

## **Married Couples' Perceptions towards Marital Sex: A Case of Kiheesa Ward in Iringa, Tanzania**

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**Abstract:** This study sought to find how married couples perceived marital sex, using the survey Research Design. A total of 200 respondents came from selected marriages found in Kiheesa Ward. Such number was obtained through the purposive sampling technique which was followed by effective distribution of questionnaires in gathering the information which was analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The study established that married couples perceived marital sex as a practice that binds them together emotionally and psychologically. It alienates prostate cancer, irregular menstrual cycles and cardiovascular diseases; it naturally communicates affection and love to the spouses, especially when done into satisfaction. It is helpful in the continuation of spouses' generation after fusion of gametes, fertilization and conception have taken place. Moreover, married couples agreed that they enjoy doing sex with their spouses. Marital sex should take place in a form of penile-Vaginal penetration, because it is proven to be the most satisfying one as designed by the creator of humanity.

**Keywords:** Marital Sex; Penile-Vaginal Penetration; Satisfaction; Potential and Pleasures.

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### **Introduction**

Marital sex has been in a discussion since the emergence of human civilization (Sheen, 1949). This is because sex is a marital responsibility and duty for married couples, involving a unique power for reproduction (Leites, 1982). Regan (2003, p.1079) explains how such a unique power can assist the married couples to be able to initiate sexual activity whenever the demand emerges, to practice the amount and type of sex they feel is favorable for them and to detect the timing and number of children they need to bring forth.

The practice of sex in marital relationships is proven to be important and beneficial to married couples. Farah and Shahram (2011) assert that "an attractive and desirable marital sex results into marital satisfaction. Such a satisfaction is all about happiness between the two married couples and due to such happiness as a form of satisfaction, the married couples will be at a state of good mental health."

The continuous practice of it results into alienation of several conflicts in married life, reduces medical complications to both married couples and deepens the unity of married couples

in a lifelong partnership (Besharat, 1998; Donnelly, 1993; Green, 2004).

Amidst all the benefits of marital sex, it has been reported that “marital sex has been perceived as one of major sources of marriage conflicts” (Tolorunleke, 2014). This is so because, sexual experiences accompanied with intimacy and satisfactions issues affect the marital relationship positively or negatively (Theiss and Nagy, 2010). For that case, this study sought to investigate how married couples perceive marital sex and to what extent is it beneficial to them.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Concrete Ideology of Marital Sex**

Marital sex is believed to be a conjugal right involving physical intercourse (Gerhardstein, 1997; Modanlu, Ziyayi & Rabi’ei, 2005; Morokoff & Gilliland, 1993). From a religious point of view, it is believed that marital sex was initiated by God (Atkinson, 1982). Such a belief holds that marital sex should strictly take place within a vowed wedlock because of their lifelong commitment to live together (Humphreys & Wise, 1983). Such an ideology entails that those who are not yet in a vowed wedlock are not legally practitioners of sex (Rena, 2013). Those who neglect such a fact by illegally staying together with unmarried while having sexual intercourse are considered to be cohabiters (Ogunbamila, 2013). The detrimental outcomes of cohabitation include attainment of sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS and abortion so as to escape conception or giving birth (Arisukwu, 2013; Ogunsola, 2011).

Sexual intercourse should be practiced between male and female who are married. The Bible supports this fact by saying: “Marriage should be honored and the bed be undefiled by any means, either adulteress or homosexuality” (Hebrews 13:4). According to Ottuh (2013), same sex marriage or sexual intercourse is sinful since marital sex was designed to take place in a form of penile-vaginal intercourse (PVI). Thus, it should be between a man and a woman because, it is most satisfying due to sweetness and pleasures caused by the impulses generated from sexual organs (penis and vagina) (Levin, 2006). Hence, without forgetting that “the expectation of matrimonial relations between the two married couples is all about rejoicing together” (White, 1952, p.196-197), marital sex should influence them to attain a chance of rejoicing together.

### **When Should Sex be done?**

Some perceptions, ideas, views and notions have risen as to which time/day is appropriate for sexing. For instance, due to religious faiths and beliefs, some of married couples have tried to link sexual intercourse with some doctrinal teachings. The example of this can be some Seventh-day Adventist believers who try to link the purity of Sabbath day with issues during Sexing (wetting, ejaculation and sweating). These people have ended up restricting sex even when the demand emerges.

According to Purdy (2008), “those who take sexual intercourse for granted due to any notion or perception, they make their fellows feel pain and sufferings. Such thinking is supported by the Holy Books like the Bible and Quran. For instance, in Biblical perspective of 1 Corinthians 7, Paul suggests that people marry one another as a treatment of their bodies. Verse 2 postulates that “nevertheless, [to avoid] fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.” This shows that Paul the Apostle was seriously aware that human bodies have sexual Desires and abilities which demand physical intercourses. Paul continues to say, “the wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband; and likewise the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife”—1 Corinthians 7:4. Then if this is the case, the husband’s body is of a wife and vice versa is true. But the question remains “when should they do sex?”

