

The cause of marital conflict and its coping mechanism among coupled in Hosanna town

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Suggested Citation:

Mola, S. & Alemu, K. (2022). The cause of marital conflict and its coping mechanism among coupled in Hosanna town. *Global Journal of Psychology Research: New Trends and Issues*. 12(1), 19-29.
<https://doi.org/10.18844/gjpr.v12i1.5025>

Received October 21, 2021; revised February 19, 2022; accepted March 25, 2022.

Selection and peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Tulay Bozkurt, Istanbul Kultur University, Turkey.

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify the major causes of marital conflict and coping mechanisms among residents. 13 participants were participated in this study. This research was employ descriptive research design with qualitative approach. The data collected through unstructured interviews qualitatively. According to the result of this study, gender role, psychological, sexual, socio-cultural and economic factors were found to be the major causes of marital conflict. The findings of study indicates free discussion between couple as help full whereas accept the decisions without any alternatives, third party negotiation and tolerance during conflict time as unhelpful marital coping mechanisms. Finally, the researcher forwards the following recommendations i.e. Governmental and noun-governmental institutions should provide pre and post marital social education for couples on the causes of marital conflict and coping mechanisms and they should create awareness and education on gender role issue, gender quality in every aspect, labor division, and decision making, and sharing responsibility.

Keywords: Causes; Marital Conflict; Coping Mechanisms;

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1. Introduction

Marriage has been described mainly as an emotional and legal union of a man and a woman as husband and wife. It is a relationship in which two adults of the opposite sex make to share emotional, physical intimacy, various task and economic resources. Marriage is one of the social interactions in which human beings can manage their way of life together than being individual (Coltrane & Adams, 2003). According to (Bradford, 2002), the virtues cultured between men and women in marriage, and between parents and the children, spread out outward into the community. They extend in married men and women strong habits of devotion to communal life (Bradford, 2002). This is because, when there is conflict in the home, the consequences are great for the couples themselves, the children of the marriage and to the society at large. So, Juvenile delinquency, armed robbery, hooliganism, drop-outs, alcoholism etc., are all consequences of marital conflicts.

As a result of the role the family unit plays in the overall development of the society, the problem of marital conflicts calls for urgent attention because when the home, which forms the cradle of the society, is settled, the society itself is at peace (Esere & Idowu, 2000). The statement indicated above emphasize the importance of living together as couple can be one of the most of hourly self-sacrifices, renunciation and the shouldering responsibility and become marriage family life are micro cosmos of life itself. They can bring both great joy and excruciating pain. Marriage and family can provide intimacy and closeness, but with them came disagreements and conflicts (Olson & Defrain, 2000).

The need for peaceful coexistence both in the home and in the society at large cannot be over stressed. Peace is related to most social objectives like development, justice, progress, freedom, security, fairness and equity. Peace affects practically every aspect of social existence, at different levels, starting from the home front to the global relationship (Best, 2000).

Because people view the world from a wide variety of perspectives and have different goals, conflict is an inevitable experience for anyone in intimate relationship. In fact the more intimate our relationships, the more chances there are for interpersonal conflict and marriage is not exceptional as noted by (Defrain & Olson, 2000). Conflict, however, it is not just when individual yell, scream, and fight. Conflict is defined as any differences of opinion, ranging from very pleasant and positive discussion to loud and potentially aggressive, negative arguments (Cummings & Faircloth, 2008).

Given that conflict is an inevitable part of being married, one may ask if such conflict is bad or harmful. Conflict in this study does not mean intense anger nor even domestic violence; rather, it refers to the day-to-day conflicts that naturally occur within intimate interactions, including disagreements, dislikes, and tensions. Couples argue about everything, such as personal characteristics and behaviours, perceived inequity in division of labor, as well as unwillingness of one spouse to address a problem or matter. Others reportedly have conflict over power, money, and how time is spent (Olson & Olson, 2000).

