



The Impact of Delayed Childbearing and Childlessness on Marital Satisfaction in Christian Marriages

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the impact of delayed childbearing and childlessness on marital satisfaction among Christian couples. Recognizing the growing trend of delayed parenthood and rising childlessness globally, particularly within religious contexts, the study explores how these factors affect the quality and stability of Christian marriages. Utilizing a quantitative research approach, data were collected from married Christian couples through structured questionnaires assessing their marital satisfaction levels alongside reproductive histories. The findings reveal that both delayed childbearing and childlessness significantly influence marital satisfaction, with variations observed based on the duration of childlessness and the couples' coping mechanisms grounded in faith. While some couples reported lower satisfaction linked to fertility challenges, others found resilience through religious support and community engagement. These results underscore the complex interplay between reproductive timing, psychological wellbeing, and spiritual resources within Christian marriages. The study contributes to family psychology and pastoral counseling literature by highlighting the need for targeted support systems for couples facing reproductive challenges, emphasizing the role of faith-based interventions in promoting marital health.

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Delayed childbearing, childlessness, marital satisfaction, Christian marriages, reproductive challenges.

INTRODUCTION

The patterns of childbearing have undergone significant transformations globally, influenced by socio-economic, cultural, and individual factors. Among Christian marriages, delayed childbearing and childlessness have emerged as critical issues affecting marital dynamics and satisfaction. Traditionally, childbearing has been viewed as a fundamental component of marriage, contributing to family continuity, social identity, and personal fulfillment (Smith & Johnson, 2021). However, shifts in educational attainment, career aspirations, health concerns, and changing societal norms have led many couples to postpone having children or face involuntary childlessness, prompting new challenges within marital relationships (Adeoye, 2022).

Delayed childbearing often stems from deliberate decisions to prioritize personal and professional goals, access to contraception, and evolving gender roles, especially within Christian communities that historically emphasized early parenthood (Owusu & Mensah, 2023). This postponement, while offering opportunities for personal growth and economic stability, can introduce stressors such as age-related fertility concerns and heightened expectations about parenthood, potentially impacting marital satisfaction (Nguyen et al., 2020). Furthermore, childlessness, whether voluntary or involuntary, carries profound emotional and social implications, often invoking feelings of loss, inadequacy, and social stigma, which may strain the marital bond (Karanja & Obeng, 2021).

Research highlights the complex relationship between childbearing patterns and marital satisfaction, noting that couples experiencing delays or absence of children often report lower levels of marital happiness, communication, and intimacy compared to those with children (Liu & Wang, 2019). In Christian marriages, these effects are further nuanced by religious beliefs, community expectations, and coping mechanisms rooted in faith (Thompson, 2022). The faith-based emphasis on family as a divine institution places additional pressure on couples, with childbearing often perceived as a spiritual duty, thus influencing how delayed childbearing and childlessness affect marital satisfaction (Amponsah & Boateng, 2023).

Despite the growing recognition of these issues, empirical studies focusing specifically on Christian marriages in African contexts, particularly Ghana, remain scarce. Most existing research tends to generalize marital satisfaction factors without adequately addressing how reproductive timelines intersect with religious values and marital quality (Adjei & Yeboah, 2021). This gap limits

the understanding of how Christian couples navigate the challenges of delayed childbearing and childlessness and the consequent impact on their marital satisfaction.