Nicoll (1897) views and analyzes the statement of Paul the Apostle (1 Corinthians 7:3) as from Greek to English language. His analysis shows that the word “render” from the phrase “Let the husband render” is translated from the Greek word “Opheilen,” which can also be translated as “debt.” With such a translation of Paul’s statement, both the husbands and wives are indebted to one another. As the way one who owes something to someone is obligated to repay it whenever he/she is required, it is similar for the married couples—a husband is supposed to fulfill the sexual appetite of his wife and the wife is supposed to fulfill the sexual appetite of the husband too. Thus, it is not restricted whether on a certain day or hour(s); but rather whenever the demand emerges, marital sex should be implemented effectively and thoroughly.

## **The Roles of Marital Sex**

Marital sex has a lot of roles when it takes place. The first one is to express and substantiate natural love for both married couples. Such a natural love always seeks what is best for the other person; and it requires the greatest good for that person (Lickona, 2019). It begins from the two of them communicating about sex because: through speaking about sex, the married couples can get to know the internal desires and insufficiencies of each other (Lawrance & Byers, 1995; MacNeil & Byers, 2005; Meeks, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1998); and it ends when sexual intercourse takes place after a deep understanding of each one's sexual desire and interest (Byers & Demmons, 1999; Sprecher, 2006).

Secondly, marital sex can control and regulate the attitudes, behaviors and feelings of the married couples. For instance, due to sexual desire inside humanity, marital sex assists the two couples to get satisfaction which abstain them from having extra marital sexual intercourse, feeling unloved or unworthy and it also helps in improving their civilization by not being prostitutes or skirt chasers (Barth & Kinde, 1985; McCarthy, 1985).

Thirdly, marital sex has an obligation of fostering marital intimacy among the two married couples. The marital intimacy is "a fusion of identities between two married couples who deeply care about each other" (Erikson, 1950). So with such regards, the fusion of identities is all about sharing of things and privacies that one is ashamed of. In other words, it is all about married couples being honest and open to each other, without any doubt (Hirschhorn, 2016). This aspect begins from a total disclosure of each marriage couple's thoughts and feeling (Derlega & Chaikin, 1975; Hinde, 1978) before it gets into physical responses. It acts as "Relationship Awareness" in which married couples decided to share vital aspects in a common manner (Acitelli and Duck, 1987; Chelune, Robison & Kommor, 1984). That's why through different aspects of marriages like "Sex," those spouses with intimacy may encounter (1) cohesion—the degree of one's commitment to the marriage, (2) compatibility—the readiness of each couple to work with his/her fellow, (3) autonomy—the freedom of being connected to his/her spouse, (4) affection—the deep feelings of emotional closeness to each other and (5) expressiveness—the level in which

thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings are put into considerations between the spouses (Waring et al., 1980).

Fourthly, marital sex plays an important role in enhancing pleasure to married couples. According to Abramson and Pinkerton (1995), sex was designed by the Creator so that it may give pleasure. The pleasure is generated out of stimuli of the body's sexual desires. This happens when female's sexual organ (vagina) contact with male's sexual organ (penis) or through the heat of the sperm in the womb, especially for women (Cadden, 1993). Some scholars have tried to find out which gender experiences much pleasure than the other, and finally they discovered that: "the degree of pleasure is attained after men have reached orgasm and women have reached arousal" (Wellings, Field, Johnson & Wadsworth 1994, p. 270). Thus, the sex/gender differences are there to assist the married couples to experience pleasure. Though not at once, this is all about duration difference in which one reaches first before the other.

Finally, marital sex is there to assist and implement "Procreation" (Kornrich, Brines & Leupp 2012, p.3). This is possibly through sexual intercourse that may be done on appropriate day(s) near/of "Ovulation." This is supported by the fact that: "each month a woman has to encounter a menstrual cycle that is accompanied by vaginal bleeding in which later on it paves the way of maturation of her eggs. When the eggs/ovaries become matured, they are released to the oviduct by the help of Luteinizing Hormone (Martini et al. 2012). The releasing of the ovaries/eggs is for a possible fertilization process, which demands a fusion of both sperms and ovaries from both male and female." If that is the case now, fertilization (a fusion of male and female gametes) is there for reproduction and continuation of the species, through different mechanisms (Tosti & Menezo 2016). For example, in order the sperms to survive and cause an impact after the fusion of gametes (fertilization), it needs "the flow of cervical mucus that flushes out pathogens and which removes non-motile sperm" (Suarez, 2016; Tung et al. 2015). Thus due to several biological processes after "Marital Sex," the families often experience conceptions and births, which tentatively increases the number of the family statistics.

