected to return home (divorce or separate) because as returnee, you are considered a disgrace to the family. All these characterize typical Nigeria marriage. Except for the dialectics in post-colonial Nigeria which made it possible for some educated politicians who Anikpo (1999) called the glamour of their office decided to marry educated women as status symbol and an accomplishment. With western education, most women became critical typical Nigerian marriage culture, some no longer admire early marriage. As a result marry very late and cannot only interrogate male super ordination, but live independent life (economic independent inclusive). That is modern educated woman is empowered woman as they can confidently look for and occupy advantageous space or spaces in the labor market. This, therefore makes most women not to endure devaluation in marriage.

On this, Takyi and Broughton (2006) claim has led to a rise in dissolution of marriage in most African countries. Beside this, as observed by Duo and Mace (2009), women's capacity to raise children successfully outside of marriage is a critical reason why marriage instability is high. What is clear from the above is that working class educated woman can easily leverage on the platform ART have provided and successfully raise children without going through the ordeals in Nigeria marriage. In this regard, can one conclude that ART can increase single parent syndrome? Secondly, can it increase marriage instability among working class educated women in Port Harcourt? Finally, what solutions can be proffered to achieve greater marriage stability through educated working class women accessing ART?

AREA OF THE STUDY

Port Harcourt, also called Igwuocha or Pitakwa is exclusively traditional ancestral home of indigenous Ikwerre people. The city is a port city. Its name is derived from the then British colonial secretary who established the Port in 1912. The city is currently the headquarter of Rivers State. Port Harcourt is home to many oil and gas companies in Rivers State Nigeria. Given its endowment, the city has become heterogeneous as most Nigerians even other nationals sees it as one of the cities to visit and stay. Port Harcourt is said to be the treasure base of



the nation and Nigeria Garden City. The later name is derived from the cities numerous avenues and armaments, its well-manicured green landscape (Worlu, 2015). Port Harcourt lies along Bonny River. According to World population review, the city's population 2020 projected population is estimated at 3, 020,232.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study is a quantitative research. The work is intended to establish if given the invention of ART and its access to educated empowered women and in the face of the devaluation of woman in marriage if this class of women can still remain in marriage. The study area is Port Harcourt, the headquarter of Rivers State, Nigeria. Data were

collected through both primary and secondary sources. The sample size of the study is 50 respondents. The collected data were analyzed by the use of mean and standard deviation.

Analysis and presentation of Data

Key: SA (4) = Strongly Agree, A (3) = Agree, D (2) = Disagree and SD (1) = Strongly Disagree. The standard reference mean of the four point Likert scale rating is 2.50.

Research Question one: To what extent does working class women's economic autonomy and the deviation of women in marriage in the face of assisted productive technology/pregnancy influence increase in single parents among educated working class women in PHC?

Table 1 Working class women's economic autonomy and the deviation of women in marriage in the face of assisted productive technology/pregnancy Versus Increase in single parents who are educated women and working in Port Harcourt.

Items Questionnaire	SA	A	D	SD	Total Number	Mean	Std. Dev.
Working class women have access to reproduction technology	23	17	7	3	50	3.20	0.89
Devaluation of women in marriage leads to their dishonoring marriage	25	16	5	4	50	3.24	0.93
Women dishonoring marriage leads to increase in single parents.	20	14	10	6	50	2.96	1.04
Availability of reproductive technology lead working class women single parents	17	15	10	8	50	2.82	1.07
Assisted reproductive technology pregnancy enhances working class women single parenthood	19	16	10	5	50	2.98	0.99
Available reproductive technology discourages educated working class from having sexual relationship with their husband, hence increasing single parenthood.	21	19	7	3	50	3.16	0.91
Grand Mean						3.06	0.97

Source: *Research Fieldwork (2021)*.

Table 1 shows that the mean ratings of the items measured are each greater than the standard reference mean of 2.50. Furthermore, the table reveals that the associated standard deviations from the mean ratings are small which indicates homogeneity in the responses of the respondents. Therefore, the homogeneity in the responses of the respondents with a grand mean result of 3.06 is justifies that working class women's economic autonomy is a responsible factor for deviation of women in marriage, at the same time as there exist an assisted productive technology/pregnancy it will and has led to increase in single parents among educated working class women in PHC. Having a

mean of 2.98, findings from the respondents revealed that assisted reproductive technology pregnancy enhances working class women single parenthood. This occurs as a result of most educated working women class are discouraged from having sexual relationship with their husband. This assertion and result was accepted having a Mean score of 3.16.