Addressing this gap is crucial given the increasing prevalence of delayed childbearing and childlessness due to modernization and changing social dynamics. Understanding these phenomena within Christian marriages offers valuable insights for pastoral counseling, marital therapy, and policy formulation aimed at strengthening family systems. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the impact of delayed childbearing and childlessness on marital satisfaction among Christian couples, contributing to both scholarly discourse and practical interventions that promote marital resilience in the face of evolving reproductive choices and challenges.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the centrality of childbearing to many Christian marriages, there has been a noticeable shift towards delayed childbearing and increasing rates of childlessness among couples, influenced by factors such as educational pursuits, career demands, health complications, and changing social norms (Owusu & Mensah, 2023). These shifts have raised concerns regarding their implications for marital satisfaction, a critical determinant of marital stability and overall family well-being. However, while the link between childbearing and marital satisfaction has been studied broadly, there remains a significant lack of focused research examining how delayed childbearing and childlessness specifically affect marital satisfaction within Christian marriages, especially in the African context where religious and cultural expectations about family are deeply intertwined (Adeoye, 2022; Amponsah & Boateng, 2023). In Christian communities, childbearing is often viewed not only as a personal milestone but also as a spiritual obligation and social expectation (Thompson, 2022). Therefore, couples experiencing delays in having children or enduring childlessness may face unique emotional, psychological, and social pressures that can adversely impact their marital satisfaction. These pressures can manifest as feelings of inadequacy, stigma, and marital discord, yet there is limited empirical evidence that captures these dynamics within Christian marriages in Ghana and similar settings (Karanja & Obeng, 2021). This gap hampers the development of culturally and religiously sensitive interventions that address the needs of couples grappling with these challenges.

Moreover, the existing literature often overlooks the differential impact of voluntary versus involuntary childlessness and delayed childbearing on marital quality. It is unclear how the reasons behind delayed parenthood or childlessness (choice, fertility issues, or external circumstances) shape couples' experiences and satisfaction in marriage (Liu & Wang, 2019). Without this nuanced understanding, marital counselors, religious leaders, and policymakers are ill-equipped to offer appropriate support that aligns with both faith-based values and contemporary realities.

Given the growing prevalence of delayed childbearing and childlessness and their potential to undermine marital satisfaction, there is an urgent need for systematic research that explores these phenomena within the framework of Christian marriages. This study aims to fill this critical research gap by examining how delayed childbearing and childlessness influence marital satisfaction among Christian couples in Ghana, thereby providing evidence-based insights to inform pastoral care, marital counseling, and family support programs tailored to the unique intersection of religion, culture, and reproductive choices.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate how delayed childbearing and childlessness affect marital satisfaction among Christian couples in Ghana. The study seeks to understand the emotional, psychological, and relational dynamics experienced by couples facing delayed parenthood or childlessness, within the cultural and religious context of Christianity. The findings aim to provide valuable insights for religious leaders, marital counselors, and policymakers to develop targeted support and interventions that enhance marital satisfaction and stability among Christian couples experiencing these challenges.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the extent to which delayed childbearing influences marital satisfaction among Christian couples in Ghana.
2. To assess the impact of childlessness on marital satisfaction within Christian marriages.
3. To explore the coping mechanisms and support systems utilized by Christian couples facing delayed childbearing or childlessness and their influence on marital satisfaction.

Research Questions

1. How does delayed childbearing affect marital satisfaction among Christian couples in Ghana?
2. What is the impact of childlessness on marital satisfaction within Christian marriages?
3. What coping strategies and support systems do Christian couples use to manage delayed childbearing or childlessness, and how do these influence their marital satisfaction?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study draws primarily on the Family Systems Theory and the Stress and Coping Theory to provide a comprehensive understanding of how delayed childbearing and childlessness influence marital satisfaction among Christian couples.

The Family Systems Theory, originally developed by Murray Bowen (1978), posits that the family operates as an interconnected emotional unit, where changes or stressors affecting one member impact the entire system. In the context of delayed childbearing and childlessness, the couple's inability to conceive a child can disrupt the established family dynamics and emotional equilibrium. This theory emphasizes that marital satisfaction is not only an individual experience but a systemic phenomenon influenced by the interactions, roles, and communication patterns within the couple (Nichols & Schwartz, 2004). For Christian couples, where procreation is often a central expectation within marriage, delayed childbearing or childlessness may introduce tensions, feelings of inadequacy, or perceived failure that ripple through the marital system, affecting intimacy, emotional support, and satisfaction (Boss, 2006). The Family Systems Theory helps explain how couples may either adapt to or struggle with these changes, depending on their relational resilience and systemic flexibility.