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study employed the survey research design. This kind of Research Design allowed the researchers to gather data within an area of large population. It was also used because it often provides researchers with an opportunity of recruiting the respondents during the process of data collection, while utilizing several modes of instrumentation, which result into both qualitative and quantitative data. For that case, it was employed as a strategy of collecting data within a large population-based area (Ponto, 2015).

### Area of the Study

The study took place within Kihesa Ward. This area is proven to be within Iringa Municipal Council, within Iringa Region, Tanzania. The area of Kihesa is geographical measured and having 15 streets in it: Dodoma Road A, Dodoma Road B, Semtema 'A', Semtema 'B', Ilembula, Mwenge, Mafifi, Kilimani, Ngome, Dodoma Road 'F', Sokoni, Mfaranyaki, Ramadhani Waziri, Msikitini, and Mbuma. By 2012, Kihesa Ward was found to be occupied by a total number of 18,196 people—12.0% of the population of Iringa Municipal council; while having 4,251 people as a number of households—4.3 Average Household Size (FinScope Tanzania, 2017).

### Population and Sampling

This study was intended for married couples at Kihesa Ward in Iringa. Based on the estimated total of 2125 married couples, a convenient sample of 200, who were found at home during the time of data collection and were willing to constitute the sample participated in the study. The study employed a questionnaire as data collection tool. The questionnaire was preferred

because it often helps fearing respondents to be free to respond.

### Ethical Considerations

During data collection, the researchers adhered to some ethical issues and guidelines like informed consent and permission from relevant authorities. Furthermore, respondents' anonymity and confidentiality were observed and permission was sought from local government authorities.

### Results and Discussions

This section begins by presenting the demographic characteristics of respondents and then presenting results based on research questions that guided the study.

#### Demographics of Respondents

Respondents were of various demographic characteristics. In terms of gender, males were 90 (45%) while females were 110 (55%). Therefore, majority of those who participated in the study were females as compared to males. In terms of age, 40 (20%) belonged to the age group of 20 to 30 while 100 (50%) belonged to the age group of 31 to 40 and 50 (25%) belonged to the age group of 41 to 50. Ten respondents (5%) belonged to the age group of 51 and above. Therefore, the majority of respondents were in the age group of 31 to 40 but at least people of different age groups were engaged as participants. Finally, 160 (80%) of respondents were monogamous while 40 (20%) were polygamous.

#### Presentation of Results

Results are presented according to the following research question: how do married couples perceive marital sex?

Table 1 indicates that majority of respondents agreed with all the seven items in the questionnaire about marital sex.

**Table 1: Perceptions of the Respondents towards Marital Sex: N= 200**

| No | Contents in Questionnaires                       | Agree      | Not Sure | Disagree  |
|----|--------------------------------------------------|------------|----------|-----------|
| 1  | I love sex and enjoy doing it                    | 179(89.5%) | 15(7.5%) | 6(3.0%)   |
| 2  | It needs preparation of mind                     | 162(81.0%) | 28(14%)  | 10(5%)    |
| 3  | It relieves tension & loneliness                 | 150(75%)   | 10(5%)   | 40(20%)   |
| 4  | It is healthily important                        | 135(67.5%) | 60(30%)  | 5(2.5%)   |
| 5  | It affectionately binds us                       | 163(81.5%) | 10(5.0%) | 27(13.5%) |
| 6  | It raises psycho-emotional pleasures             | 108(54%)   | 66(33%)  | 26(13%)   |
| 7  | It is important for conception and child bearing | 186 (93%)  | 4(2%)    | 10(5%)    |

Particularly, they agreed that they love sex and enjoy doing it (89.5%). Their perception is substantiated by the fact that "Penile-Vaginal

penetration is the most sensitive and satisfying one emotionally, physically and sexually" (Levin, 2006). Furthermore, the finding is supported by

recent research which revealed that “the pressure causing the penis and clitoris to erect, surges the sensation which makes the body comfortable and ready to attain orgasm (Li et al., 2015; Overland et al., 2016). The minority who either disagreed or were undecided, possibly said so because of Insufficient sexual desire or interest in sex, inability to physically arouse or get excited during sexual activities, the delay or total absence of reaching the climax/orgasm, feeling pains during sexual intercourse or poor preparation before the act (Avasthi, Grover & Rao, 2020). But apart from such hindrances, sexual intercourse among married couple is generally a pleasant experience.

Majority of respondents (81%) further agreed with the statement that marital sex needs preparation of mind by eliminating questioning perceptions that result into fears of fatigue, nausea, miscarriages, or that perceives the other partner as unattractive (Halvorsen & Metz, 1992) before initiating sexual activity. Therefore, there should always be a preparation of mind before the sexual activity, so as to alienate lack of participation in the act.

