



DCPsych thesis

For better or worse: a phenomenological study of the meaning of marriage amongst Nigerian women in monogamous marriages
Abdul, Z.O.

Full bibliographic citation: Abdul, Z.O. 2021. For better or worse: a phenomenological study of the meaning of marriage amongst Nigerian women in monogamous marriages. DCPsych thesis Middlesex University / New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling (NSPC)

Year: 2021

Publisher: Middlesex University Research Repository

Available online: <https://repository.mdx.ac.uk/item/1ww843>

Middlesex University Research Repository makes the University's research available electronically.

Copyright and moral rights to this work are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners unless otherwise stated. The work is supplied on the understanding that any use for commercial gain is strictly forbidden. A copy may be downloaded for personal, non-commercial, research or study without prior permission and without charge.

Works, including theses and research projects, may not be reproduced in any format or medium, or extensive quotations taken from them, or their content changed in any way, without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). They may not be sold or exploited commercially in any format or medium without the prior written permission of the copyright holder(s).

Full bibliographic details must be given when referring to, or quoting from full items including the author's name, the title of the work, publication details where relevant (place, publisher, date), pagination, and for theses or dissertations the awarding institution, the degree type awarded, and the date of the award.

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Middlesex University via the following email address: repository@mdx.ac.uk

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated.

See also repository copyright: re-use policy: <https://libguides.mdx.ac.uk/repository>

For Better or Worse: A Phenomenological Study of the Meaning of Marriage Amongst Nigerian Women in Monogamous Marriages

**A Thesis Submitted to the New School of Psychotherapy and
Counselling and Middlesex University Psychology Department in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of
Existential Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy.**

Zainab Abdul

August 2021

Word Count 63,651

Acknowledgements

My gratitude first goes to Almighty Allah for seeing me through this course and making me able to complete my final thesis. I will like to thank and dedicate my research to Nigerian women especially my participants who helped in making this study a success by giving me their time and experiences to share.

My gratitude goes to my Supervisors; Prof. Emmy Van Deurzen whose input made a world of difference and Dr. Claire Arnold Baker who patiently and firmly supported and helped me to find the confidence and self-belief I needed to push through. Finally, I want to thank my family members who stood by me through it all; my husband, children, sisters, uncle, friends and parents. You all mean a lot to me.

Abstract

The research titled – a phenomenological study on the meaning of marriage among Nigerian women in monogamous marriages sought to ask how Nigerian women make sense of their marriages, and how their marriages affect them taking into consideration their four worlds.

Eight participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was adopted as the primary methodology, and Structural Existential Analysis (SEA) was adopted as a tool in filtering the analysis, looking at their narratives through their lived personal, physical, social and spiritual world.

Four themes and nine sub themes were generated from this research; they are: Loss of freedom with sub themes marriage as slavery and being owned, second theme is the reality of marriage with benefits in title, and shame as subthemes, the third theme is sociocultural dimension with family within culture, role of religion and

meaning over time. The last theme is the self with being for self and identity and being independent as subthemes.

The findings in this study are in line with some of the existing research and literature; it was found that women struggle with the cultural and familial expectations of the society. It was also found that women who see themselves as individuals with responsibilities that go beyond being a wife see marriage as more meaningful. Financial independence stands out as a theme that women relate strongly to in that, it serves as a means through which a better sense of self is achieved, respect is earned, and more meaning is made.

The strengths and weaknesses of this research are highlighted, implication on the field of counselling psychology and psychotherapy as well as recommendations for future research are proffered.

Key Words

Marriage, Meaning, Women, Nigerian Marriage, IPA, SEA

Statement of Authorship

I, Zainab Abdul, do confirm that the work presented in this doctoral thesis has been done solely by me and it has ethical clearance from both the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling and the Psychology Department of Middlesex University.

The thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Existential Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy. I as the author am wholly responsible for the content and writing of the thesis, and there are no conflicts of interest.

Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Abstract	4
Key Words	5
Statement of Authorship	5
1.1. Introduction.....	10
1.2. Relevance/Aim	10
1.3. Personal Rationale for the Research	11
1.3.1. Place of Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy in Nigeria	13
1.4. Researcher as Insider	16
1.5. Organisation of the Research	17
2. Chapter Two: Literature Review	19
2.1. Introduction	19
2.2. Defining Marriage:	27
2.2.1 Biological, Religious, and Economic Definitions of Marriage	28
2.3. Historical Context of Marriage	35
2.4. African Marriage Systems:.....	35
2.5. Nigerian Marriage.....	37
2.5.1. Statutory, Customary, Religious Marriage in Nigeria	37
2.5.2. Culture and Lifestyle in Nigerian Families.....	39
2.7. Feminist Perspectives on Marriage.....	52
2.8. Literature on Areas of Marriage.....	61
2.8.1. Self and Identity	62
2.8.2. Marriage and Religion.....	68
2.8.3. Economic Independence and Marriage	70
2.8.4. Marriage and Freedom.....	70
2.9. Further Studies on Marriage and Meaning	74
2.10. Conclusion	78
2.11. Reflexivity	79
3. Chapter Three: Methodology	80
3.1. Chapter Overview	80
3.2. Aim	80
3.3. Epistemology and Methodology.....	80
3.3.1. Epistemology and Qualitative Methodology	81
3.3.2. Phenomenological Epistemology of Research	82
3.3.2.1 <i>Husserl and Phenomenology</i>	82
3.3.2.2 <i>Heidegger and Phenomenology, a Reaction to Husserl</i>	83
3.4. Types of Phenomenology	85
3.4.1. Descriptive Phenomenology.....	85

3.4.2. Interpretative Phenomenology	86
3.5. Utility of a Multi-Perspective Approach	89
3.6. Interpretative Phenomenological Method.....	90
3.6.1. Choosing IPA.....	90
3.6.2. Why Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis?.....	92
3.6.3. Limitations of IPA.....	93
3.7. Existential Philosophy and Phenomenology	94
3.7.1. Structural Existential Analysis (SEA).....	95
Physical	98
Social	98
Personal.....	98
Spiritual.....	98
3.8. An Additional Approach	101
3.9 Alternative Methodologies	102
3.9.1 Narrative Analysis.....	103
3.9.2 Grounded Theory	104
3.9.3 Discourse Analysis	105
3.10. Reflexivity	106
3.11. Developing Interview Questions.....	110
3.11. Validity Issues	111
3.11.1. Sensitivity to Content	111
3.11.2. Commitment and Rigour	112
3.11.3. Transparency and Coherence.....	113
3.11.4. Impact and Importance.....	114
3.12. Audit Trail	114
3.13. Design	115
3.13.1. Recruitment	115
3.13.2. Participants.....	116
3.13.3. Ethical Considerations - Confidentiality	117
3.13.4. Interview and Risk to Participants.....	118
3.13.5. Risk to the Researcher	119
3.13.6. Benefit.....	120
3.14. Procedure	120
3.15. Analysis	121
3.15.1. Step 1: Reading and Re-reading.....	121
3.15.2. Step 2: Exploratory Comments.....	122
3.15.3. Step 3: Emergent Themes	122
3.15.4. Step 4: Clustering	123
3.15.5. Step 5: Moving to the Next Case	123

3.15.6. Step 6: Patterns across Cases.....	123
3.15.7. Step 7: Discussion of Findings.....	124
3.16. Reflexivity.....	125
4. Chapter Four: Findings	128
4.1. Introduction.....	129
4.1.1. Meet Jenny:.....	130
4.1.3. Meet Anne:.....	132
4.1.5. Meet Hannah:.....	134
4.1.7. Meet Rose:.....	136
4.1.11. Meet Sumayah:.....	140
4.1.13. Meet Tayo:.....	141
4.1.16. Meet Shola:.....	143
4.1.18. Presenting the Themes.....	145
4.2. Theme 1: Loss of Freedom.....	147
4.2.1. Being Owned and Restricted.....	147
4.2.2. Marriage as Slavery.....	157
4.2.3. The Four-World Perspective.....	157
4.3. Theme 2: The Reality of Marriage.....	159
4.3.1. Honouring the Title.....	159
4.3.2. Shame and Resignation.....	162
4.3.3. Change in Meaning over Time.....	164
4.3.3.1. <i>The Four-World Perspective</i>	170
4.4. Theme 3: Sociocultural Issues.....	172
4.4.1. Familial and Cultural Expectations.....	172
4.4.2. Role of Religion.....	179
4.4.1. The Four-World Perspective.....	182
4.5. Theme 4: The Self.....	183
4.5.2. Financial Independence.....	188
5. Chapter Five: Discussion.....	194
5.1. Introduction.....	194
5.2. Findings in Relation to the Literature.....	195
5.2.1. Loss of Freedom.....	196
5.3. The New Reality of Marriage.....	202
5.3.1. Honouring the Title.....	203
5.3.2. Shame and Resignation.....	204
5.3.3. Change in Meaning over Time.....	206
5.4. Socio-cultural Issues.....	210
5.4.1. Familial and Cultural Expectations.....	211
5.4.2. Role of Religion.....	214
5.5. The Self.....	216

5.5.1. Being for Self and Identity.....	217
5.5.2. Financial Independence	219
5.6. Summary of Discussion	224
5.7. Reflexivity	226
6. Chapter six: Conclusion.....	227
6.1. Reflections.....	227
6.1.1. Research Area	227
6.1.2. Methodology.....	228
6.1.3. Reflexivity and Bracketing	229
6.1.5. Validity and Quality.....	232
6.1.6. Participants and Their Four Worlds	235
6.2. Contributions.....	236
6.4. Recommendations for Future Research.....	238
6.5. Summary and Conclusions.....	239
7. References.....	243
8. Appendices.....	283
8.1. Ethical Approval.....	283
8.2. Risk Assessment	292
8.3. Participant Information Sheet.....	300
8.4. Written Informed Consent.....	305
8.5. Debriefing.....	306
8.6. Interview Schedule.....	308
8.7. Analysis of Themes.....	309
8.8. Themes across Cases.....	320
8.9. Abstraction.....	321

1. Chapter one: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Marriage is universal. It cuts across all cultures, religions, ethnicities and sexual orientation. Canel (2013) describes marriage as the building block for all societies. It is one of the most intense relationships, which is redefined by spouses and plays a crucial role in the experience of family life (Pimentel, 2000). Everybody has a personal relationship with the institution of marriage; one could be either married or is a product of marriage; if not through parents, then grandparents or their parents before them. Marriage is a social institution that has been in existence from time immemorial, taking different forms in different societies.

From the moment the journey of marriage begins until it ends either through death, separation or divorce, marital relationships come with endless uncertainties. Studies have found that most first marriages end in either divorce or permanent separation despite the belief that couples have to be together, for better or worse (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002).

However, my interest in marriage is not to investigate the cause or rate of divorce; instead, it is to understand what meaning Nigerian women make of the experience of their marriages which makes them remain married, for better or for worse. I am interested in finding out what takes place in a marital relationship that determines how meaningful the relationship is.

1.2. Relevance/Aim

Marriage is a wide area of study, but reports do not typically reflect African culture; the findings of this study would add greater depth to the meaning of marriage in

general and may relate to underrepresented regions like Nigeria. Only a handful of qualitative research has been conducted in Africa, with particular reference to Nigerian women. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to update the extant literature that reflects African culture through exploring the lived experience of married women as they make sense of their marital relationships.

As acquiring more knowledge in the area of cultural differences is a significant factor in client behaviour in therapeutic relationships, this study will help provide a better understanding of how clients see themselves in the world in relation to their experiences and cultural backgrounds and inform practitioners on how clients can best be supported. In other words, research outcome would serve as a base for better practice after all; it is the professional's responsibility in the field of counselling psychology to expand the boundaries of knowledge by providing evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence.

1.3. Personal Rationale for the Research

What I had learned about marriage through observation, education, stories, the media, my parents, and my upbringing made me understand that not everyone would want to get married, stay married, marry the person they loved, or want to have children in their marriage. Nevertheless, nearly everyone is affected by the culture within which they reside. I knew of variants common and acceptable in my own culture. Also, I learned about other cultures, other periods and family forms that are different from the one in which I was brought up.

Marital relations have always been a topic of interest to me, and I remain curious and driven in the pursuit of narratives that could lead to women being heard, seen and adequately represented in all spheres of life.

There are several aspects of marital life that researchers have and can still choose to explore; however, the fundamental question of meaning has not been asked by many.

The interest I had in the lived marital experiences of Nigerian women resulted from seeing how women adapt to and in their marriages, for better or for worse. For the first two decades of my life, I saw the need for women to make their marriage work; women submit entirely to their husbands, who are referred to as bride price payer and I also saw them serve their in-laws.

With time, independence, modernisation, including formal education, and feminism have reduced to some extent, the marriage traditions and customs where wives were not expected to go contrary to society's roles and expectations. Perhaps, the change that modernisation and feminism brought about played a crucial part in how I experience my marriage and how meaningful it is.

As Nigerian women do not readily talk about their marital experiences, I assumed what I experience as a change in time is common to most women in my age group.

For two decades of being married, I never thought about what my marriage meant to me until I came face to face with the concept of meaning in life in my doctorate programme. This generated an interest in researching marriage and its meaning as the experiences inform Nigerian women in monogamous marriages. Therefore, genuine interest in marital relations, personal experience of finding meaning, the inadequate research in this area, and the fact that I am originally Nigerian and married to one, drew me to this area of research.

Amid many areas of research interests and studies; child marriage, early marriage, domestic violence, gender inequality in marriage, women and politics, HIV/AIDS,

Vesico-Vaginal Fistula (VVF), infertility, among many others. The questions I found myself asking were:

What sense do married women make of their relationships?

What does it mean for them to be married?

What are their values and beliefs?

I believe marriage is worth exploring from these vantage points.

As a psychological practitioner, I also wondered where and how married women get support if needed in a country where emotional wellbeing and mental health support is not readily embraced. This, coupled with a culture where an open discussion of intimate matters is rarely held, be it within or outside the country. Helping and supporting women from this cultural background could be quite challenging for both practitioners and clients alike.

In this research, I see myself standing as and for Nigerian women (my participants) as they make sense of their marriages and provide an avenue through which the psychological and counselling world gets further enlightened on how to work therapeutically with Nigerian women.

1.3.1. Place of Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy in

Nigeria

Psychotherapy is considered a thing of luxury in African countries; psychological disorders and emotional instability are on the increase and are as common among Africans as they are in developed countries (Peltzer, 1999). Only recently, African countries began to be included in therapy research (Cooper, 2007).

According to Madu (2003), the area of mental health in many African countries have to a large extent, been handled by traditional healers, heads of communities or

clans, religious leaders, as well as extended family members, before and even soon after independence from colonial rule. There was a period where westernised medicine and psychotherapy was hardly found in Africa (Madu, 2003; Lesolang-Pitje 2003). Madu (2003) argues that 80% of emotional issues, family related challenges and psychiatric problems are solved in multiple ways. The solution includes various magico-religious rites to well-organised quasi-mathematical procedures, endowed with a poetic, and most striking gab, to the use of hypnosis, trances, advises persuasion mystic spiritual invocations (Lambo, 1974).

People known as curers who communicate with God/ the gods or the ancestors and proffer solutions to the afflictions as directed by the gods carry out the healing process. In this period and up to date, paramedical fields like psychotherapy were still struggling to gain ground (Mariach, 2003; Madu, 2003; Cooper, 2007).

With the ushering in of modernisation, enlightened people have found it essential to share the mental and emotional illnesses and stress they are undergoing but are restricted by the culture and tradition prevailing in their society and resulting in a life of solitude (Madu, 2003). Therapists have attempted to develop African based forms of psychotherapy to reach many people while trying to understand their culture. In understanding the culture, they offer appropriate support; Ebigbo's "Harmony Restoration Therapy" and Awaritefe's "Meseron Therapy", developed according to the Nigerian belief systems (Nefale & Van Dyke 2003).

One of the ways scholars have looked at meeting these challenges for the future includes studying western-oriented forms of psychotherapy to bring universal principles of human behaviour out and replacing the aspects of western cultures intrinsic in these models with complementary aspects of African cultures (Madu, 2003).

However, this is not the main challenge facing psychotherapy itself; one of the challenges attributed to psychotherapy in Africa, as described by Peltzer (1999), is a lack of acceptance of psychotherapy, which can be further explained as a lack of psychological mindedness. A lack of interest and unwillingness to discuss family problems beyond the boundaries of the family, there is the feeling of shame and failure accompanying people who are unable to deal with family issues within the confines of their family and seeks help or mediation from an 'outsider'.

Nigeria, being the most ethnically diverse country in Africa, has been using traditional and cultural psychotherapeutic practices long before the western-oriented counselling modalities found their place within the country (Ipaye, 1995; Bojuwoye, 2001). The reliance on traditional and cultural psychotherapeutic practices flourished and served more than half of the population in diagnostics, treatment and prevention of physical and mental illnesses that are bound to cultural beliefs and social construct (Adekson, 2003).

However, with a decline in illiteracy and the wake of modernisation, there is a need to support people who feel stifled or emotionally and mentally challenged. The nature of their illnesses is not such that can be treated via the adoption of a medical model. Be it traditionally or medically; the expectation is for the country to allow for the growth of counselling and psychotherapy to help support individuals by removing stigmas associated with some conditions like marital problems. This can best be achieved if psychotherapists are more acquainted with the culture, beliefs and practices of the client group that is being worked with, without trying to eliminate the inherent beliefs.

Modernisation and the feminist movement have contributed to the dynamics of marriage in general, causing the communal life that was signified by the traditional

Nigerian family to slowly fade, generating a change in the position of women. This change, in turn, had a highly tremendous effect on domestic life (Fadipe, 1970).

Nevertheless, the fact that Nigerian women do not have the bravery to express their emotions verbally, especially to strangers, makes counselling and psychotherapy remain in their infancy in the country. Due to the nature of communal living practised in many African countries, clients may feel obliged to view clinicians as an extension of their own family that could be trusted before engaging therapeutically (Ruiz, 1990).

For practitioners, it is vital to make room for the expression and promotion of customs and traditional beliefs, which indicate the ever-present identity of the blacks as evidenced in their behaviour within and outside therapy.

I have heard stories relating to marital expectations and satisfaction that have stuck with me over the years. However, through the lived experiences of women, I wish to find out what sense they make of their marriages and proffer ways that they can be helped and supported emotionally and mentally should the need to seek professional support arise.

1.4. Researcher as Insider

Being an African plays a significant role in this research; I bore in mind that opening up may be quite a difficult task, but hopefully, being a researcher that is also an insider helped the interview process.

This research looked through Nigerian women's eyes, the journeys into marriage, what it means to them, their expectations, beliefs and the satisfaction derived. Nigerian women living in Nigeria are the research's primary focus to guide against

any cultural bias or conflict. The assumption is that Nigerians living in the UK or Nigerian British would be affected by their exposure to their country of residence through acculturation.

Being an existential practitioner enables me to take a philosophical attitude towards my view of not only myself but also other people. I am particularly interested in how individuals create their meanings in uniquely challenging situations, which results from marriages and relationships in general. Through challenging situations, the question of meaning comes up and is most likely found along with the transformation.

1.5. Organisation of the Research

This research explored the lived experience of married Nigerian women as they make sense and give meaning to their marriages. As this is a qualitative study, the rationale is not to measure meaning and or satisfaction but to focus on the meaning and lived experience of participants, which makes the chosen method appropriate. According to Finlay (2011), phenomenological research seeks to provide insights into and provide an understanding of the less concrete meanings and complexity of our social world.

The study makes use of culture, freedom and identity as a lens. However, my particular interest as the researcher is about the meaning and sense women make of their marriage and themselves due to their experience.

This research project is divided into six chapters; the first chapter is the introduction, followed by the literature review in chapter two, where marriage will be looked at through the lenses of other literature and research studies. The literature review will also look at findings of studies in various areas of marriage and, specifically,

qualitative study into the meaning of marriage. Chapter three focuses on research methodology; my epistemological position within the research is outlined, including the rationale for choosing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as my primary approach and Structural Existential Analysis as an added analytic tool.

Chapter four focuses on my findings; this is where the analysis of research interview data is presented. The participants and essential information about them, beneficial to research, are stated, bearing in mind the concept of anonymity and data protection. Themes generated from interview transcripts, sub-themes, superordinate and master themes are discussed.

The fifth chapter focuses on a thorough discussion of the findings in relation to current literature and studies. The sixth and final chapter focuses on the reflections on the research process, summary, conclusion drawn, an overview of the meaning of marriage to Nigerian women, a critic of the study and implications for future research.

2. Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter, I discuss the principal terms used in this study; first is the theory of meaning after which I explore various definitions of marriage before looking at marriage in a brief historical context. This is followed by the discussion of marriage through existential and feminist lenses, mainly because this research has an existential background and centers on women. After this, the Nigerian marriage which includes culture, gender roles, lifestyle, freedom and identity issues are discussed. Finally, various studies on marriage and some studies specifically on the meaning of marriage that are particularly relevant to this research are examined.

2.1. Introduction

In carrying out a literature review, I came across a vast number of researches into marriage issues. However, this was expected as I was fully aware of marriage being an institution people are strongly connected to and one which keeps unveiling itself in different ways, therefore, being a recurrent port of interest to many.

The literature search commenced with the keywords of the research title hence, various definitions of marriage, a history of marriage, marriage in modern day, marriage in Africa;

marriage in Nigerian types of marriage, marriage from different perspectives; feminist, socio anthropological, legal, cultural philosophical perspectives; meaning, and meaning in marriage.

With the narrowing down of my search to my research question, came less relevant results. Scholarly articles and past thesis were accessed through the Middlesex

library repository, the online journal of marriage and family, other online journals, SAGE publishers, Google scholar, NSPC library for books to mention a few.

Much research has been carried out on marriage, mostly in the western world, many among African Americans and some other racial/ethnic groups, same-sex marriages, interracial marriages and cohabitating couples.

It is noted that many of these studies are published in English language journals outside of westernised countries, enabling it to reach a wider audience and serving to enlighten people about other cultures.

I searched current research on marriage in Nigeria, and found a plethora of studies on various areas of marriage; early marriage, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, women in politics. As these studies are not directly linked to my research, I limit the discussion to the few qualitative studies relevant to the research question and themes; I also looked at past studies as deemed appropriate. This literature review serves as the basis for the need for my research and will only represent the main currents in marriage related to my research.

As this research explores the meaning of marriage, it is vital to discuss the theory of meaning according to scholars before discussing Nigerian marriage, and engaging with existing studies on the meaning of marriage. This question of meaning is answered through several ways; African theories are included due to the cultural nature of the study.

2.1.1. The Meaning of Meaning

The Oxford English dictionary (2012) defines meaning as importance, worthwhile quality or purpose.

In order to answer the question of meaning, one must first understand the concept as the question of life is ultimately a personal one. A question we face at some point; the worth of the strife that is part of our lifestyle (Attoe, 2020).

Searching for the meaning of that which man seeks in everyday life to be fulfilled would pose almost impossible as meaning in itself cannot be learned but experienced, it is through our experience that we find or not find meaning in life. Scholars have described what meaning is about, using various aspects to include motivation, values, understanding, worthiness, regulation and commitment (Wong, 2013).

2.1.2. Meaning in and to Africans

Scholars in the western philosophical tradition have worked on the meaning of life but very little work has been done within the African philosophical tradition. It is quite pertinent to understand that the concept of meaning comes with clarifications; value for human life especially within an African setting does not necessarily translate into a belief that such life is meaningful. Also, the meaning of life is quite distinct from living well; these two do not necessarily go hand in hand, although they can exist together (Attoe, 2020).

To Africans, human life is deemed sacred, which makes procreation a vital part of life, and life is described as meaningful if a communal relationship is fostered (Okere, 2005; Igbafen, 2017).

Looking at life among the Yorubas, Balogun (2008) based meaningfulness on conditions including wealth, good health, longevity, procreation, marital bliss and overcoming adversities. In Okolie's (2019) view, the question of meaning is tied to an

ultimate goal of any individual. He opines that this goal is very much connected to personhood therefore, one must live as a person to achieve a meaningful life.

Metz (2020) looks at two theories of meaning in Africa, namely the communal and vitalist theories. He opines that the traditional theory of meaningful life is all about being relevant which is achieved through caring for others and being of service to the community.

The idea that one finds meaning through relating with others makes it common to both African and the western philosophers. In their opinion, meaning is constituted through the sharing and caring that the experience of love for other humans brings about (Wolf, 2002, Eagleton, 2007).

As similar as the two submissions are, it is important to note that communal life lived by Africans is quite striking and distinct from the individualistic life obtained in the western world (Metz, 2019). A close relation with those we commune with naturally translates into a longer and stronger bond. Meaning can be achieved through caring for those who need such care as long as they need it.

Metz (2013) disagrees with the notion that meaning could be lacking in inhumane conditions like slavery, ethnic cleansing, aggressiveness, racism, colonisation, lack of caring and sharing and the presence of harm and oppression. He goes further to say:

“contrary the communal theory, some meaning in life could come from these conditions: cultivating a garden or learning an instrument; climbing Mount Everest or completing a triathlon; overcoming mental illnesses such as addiction, depression, and weakness of will; exhibiting virtues such as

courage, perseverance, and patience; and being authentic or true to oneself" (Metz, 2020, P. 117).

Another theory is the vitality theory where it is believed that human's life is meaningful when they promote liveliness not only in themselves but also in others. It is through the participation in activities that mutual enlivening is fostered, loneliness and boredom are eliminated creating in its place motivation or interest (Metz, 2020). This theory also accounts for situations when meaning is lacking; to the vitalists, meaning cannot be found when living in solitude for people are unable to make themselves lively and as a result, unable to invoke the liveliness in others. Examples of extreme acts of immorality like slavery and subjugation would naturally reduce people's vitality, rendering them unable to experience the ongoing change that is dependent on one's inner source of power (Metz, 2013).

From the preceding, meaning in life as described through the communal and vitalist theorists are not without questioning. As Metz (2013) suggests in communal theory, meaning could be found through close relationships and caring for others no matter where they are. He also debunks this theory by suggesting several other means through which meaning could be found, independent of others, for example, skills acquired by one person can benefit many others and through that, meaning is found.

The thought of oneself can also be meaning inspiring depending on what state of life one is. Meaning is unique to individuals and it is only in being aware that we can find true meaning in life be it through relating to others or in solitude (Metz,2013).

The vitalist theory suggests liveliness as central to meaning in life, where one person's energy impacts the other and it is through this that meaning is found.

Solitude and immoral acts that bring about a reduction in vitality translates into a decreased liveliness in others and in the end, a failure to find meaning.

Both theories are intertwined; although meaning is derived through relations with people either through fostering close relations (communal) or through the promotion of liveliness (vitalist).

The meaning every individual makes of life is unique and situation dependent. A weakness of the communal theory is its failure to see that people can still derive meaning in other self-regarding ways (Wolf, 2010).

As described by Frankl (1959), Meaning in life can stem from close relationships and caring for others as it is found in the communal theory. The degree of suffering that Frankl endured in the concentration camp can serve as an example of how meaning is derived through suffering. This is contrary to the submission of the vitalist theory, which maintains that meaning cannot be found in lack, is reduced when there is no liveliness or when there is the presence of immoral acts like slavery and subjugation.

2.1.3. The Theory of Meaning

Prominent in the field of existential psychotherapy and psychology is Victor Frankl. He laid the foundations for other research on meaning through positive existential givens and is considered a theoretical framework guiding this research.

For Frankl (1959), meaning can be found anytime and anywhere, no matter the situation. It is what resides in us whether we are suffering or not. Finding meaning is seen as the path to a meaningful life (Pattakos and Dundon,2017).

Most importantly, meaning is exclusive to all individuals and depends on where they find themselves (Frankl, 1959). It is the means through which people cope with life in varying situations, and there is no single, correct or wrong definition of meaning (Feldman & Snyder, 2005; Schnell & Becker, 2005; Stillman et al., 2009, Vos, 2018).

Frankl (1963) describes meaning as discovered through three ways: love, work and suffering. In man's ultimate search for meaning, Frankl said:

“A man who becomes conscious of the responsibility he bears toward a human being who affectionately waits for him, or to an unfinished work, will never be able to throw away his life” (Frankl, 1946 /2006, p.69).

There is no universal meaning to life; everyone must create his or her meaning through various desired means (Frankl, 1963; Battista & Almond, 1973).

Psychological studies found meaningful living directly links with authentic living or a means through which one's potential is maximised (Kenyon, 2000; Maslow, 1971).

Frankl argued that, as humans, we are characterised by a 'will to meaning as meaning' is an inherent part of who we are as humans. 'Failure to achieve meaning could result in psychological distress, also referred to as the 'existential vacuum' (Frankl, 1984).

This point is further emphasised by other researchers' findings that a lack of meaning links with psychological distress, and little meaning in life associated with depression and anxiety (e.g. Wezeman, 1993), greater need for therapy (e.g. Battista & Almond, 1973) as well as other forms of distress. Having more meaning

has been positively related to life satisfaction (e.g. Chamberlain & Zika, 1988) and happiness (e.g. Debats et al., 1993).

The failure to achieve meaningfulness, as described above, could be true for participants who experience emotional distress and dissatisfaction in marriage.

2.1.4. Levels of Meaning

There are varying levels of meaning; specific, present meaning versus ultimate meaning, and meaning versus value. Frankl (1967) identified two levels of meaning; the first is the present meaning, which refers to specific meanings associated with a particular situation rather than focusing on the general meaning of life. The second is the ultimate meaning, which is hidden from us and beyond the limits of the human dimension (Frankl 1967, 1984, 1986).

Frankl (1967, 1986) sees values as abstract meanings based on the lived experiences of individuals. He believes that these values can guide our search for meaning; an example is how traditional values guide us in accumulating meaning through people's experiences over time.

Although traditional values are threatened by modernisation, it is believed that meaning can still be found in real situations. From this, it can be concluded that meaning could be experienced on different levels; minute, ordinary meaning and gigantic meaning make up the meanings of life.

Similarly, Vos (2018) breaks meaning into three scales; micro, meso and macro meanings.

In micro meaning, specific subjective experiences of individuals in specific situations are accounted for. Meso meaning results from micro meanings formed over time,

and macro meaning is the general sense of meaning-making achieved through the micro and meso levels of meaning-making.

How we create meaning and what gives us meaning in life depends on the aspect of life that meaning is being sought and the type of meaning we seek to find.

Vos (2018) talks about the types of meaning, which are also tied to the four worlds' framework of Deurzen (2014). Meaning could be experienced through a materialistic, physical means, being aware of the value of the self, connections to other people, religion or spirituality, and the acceptance of one's being and the gratitude that comes with it (Vos 2018).

Individuals seek meaning from a young age and are shaped through the values and beliefs of parents and the society in which they grew up. Although people have a sense of whom they think they are, a change in meaning gradually occurs, which will also happen within marriage where the meaning of marriage becomes reshaped.

The meaning that is unique to people ceases to be foremost on their minds, a more sophisticated form of meaning emerges, a meaning constructed together, yet individually through respect and love for the other (Radziejewski, 2011).

As meaning or its importance is not an aspect of research that has received attention in Nigeria, I was interested to see how Nigerian women, as individuals, create or not create meaning in their marital lives. Although the research is exploratory, it can also expand the knowledge already gathered in counselling psychology.

2.2. Defining Marriage:

In this section, terms that make up the basis for this research study are discussed to enhance the understanding of the reader. Marriage is discussed from different perspectives, and the type of marriage adopted for this study is also discussed.

2.2.1 Biological, Religious, and Economic Definitions of Marriage

According to the Oxford English dictionary (2012), marriage is a “formal union of a man and a woman, typically as recognised by law, by which they become husband and wife”. This historical union between a man and a woman is the definition assumed for this research.

Various scholars have defined marriage in various ways; for instance, Havilland et al. (2011) refers to marriage as concerning a person’s rights and rights between people. Marriage can be defined as a recognised union between two people, which establishes the rights between them as spouses or as parents if they have children as well as between them and their in-laws (Havilland et al., 2011).

Obilade (1979) defines marriage as a contract but also a voluntary union. Statutory monogamous marriage “is a marriage which is recognised by the place where the contract takes place, as a voluntary union between a man, and a woman to the exclusion of all others during the continuance of the marriage” (Section 18, Interpretation Act, 1964, Obilade, 1979, p.66).

However, other scholars see marriage less like a contract and rights but rather as a relationship between two people. For instance, Finnis (1994) argues that marriage is the coming together of two romantically involved minds.

The process of marriage and its celebrations vary across the world. In Africa, particularly Nigeria, marriage is an integral part of the culture, usually celebrated glamorously, with a considerable amount of money spent on expensive venues, parties, clothes, jewellery, entertainment, gifts and food (some marriage ceremonies

last for at least one week). Although marriage here may be celebrated like it is in other areas of the world, Nigerian marriage is not limited strictly to the union between a man and a woman but also guided by cultural norms and customs (Canel, 2013).

Biologically, the object of marriage is not to legalise a sexual union but rather to ensure the survival of the species and the human race. From this point of view, marriage is not merely a sexual relationship but a parental association. It is the union of a male and a female for the production and care of offspring and therefore, another primary object or purpose of marriage” (Stone, 1939, p.18).

From the above, it can be concluded that the main object of marriage was always to provide a continual human race.

In interpreting marriage, Radcliffe- Brown (1953) says that in certain societies, a man may be said to have relatives by marriage long before he marries and indeed, as soon as he is born into the world, the institution of the required or preferential marriage provides this. From this description, it can be said that marriage has been laid down by nature, and one is only waiting to fulfil the inevitable fate.

Nevertheless, the recent development and change surrounding the institution of marriage seem to disagree with this statement. Although marriage is seen as an inevitable fate or divine right, it is an aspect of life which one chooses actively to engage in or not and could decide not to procreate if engaged in.

The description offered by Lord Penzance’s in the Hyde v Hyde divorce and polygamy case in 1866 states that marriage is “the voluntary union for life of one man and one woman, to the exclusion of all others” (Poulter, 1979). Although the definition is a product of its time, it is the closest legal definition for decades. This

legal understanding of marriage remains relevant till present and is often cited by traditional marriage campaigners as the definitive meaning of matrimony (Winfield, 2016).