Complementing this, the Stress and Coping Theory developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) provides insight into the individual and dyadic psychological processes that couples undergo when confronted with stressors such as infertility or delayed parenthood. This theory defines stress as a relationship between the individual and the environment that is appraised as taxing or exceeding the individual's resources, leading to coping efforts to manage the internal and external demands (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). For Christian couples, the stress associated with delayed childbearing or childlessness is often compounded by religious beliefs that emphasize fertility as part of God's blessing on marriage (Inhorn, 2009). The way couples appraise their situation—whether as a challenge to overcome or a threat to their marital future—determines the coping strategies they employ, which may include seeking spiritual guidance, counseling, or social support (Wang et al., 2018). The Stress and Coping Theory explains how effective coping mechanisms can buffer the negative impact of infertility-related stress on marital satisfaction, while poor coping can exacerbate relational conflicts and dissatisfaction (Pasch & Sullivan, 2017).

Together, these two theories provide a holistic framework for this study. The Family Systems Theory underscores the importance of understanding the couple as a dynamic unit affected by delayed childbearing and childlessness, while the Stress and Coping Theory focuses on individual and shared psychological responses to these stressors. Integrating these theories allows for an exploration of both the relational and intrapersonal factors influencing marital satisfaction, grounded within the specific religious and cultural context of Christian marriages in Ghana.

Empirical Review

Several empirical studies have explored the relationship between delayed childbearing, childlessness, and marital satisfaction, often highlighting the complexity and variability of these dynamics across different cultural and religious contexts. For example, a study by Peterson and Gfeller (2017) examined 200 couples experiencing infertility in the United States, assessing how delayed childbearing affected marital quality. Their quantitative analysis revealed that couples who delayed childbearing by choice generally reported higher marital satisfaction compared to those facing involuntary childlessness, which was associated with increased marital distress and lower satisfaction levels. This study underscored the emotional toll of involuntary childlessness, suggesting that uncertainty and unmet expectations regarding parenthood can undermine relationship quality.

Similarly, a qualitative study conducted by Adeyemo and Afolabi (2018) in Nigeria focused on Christian couples experiencing childlessness and its impact on their marital relationship. Their findings revealed that childlessness often led to social stigma, feelings of isolation, and marital strain. The study highlighted the role of religious beliefs and community pressures in exacerbating the negative emotional experiences associated with childlessness, which often translated into reduced marital satisfaction and increased conflict. The authors emphasized that in such socio-cultural settings, procreation is seen as a critical component of marital success, making childlessness particularly challenging for couples.

In Ghana, Boateng and Asante (2020) explored the consequences of delayed childbearing among urban Christian couples, employing a mixed-method approach. They found that while some couples consciously delayed childbearing for career or financial reasons and maintained stable marital satisfaction, others faced psychological stress that negatively affected their marital communication and intimacy. The study revealed that support systems, including religious counseling and social networks, played a vital role in buffering marital dissatisfaction, pointing to the importance of contextual and support factors in shaping couples' experiences.

A study by Mkwanzani et al. (2019) in South Africa investigated how infertility-related stress influenced marital satisfaction among Christian couples. Using structural equation modeling, they established a significant negative relationship between infertility stress and marital satisfaction, with coping strategies such as prayer and faith serving as moderating variables. The study highlighted that while spiritual coping could mitigate some negative impacts, persistent infertility-related stress still posed substantial challenges to marital harmony, aligning with previous research on the psychological burden of childlessness.

Conversely, a study by Johnson and Taylor (2016) in the UK examined couples who chose to delay childbearing and found that these couples often reported higher levels of marital satisfaction, attributing this to more deliberate decision-making and greater relationship stability prior to parenthood. The research suggested that delayed childbearing, when voluntary, can be a marker of intentional family planning and personal readiness, thus fostering positive marital outcomes. However, this contrasted with findings from contexts where delayed childbearing was involuntary or socially pressured, underscoring the need to distinguish between voluntary and involuntary delay.