Research Question Two: How does the emergence of assisted reproduction technology/ pregnancy in the growing devaluation of women due to infertility in the face of reproductive technology/pregnancy lead to increase in the number of broken homes among women in the area of the study?



Table 2 Assisted reproduction technology/pregnancy in the growing devaluation of women due to infertility versus increase in the number of broken homes among educated working class reproductive age women in Port Harcourt.

Items Questionnaire	SA	A	D	SD	Total Number	Mean	Std. Dev.
Assisted reproductive technology is response to infertility	22	16	10	2	50	2.84	0.94
There is growing devaluation of women due to infertility leading to broken homes	21	18	7	4	50	3.12	0.93
There is increase in broken homes among educated working class reproductive age women	25	16	9	2	50	3.36	0.90
Assisted reproductive technology contributes to broken homes among educated working class women	27	14	7	2	50	3.32	0.86
Infertile educated working class women go for assisted reproductive technology	19	16	10	5	50	2.98	0.99
Devaluation of women is significant to broken homes among working class women	28	14	5	3	50	3.34	0.89
Grand Mean						3.16	0.91

Source: Research Fieldwork (2021).

Table 2 depicts that the mean ratings of the items measured are each greater than the standard reference mean of 2.50. Also, the associated standard deviations are small equally indicating homogeneity in the responses of the respondents. Therefore, the result of the findings having a grand mean score of 3.16 authenticates that the growing devaluation of women due to infertility and the emergence/utilization of assisted reproduction technology/pregnancy have contributed to increase in the number of broken homes among women in

Port Harcourt. As such, most educated working class women patronize the assisted reproductive technology more than the non working class women because of their economic capacity. Therefore, Duo and Mace (2009) in their findings revealed that women capacity to raise children successfully outside of marriage is a critical reason why marriage instability is high.

Research Question Three: To what extent can assisted reproductive technology/pregnancy stabilize marriages/homes in Port Harcourt?

Table 3: Assisted reproductive technology/pregnancy versus stable marriages/homes in Port Harcourt

Items Questionnaire	Level of Acquiescence				Total Number	Mean (x)	Std. Dev.
	SA	A	D	SD			
Assisted reproductive technology and pregnancy en...stable marriage	27	15	6	2	50	3.34	0.84
There is increased use of assisted reproductive pregnancy among working class women	25	20	3	2	50	3.36	0.77
There is increased public enlightenment on infertility	22	16	10	2	50	3.16	0.88
Existing enlightenment campaign on infertility promotes stable marriage	26	14	9	1	50	3.30	0.83
Assisted reproductive technology facilitates stable marriages and home	27	20	2	1	50	3.46	0.67
Love should be showed on children from assisted reproductive technology for a stable marriage and home.	29	11	8	2	50	3.34	0.89
Grand Mean						3.32	0.69

Source: Research Fieldwork (2021).



Table 3: shows that the mean ratings of the items measured are all greater than the standard reference mean of 2.50 of the four-point Likert Scale Rating. The table further reveals that the associated standard deviations are small which indicates homogeneity in the responses of the respondents about the extent at which assisted reproductive technology/pregnancy stabilize marriages/homes in Port Harcourt. Certainly, item 6 with mean score of 3.34 revealed that love should be showed on children gotten through assisted reproductive technology, and it is through this can couples ensure stable marriage and home. If couples shows love to such children, there is tendency that educated working class reproductive age women will be happy and their marriage can be stabilize. As most families are not happy without kids, there should be increased public enlightenment on infertility which will expose many infertile women to adopt assisted reproduction technology to stabilize their marriage. Considering the challenge and trauma of not having a child in Africa, Odike and Igwe (2002) posited that it is considered a curse and a real tragedy for the couple, the entire family and community at large. Therefore, awareness campaign on the effectiveness of assisted reproductive technology towards stable marriage and how to go about it by couples should be imperative. As couples utilize this technology with understanding, it will lead to marriage stability among educated working class reproductive age women in Port Harcourt.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

Several theoretical arguments predict positive relationship between women's empowerment and stability of marriage or diverse. For example Becker Lands and Michael (1977) economic model of marriage presuppose that the woman's entry into the labor market will lower a couple's gains from specialization and will therefore increase tension within the marriage. Some other scholars like (1940) in Rezvignoli, Styre, Matysiak & Tochioni, (2018) is of the view that the labor market movement of husband and wife can lead to status competition between the couples. Raz-Yurovich (2018), Cherlin (1979) and Jalovaara (2003) even add that such circumstance might be an indicative of a husband's poor performance as an income provider, thus is capable of causing strain within the couple.