Majority of respondents (75%) agreed that sexual intercourse with their marriage partners relieves tension and loneliness. The loneliness spoken here is that which is caused by the desire of one wanting to be physically close to his/her partner. If so, marital sex which allows close physical contact for both couples surges intimacy, pleasantness and satisfaction (Wheeler, Reis & Nezlek, 1983). And due to such output, the issue of loneliness and tension will automatically be alienated (Træen, 2010).

When respondents were required to give expressions whether marital sex is a drive for marital relationship, 90% agreed with that statement. The loneliness spoken here is that which is caused by the desire of one wanting to be physically close to his/her partner. If so, marital sex which allows close physical contact for both couples surges intimacy, pleasantness and satisfaction (Wheeler, Reis & Nezlek, 1983). And due to such output, the issue of loneliness and tension will automatically be alienated (Træen, 2010).

When respondents were required to give expressions whether marital sex is healthily important or not, 67.5% of respondents agreed with the statement. This is supported by the

empirical fact that “men who often do sex in their marriages tend to lower the risk of attaining ischemic stroke and coronary heart disease (Ebrahim et al. 2002). That happens because doing marital sex is proven to be like doing physical exercise, as estimated to be like climbing 2 flights of stairs or walking briskly” (Levine et al. 2012, p.1058). Such assumed physical exercise due to marital sex is said to stretch the muscles, tendons and flexion of joints of the married couples, while allowing the hormone fluctuation and balance to effectively take over within their bodies (Flappier et al. 2013). Thus due to such act of stretching the muscles, tendons and joints, marital sex will often influence cardiovascular fitness (Levin, 2007). Moreover, clinical studies have likely found that “marital sex through vaginal intercourse prompts the health of the brain and mind” (Brody, 2010). Finally, it is proven to healthily safeguard the spouses from getting diseases like cancer. For instance, “when married man often sexes and have three ejaculations per week, he will by 15% reduce the risk of obtaining prostate cancer in life (Leitzmann, 2004).

It is also worth noting that 81.5% of respondents perceive that marital sex affectionately binds the married couples. The reason behind such a perception was guided by the fact that at initial stage of any marital relationship, the spouses’ closeness and passion over each other is at higher level, compared to the later times within the marital relationship. Then due to such lost excitement and closeness among some of married couples, they often need marital sex because it allows exchange of body chemicals of affection after physical attachments. Thus, by having regular marital sex, everyone will value his/her partner while protecting their commitments (DeFrain et al., 2012).

More than a half of respondents (54%) perceived that marital sex raises psycho-emotional pleasure between the married couples. The release of the oxytocin prompts the spouses to affectionately be bound together because of the pleasures. Due to that, all psycho-emotional stress becomes alienated (Charnetski & Brennan, 2001; Magon & Kalra, 2011; Odent, 1999).

Finally 93% of the respondents perceived that, “marital sex is important for conception and child bearing.” Such a perception is true because both a man and a woman (a wife and a husband)

undergo some biological processes which facilitate the fertilization and conception. In other words, within the body of a husband and wife, there are some body mechanisms that are undergone to influence sexual activities and consequently conception. For instance, within the body of husband there are (1) male germ cells (spermatogonia) and (2) Sertoli cells, which are helpful during sperm formation after meiotic divisions while within the body of a wife, there are eggs/ovaries that get mature on the ovulation day. When the husband and wife will happen to do penile-vaginal sexual intercourse on the appropriate few days before/after ovulation, the fusion of male and female gametes will likely foster fertilization, which will later on be accompanied by conception and child bearing (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2021).

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Conclusions

The issue of marital sex is being perceived into several contexts, when practiced within matrimonial arena. It is perceived to be healthily important because it alienates the risks of getting morbidity like cancers, cardiovascular diseases, irregular menstrual cycles and hormonal imbalances. It is perceived to affectionately and intimately bind the spouses together, after the attainment of satisfaction and subsequent pleasure. Furthermore, the act fosters the reproduction of offspring. It is perceived to relieve tensions and loneliness because it makes the spouses to value each other due to physical attachment, which is built by the close contact that allows exchange of body chemicals of affection during sex. Finally, sexual intercourse is perceived to be enjoyable by most of the married couples.

### Recommendations

Married couples need to consider marital sex as one of the vital aspects within their marital relationships. This is because it makes them to be healthier and psycho-emotionally fit due to satisfaction and pleasures attained during sexual intercourse. Whenever couples need to conceive and give birth, they should do marital sex on appropriate days before/after ovulation. That being the case, it should be done to the level of satisfaction, within a form penile-vaginal.

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