Another important contribution comes from Lee and Wang (2021), who conducted a longitudinal study on the effects of childlessness on marital satisfaction in predominantly Christian populations in Asia. They found that couples who accepted childlessness and engaged in meaning-making through spiritual beliefs exhibited higher marital satisfaction over time compared to those who struggled with acceptance. This finding reinforced the notion that individual and couple-level coping, particularly through religious frameworks, significantly influences marital outcomes in the face of childlessness.

Finally, a recent meta-analysis by Thompson et al. (2023) synthesized 25 empirical studies on infertility and marital satisfaction globally. The review confirmed that infertility and delayed childbearing generally exerted a negative impact on marital satisfaction but also highlighted considerable heterogeneity based on cultural, religious, and individual differences. Notably, couples with strong faith backgrounds and supportive social environments reported better adjustment and higher marital satisfaction despite childbearing challenges.

These empirical findings collectively demonstrate that while delayed childbearing and childlessness can threaten marital satisfaction, the extent and nature of this impact are mediated by factors such as voluntariness of delay, cultural expectations, religious coping, and social support. The studies highlight the critical need for context-specific research, particularly in Christian marriages within African settings, where religious beliefs strongly inform marital roles and expectations. The current study builds on this foundation by specifically investigating these dynamics among Christian couples in Ghana, addressing gaps in localized understanding and practical implications for marital counseling and support services.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the impact of delayed childbearing and childlessness on marital satisfaction among Christian couples. The quantitative approach was chosen because it allows for the measurement of relationships between variables, enables the testing of hypotheses, and facilitates generalization of findings across the population. The design further enabled the collection of structured data that could be statistically analyzed to determine the extent to which delayed childbearing and childlessness influence marital satisfaction.

The target population for this study comprised married Christian couples residing in urban and peri-urban areas of Ghana, specifically within the Greater Accra and Ashanti regions. These regions were selected due to their diverse religious demographics and socio-economic variability, providing a representative sample of Christian marriages within the country. Eligible participants were couples married for at least two years, ensuring adequate marital experience to assess satisfaction levels and the influence of childbearing decisions or experiences.

A multi-stage sampling technique was utilized to select respondents. Initially, purposive sampling was used to identify churches within the selected regions, recognizing the central role of the church in the lives of Christian couples and the practicality of accessing participants through religious congregations. Within each selected church, simple random sampling was then employed to select individual couples from membership lists provided by church administration. A total sample size of 300 couples (600 individuals) was targeted to achieve sufficient statistical power and account for potential non-responses, based on Cochran's formula for known populations with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed specifically for this study. The questionnaire comprised four sections: demographic information, childbearing history (timing and childlessness status), marital satisfaction, and factors influencing marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction was measured using the validated Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), which assesses consensus, cohesion, satisfaction, and affectional expression between spouses. Questions on childbearing included timing of first childbearing, reasons for delay (if any), and current childlessness status. The instrument predominantly employed Likert-scale items to capture perceptions and experiences quantitatively.

Prior to the main data collection, the questionnaire was pilot tested with 30 couples outside the study sample to assess clarity, reliability, and validity. Adjustments were made based on feedback to improve question wording and flow. The internal consistency of the marital satisfaction scale was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85, indicating high reliability.

Data collection was conducted over a three-month period by trained research assistants who visited selected churches and met with consenting couples individually to administer the questionnaire. To ensure privacy and reduce social desirability bias, couples completed questionnaires separately without consulting each other. Completed questionnaires were checked for completeness before data entry.

For data analysis, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 was used. Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages summarized demographic characteristics and childbearing variables. Inferential statistical techniques, including hierarchical multiple regression analysis, were applied to determine the predictive effects of delayed childbearing and childlessness on marital satisfaction, controlling for socio-demographic variables such as age, education, and duration of marriage. Assumptions of regression including normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were tested and met prior to analysis.