However, the definition of marriage has been revised in the 21st century. The Marriage Act 2013 has considered same-sex marriage when defining marriage in many countries. For instance, due to the act passed by the UK parliament in 2013, marriage can be defined as a recognised union between same-sex and opposite-sex couples.

As well as a statutory definition, there is also a religious definition of marriage. This is important to discuss because both Christianity and Islam are the two predominant religions in Nigeria. Although the Christian religion is diverse in beliefs and the modes of practice differ among the sects, the general view is that God has ordained marriage.

According to the Roman Catholic faith, the primary purpose of marriage is broken down into procreation, bringing up children and the spouse's good (Yarhouse and Nowacki, 2007). In the same vein, protestant Christianity views marriage as a covenant bond symbolising the relationship God has with his people according to the Old Testament bible. The difference in opinion stems from what each group hold dear; while Catholics hold the principle of celibacy and procreation very dear, protestants focus more on companionship, rendering procreation secondary (Yates, 1985). Opinions of aspects of the Christian religion emphasise the importance of companionship and procreation in marriage, as was found in this research.

Islam views marriage highly and regards it as half of a Muslim's faith; therefore, whoever gets married is considered to have fulfilled half of his religion. The Quran's

expectation (Q4: 34) is that; the husband provides for and protects the wife while the woman respects and takes care of her husband and his property. The purpose of marriage in Islam is to balance an individual need and societal need, procreate to increase the number of Muslims worldwide (Hadith, Duran, 1993).

In addition to the religious view on marriage, economic and social issues are also relevant in the definition of marriage. According to Stone and Stone (1939, p.20), “economic fitness still constitutes a significant social factor in marriage”. A nuclear family, which consists of husband, wife and children, is regarded as a complete unit in modern society. In most societies (Nigeria included), the bride moves to the husband’s place upon marriage. In this setting, the family’s functions through division of labour based on sex; the husband is expected to perform all the tasks outside the home and fulfil his economic obligations while the wife bears children, brings them up, and performs other household duties. However, managing a family efficiently depends largely on economic conditions (Stone and Stone, 1939).

The description agrees with the economic theory of marriage as propounded by Becker (1974), which opined that when a man who is better at making money and the wife who is better at taking care of the home combine forces, specialising in their chosen area, they can thereby expand the labour market.

This is a dated opinion as marriage and the roles played by partners are not as separated as suggested by Stone and Stone (1939). Sawhill (2014) also reacted to the old economic theory by stating that it has failed, as it could not account for the dramatic transformation of family life in many countries in recent decades.

Segmented marriage market, unequal income distribution, social norms, women’s changing roles, and sexual liberation must be factored into the equation (Carbone

and Cahn, 2014). For these reasons, marriage goes beyond just being looked at through the categorisation of marital duties.

Anthropologists Radcliffe-Brown and Ford (1987) describe marriage as nothing but a rearrangement of social structure where social structure is an arrangement of a person in institutionalised relationships. The government is a significant part of marriage, making the union legally binding for couples. In marriage, certain existing relationships are changed, and new social relations are created, not only between the spouses and between the spouses and their relatives but also between the relatives of both wife and husband who express interest in the marriage and children as the gain expected from it (Radcliffe Brown, 1953).

According to James (1952), marriage is primarily a social contract, affecting both the bride and the bridegroom's relatives. He describes marriage as a fundamental institution in human society with a universal occurrence. "No other union of men and women meets all the requirements found in marital relations; mating, home-making, love and personality at the human level of biological, psychological, social, ethical and spiritual evolution" (James, 1952, p.191).

The recent development and change surrounding the institution of marriage seem to disagree with James' submission; marriage has changed from what he described as 'no other union meets all the requirements. There has been a dramatic increase in women as the primary provider in the home, changes in gender roles, social acceptance of cohabitation, premarital sex and childbearing outside marriage (Wilcox et al., 2005).

2.3. Historical Context of Marriage

The work of anthropologists, neurologists and palaeontologists shed light on the evolution of human sexuality and pair bonding. The type of food accumulated informed the pattern of mating and are differentiated over three periods:

Scavengers - Here, copulation took place between and among many partners, and there was no direct responsibility for any offspring or female within the group (Carol, 2005). Monogamy is somewhat observed in that selected few seek to spend time together, away from the rest of the group and engaged in the form of romance, like hugging and kissing, which likely last for weeks (Fisher, 1992).

Hunters- As time went by, scavengers turned into hunters who acquired tools and could produce more food, making it possible to have healthier babies who were born sooner and required more time and attention from their mothers. Here, mates became providers as women, who were nursing their children, could not collect their food (Fisher, 2004).

Pair bonding, as well as the drive to love temporarily, was evident in this period.

Monogamy was practised over short periods beginning from the conception to the provision for, and protection of the child until it attains maturity (Adshade and Kaiser, 2008).

Agriculturists- The shift from hunting was evident in the way humans sought energy-intensive foods. Plant foods gathered gave rise to agricultural cultivation and annual domestication (Weiss et al., 2004). At this stage, there was the need for both males and females to put in the labour, leading to the acquisition of wealth and supporting the movement towards long-term and stable pair bonding (Adshade and Kaiser, 2008).

By the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, many values, norms, goals and most importantly, the meaning of marriage had changed due to the liberalisation of society. From the cultural standpoint, prominence was given to emotional satisfaction, individuality and romantic love in marriage (Cherlin, 2004). From a materialist perspective: *“the transition from agricultural subsistence to wage labour, rising standards of living, and the eventual joining of married women to the workforce, was also instrumental in changing the meanings that were associated with marriage”* (Cherlin, 2004, p.187).

To Ernest Burgess, the transition ‘from an institution to a companionship’, as quoted in Cherlin (2004), observed mostly in the 1950s, ushered in a new perspective to marriage. Although the traditional divisions of labour were still enduring, “married couples were supposed to be partners to each other as well as being friends and lovers with greater importance placed on emotional bonds of the family” (Cherlin, 2004, p.188).

However, the 1960s and recent times have seen a rise in the number of young adults that remained single as they went through educational institutions and started their careers. There is also a rise in childbearing out of wedlock, high divorce rates, same-sex unions and a greater acceptance of cohabitation before marriage. All these translated into a whole new meaning of marriage for society. Marriage transitioned from the companionate model to what Cherlin calls “individualised marriage” (Cherlin, 2004, p.189). Cancian (1987) which characterises this transition as a shift from being concerned with role-playing to that of self-development and emotional fulfilment.

In modern times, the most important aspects of marriage are social, religious as well as legal. Bertrand Russell (1959) says, “marriage differs, of course, from other sex

relations by the fact that it is a legal institution. It is also in most communities a religious institution, but it is the legal aspect which is essential” (: p. 88).

Marriage is fundamentally defined as “a personal association between a man and a woman and a biological relationship for mating and reproduction. As a social, legal and religious institution, marriage has undergone various modifications and changes; nevertheless, its basic realities remain the same” (Russell, 1959, p.89).

For this research, marriage would mean a marital relationship between a man and a woman.

After looking at marriage from the customary, statutory, religious and anthropological viewpoints, the next section discusses the African marriage systems, and Nigerian marriage including the status and roles of women.

2.4. African Marriage Systems:

Marriage is the beginning of erecting a family, which forms the basic unit of most organisations; therefore, it is given serious consideration among the traditional African societies as it serves many purposes. Mbiti (1969) describes African marriage as the focus of existence for the Africans:

“It is the point where all the members of a given community meet: the departed, the living and those yet unborn. All the dimensions of time meet here, and the whole drama of history is repeated, renewed and revitalised. Marriage is a drama where everyone becomes an actor or actress and not just a spectator” (: p.133).

Ogoma (2014) describes African marriage as a family or community affair, which is made sacred through the involvement of the departed souls.

In the old African setting, spouse selection starts when the parents deem their son fit and mature enough to take a wife. It was the sole responsibility of the parents to choose a marriage partner for their child. When a prospective spouse is found, a marriage proposal is made by the groom's family, followed by the two families seeking spiritual divination to determine the fate of the marriage. The outcome of such divination would determine whether the marriage would be allowed to take place (Ogoma, 2014).

Women are prepared for their roles and expectations in marriage through education and training. Importantly the wife's roles include moral education of the children, trying to mould them into responsible members of the society (Abraham 1987). Men are also taught their duties to their wives and in-laws. The husband needs to provide for the wife's needs, a failure of which is counted as morally unjust (Ogunngbemi, 1997).

African traditional marriage is celebrated with the total involvement of the immediate and extended families. The celebration is characterised by gifts, wealth, farm produce, and special recognition of the wife's family for giving out their cherished daughter in marriage.

The above is majorly a traditional and earliest marriage process in Nigeria. In modern times, parents are no longer solely responsible for the selection of spouses; neither are they as deeply involved in the process of preparation and marriage rites. Modernisation, education, and religion have significantly affected the contemporary marriage process (Ogunngbemi, 1997).

This is, however, not to say some aspects of culture are no longer in existence; children are still expected to seek parental consent before marriage. This study focuses on modern-day marriage as it is practised in Nigeria today.

2.5. Nigerian Marriage

Nigeria, with a population of about one hundred and ninety million people, over 400 ethnic groups and more than 300 languages as estimated in 2017 by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), is a culturally rich yet, diverse country. There are three main types of marriage: Christian, Islamic, and customary marriage. In the Nigerian culture, marriage can be defined as the coming together of two families as a result of the union between a man and a woman. Marriage ceremonies take any form preferred by the couple, mostly conforming to their culture, ethnicity, and religion, and it is valid under the Nigerian legal system. In Nigeria, cultural or religious marriage is signified by the payment of bride price and bridal gifts from the groom to the bride.

Due to the recognition of the registered (statutory) marriage worldwide, people are encouraged to register their marriage under the statutory law in addition to the customary or religious marriage to gain legal marital status throughout the world (Omokhondion, 2001; 2008).

The current study is based solely on heterosexual marriages, not the revisionist's definition of marriage, which is the coming together of two romantically involved minds (Finnis, 1994), regardless of their sex, to commit to a life of sharing a domestic life and all it entails.

2.5.1. Statutory, Customary, Religious Marriage in Nigeria

Statutory marriage is also known as marriage under the Acts. In Nigeria, the Acts that govern celebration and incidents of monogamous marriage are found principally in the English celebrated case of *Hyde v Hyde* (Philips, 1953 ed). Here, Lord

Penzance declared statutory marriage as the voluntary union for the life of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others. This definition depicts monogamous marriage, where couples intend to live for the period of their lifetime or until either of the parties dies (Olomjobi, 2016).

Customary marriage is a union of one man and one woman or more than one woman and between the two families. Although Nigeria has more than 400 ethnic groups and so practices differ, the basic requirements of customary marriage are quite similar; they all include parental consent, consent of the parties to the marriage, marriageable age, bride price, gift, or gift symbol.

Religious marriage, under religious law, is officiated in the place of worship. People come together to perform their marital rites in sacred places in the presence of friends, and family, as witnesses to God's commandment being obeyed by couples. Verses from the holy books are recited, and couples are educated about their marital roles and expectations according to their religious teachings.

In Islam, marriage is although for a lifetime and divorce is strictly frowned upon; the marriage can be dissolved on many reasonable grounds. In Christianity, however, the marriage is expected to be for life and under no circumstances should the couples be divorced.

Other marriage forms can be undertaken alongside the religious ones, and many Nigerians conduct all three; religious, traditional and registered/statutory. This further shows how significant the role of religion is in Nigeria and the place it occupies in marriage regardless of what religion it is.

2.5.2. Culture and Lifestyle in Nigerian Families

Nigerian culture and lifestyle have seen all forms of change over the years, and both marriage and family life became very different in the face of modernisation. Psychological studies (e.g. Mastekaasa, 1992) suggest that people's emotional and psychological needs are still provided by marriage. However, it is important to note that marriage in Africa does not take the shape of unions in the Western part of the world. The family occupies an extremely significant position in Nigeria. Many people get married upon the instruction and input of their family, and the whole affairs of marriage are not handled in isolation; it is not unique to the couples alone but subject to the approval and blessings of the parents and the extended family (Caldwell, Orubuloye and Caldwell, 1991). It is not enough for couples to want to come together; there will be consultations of the elders within the family and the approval of both parents before the marriage can be approved of or conducted.

2.5.3. Display of emotions

It should be noted that, the way Africans show affection, especially in public, could be different from other cultures around the world. It is therefore important not to conclude that the lack of public display of affection could only be due to a sign of a dissatisfying marriage and not a practice of the African culture. The display of emotion is strictly a private affair and considered an immoral act when done in public.

Anthropologists (e.g. Radcliff-Brown, 1958) have pointed out that African culture frowns upon a show of affection and companionship in the public eye. However, it could be shown in the privacy of their homes which makes it difficult for outsiders to readily tell what the relationships between couples are like.

The discussion of affection, especially in public, could be different from other cultures. In Nigeria, intimacy is not readily spoken about due to the cultural, moral and religious ways the society has been shaped. Religions see the discussion of intimacy as taboo and acceptable only to those of lowly behaviour, and even such behaviour was practised discretely (Kayongo-Male and Onyango, 1984).

It is very difficult to broach the topic of intimacy in public, let alone discuss the satisfaction or dissatisfaction therein because the act of premarital sex is forbidden in the case of Muslims, a primordial sin in the case of Christians, and disreputable in the eyes of culture.

Long before the advent of Christianity and Islam, Nigerians practised their high moral values alongside their secretive attitude to sex (Onuche, 2013). Procreation is discussed and never the process that leads to it. It is therefore understandable that a country with such a level of silence about intimacy would not engage in any form of public display of affection.

2.5.4. Patriarchy, and Gender Roles in Nigerian Marriage

The key feature in the traditional Nigerian society is its patriarchal nature. A structure that renders the men dominant over the women (Aina, 1998).

The patriarchal nature of Nigeria highlights the male figure in the family, describing them as strong and authoritative ones. In contrast, women are described through their domestic responsibilities as the weaker sex (Aluko and Alfa, 1985).

Immediately after the woman gets married, society expects her to adopt the husband's last name and become his possession. The woman exercises little or no rights and is seen as a wife and mother with no voice or identity (Aluko and Alfa, 1985; Omokhondion, 2008; Labeodan, 2001).

The strict hierarchical structure guiding Nigerian families expects the wife to serve her husband's family, fulfil her sexual role in her home, partake in all forms of chores and social obligations with little or no consideration for her feelings (Fadipe, 1970; Aluko and Alfa, 1985).

Despite the level of education and adopted westernised lifestyles evident in both social and religious practices, the tradition and norms in Nigeria portray women as having stereotyped roles and being seen by society as inferior to men.

Also, there is an expected age of marriage for both men and women but most especially women. Stigma is attached to unmarried women having reached the marriageable age between eighteen and thirty (Ntoimo and Abahile 2014). From the age of thirty-five, women are treated with disrespect and ashamed of their single marital status. Stigma types range from name-calling to harassment and discrimination, although it is more profound for women who were never married than those previously married (Ibrahim and Hassan, 2009).

Patriarchy in Nigeria serves as a justification for the demotion of women in all spheres of life; family, education, economy, workforce, politics, and inheritance (Salaam, 2003).

Be that as it may, the issue of gender roles and women domination cannot be understood without going back in history. African countries, Nigeria included, did not start out being dominated by men. The changes in the state of affairs in Nigeria causing women subjugation and gender inequality can be traced back to and described as the aftermath of colonial rule.

Women were the most adversely affected by colonialism; men were preferred in war fronts, and women were relegated to the positions of help, who stay back to treat the wounded, cook or do other acts of caring (Malembanie, 2014).

In Mama's perception, colonialism has affected, to a considerable extent, how men treat women in Africa. Although both genders suffered under colonial rule, women suffered more severely in that the treatment went from the hands of the white to the black man whom they had brainwashed through imperialism (Mama, 2007).

By the time the colonial masters departed, they had largely influenced how Black men treated African women. What Mama (2007) advocates is that imperialism had transformed pre-existing conditions of African men to ill-treat women in general and their wives and their daughters in the colonies in particular. Colonialists taught the Africans new ways of seeing themselves as evil and inferior while seeing the white as lord and the key to civilisation and economic development. This, in turn, resulted in the shunning of customs and traditions that made both men and women one in the society, losing control of them without being acutely aware of this (Fanon, 1959, Mama, 2007).

Economic independence became a weapon for men against society, where "power acquisition is directly related to the wealth amassed. The more money a man could have, the more subdued the wife can be especially wives with no means of acquiring wealth, therefore, rendering them women oppressed, sexually as well as economically exploited" (Mama, 2007:P.49).

This position of superiority was easy to attain as, during the colonial era, men were trained to become leaders of various communities. In contrast, women were trained in primary domestic roles to become wives suitable for the men taking up colonial administrative roles (Mama, 2007).

2.5.5. Roles and Status of Women in Nigeria

The discussion thus far suggests what women became as a result of subjugation. Although this is the Nigerian woman that is mostly represented through the media and publications, it is not an adequate representation of the significant roles of women in the development of Nigeria over the years (Wole-Abu, 2018).

Half of the Nigerian population are women, and they play vital roles in building the nation socially and economically. Therefore, it is essential to look at the role and status of Nigerian women through three periods of colonisation to the present day, in which this study is based.

Pre-colonial era:

Women during the pre-colonial era contributed toward the growth of the nation through the promotion of goods and services. They were involved in producing crops that accounted for the even distribution of varieties of foods and commodities. Not only did women plant foods, they also processed them; the nature of food and commodities produced depended on what is in abundance in the part of the country they resided (Okunna, 2005; Wole-Abu, 2018).

In addition to being merchants and farmers, some women were identified as possessing the supernatural power to cure ailments, offer general health care and even make childbearing possible for those with infertility.

During the pre-colonial era, education for women was tailored towards specific skills, however, a failure to acquire income-generating skills would result in them becoming wholly dependent on their husbands (Wole-Abu,2018).

Politically, women occupied some notable positions in the pre-colonial era; for instance, the founder of modern Zaria, Queen Bakwa, was succeeded by her daughter, Queen Amina of Zaria, who was a warrior. Women in Yoruba land held

reputable chieftaincy titles; Iyalode and Iyaloja were positions occupied only by women within the royal kingdom. Moremi was also known for her prominent role in the Benin kingdom (Awe, 1992).

Interestingly during this period, the level of involvement of women in politics, economic and social development of Nigeria did not undermine the problem posed by the patriarchal state of the nation. Women were considered free under the customary law and farmed on communal land; however, they could not inherit it. The inheritance was passed from one generation of males in the family to other male generations.

The colonial era:

This period signified the struggle of women economically as the country was at this time export-oriented. This meant women were unable to carry on with the traditional occupations formally in place. The advancement of the country and the introduction of expatriates eventually led to the demise of low scale businesses and smaller markets (Wole-Abu, 2018). Efforts to have access to loans that could help boost their business were denied. Agriculture, which women were highly skilled in, was not functional. There was no access to cash crop incentives or modern technological know-how (Odah, 2003); these facilities were mainly for men.

This period in Nigeria represented a period of subjugation and exploitation of women. Inferiority complex was created, and women began to experience low self-esteem where figures of authority, primarily men, became the superior ones (Adamu, 1999; Okunna, 2000).

Post - colonial era:

Women eventually turned traditional agriculture around by putting men who needed financial support to good use on the farm leading to a high level of national development for Nigeria. The contribution of women led to the production of about 70% of the nation's food (Okunna, 2000).

In the public services, the percentage of women who held office posts continued to grow, albeit at a plodding pace. A significant contributor to this slow growth was the economic recession, which led to parents choosing to educate their male children. The situation women found themselves in became increasingly difficult due to the legal system that was in place, making women subservient to men. Men were seen as more valued, and girls were only offered free education up to a certain level to prevent early marriages (Wole-Abu, 2018).

Over time, women continued to fight to get liberated from the residual laws created by colonisation and further exacerbated by the country affording men the authority to apportion rights within the country. Women continue to struggle to gain recognition by striving to be educated and gain skills to be self-sufficient, although the margin of women who can achieve this continues to be very low due to the patriarchal nature of the country (Awe, 1992; Wole-Abu, 2018).

2.5.6. Rights in Marriage

Marriage involves the allocation of rights and obligations among the parties to the agreement. Anthropologists have attempted to classify the various rights, usually allocated at the marriage in different societies. In an attempt to discuss the jural elements in marital and other kinship relations, Radcliffe-Brown (1960) distinguishes between personal rights and possessive rights. In most societies, husbands and wives

have personal rights over each other; either spouse may claim certain duties of the other. It is also common to find that a husband has possessive rights in relation to his wife.

As mentioned earlier, Nigeria is a patriarchal society, which means men are dominant over women in virtually all areas and, women still have fewer legal rights than men. According to Nigeria's Penal Code of Northern Nigeria, Section 55 (1d), an assault by a man on a woman is not an offence if they are married, as native law or custom recognises such 'correction' as lawful if there is no grievous hurt. In the northern part of Nigeria, men have the right to beat their wives as long as they do not cause permanent physical injury. Wives are often seen as little more than possessions and are subject to the rule of their husbands (Sanders, 1998).

This is an aspect of the Nigerian culture, which is prominent in the northern part of the country; interestingly, marriage could mean different things to people depending on what tribe they belong to. Not only this, different bye-laws bind marriages depending on the region within the country the married couples reside.

2.5.7. Bride Price

Bride price, otherwise called bridewealth, is endorsed in customary marriages. As most Nigerians get married under customary and or religious law, there is a need to discuss the tenets of customary marriage.

Many Nigerian ethnic groups adhere to the practice of offering a bride price for an intended wife. Unlike a dowry, in which the woman would bring something of material value to the marriage, a bride price is some form of compensation the husband must pay before he can marry a wife. It comes in different forms, such as money and or gifts like a car, cattle, swine, foods, or other valuable goods paid to the woman's

family upon marriage. Although the payment usually goes to the wife's family, in some cultures and the Islamic religion, the payment is made directly to the bride as a token of love.

The act of paying the bride price could be misconstrued as the buying off of the bride from parents to engage in hard labour and bear children depending on the culture (Sagay et al., 1999; Oguli, Oumo, 2004).

Initially intended to give value to marriage rite, bride price, especially in the urban setting, is now commercialised and appears to be a purchase of goods to be used, resulting in women being abused and being stranded in abusive relationships sometimes due to their inability to repay the bride price in order to leave such relationships and regain their freedom (Ndira, 2004).

It is common practice for the bride price to be very high for the highly educated or those from privileged backgrounds (Matembe, 2004). Studies have been conducted to investigate the effects of high bride price on Marital Stability, (e.g. Sambe and colleagues, 2013; Bloch and Rao, 2002) and on the perverse effects of high bride prices on marriage (e.g. Hague and Thiara, 2009; Platteau and Gaspart, 2007). Many studies indicated that the bride price, which is supposed to be a token of love, has come to mean the surrender of freedom. The woman's status is reduced to a property, and all aspects of her life including her earnings are under the husband's control, scrutiny, and instruction (Alupo, 2004; Platteau and Gaspart, 2007).

Kaye et al. (2005) conducted a qualitative study titled 'Implication of bride price on domestic violence and reproductive health in Uganda'. The study sought to find perceptions of domestic violence from ten participants. It was found that Bride price has an implication on gender values, expectations, roles and relations. Participants

perceived bride price as indicating that a woman was bought into the man's household, which diminishes the woman's status in the home, thereby promoting inequality (Kaye et al., 2005).

Although this may not be entirely true for the participants in this research, it is an indication that the issue of bride price has a significant influence on the sense-making of marriage for women in the African culture.

2.6. Existential Perspectives on Marriage

As this phenomenological research has an existential stance, it is crucial to view marriage and romantic relationships through existential and feministic lenses to enhance how participants create their meanings.

It must be noted that the views of the western existentialists are not necessarily adequate representations of Nigerian marriage and how Africans perceive it; however, it can serve as a basis for comparison with the few indigenous philosophical theories found.

Below is a section exploring both existential and feminist philosophers' perspectives on marital relations.

2.6.1. Nietzsche and Marriage

Friedrich Nietzsche lived in a period where the roles of men and women were a lot different from today (1844-1900). His submission on marriage is exciting and contradictory but certainly gives one the reason to think about how it applies to today's world. He admires the ancient Greeks and their relationship model where the

man would be dominant over the female and used for recreation (Nietzsche, 1883/1996).

Nietzsche (1968) sees heterosexual relationships as an obstacle that can only get in the way of a man achieving this transcendence because of the distraction that comes with romance and power struggle.

Here, it can be seen that Nietzsche refers directly to men in many of his suggestions, so it is difficult to apply the same to women. A Few of his suggestions includes not marrying for love but friendship, advocating for a trial marriage and procreation as a goal that everyone should set his or her mind to achieving and having a more victorious life. According to him:

“This would create new generations of amazing individuals, which is an ultimate expression of the power of an individual” (Nietzsche, 1881/1997, p.97).

It is important to note that the submission of Nietzsche on marriage and the marital relationship came at a completely different time to what we have now. In the 19th century, women saw themselves as acting strictly in the roles of mothers and wives. It was much later, in the 20th century, that the movement for women suffrage and finding their place in the labour market became widespread (Nettleton, 2009).

Many of the ideas propounded by Nietzsche as needed for marriage could be seen as offensive to women, as most of these suggestions are more in support of men than they are of women. Not only this, his suggestions are not in conformity with or applicable to the African setting of today. In the wake of modernisation and feminism, Nietzsche’s views on marriage can be seen as applicable to some extent in terms of dominance as it is seen in Nigeria’s patriarchy. Also, the idea of a trial marriage is

practised in many parts of the western world; his general idea is anti-feminist and probably appropriate for the era in which it was written when women had no voice.

Marriage and its meaning have evolved over the decades, and Nietzsche's prescription falls short of what Nigeria traditionally represents. This is because marriage is seen in Africa as the affair of the whole community. The family plays a significant part in spouse selection, so the prescriptions of Nietzsche cannot be upheld in a traditional communal setting like Nigeria.

2.6.2. De Beauvoir and Love

Simone de Beauvoir's (1949) concern in 'loving authentically' is the distinction between inauthentic and authentic loving. She believes there are unbridgeable gaps between individuals because they are separate and different. In loving authentically, one should be free from oppression. Romantic love is saddled with many complicated problems, some of which are sacrifices partners make to make the relationship work, striving to be united and feel secure. This loving raises the probability of one lover to lord over the other, rendering him/her into an object and creating bad faith (De Beauvoir, 1949).

Other problems that may arise include devotion, which can take the shape of selfishness, being blinded to one's meaning, not seeking meaning and goals through the other and believing in social and biological fate (Cleary, 2015). All these can only render one empty if the relationship ends at any point because the lovers would have invested heavily in the relationship. Her solution, authentic loving, is for lovers to see and treat each other equally, especially by avoiding master-slave relationships (be it by domination or submission) and appreciating each other's differences. Finally,

transcending both as individuals and as a couple while also working towards a common goal (De Beauvoir, 1949).

Like Nietzsche, De Beauvoir views friendship and authenticity as better grounds upon which a relationship should stand. Not putting one's faith in love, for it is only through friendship and not a merging relationship that partners can respect each other as equally free and independent.

In the African setting, De Beauvoir's statement of bad faith can be true in that women are seen and treated as what the society prescribes them to be; they are seen as objects dedicated to wifely duties and making the marriage work. Friendship, even if present, is not apparent in Nigerian marriages as women and men see themselves more through their roles and obligations, which takes precedence over feelings. However, the suggestion that couples see each other as equally free and independent is a state that would be almost unachievable in Nigeria owing to her staunch patriarchal nature. Domination and inequality are the hallmarks of Nigerian marriage, and for this, her submission will only remain a suggestion not practicable in reality.

In summary, it can be noted that friendship is common to both philosophers, and one has suggested that love is essential in all relationships, one form or the other, although not as needed as friendship in a marriage. What is clear is that both Nietzsche and De Beauvoir cannot find an explanation for the conflict between freedom and loving. Their prescriptions are not 'one size fits all'; therefore, do not necessarily fit some settings like the strict cultural and religious African/Nigerian setting, be it ancient or contemporary. Attempting to make it fit would be a pointless effort.

2.7. Feminist Perspectives on Marriage

The feminist perspective on marriage is more of a combination of the critiques of marriage and a review. There has been considerable controversy in the women's freedom movement (Cronan, 1973). It became clear to the feminists studying marriage that laws in the state and tradition within the culture have rendered the position of women in marriage inferior to that of the husband.

2.7.1. Feminism and gender inequality

The renowned French existential philosopher Simone De Beauvoir shows in her book titled '*The Second Sex*' the limitations of the choices available to women due to many factors, one of them being the woman's anatomy (De Beauvoir, 1949). She discusses how women internalise social myths and the extent to which social structures and institutions have impacted the existence of women. According to her, the body of a woman brings a situation while the woman herself is the reaction to such situation in that the woman possesses the natural vessel through which the child is born and fed, and it is the woman that decides to have children or not to have them. This then limits the woman's ability to achieve transcendence and become more than they are seen through a long-standing view of society. In De Beauvoir's (1949) argument, the limitation of women makes it difficult to live out of free will; the only way a woman can achieve transcendence is to reside in another society. She says:

"Yes, women, in general, are today inferior to men; that is, their situation provides them with fewer possibilities: the question is whether this state of affairs must be perpetuated (...). Many men wish it would be: not all men have yet laid down their arm" (De Beauvoir 1949, p.13).

She goes further to say the ideology of men should change alongside social and economic organisations for women to enjoy their freedom, which was originally part of their constitution as humans.

In *'The Second Sex'*, De Beauvoir aims to gain a higher sense of clarity regarding gender difference; different sex does not or should not justify stereotypical behaviours within culture and society. Women should be able to make choices, gain relief from the numerous reproductive roles, which render them weak and give room for them to take on economic roles within the society. This way, they are seen as women and not just as wives and mothers (De Beauvoir, 1949).

African feminists (Oyewunmi, 1999; Amadiume 1987) looked beyond De Beauvoir's submission of women as the 'other' as depicted in the second sex through the use of language. They looked at how the importation of terminologies could misrepresent what is obtained in Africa. Oyewumi (1999) and Amadiume (1987) criticise the western concept of gender as carrying a male bias which is not necessarily the case in Africa. Social identity is more relational than essentialised, and applying a thought focused on the body would only result in ideas that do not readily align with the realities of African traditions (Amadiume 1987).

2.7.2. Feminism, Marriage and Motherhood

De Beauvoir (1949) maintains that one becomes a woman and not necessarily born as one, but the process of motherhood renders her objectified, thereby fulfilling the fate of early history. She maintains that physiological characteristics should not be the reason for accepting the inequalities between the two sexes.

Marriage has been described as the destiny apportioned to women in traditional society. To De Beauvoir (1949), it is the end of the woman's life, where she gets together with another human from an unfamiliar setting, not understanding each other yet proceeding to have children and ensure the continuity of his lineage. A union that should be based on excitement then becomes a job, a means through which women get their little financial reward in exchange for fulfilling the husband's needs, procreating and also briefly or ultimately becoming his slave (De Beauvoir, 1948).

She sees abortion as a way of releasing women from the constraints imposed on them through marriage. She sees the need for a woman to be a mother and wife as social constructs that have successfully made women see themselves as perfect only when they procreate.

De Beauvoir, therefore, suggests that the way to attain freedom and escape marriage is through occupation. Entering the world of work through production and supplying goods and services to promote the labour market is the initial step to a woman's ultimate release from marriage.

Contrary to de Beauvoir's opinion, marriage in Nigeria is not seen as an institution to be escaped. Occupation in Nigeria since the pre-colonial era was seen to foster women independence and relevance in the economic building of the nation. Skill acquisition and gender roles were seen not as a means to be independent of marriage but to gain recognition and play vital roles in the society alongside being stakeholders, valued and respected in Nigeria. Financially independent married women are more respected in society than ones who are of marriageable age yet single.

On motherhood, a way to overcome the challenges was not recommended by de Beauvoir, other than for women to refuse to enter into one constantly; she describes it as a man's way of capturing women and ruining her future (De Beauvoir, 1949). Motherhood, like marriage, is seen by de Beauvoir as an obstacle that needs overcoming and being a mother is tantamount to doing the bidding of the man. However, in modern-day Nigeria and the western world, women can decide to procreate independent of men or husbands. With the availability of artificial insemination and contraception, women can make informed decisions on procreation irrespective of being married or unmarried.

In line with de Beauvoir's suggestion that women should exercise the right to refuse motherhood, Hooks says:

"Many of us were the unplanned children of talented, creative women whose lives had been changed by unplanned and unwanted pregnancies; we witnessed their bitterness, their rage, their disappointment with their lot in life. And we were clear that there could be no genuine sexual liberation for women and men without better, safer contraceptives—without the right to safe, legal abortion" (Hooks, 2000: 26).

Although being African could create an assumption that Hook's submission is valid for Africans, it must be noted that the issue of motherhood goes beyond exercising rights as women to become mothers. The process of having children, be it unplanned or not, does not necessarily make abortion an acceptable means of

contraception in Africa, where children are seen as the centre of and a significant gain in any marriage (Arnfred, 2002).

Contrary to de Beauvoir's view on marriage and motherhood, African scholars and existential feminists view feminism in different lights. Quite importantly, each woman as an individual is capable of deciding what being in the world means as well as the purpose assigned to her existence (Amadiume 1987).

In Oyewumi's (1999) response to de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, she draws a line between what women are and how they are seen compared to how mothers are seen and regarded in Africa. The idea of the woman being the other does not necessarily hold for African women in that mothers in the African setting are seen, and regarded as important even to men.

As childbearing is an integral part of marriage, women who grow to be Mothers of men who occupy enviable positions in the community become highly respected, enviable and influential. Therefore, how women are treated as the other can only be understood by limiting a woman's role to a wife and not a mother. In Nigeria and many countries, the two come hand in hand and impact how women are seen and treated (Grosz 2005; Hooks 1981).

2.7.3. Differing faces of Feminism

Similar to de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan (1963) in *The Female Mystique* talks about the social aspect of marriage and how it affects the person and identity of white middle-class American women.