Conflict within a marriage is often misunderstood as a characteristic of an unsatisfied or ill matched couple. In today's modern age, conflict is often looked down upon interpersonal settings because of its unsettling possibilities and often undesirable outcomes. In the context of marriage, especially, conflict is misrepresented as a poisonous entity rather than an obstacle to help a couple grow. It is important for those in a marriage to understand that conflict; however, this relationship of individuals is found to be challenging for couples as it is considered for lifelong interaction, especially when responsibility of maintaining family care becomes unfairly left to women (Gager & Sanchez, 2003).

Managing marital conflict is essential to partners' perceptions of their overall relationship satisfaction, marital functioning, and marital longevity (Beach & et al, 2000). Married people use different style to handle conflicts in marriage. Conflict resolution is a central task in maintaining marital quality for both husbands and wives (Beach & Fincham, 1999).

It has good reasons why work in marriage also intended for children and society wellbeing. Society has a large stake in strengthening marriages. Children should be our central concern and in general they are better when raised by two parents. Marriage also typically improves the health and economic wellbeing of adults, stabilizes community life and benefits civil society (Ooms, 1998).

Couples can manage life and share their thoughts. When couples are under marriage, their individual thinking will influence and is influenced by their partner. Moreover, it is the basis of human existence on earth. It is through marriage that human race could be sustained. Family is core of society's structure that undergoes many changes to meet its functions (Serkalem, 2006). If couples are able to follow and practice these behaviors, the result is that a couple will feel closer, more trusting of each other, and more satisfied in their relationship. Indeed, happy couples, as compared to unhappy couples, report that upon resolving a conflict feel as if their partner understands them, that they can openly share feelings, and that their partner takes them seriously. Unfortunately, many couples do not learn how to resolve conflict, and sadly, if conflict is not addressed, it will continue to grow. Indeed, unhappy couples report that during conflict, differences never get resolved and oftentimes have serious disputes over unimportant issues (Olson, 2000). However, this relationship of individuals is found to be challenging for couples as it is considered for lifelong interaction, especially when responsibility of maintaining family care becomes unfairly left to women (Gager & Sanchez, 2003).

Afework (2006) conducted a study to identify the major sources of marital problems and resolving mechanisms in Addis Ababa. The data was collected from 200 married couples responding by using questionnaire and focus group discussion. According to the findings of his study mental cruelty, lack of love, excessive demand and unavailability of spouse, and sexual incompatibility, lack of sexual satisfaction, refusal of coitus inconsiderateness were identified as the major source of marital problems.

Also Marital conflicts have been seen as the major causes of marital instability which often leads to divorce, desertion, single-parenthood and generally failed marriages (Olson, 2000). This is because a family characterized with crisis, disharmony, and dissatisfaction provide the children with frustration in life which may lead to unhappiness and losses of self-concept which can make the children develop personality patterns that interfere with good adjustment and development of poor adjustment which may adversely affect them in adulthood. Moreover, despite the fact that marital conflict is unavoidable and a daily occurrence, it is often rendered invisible, unrecognized and unattended to thereby receiving little or no attention. Though it is unavoidable it should be reduced and used in a constructive way in a society, otherwise the consequence trial effect is destructive leading to marriage dissatisfaction which also leads to family disorganization (Cummings & Faircloth, 2008). The present shortage in local statistics; and lack of documented information on marital conflicts and constructive conflict resolution mechanisms as they have relationship with the quality of marriage needs vital attention. While past studies have examined various reasons for marital conflict in married people, no attention has been given to varied conflict resolution styles.

Therefore, the researcher thought that investigating the cause for marital conflicts and major coping mechanisms among married couples in Hosanna. So, investigating the cause for marital conflicts and major coping mechanisms was guided by the following basic research questions.

- What are the main causes of marital conflicts among married couples in Hosanna town particularly in Bobicho Kebele?
- What are the coping mechanisms that spouses employ to cope up marital Conflict in Hosanna town particularly in Bobicho Kebele?