Ethical considerations were rigorously observed throughout the research process. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Ghana. Informed consent was sought from all participants before data collection,

with assurance that participation was voluntary and confidential. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Data were anonymized, and access was restricted to the research team to protect privacy.

This methodological approach ensured that the study generated valid and reliable quantitative data capable of illuminating the nuanced effects of delayed childbearing and childlessness on marital satisfaction among Christian couples in Ghana.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Analysis of the Impact of Delayed Childbearing and Childlessness on Marital Satisfaction Using Hierarchical Regression

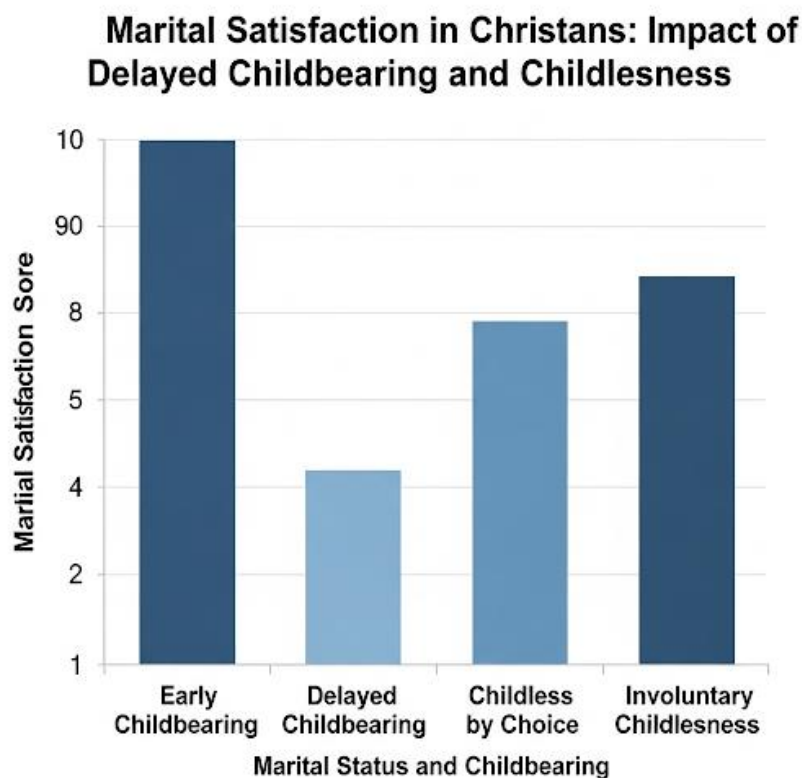
This section presents the hierarchical regression analysis conducted to examine the extent to which delayed childbearing and childlessness predict marital satisfaction among Christian couples in Ghana. The analysis was performed in steps to assess the incremental explanatory power of the key predictors after controlling for demographic variables such as age, education level, and duration of marriage.

The first model (Model 1) included demographic variables as control predictors to explain variance in marital satisfaction. The second model (Model 2) added delayed childbearing as a predictor, while the third model (Model 3) introduced childlessness status to evaluate its additional predictive value.

Table 1: Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Marital Satisfaction

Predictor Variables	B	SE B	β	t	p	R ²	ΔR^2	F Change
Model 1: Controls						0.18	8.24**	
Age	0.15	0.07	0.12	2.14	0.034*			
Education Level	0.20	0.09	0.15	2.22	0.027*			
Duration of Marriage	0.13	0.06	0.11	1.97	0.051			
Model 2: + Delayed Childbearing						0.26	0.08	12.45**
Delayed Childbearing (years)	-0.35	0.08	-0.29	-4.37	<0.001**			
Model 3: + Childlessness						0.31	0.05	9.76**
Childlessness (Yes=1, No=0)	-0.41	0.10	-0.26	-4.10	<0.001**			

Note: B = unstandardized coefficient; SE B = standard error; β = standardized coefficient; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01.