In America, Friedan published a book airing the voices of married women in the 1950s, focusing on educated middle-class homemakers in America whose lives revolved around their spouses, children, cleaning and cooking. Some describe

themselves as fulfilling their destinies, but common to these women was the problem that could not be defined. There was the absence of a true sense of self behind the title of wife and mother; they yearned to be known for something rather than what society has groomed them to be (Friedan, 1963). The persistent ideologies demanding women to be domesticated, lose their femininity, or education are not the problem for women. Instead, it is the solution to other problems that caused torture in the lives of women and their families and puzzles for their doctors and educators. It is the solution to the question that arose from women, which says: "I want something more than my husband and my children and my home" (Friedan, 1963, p. 32).

It can be deduced that women need to be identified as women, not viewed through the position they have come to occupy or their role as wives, homemakers, or child bearers.

Looking at Friedan's study, one can readily see that the problem of the women during this period was being a housewife while at the same period for Africans, the question and problem that could be defined was about freedom from oppression, slavery and colonisation. Although African women share in Friedan's opinion that women wanted to be seen more than as wives and mothers, the reason for this desire was different.

African feminists, especially Nigerians, faced high levels of struggle in terms of their roles, not just as women but as contributors to the economic and social development of the country. There was the need for independence and freedom from inferiority brought about by the infiltration of the country by westerners who evaded women of their enormous contribution to the general development of the country through colonisation and imperialism (Mama, 2007).

After colonisation, it would be wrong to think the past incarnations of marriage, which left women with little or no rights over themselves, children or possessions, have changed due to the change in laws regarding women rights (e.g. Okin, 1994; Card, 1996). The state supported through the award of its license the claims one partner (man) has over the property of the other (woman). The effort to have women seen not through their roles has met with little changes as the state's practice encourages the objectification of women (Aina, 1998; Otite, 1991).

Many scholars have written on married women's constraints and dominance and marriage (e.g. Bernard, 1964; Coontz, 2005; Elliot & Umberson, 2008). Chambers' (2001) argument is that marriage is a form of female oppression in that it renders them worse off when married than before marriage. For instance, the traditionally assigned tasks and the devaluing of women still exist after many decades (England, 2010; Jaramillo-Sierra & Allen, 2013). Initially, it was the legal responsibility of the wife to live in the home established by the husband in many parts of the world and must also perform domestic duties required to care for the husband and the product of the marriage (Walker, and Dickson, 2004).

The call to abolish the role of a wife, according to Oakley (1997), did not materialise because the old idea of wifedom, where women saw being a good wife and mother as the highest form of achievement, still lingers (Sharp & Ganong, 2011). After the abolition of this law, the sentiment that came with it has not waned, especially in African countries, particularly in Nigeria, where this study was based.

Bourdieu (2001) criticises marriage using 'symbolic violence' to describe women's symbolic standards to which women will have to conform. To him, symbolic violence

directly affects women's thoughts and not their bodies; it is experienced due to societal pressure, which renders individuals low in self-esteem and self-worth. The unmarried women feel the need to fulfil the societal expectation, and the married ones conform to the standards set for them, seeing themselves as nothing but what they ought to be seen as.

The picture painted by society shows that unmarried women have failed; family, peers, friends, married women and the media further exacerbate this. In general, a state of being unmarried is supposed to be a brief one, leading quickly to marriage, which is the pre-ordained destination by, and in the society (Sandfield & Percey, 2003).

Kingston (2004) named the following as the basis for a feminist movement in marriage: Oppression in the form of entitlement and ownership concepts and the gendered division of labour, which means women earn less than men and are less independent than men. He further argued that marriage constrains women by restricting their ambition and available options to pursue careers. From a young age, girls do not usually aim to achieve an influential status in terms of education and always feel incapable of being independent and happy at the same time. This is easy as women do most if not all the household chores and children upbringing, so working outside the home and the housework-induced stress will have an adverse effect on the physical health and the dignity of the woman (Kingston, 2004).

Feminist scholars have researched the idea of wilful submission, otherwise known as 'choice feminism' (e.g. Snyder-Hall, 2008), where wives decide to opt for the role of a

submissive wife, a desire borne out of their own free choice. For instance, Gill (2007) described post-feminism as including choice, individualism, empowerment and self-regulation, to name some of the ideas. The basic tenets of choice feminism are for women to be given a choice and not judged on whatever choice they make (Snyder-Hall, 2008).

2.7.4. Feminism in Africa

There is the need to examine African feminism separately as there is a point of divergence between black feminism and her white, Anglo-American/European counterparts. Examining issues faced by women in Africa would automatically take us to the root cause of the movement, which is colonialism. Black feminism and womanism theory came about due to women paying attention to the sufferings of women and seeking to end women subjugation as a result of colonial rule. Not only this, they took cognisance of the oppression, sufferings, exploitation and oppression of men within their social group under the colonial rule (Hooks, 1984).

Colonisation is not gender-neutral. Therefore, it can be said that the sufferings of Africans were severe, although the system was structured such that women's oppression was more perpetuated, making their sufferings a two-level one; colonial rule and oppression from men (Mama, 1997).

The challenges women face in Africa in terms of inequality, discrimination, oppression and gender roles are experienced worldwide. However, what is obtained in Africa is in no small degree different from the realities of the developed countries at present (Atanga, 2013).

In Nigeria, various means were adopted to have women's voices heard; riots, campaigns, and protests by women rights activist Fumilayo Ransome-Kuti. These

protests and campaigns met with a degree of success and paved the way for feminism and the women rights movement as we have it in Nigeria today. Despite this success, the state of affairs concerning gender inequality still cannot be overcome (Firestone, 2003).

From the discussion above, it can be gathered that, in the movement to bring the unjust, unequal treatment of women to an end or the barest minimum worldwide, some countries have made more progress than others. The state of affairs that feminists described in the early twentieth century is still prevalent in Nigeria. The under-representation of women is evidenced in their level of participation at both the national and the international level; despite a high level of education and modernisation, gender equality, revision of gender roles and liberation, women seem to be faced with persistent resistance by the patriarchal society that Nigeria is. Patriarchy is richly supported by cultural and religious beliefs and practices that serve as a means for women to become mentally isolated and begin to see themselves as nothing but what society expects them to be (Okafor, Fagbemi & Hassan, 2011).

2.8. Literature on Areas of Marriage

The following section focuses on different aspects of marriage relating to this research, generated through the interview schedule. Self and identity, freedom, the role of religion, and financial independence are discussed.

2.8.1. Self and Identity

Self and identity issues have been of theoretical interest for a long time. Previous studies (e.g. Campbell, 1990; Baumeister, 1999) have addressed how the social network impacts people's identity management and serves as a means through which identity is validated while reminding them of their beliefs, values, and abilities (Cotten, 1999; Stryker & Burke, 2000). The concept of identity has become progressively more complicated, and at its core, it serves as the answer to the question of, 'who we are' (Allport, 1961).

2.8.1.1. Self and Identity in Africa

The philosophy of Mbiti's (1990 p.106) "We are therefore I am, and since we are therefore I am" is the ground upon which African identity is based. This translates into the principle of Ubuntu, a communal lifestyle where individuals become aware of themselves in relation to others. Here, the self is both an ontological and social product (Chuwa, 2012).

In living a communal life, the individual never experiences joy, sorrow, successes and struggles alone; one is self only through the other and denying oneself of the other would mean denying oneself of selfhood (Musana, 2018).

In recent times, the humanness and personhood that is evident in the life of Africans and derived through interdependence, integrity, respect, love, sustenance and promotion of values have been deconstructed through modernisation and knowledge systems.

It is the belief of scholars (e.g. Rose, 1998; Musana, 2018) that social, educational, religious and economic institutions threaten the individual and communal existence

of Africans as it was known before the advent of globalisation, thereby tainting the personhood and identity that is original to them.

Furthermore, the question of 'who we are' in Africa is considered by Fanon as being severely tainted by colonialism. Colonisers are known for ridding Africans of their original identity by compelling them to adopt western ways of life. Fanon (1967) says:

“His customs and the sources on which they are based were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilisation that he did not know and that imposed itself on him” (:p.110).

The issue of identity plays a vital role in determining an individual's personality, and many factors give rise to how they are formed.

In addition to the aforementioned, identity can also be looked at through its components as we navigate our ways through life in relation to others, especially in marriage.

2.8.1.2. Components and prototypes of identity

Identity comprises two distinct components:

Collective identity: Constructed through our interrelationships, and described as how individuals view themselves through how others view them as members of a public group (Marcus & Cross, 1990; Trafimow, Triandis, & Goto, 1991; Brewer & Gardner, 2004).

Private identity: This is understood as a sense of self disconnected from group membership and social roles; it includes personal attributes, beliefs, values, and skills.

According to Deaux (1993), collective and private identities are interrelated in that private identity informs and is informed by the collective identity of an individual. We can understand identity change as changes in the meaning of the self, which includes changes through reference to a public group and what it means to be who one is as a unique, private person (Burke, 2006).

A study conducted by Berger and Kellner (1970) demonstrated that entering a marital relationship calls for identity reconstruction, achieved by reconstructing past identities and defining a new relationship identity. The couple must look at their past, revise their identity to the point of marriage, and set out to construct a new identity based on the new relationship embarked upon.

Pals (1999) proposed that marriage is an identity investment. She outlined four prototypes of identity in marriage, which reflect the different ways women analysed their identities in the marriage context:

Anchored: Women who can integrate different elements of their identity into their marriage while maintaining a sense of identity possess an anchored identity.

Defined: This fits a description of women engrossed in their marital and family life that renders other aspects of their own identity less important to the marriage.

Restricted: Women here display a feeling of frustration due to the limitations placed on them by marriage.

Confused: Women that have confused identity initially suffered from a lack of self-confidence and a sense of competence which marriage had not helped improve.

From the above, it can be seen that seeking to define one's identity through history would be a futile task as pre-colonial identity has been destroyed through colonisation and new ways had to be learnt (Fanon, 1967).

Although new, westernised ways may have been learnt, the communal lifestyle of Africans still exists and continues to inform how individuals strike a balance between a collective and private identity. For instance, in marriage, people learn to strike a balance between being part of a community or an extended family, especially women, and at the same time adopt a new lifestyle that suits the purpose of their marriage.

2.8.1.3. Existential Dimension to the Self and Identity

Theoretically, existentialists contend that there is no solid self. A sense of self develops through our abilities, actions and deeds as we relate to other people and our world and learn about ourselves through others (Van Deurzen and Arnold-Baker, 2005).

Despite the submission that there is no solid self, Heidegger (1927) emphasises the importance of being oneself; our experience of the world is always unique and so different from that of other people. In other words, there is always an inner felt sense of who we are, a sense of ownership as we experience our own private and controlled world. He also believes that there is no self in isolation; every human is in connection to the world (Heidegger, 1927).

Sartre's (1943) argument is that existence precedes essence, so humans create themselves every day and can only exist in the moment, unlike objects that have been solidly created for a purpose.

Buber (1970/2000) emphasises the importance of relating to an 'other' by stating that people can only become through relating to the other, and there cannot be an 'I' in isolation.

To Kierkegaard (1980), the self can only be created by living through the struggles of two life tensions. He describes the creation of self as struggling between the finite and the infinite while encompassing all versions of the individual (past, present and future) through relationships between reality and possibility.

The strife to find oneself amid all tensions created by man and those out of man's control is known as the process of becoming oneself (Kierkegaard, 1983; Van Deurzen and Arnold-Baker, 2005). However, the strife is endless, and so are the tensions between the finite and the infinite, thereby making the creation of oneself an ever-continual process (Kierkegaard, 1983).

To Nietzsche (1977), the self is an active process of living where man has the willpower to create a self that possesses both freedom and power as he sees the body, mind and soul as the same.

Van Deurzen (1998) talks about the self in relation to how individuals seek to create continuity by committing to doing the same thoughts, beliefs and actions. Although

these may be congruent to the survival of the individual, they can also cause a hindrance that can render life complicated. When the very things that give a sense of security affect life adversely, we will have to create new selfhood (Van Deurzen and Arnold-Baker, 2005).

It is essential to see how the experience of marriage has any affected the participants' felt sense of self.

2.8.2. Marriage and Religion

Religion, as earlier discussed, is a significant part of the Nigerian culture, hence the discussion on religion and marriage:

Religion plays a significant role in social control, and marriage in Nigeria is usually considered a religious affair. As the majority of the population belongs to one religious group or the other, all affairs are directly or indirectly affected by religion (Amzat, 2020). Religious doctrines have been instilled in individuals from childhood and consequently they see going against the rules of religion (e.g. pre-marital sex) as a sin; children grow up doing the bidding of their religion with the hope of gaining the pleasure of God (Amzat, 2019).

According to an American study conducted by Dollahite and Marks (2001), religion comprises three dimensions: faith, religious practices, and spiritual beliefs.

They argue that all three dimensions need attention if a rich, meaningful picture of how families are influenced by and draw meaning from religion is to be developed (Dollahite et al., 2004).

Religious participation is significantly linked with a higher commitment to marriage and increased family satisfaction (Larson and Goltz, 1989; Stinnett, 1983). Additionally, a review of the religion and marriage literature by Bahr and Chadwick (1985) found evidence to show that religious affiliation and activity have a modest positive impact on marriage and family life. Several studies have also linked religiosity with increased marital satisfaction, increased commitment and extend the duration of the marriage and fidelity compared to those who are not religious in their marriages (e.g. Agius and Chiroop, 1998; Kennedy and Whitlock 1997).

Studies have found that mere religious affiliation without religious 'activity is not typically a significant factor in the marital relationship; shared or similar religious attendance correlates with marital quality and stability. Couples or families who attend church regularly and practice religious activities as a family tend to display a sense of satisfaction in their marriage (Call & Heaton, 1997; Curtis & Ellison, 2002).

2.8.3. Economic Independence and Marriage

Economic independence is not readily spoken about in Nigeria. However, it is the pride of most women to show off to outsiders that their needs are met in marriage.

In this research, financial independence came up as a theme, making it essential to be a part of the literature discussed.

The rise in the divorce rate has ushered in the discussion surrounding women's economic independence among scholars (Goode, 1971). Social scientists expect that economic independence in women would increase the probability of marriage dissolution as the benefits of marriage would have been reduced (e.g. Dechter, 1992; Cleek & Pearson, 1985).

The independence hypothesis (e.g. in Becker et al. 1977, Parsons 1940, Hobson 1990, Ruggles 1997) focused on how women's financial independence could destabilise their marriages. Academic literature and the mass media suggested the relationship between financial issues and family conflict and divorce (e.g. Godwin, 1990; Israelsen, 1990; Madanes, 1994; Burkett, 1989).

This is not an area of marriage that is being examined in the current study. However, the suggestion of the independence hypothesis is debatable for Nigerian women as economic independence play a significant part in how they make sense of their marriage.

In 2002, a discussion paper titled 'Economic Independence for Women Leaving or Living in Abusive Relationships' describes economic independence as a situation whereby an individual has free access to financial resources and opportunities. This free access will, in turn, afford women the ability and freedom to shape their lives and those who depend on them. In the paper, the economic independence of women is seen as a means of improving their lives and getting rid of the abuse they face in marriage (Circle of prevention, 2002).

Another study conducted to gain a better understanding of the relationship between financial issues and the marital relationship of Turkish families found that financially satisfied people are usually satisfied with their marriages while couples who are dissatisfied with their financial situation are not satisfied with their marriage (Copur & Eker, 2014).

From the above, it is uncertain whether women's financial independence causes marital instability, but what is certain is the link between financial satisfaction and marital satisfaction. This will be carefully examined in the discussion chapter.

2.8.4. Marriage and Freedom

Previous researchers have looked at freedom concerning marital satisfaction amongst Africans and Nigerians in particular (e.g. Allen & Olson, 2001; Speed, 2005; Chaney, 2010; Curran, Utley, & Muraco, 2010; Duncan, 2011; Ferguson-Cain, 2015). Today, most people come together out of their free will to get married, which indicates the will to give up some freedom out of choice through sacrifices and compromise. With the ushering in of modernisation, people are free to decide whether they want to be married with the hope that they will derive satisfaction from it as opposed to a traditional method of marriage imposition (Fasoranti and Olusola, 2012).

According to Macquarie (1978, p.16) quoting May (1975):

“It is the exercise of freedom and the ability to shape the future that distinguishes man from all the other beings that we know on earth. It is through free and responsible decisions that man becomes himself authentically. However, this choice does not determine how satisfactory any

union will be; lack of knowledge, understanding or awareness of liberty and how it exhibits itself makes people face marital satisfaction difficulties. Life's problems are, at times, a sign that some existential freedom has not been utilised in a harmonious way".

Furthermore, exercising the freedom to get married is not all there is to marriage and freedom; freedom is two-fold: freedom to make a choice and freedom to be in a chosen way in the marital relationship. Being a patriarchal society, Nigeria has laid down unspoken rules and expectations of the wife upon marriage. They play significant roles in how women exercise their freedom within the confines of their homes. The roles include bringing up children to be valuable members of the society, to be respectful and dutiful to extended family and continually seek the pleasure of and obey her husband through whom she has a new identity.

In an African sense, freedom can also be two-fold and should not be confused.

Colonial rule and the lack of freedom that came with it is entirely separate from the state of being restricted by a man (husband) in a union (marriage) that was willingly entered into.

Examining freedom from a philosophical stance, in addition to the cultural aspect discussed, existential philosopher Sartre bases his discussion on the oppressive relationship between a master and slave where the slave is denied freedom and the master is yet, still dependent on the slave (Sartre, 1985).

He discusses many aspects of freedom in several of his publications; *Being and Nothingness* (1943), *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1945), *Critique of Dialectical Reasoning* (1985). He proposes freedom as possible in every situation since

humans are not determined beings but possess the free will to act according to his own will.

Although this description by Sartre might seem extreme, it can be likened to the marital relations in Nigeria where the husband is dominant and yet depends on the wife's subservience.

2.8.5. Qualitative Studies on Marriage, Meaning and Satisfaction

A fascinating existential study on marriage titled the portrait of marriage from Frankl's existential perspective concluded that couples tend to have a very satisfying life together when committed to the relationship (Radziejewski, 2011). Here, the couples' backgrounds did not affect the level of satisfaction later in life because they have an individual commitment to marriage, which makes it easier to achieve a common goal as a result of creating meaning together. In the study, Radziejewski (2011) used the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) as a tool to determine marital satisfaction and based her research on couples that were already considered happy and satisfied. She sought a phenomenological approach to explore how individuals fulfil the purpose of their marriage. In her selection process, Radziejewski handpicked her participants from various cultural backgrounds and marriage lengths ranging from 5 to 40 years, which could taint the richness of the experience as the period of the participants' marriage (5 to 40 years) is quite broad.

Couples in the latter part of their marriage (e.g. 35 years) would naturally be assumed to have more experience than those who have been married, for example, five years. This would significantly affect the way they may make meaning of their marriage. Not only that, the wide gap in the period of marriage relayed to the researcher may have had an impact on how participants responded to their interview

questions. Finally, there was no clear-cut way of separating bracketed thoughts from active reflexive processes throughout the study, which could have helped readers understand that the researcher was aware of her preconceptions and considered them in rigorous and transparent research.

A qualitative study, which explored marital experience and marital satisfaction amongst Trinidadians, explored the subjective marital experiences of couples married for more than twenty years (Deiner et al., 2010). What the study sought was the understanding of the phenomenon of enduring yet satisfying marriages. Despite the steady decline in marriage amongst couples worldwide, participants' marriages seem quite stable. Couples seem highly committed to their relationships through struggles, strengths, and resilience; this helped them describe their relationship as one they are satisfied with (Durodoye, 1997). Five major themes emerged for the Trinidadians: friendship, commitment, religion, forgiveness, communication, children, role sharing, acceptance, and contentment.

The study shows that marriage acts as a basis for human functioning, providing opportunities for security, intimacy, growth, and satisfaction, which contributes immensely to individuals' subjective well-being in society (Deiner, 2010).

Although, the above study is qualitative; it sought to answer different research questions and was based in Trinidad. The cultural difference makes it very different from the research understudy in that; culture plays a significant part in answering the research question. Like meaning, marital satisfaction can only be rated by others but by those experiencing it (Radziejewski, 2011). It is a unique way of expressing how people make sense of their marital relationships (Durodoye, 1997).

For this current study, other meanings often attributed to marital satisfaction like happiness or quality are not focused on to avoid deviating from the original research aim of finding out what meaning Nigerian women make of their marriage; however, these factors may come up themselves as participants describe their experiences.

2.9. Further Studies on Marriage and Meaning

Hurt (2013) carried out a qualitative study on the meaning of marriage among 52 black men, paying attention to the positive aspects and meaning of marriage to encourage men to enter marriage. This is because statistics show that men tend not to be inclined to get married despite the numerous benefits they stand to gain (Hurt, 2013).

Themes found include secure emotional support, lifelong commitment, enhanced life success, and secure attachment. Two themes emerged from the data relating to important influences on the construction of meaning relative to marriage; faith and the dynamics of giving and taking. From the list of themes and submissions of the author, it is clear that men in this study view their marriages as very happy and secure.

The analysis was done in two phases; a within-case analysis and a cross-case analysis to compare information among participants using the interactive synthesis of Huberman and Miles. The analysis showed clearly how the author arrived at their conclusion, and the themes generated from the interviews were quite interesting.

There are a few similarities between the study and this current research, but the differences still set them very far apart. As the meaning of marriage was sought, the

study resonates with the current one, but the demographics, recruitment, interviews and analytical method set them apart.

Limitations of and difference in the study include the targeted sampling; the participants were recruited from a circle of religiously inclined married men who have faith in marriage and saw the positives in it. Recruiting from this area in America would most likely prepare one for a scripted response as interview questions could have been answered in an ingenuine manner. Perhaps expanding the scope of the study to those without any religious affiliations could bring forth different findings.

The study shed light on the experience of men in America, while this current study looks at women's experience in Nigeria. Paying the participants could also pose an ethical issue in that participants could feel obliged to participate in the study for the monetary reward involved. Although offering participants financial incentives do not necessarily affect research outcome, it could undermine their decision-making autonomy and could result in making financially-motivated choices.

Also, the author was not the interviewer, interviewers were trained in questioning the participants, and the meaning of marriage to the participants was based on the participants' narrative to the interviewers who did not consider reflexivity.

Lastly, the sample size and the fact that the researcher did not have a first-hand experience of interviewing the participants could have prevented the discussion of his reflexive process and can be seen as a limitation because recruits conducted the interviews.

The study is worthy of mentioning because it is one of the few studies exploring what marriage means.

A recent study on the meaning of marriage was conducted by Melike Ozyigit (2017), who carried out a phenomenological study on the meaning of marriage among university students to know how university students give meaning to marriage before committing to it. Using content analysis, fourteen participants, seven males and seven females between the ages of twenty-two and thirty-two, were recruited. The themes that emerged were grouped into three phases; the premarital phase, which included self-knowledge, spouse selection and ceremonies; the marital phase, which included marital functions and lastly, the post-marital phase, which included possible divorce or separation and the reasons accompanying them. These themes, also termed the 'findings', show how relatively young people, both male and female, create the meaning of marriage before marriage. According to the final year students in the study, the unchanged but definitive constructs of marriage are deciding on marriage, key elements of marriage and marriage dynamics. The major themes that revealed the meaning of marriage for the participants include self-knowledge, spouse selection, ceremonies, functions of marriage and divorce and separation process.

The study and this current one both committed to exploring the meaning of marriage and generated some interesting findings. However, they differ due to location, participants and method of analysis.

One of the limitations of Ozyigit's study is that the backgrounds of the participants were not clearly stated. The seventeen interview questions were answered between twenty-two and forty-five minutes, which queries the depth of the interview and the level of engagement of the participants with the questions to generate deeper and richer data. The research was conducted by a psychological counsellor working within the university, where participants were recruited. However, the researcher

provided no information on the reflexive process that he could have engaged in to ensure the bracketing of preconceived ideas. The current study engages in a transparent and reflexive process throughout the research.

In sum, it can be noticed from the studies reviewed above that few of them mentioned an in-depth engagement with the reflexive process of bracketing within the text and much is not known in terms of participants' backgrounds.

As mentioned in the introductory section, although many studies have been carried out examining various aspects of marriage, there is only a handful of studies conducted on the meaning of marriage from an existential perspective by a psychotherapeutic practitioner, which further makes this current study significant.

2.10. Conclusion

Reviewing the literature makes it evident that there are many studies relating to marriage and marital satisfaction. There are minimal qualitative, phenomenological studies addressing the meaning of marriage, which makes it difficult to determine the lived experience of meaning-making in people's marital lives.

Although the factors found in previous research as affecting meaning and satisfaction in marriage could be true for Nigerian women, this current research can hardly be based on existing generalisation. It can only be interpreted based on my findings, which may or may not be in line with what literature found.

Previous studies on African identity and the feminist movement are also employed to understand some aspects of women and marriage to help give a cultural richness to this study.

The limited studies on marriage and meaning further emphasise the importance of this study, which is unique to Nigerian women and limited to the exploration of the meaning of marriage. It relates to how women create their meanings through variables which include culture, patriarchy, freedom, bride price, self, identity and dependence. Also, seeing how these women make sense of the experience of marriage as they relate to their physical, personal, social and spiritual life.

I hope that the findings of this study would add greater depth to the area of marital relationships in general and may relate to the underrepresented populations in this line of research.

2.11. Reflexivity

There is no doubt that I wanted to explore the phenomenon of marriage and hoped to engage with much past literature, be it quantitative or qualitative. However, I was not prepared to find that very little has been done using a phenomenological method. As I combed through various websites to get closer to studies that have tried to answer my research question, I went through lists of references in case I missed something out. I searched, intending to be true to myself and hoped to own my oversight. As I read through studies that have explored the meaning of marriage in and outside Nigeria, I found there was no cultural study that sought to answer the research question by exploring the lived experience of married Nigerian women. Not that a lot has been done on the meaning of marriage in general. Many studies were not carried out from a psychotherapeutic or psychological point of view, although there are numerous sociological studies.

I hope my study will be a novel one, going with the notion that no study is precisely like it elsewhere.

I engaged with various topics that touch on different aspects of marriage/marital relations in reviewing the literature. I was also aware of having to update the literature reviewed if a new theme came up, which was not initially considered in the interview schedule. This did not serve as a problem as it is accommodated in the interpretive phenomenological analysis approach chosen for this current study. It is hoped that I have engaged with past literature and have reviewed the few that are most relevant to my research, although they still differ in that they were not conducted using the same approach or recruitment criteria.

3. Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1. Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I begin by identifying the goal of my research and justifying my choice of qualitative research methodology. In so doing, I will present the epistemological position I have adopted by establishing the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of my research framework. This is followed by the need to blend research methods; interpretative phenomenological analysis (hereafter IPA) and structural existential analysis (hereafter SEA). Lastly, I will engage critically with my research questions in a reflexive manner to clarify the link between my methodology and chosen methods and how they enable me to address my research questions.

3.2. Aim

This thesis explores what meaning married Nigerian women in monogamous marriages attribute to their marriage. As discussed in the introductory chapter, various studies have been undertaken, but few have sought to address the meaning attributed to marriage. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to adopt a methodology and select method(s) that align with the nature of the research question. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) has been chosen to answer my research question.

3.3. Epistemology and Methodology

Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge and how it is acquired (Willig, 2001). The extent to which our epistemological position informs our choice of research method needs to account for the difference between methodology; the

general approach to studying a research topic and methods; the specific research technique (Willig, 2001). The epistemology of this research draws on my knowledge and subjectivity. It also emphasises the personal perspective and interpretation of the participants' worlds. However, as the research has a heuristic element, due care is needed to be aware of my own bias and preconceived ideas, thereby making reflexivity important throughout the research process.

According to Willig (2001), epistemology should inform the choice of research method and, in so doing, must account for the difference between methodology and method, each of which will be considered in turn.

3.3.1. Epistemology and Qualitative Methodology

Numerous studies on marriage have been undertaken in the fields of social anthropology and psychology. These studies have often involved using quantitative methodologies, with the primary focus on questions requiring the use of measurement and the discovery of empirical evidence (Gergen, 1985). However, the dissatisfaction with the limits of logical, empirical research methods to address important questions relating to how people make meaning and make sense of their world has contributed to the growth in the use of qualitative methodologies (Osborne, 1994).

The main concern of qualitative research revolves around the meaning, quality and texture of experience (Willig, 2001) as opposed to cause-and-effect relationships, which underpin quantitative research. The main aim of qualitative research is to describe participants' experiences in relation to events as fully as possible within a natural setting. It moves away from working with variables, cause-and-effect

relationships, and the imposition of the researcher's meaning; it enables the participant to make their sense of the research phenomenon.

3.3.2. Phenomenological Epistemology of Research

The focus of phenomenological research is on things as they appear to give a descriptive account of these experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

The phenomenological research epistemology draws on phenomenology formulated by Husserl (1982); it is concerned with how the world presents itself to humans.

Therefore, phenomenology can be seen as falling within the interpretative strand where an attempt is made to understand and engage with the world around us through conceptualisation and interpretation, thereby shedding more light on understanding our involvement in the lived world (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009; Willig, 2008).

3.3.2.1 Husserl and Phenomenology

A phenomenological attitude involves openly engaging a phenomenon through 'reduction' (Husserl, 1970), which involves suspending our preconceptions and reaching a new form of interpretation. Indeed, Husserl identified three main phases of reduction in gaining understanding in a phenomenological method:

Firstly, *epoche*, which requires the researcher to suspend assumptions and judgments to become fully aware of what is presented. Secondly, a phenomenological reduction which enables us to describe the totality of phenomenon as it presents itself. Thirdly, imaginative variation concerned with how the experience is structured, making it what it is. This process creates a sense of wonder as if seeing the essence of the phenomena is for the first time.

Husserl's (1970) philosophical underpinnings are of human experience. The aim is to reinstate the world of humans as that which shows the lived experience in its true light. Husserl believes that there is a possibility of experiencing a state of non-concrete consciousness, making it possible to describe phenomena as they present themselves as comprehensive intentional objects (Husserl, 1952).

Fundamental to this is intentionality, which was originally conceived by Brentano (1874/1995); Husserl (1952) describes intentionality as a way an individual becomes 'intentional' towards the world, an aboutness or directness towards an object.

Further, he notes that it is only in intentionality that subjects and objects are bridged, allowing them to be brought to consciousness.

Husserl's phenomenology prepared the ground for researchers to reflect and 'bracket' their preconceived ideas or foreknowledge. The examination of the taken-for-granted experience of the world and not just the activities (Husserl, 1982) is made possible if we move away from our 'natural attitude'.

Consequently, I approached my research with openness, intentionality, a non-judgmental attitude and attempted to bracket my assumptions. In so doing, I aimed to describe the experience and sense-making of marriage fully, without judgment, and capture the experiences described by participants.

3.3.2.2 Heidegger and Phenomenology, a Reaction to Husserl

Husserl's focus on epistemology and essence was later rejected by Heidegger, who emphasised the primary importance of meaning. An ontology (i.e. our relationships, how we see our world, and the meaning we make out of it (Heidegger, 1962; Smith et al., 2009). The resultant approach to phenomenology emphasised hermeneutic, interpretative and existential phenomenology. This approach involved a systematic way of viewing human existence that moved beyond the description of experience

and sought meanings ingrained in everyday happenings. His new philosophy served as a basis for existentialism.

Heidegger's main concept is Dasein (Being-there) which refers to how humans experience existence by simply being in the world or being with others in the world. Furthermore, he believes bracketing is not necessarily required as hermeneutics interprets an already presumed human experience (Heidegger, 1962; Reiners, 2012).

According to Heidegger (1962), we can only become aware of our preconceptions after we are faced with new things. There are both hidden and visible meanings to things we see as they appear to us. As we approach these things, our primary aim is to see them as they are presented to us; however, we cannot really look at anything without relating it to our past personal experience. Thus, it is only through exploring the new concept that the researcher can be more aware of their preconceptions. In interpretive phenomenology, the researcher can and is encouraged to draw upon their assumptions and preconceptions, making the meaning-making process a co-created encounter.

3.3.3. Epistemological Position

Various qualitative approaches to conducting psychological research have emerged over the twentieth century, with varying epistemological and ontological standpoints.

Madill (2000) identified three broad epistemological approaches:

1. Realist - concerned with discovery in a naive manner
2. Contextual constructionist - opines that knowledge is a social construct

3. Radical constructionist - based on the belief that every knowledge is gained from a standpoint.

I position myself within a contextual constructionist perspective as I see everyone as responsible for constructing their reality which impacts their behaviour; for when a participant(s) and researcher come together, the encounter is co-constructed.

3.4. Types of Phenomenology

The types of phenomenology are further discussed in the next section to better understand the epistemological stance the research draws from.

3.4.1. Descriptive Phenomenology

Descriptive phenomenology is rooted within the transcendental phenomenological tradition. It recognises the significance of interpretation in how we perceive people and how the world is experienced (Willig, 2008). It is also to minimise interpretation and pay attention to what ordinarily appears before us in a pure form (Husserl, 1931). For Husserl and other descriptive phenomenologists, “description is crucial, and interpretation is a special form of description” (Giorgi and Giorgi, 200, p.167).

In descriptive phenomenology, the researcher must assume a phenomenological attitude where all presuppositions about the investigated phenomenon are bracketed, attempting to be present, focusing on the phenomenon as experienced by the research participant and not the substantial reality (Giorgi and Giorgi, 2003; Willig, 2008).

3.4.2. Interpretative Phenomenology

Interpretive phenomenology is concerned with moving past the description of an experience or phenomenon to seeking meaning set in everyday events. Heidegger's (1927) submission is that it is impossible to belittle our personal experiences concerning the studied phenomenon because personal awareness is as fundamental to phenomenological research as our understanding of the world (Dahberg et al., 2008).

3.4.3. Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Hermeneutic phenomenology (or Hermeneutics) is referred to as the theory of interpretation. As Heidegger (1927) pointed out, the way to get closer to the lived world of another is through interpretation. He described it in line with its Greek meaning; 'to appear'. He further describes the meaning of appearance as having two qualities: visible and hidden (Heidegger, 1927). In facilitating the showing of these qualities, the phenomenologist can help make sense of what appears (Moran, 2000). It is paramount that interpretation reflects the interpretation intended by the person being related to, not just based on our interpretation.