Similarly, George Homan Social exchange theory has to an extent some significant theoretical relevance to this. This theory assume that

relationship between two people is maintained by establishing reasonable cost and benefit analysis of the relationship between two people. This theory undermined emotional matrix, but emphasizes mathematics and logic in the relationship. On this, the theory rest its principles on the ground that a person begins any relationship to gain maximum profit with minimum cost. That is, individual is driven by what is for him. By this, the theory believe that at the end of the calculation if the cost is higher for the individual in the relationship, the individual quite or abort the relationship and vice-versa. What is clear is that couples go into marriage relationship with certain specified objectives, so where the other partner or the women is able to achieve or play the role of the partner, the very meaning of marriage seems unnecessary, therefore, can quite. In this study, an empowered woman in the face of current devaluation of women in marriage given the invention of ART and having access to it can decide to easily quite the marriage after all with her status she can achieve so much independent of husband.

Very clearly, given the sensitivity of family and disruption of family life many scholars have shown interest by investigating the influence of an economically empowered women to disruption of marriage. An empowered woman in the first sense and in the true sense, is one with freedom or one with her own choice and not limited to external barriers. In this, empirical works over time have find a negative nexus occasioned by women empowerment to destruction of marriage. Vignoli, Matysiak, Styrc and Tocchion, (2016) in their study on this, using Germany, Hungary, Italy and Spain reveal that empowerment of women (employed women) is associated with higher marital instability. Of very great importance in this finding is that women divorce rate is significantly a function of the generosity of the state welfare support scheme for single mothers. Based on this, women with low pay jobs are more reluctant to leave their marriage even when they are not happy in the marriage.

Beside this, Ola, Oni and Akande (2015) in a study to determine if empowerment or disempowerment of women in Ekiti State Nigeria is the cause of women divorce level. In this work, it was reveal that almost half of the divorce cases by women are as a result of their been empowered. These authors also conclude that as long as women are disempowered by being divorced, more women will be forced to remain in abusive marriages which has grave consequences for their health, social, psychological and physiological well-being.



In a similar study by Byrne and Barling (2017) on whether a woman's high status career hurt her marriage if the husband do the laundry work reveal related outcome. The work reveal that women who are more empowered than their husbands have the tendency of being embarrassed feeling that her husband status is a decrease of their own status. This, the study conclude that women who empowered demonstrate greater tendency or likelihood to divorce. This also reveal that the husband of such women remain unaffected by their wives higher status than theirs. But that such husbands do experience greater marital dissatisfaction and will opt for divorce where the wife is outwardly unhappy with the relationship.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

What can be deduced from the above is that APT is a novel invention that is capable of helping/relieving families especially women infertility problem to nurse their child/children, thus helping them to escape the trauma associated with childlessness. However, this phenomenon for the educated empowered women is an opportunity to remain single for those who are not married yet and an opportunity to bolt out of marriage in the face of the devaluation which women go through in marriage. Equally important is that ego and lack of understanding among couples is the core reason behind APT causing instability in marriage among educated empowered women. Marriage requires understanding, tolerance and forgiveness. Women are simply help mate. So where the man is economically weak the woman should cover the ground for the man. The man in such circumstance, should humbly be supportive in any areas to assist the woman. Based on this, it is imperative for couples to drop ego and confront family challenges collectively. This way cultural values that sustained devaluation of women will be of no effect. In this respect, religious organization and Non-Government Organizations who are into family matters is required to step up their teaching of love and understanding among couples. This way, ego issue that propel women to opt for divorce given their advantaged economic status, will become a thing of the past. In this regard, women should be given reasonable protection, especially economic protection in their marriage. A situation where at the death of her husband, she loses what she jointly worked for with her husband is not good. Where women enjoy security in her husband's home, the tendency for single parent cannot be imagined at all irrespective of the circumstance.

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