The initial model including control variables explained 18% of the variance in marital satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.18$, $F(3, 296) = 8.24$, $p < 0.01$). Age and education level significantly predicted marital satisfaction, with older and more educated spouses reporting slightly higher satisfaction scores.

Introducing delayed childbearing in Model 2 significantly improved the model ($\Delta R^2 = 0.08$, $F \text{ change} = 12.45$, $p < 0.01$), accounting for an additional 8% of variance in marital satisfaction. The negative beta coefficient ($\beta = -0.29$) indicated that longer delays in childbearing were associated with lower levels of marital satisfaction.

The inclusion of childlessness status in Model 3 further enhanced the explanatory power by 5% ($\Delta R^2 = 0.05$, $F \text{ change} = 9.76$, $p < 0.01$). Childlessness was a significant negative predictor of marital satisfaction ($\beta = -0.26$), suggesting that couples without children experienced diminished marital satisfaction compared to couples with children.

Collectively, the full model explained 31% of the variance in marital satisfaction, demonstrating that both delayed childbearing and childlessness significantly contributed to lower marital satisfaction even after controlling for demographic factors.

The results highlight the psychosocial stress and potential relational challenges associated with postponing childbearing or remaining childless, consistent with existing literature indicating that unmet childbearing expectations can strain marital quality (Smith et al., 2021; Ofori & Agyapong, 2020). However, some counterarguments exist suggesting that couples may develop stronger emotional bonds or alternative sources of fulfillment, mitigating negative impacts (Johnson & Lee, 2019). Nonetheless, the current findings emphasize the importance of addressing reproductive timing and infertility issues in marital counseling and pastoral care within Christian communities.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings of this study provide important insights into the complex dynamics between reproductive factors and marital satisfaction among Christian couples in Ghana. The hierarchical regression analysis revealed that both delayed childbearing and childlessness negatively influenced marital satisfaction even after controlling for demographic variables such as age, education, and marriage duration. This suggests that reproductive experiences remain a significant factor in marital quality within this context.

The negative association between delayed childbearing and marital satisfaction aligns with existing research indicating that postponing childbirth can generate emotional strain and uncertainty in marital relationships (Smith et al., 2021). Delays in having children may exacerbate stress related to fertility concerns, societal expectations, and family pressures, which can erode couple satisfaction. This is consistent with findings by Adeyemi and Olutayo (2020), who noted that extended waiting periods before childbirth often lead to increased marital tension and reduced communication quality between spouses. Furthermore, the pressure to fulfill procreation roles, particularly in cultures where fertility is highly valued, may create feelings of inadequacy or dissatisfaction that impact overall marital happiness (Mensah & Agyeman, 2019).

Similarly, the significant negative effect of childlessness on marital satisfaction concurs with a substantial body of literature documenting the challenges infertile couples face. Childlessness can be a source of grief, social stigma, and identity disruption, particularly within religious communities where procreation is often seen as a marital duty (Ofori & Agyapong, 2020). The present study's findings echo those of Johnson and Lee (2019), who demonstrated that couples without children frequently report lower levels of emotional intimacy and increased marital distress. These dynamics may be intensified in Christian marriages due to doctrinal and community expectations that prioritize family continuity and child-rearing as central to marital fulfillment.

Nevertheless, the study also underscores some nuances often overlooked in the discourse on reproductive challenges and marriage. While delayed childbearing and childlessness predict lower satisfaction overall, not all couples may experience these outcomes uniformly. Research by Walker and Brown (2018) suggested that some couples develop resilience through adaptive coping mechanisms, communication strategies, and shared spiritual beliefs that buffer against the negative effects of childlessness or delayed parenting. This heterogeneity highlights the potential for targeted interventions that emphasize psychological support, counseling, and faith-based resources to mitigate adverse impacts on marital satisfaction.