What appears should be as it appears to the person, not an observer or based on any theoretical model. It is believed that description itself is an interpretive process, and interpretation is all we have. However, the best way to bring forth the most appropriate interpretation is through the use of the hermeneutic circle, which is to take cognisance of the part to understand the whole and vice versa (Smith et al., 2009).

In hermeneutics, description and interpretation are not separated; rather, it is argued that all forms of description make up a form of interpretation.

Van Manen (1990) maintains that the phenomenological 'facts' of lived experience are always already experienced meaningfully and that capturing such 'facts' requires language, which is inevitably a process of interpretation (Giorgi and Giorgi, 2008).

Interpretative phenomenologists maintain that understanding cannot occur without a form of preconception of what is to be understood. To Schleiermacher (1998), parts are understood due to understanding the whole and vice versa. This indicates that understanding involves a circular movement from our presuppositions to our interpretation and back again. Therefore, "our assumptions and experiences about the world are not to be bracketed but seen as a tool to aid a better understanding of the investigated phenomenon" (Willig, 2008, p.56).

As with descriptive phenomenology, the hermeneutic approach comprises various forms (e.g. Packer & Addison, 1989; Langdridge, 2007). One such example is Van Manen's lifeworld (1990) which shares a lot of common ground with Smith's (Etough and Smith, 2008) interpretative phenomenological analysis. The focus is on understanding the person in relation to his involvement in the lived world, seeking to interpret and make meanings out of their activities (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

Hermeneutic phenomenologists cannot overemphasise the importance of interpretation. Recognising the hermeneutic circle (where we seek to understand the parts in order to understand the whole and vice versa) as a means of carrying out the interpretive task of bringing to the fore. The meanings of lived experience are hidden, looking at the parts as they present themselves in the whole and then

looking at the meanings that are emerging without being disclosed by previous experience (Smith et al., 2009).

According to Finlay (2008), the reflectivity of the researcher can bring us closer to the text; the researcher can understand the phenomenon better through an exploration of the relational process emerging between the researcher and participant. Van Manen (1990) stresses the importance of the researcher's involvement through various methods of encounter to ensure close attention is paid to all cases, and nothing is taken for granted as themes are revealed or confirmed.

Further influences on the process of interpretation that require acknowledgement are history and tradition, in terms of their roles in identifying the relationship between the fore-structure and the new object (Gadamer, 1994/1960). For example, Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, p.48) state:

“The phenomenon, the thing itself, influences the interpretation, which in turn can influence the fore- structure, which can then influence the interpretation. One can hold several conceptions, and these are compared, contrasted and modified as part of the sense-making process”.

Schleiermacher (1998) asserts that if a researcher has been able to engage deeply in very thorough, holistic and comprehensive analysis, they can end up with “an understanding of the utterer better than he understands himself” (: p.266).

The process of finding the meaning of a phenomenon in its true state can hardly be achieved without prior knowledge of the phenomenon being explored. Our

experiences (through tradition, history, language, intuition and everyday happenings) help shape the meaning of any given phenomenon. The constant awareness of our bias and questioning of such awareness can lead to the creation and re-creation of new meanings and interpretations of the studied phenomenon. This is done until we are faced with the meaning of the encounter in its true form.

In summary, the various types of phenomenology involve carefully examining human experience, focusing on the experience of a conscious individual (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

Heidegger views phenomenology from the point of Dasein and intersubjectivity. He argues that relatedness to the world is a crucial part of our genetic make-up; therefore, it will be difficult to choose to move away from our inner world. Through intersubjectivity, we can make sense of each other's world (Heidegger, 1927).

With regards to foreknowledge and bracketing, I share the opinion of Heidegger (1927), Merleau-Ponty (1962), and Gadamer (1995) that we can hardly get away from history, knowledge and understanding of our world. In relating to others, we can only observe and experience empathy, but not share the experience because it belongs to the participants as they are in the world; the difference is in how the experience of the other is displayed to us as opposed to how they live through it (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

3.5. Utility of a Multi-Perspective Approach

This section focuses on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as the chosen methodology for this research. A discussion of IPA is followed by existential

philosophy and phenomenology. This is to provide a deeper understanding of the existential perspective to the phenomenological research. After this, Structural Existential Analysis (SEA), adopted as a theoretical tool to provide further depth to the findings generated through IPA, is discussed in detail. Finally, the rationale for choosing to blend both SEA and IPA is discussed.

3.6. Interpretative Phenomenological Method

Phenomenological research investigates the meaning of the lived experience of a small group of people from a phenomenon's standpoint (Schram, 2006).

Researchers focus on what an experience means for people and can provide a detailed description of it. It is assumed that dialogue and reflection can reveal the essence – the primary, structure or central, fundamental meaning of some aspects of shared experience (Schram, 2006). It is an approach whose primary focus is on studying experience (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

3.6.1. Choosing IPA

In addition to hermeneutics and phenomenology discussed earlier (see section 3.4), IPA draws its concept from a third aspect of philosophical knowledge; Idiography (Smith, 1996) which is concerned with committing to the depth of analysis and how an experience has been understood. Warnock (1987) noted that it is concerned with attempting to derive general claims from a single one through an analytic procedure. Idiography in IPA focuses on the experience of individuals in a context, which at the same time brings us closer to the general context of that experience (Smith et al., 2009).

Encompassing all three, IPA is concerned with expressing human lived experience and how individuals make sense of such experience (Willig & Rogers, 2008). It seeks to find both similarities and differences while still maintaining the uniqueness of each voice (Smith, 2009).

IPA, researchers, adopt highly purposive sampling to recruit relatively homogenous samples to enhance the research question's significance.

In this research, I sought to understand what it is like to be in the participants' 'shoes', as they make sense of the experience of marriage. In order to achieve this, I adopted the "double hermeneutic" process (Giddens, 1984, Smith et al., 2009), which is the process through which a researcher tries to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world. Therefore, I can only make sense of them making sense of their worlds due to my interaction with them.

3.6.2. Why Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis?

As discussed earlier in the methodology section, this study adopted the interpretative phenomenological approach with an application of a method prescribed by Jonathan Smith in Smith et al. (2009). This is because it creates a methodological structure that allows the meaning-making of Nigerian women to be explored and in line with my epistemological position. Above all, it answers my research question and being new to research; I find IPA as set out by Smith et al. (2009) provides me with a structured analytical process.

3.6.3. Limitations of IPA

The conceptual and practical approaches of IPA are faced with some criticisms.

As with many phenomenological studies, IPA has been criticised for giving unsatisfactory recognition to the vital role of language (Willig, 2008).

The argument is that language is seen as constructing rather than describing reality. Words are chosen to describe experiences, and the same event can be described in various ways; therefore, language cannot give the experience an expression; rather, it enriches the meaning already residing in the experience. This process renders, impossible, the direct access to the rich texture of another person's experience (Baillie et al., 2000; Willig, 2001; Finlay, 2011).

IPA seeks to capture nuances and subtleties by paying close attention to both the participants' said and unsaid words. Meaning is made through discourse, narratives, metaphors, among others, and although the primary aim of conducting a study is to gain insight into participant's experiences, it does not claim to focus its analysis mainly on the language used in describing that experience.

Another criticism of IPA is that of the suitability of the account generated, in terms of whether it can accurately capture experiences and their meanings and not just its opinion. IPA is concerned with making sense of the participant making sense of their own experiences, trying to get as close as possible to uncover the pre-reflective meaning held by the researcher and not to uncover 'pure experience' as it is wholly inaccessible (Eatough and Smith, 2006).

Critics have also stated that IPA, like other phenomenological inquiries, is based on perceptions that render studies problematic and less understood. The concern is that it focuses more on the lived experience and fails to explain the reasons for such occurrences. Willig (2008) believes that research, which is authentic in inquiry, should not be limited to seeking to understand only the experience but also seek to explore the triggers of the experience located in the events of the past.

As IPA uses hermeneutic, idiography and contextual analysis, the cultural position of participants' past and present experiences can be understood argued, Smith et al. (2009).

Also, an over-reliance of IPA on cognition and perception is concerning; however, this is due to an inadequate understanding of the role of cognition in IPA (Langbridge, 2007, Willig, 2001). It is argued that such reliance could weaken its status as a phenomenological method. However, Smith et al. (2009) clearly state that the interpretative aspect is guided by how the participants describe their experience and as understood by the researcher.

While IPA is criticised for its small sample size, its proponents see it as a strength because it enhances the richness and depth of the analysis of the study. Large samples could lead to overloaded data where the focus shifts from the idiographic detail onto common themes (Pringle et al. (2014), Smith et al. (2009), Wagstaff et al., 2014).

Another criticism is that the methodology has been viewed as not meeting scientific criteria. The position of IPA is such that quantitative research is different from a qualitative one and that qualitative studies conducted appropriately are of great value (Brocki and Wearden, 2006).

Finally, Willig (2011) argues that in conducting an IPA study, how the researcher's perspective affects the research process is left unanswered. However, the methodology in IPA does not seek to test a hypothesis but to make sense of how participants make sense of their world, whilst not losing sight of the reflective attitude of the researcher as they make sense of their lifeworld and the impact this has on the data in accordance with the hermeneutic essence (Wagstaff et al., 2014; Reid et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2009). The aim of IPA is not to offer generalisation but to

provide ways of learning as much as possible about how another individual makes sense of and describes their experience.

This current study takes a phenomenological approach, conducting individual interviews and adopting the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method while utilising the Structural Existential Analysis (SEA) to explore women's lived experiences of marriage and their meaning-making of it further. In data analysis, I adopted Smith's Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis strategies, sensitive to the personal, emotional and social aspects of experience construction (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006).

3.7. Existential Philosophy and Phenomenology

Existential philosophy seeks to approach the world in an open, descriptive and rich way. It shares Husserl's (1927) phenomenological method of setting aside, but not getting rid of, our previous knowledge to be aware of our stand in situations as the truth emerges (Deurzen, 2012). It mirrors the idea that our perceptions and our internal experience are most important in the description of the nature of man.

3.7.1. Structural Existential Analysis (SEA)

Van Deurzen (2014) describes the many layers of phenomenological work involved in Structural Existential Analysis (SEA) discussed fully below. Firstly, she identified how intentionality is dealt with through three separate reductions:

In phenomenological reduction, the researcher is encouraged to suspend previous assumptions, describe the observation process carefully, horizontalise what is observed, equalise what is experienced and verify observations repeatedly.

Eidetic reduction involves paying close attention to the objects being studied and being aware of what is brought forth from all study angles. Also, being in search of essences that lay behind what directly appears, paying attention to the inherent constitution of beings as they change over time given their very nature, then aiming towards an understanding of properties beyond what ordinarily presents itself to us.

In transcendental phenomenology, the basic principles are: paying close attention to the thinking self, which is the subject, searching for the principle of consciousness, a movement towards intersubjectivity, the horizon of intentionality, location of the springing point of consciousness and the establishment of multiple views of checking the truth.

In the current research, all three reductions were upheld in that preconceived knowledge were bracketed, and close attention was paid to both the participants and the topic explored. This enabled me to understand the meaning my participants make of marriage through the description of their experiences.

3.7.1.1. *Dialogical and Hermeneutic Interviewing*

Dialogue is most significant in the process of any phenomenological research. According to Van Deurzen, (2010, p.3):

“We should aim for coherence and simplicity in our interpretation of the facts. We follow the principles of hermeneutic interpretation, which is a form of interpretation that ensures that meanings expressed correspond to what was intended by the subject of these meanings”.

Principles of hermeneutic interpretation need to be adhered to, to ensure that meanings expressed by researchers are in line with what was intended by the

participant. Going back and forth in a hermeneutic circle, returning to the process of verification now and again to have finely collected results (Schleiermacher, 1998; Deurzen, 2010).

Concerning assumption, there is an acknowledgement of the challenge faced by the researcher as they learn to make their minds turn to pay close attention to their assumptions in a systematic manner. Knowing that they are not in a state of 'not knowing', 'naivety', or 'wonderment' (Deurzen, 2010) but based on an attempt to purify the conscious mind. This is not to eliminate anything "but rather to heighten consciousness to a more intense level where we can be more precise in understanding reality than in our normal 'natural' way of going about knowing the world. Phenomenology is "not an emptying of the mind, but rather a polishing of its lens in order to let the light through and illuminate things more brightly" (Deurzen, 2010, p.4).

On interviewing, SEA regards the quality of the relationship with participants as central to phenomenological research. I utilised my therapeutic skills while conducting interviews, creating an I-Thou encounter by being fully present and not shying away from sharing in their moods by being attuned to what they were trying to express (Buber, 1929). I imbibed the interview process in SEA, which calls for a dialogical method. I adopted the schedule prescribed by Smith et al. (2008) to balance the research interviewing process. Therefore, I conducted a semi-structured interview, which is in line with the chosen methodology, using the psychotherapeutic skills learned in training and practice.

3.7.1.2. Working with Bias

As bias is very much part of any phenomenological research and can hardly be avoided, there is a need to pay close attention to the bias of both the researcher and

the participant. According to Deurzen (2010), researchers need to recognise and locate biases while learning to suspend them when the need arises during the research process. She also coined a mnemonic (SOAR) as a guide for remembering and tracing biases:

State of Mind- relating to what is being observed regarding worldview, emotional state and mood.

Orientation- the perspective of both researcher and participant based on worldview and belief systems.

Attitude- dealing with an attitude towards the object based on preconceptions, including experience

Reaction - the response to the present; noticing what is being aroused due to the interaction.

This mnemonic served as a guide for me throughout the process of this research.

3.7.1.3. The Four Worlds' Model, and its Paradoxes

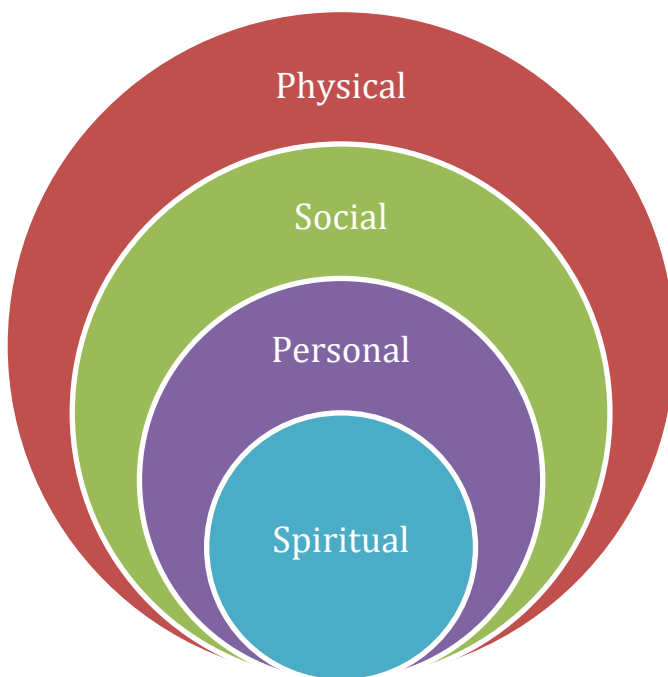
There are several different dimensions to our experience. Scholars have outlined four dimensions systematically; Heidegger (1946, 1957) discussed different dimensions in relation to earth, world, man, and gods. Binswanger's (1963) systematic description was outlined through the Umwelt (environment), Mitwelt (world with others) and Eigenwelt (personal world), while he also implied a spiritual dimension (Uberwelt) in his work.

Deurzen (2012) describes the four dimensions of existence using concentric circles and a layered pyramid by positioning each dimension according to their proximity to the wider world. The four dimensions are, although neatly outlined, it must be borne

in mind that it is not a map but serves as a tool to facilitate thorough observations (Deurzen, 2012).

Below is a figure demonstrating the four worlds in relational layers:

Figure 1: The four worlds in relational layers



Adapted from Van Deurzen, (1997, p.94)

3.7.1.3.1. The Physical World

The physical world, (or Umwelt), is concerned with how individuals relate to their environment and all the 'givens' of the natural world surrounding them. This includes the body, its needs and sensations, the person's health and their attitude towards it in terms of illness and mortality, tangible things they are surrounded by like the weather, climate, and material things. People struggle through the paradoxes of life by seeking to control the fundamentals and natural law and, at the same time, accepting the confines of the natural boundaries. The ultimate aim is to gain security

usually through health and wealth; however, the realisation of our limitations and temporality brings about a lot of tension. According to Deurzen (2010), in this dimension, action is the outlet; the primary interaction is between our bodies and the physical world where actions result or are expected to result in something concrete and rewarding.

3.7.1.3.2. Social World

In the social world, (or Mitwelt), individuals engage in interpersonal relationships in which they relate to and with others as they interact with their world. This dimension is shaped through feelings and emotions, upon which relationships are based and comprehended. In this dimension, we find ourselves responding to the culture we live in and the struggle to find our place in it. Meaning is derived through the establishment of value usually through the seeking of acceptance by following rules or rising above rules and seeing for one self, at every point, the existence of dynamics which involves love against hate, acceptance against rejection, belonging or isolation among others (Deurzen, 2012).

3.7.1.3.3. Personal World

The personal or psychological world (or Eigenwelt), or dimension stems from the relationship individuals have for and with themselves, as they connect with their inner world. The way they create a sense of identity and 'selfhood' depends on the other dimensions and their experience and assumptions. The struggle here is in determining one's self-worth and learning that one is a valid person through thoughts, actions and inactions.

3.7.1.3.4. *Spiritual World*

The spiritual world (or *Überwelt*) considers how individuals relate to the world of ideas, the unknown or unseen in order to create a tangible meaning of everyday life (Deurzen, 2010). People find different ways of finding meaning or making sense of their ideal world, usually to conquer the soul or surpass mortality. Spirituality can be practised through a commitment to religious belief where there is an existence of a God, or it could be the adherence to a force higher than oneself, which is not termed as God but directs our inner soul to help find certainty in an otherwise uncertain world. To others, it is merely through values and beliefs that they discover and ascribe meaning to life.

3.7.1.4. *Working with Timelines*

In addition to the four worlds, it is important to be aware of how participants express their feelings and create their narratives through words and the use of tenses, suggesting their references to the past, present and future; how they remember, represent and anticipate the future (Deurzen, 2014). Human beings are thrown into the world from birth to death in a forward movement, which is historical. This enables us to look back at our past, update or form a new narrative as far as our recollection can take us, we re –present ourselves in the moment and or contemplate the future and the anticipation of its possibility (Deurzen, 2014). This is referred to this as the Ecstasies of time, where the past, present and future visions are unified, and we temporarily experience life with an authentic presence (Heidegger, 1962).

This layer is particularly interesting in its application to the current research as the participants talked about time. They compared married life to when they were single, their present state of being married, as it was experienced and also expressed their wish for their lives and the future of their marriage.

3.8. An Additional Approach

This aim of complementing IPA with SEA is to consider the contributions of each perspective to the better understanding of the lived experience and meaning making of married Nigerian women. This is however, not to say IPA and SEA are both adopted as the primary methodologies, instead, IPA is the methodology adopted for this study; it helps in the categorization, and analysis of themes in this research. SEA serves as the filter and a theoretical tool which lends a deeper understanding to the findings generated through IPA. This allows for a richer insight into the research findings through a phenomenological and an existential perspective, useful for both research and practice in the field of counselling psychology. Existential psychotherapists and counselling psychologists draw from a wealth of theoretical standpoints; they seek to capture the essence of human existence by paying attention to unique individual life experience, keeping in mind the fact that that we are continually connecting with other people in the world (Heidegger, 1962).

I was particularly interested in the application of the four world models and how my participants moved about their worlds, as earlier discussed in this chapter.

life and all aspects of our four worlds are not experienced in an orderly or separate fashion and so would not be expected to manifest in this way during the research process. The four worlds are tools devised to help enhance our observation and understanding of the tensions and challenges that people face at different layers of their worlds; this paves the way for a thorough research process (Van Deurzen, 2014). Participants, as people experience tensions and predicaments in different forms and layers of the four dimensions and may find it easier to identify with only the positive part of the tension and tend to ignore the negative ones. The awareness of these tensions and the reality of the challenges faced are not separated neatly in

the real world. The acceptance of the fact that either side of the tension cannot be avoided will not only help in describing participants' struggles with regards to their sense-making of marriage but also make us accepting of the paradoxes they may also represent (Van Deurzen, 2014).

Temporality also serves as an integral part of the analysis in that participants look at marriage and their relationships through time; past present and future. The adoption of an additional method is therefore to help delve deeply into the existential world of women, much more than IPA alone would have achieved.

Although IPA has been chosen as the preferred methodology for this research, there are other methodologies that were considered before deciding on the chosen ones. Alternative methodologies and why they were not chosen will be discussed in the section below

3.9 Alternative Methodologies

According to Willig, (2001) research methodologies are not necessarily wrong but become technically wrong if it does not answer the research question. The fact that a methodology cannot answer a research question does not mean it cannot answer a different research question in another study. In essence, the research question should inform the choice of method to be used. It is also essential to state the reasons for preferring the chosen methodology for this research, and to consider other methods of qualitative research that could be used for this study including narrative analysis, grounded theory, and discourse analysis.

3.9.1 Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis involves working with memories, as with many other research methods, it draws on the stories we narrate about our lives and selves. Telling stories gives room for coherence and meaning to what might have seemed confusing (Murray, 2003). Also, it provides an opportunity for the storyteller to not only define him or herself but also clarify life's continuity and tell it to others. Stories usually have a beginning, middle, and end or are categorised into types; progressive, regressive and stable (Murray, 2003; Gergen and Gergen, 1988). One of the reasons to adopt a narrative method is to uncover an earlier understanding of happenings with regards to current ones. The story does not have to be accurate; what is important in narrating the story is how it is recounted (Crawford et al., 1992).

I was interested in the narrative approach mainly because the research focuses on how women tell their stories concerning their marital experience. There is the claim that through this method, we 'narrate' our lives, forming narratives of the past and future not only describes our lives but maybe influences our lives (Rhodes & Jakes, 2000). We develop personal identity through our life stories (Beskow & Miro, 2004), which deals with primary issues of human existence, like self-actualisation, freedom, responsibility and the sense of life.

However, this approach does not give an account of whether a recount is an accurate reflection of the actual event. Putting people in a group where the researcher is also an active participant may influence the research due to the close engagement that will necessarily take place between both the researcher and participants. It is also possible for the research boundaries to blur and offset the research process especially if the researcher needs to befriend the participants as

required by this research considering the type of culture where it will take place (Morse, 2000).

I found the method inappropriate for this study because I have many things in common with my participants, and would like to serve as a researcher solely, seeking to find out about the lived experiences of Nigerian women not as a co-participant or collecting narratives of their experience in marriage.

3.9.2 Grounded Theory

Another method that I considered for the research is grounded theory. As one of the earliest qualitative methods of data analysis to emerge, it brings forth a theory, which bears a direct relationship or is grounded in the data but is also abstracted from the data. It involves the process of both category identification and integration, and its product is a theory (Willig, 2008). The end product of a process, which identifies categories, makes links with them and establishes the nature of the relationships between these categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Grounded theory is a method which was founded to allow new and contextualised theories to emerge from data, it seeks to minimise the imposition of the researcher's meaning, but with the detailed, step-by-step guides, it became more prescriptive. "Researchers are exposed to very rigorous analysis so as to develop a theoretical analysis" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 127). In grounded theory, researchers think about data conceptualisation by continuously subjecting it to interrogation until a theory is found (Charmaz, 2006, 2009). Theorists start with Inductive logic, where researchers do not start with a hypothesis as it is in quantitative studies but by collecting data and analysing it until a hypothesis is generated.

Grounded theory does have its limitations; there is little or no space for reflexivity of the researcher (Willig, 2001). The researcher's role does not get enough attention because of the assumption that the data speaks for itself. According to Dey (1999), what we find as researchers will depend, to some extent, on what we are looking for in the first place.

I chose IPA over grounded theory due to the limitations of it having several versions that make it less straightforward to use and is associated with many debates and controversies. Most importantly, given the aim of this study, I would like to gain a better understanding of the quality of the lived experience of individuals and not just explicate contextualised social processes (Willig, 2008) or aim to develop a theory.

3.9.3 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis, according to Foucault (1972, p.36), is a "set of statements or practices which systematically constructs the object of which it speaks".

This method 'reaffirms a relative ontology' where, all experiences and foundations of epistemology are seen as being socially constructed (Johnstone, 2000). Discourse Analysis does not seek the understanding of the 'true nature' of a psychological phenomenon in its pure form; instead, it seeks to understand the process through which they are talked into being' (Willig, 2001). The main focus of discourse analysis is on the construct of language as it seeks to find out how individual's projects are accomplished and made sense of (Starks and Trinidad, 2007; Smith, 2009). Researchers are encouraged to describe their study in an objective, detached and sterile manner such that there will be no room for giving any thought to any "inevitably messy or subjective aspects" (Parker, 1993, p.284).

Choosing discourse analysis would mean deconstructing my participants' experiences through the use of language; the construction and functionality of language where no reading can be right or wrong (Willig, 2001). The power of the researcher to impose their values on the study, rejection of the world without language and no particular method of analysis are upheld which makes it lose its critical value (Morgan, 2010; Willig, 2001). I was willing to be involved in the exploration and understanding of both the implied and vibrant nature of my participants' experience; therefore, discourse analysis was eliminated as a preferred method.

3.10. Reflexivity

There are different ways of defining reflexivity. The process of coming up with a definition relies heavily on the approach adopted by the person defining it. For this study, I am adopting a philosophical approach to the definition of reflexivity.

Reflexivity can be described as an attitude developed in attending systematically, to the context of the construction of knowledge, throughout the research process (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006).

“A researcher’s background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged as most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions” (Malterud, 2001, p. 483-484).

For most researchers, gathering data requires engaging with people's stories, experiences and the language they use to tell these stories. As social beings, we are constantly interacting with the world and not just existing in it, we are not only conscious but conscious of things around us. We, as social beings understand our

experiences within the context of it happening and we make sense of both our experiences and selves within a given time and place (Shaw, 2010).

According to Heidegger (1962), new things are experienced as already having been interpreted because humans are gifted with the ability to make sense of both our experiences and that of others, all done within our given limitations.

An important fact to note is that as humans, we have our own experience, beliefs and presuppositions, which shape our understanding of the experience of others when we meet. Gadamer refers to this as 'fusion of horizons', which is only made possible through being transparent (Gadamer, 1975).

"Our understanding of 'other-ness' arises through a process of making ourselves more transparent. Without examining ourselves, we run the risk of letting our unelucidated prejudices dominate our research. New understanding emerges from a complex dialectic between the knower and known; between the researcher's past pre-understandings and the present research process, between the self- interpreted co-construction of both participant and researcher. Between and beyond..." (Finlay, 2003, p.108).

Both Heidegger's 'Being-in-the-world' and Gadamer's 'Horizons' are in support of the adoption of a reflexive approach in experiential qualitative research. It is when we are aware of and true to our own feelings and expectations of the research that we begin to appreciate the nature of the investigation (Shaw, 2010).

Engaging in reflexivity by exploring actively, oneself as a researcher at the beginning of the research and also all the way through when meeting with participants, we are able to come to a position of revising prior understanding and welcome a new meaning of the phenomenon under investigation.

Although reflexivity is lacking in theoretical stance within IPA, it is addressed in a hermeneutic process (Willig, 2001). A researcher's reflexivity is an important part of the method where the researcher is invited to engage in a fairly critical and reflective process of evaluation whilst at the same time considering the influence pre-conceptions have on the overall research. According to Smith et al. (2009), some of these pre-conceptions may not be known to the researcher before the analysis is done but may emerge during interpretation which necessitates some interplay between the researcher and the researched: the 'hermeneutic circle' (Smith et al., 2009). The reflexive process adopted in this research is not limited to that prescribed by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009).

Fore conceptions are part of the research process, and the researcher's values and assumptions as well as the implications of these values on the overall research are usually presenting themselves in the research carried out.

In this research, I practised reflexivity through transparency; being true to myself and owning my assumptions. Not shying away from the fact that the study was picked out of personal interest in the institution of marriage, therefore there is a preconceived idea of what it is like to engage in the phenomenon. It was my intention to engage in a reflexive process throughout this study, starting by thinking about my experience and how I make sense of my marriage. I came to an awareness through self-interview that it might be quite uneasy for participants to engage with some of the questions as I found myself thinking deeply about them when I opted to go through what it would feel like for participants to be interviewed in this area. As vast as the research on marriage is, no two marriages are the same; it is important to pay attention to the similarities, and differences in the marital experience of women who share the same cultural background with me and possibly share some of my ideas

as well. I went into the research knowing what my assumptions were but also prepared to be transparent in my engagement with the interview and analysis, asking all participants the same questions so as not to be led into excessively digressing from the interview schedule or being biased. The reflexive process I engaged in at every stage of the study deviated a bit from that of Smith et al in that every aspect of the study (and at the end of each chapter) has a reflexive process in it so as to ensure transparency and constant reduction of fore conceptions or understanding as suggested in SEA.

An additional consideration is my position as an 'insider researcher'. This was important because I am a Nigerian woman who has been married for more than ten years to a fellow Nigerian, just like the participants recruited for the study. Also, being a Nigerian, I have encountered and have a preconceived idea of the varieties of marital relations amongst Nigerians through observation or narratives of people I know. People try to avoid discussing personal issues and try to protect their marriage from the public eye, seeing its failure as their own failure and so do not seek help when they suffer emotionally. These are ideas gathered from interactions with women in Nigeria and not from any study, and one of the reasons for being interested in Nigerians as participants in this study is to shed more light on my own preconceived idea about marriage.

As the study is very close to my own experience there was a need to support my reflexive process with a reflexive journal, engage more in ongoing personal therapy and to make proper use of supervision. I felt affected by some interviews more than others and had to engage in a process of reflecting upon the factors responsible for this. I made notes both in my journal and at the end of each interview to remain aware of my feelings and thoughts during and after each interview.

3.11. Developing Interview Questions

When developing the interview questions, it was important to consider that marriage is a very sensitive phenomenon, and the participants represented a culture that does not openly discuss private affairs. With the assistance of my supervisors, an interview schedule with prompts was prepared, to encourage the participants to open up and describe their experience further and limit the likelihood of providing 'scripted' answers.

The questions were structured such that the four worlds were explored, so the questions adopted the funnelling method suggested in IPA by starting with a general overview then moved on to specific questions about the participants' experience in all dimensions. There was a hope that there would be little or no need for prompts, but some questions did have prompts to enable the participants' further explicate their response. The interview questions were:

1. What is your general view on marriage in Nigeria?
2. People believe that husbands own women in Nigeria due to the bride price paid, how has this affected your sense of self?
3. What made you get married at the time you did?
4. What does your marriage mean to you?
5. How has your marriage and/or husband affected your life?
(In all dimensions: physical, personal, social and spiritual both positively/negatively)
6. How satisfied are you in (with) your marriage?
7. At what point would you walk away from your marriage, if ever?
8. Is there anything you would change in your marriage if you could start from the beginning again?

3.11. Validity Issues

Validity and reliability issues are important factors to consider when carrying out a research. In qualitative research, validity and reliability are not interpreted in the same way as they are in quantitative studies. In IPA, sensitivity to the context of the research and the relationship between the researcher and the participants play very significant roles in increasing a valid study (Smith & Osborn, 2009). Four rules were identified to support the flexible interpretation that best suits qualitative research when it comes to addressing validity, (Yardley, 2000) the four rules are:

3.11.1. Sensitivity to Content

The first rule considers the sensitivity of the researcher towards all factors informing the research; the data, social-cultural framework, methods, the process of data collection, and the relationship between the researcher and the participants. Moreover, sensitivity extends to the researcher's engagement with existent studies and literature. By using IPA, I as the researcher demonstrated a significant level of sensitivity to the context from the very beginning through a close engagement with the idiography and particularly by selecting a purposive homogenous sample of women as they share their experience of being married and the meaning they make of it. I also engaged thoroughly with the existent literature as well as studies in the area of marriage, using my preferred method of analysis.

According to Smith et al., (2009), skill, awareness and dedication are all required when conducting a good interview. As with my clinical work, attention was paid to all factors that could serve as a barrier to smooth communication so measures were taken to put participants at ease, giving them the freedom to be the way they would like to be, trying not to be drawn into a position of power or authority but rather

acknowledge participants as the experiential experts in the research. I remained aware of the sensitivity of the phenomenon researched and being very much aware of the participants' need for space and understanding of the fact that it could be difficult to express some feelings sometimes. Attention was paid to their verbal and non-verbal communication while interviewing participants.

In the analysis, every participant's account was given thorough attention to ensure they made sense of their experience as it was the aim of the interview. The process of analysis involved going back to the transcript to read and re-read several times, taking care not to lose any valuable data and also going back to the transcript during the process of developing the themes, checking and remaining sensitive to each participant's account throughout the process of analysis.

3.11.2. Commitment and Rigour

Commitment refers to how attentive and engaged the researcher is with the participant and data and also the competence they gain as a result of this engagement. Rigour can be described as the thoroughness of the research study. Yardley describes the appropriateness of the sample size, collection of data and analysis as resulting in 'completeness' (Yardley, 2000). In this research, I demonstrated commitment by paying attention to the participants before, during and after the interviews; dedicating time and emotional presence to ensure they were at ease; being transparent in my relation to them by displaying my emotion enough not to get them distracted but to show my understanding and interest in them as individuals. I transcribed the interviews verbatim, noting every detail and engaged with my supervisor in the analysis of the transcripts, learning with each encounter, and improving my skills in analysis.

In IPA studies, rigour is made clear through choosing an appropriate sample of participants, research questions, interview quality and a detailed analysis of the data (Smith et al., 2009). I demonstrated rigour by being an interviewee myself in order to experience first-hand, what I will be asking my clients to experience.

I was interviewed by one of my colleagues, a trainee psychologist, and this helped shape my interview questions further. Carrying out a pilot study ensured the appropriateness of the purposive and homogenous sample, in addition, my personal and professional experiences of being with married women, formed the basis for the study.