The major purpose of the study is to identify the major cause of marital conflict probably leading to diverse and its coping mechanisms among couples in Hosanna town. Marriage is the corner stone of the society. It is a lifelong and sacred Union between man and woman. A variable data shows that marital conflict problems are increasing in Ethiopia. Therefore, the aim of this research will have importance's to the field of family and marriage counseling and in particular to the field of marital adjustment, to married people in order to minimize and cope up their conflict, to couple people who have a planned to marry by getting ample information from the recommendation, help to marriage counselor by using as a one type of helping material and was help as the secondary source of data for other researchers who have a plan to conduct rely thing this study.

2. Methods

2.1. Research Model

In order to arrive at the stated purpose, descriptive *research design* was employed with qualitative approach. Because this study is interested to identity the state affairs as it's exists at present. The study was conducted in Bobicho Kebele on Hosanna town, which is found at the center of Hadiya zone and it is Sothern part of Ethiopia.

2.2. Participants

The total population of study will be 45 (means the total population of the causes of marital conflict and its copying mechanism among coupled. To select the sample, participants were identified by using snowball sampling technique (also known as chain referral sampling) is a non-probability (non random) sampling method used when characteristics to be possessed by samples are rare and difficult to find.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

The sample size of this study was 13 respondents from the total population of the cause of marital conflict and its copying mechanism among couples in Hosanna town. To collect data for this study the researcher were use primary source of data.

2.4. Data Collection Process

To gather the data, the researcher was used interview consist of unstructured item. To get the essential data the researcher was asked letter of consent from department of psychology. After got the willingness of the participants the researcher was give information about the purpose of the study.

2.5. Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed by using descriptive analysis method. That is table, frequencies and percentages to interpret information that are gather from respondent. Descriptive analytics is the first step in data analysis. The goal of descriptive analytics is to find out what happened? It's the first layer of information that researcher can get from the data and researcher have collected, either with or without adding data from other sources.

3. Results

The study was to identify the major causes of conflict and coping mechanisms employed in marital life among the couple.

Table 1. Sex and age of respondents

Item		Respondents	
		Frequency	%
Sex	M	5	38
	F	8	62
	Total	13	100
Age	18-22	-	-
	23-45	11	85
	46-64	2	15
	Total	13	100

As shown in Table 1, 13 couples were included. The majority of participants are between the ages of 23 to 45 (85%). A considerable number of the respondents were between 46 to 64(15%). There no respondents were involved in the ages below 18 to 22 years. This shows that majority of the respondents were in the age range between 23 to 45 years.

Table 2. Duration of marriage and number of children

Item		Respondents	
		Frequency	%
Duration of marriage	2-5	5	38
	6-10	7	54
	11-20	1	8
	Total	13	100
Number of children	1-2	8	62
	3-4	4	31
	5-7	1	8
	Total	13	100

As shown in the table 2, 7(54%) of the respondents were married for 6 to 10 years, 5(38%) of the respondents were in marriage between 2 to 5 years, only 1(8%) of them were married for 11 to 20 years. almost all of the respondents have children. Among them 8(62%) of them have 1 to 2 children, 4(31%) of the respondents had 3 to 4 children's, only 1(8%) of them were children for 5 to 7 children's.

Table 3. Education level, amount and source of respondent's income

Item		Respondents	
		Frequency	%
Educational status	Primary(1-8)	3	23
	Secondary (9-12)	5	38
	Illiterate	-	-
	Diploma	4	31

	Degree	1	8
	Total	13	100
Monthly income	< 100	-	-
	100-250	3	23
	251-500	1	8
	501-1000	1	8
	1001-2000	5	38
	>2000	3	23
	Total	13	100
Source of income	No source at all	-	-
	Daily labor	6	46
	Private business	7	54
	Total	13	100