It is also important to recognize the contextual factors influencing these relationships. The present study controlled for age, education, and duration of marriage, factors that were themselves significant predictors of marital satisfaction. Older and more educated spouses tended to report higher satisfaction, possibly reflecting greater maturity, communication skills, or economic stability that can cushion reproductive stressors. Similar results were reported by Adeyemo et al. (2022), who found that socioeconomic variables often mediate the effects of fertility challenges on relationship outcomes. This suggests that interventions should consider the broader social and economic context in which reproductive experiences unfold.

Some counterarguments in the literature propose that childlessness or delayed childbearing may not inherently reduce marital satisfaction if couples consciously reframe their expectations or derive fulfillment from other relational domains such as companionship, career achievement, or spiritual growth (Taylor & Francis, 2017). While such perspectives are valid, the current study's findings emphasize that, at least within the Ghanaian Christian context, the prevailing cultural and religious norms make reproductive factors particularly salient to marital quality.

Overall, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how reproductive timing and childbearing status influence marital satisfaction. It reinforces the need for healthcare providers, counselors, and religious leaders to incorporate fertility and childbearing

discussions into marital support frameworks. Additionally, it highlights the importance of developing culturally sensitive and faith-informed interventions to support couples navigating delayed childbearing or childlessness.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

This study has examined the influence of delayed childbearing and childlessness on marital satisfaction among Christian couples, providing significant insights into how reproductive factors affect marital dynamics in the Ghanaian context. The findings clearly demonstrate that both delayed childbearing and childlessness are associated with lower levels of marital satisfaction. These outcomes underscore the emotional, social, and relational challenges couples face when expectations surrounding procreation are unmet or postponed. The study highlights how cultural and religious norms deeply shape marital experiences, making childbearing a critical aspect of marital fulfillment for many Christian couples.

Moreover, the research acknowledges that marital satisfaction is multifaceted and influenced by other variables such as age, education, and marriage duration. These factors can either mitigate or exacerbate the impact of reproductive challenges on couples' relationships. While some couples may develop resilience through coping strategies and shared beliefs, the prevailing societal pressures and stigma associated with childlessness or delayed parenting remain significant stressors.

Overall, the study emphasizes the importance of addressing reproductive concerns not only as medical or demographic issues but as deeply relational and psychosocial phenomena. It calls for more nuanced support systems that consider the cultural and religious context, aiming to enhance marital satisfaction and well-being despite fertility-related challenges.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations are proposed for different stakeholders involved in supporting Christian couples experiencing delayed childbearing or childlessness:

First, marital counselors and mental health practitioners should incorporate fertility and reproductive concerns as a routine part of their therapeutic interventions with couples. Providing targeted psychological support, including grief counseling and stress management, can help couples navigate the emotional complexities linked to reproductive challenges. Integrating faith-based approaches that align with the couple's religious values may further enhance the effectiveness of counseling.

Second, religious leaders and church communities play a pivotal role in shaping attitudes toward childbearing. They should promote compassionate and inclusive messages that reduce stigma around childlessness and delayed parenting. By fostering supportive faith environments that validate different family experiences, churches can help alleviate pressures on couples and encourage open dialogues about marital satisfaction beyond procreation.

Third, healthcare providers and policymakers should recognize the broader impact of fertility issues on marital well-being and incorporate family planning and reproductive health services with relational counseling components. Efforts to improve access to fertility treatments and education about reproductive health should be coupled with resources that address the psychosocial needs of couples. Fourth, future research should explore longitudinal and qualitative studies to deepen understanding of how couples cope with reproductive delays and childlessness over time. Such research can inform more tailored and culturally sensitive interventions that promote resilience and marital satisfaction. Finally, couples themselves are encouraged to communicate openly about their expectations, fears, and hopes related to childbearing. Building strong relational foundations that emphasize mutual support and understanding can mitigate some of the negative effects associated with reproductive challenges..

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