3.11.3. Transparency and Coherence

This refers to how clearly each stage of the study is described in the research write up from participant selection to the analysis of data (Smith et al., 2009; Yardley, 2000). This is to ensure that an intelligent layperson is able to read and articulate what the research is all about and make their sense of it. In being coherent, I paid attention to every detail that made up part of the study and ensured steps are spelt out from the sample selection to the interview schedule, to the methods and to the analysis which was supported by quotes from participants (See appendix 7).

In summary, I ensured the study was consistent with the phenomenological theoretical perspectives and hermeneutics. The themes were constructed and outlined logically, taking care to address the ambiguities and contradictions that arose (Smith et al., 2009).

3.11.4. Impact and Importance

This is referring to a question of whether the study has produced something of interest, importance or usefulness (Yardley, 2008). In this research, I looked at Nigerian women as they made meaning in their marriages. As a phenomenological study, its impact may not be intense as it is not seeking to make generalisations about the meaning of marriage, but it does shed more light on the phenomenon.

The women interviewed felt they benefitted from having the chance to give a voice to their thoughts and feelings and I was impacted immensely through my engagement with their stories, transcripts, analysis and their overall experience both as a researcher and a psychotherapist. The study discusses its relevance and offers a possibility for future studies further on, within the study.

3.12. Audit Trail

The value of independent auditing enabling the entire process of research to be trackable and made sense of from the onset through to the end of the study is discussed by Smith et al. (2009). He sees it as a way of ensuring validity in IPA as it provides a chain of evidence that is clear as to how research has progressed in its entirety. In this research, appendices, which provide evidence of every stage of the research, are provided, and they include:

1. The research procedure, highlighting initial ideas and how the research will be conducted including ethical approval.
2. Literature review and the breakdown of existent literature in the same area of study.
3. Research questions as evidenced in concepts and literature review questions.

4. Data collection, which includes interviews process, records and verbatim transcription.
5. Data analysis through emergent themes.
6. The findings and discussion making up the final report.

The above is a summary of the audit trail taking into consideration, my supervisor's involvement in this study at every stage. This contributed to the process of independent auditing, making it easy to make sense of the entire study.

3.13. Design

3.13.1. Recruitment

According to the BPS guidelines, of high priority is the protection of participants. Researchers must abide by moral principles and protect the participants from any harm that may occur as a result of participating in the research. For this research, ethical approval was sought from and granted by the ethics committee of the Middlesex University psychology department in conjunction with NSPC (See appendix 1).

After I gained ethical approval, I started the process of recruiting my participants. I was looking for eight participants. I chose eight participants so as to have a reasonably rich representation of the researched topic while also falling within the recommendation of IPA. This is to guard against the possible problem of having too small or too large a sample size (Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009).

A homogenous sample was aimed at according to IPA guideline therefore participants with similar characteristics.

The recruitment process began with the creation of posters and pasting on the notice boards around the hospital and at the obstetrics and Gynaecology department of a teaching hospital. I also told people I knew at the hospital to call the attention of patients to the posters. The recruitment sampling was a purposive homogenous one in that they share the same experience and share similar backgrounds.

3.13.2. Participants

In line with recommendations, regarding small sample size, (Smith et al., 2009) eight married women were recruited for the research after I was granted ethical approval. In order to be eligible to participate in this research, and keeping the principle of homogeneity in mind as advised by Smith et al. (2009), the participants were required to be currently married, be between the ages of thirty-five and fifty and must have been married for at least ten years. The age range was chosen to allow for maturity and sufficient experience of marriage hence the ten years of marriage requested in the invitation to participate in the research.

Participants should be Nigerian and married to a Nigerian man but not necessarily come from the same part of the country. Nigeria as a country has over two hundred and fifty languages and three main religions; Islam, Christianity and Traditional religion. However, for the ease of the interview, analysis and interpretation, a further inclusion criterion was for participants to be well educated with at least a university degree, and fluent English speakers to enable the ease and understanding of the interview conducted in English language.

Marriage in Nigeria is strongly linked to the rearing of children. Some marital relationships are based on or enriched by the addition of children, but that does not necessarily give a meaning to the structure of the marriage itself. Therefore, there

were no exclusion criteria regarding, marriage with children or without; although the presence of children could be an important factor in marriage. Also, the type of marriage did not matter, but they must importantly be in a monogamous form. Religion or religious orientation was also not a primary concern in this study.

Although some actors are not necessarily the prerequisite for the recruitment of participants, I was interested to note if the demographic information; children, religion, age, employment status, marriage length or type and tribe, make any difference to how they viewed their relationships and the outcome of the research (see table 1).

3.13.3. Ethical Considerations - Confidentiality

As earlier discussed, marriage is a sensitive and highly personal topic for which many people, especially Nigerian women, do not readily talk about. It is important to bear in mind that simply putting out the informed consent and discussing confidentiality are not all there is to interviewing but also there needs to be an awareness that there is every possibility of old wounds to resurface and for secrets to be shared, for some people (Orb et al., 2000). There are several areas where ethical issues could come up; the research questions, data collection- interview, relationship between researcher and participant, analysis, interpretation and the final write up (Creswell, 2009; Ramos, 1989) therefore, measures were taken to address ethical issues as shown below:

I spoke to the participants over the phone about what the study entailed while leaving the decision to participate entirely to them by stating that they were under no

obligation to participate and can always withdraw from the study at any stage if they so desire.

At the beginning of the interview, participants were met in person, and information already shared over the phone was reiterated to them. Also, in a friendly manner, I reiterated their freedom to withdraw from the study at any time. I explained the concept of anonymity and asked if they were willing to choose their own pseudonyms which some of them agreed to. I went on to explain the recording and how the data would be used after the interview emphasising the fact that their identity or any part of their data that would make them easily recognisable will not be included in the data, the recordings would be destroyed after transcription and transcripts would be kept safely and securely using a personally pass coded computer system and in a filing cabinet in the New School for ten years.

3.13.4. Interview and Risk to Participants

The interviews were conducted in an office at a university teaching hospital, Ilorin, Nigeria. This location was chosen due to the added security it afforded both researcher and participants. Participants felt at ease because there was no fear of being seen and judged as the hospital is a public place where people go for different reasons therefore, they could remain anonymous even in plain sight. Participants also felt at ease in this environment, knowing it was familiar to them and neutral as well. An added advantage was that the hospital was easily accessible via all transportation links, within the town.

After the interview, the debrief was done and questions were asked; professional emotional support, via NGOs such as WHAF (Women's Health Attention Focus) and 'The Leah foundation' was offered in case they would like to seek professional help.

This is to explore their experience further as there was the possibility of the research interview bringing up feelings and thoughts that are best forgotten, never shared or which even made them reassess their positions and decisions with regards to their choices which could affect both the researcher and participants. The term 'Pandora's box' could be used in illustrating how we often ask people to talk about aspects of their lives that may not have been previously discussed or examined carefully (Ramos, 1989).

3.13.5. Risk to the Researcher

The safety of the researcher as well as the participants was of high priority, especially in a country where there is a high risk of terrorist attack propagated by the Boko Haram, an Islamist militant group, which had attacked Nigerian schools, civilians, religious buildings, army and police forces and public institutions with increasing regularity since 2009. This has resulted in many people losing their lives or being displaced. Although participants were already aware of this and took caution, due care was taken to address this issue. The research was carried out in a peaceful part of the country that had no history of religious or political violence or riot. Interviews took place in the state capital, in an office within the hospital premises. My next of kin in Nigeria was informed when I started and finished each interview and knew my movement throughout the interview process. Although I was quite familiar with the hospital, I also had my mobile phone throughout the interview process for security reasons. The office intercom and security guard just outside the office also contributed to the sense of security for both researcher and participant, as we knew help was available in case it was needed urgently.

3.13.6. Benefit

The research study would have implications for Counselling Psychology research and psychotherapy as practitioners engage with this culture and client group. Also, it is hoped that through dissemination, the gap in the research on Nigerian women will become narrower narrow through awareness of, and discussion around how they relate in and to their marriages which could in turn impact other African countries and probably the whole world.

3.14. Procedure

The pilot study was with a 38-year-old participant who now serves as my first participant after which seven other women were recruited all between the ages of thirty-five and forty-five years. The research did not set out targeting a particular tribe, but it so happened that all the participants are all from the Yoruba tribe, although from different states within the same geographical region. I interviewed three Muslim and five Christian women, all in monogamous marriages.

The interview was conducted using the semi-structured interview method recommended by Smith (2009) to ensure a smooth and deeper level of participants' engagement and expression. One of the benefits of the pilot study was that, it enabled me to experience the process of data collection. I found I needed to prompt my participant once or twice, which then automatically became prompts kept in mind in case I faced the same challenges with other participants.

The interview was conducted using a tape recorder and my phone as a backup and the recorder was tested before starting the interview. During the interviews, the recorders were placed on a small table, between me and the participant.

Each interview varied in length; two lasted more than an hour (an average of one hour, and fifteen minutes), five interviews lasted an average of fifty-eight minutes, and the last one lasted forty-eight minutes.

The reason for this variation can be due to two participants digressing from the interview schedule and offering instances that were not directly related to their experience. One participant became distressed talking about her experience so the interview had to be brought to a premature conclusion although a lot of ground had been covered during the interview. Although the length of the interview was shorter than the others and which was not expected, the data collected was rich therefore, I went on to make use of the interview transcript.

All interviews were transcribed by me, taking care to uphold the principle of anonymity by erasing all data that could lead to an easy identification of participants. Also, the recordings were destroyed soon after.

3.15. Analysis

Data were analysed using the six-stage approach outlined by Smith et al. (2009) for interpretative phenomenological analysis. These six steps I carried out with commitment and rigour are:

3.15.1. Step 1: Reading and Re-reading

The first step involved reading and re-reading noting anything that was missed and gaining more understanding of what had been transcribed. Each time I read the transcripts, I became more aware of the emotion, and other non-verbal communications extended by the participants. I also noted my feelings and thoughts with regards to each participant, such as what each listening round brought out in me

and what it made me learn from the transcripts. Notes were made at the right-hand margin of the transcript while personal notes about thoughts and feelings were made in my reflexive journal.

The transcripts were read many times, and few times I went back to the recording in case I missed the emotion with which some of the responses were delivered.

3.15.2. Step 2: Exploratory Comments

The second step involved further engagement with the transcripts and involved highlighting sections of the texts that seem interesting and meaningful, paying attention to the language, tone and possible mood of the participants' stories. As I engaged in making exploratory comments, I was drawn even closer to the participants and the sense they were trying to make. The process of reflexivity still carried on; I tried to remain as open as possible to allow myself make sense of the participants making sense of their experience. Care was taken not to start interpreting at this point and so I stayed with the participant's words as I read and re-read the transcript while I noted my reaction and thoughts about the highlighted texts in my reflexive journal.

3.15.3. Step 3: Emergent Themes

In step three, my initial notes and personal comments were re-examined. I also spent time reflecting on the highlighted parts of the transcript and contemplating what it was that made them stand out. I also searched for possible themes that could emerge in line with the hermeneutic circle where the whole becomes a set of parts and then coming together at the end of the analysis as a new whole (Smith et al., 2009). By identifying the emergent themes, I got closer to the experience; I felt I

could interpret what the participants were saying and what they meant by maintaining the descriptions and at the same time reducing the texts.

3.15.4. Step 4: Clustering

In step 4, I grouped emergent themes in order of similarities; the themes, which were closest in meaning and texts, were grouped. This step enabled me to see clearly what themes were emerging and what meaning was beginning to be formed, I wrote down my thoughts on themes, taking care not to lose the meaning of the words used or the participants' details as I clustered the themes.

3.15.5. Step 5: Moving to the Next Case

In this step, the movement between cases raises the possibility of my judgment being clouded by the previous case, when understanding and interpreting the next case(s).

In order to help deal with any preconceived ideas that might have developed from earlier transcripts; I took breaks before engaging with each subsequent transcript.

3.15.6. Step 6: Patterns across Cases

After creating emerging themes for all cases, the final step involved re-visiting the transcripts and the highlighted texts, re-reading each one to make sure I did not leave any important text unattended. I then considered how the emerging themes were connected either through similarity of texts or context. Some themes cut across all participants, which could have resulted from a form of saturation. Superordinate themes and master themes emerged after the connections were made taking care

not to rid any participant of the uniqueness of their experience as expressed in the transcript and emerging themes.

Few themes emerged that were quite isolated and did not fit that of other participants, nor were they strongly connected to other themes. They are: lost hope, marriage and health, and surrendering self.

Although these themes were left out of being master or superordinate themes, the participants' narratives were not lost in the process of analysis. With the principle of hermeneutics in mind, I interpreted the part through the whole and the whole through the part where the part comprised of the transcripts upon which the themes were developed (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). For this reason, I was able to resituate the unused themes into other appropriate themes that are more encompassing and strongly represented the experiences of the participants. All themes were products of both participants and myself through the descriptive and interpretative process, therefore, it was not difficult to exclude them. For example, 'lost hope' was tied to the theme 'reality of marriage'; 'marriage and health' was looked at through the theme 'The self', and 'surrendering self' was further examined and tied to the theme 'loss of freedom'.

3.15.7. Step 7: Discussion of Findings

In the final step, I began to describe the idiography of the participants to enable readers to make sense of me trying to make sense of them, as they make sense of their experience (Smith et al., 2009). I took the time to describe the participants, giving all the essential details concerning the study while upholding the principle of anonymity. After this, I went on to describe each superordinate and subordinate theme thoroughly by bringing into perspective the progressive appearances of the themes and seeking to relate it to the research question.

Discussion of the findings was the last step and involved relating findings to the reviewed literature and highlighting the new understanding and additional knowledge gained. Possible implications to the fields of counselling psychology and psychotherapy, along with critic of the study were discussed. The step was ended with a reflexive process.

3.16. Reflexivity

Coming to a decision to adopt a methodology was not as easy as I thought it would be. I found myself asking what the reason for choosing my preferred methodology was, thought that I would like to look at my participants through their four worlds and wondered how I could manage that. Reading about each method and looking at existing literature that used the same method to answer similar research questions. Participating in the advanced seminar and the PAP viva swayed me in the direction of my chosen methodology. I am aware that methodologies are not necessarily wrong but can become so when they do not answer the research question, therefore there was the need to be sure my choice was actively answering my research question, and there was support available for me as I blended the two approaches chosen in analysing my data.

Also, being interviewed using the interview schedule before beginning research enabled me to understand the experience of participants. It turned out to be a learning curve where I had to sit with the difficulty of some questions. It did however, enable me to adjust some questions in order to guide against closed responses and or scripted answers.

The pilot interview gave me the chance to learn about the importance of the participant's experience in relation to and the importance of the researched

phenomenon. My previous experience of being interviewed, the memory of how difficult it could be, coupled with my experience as a counsellor made me more attuned and sensitive to the participants' needs and presence.

During the pilot interview, the recording was not as loud as I would have liked it to be and I was not very relaxed in the process, my mind was constantly on the tape recorder hoping not to lose any part of the recording. I used this as a means of improving on the other interviews; the tape recorder was duplicated, and I spent time to both make the participants feel at ease as well as helping myself to relax in their presence before the recording began.

There was an issue of heat during the interview process, and I had to get up to adjust the air conditioner to make the participant more comfortable. This was also put into consideration when conducting subsequent interviews.

I made sure I sat with my participants and looked out for any sign of distress or discomfort that might arise as a result of the questions. Some interviews were shorter than others but generally lasted an average of one hour.

At the end of the interview, I checked with all my participants to know how they felt, and also asked how they found the interview process. Most participants responded with an appreciation of the opportunity to share their feelings and thoughts about their experiences, while one of them was too upset to carry on.

Afterwards, participants were offered the opportunity to take up the offer of psychotherapeutic support which they all declined.

Each participant's interview left me with different feelings; I felt different emotions when interviewing because I connected to them as they took me through their inner world, bringing back to memory, some issues they never discussed with anyone before. Alongside my participants, I felt angered, sad, proud, deflated, and helpless.

I was aware of being taken to the place my questions took my participants as they sought to give an enriched account of their unique, individual experiences. This however, did not serve as a hindrance to the interview process because I was able to bracket these feelings, my awareness of their feelings made me empathetic and authentic, and my ability to bracket my feelings and thoughts made it possible for me to understand their narrative and make sense of my participants making sense of their experiences.

After the interview, I felt somewhat helpless especially when a participant who could use the professional support I offered refused it. After the interview was brought to a premature ending because she could not carry on due to how painful her experience was to her. I felt there should be something I should do, but all I could do was check back in on them a day after the interview and also reiterate the offer for free professional counselling support.

Being a practitioner helped me remain in my role and shaped my empathy as well, I wanted to help, but also wondered if I could do more than I already did. I was unable to shake off the feeling of helplessness that I couldn't help the participant.

Analysing the data made me realise some more fore conceptions that I wasn't aware of, although these were very minimal since I had engaged with a continual reflexive process right from the beginning of the study. I took time reading and re-reading the transcripts as a whole to differentiate between my experience and what my participants have said and if any part of the interpretation was about what I would like the meaning to be in terms of interpretation, and not what it originally was. After all, my aim was to make sense of the participant making sense of their experience. I believe this transparency enhanced the validity and rigour of the research.

It was important to keep visiting the transcript, as I went through each stage of analysis, going back and forth, being more aware of the participants as my fore conceptions gradually faded into the background until I was faced with the meaning/sense my participants were trying to make of their experiences.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will explore how married Nigerian women make sense of their marriage. The purpose of the study will come to life in this chapter, as I introduce my participants and use the analytical method discussed earlier on to describe and interpret my participants' experiences.

During the analytical process of this research, I was very aware of my own biases and preconceptions; however, I was able to engage with my participants through the process of reflexivity and by attempting to put aside my preconceived ideas as I interpreted the data and texts. As Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis can be carried out idiographically, I will be presenting the participants' experiences of marriage, demonstrating their unique attributes and bringing them as close as possible to the readers. This will provide an in-depth understanding of their lived experiences and a way of engaging with the double hermeneutics as described in IPA (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Each participant will be introduced in turn using statements regarding the positive and negative ways their marriages have affected them and how they make sense of it. After introducing each participant, I will be carrying out a reflexive process to illuminate my understanding of each participant as they give an account of their unique marital experience. Participants have been given pseudonyms in order to protect their identity.

Below is a tabular demographic representation of the participants, followed by an individual introduction of all eight.

Table 1: Participants Demographic Representation

Name	Age	Tribe	Length of Marriage in years	Employment status/Job	No of Children	Religion
Jenny	38	Yoruba	12	Civil servant	4	Muslim
Tayo	40	Yoruba	13	Business	3	Christian
Sumayah	42	Yoruba/Edo	17	Medical practitioner	4	Muslim
Rose	42	Yoruba	14	Business	2	Christian
Ire	35	Yoruba	10	Medical Practitioner	1	Christian
Shola	44	Yoruba	11	Civil servant	0	Christian
Anne	43	Yoruba	12	Civil Servant	0	Christian
Hannah	45	Yoruba/Hausa	18	Stay at home mum	3	Muslim

4.1.1. Meet Jenny:

Jenny is a thirty-eight-year-old Muslim woman married for twelve years with four children. She appeared calm, spoke in a low tone and was quite happy to participate in the interview. Jenny made it a point of duty, to be honest and open. According to her, “many people like to lie about things like this”. Jenny is a university graduate with a postgraduate as her highest qualification. Jenny’s description of her marriage centres on slavery, control, and the influence and the inconvenience of the

husband's family. Talking about the positive and negative aspects of her marriage, Jenny says:

"I got my children from my marriage, and that is something positive I see that even though I did it, it is the first positive thing I know my marriage has given me. I am happy when I see them and can live peacefully knowing that they are happy and in a stable home themselves. Also, the life I am living is that of comfort, I feel secure; my husband makes me feel secure. Knowing I have him just gives me peace of mind, although I am not happy all the time (smiles). I think those are the positives. I think also my marriage has helped me learn how to be diplomatic, especially within the extended family, I have more patience and understanding, and I am also more accommodating than I used to be before I got married. You must learn to bend your rules sometimes and not continue to maintain your rights, especially where your husband's family is concerned. I think those are the positive ways it has affected me. I know there is no perfect marriage, but when the negative aspect of your marriage makes you really sad, you sometimes forget the positive aspects. Negatively, I will say my husband does not allow me to take decisions if it is not okay by him. Even if it is good for me or for my progress, he might still say no without giving any reasons. What I hate most is when I am not allowed to do my own thing, when I am not allowed to take my own decisions about my own thing, you know, it is just not fair sometimes".

4.1.2. Reflection:

During the interview, I could feel Jenny's frustration and anger towards the culture and tradition she has found herself in. This relates to how the extended family dominates and almost controls the nuclear family and how education means little or

nothing regarding wifely duties. I wondered how much of these practices are still present in Nigeria. As this was my first participant, I could only see this through the eyes of a researcher; coming into contact with her for the first time, I tried to put preconceived ideas aside so that I could understand her experience as they appeared to me through her account. I felt anger, frustration and irritation at the thought of her not having a voice.

The themes generated from Jenny's interview transcript are cultural influence, personal meaning of marriage, servitude in marriage, place in marriage, coping with discontentment, sense of self, family influence, wishful thinking, limited freedom, voice in marriage, benefits of marriage, price to pay for peace, time and meaning.

4.1.3. Meet Anne:

Anne is a forty-three-year-old Christian woman married for twelve years, yet to have a child. During the interview, she appeared very bright, happy and eager to participate in the research. She said she liked raising awareness and being part of a change "much needed in our country". She was very articulate and coherent in speaking; there was a point when she became quite animated in her response. She spoke about striking a balance and remembering her imperfection to allow room for consideration in marriage. In this discussion, Anne evaluated the positive and the negative ways her marriage had affected her:

"To an extent, I am satisfied with my marriage, that is not to say there are no aspects that are there that I do not want, there are, but there are other things that I am quite satisfied with, really because when sometimes I am thinking about what would have made me more satisfied, I actually remember that I am not a perfect person too (laughs) and I have my own days at times, and

you know, and we are still here so I can be crazy and I know so that actually makes me feel like you know what, it is not that bad. It is not that I am an angel and this person has these qualities that I have written down that I do not like if you get what I mean, so every time, once in a while, I try to evaluate marriage, my life, marriage and especially when I am not happy with my husband I try to think about all the things that he should have done better, and the things that I think I should have done better so it is not like I am perfect so that actually balances up for me and helps my sense of satisfaction if you get what I mean or if I can construct it like that so there are times when I feel that my husband is insensitive you know, to my needs probably erm, spiritually, financially or even emotionally that I would have. He is usually the kind of person that does not like being told what to do; I do not like that, I prefer you being sensitive to my needs if I say I am thirsty, it is enough for him to say that "let us stop at the next station and buy water or something. So, things like that on simple platforms to more complicated platforms, things like that really get me dissatisfied sometimes, but as the years go on, you begin to know yourselves..."

4.1.4 Reflection:

I felt quite energised at the end of the interview, although; the feeling of frustration that I experienced in the first interview was still present. Nevertheless, it was minimal because I could feel Anne come alive and revalidate her sense of self and self-worth throughout the interview. I wondered if the relational depth I got to with Anne had anything to do with my stance in my marriage, and I remember noting "still myself" in my reflexive journal as something that stood out for me in my encounter with Anne.

The themes generated from Anne's transcript include influence on marriage, marriage through the eyes of society, benefit of marriage, shame, viewing self, decreased freedom, an unlost sense of self, making it work and saying no.

4.1.5. Meet Hannah:

Hannah is a forty-four-year-old Muslim mother of three who is a stay at home mother and married for eighteen years. Hannah's manner of speaking was quite gentle and pleasant; she was not one to use many words, and she was apologetic about her honest and swift responses. I was asked if her responses were useful for the study, and I reassured her that I would let her know if I needed more information on any aspect of the interview. Her tone was filled with a kind of resolve that was not very clear to me, but I got to know this as she gave an account of the price she paid for not being financially independent and the sole reliance on God to make things right. I got a better sense of Hannah as the interview progressed and also as I read and re-read the interview transcript.

In talking about her marital experience, Hannah says:

"In this part of the world, if you are married, people respect you because of that. You are the only one that is there, people outside do not know, and you do not even want them to know. I give thanks to God; it is okay, at least there are some good aspects to it, I have my children to think of, but if you ask me, the negatives outweigh the positives. There was a time it actually affected my self-esteem. Whatever he said was what I perceived as me. I did not actually see myself as me. If he says you are this or you are that, that is it, I agree I am that thing. It has rubbed off on so many things; It has affected the person I am (long pause) though part of the positive aspect is that it has made me

spiritually strong because it has made me closer to Allah so that everything will be okay and that is erm... that is one of the positive things that I gained from this”.

Sometimes I feel somewhere that I am being abused, most times verbal, emotional, physical. In those days, emotional is the common one, so that is even one of the reasons why I do not even see it as a marriage. Sometimes I see myself as, most times I see myself as helpless, I cannot help many things. But the thought of being around my children is keeping me there, you know. I depend on my husband for lots of things and not by my own will, but because of the situation, you know the fact that that has always been a strength for him which he uses against me so whether I like it or not I have to be at the receiving end of it all the time. But at least the whole fact that my children are fine, they attend one of the good schools around they are happy, at least that is one of the good things, the positive things even though I wish it is different. I wish it were not solely because of them, I wish to be there because I want to be there, happy a lot and can do whatever I want, relate to anyone I want to but I cannot”.

4.1.6 Reflection:

Encountering Hannah made me wonder if the level of doggedness I sensed in her interview resulted from the lessons she had learnt in her marriage. For instance, issues to do with what she had always known but did not heed due to familial pressure. I felt like she had already had the ‘light bulb moment’ but had not quite figured out where the last few pieces of the puzzles would go. I felt sad and somewhat reassured, as she has been through an uneasy journey of reconstructing

herself and hoped to make things better with time. I left the interview with mixed feelings of both sadness and hope for Hannah.

The themes from Hannah's transcript include external influence on marriage, finding one's feet, undesired state of being, marriage and meaninglessness, finding strength in self/ self-dependence, failing health, lack of freedom, low self-esteem, and finding solace.

4.1.7. Meet Rose:

Rose is a forty-two-year-old; Christian mother of two children and married for fourteen years. She was also very eager to participate in the research and made it clear that she seizes every opportunity to speak to single and married women on the topic of marriage. I saw that she had a lot to say, and I had to try hard to bring her focus back to the interview questions. The interview lasted one hour and fifteen minutes, which was longer than other participants. At many points in the interview, the focus was on advising unmarried people or stating wishes and hopes. Although interesting, these topics were not directly linked to the interview questions. Rose's openness and willingness to engage made it easy to get very rich data.

Rose says:

“Going into marriage, you are full of hopes, my husband is the best man in the world, he is good, he is going to love me, he is going to be there for me, he is going to be my best friend, my best pal, we will talk we do everything, we will live happily ever after, that is why I said love is sometimes unreasonable because when you go into marriage hmm.

I am married to one of the most responsible men on earth; my father was a very responsible man, in fact, we are so lucky because we were not very rich,

but I have never had money issues, so when I married my husband, thank God my husband is also responsible. You never have to think about how to pay the house rent, how to pay the bills, in that aspect, he is very good, he is very good, but also you know being a man you know there are some times... you know there was a time I made some investments. I lost a lot of money, oh, I saw the other side of my husband, he became very angry, he withdrew his support, it was a trying time, I felt very alone. You know I am a kind of person; I do not have friends in my married life as such, so it was a trying period for me; I felt very sad, I lost all my savings, and my husband did not understand, I regretted marriage, I was like is this thing worth it. In fact, I was too dependent on my husband in marriage, so that was how I discovered that even in marriage, no matter how much you have put yourself in it, you should reserve a little for yourself, never disappear in marriage, never lose yourself. I tell people, yes, love your husband with all your heart, but he should not be your all, he should not be”.

4.1.8. Reflection:

As pointed out earlier, the interview went on for longer, but this helped me make proper sense of how Rose understood her marriage. With instances cited, the experience seems full; it was almost like all has been learned, and everything will be okay now. I felt a sense of relief when she said: “do not disappear in marriage, do not lose yourself”. It made sense to me and made me admire her for being able to go through the journey of rediscovering herself and coming out stronger than she previously was. It was like a reminder to her and a warning to those who care to listen. I left the interview full of admiration for Rose. The themes generated from the

interview include cultural and religious influence on marriage, lack of freedom, being owned, timing in marriage, sacrificing for marriage, fulfilment of duty, and being faced with a new reality.

4.1.9. Meet Ire:

Ire is a thirty-five-year-old Christian mother of one married for ten years. Her responses were succinct; she appeared in a hurry, although she said she was not when I checked with her. I clarified a lot with Ire as I was sometimes not sure what she meant by and in her responses. Many times, she would leave her sentences unfinished or throw in some words from a fairy tale that would leave me pondering over the meaning. I do not know if her profession as a medical doctor contributed to the air of formality that took over the interview or if her personality was business-like.

In Ire's account of how her marriage has affected her, she says:

“The only thing that marriage has done to me in the past ten years is spiritually. I am better off; I have so many challenges in the last two to three years that if not for this, I would have said my knowing and praying would not have been this serious. I think, thinking of where I am coming from, I am better off spiritually. Then socially, yes, before I got married, I was this kind of person who will stay at home, you do not go out, do not socialise and then maybe my medicine contributed to it, I think because of that, and I felt, my husband is not the outgoing type, we stay at home. I think positively when we are having challenges; I told myself going out does not mean you mix up with the wrong group, I go out to free my mind, I go out to rub minds with people, that way you learn better, I think recently I have gotten the strength I did not

even know that I could move on. There is nothing that is good that does not have a negative part; it has helped me personally; at least it has given me the mindset that I can strive for better things. He did not really like it, staying at home and always relying on him. If he does not say do it, do not do it, I guess.... though you are working, you are dependent on him for ideas, but now that I do so many things on my own, he even goes around that (laughs) I am a superwoman, at least I am getting on with my life, at least I am happy that is the most important thing, and I think my self-esteem is better”.

4.1.10. Reflection:

I noticed that I was not as comfortable as I was with other participants with Ire and wondered why this was the case. I asked if she was comfortable answering the questions, and she said she was not entirely comfortable, as it was not a topic she readily spoke about, that she would be more comfortable when the interview ended. I got a sense that Ire did not want to waste time on something she was able to put to bed in her mind and sometimes seemed dissociated from the account she provided during the interview. I sensed a strong sense of self-worth and esteem, but I could not quite place how I felt during the interview. What came to my mind was a sense of wonder; I wondered how she got to this point and if she was happy being where she was and did not need further emotional help from professionals. I felt unsettled but left with the hope that she was very much aware of her being for herself and others in her relationships and that there is free professional emotional support available should she need it.

The themes generated from Ire's interview are the place of culture, being owned, lack of freedom and esteem, and finding solace.

4.1.11. Meet Sumayah:

Sumayah is a forty-two-year-old Muslim woman with four children, married for seventeen years. There was a strong sense of calm that Sumayah exuded and I felt drawn to her gentle nature. She took her time to respond; she contemplated her responses and expressed herself openly. I could see the strain in her eyes as she described what she would like an ideal situation to be. Sumayah's answers were quite straight to the point, and I attributed this to her medical profession. In giving an account of how her marriage has affected her, Sumayah says:

“Looking at marriage over the years, the positive impact it has had on my personal life is that it has made me more responsible, being in charge of so many things, having to take care of so many things have changed my deployed responsibilities which has also affected my professional life too. Spiritually, it has also helped because I developed the spiritual component to a greater height compared to when I was single. Then physically, positively, it has (laughs). I will say I have grown a little bit older and stronger to be able to face the physical day to day activities and challenges. Then socially, the social component that I will say positively is on my professional life because it has made me enjoy a lot of support that has really helped me improve my achievement in my professional life. That is one positive thing my marriage has had on my social life. Then negatively, on my social life, marriage has really separated me from social activities”.

4.1.12. Reflection:

I felt calm and, at the same time, filled with a strong sense that Sumayah had little expectations in marriage and had been accepting of what marriage had given her as a

gift. She appeared as one not to complain, and this was evident in her response to a hypothetical question about a situation where she did not have to work hard for anything. I wondered if it was contentment or resignation to fate I sensed in my encounter with Sumayah. The themes generated from Sumayah's interview transcript included influences in marriage, marriage in the wake of modernisation, act of being married, finding one's place, meaning over time, Impact on self.

4.1.13. Meet Tayo:

Tayo is a forty-one-year-old Christian mother of three, married for twelve years at the interview. Tayo appeared pleasant and mentioned that she was coming across these forms of questions for the first time in her marriage. She gave an account of her marital experience in an off-handed manner, which did not suggest a great deal of emotional commitment. I would say she was very realistic and focused on herself and her independence. In responding to how her marriage has affected her, Tayo says:

“It made me move closer to God, and it makes me believe more in myself. Those two, especially, have made me closer to God and made me a better person. It has made me more diplomatic like before I got married, I was the kind of person that I do not care how you feel, I will just say it the way it is, but since I got married, I tend to put other people into consideration before doing or saying stuff, that was not me before, it made me believe that there is a supernatural power somewhere that directs our affairs then I think it makes me more open, more open hmmn. Marriage has really helped me socially. I used to like parties; there is a particular way I liked dressing before marriage. Do I say that is positive or... in

some aspects it is positive and some aspects negative. Socially, I used to like parties a lot but now when you talk about parties... The kind of family I come from, they are the party type, everybody knows that the part of Nigeria that I come from is the partying type, but since I got married I have come to realise that it is not all parties you go to. You do not really have to go to parties every weekend. And socially, it has made me to be more reserved and choose my friends, not my friend choosing me. I do not have to be everybody's friend, that is' personally then it has really affected me spiritually physically, it has affected me of course, I was not like this when I got married because since I got married, I noticed a lot of changes".