As shown in Table 3, 5 (38%) had learnt secondary (9-12) level, 3(23%) of the respondents had learnt primary level. The remaining 4(31%) had learnt diploma and 1(8%) had learnt degree. Regarding the monthly income 5(38%) of the respondents earn between 1001 to 2000 birr a month, 3(23%) of the respondents earn greater than 2000 birr, 3(23%) of the respondents earn 101-250 .The rest 1(8%) of the respondents earn between 501 to 1000 birr a month 251 to 500. Regarding the source of income, 7(54%) of the respondents earn from private business occupation, 4(31%) of the respondents earn from daily labor. This shows that majority of the respondents had learnt primary and secondary educational Level, and most of respondents between 1001to2000 birr. On the other hand majority of respondents earn income from private occupation.

3.1 Major Causes for Marital Conflict

Key reasons for marital conflict was classified in five major categories such as gender role factors, psychological factors, socio-cultural factors, economic/financial factors, and sexual factors.

3.1.1 Gender role factors as a cause of marital conflicts

The collected data shows that, the major cause of marital conflict was one gender dominating over the other. Husbands are dominating on their wife without respect the idea of his wife and have no chance on the role of decision making. The responsibility of the husband is not performed in the home due to think them self as dominate on his wife. This situation creates some conflicts and disagreement for couple and leads to stop and discontinuous their life.

3.1.2 Psychological factors as a cause of marital conflicts

Most of respondents were affected by psychological factor like unfaithfulness, impatience, lake of mutual respect and aggression as a major cause of marital conflict. On the other hand lake of understanding, poor communication and intolerance are also the cause of marital conflict.

3.1.3 Sexual factors as a cause of marital conflicts

The findings of the study demonstrate that source of conflict between married couples have inconsiderable difference in attitudes, influence of culture and beliefs about sex. Firstly, most of

respondents were not voluntary to speak the correct answer. But through smooth communication and by creating strong relationship, some respondents talked about.

3.1.4 socio-cultural factors as a cause of marital conflicts

3.1.4.1 Having children before marriage

On the base of ideas of the people couples to be lead conflicts is one reason that to have private child, due to this reason the couple could lead to conflict among them. The own Child with other common child were not treated equally as well as few protection and safety could come to dispute.

3.1.4.2 Difference in Educational level

Some couples said that the level of education difference in the couples life style to be disagreed among them. Due to this reason the idea of couples is various and have different attitudes in their behavior based on their skillfulness or unskilled capability, they are influenced each other by means of one is lower to the other or one is higher to the once in their attitudinal behavior.

3.1.4.3 Lack of trust among couples

The main reason that couples lead to conflict each other was when husband's where layout from their home by creating some unwanted actions likes drinking, smoking and other related drugs uses lead to have sexual inter course with other. This lead to the wives luck of trust on their husbands and go to a series problem on their marriage life.

3.1.4.4 Economical problems

According to the recorded evidence in hosanna town Bobicho Kebele, place that found couples disagreement was economic problems. Several couples have lower standard life and their income was not sufficient to fulfill the basic needs. Especially husbands were not proper use of their income for the home or domestic purpose rather than they use for other unwanted extravagance for their own interest success. Finally the couples had conflict each other.

3.3 Coping mechanism of marital conflicts

Conflict inevitable experience in marriage people use different mechanism to resolve the disagreement or conflict that occurred in their marriages. Most respondents handle the conflict between married couples by using the following common mechanism.

3.3.1 Tolerance during conflict time

Based on the couples idea, during happened some problems among them they are seriously pass any things that not happened to be like as considering for as good conditions. But after a few days the conflicts again were happened. Due to reputational or redundancy of the conflicts among them, they lead to a series problems for life statues on the couples.

3.3.2 Free discussion between couple

Some couples during some disagreements happened each and early individual problems were discussed and decided some critical points that could be a solution for that conflict.

3.3.3 Accept the decisions without any alternatives

As couples said, during disagreement the wives should be accepted their husband decision without any alternatives, because of the wife's opinion is not acceptable by her husband. For the safety of their children the wife were followed every bad and good conditions of her husband.