4.1.14. Reflection:

This particular interview reminded me of my initial interview and my personal view on marriage in general. I was reminded of how much I held the same ideas as Tayo and how my outlook on marriage was quite similar to hers. I was aware of her being overly protective of herself and handled her marriage with levity while at the same time holding it in high esteem. I felt the strength stir in me as she described her independence and her love for it. I knew I was looking at a woman whose freedom and happiness meant a lot to her but was trying to get herself ready for any eventuality by being independent and not overly attached to her spouse, regardless of how satisfying this marriage is. I took extra care in interpreting the interview transcript so as not to draw themes from a biased part of my narrative and not place myself in the interpretive process. I took these thoughts and feelings to personal therapy to deal with my emerging issues due to conducting the interview. I left Tayo feeling a renewed revelation of myself and relieved that some people are experiencing freedom and

independence while enjoying marital bliss. The themes generated in Tayo's interview transcript include cultural influence on marriage, belief in the unseen, restriction of freedom, what might have been, worth in financial independence, satisfaction in marriage, what marriage means.

4.1.16. Meet Shola:

Shola is a forty-three-year-old Christian woman married for eleven years with no children. She appeared gentle, quite reserved and withdrawn. The Interview with Shola was the shortest, lasting forty-eight minutes. However, most, if not all, of the interview schedule was covered before we had to bring the interview to an end as she was in distress and could not stop crying at the memories the interview was bringing her. I include the interview because I stayed with Shola as she cried and stopped recording after one hour six minutes when she said she could not carry on. Shola spoke with pain in her eyes, and I checked several times to know if she was all right to carry on, to which she agreed. In giving an account of how her life had been affected by her marriage, Shola says:

“When I was still single, my thought was that when I get married, I will have someone that we will pray together, fellowship together, go to church together because, by my own religion, we feel that when two of you agree to pray on something, that thing will come to pass but spiritually, he is nowhere to be found. Even socially, sorry if I am being too blunt about this but maybe because of his upbringing, I mean socially now, maybe once in a while, you expect you and your husband to go out together. I remember when we were newly married, anywhere he was going, I will feel like following him, and my husband's brother now asked me, why are you following your husband

around? I do not know; to them, it is not decent; they do not expect the wife to be following the husband. It was late, though we do not have an issue (children), so I thought anywhere he is going, we should go together. My in-law said, why are you following him around and since then, I noticed that my husband, too, whenever he is going out, does not want us to go out together again; there are some places I will want to go he believes he is a man. He is not expected to bring me along, so what he expects is that if they go out anytime, they come back the wife should be at home, cooking if there is a baby, the baby should be clean, that is their own belief of a wife by their culture though”.

4.1.17. Reflection:

I felt the loneliness in Shola’s world as she described her relationship. There was an expression of desire that was wished for but that she may never get, of the dreams lost, hopes shattered, and of the untainted sadness that consumed her towards the end of the interview before she broke down and could not carry on. I felt an air of sorrow in the room as we sat in silence. I felt helpless in Shola’s presence; she refused professional counselling support since I could not personally provide it due to my role as a researcher. The belief that no session was confidential and anything and everything said would still be shared with outsiders prevented Shola from sharing her feelings with those who could help- in church or within the community. I stayed with her until she was calm and ready to leave, and I also checked in with her the following day to make sure she was okay. All the while, I still felt helpless, and I remembered the sorrow I saw in her eyes as she gave an account of her marital experience. The themes generated from Shola’s interview transcript include lost

freedom, being for others, the power of culture, lost dream and lost reality, being for self/Independent self.

4.1.18. Presenting the Themes

The themes were generated by analysing these interviews in order to answer my research question. Although much text was generated from the interviewing process, not everything is covered in this section due to analysing the transcripts and choosing themes.

I will be discussing the superordinate themes and the sub-themes generated from the analysis of the interview transcripts.

Four master themes were generated. The first theme is the loss of freedom; this has two sub-themes: being owned and restricted and marriage as slavery.

The second theme is the reality of marriage, which has three subthemes: honouring the title, shame, and change in meaning over time.

The third theme is the sociocultural issues, which has two sub-themes; familial and cultural expectations and the role of religion.

The fourth theme is 'The Self', which has two sub-themes: being for self and identity and financial independence.

The four superordinate themes and the subthemes that cut across all participants will be taken in turn here, supported with quotes from participants and concluded with an existential, four world perspective.

Below is a tabular representation for the themes and sub-themes.

Table 2: Representation of themes and subthemes

Super ordinate themes	Loss of freedom	The reality of marriage	Sociocultural issues	The self
Subthemes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Being owned and restricted 2. Marriage as slavery 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Honouring the title 2. Shame and resignation 3. Change in meaning over time 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Familial and cultural expectations 2. The role of religion 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Being for self and identity 2. Financial Independence

Table 3: Super ordinate themes and the paradoxes of the four worlds

Superordinate themes	Subthemes	Existential dimension	Participants applicable to
Loss of freedom	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Being owned and restricted 2. Marriage as slavery 	Personal	6 out of 8
		Social	
		Physical	
The reality of marriage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Honouring the title 2. Shame and resignation 3. Change in meaning over time 	Personal	All 8
		Social Physical	7 out of 8
		Temporality	6 out of 8
Sociocultural issues	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Familial and cultural expectations 2. The role of religion 	Social	All 8
		Spiritual	
The self	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Being for self and identity 2. Financial independence 	Personal	All 8
		Physical, personal Social	7 out of 8

As seen above with each participant, many themes were generated when engaging with the transcripts at an individual level and from individual cases. Some themes cut across all participants, which informed the generation of master themes.

4.2. Theme 1: Loss of Freedom

This theme refers to the participants' views on marriage within their culture and their marital experiences. It refers to how freedom is denied as a result of being married; this is backed up by culture, the tradition of bride price, religious understandings and the part played by the extended family. Culturally, women are supposed to get married to men, who are seen as the head of the family. Women are unable to or prevented from making their own decisions without the knowledge and approval of the husband. Nigerian culture has spelt out the wife's duties as subservient, and the man's as being in control. The payment of bride price further makes the line of freedom blurry, as the wife is regarded as the husband's property in some parts of Nigeria. When the bride price is paid, women become the possession of the husband. In the two main religions practised in Nigeria, women have roles spelt out to them, and the men take the lead role in the household.

The family plays a crucial part in the process of women's loss of freedom. They come together to enforce the culture, tradition, and religious teachings on their female children – so that they take up the duties of being a wife, primarily controlled by the husband. Two subthemes emerged under the theme loss of freedom; being owned and restricted, and marriage as slavery.

4.2.1. Being Owned and Restricted

Six participants gave accounts of their experiences and what they had come to know through growing up around other people. For all participants, their idea of Nigerian

marriage was that the woman ceases to be herself the moment she becomes a wife. The culture suggests the husband is the head of the family, and the wife is supposed to be submissive to him. Jenny described being owned in terms of the bride price and the role the family plays in making the wife become the husband's property, whether dead or alive. An elaborate wedding is celebrated, and the bride price paid to a predominantly low-income family would mean possessing the bride in exchange for money.

Jenny went on to describe the controlling nature of Nigerian husbands and the limited freedom the wife has in making decisions:

“wives don't really have a say, whatever the husband says is final even if the wife doesn't like it” (Jenny, lines 90-91).

Jenny had a dislike for how things were in her marriage, as it took away the autonomy she had as a single person. Although the bride price was returned to the husband's family upon marriage, she felt restricted and unable to exercise freedom to do as she pleased, as she could only do as her husband pleased. This sometimes made her feel less than a wife:

“I must confess I don't feel like a wife sometimes, how it makes me feel is like a servant sometimes. You know, my parents refused the bride price that was brought by my husband's family saying they are offering me to him as a gift to love and to take care of. When no bride price is paid, you will expect to be in a relationship of love, a balanced relationship of respect and appreciation but many times, in many homes, it's the wife doing the loving, appreciation and respect, it is not compulsory for the husband in our culture” (Jenny, lines 96-102).

The idea of being the one to listen, love, and obey at all times in the marriage, whether or not the bride price was collected, makes the loss of freedom in marriage more painful to bear for the women. Likening marriage to being a servant is an indication of how far the denial of freedom can go in matrimonial homes.

For Shola, the issue of feeling owned is evident in her response to how she feels as a wife despite the bride price being returned by her parents during her wedding ceremony. She described being owned as the same as having a property, where both are one and the same:

“Yes now, when you pay for something you own it, it’s just like buying a vehicle, you are entitled to it, the vehicle belongs to you so far you have paid”
(Shola, lines 50-51).

The feeling of being owned, and being equated to a car only shows how she feels like a possession owned by her husband and the fact that she has no choice than to stay in the marriage, and try to make it work no matter the degree of maltreatment, emphasises the submission made by Shola.

Rose’s general view of marriage is that *“It’s in Africa, the husband owns the wife, whether there is bride price or not”* (Rose, line 186).

Rose does not submit to the idea of being owned. However, she recognises the fact that elaborate weddings can be a factor affecting the issue of bride ownership in Nigeria. According to her:

“when you have spent too much it shows you have bought the woman and you just behave anyhow, she is your property” (lines 110-111).

Ire maintained that she was not bought and cannot be bought. This was in reaction to her in-laws stating that she had been bought. When I asked how it made her feel, she said:

“I feel low, low self-esteem, someone telling you that they bought you, it’s not possible, you can’t buy life” (Ire, lines 93-94).

Ire feels her self-esteem has been bruised just by the fact that her in-laws refer to her as their property in spite of the awareness that it is not literally the case, she felt slighted by the idea of being objectified.

Like Ire and Rose, Anne does not feel owned but is aware of the fact that people claim to own their wives regardless of the bride price, she states that being owned is a thing of the mind. While some women feel owned and love to feel owned, some men claim ownership of women whether they have paid the bride price or not. In Anne’s words:

“The fact that somebody paid bride price or not doesn’t mean to me, does not mean that you own a woman. Some people don’t pay any price and they feel they own the woman, they still say they own the woman, this is my woman I own her and some people think because they pay bride price, they own the woman and I know that in some cultures in Nigeria, the fact that the men have to pay quite a lot of money to marry their wives”

(Anne, lines 76-82).

Given the findings above, participants have similar views of marriage regarding loss of freedom. Not all of them see marriage as rendering them lacking in freedom. Some participants talk about how marriage had changed them from being free to being restricted, having to seek consent, permission, or consideration before embarking on any project, which negatively affects the marriage. According to Ire, there is a need to be dependent, as stipulated by the culture

“Staying at home and always relying on him. If he doesn’t say do it don’t do it” (Ire, lines 216-217).

Tayo, who sees the issue of bride price as an advantage in marriage, comments about the fact that she does not just get up to do things as she pleases as it is frowned upon by Nigerian men:

“You don’t have your time to yourself, you are restricted, erm, there are some things you might want to say or do, in that area, marriage has really affected me because I am a go do it person, go getter, I want to do it once the idea comes, I want to do it now, marriage has really affected that aspect of me negatively because erm, in this part of the world, you can’t just go ahead and do” (Tayo, lines 161-163).

To Shola, the idea of having to ask and be denied the thing requested is very irritating. The husband feels in control because he can decide when to approve or deny his wife’s request:

“You can’t do what you want if your husband doesn’t support you, I can’t go anywhere I want if he does not allow it” (Shola, line 113-114).

Anne described her experience of the restriction of freedom in terms of being slowed down, not necessarily seeing it as an act to be regretted but a sacrifice made in marriage. However, this sacrifice resulted in being slowed down, which means all she could do in the past when single without consideration for anyone is no longer possible. By contrast, she would have to think of how her actions and decisions affect her partner or marriage. Having to keep consulting the husband or making sure the decision she is taking is okay by him renders her spontaneity almost non-existent:

“Marriage has actually slowed me down like I said the other time that marriage has slowed me down that I have these vibes and energy negative or positive. I want to say that marriage has really slowed me down” (Anne, lines 287-280).

Rose spoke about her experience of trying to make her own decisions without seeking her husband’s permission, and this was met with blame and disapproval from the husband. Her bid to freely take her own decision almost cost her her marriage, realising that little or nothing could be done without the husband’s consent and that there are grievous consequences to be faced as a result if this was done:

“Because my husband was saying I didn’t consult him and I was like I should be able to do some things by myself, I wanted to prove myself but unfortunately when all this happened, my husband became very angry, he withdrew his support, it was a trying time, I felt very alone” (Rose, lines 217-221).

Hannah sees marriage as rendering her dependent on her husband for a lot of things, if not everything, as this prevents her from exercising her freedom and affects her self-worth:

“I depend on my husband for lots of things and not by my own will but because of the situation, you know the fact that that has always been a strength for him which he uses against me so whether I like it or not I have to be at the receiving end of it all the time” (Hannah, lines 168-171).

According to Jenny, the issue of the husband taking over control and taking decisions that affect the whole family is painful to experience. She wonders:

“Why he feels he is the man of the house and providing for his family should mean taking over control and not allowing his wife to have a say is what I

don't understand. I really don't like it, it makes me feel like I'm just living in the house and not having any worth as a woman” (Jenny, lines 113-117).

For Sumayah, being married slowed down her professional development due to its demands, such as taking care of as well as supporting the home as it is expected of a dutiful wife. She has experienced, over time, the aspect of marriage, which doesn't allow for either spontaneity or self-paced professional development.

“The family and all of that tends to be a step retractor for you in terms of gaining professional achievement” (Sumayah, lines 208-209).

Being owned and restricted is a subtheme all participants see through different lenses. The inability to do anything independent of the husband is a major struggle for all participants. The change in status also contributed to how much the wife can do for herself in individual or professional development. In a culture where everything depends on the happiness and approval of the husband, wives feel "slowed down", "not free", "owned", and restricted by their husbands. Freedom restricted or lost is, in another way, tied to how the participants have limited control over their time and how it is used.

4.2.2. Marriage as Slavery

Although not all participants referred to their marriage as slavery, it stood out as a powerful and recurring theme across all participants. Some participants gave accounts of their experience using the exact term "slavery" (Jenny, line 7; Shola, line10; Ire line 24). Some referred to it as the lack of freedom, submission, and absolute dependence on their husbands (Rose, Hannah). Some refer to it through

their inability to pursue their dreams and realise their potentials (Tayo, Anne, Sumayah).

Serving husbands can be interpreted in various ways; It ranges from losing one's known sense of self to assuming a new identity. It can also mean giving up one's freedom due to heeding a religious or cultural call or submitting to the husband's will for the sake of peace, which could all lead to losing oneself.

'Being owned' and "marriage as slavery" are intertwined in that they both point to the restriction and/or failure to stand as one entity in a free, romantic relationship based on equality and freedom.

In describing how marriage was experienced as a form of slavery, Jenny aired her general view by simply saying, "marriage is modern-day slavery" (Jenny, line 7), and when asked what she meant by this, she said:

"For you to be happy and have peace of mind in your own home, you have to be ready to serve your husband as well as your husband's family (Jenny, lines 12-13).

Jenny described the slavery in marriage as emanating from within the bride's home through the manner of pre-marital education offered to the wife in relation to her role, which is to be submissive to both her husband and his family members. Wives are taught to be silent; to never exchange words with their in-laws and to be respectful of them like a child is expected to respect their elders in the traditional sense. Jenny goes on to say:

"You can imagine where the slavery comes in, from within your own family. They make it seem like you are going for an eternal test, which is not likely ever going to be passed. The only way one can pass is by being submissive

both to your husband and his family members. I don't see any other way of describing it than modern day slavery" (Jenny, lines 23-27).

The description of slavery is also expressed in the dynamics within the family home. The husband exerts control, and as the society expects, the wife as well as her family strive to please the husband's family. In Jenny's words:

"You cannot freely exercise your right as a wife and co-owner of the house. The decision is for the man to make and the man's decision is final. If anyone must leave for any reason, it will be your own family no matter how important it is for the person to be with you. In short, the wife and her family strive to serve the husband and their family, it is their own way of ensuring that the marriage lasts a lifetime. To me, treating men like that is all part of slavery especially when the wife has no say in any matter that concerns her. It's so sad really" (Jenny, lines 49-55).

Shola's view is that marriage is slavery; the wife is expected by both her family and the society at large to be subservient to the husband who is known as the master in the relationship. The wife is not expected to complain or take decisions affecting her own self:

"I think marriage is slavery. I believe marriage is slavery" (Shola, lines 3-4).

"...I feel to me marriage is a kind of slavery you can't do what you want if your husband doesn't support you, I can't go anywhere I want if he does not allow it, I believe marriage is slavery to me because when you are not married, people will be asking you why are you not married. You know I now compare it to when I was single there were so many things I intend doing but now because I am married you will first have to think, what will your man say about it, will he support you, what will people around him say? So, so many things you just must give up because you are married" (Shola, lines 110-120).

Ire gave her view on marriage and servitude through the duties that men are supposed to assume due to an enabling culture. The society created the husbands to be the way they are, they are supposed to be in charge and dictates what happens within the home:

“They decide what happens and the ego in men makes it worse, they are not people you readily relate with they believe they were taught to be lord and master of the marriage it’s the man that dictates the tune and if you are not comfortable with it they turn it to violence (Ire, lines 25-27,30).

Rose’s submission comes from a religious point of view. She used the word “submission” to describe what she does in her marriage and how it is a commandment of God. In obeying God, the wife is supposed to submit to the husband:

“For me, I’m a Christian and the way the bible teaches us is that the husband is the head of the home and you are supposed to submit to your husband totally. In fact, in Africa, just like I said, for marriage to be peaceful and successful, you have to submit to your man” (Rose, lines 60-63).

Hannah described her experience in terms of her dependence and helplessness in the marriage. She has suffered abuse emotionally and so hardly considers herself married:

“I don’t even see it as a marriage. Sometimes I see myself as, most times I see myself as helpless, I can’t help a lot of things...” (Hannah, lines 163-165).

“...so, whether I like it or not I have to be at the receiving end of it all the time” (Hannah, lines 170-171).

In a certain way, the participants have seen the institution of marriage as one that comes with serving the husband and his family. Little or no freedom is given to the

wives, and they are not expected to violate any rules laid down by their husbands, and cannot go against the traditional definition of marriage and marital roles set out by the society and culture.

4.2.3. The Four-World Perspective

From the findings, participants continually live within the tensions and paradoxes provided through their relation to the four worlds. It can be gathered that freedom and the lack of it determine how participants make sense of their marriage to a large extent. Freedom should ideally be what everyone is entitled to in making choices, and people are expected to be responsible for all their actions.

However, for participants, the society, which includes their families, has shaped them into submitting to a kind of life where options to do anything else is minimal. Society renders women objects and men subjects, creating a way to see themselves within the patriarchal society. It can be said that women who see being owned, enslaved or lacking in freedom in marriage are in bad faith. This is because they have accepted their fate, obeying the laid down cultural instruction on how to be, with no resistance as it could lead to the possibility of being rejected by society.

From the theme 'loss of freedom' came two subthemes; being owned and restricted and marriage as slavery. The existential dimension that emerged includes the physical, social and personal.

4.2.3.1. Physical Dimension

The physical dimension emanated from being owned; participants describe themselves as being owned in marriage. Women are generally seen as the property of the husband and his family, which deters them from exercising the freedom to be

a woman and not just a wife. In some parts of Nigeria, women are referred to as property because of the payment of the bride price. Some participants agree with this (Rose and Shola), while others believe that the payment of bride price gives the husband the notion that their wives are owned. There is a direct interpretation of trade in that money is paid to acquire the person/wife.

How participants see themselves and how they see their marriage is another aspect of the physical dimension. Restriction causes the women to give up on dreams and desires, thereby slowing down or truncating their personal and professional development.

4.2.3.2. Social Dimension

Culturally, the participants see themselves as being denied their freedom or experiencing less freedom than they had before marriage. Being seen as the husband's property affects the sense of self that participants have as individuals, seeing themselves through their duties and responsibilities as wives in society. Women are seen as subservient to men and have no voice in the home.

4.2.3.3. Personal Dimension

This dimension relates to the way women see themselves in relation to the lack of freedom they experience in their marriage. The effect of the physical and social dimensions on the sense of self is displayed in the participants' submission that marriage comes with a significant decrease in freedom. The general opinion of and experiences of the participants in marriage showed that it is quite difficult for women to be seen as separate from the social construct because the society that shapes who they are also imposes the duties and responsibilities that come with marriage on

them. Here, marriage seems to serve as a hindrance to a free, flourishing self; instead, there is an image of them based on how they are seen through their environment, culture, and society.

4.3. Theme 2: The Reality of Marriage

The theme reality of marriage has three subthemes; honouring the title, shame and recognition, and change in marriage over time. This superordinate theme centres on the experience of the participants as they make sense of their marriage. Participants came up with interesting terms like 'companionship' (Anne, Tayo, Ire), 'life' (Rose), 'children' (Jenny, Hannah), 'various things' (Sumayah, Jenny), 'security' (Jenny), and 'nothing' (Hannah). Participants engaged in the process of looking at the satisfaction derived from and benefits of being married. Part of this theme centred on the shame that results from not being married and the changing meaning of marriage over time according to individual experiences.

4.3.1. Honouring the Title

Seven participants testified to the fact that being married gives the wife much respect in society. Words used include: 'dignity' (Jenny), 'respect', 'success', responsibility (Shola, Hannah, Rose) and 'protection' (Anne, Tayo, Sumayah).

According to the participants, married women are automatically granted a high level of honour according to their marital status in Nigeria. The husband's affluence also adds to women's respect, which is also extended to her family members. These factors make it mandatory for women to get married as soon as possible and, more importantly, stay in the marriage even if the relationship becomes challenging or

unbearable. Shola, who does not derive any satisfaction in her marriage presently, acknowledges the benefit that she gets from bearing her husband's last name:

"People will give you respect because you are married. That you are bearing someone's name, you are Mrs" (Shola, lines 204-206).

Outsiders did not see the challenges faced in Hannah's marriage; all they see is her being in an enviable position of the 'wife' of an affluent man:

"A lot of people out there would be envying you. You know it's just the outward they see but it is the person wearing the shoes that knows where it pinches" (Hannah, lines 218-220).

Anne spoke about the "boost in self-esteem" (line, 190) that is experienced in her culture as a result of being married in addition to the protection enjoyed by virtue of being married:

"It has actually affected my social status because when you are married, people look at you in a different way, and if you are married, it comes with some things like your husband being able to provide you with things that people use to weigh you as better than some other people" (Anne, lines 246-250).

Rose's view is a general one about how married people are seen in society:

"In Africa, no matter how much money you have, if your marriage is not okay, you are not okay as a woman, people will grade you on how successful your marriage is" (Rose, lines 427-429).

In giving an account of the meaning of marriage in order of importance, Jenny spoke about respect after stating children as the most important thing in her life. She says:

“Without being married, I won't be a respectable person in the society especially with children. Women are looked down upon here unlike in the western world where you are allowed to live your life the way you want, an unmarried woman is regarded as cheap and disrespected in the society. So respect is another thing my marriage means to me, even people close to you start addressing you with respect the moment they know you are married, generally hearing or seeing ‘Mrs’ in front of your name is enough to gain the respect of those you meet” (Jenny, lines 160-169).

Another point raised by Tayo is the material benefit in marriage, when giving her view on marriage in Nigeria:

“To other people marriage is to like update their status, to some other people marriage is for stepping up in life like some people come from a very poor background and are fortunate to get married into a rich family so that is what marriage is basically about in Nigeria” (Tayo, lines 23-26).

Sumayah's position is quite different; the benefit of marriage is not seen through the eyes of the society but a difficult childhood, growing up in a polygamous setting. She felt it would be beneficial to carve out a desired life for her and so got married for that reason:

“It wasn't too good on my developmental achievement and I thought I could simply solve that by changing my environment and setting out what I think I want for myself” (Sumayah, lines 110-112).

It can be seen that every participant tied being married to being respected and valued within the family as well as in the society. Attaining the status of being married is important both to participants and the people around them. It appears to provide an added value to their sense of womanhood.

4.3.2. Shame and Resignation

Participants stay in their marriage despite the dissatisfaction experienced due to the potential shame that getting divorced might cause. Outsiders are not allowed to know the challenges in the marriage of others because it would mean the failure of the woman. The role of the 'other' that participants experience is such that the woman pretends to have a blissful marriage even when an abuse is going on.

Women need to remain in their marriage so the family is not humiliated or shamed.

For this reason, there is a form of resignation that comes with being in a marriage, let alone an unhappy one.

In Ire's description of resignation:

"Everybody keeps going, let me just keep going, even if it's not palatable you just have to keep going because people usually pass derogatory comments about women that are not married or divorced, so people just stay in a man's house" (Ire, lines 15-17).

To further buttress Ire's point, Shola is in her marriage solely for the reason of being seen as responsible. She pretends to people outside of her marriage that all is well:

"We will be pretending that things are well, especially those people that you like, you don't want other people to have a negative opinion" (Shola, lines 14-16).

Sumayah sees marriage as an important project in which she must succeed:

“To me, marriage means an institution I must succeed in at all cost because I know what it is tied to” (Sumayah, line 3).

In Anne’s opinion, the issue of shame has been in existence for as long as she can remember. According to her, women are advised by their immediate family to remain in abusive marriages due to the shame that leaving would bring to them:

“I can remember now that even while growing up some parents advise their children to stay in a violent marriage, so people will not say that their daughter has failed in their marriage and they feel like it’s their shame” (Anne, lines 101-104).

Six out of the eight participants talked about the consequences of unwanted and intolerable acts from their husbands. When asked what could make them walk away from their marriage, the initial response was that nothing would make them leave, and after careful thought, they came up with extreme cases that could lead to them walking away from their marriage. Some said ‘nothing but used to say they would leave upon their husbands’ infidelity (Tayo, lines 260-261; Sumayah, lines 325-356; and Shola lines 307-308).

Physical abuse/violence is the only thing that would make Rose, (lines 621-622); Anne (lines 426-428); and Ire, (lines 355-359) walk away from their marriage.

Hannah’s pride would make her walk away if asked to leave (Hannah, line 235), and polygamy is what Jenny cannot stand (Jenny, line 347) therefore would walk away if her husband takes another wife which is allowed in their religion; Islam.

4.3.3. Change in Meaning over Time

Participants described different stages of their relationships; description of and the meaning of their lives before they got married compared to when they got married. They also described married life before having children, the challenges they faced over the years they have been married and how that informed their current meaning of marriage. One of the participants described her experience of her husband as comparable to being with three different men:

“I can almost say it’s like being with three different people and not knowing what exactly changed but certainly not enjoying the present one he has become, maybe it’s because we have been together for so long” (Jenny, lines 124-127).

Rose described her experience of her husband like that of meeting a stranger. She described it as being with an unknown person when an investment she made failed. This changed her outlook on marriage and caused her meaning to change from her marriage being her life and husband to being a duty to be performed:

“I made some investments and I lost a lot of money, oh, I saw the other side of my husband, he became very angry, the support I thought I would have, was not there, that changed things for me” (Rose, lines 211-214).

Hannah described her experience of marriage before the arrival of children as better than it is now. The relationship was better between the couple at the early stage of their marriage:

“I will say I give thanks to God, back then things were a lot better, even when the kids were not here, I will say over time, I’m here solely because of them they are the greatest joy I have” (Hannah, lines, 142-144).

Sumayah's change in meaning of marriage is derived from every stage of marriage. Her rich description of marriage is based on three periods: before children, with children and upon the exit of children:

“At the very onset, it meant life, it meant happiness, but as it progressed, as challenges began and other things, the meaning changed with time. When I started, it meant life because I didn't have any other thing apart from the marriage and probably my husband but with the arrival of the kids, it changed the meaning changed, that all I want to do is have the best kids and the best family, happy and all that. So that was what marriage meant at another point. I think, now having gone through so many years of marriage, it is beginning to change again because most of the children are now getting ready to leave the house, they are ready to go and one has to restructure the meaning of marriage” (Sumayah, lines 132-142).

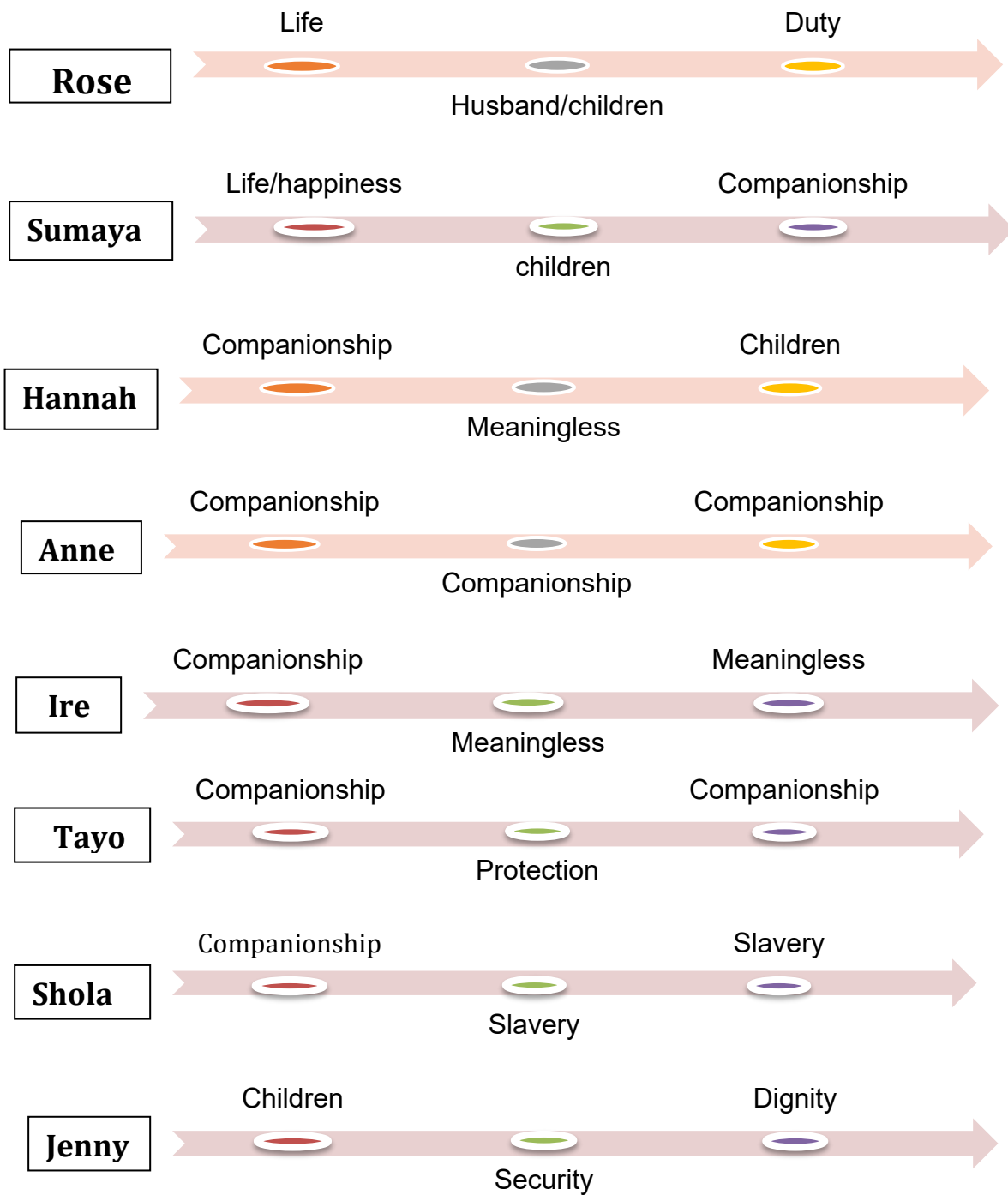
Ire's change in meaning of marriage is also not static, as the meaning of marriage depended on what was going on in her life at the time:

“The concept or the meaning of marriage everyday keeps changing, I guess based on experience, experiences whichever one and the present situation and circumstances” (Ire, lines 121-122).




Shola's meaning of marriage changed as a result of a shattered dream and expectations before marriage and shortly after, the marriage was as she dreamed it to be but eventually things deteriorated:

“Yes, because when we were courting, this was not what I expected, I have my own how will I call it, my own quality, my own dream, my own kind of marriage, I want a marriage where by me and my husband will pray together, I can discuss anything that is disturbing me with my husband, feel free, I will feel like sharing my opinion my mind with my man but when you are not getting that, the next thing is to you know, you just have so many” (Shola, lines 227-234).

Figure 2: Timeline showing how the meaning of marriage change over time for the participants:



KEY

	Earlier
	As time went by
	Presently

The timeline above shows what marriage means and had meant to the participants throughout their marriage. In the key, 'earlier' suggests what marriage meant when they were newly married. Interestingly, all participants see 'companionship' as the meaning of marriage at some point in their marriage. Although the impact of having children is not emphasised as part of this research yet, it can be seen from the timeline that children play a significant role in creating meaning in marriage.

Out of the three participants who did not mention children as giving their marriage meaning, two have no children, which shows that companionship and children are very significant in marriage. It can also be noticed that the two participants who have children as currently giving their marriage meaning are not in a meaningful or satisfying relationship with their husbands.

All eight participants gave different accounts of the experience of being married. Some were able to give concrete meaning to their marriage, and some could only describe it through what it should be and what it could be in terms of expectations.

Jenny based her meaning on various things and in an orderly fashion when describing what marriage meant to her:

"It means a lot of things to me. It is not just one thing, it means a lot of things, but I will take it in order of importance; "My marriage means my children, security and dignity. (Jenny, lines 149-152).

She went on to elaborate by laying more emphasis on children:

"Marriage is the foundation for childbearing, so my children hold a special place in my marriage; in fact, thinking about my marriage without thinking of

my children is almost impossible. Not that I don't get any other thing, but the most important is children for me" (Jenny, lines 155-159).

For Hannah, children, give her marriage meaning and are the reason for remaining in the marriage. She described marriage as otherwise not meaningful; it is only through the children that meaning is currently created in her marriage. This means children play a significant role in the meaning making of Hannah's marriage, without the presence of children, no meaning is attributed to her marriage:

"I am sorry, but it means absolutely nothing. The thing that has actually kept me in the marriage are my children. Yes, my children. Sometimes I don't even see it as a marriage I see it as a place I need to be to safeguard something that means so much to me" (Hannah, lines 111-114).

Rose used the term 'life' to describe her understanding of marriage. Initially, she described her marriage as meaning life itself where everything she does revolves around her immediate family and her own needs come after that of her husband and children:

"To me, my marriage is my life. Honestly, because my husband and my children are the most important things in my life. That's what I breathe" (Rose, lines 145-147).

Sumayah described the meaning of her marriage in stages; beginning, the immediate past and what it looks like presently, which is informing what it will be like in the future:

"Marriage means a lot. It means a lot, I don't want to say means everything" (Sumayah, line 111) *"it means children to me, it also means happiness, I don't want to say life because it is not perfect"* (Sumayah, lines 129-130).

Several factors make marriage meaningful to Anne, but the most important one is having a companion in her husband. She made a point of the absence of children in the relationship at the moment:

“You can bear your mind and soul to them, so to me, my marriage actually means first companionship... probably if I have children, I could be able to say other things like family life” (Anne, lines 182- 183; 200-201).

In the same vein, Tayo described her marriage as meaning companionship. The presence of children does not affect the way she made sense of her marriage; she described it as both companionship and protection:

“My marriage to me means companionship; you have someone you can share with erm, you are protected sort of, it means protection, to me, that’s what marriage means to me. Basically, protection” (Tayo, lines 93-95).

Ire’s way of approaching the meaning of marriage is quite different. Although she says the meaning is always changing, she is not able to find an appropriate meaning for her marriage - given the fact that she is not currently in a desired relationship:

“I want to look for the exact word. Do I say status quo? Just platonic for now, that one is still better to describe it, for now, it’s just platonic” (Ire, lines 170-172).

Shola based the meaning of marriage on her belief, the general opinion of marriage, and also based it on her personal experience, so, with this, she reiterated the fact that marriage is a form of slavery:

“Yes, on a personal note, I felt if I am not married, there are some things I intend doing and some things I intend achieving but because of marriage I cannot so I feel to me marriage is a kind of slavery” (Shola, lines 109-112).

4.3.3.1. The Four-World Perspective

In the theme, ‘Honouring the title’, the social dimension emerged; society holds married women in high regard as being married comes with many gains. The physical gains of being married include high standards of living, being highly respected in society, security for the children’s future, holidays all around the world, and financial support for the extended family, to mention a few. Through these benefits, women tend to make sense of the power that exists within the confines of their marriage. This is paradoxical because marriage renders them powerless, and being seen as married gives them power in society. Also, the shame of not having a fulfilled life in marriage is so intense that women choose to resign to fate and stick to the material and social benefits of marriage even if the relationship no longer seems to bring satisfaction or is regarded as meaningful personally.

Society’s impact on deciding to leave or stay in a marriage is strong; women think about how they are ‘looked at by others’ before making decisions that could affect them adversely. Seeing them as a reflective self and acting upon it is difficult because there is the ‘other’ to consider. In society, people judge their success or failure by the women’s ability to stay in a marriage and enjoy the ‘benefits’.

Meaning, which makes up a significant part of this study, varies for every participant. Like the subtheme ‘change in meaning’, viewing marriage over time depicts the fact that meaning is not static and cannot be structured.

In the early years of marriage, the women’s relationships with their husbands suggest the importance of ‘being with’, which brings about companionship. Some

participants relate meaning to children and their husbands, feeling quite settled in knowing there is a sense of understanding of their marriage over the years as they continue to make and remake their meanings.

The subthemes were present in all dimensions and temporality; meaning differed as marital situations changed for different participants. The level of satisfaction experienced in the marriage depends on the meaning that has been formed. Participants who feel their marriages are not satisfactory described it as not meaningful (e.g. Hannah, line 144) or as slavery (e.g. Shola, line 80).

In this theme, it can be found that there is a process of self-reflection; there was a better engagement and expression of self than in the previous theme where participants see themselves as they think they should be seen in the society. Some participants seem to have made peace with their marriage after going through several challenges and seemed to find renewed meaning by accepting what they have no power to control or the ability to change, leaving them somewhat balanced and contented.

Lastly, temporality emerged as an existential perspective on marriage. Through the use of language and description, I found that the narrative of the women describes different stages of meaning-making. As meaning is not static, women give meaning to marriage at every point as a result of being with the husband. For instance, Jenny described her meaning as “being with three different people” while Hannah described hers as “being a lot better before the children came.

Using past tenses and comparison, I gathered that meanings change for women over the years and as a result of experiencing the changes in their husbands and probably themselves. With the length of marriage comes the realization of what

marriage is, a clearer sense of self, and the understanding and acknowledgement of who their husbands as well as they were.

4.4. Theme 3: Sociocultural Issues

This theme shaped the outlook of participants in making sense of their marriage. Enlightenment and educational background have played no significant role in how women experience marriage, according to participants' accounts of the role culture and families play in navigating their marriage experiences. Both the general views and the unique experience of each participant point to the fact that culture seems to affect how each participant makes sense of their marriage. This is possible because the participants all have the same cultural and educational background and are exposed to a similar form of societal nurturing.

There are two sub-themes under this theme: familial and cultural expectations and the role of religion.

4.4.1. Familial and Cultural Expectations

All participants gave an account of how marriage is viewed in Nigeria; the traditions of people from different tribes were cited to support their views. Family traditions are based on the practice of the whole society. For instance, what happens in one family is usually found in other families, especially among people from similar ethnic backgrounds.

As discussed in the literature review, the role of the other in relation to shame is a result of the culture that attributes being married to being successful, thereby making families, especially parents, tailor their actions towards the practices and beliefs of the society in which they exist. This theme will examine the overlay of cultural and

familial expectations as factors in marriage since one can hardly be discussed without the other.

Families are significantly influenced by the customs and values of the society, which have been in existence from time immemorial; therefore, families can be seen as the interpreter of culture.

All participants are from the same part of Nigeria and are all part of the Yoruba tribe; however, two of the participants have one of their parents from different tribes (Sumayah is half Edo and Hannah is half Hausa). This makes their views of culture quite similar.

All participants have the same view of Nigerian marriage. Ire thinks, 'marriage in Nigeria is promoting a man's world'.

Sumayah believes that marriage is a sacred thing and something that has been believed in and passed down for many generations; She believes marriage to be something that should be kept intact by all means. In Anne's view, marriage is based mainly on a social and cultural call. Anne thinks that society looks down on women who are not married, and she thinks that society gauges success through the ability to find a husband and expects marriage to take place at a certain age.

Along the same line, participants talk about the need to get married and how family and society influence marriage. For instance, they are influenced by marital age, as there is a certain age that one is expected to get married. Nigerian women are expected to get married when they complete their tertiary education, which is around the age of twenty-four or twenty-five at the latest (this age applies to educated women and a younger age for uneducated ones), after which pressure is mounted on the woman who chooses to remain single for any reason. Tayo supports this motion by saying:

“In Nigeria now you are in your late twenties, you are not married your parents are really worried, by late thirties you are not married, your relatives are really worried, and by forties, you are not married, everybody, both those you know and do not know are really worried” (Tayo, lines 10-13).

Shola echoes this by saying: *“My parents, my mother, then was asking me if there was something wrong with me so they can seek solution to it”* (Shola, lines 90-92).

For five participants, marriage was the next step to take, right after completing their university degrees. Two participants had finished their education and had gained employment, but they wanted to get married because they felt they were getting old:

“Because I felt I was getting old. I was thirty-something, so I felt I was getting old and my relatives have been asking me when will you get married when will we know your husband, so I felt I was getting old that is why I got married” (Shola, lines 79-82).

Getting married for Ire seemed to be the next thing on her agenda as well. Being a medical doctor meant staying longer in education than her counterparts and makes the need to get married immediately after education even more important:

“I was ready to settle down; my profession wasn’t helping matters, I already finished house job, service was on the way. I spent so many years in medical school so when exactly do you want to settle down?” (Ire, lines 92-94).

One participant felt the need to get married because she saw it as a means of escape from the unfavourable living condition at her parents’ home. The situation in a polygamous home called for the need to seek succour in marriage:

“What made me get married then was basically family influence and parental influence, at the time I was getting married, I was still a student, I wasn’t anywhere ready to leave the house yet” (Sumayah, lines 88-90).

Growing up in a culture with strict practices influenced some of the participants in terms of getting married immediately after their education and in this case, their university degree; they described it as being “the next thing”.

For Rose:

“After I finished and I got a job, the next thing is to get married (laughs) because, maybe it in my subconscious but I tell you, when you finish school you get a good job the next thing is to get married... it’s automatic because in my culture, you have to just get married then because of child bearing it’s advisable, it’s advisable that you marry early I got married at twenty-five” (Rose, lines 120-127).

For Tayo:

“Really, when I got married, I just felt that people get married when they are at a certain age and I got married. I was not under pressure to get married, I just felt I liked him and he wanted to get married, I just, I didn’t even know what marriage was, I just know that people get married, when I was done with my studies, I had a job then I just felt like the next thing was to get married” (Tayo, lines 77-81).

For Jenny:

“It was the next thing in the agenda, the next box to tick if I may say. Even if you say you are not ready because you haven’t found someone suitable, your parents and extended family members will mount so much pressure on you that will make you take the next available man home as your husband to be” (Jenny, line 137-141).

The participants who were more interested in pursuing a career (Hannah) or moving on to further education (Anne) were prevented from doing so because their families felt the age was right for marriage and career pursuance or that an additional degree was not the next line of action at such age. Marriage was seen as more important at that time and therefore the next step to be taken as recommended by the family.

Hannah's decision to get married was as a result of both age and parental influence:

“For me then, it was more out of pressure even though I love my husband a lot, I didn't want to get married then, I was not ready then, I just finished university and have not even done my service year then but my mum used to say something back then that because of a lot of things that happen in marriage, it is good for a young lady to be independent before getting married but my dad didn't see it that way, he felt when you have attained that age you just have to go” (Hannah, lines 77-83).

For Anne, age and parental influence shaped her decision to get married when she did:

“I was trying to choose between going abroad to do my master's and getting married and I spoke to my step mum and she said” you could do a degree at any time but if you really like this man I think you should get married now, I was like 27, 28 and I thought that I was not getting younger and should be thinking about marriage and not my masters” (Anne, lines 154-158).

For every aspect of marriage touched on thus far, there is the influence of either family or society. The concept of bride price was both cultural (6 participants) and religious (2 participants). Not all the participants feel owned due to bride price. They commented on the confusion that the meaning has generated.

Although some did not accept the bride price and object to feeling owned, they are aware that the institution of marriage has been set up within the culture, so the wife is subservient to the husband, freedom is limited, and a new identity is assumed.

The Yoruba tribe, to which the participants belong, returns the bride price to the groom and emphasises that the bride is not being sold.

Other parts of the country mentioned by all participants pay a heavy bride price and treat women like they are owned. Also, there is great emphasis on girls' education in the Yoruba culture, which makes them feel valued.

Tayo emphasised this in her account:

“For the Hausas, once your bride price is paid, I am very close to a lot of Hausas so I know, once your bride price is paid, you don’t have a say, completely sold just like the, that’s the northern part of Nigeria, just like the eastern part of Nigeria, the Ibos, it’s the Southerners that I really say are different, they value their female children more than the people from the east and the north of Nigeria. It makes me feel good, I see it as an advantage, to me, the place I come from in Nigeria is an advantage to me because I know my husband cannot mess up with” (Tayo, line 47-54).

For all participants, the socially constructed gender roles and expectations of wives in marriage are evident in how they relate to their husbands' family. There is the need to relate to the in-laws and to serve them in order to enjoy the experience of marriage. In the Nigerian culture, in-laws are to be accorded the highest form of respect by both the bride and her family, for it is through this that the marriage can last, and happiness can be found. Sumayah says:

“In our culture, you are not just married to the man alone, you are married to him, and you are married to his extended family (lines 245-247).

To Tayo in speaking about the in-laws:

“You are not expected to talk to your in-laws anyhow even if they are wrong. Before marriage, if you give it to me I will give it to you back, even when you know what that in-law is doing is bad, this society doesn’t encourage you to come out to say it is bad” (lines 190-193).

In Jenny’s experience of serving the in-laws, she says:

“When it comes to wifely duties, the level of education will no longer matter; financial independence will no longer matter. It is even worse if you go to the family house, all the work you haven’t done since the last time they saw you would be done by you and no one will help you because that is the culture, the wife does all the household chores for the husband’s family and also take care of her children” (lines 29-32,34).

The same point was echoed by Ire when describing her experience of her in-laws:

“I think being around our in-laws is not making things easy too. I think at times; couples need to stand on their own. Not that I should come around, no, I’m busy I’m busy. Let’s just face our life” (Ire, lines 304-306).

“Move on not that let’s go to this person’s house and somehow this mentality of, you get to their house, the cultural one, you move around, clean around” (Ire, lines 323-325).

Shola talked about how her in-laws influenced her home dynamics as well as how the cultural belief of the place of the wife has restricted her progression:

“To them, it’s not decent; they don’t expect the wife to be following the husband. It was late though, we don’t have children, so I thought anywhere he is going we should go together, and my in-law said why are you following him around” and since then I noticed that my husband too, whenever he is going out he doesn’t want us to go out together again” (Shola, lines 144-149).

“...so, what he expects is that if they go out anytime, they come back the wife should be at home, cooking; if there is a baby, the baby should be clean, that is their own belief of a wife by their culture though” (lines 151-154).

4.4.2. Role of Religion

The role played by religion in how participants make sense of their marriage is twofold, in that they see religion as a guide and as a sanctuary. To some of the participants, marriage is a religious call they answered as a way of obeying God. According to both Christianity and Islam, which make up the religion of the participants, every person who believes in God through religion has to be married in order to fulfill their religious calling. All participants, both Christians and Muslims, emphasize the role of religion in their marriage:

“In Nigeria, the religion that most of us practice, that is Christianity, Islam and even the traditional religion all has aspects that lays so much emphasis on marriage and even have components that even make marriage compulsory and sacred, it's like mostly part of religion that you have to fulfil for you to say you are being religious so for example like the religion which I practice, they said if you are married, you have fulfilled half, 50% of your faith in God” (Sumayah, lines 29-34).

Rose sees marriage as a duty and responsibility from God that must be fulfilled. She talks about being married as obeying God's instruction and guidance of which she follows through the bible:

“I see my marriage as a duty from God, so I take it very seriously and that's how I see my marriage, it's a responsibility” (Rose, lines 172-173).

"...My life revolves around them and of course about God because I get my strength from him, I get my instructions from him and to me marriage is very important to God" (Rose, lines 162-165).

When asked how their marriage have affected them spiritually, all eight participants talked about how marriage had helped them to grow spiritually by drawing them closer to God, and their religion. To some participants, religion has helped them cope with the challenges of marriage, even if nothing changes for the better while, for others, it has helped them overcome challenges, and become quite happy. Probably due to having faith, and belief in something greater than them, that can be relied on to help make peace with their lives.

To find peace in her marriage, Jenny moved closer to God:

"It has made me move closer to God, I don't have many friends, most of my friends are my husband's friends' wives so I don't really open up to people around me instead I go to God in prayer and praying, communicating with Allah gives me peace" (Jenny, lines, 232-236).

Anne's reference to spirituality is in preparation for the future and a way of discharging her responsibilities in the family. She sees herself as the one responsible for the proper upbringing of the children that they are yet to have and so is preparing herself for the task ahead:

"I have learnt to develop myself more spiritually since I got married because I feel I have a responsibility towards my marriage, expecting to have children in future, (Anne, lines 267-269)

In Ire's marriage, moving closer to God in faith and practice is seen as the positive thing that she gained in her marriage over the decade:

“The only thing that marriage has done to me in the past ten years is spiritually I am better off, I have had so many challenges in the last two three years that if not for these challenges I would have said my praying would have not been this serious” (Ire, lines 190-193).

Tayo spoke about moving closer to God in marriage and changing her old ways of excessive outings and socialisation. She became more religious and spiritual after getting married and has gained a stronger sense self-belief through this:

“It really, really affected me spiritually. It made me move so closer to God and it makes me believe more in myself” (Tayo, Lines125-126).

Tayo’s belief in the unseen is further emphasised when she was describing how her life is being directed and the support that is accorded to her:

“It made me believe that there is a supernatural power somewhere that directs our affairs” (Tayo, lines131-132).

Sumayah’s closeness to God has improved since she went into marriage and got closer to God. This has in turn paved way for the formation of a close knitted family who observes prayers together causing them to do most things together:

“It has improved my closeness to God if I should put it that way, we pray together as a family, we encourage ourselves as a family, things I ordinarily wouldn’t do if I was alone” (Sumayah, lines 182-184).

Knowing there is a God to rely on in her marriage has made Hannah believe that everything will eventually be okay. This is a faith she developed as a way of coping with the challenges her marriage is posing, channeling her energy towards a higher being to take care of her marital problems

“It has made me spiritually strong because it has made me closer to Allah and I know with Allah that everything will be okay” (Hannah, lines 155-157).

Unlike in Sumayah’s case, Shola’s dream of having a husband that can be religious and having children to pray with and share her religion with was not realised. Religiosity is evident all through Shola’s account and it was tied to activities like attending church services and relying on support and counsel from her ‘spiritual father’ (leader of the congregation in her church) in order to help her cope with the challenges in her marriage:

“The kind of home I dreamed of the home whereby my husband and I will pray together, our children will be brought up in a Godly manner” (Shola, lines 328-330).

From the findings, socio-cultural factors, family as well as religion play vital roles either negatively and/or positively in the experience of each participant. They view these from different dimensions especially within the cultural dimension of their married lives.

In terms of spirituality, six out of the eight participants spoke about having to rely on God to get through the difficult times in their marriage, by either praying or attending church or mosque. Some had the chance to think about the meaning in relation to how much satisfaction is derived from their marriage over the years. When asked the meaning of marriage and how it has impacted them both positively and negatively, most participants looked upon meaning from an existential, spiritual dimension. They relate their ability to go through marriage and emerging stronger, either through having to deal with adversities or having God in common with their husbands.

4.4.1. The Four-World Perspective

The social and spiritual dimensions emanated from the theme socio-cultural factor

4.4.1.1. The Social World

The role of culture and family in the society cannot be over emphasised. All participants spoke about how family members both nuclear and extended have a say in marriage and the decision to get married. It is a cultural practice that cannot be withdrawn from; it is inherited by family through centuries and has become a way of life for most families in Nigeria going by the narratives of all eight participants. Family is within culture as culture is within family and the two can hardly be separated. Individuals who live within the culture find themselves practicing what is already in existence as a way of relating to others and defining themselves as a social being in a situation that they cannot be separated from. In a dictating and dominating culture, the collective good will be valued above the individual good such that members, in this case, women within the culture are generally subsumed into the collective values, many a times at the expense of the individual.

4.4.1.2. The Spiritual World

In addressing what marriage means and how it has impacted them both positively and negatively, most participants looked at meaning from a spiritual dimension, attributing their ability to endure the challenges of marriage to having God in common with their husbands or making their own individual connection with God and relying on him to help them overcome all adversities in marriage or life.

4.5. Theme 4: The Self

The concept of self has been part of the participants' lives since childhood. Although, the sense of self develops and changes over the course of a lifetime, the experience

of marriage and other aspects of the participants' life experiences have shaped their overall idea of who they are.

All participants speak about the concept of self, based on how they have come to view themselves over the years. Some participants have a consistent definition of themselves despite the changes that have taken place within their marriage; two participants (Anne and Tayo) talk about not letting go of themselves that is, remaining steady in the self that they have grown to know and accept as part of their personality and identity. Other participants seem to be evolving as years go by in their marriage. They change with time and experience and can be described as having an evolving self-concept, an existential self, where their vision of themselves vary in terms of contexts and or roles; as wives, as mothers, as women.

As the self is not static and can and do always change, participants are in a continual process of making sense of whom they are, their desires to be their ideal self in marriage was tied to a sense of accomplishment.

In this theme, participants gave accounts of how their journey into marriage paved the way to rediscovering themselves. Some never lost themselves and some are hoping that a better version of them will emerge with time. Although marriage have given the participants a new identity, there is a need to look at the self behind the label of 'wife' and to reconstruct the meaning as best as they could with the aim of being an authentic self.

Two sub themes were generated; being for self and identity and financial independence. Participants take control of their lives by attributing value, freedom and identity to themselves even within their roles as wives. Some participants have already reached this independent self-status, some regret not being independent, and some are striving to become so.

4.5.1. Being for Self and Identity

In this sub theme, it is noted that participants want to be or are happy to be responsible for and take care of issues concerning them directly. Taking decisions affecting them directly and being seen as unique and separate from their husbands, can be likened to being free to be a woman and not necessarily limited, solely, to the role of a wife; putting effort to exercise the freedom to be and express themselves as individuals. All participants exhibit this one way or the other; for instance, Ire sees herself as being happy when she can do things by herself, no longer depending on her husband:

“I can strive for better things. Strive for excellence at least do other things without thinking of the opposite sex or what my husband will say about it” (Ire, lines 211-212).

“At least I’m getting on with my life, at least I’m happy that is the most important thing and I think my self-esteem is better and I meet a lot of people (Ire, lines 225-227).

Ire’s experience made her review her status as a woman in the home, saying:

“There is no concept of housewife, you can be in this house and work from home, I am not a house wife, of course I can stay at home 24/7 but that does not make me a housewife because I am doing something for myself” (lines 383-386).

Anne was able to maintain her sense of self and that it is important for her to maintain it. Being married came with giving up a part of her freedom and considering her husband before making decisions, but it is important for her to still be able to recognise herself as an individual despite being married. She checks constantly to make sure her sense of self has not been lost:

"I am still confident; I wouldn't say my ego has been rubbed. I am not saying my husband is a perfect person, but I didn't allow myself to stop being confident. I still want to remain the same person; I keep checking all the time irrespective of my marital status and my weight on the scale. Yes, some things have changed but I am still myself. It is quite satisfying" (Anne, lines 205-310).

Tayo spoke from a place of strength, being able to do things without depending on anyone looking out for herself; providing for her needs without looking on to another to provide for her:

"If you are your own woman, you can to a large extent, watch your own back take care of yourself because you are not a liability" (Tayo lines 211-212).

In Shola's marriage, she takes care of herself and needs, especially as no one will do it. She sees herself as capable of taking care of herself if her husband is not willing to be supportive or offer to help:

"To me if I want something and you cannot do it for me and I can do it myself, I will go ahead and do it" (Shola, lines 271-272).

A bitter experience that Rose went through in her marriage made her re-emerge as a different person. She saw herself as gaining strength through challenges in her marriage when there was no support from her husband. In redefining herself, she said:

"I just thought no man is worth dying for, let me just, I will do my best but I will make sure I take care of myself and my happiness will not be on anybody, let me look for what to do, what makes me happy, what makes me good, I started having some good friends, I started going out..." (Rose, lines 281-285).

“...I almost died but I survived and when I survived, I became a better person, I became stronger, I became a more balanced person you know, I felt like the life I was living before was not ideal” (Rose, lines 337-339).

Hannah saw herself only through her husband’s words and she lost her identity through dependence. For a long time, having to depend on her husband for virtually everything left her feeling caged. This gave her husband the power to mentally rid Hannah of a clear sense of herself.

Due to this, she uses the interview session to advise unmarried women to have the talk with their would-be husbands and state clearly what they would like to do when they get married so that they are not trampled upon:

“It’s very important to allow you be yourself and not see yourself as someone who is caged. It is very important (Hannah, lines 194-195).

“...I didn’t actually see myself as me. If he says you are this or you are that, that is it, I agree I am that thing. It has rubbed off on so many things, it has affected the person I am” (Hannah, lines 152-155).

If Jenny could turn back the hands of the clock, she would wish to be her authentic self.

Marriage has given her another identity, one through which the society sees her and regrettably, the one she has embraced for a long time, leaving her with an identity that is hardly separate from the husband:

“I wish I had some magical powers to allow me start over. So, I can change the way I was, I will still like him to be my husband, but I wouldn’t want to come second. I want to be a wife and a person too. A woman who is free to decide what she wants despite being married. A woman who feels respected and seen as a valuable member of the household that is. One who can exercise her rights fully as a wife without having to put up a fight before being heard” (Jenny, lines 338-343).

4.5.2. Financial Independence

Financial independence was emphasised by most of the participants (7 out of 8). There was a high degree of importance attached to being self-reliant and, most importantly, being financially independent. Participants whether or not they find their marriages satisfying state the importance of being financially self-dependent and emotionally stable.

Ire talked about how she became a better person, and the advantage of being independent meaning freedom for her to express herself and ability to teach the importance of an independent mind set to her daughter:

“The most important thing that keeps coming to my mind now about the journey so far is that once you are married and you have a female child, you should empower her at all costs, it is an investment. It is very important to be financially independent” (Ire, lines 271-274).

In Rose’s case, there are a lot of things she wished to take back. Giving up a career in order to take care of the home and losing an investment without any support from her husband brought her the point where financial independence became the key to a woman’s place in marriage:

“Everything still ties around financial independence because when a woman is financially independent, it makes your husband to respect you more. You know this notion in Africa that men own the women, what makes you own them. It’s because many men don’t allow their wives to work and they know that when I have my own money, I will not be rude to you but there is a lot of things you won’t have to rely on your husband for” (Rose, lines 360-366).

Tayo shared Rose's opinion, although, her opinion did not result from experiencing an unhappy marriage, it was informed by the experiences of others with whom she had been in contact. She made her submission with a note of conviction, that being financially independent is what will always make a woman respected in marriage:

"No man will disrespect independent women, a lot of men not all of them they are threatened, they know there is nothing you can't do on your own, so it makes you not depending only on a man. So it doesn't really make me see marriage not as a do or die if you want it to work fine it works, if you feel... Basically that is just me, if you feel you don't want it to work then I'm rich, I can take care of myself, take care of my children, to hell with you, I can go out and buy myself a man if I need one" (Tayo, lines 214-221).

Shola never saw herself as dependent and will not put herself in a situation where she can be subdued, instead she sees herself as being in a position normally occupied by men merely by being independent. The fact that Shola can fend for herself in her marriage is the only strength that is keeping her going although her husband is not receptive of such an idea:

"When there is no one to encourage you, you encourage yourself. I feel like a man and that reminds me that has always been a problem with my husband, he sometimes believes that I behave like a man" (Shola, lines 257-259).
"I am not dependent, and I have never been dependent, if he can't do it, I will go ahead and do it" (Shola, lines 278-279).

Of all the marital problems Hannah experienced, she thinks everything could be solved or, at least, coped with a lot better if she was financially independent. Being dependent on her husband rendered her self-esteem non-existent; she saw herself only as her

husband described her and she felt that she was not able to help many things because of being dependent on her husband:

“It is very important for a woman to be independent financially to be strong emotionally and spiritually too. That financial aspect is very important” (Hannah, lines 185-187).

“That financial aspect will only make me okay I will be fine, it will make things very okay” (Hannah, line 253).

4.5.3. Existential Perspective

The self is not a solid construct and so keeps changing. Most participants initially saw themselves as an existential self, where they are, although separate from other people and start from a place of nothingness as it is with all humans; still have to be in relationship with others to establish the sense of self they wish to accomplish. Participants struggle to live authentically and incongruently within their roles and expectations between the tensions and paradoxes of limitations/restrictions and freedom/ independence.

The participants' sense of self can be seen as changing as they transcend each stage of their marriage, bringing forth a renewed sense of self as they view themselves as being in relation to themselves as well as others, exhibiting the strength and ability to look at where they are and steer themselves in another desired direction, either discovering for the first time, rediscovering or reaffirming a sense of autonomy they have over themselves within limits set by their culture, family and marriage.

4.5.4. The Four-World Dimension

For the theme 'The self', a personal, social and physical dimension emerged and are interwoven. Participants are being more self-reflective, appreciating, and owning who they are as well as being for themselves and not just others within and outside marriage. The struggle to achieve a new identity and not be seen through their wifely or motherly roles brought a new identity with it.

The limitations set by the natural law regarding female anatomy, social construct, custom and tradition of the society are being accepted by participants. At the same time, they aim to have a secure sense of self and be self-sufficient as women. Some participants have always had a clear sense of self which marriage never tampered with; although they make some sacrifices in order to accommodate marriage and its demands, they must maintain a sense of self and a separate identity that is not defined by society. Anne (line 325) will periodically check to see if she has not lost herself in her relationship. Rose (line 330) saw the need to be financially independent due to her bitter experience of leaving her job to care for the children and home. Sumayah (line 214) wishes for more economic security, so she will not have to do so much work, not having time for the home. Sola (line 266) enjoys financial freedom because it gives her the power to refuse to be treated like a "slave". Ire (line 287) is enjoying the new resolve that affords her the freedom to make her own decisions and be unanswerable to anyone. This indicates the need to acquire power in the shape of wealth, for it is only through this that the power to command recognition, respect, value and satisfaction can come forth.

Financial independence cuts across all participants and is one where the women see themselves as individuals. Although they live in relation to their situation and relation

with and to others in their world, they can also take the time to reflect and grow to relate in a more self-satisfying way within the confines of their marriage and society.

4.6. Reflexive Notes

The analysis above is a descriptive account of how participants make sense of their marriage. The themes generated were chosen by narrowing the data down to the vital and most occurring themes common to them all. It can be noticed that it is not in all cases that all participants agree, but the themes were considered strong enough to be included as most of them share an opinion. Introducing the participants using quotes directly from them was done to bring their uniqueness to life and as close as possible to my experience of them as they gave their account.

From my research question to finding a suitable methodology for my interview process, I grappled with the preconceived ideas that I noticed as I engaged with the transcripts again. When referring to the participants' quotes, I hope I did enough not to let my judgment becloud my presentation and engagement with the process.

It was quite challenging to focus on the findings of all participants at the same time without feeling overwhelmed and a little confused. Some themes overlap but did not necessarily hold the same meaning for all participants. The themes were looked at and then revised several times until I felt there was little or nothing of my fore conceptions left in the process.

What I found helpful was taking a break from the transcript after each presentation, as they all became alive in my mind and prevented me from moving on to other themes.

All aspects of the transcripts were important, and I wanted to ensure that every valuable data was used. There was a risk of the themes being saturated due to the participants' similar responses to the interview questions. However, this is not strange due to the

homogenous nature of the research. It is hoped that the themes found above capture the essence of the research and give voice to the participants, as I try to make sense of them making sense of their experience.

Also, the process of interpretation is one I was a bit wary of each time I thought about my experience in finding the themes. I did not want to fall into the temptation of taking over the participants' narratives and making them entirely mine. Hence, the continual reflexive process and constant checking of my biases. The idiographic nature of the study helped me preserve the participants and the uniqueness of their narratives as recommended in IPA. As described in the methodology section, I also employed SOAR as recommended in SEA in maintaining my awareness of my bias throughout the processes of analysis and findings.

5. Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1. Introduction

The experiences of eight monogamously married Nigerian women were looked at in this study to understand how they create meaning and make sense of their marriages. The research method was phenomenological; the four themes and nine sub-themes emerged were analysed using Smith's (2009) IPA. These themes were further examined from an existential point of view using Binswanger's (1946) four dimensions of experience and Heidegger's (1927) time and temporality. In analysing the findings, it was found that the women make sense of marriage in similar ways, although some aspects differ.

The women endure changes that come with being married in various ways and through their experiences; meaning is continually created and re-created.

This chapter will discuss the findings in line with the literature and previous research on the subject. Some existential philosophical literature will also be used to discuss the findings being explored.

5.2. Findings in Relation to the Literature

The findings in this study share some features with extant literature that reviewed various aspects of marriage, although not many have adopted the existential-phenomenological stance in their processes. I will be discussing themes relating to existing literature discussed in chapter two. However, it must be noted that some themes here were not initially discussed when reviewing the literature as they were not foreseen when scheduling the interview and so were added after the findings.

This is not out of place in IPA studies due to the experience of being taken to unforeseen territory by the interview and the analysis (Smith et al., 2009).

The four themes and nine sub-themes, which make up my findings, will complement/shed light on existing literature. Subthemes are discussed in line with what already exists as well as what was newly found in the study.

The four superordinate themes; loss of freedom, the reality of marriage, socio-cultural issues and the self, alongside the nine sub-themes; being owned and restricted; marriage as slavery; honouring the title; shame and resignation; change in meaning over time; familial and cultural expectations; the role of religion; being for self and financial independence are discussed below:

5.2.1. Loss of Freedom

Freedom is discussed in several pieces of literature. Within the African setting, freedom is an integral part of history and culture. It shapes the idea of the African identity and so is viewed strongly. Freedom here is strictly referring to the one in marriage.

Concerning marriage, the loss of freedom has been examined through the feminist lens. In the literature reviewed earlier, feminists both in the western world (e.g. Friedman, 1963 and De Beauvoir, 1949) and in Nigeria (e.g. Oyewumi, 1997; Amadiume, 1988; Grozs, 2000; Mama, 2007; Atanga, 2013, Onyewere, 2017) have looked at the absence or limitation of freedom where women are concerned. Freedom in marriage can be two-fold; freedom to choose whom to marry and the freedom to be in the marriage in the desired way; without restriction or limitations.

The loss of freedom highlighted does not emphasise the freedom to choose a partner; instead, it focuses on the lost freedom resulting from being married. This is further clarified in the two sub-themes; being owned and restricted and marriage as slavery.

It must be noted that, as solid and suggestive as involuntary servitude, exacting undue control and exploitation are, the term slavery in, the theme “marriage as slavery” is used because they were the participants’ exact words. Some participants described marriage as slavery. Therefore, it is essential to stick to the choice of words of the participants while describing and interpreting it further through the use of analysis. For example, Jenny (line 7), said “marriage is modern-day slavery”.

5.2.2. Being Owned and Restricted

Participants talked about how marriage made them feel like they no longer own themselves; they feel incapacitated and restricted in carrying out their wifely roles as society expects. Women are restricted in many ways; in their biological composition and the expectation that they must bear children since they are genetically wired to do so.

The African cultural setting, as discussed earlier, is such that the roles of the couples are spelt; women are married off to their husbands with expectations in place to be submissive to the husband and his family. The Nigerian penal code of the northern part, which promotes the use of force on the wife, could allude to the fact that Nigeria is a patriarchal country, and the man dominates the wife upon marriage. Sanders (1998) sums this up by describing the wife as nothing but possession in Nigeria. Hooks (1997) sees marriage through motherhood and a way of ridding the woman of her freedom.