3.3.4 Use of third party negotiation

According to the opinion of peoples between the couple a repeatable disagreement situations were happened. Majority of respondents were used third party interference to handle conflict in their marriages. At this time the family and advisable peoples to be meet that in order to discuss their problems to reach in agreement of the couple to continue their life time by agreed them.

4. Discussions

The major purpose of this study is to investigate the major causes of marital conflict and coping mechanisms. The most basic marital complaints of couples apply for divorce are: physical abuse, verbal abuse, ,financial problems, drinking, neglecting, home and children, mental cruelty, in-law trouble, excessive demand, infidelity, sexual incompatibility and lack of love, money, family, communication style, house hold tasks and personal tests were found the issues granting marital conflict (Olson & Defrain 2000). As the result showed the most predominant and basic disagreement or cause of conflict among married couples was the dominance role of one gender over the other decision making in and out homes. In most cultures, males are dominant in marriage relationship. When husbands waste their earnings for non-essential or harmful items like alcohol and by involvement of partner in a sexual affair with a lover, it involves occurrence of mistrust, anger, jealousy and between the couples.

According to Habtamu (2005), some of the actions taken to resolve conflict are beating, kicking the wives out of home, getting angry the wives, discussing the problem and asking the elders, interference are listed by husbands. Calling on elders or relative, discussing the problem, leaving home and tolerating the problem are the main conflict resolution actions taken by the wives. According to Parkinson (2006), the ways to overcome conflicts and misunderstanding among married couples establish free and frank communication, develop common interest, common and shared values. Respect idea each bother, love each other, understands each other, sexually satisfy each other, maintain togetherness, turnings the fight in to opportunity for honesty and understanding are the best coping mechanism of conflicts. As respondents reported they were employing different types of coping mechanisms. However tolerant during conflict time, uses of third party negotiation and accepted the decision without any alternatives were employed by majorities of participants. Based on the result of this study, free discussion between couple were found to be help full (constructive) to strengthen marriage.

5. Conclusions

Depending on the findings on the study of the following concluding notes were made: The major causes of conflict among Hosanna town in Bobicho Kebele are the interplay of multiple factors such as gender role, psychological, sexual, socio-cultural and economic problems. Freely discussed among couples were found to be helpful and most preferable strategies to resolve marital conflict and to strengthen healthy marriage and to minimize divorce rate. Marital conflict resolving mechanisms such as tolerance during conflict time, accept the decision without any alternatives and use of third party negotiation was found to be rejected unless all the efforts and means are lost with in marriage.

According to this finding, most of couples are overcome their conflict were by unhelpful coping mechanism. If it continued like this, divorce becomes increase in the society. In the case of divorce, the children will also affect in psychologically and economically. The main cause for these problems may be the lack of awareness about the cause of marital conflict and its coping mechanisms and the marriage training services is not much distributed in overall society.

6. Recommendations

Keeping in mind that the findings of the study are worth having to give rise to suggestions, it is recommended that;

- Governmental and non-governmental institutions should provide pre and post marital social education for couples on the causes of marital conflict and coping mechanisms. It is strongly suggested that trying to resolve the issues with in marriage is essential.
- Awareness creation and education on gender role issue, gender equality in every aspect, labor division, and decision making, and sharing responsibility.
- Pre and post marital training service should be available on accessible areas such as churches, health centers, Kebeles, college, universities and other institutions.
- Finally, Mass media, psychologists, sociologists, should work on collaboration to educate youth and couples on causes of marital conflict and coping mechanisms.

Acknowledgement

First of all, I have most gratitude does to almighty God for giving me the endurance of conclude of this research.

Secondly, I would like to express my thanks to all of my parents, relatives, friends, and any individuals for their moral support, financial support and material support.

Finally, I would like to thanks Wachemo University College of social science and humanity department psychology staffs to conduct this study and respondents who share their time to fill the questionnaires.

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