Although the level of domination has reduced throughout the country, the prevalence of domination in the northern part of the country is still very much around. This is probably due to less embracement of western education and female empowerment, which still upholds in northern Nigeria today.

Being married indicates the willingness to give up one's freedom (Sartre, 1965), however, being forced to be in a certain way makes such marriage less pleasurable, becoming an uncomfortable cage.

According to Aluko & Alfa (1985), in Nigeria, the woman is expected to drop her maiden name upon marriage, although this is supposed to be a voluntary action; women are considered non-committal if they decide to keep their maiden name. Some women may choose a compound name where both parents and husband's names would be used or drop the husband's name altogether and stick to their maiden names.

Given this, women who compulsorily drop their maiden name have seemingly become the possession of their husbands. Due to the unwavering patriarchal nature of Nigerian society, the husband is regarded as the authoritative and powerful one. The wife is described through her domestic responsibilities and biological sex (Aluko and Alfa, 1985; Labeodan, 2001).

The participants raised no complaints about the husband's surname but objected to the notion of being owned due to being married. Being owned and marriage as slavery are closely knitted themes in that the participants experienced a limitation or absence of freedom in both elements.

Another issue that is tied to the loss of women's freedom is the bride price. Participants see the impact of bride price on their sense of self as not necessarily significant. Participants all feel they had limited freedom when married than when

they were single; however, they do not attribute the payment of bride price to being owned.

The findings in this study complement findings of studies conducted in Africa, Uganda and Nigeria on bride price and its effects on domestic violence (Kaye et al., 2005) and marital instability (Sambe et al., 2013). It was found that payment of bride price has a detrimental impact on marriage stability due to the degradation of women, being seen as property and even suffering domestic abuse/ violence as a result.

The payment of bride price translates to the degradation of women in the above study. Men are superior to women due to the limitations of opportunities afforded to women in society; it is, therefore, difficult for women to exercise a freedom that is pertinent to their rights as human beings within the same society. The limitations experienced by women could be a result of how roles have been decided first by nature, then by the different continents and eventually promoted and practised by indigenous societies like Nigeria.

In many African countries, Nigeria included, the payment of bride price by the groom to the bride's family is an expression of gratitude to the bride's family. Therefore, bride price is not necessarily the root cause of women feeling owned or lacking in freedom; it is more so the patriarchal nature of the country where men are seen and treated as superior to women. Women's roles are marked to include practices of domestic duties that afford them less time to pursue a career path that could take them away from home, unlike men. Women are naturally expected to make sacrifices in terms of pursuance of careers and focus on the main aim of the marriage, which is to procreate and bring up respectable members of the community.

This is true for some participants; Rose had to leave work to support the children and because she was not allowed to partner with her husband within the same organisation (Rose, line 357). Hannah is a full-time housewife, depending on her husband for all her needs. It is common practice and an acceptable one in Nigeria for the wife to follow no career path but not befitting the husband not to have a means of earning a living.

5.2.3. Marriage as Slavery

All eight women recognised the fact that their level of freedom was truncated the moment they got married. Participants frowned upon the practice of permission and approval seeking, a failure of which resulted in the significant breakdown of relationships, as evidenced in the case of Rose.

In some cases, the participants felt they had no voice, which rendered them utterly compliant with the man's every decision. This theme came about due to the direct description of these participants who repeatedly described marriage as slavery or modern-day slavery. However, studies on slavery in marriage are not readily documented in the literature. The submission of feminists (e.g. De Beauvoir, (1949); Mama, (2007); Hooks, (1997) and the limited discussions around the loss of freedom and suppression is relied on to shed light on this sub-theme.

As in the section above, literature opined that the payment of bride price leaves the woman in a vulnerable position where they are forced to live under an unbearable and unfavourable environment where they are subjected to servitude and slave-like conditions, which could then lead to violence (Alupo, 2004).

Sanders (1998) points out that in Nigerian marriage, men have the right under the penal code to hit their wives as long as they have not caused permanent damage to

them physically. The existence of codes like this only makes wives out as nothing but subjected to the husband's rule. Studies (e.g. Aina, 1998; Otite, 1991; Ntoimo and Isiuigo-Abanihe, 2013) that were found discussed how women are seen as possessions due to the country being a patriarchal one, participants speak from their unique experience describing marriage in light of how they feel in relation to their husbands. Some spoke about how they are voiceless, dependent on their husbands for decision-making; some talked about not doing anything productive or carrying out any project without their knowledge, approval, and provision of the funds. There must be no complaints or attempt to be independent, as this would mean competing with the husband to become a man, and it is not allowed, as evident in the account of the participants in the findings.

The country frowns upon divorce, which sees a failed marriage as a failure on the part of the woman. This makes women dedicate themselves to the institution even in the face of abuse or subservience. Another very salient point to note, in addition to the patriarchal nature of the country, is the hierarchical structure in place. Women are generally younger than men in marriage, and the Nigerian culture emphasises how elders are treated, be it in a marital relationship or not. This tradition of seniority places women in subservient roles because men, either as elders or husbands, are classified as superior and in authority.

5.2.4. Existential Perspectives

Existentialism lays great emphasis on freedom, choice and responsibility.

The interest of existential thinkers does not lie in man's potentials, social institutions, and collective achievement; rather, they are interested in his existence, choices, and decisions (Blackman, 1959). In the opinion of existentialists, man's existence comes

with freedom, which he uses to mould himself and then creates his values through the act of freedom.

According to Sartre (1957), freedom means facing choices, making decisions based on these choices, and accepting the consequences. He goes further to say:

"Man cannot be sometimes slave and sometimes free; he is wholly and forever free, or he is not free at all" (Sartre, 1957, p. 441).

As mentioned earlier in the literature review section, Sartre discusses many aspects of freedom in several of his publications, *Being and Nothingness* (1943), *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1945), *Critique of Dialectical Reasoning* (1985). Initially, he proposes freedom as something possible in every situation since humans are not determined beings but possess the free will to act according to their own will. He also discusses freedom in terms of the oppressive relationship between a master-slave where the slave is denied freedom and the master is still dependent on the slave. This can be found true for participants where the husbands are seen as the controller of the home; one who controls the finances, provides for the family and dictates what the wife can and should do to a large extent; here, the man can be referred to as the master.

On the other hand, the wife controlled by the husband is also important because she oversees the home, carrying out the husband's desired duties and bringing up children as society expects. Here, the wife had lost her freedom to a large extent in carrying out these duties and therefore is the slave.

Sartre's submission in the '*Critique of Dialectical Reasoning*' that man cannot be free in all situations as earlier suggested confirms that all forms of oppressions are synonymous with a loss of freedom. Although it is not in all situations that man can

be free, in his modification of the "look", Sartre maintains that only some of the interpersonal relationships end in loss of freedom and estrangement (Sartre, (1943). Although the women in this study who deem their freedom lost can be said to be ontologically free, it is essential to note that the form of freedom exhibited is no material freedom if the person is confined (Santoni, 2003). This further elucidates the theme 'loss of freedom' where participants are although free, there are still many limitations to how much they can do independently in their marriages.

5.3. The New Reality of Marriage

This theme has the highest sub-themes: honouring the title, shame and resignation, and changing meaning over time. Participants describe how they make sense of their journey temporally and spatially. The description is three-fold: the initial meaning upon getting married, what it means now, and what is hoped for the future. The participants also view themselves and their marriages through the expectations of society. In doing this, they speak not only in relation to their individual experience but also base their positions on how society and culture have come to view and gauge marriage and its meaning in general.

5.3.1. Honouring the Title

All participants see the benefit the title of 'Mrs' affords them. In society, women are honoured and respected when they are married; according to participants, there is a form of protection and dignity that comes with the title (Jenny, Anne, Tayo).

The marital status of women, how these women see themselves and how they perceived themselves as being seen by others in society contribute to their sense of accomplishment.

Women are respected for being married, which prevents them from walking out of marriage even when it is no longer healthy. According to a participant, when a woman is married with the title 'Mrs', there is no disrespect as respect comes with marriage, even an unhappy one.

For the same reason, women see themselves as being better off married than not and are encouraged to work hard to make the marriage work.

This finding is in line with that of Omokhondion's (1998) study on the Globalisation and Socialisation of the Nigerian woman and her quality of life, where the need for women to be married and stay in the marriage for the sake of the title is discussed. According to the author, it is the dream of many Nigerian women to be married, which has affected women's ability to maintain their stance in marriage. This means women feel unable to control their lives, as they have been desperate to get married. Women succumb to familial and societal pressure and as a result, bear the distress that being married to an abusive man could pose or stay in the union because of the significance attached to the status of married women (Omokhondion, 2008).

5.3.2. Shame and Resignation

This sub-theme is also an indication of what makes women stay in their marriage. As different as it is from benefit in the title, shame and resignation in marriage are still similar in that they are both factors affecting the stability of marriage as well as the reason for staying in an unfulfilling marriage. The main reason those participants who deem their marriage unsatisfactory stay in their marriage is the stigma attached to being an unmarried woman in society.

As one of the participants (Shola) said, there is much pretence that goes with an unfulfilling marriage;

she describes it as "suffering and smiling" as outsiders are not supposed to know what is going on in the marriage (line 87).

It is an integral part of marriage for women to put up a front and refrain from disclosing whatever is going on in their marriage. It is considered a shame to be seen as unhappy in marriage and an even bigger shame if seen as unmarried since the country is highly pro-marriage. Women are frowned upon for being single in Nigeria (Ibrahim and Hassan 2009).

The fact that people are readily judged, especially when single, makes most of the participants feel they had to resign themselves to fate in their marriages, even in the face of dissatisfaction; women are not willing to walk away from their marriage. Some participants have experienced enough challenges that should warrant bringing the marriage to an end. However, they stay because they feel there is nothing better awaiting them, resigning to fate, a resignation that could otherwise be termed "bad faith", as Sartre (1943) described.

This theme of shame and resignation is in line with one of the findings in the study carried out by Ntoimo and Abanihe (2014) titled 'Single and Stigmatised', which examined older single women's experience of stigma on their marital status. The data were drawn from twenty-five in-depth interviews, four life histories, and seven focus group discussions with never-married women aged 30 and above in Lagos, Nigeria. Twelve types of stigma were generated from studying the involuntary single marital status of the women; they are; denigration, insults and name-calling, suspicion, loss of friends, maltreatment by family, harassment. Others are threat and violence, discrimination in the office, difficulty getting an apartment to rent, denial of opportunity, being cheated or defrauded, disrespect and shame and embarrassment.

The participants see themselves as objects that are and should serve the purpose of remaining in the marriage.

It can be noticed that the study carried out in Lagos is the part of Nigeria where participants for this study were recruited. There could be a similarity in the behaviour of people within the region or the tribe in general. However, shame seems to be a significant factor that affects marital status in the whole country at large going by the general views of participants and findings of the study.

5.3.2.1. Existential Perspective

According to Sartre (1956), shame is a feeling developed due to being aware of another person seeing our actions or appearance. This concept is explained further in his book, '*Being and Nothingness*' when he referred to the concept of the "look of the other" in depth. Our identity is shaken and remoulded as a result of being judged by others; one becomes vulnerable to other people's perceptions. If the authority is attributed to such other or group, they then become the authority who exercises control and power, manipulating the actions of the shamed person (Sartre, 1956).

Sartre, in his words, describes shame as "an immediate shudder, which runs through me from head to foot without any discursive preparation" (Sartre 2003, p. 246).

People are usually affected by the impression they make on others which prevents people from being their authentic self, not being for themselves but for others, 'the they' or crowd as Heidegger (1972) refers to it.

The way Nigerian culture has shaped the participants and their parents made them limit themselves to the social power structure, which consists of elements they have no control over.

In accordance with Heidegger's (1972) submission, individuals are rid of their choices without being aware of this, and they find themselves behaving in a conforming way without necessarily consenting to this behaviour. He was aware of the importance of others in the life of any human, a term he referred to as *Mitsein* (being-with).

However, it is an inauthentic act to fail to recognise how our immediate surroundings shape behaviour. His point is that this should be recognised, and the decision to follow the crowd or not should be one's own choice, and that would mean being authentic (Heidegger, 1986).

Participants are conforming with the culture they have been born into; putting themselves in a position of having no choice but to comply, indicating being inauthentic. There should be a certain level of choice that women can make to either conform to the practices and expectations of their culture or not.

5.3.3. Change in Meaning over Time

Participants from this study seem to have created meaning through what they think or dream marriage to be about, what they experience and what they hope for in the future. For five out of the eight participants, marriage meaning is created through companionship, and five of the participants describe their marriage as satisfying, although it could be better. Marriage ceases to be meaningful when the sense of belonging is lost, and commitment to the companionship is no longer evident in the way spouses behave and /or sometimes when abuse sets in. This is supported by Cherlin (2004) in looking at new perspectives on marriage:

"where although the traditional divisions of labour were still enduring, married couples were supposed to be partners to each other as well as being friends and lovers with greater importance placed on emotional bonds of the family"

(: p.188).

To a participant (Hannah), marriage is not meaningful in that there is no sense of belonging that was present before the arrival of children. For another participant (Sumayah), there is a hope of marriage eventually meaning what it should mean originally as there was an expectation of how and what marriage should be; companionship.

For another participant, (Shola) meaning is derived through a lost dream, resulting in marriage being seen as servitude and not companionship as anticipated before she got married and soon after.

The above confirms the literature submission, which says marriage and its meaning change over time; it has transformed from an "institution to a companionship" (Cherlin, 2004, p.188) and gradually moved from the companionship phase to an individualized one. Therefore, the nature of marriage prevalent in Nigerian society today is craved by or experienced by participants. Meaning is attained through companionship, and the ability to see themselves still as they are and not just through the lens of marriage comes through as the marriage increases in length.

It must be noted that participants who are yet to have children have not seen their lives as less meaningful despite being in a society where children are highly valued. This observation is contrary to the submission of de Beauvoir (1949) when she describes marriage as the end of the woman's life or that the woman sees her life as perfect only when she can bear children. Although participants who do not have children hope to have children, they do not see the meaning of life through childbearing, neither do they see their lives as less than perfect due to the absence of children. This could be attributed to the women's sense of self. The idea of knowing who they are and what gives them meaning beyond what society expects.

As mentioned in the literature review, specifically in the portrait of a marriage, Radziejewski found couples are happier and satisfied with and in their marriages when they come together as committed individuals to create meaning together in the marriage (Radziejewski, 2011). Through their marriage experiences and interaction with the husbands' family, participants gauge marital satisfaction and, through this, attribute meaning to their marriage. Some of the participants who see the meaning of marriage as companionship can create a positive meaning for their marriage, although this study affects women directly and not couples.

The process of engaging with meaning was quite challenging for participants, as they could not put everything it means to them into words. It was, however, easier to look at their lives and experience of marriage through three stages of their lives. Interestingly, three participants whose marriage was not deemed meaningful experienced a perfect early period of marriage. These three participants described it as being "married to three different people" (e.g. Jenny, line 328). Two other participants see it as meaning unfolding, i.e. that meaning is a continually changing concept depending on the stage of life the women are in and what is being experienced at the time.

Only those whose marriage mean companionship have a relatively stable meaning of marriage in that they hold the same meaning from the beginning of their marriage.

The process of creating meaning further reaffirms the work of Frankl (1959) on meaning. As discussed in the introductory chapter, it can be understood that meaning, which is exclusive to all individuals is created based on the situation such individual has found themselves. As meaning is subjective, there is no right or wrong way of defining it; it is simply a way of making sense of one's self and relationship through the application of purpose and direction (Feldman & Snyder, 2005; Schnell & Becker, 2005; Stillman et al., 2009).

This study's finding is congruent with the finding in Radziejewski's study, where the meaning of marriage continues to change. First, when two individuals become a couple, a more sophisticated meaning is experienced as they try to construct a new meaning both together and as individuals (Radziejewski, 2011). Although participants have similar concepts of meaning, the experience that led to the construction differs a lot. Time and experience play significant roles in creating and recreating meaning in their marital lives. They make sense of both the unsatisfactory and satisfactory marriages. They have all chosen to remain in for various personal reasons, including companionship, respect, security, shame, and honour attributed to the marriage, children, and or financial dependence.

5.3.3.2. Existential Perspective

The theme, 'change in meaning over time', can be understood through temporality. Heidegger talks about the threefold structure of being- in- the-world, our past relating to how and whom we were, our present relating to how and who we are and our future relating to how and whom we will become (Heidegger, 1972). He wonders how a man tells his stories, how they make meaning, genuinely relating to their being as they tell their life stories in the past, present and future possibilities. In making sense of their marriages, participants talked using all three tenses to describe meaning, in the past: *"It was a lot better before the kids arrived"* (Hannah, line 282). Sumayah described her meaning by going through the stages of marriage, which include before the arrival of children, now children are here and hope for when they leave. For Jenny, meaning is created through looking at the journey of marriage with different yet the same man; the man during courtship, the man during marriage and

the man hoped for that has never been experienced: It is *like being with different men sometimes*" (Jenny, line 215).

The choice of tenses used made it clearer to understand that participants saw marriage differently in terms of dreams and aspirations, which Ire(line 312) described as "*Alice in wonderland, "fairytale"*", and Rose(line 390) described as "*Mills and Booms*" idea of romantic marriage. The reality of marriage or a painful marital experience gave rise to constructing a new meaning and hope for the future.

5.4. Socio-cultural Issues

Two subthemes, namely familial and cultural expectations and the role of religion, complement findings in the literature and existing studies (e.g. Caldwell, Orubuloye and Caldwell, 1995). With its two subthemes, the theme looked at the role of family and culture in creating the meaning of marriage for the participants. It was found that people get married upon the instructions of their family and the expectations of society. Nigeria, a patriarchal and culture-oriented country, sets the stage for what is expected in marriage and how men and women attend to their gender roles. According to Mbiti (1990: p.133), "Marriage is a drama in which everyone becomes an actor or actress and not just a spectator". The involvement of the community and family members, both dead and alive, is pertinent to the evolvement of any marriage in Nigeria (Goraz, 2014).

All participants expressed the various ways their cultural background shape their meanings at different periods. From this literature, it can be deduced that marriage is not an exclusive venture. The immediate family and the extended family play active roles in the process of marriage. Not only this, the wider society, which makes up the

overall factor affecting the state of being married, play a highly significant role in the creation of meaning in marriage amongst these participants..

5.4.1. Familial and Cultural Expectations

This theme is used to describe and interpret the role family, both immediate and extended plays in shaping marriage's meaning for all participants. There is a significant influence of culture on the lifestyles of families, which means both can hardly be separated in this study.

From the display of emotions to gender roles and expectations of the society in determining how the woman should be, culture informs virtually all or almost all aspects of the socially constructed traditions. Families frown upon what society disagrees with, and an individual's level of achievement or education does not change the family's decisive influence on their marriage.

All participants talked about the importance of getting married at the time they did.

Shola, who seemed to be the one who got married late (aged 34), faced much pressure from her family; her mother, and then members of her extended family asking if there was a problem preventing her from settling down with a man.

At 28 years of age, Anne was discouraged from going for a master's degree because, according to the family, the time was not right for further education but was suitable for settling down into marriage. Hannah's father prevented her from working because he deemed her ready for marriage as she had completed her university education. It was 'the next thing' for most participants and 'an escape' for one.

The voice of the family is powerful in Nigeria, and children are not to go against the ruling of their parents; the whole marriage affairs are not done in isolation but are

subject to the approval and blessings of the immediate and extended family members (Caldwell, Orubuloye and Caldwell, 1995).

The long-standing tradition of getting married at a considerably early age has shaped the decision of these women to a large extent. They see marriage as 'the next thing' to do after education. An attempt not to uphold this trend would result in much pressure first by the immediate family, followed by the extended family, then members of the society. Tayo described the stages of worry using different ages:

"In Nigeria, when you are in your late twenties, you are not married your parents are really worried, by your late thirties if you are not married, your relatives are really worried, and by your forties, if you are not married, everybody, both those you know and do not know are really worried" (Tayo, lines 125-129).

It is, therefore, frowned upon for a woman not to be married at a certain age in Nigeria. Also, the choice of husband is not a process unique to the couples only; the family have a say in whom their children marry, although they seldom choose spouses for their children to marry these days. After marriage, the role of the family is reviewed, the wife's family fades into the background. In contrast, the husband's family gains prominence and attains a position of authority. The bride will have her roles spelt out and learn how to meet several expectations as carved out by society. In anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown's (1958) observation, couples are not expected to display affection in the presence of the in-laws. This observation is supported by one of the participants, Jenny, who thought it is very difficult to tell how satisfying and happy the marriage is by looking at couples because people do not show their emotions. The lack of show of affection and companionship is a factor that makes it difficult to tell if married couples are happy or not (Radcliff-Brown, 1958).

Most importantly, the Nigerian culture's strict patriarchal nature and hierarchical structure encourage subservience on the part of the woman (Fadipe, 1970; Aluko and Alfa, 1985). As earlier noted, the wake of modernisation has, although rendered Nigerians more exposed to the western world, the state's culture is still very much practised and affects how women make sense of their marriages.

Participant Ire described the in-law's involvement as the main reason for her dissatisfaction; she refers to them as "the so-called counsellors". Shola attributed the strain in her marriage to the brother in law who discouraged her husband from spending time with her in public:

"To them, the woman should be at home cooking and cleaning and If they have a baby, take care of it" (Shola, line 234).

The woman's place within marriage is seen through a long-standing culture, although many frowns upon it; the participants and their accounts prove that the strong patriarchal and hierarchical nature is predominant in Nigerian homes. According to Fadipe (1970), a stringent system of hierarchy guide families in Nigeria and puts women as lower than men in society. Women are aware that they are expected to step into the role of the wife and fulfil the needs of the husband. In doing this, they are meeting the expectations of the family and society at large.

All the participants in this study spoke about the influence of family on their marriage, either directly or indirectly. All of the participants mentioned that they had to meet a certain expectation of the society by being and accepting themselves as lower than their husbands in the hierarchy through the acceptance of roles and duties of making a home and meeting other social obligations, which further confirms the submission of Fadipe, (1970) and Aluko and Alfa, (1985).

5.4.2. Role of Religion

Religion is a significant part of Nigerian culture. All marriages are conducted based on at least one religious' practice in addition to a statutory or customary rite, and this is true of all participants as well. The role played by religion in the creation of meaning by the participants is two-fold. Firstly, marriage is seen as a religious call by participants: "*it is a duty commanded by God*" (Rose, line 401), so it is important to obey the command of God by getting married and being submissive in the marriage. Sumayah corroborated Rose's point by saying:

"If you get married, you have fulfilled half of your religion as a Muslim" (Sumayah, line 56).

Secondly, in terms of religion, spirituality is regarded as a way of coping with marital problems or maintaining the good in marriage. For all participants, religion or moving closer to God has to a certain degree, helped them in their marriage and to be more accepting of it.

The finding in this study is in line with the submission of Marks and Dollahite (2001), Larson and Goltz (1989), and Stinnett (1983), where it was found that families draw meaning from and are also influenced by religion. Religious participation and teachings enhance the dedication of couples to a higher power as overseeing their well-being, and so find direction, peace of mind and contentment in marriage through religious practice or indoctrination.

Nigeria is a highly religiously inclined country in that 95% of Nigerians are either Christians or Muslims and so attribute many life happenings to their faith in God. All participants talked about closeness to God or being religious as the positive thing in their marriage. It can be said that there is a need for the women to have a safe place with an unseen power where they draw strength to overcome challenges or to

strengthen and protect an already existing high level of a meaningful marital relationship.

5.4.2.1. Existential Perspectives

Like all humans, participants see themselves through the lens of the other. As stated above, society shapes people to see themselves as they are expected to be seen. The 'herd, crowd', 'other or the 'they' according to Heidegger (1962), refers to how the participants see themselves in their roles in relation to other people. The social and spiritual dimensions of the participants' lives are ones to which they seem strongly connected. As they struggle within the social dimension, facing challenges and examining their ontic responses to their experiences, striving to make sense of their marriage, they find peace and solace in their religious beliefs and practices. Turning to God brings about peace and the hope of a good life in marriage from the submission of participants.

In summary, the place of family, culture and religion cannot be overemphasised in creating meaning and ensuring the stability of marriage. Family is the bedrock upon which every social experience is based. Society itself is a creation of the family and vice versa. Religion can be described as the haven for participants as they navigate their ways through the challenging journey of marital life.

5.5. The Self

The theme reconstructed self is concerned with women's identity and how they make sense of themselves, what they have learnt about themselves through being married and how new meanings are created in their personal lives.

The theme 'the self' has two sub-themes: being for self and identity and financial independence.

As universal as it is, the concept of self is also quite locally placed. The impact culture and interdependence have on the individual's self, be it man or woman, is very high and can hardly be separated from the collective self.

In Africa, to see oneself as separate from other members of the same community is almost impossible and would suggest a futile life, a life where nothing is achieved, and no meaning is derived from being in the world (Musana, 2014).

5.5.1. Being for Self and Identity

This finding came about as a result of how participants see themselves, how they would like to be, how they have experienced marriage and how they have evolved to this current point. Although the self is a continual creation, not stable, and no one can be static, it takes a certain level of self-awareness for one to go through the process of reconstructing one's sense of self.

Participants either retain the self they went into marriage with, seeking to continually answer the question of 'who am I' or are satisfied with their current self even as the meaning of marriage changes. Other participants who could answer the question of who they were before marriage found it necessary to reassess their views of themselves. By doing this, they acknowledge themselves as women and not just mothers and or wives.

According to Alipor's (1961) work, the concept of identity and the self are quite similar yet different. The two are informed by one another in that private identity is derived from having a collective identity and vice versa (Deaux, 1993; Marcus & Cross, 1990 Masuna, 2014).

Although it can be very complicated, it still answers a straightforward question, 'who am I'. As discussed in chapter 2, people get to know whom they are through a collective or individual construction, depending on how they view themselves through connection or disconnection with a larger group. Also, individuals grow up in different cultures, having an initial sense of self as unique and separate from others. The self-concept is formed through childhood and adolescence, already learned and seen as part of their identity in adult life (Baumeister, 1999).

The participants had viewed themselves as women with careers or women seeking careers. As described in the literature (Campbell, 1990), we can say these participants have a good self-clarity concept (SCC) level. One of the participants, as earlier quoted, said:

"I check all the time to make sure I have not lost myself; it is very important to me that that does not change, I can gain weight, but I cannot lose myself" (Anne, line 231-232).

In Berger and Kellner's (1970) study, identity construction is vital at the onset of marriage. There is the need to redefine the individual identities they both have before coming together, and a new one that is common to them is constructed so they can have a shared identity. This study supports Lopata's (1973) view that identity will eventually become rooted in the marital relationship and the spouse through a process he refers to as depersonalisation.

Studies by Berger and Kellner (1970) and Lopata (1973), and the four prototypes identified by Pals (1999), are similar to some findings in this research. Some participants can be said to have an anchored identity in that they can integrate various elements of their identity into their marriage while still maintaining their original identity. This can be true of those who consider their marriage as positively

meaningful (Tayo, Sumayah, Anne). It is also true for two participants (Shola and Ire), who do not find marriage as currently meaningful but have not lost a sense of who they are.

Restricted identity, as discussed in Pal's (1999) study, appears true for participants who cannot express themselves due to the feeling of frustration stemming from being restricted in their marriage. This can be true for Jenny, who although, sees a positive meaning in her marriage, feels unheard and Hannah, who does not want to remain in the unfulfilling place where her marriage has placed her. Rose can be described as a woman with a defined identity because she saw her marriage as the most important and dedicated her whole life to it. Earlier on in the interview process, Rose described her family as her 'life' but later emerged as an anchored woman as she narrated her experience and how it has informed her current sense of self and identity through reconstruction.

5.5.2. Financial Independence

Participants spoke strongly about the issue of independence, financial independence to be precise. As Cherlin (2004) opined, the movement in marriage meaning over centuries has brought society to a point where women see themselves not through their stated job roles/role played but find meaning and gauge satisfaction through their ability to be self-developed and emotionally fulfilled.

Over the years, social science literature made a tradition of placing importance on how differentiated sex roles will give rise to a stable marriage. This emphasis laid by Parsons (1949) was further elaborated by Becker (1960) in his theory of marriage. He sees the coming together/ mutual dependence of the spouse as the significant

gain in marriage. A situation where a wife sees to the smooth running of the home and child upbringing and the husband goes out to make money. Criticised, as earlier discussed, for his lack of foresight, as now women tend to work more outside the home, which has led to their economic independence.

According to Becker, (1960) this independence will give rise to a decline in the desire for marriage or of staying married. This criticism can be true for the participants in this study in that the inability to provide for themselves financially makes them feel restricted and lacking in freedom. They all desire to be married however, there is need for them to be self-sufficient in the marriage.

Five of the eight participants wish to be financially independent so they can take decisions that affect them directly without having to seek their husband's consent. Two participants are already entirely self-sufficient but also enjoy the benefit of provision by the husband. Interestingly, one participant would have loved for her husband to take up more financial responsibilities so she can reduce her working hours and develop herself without having to think of providing for the family through her income which further makes Becker's theory untenable today. The wife is having to use her income to support the family putting her in a position of not being free to do other things, especially where the support of the husband is actively lacking:

"I wish I won't have to do so much, I wish he could just take responsibility and take care of the finances, and I can concentrate on the family, the children, doing so much at home and having to earn a living outside the home is having effect on the wear and tear of the body" (Sumayah, lines 357-361).

Although these submissions are quite varied, one thing remained the same, financial independence is a recurrent theme amongst all the participants. All women feel there can be a better sense of whom they are as women, able to choose, exercising both

freedom and power and more importantly, be active players in matters relating to them and their families directly.

De Beauvoir (1948) suggested that entering the world of work to promote the labour market is the initial step to a woman's ultimate release from marriage. She suggested that occupation for women is a way to attain freedom and escape marriage. This suggestion appears like there is a need to be free from the shackles of marriage in order to attain freedom. However, this is not in line with the participants' desires as they see financial independence as a catalyst for making marriage more meaningful and not an escape from it. It can be deduced from the participants' narratives that economic independence is a tool through which women are respected, valued and seen as having vital roles to play in their affairs. Being married and at the same time free is especially desired by participants as they see being financially independent and being married as their ultimate goal.

Over the decades, studies on financial independence have been conducted but are related to causes of divorce. An example is Dechter's (1992) empirical study on the effect of women's economic independence on union dissolution, which found that women's economic independence significantly increases the likelihood of divorce, but only for couples with children. This is not true for this study because the participants (especially those with children) desire to be financially independent because it is seen as an avenue to gain a well-deserved respect within the home, have a voice, and take part in the decision making within the household.

Although it will not solve all the marital problems within the participants' homes, financial independence could help make the situation better. One of the participants wished to be financially independent to be able to cope better with other aspects of an unsatisfying marriage:

“The other things will still be there, but it will be a lot better if I was financially independent, the person will still remain the same, but I will not have to depend on him for everything” (Hannah, lines 304-306).

There is little literature to base the finding, financial independence on. The available literature sought to use the theory of non-marriage to corroborate the hypothesis. The current study, however, does not share the independence hypothesis of non-marriage, which states that the rise in women's employment has led to a decrease in the desirability of marriage, hence is responsible for what is referred to as 'retreat from marriage' or, 'marriage decline' (Oppenheimer, 1997).

There is no clear-cut finding in literature and studies discussing whether economic independence leads to marital dissolution or marital instability. However, according to the findings in this study, women crave financial independence to stabilise their marriage and enhance their sense of themselves with an identity separate from that of their husbands. This is due to their various experiences of how financial dependence made them feel less respected by their husbands and how independence brought forth more respect.

According to Tayo, financial independence makes the man respect the wife:

“No man will disrespect a financially independent woman” (Tayo: line 114).

In the same light, Rose talked about not losing oneself and reserving a part of oneself whilst striving to be financially independent due to the feeling of hopelessness and abandonment she experienced as a result of her husband's lack of financial and emotional support when it was mostly needed:

“I want to have my own thing, my own money, my own life separate from my husband and children” (Rose, line 205).

Going by these, it can be said that women see themselves as being better off when they have economic/financial independence alone and have a say in matters that directly affect them. They hope to have better marriage, more satisfying and meaningful if they are prominent in their positions as wives with identity and self-reliant, with supportive husbands.

Furthermore, this study shares the view of the study conducted by the circle of prevention, which investigated gaining a better understanding of the relationship between financial issues and the marital relationship of Turkish families. It was found that financially satisfied people are usually satisfied with their marriages, while couples dissatisfied with their financial situation are not satisfied with their marriage (Copur & Eker, 2014). This is true of four participants who are financially independent and see their marriage as satisfying.

According to Tayo:

“I am satisfied, I am satisfied, I am not bothered, nothing bothers me, and I think my satisfaction goes a long way to the fact that I know God, and majorly because I am independent” (lines, 238-241).

Another participant, Hannah regrets not having a job as this is causing a significant setback for her and rendering her more dependent on her husband:

“I depend on my husband for lots of things and not by my own will but because of the situation, you know the fact that that has always been a strength for him which he uses against me so whether I like it or not I have to be at the receiving end of it all the time” (Hannah: line 168-171).

5.5.1.1. Existential Perspective

Existential authors (e.g. Heidegger, (1927); Sartre, (1943); Laing, (1966); Buber, (1970); Kierkegaard, (1977); Nietzsche (1977) and Van Deurzen (1998) unanimously posit that the self is fluid and always in the process of becoming. They also recognise the difficulty involved in living in good faith, i.e. authentically, due to the challenges individuals face as they relate to their worlds. There are aspects of people that wish to confirm themselves and get confirmed by others, which they do by meeting other people's expectations (Van Deurzen 1998).

Van Deurzen (2005) described the paradoxical nature of the connections with other people through their daily activities and concluded:

"The very things that give us our identity are also the things that prevent us from seeing our freedom" (: p.167).

Participants struggle between tensions in their lives; to meet expectations of the cultural and marital world and make sense of who they are despite the roles they play in their own lives and the lives of their husbands and families.

Participants who seek to gain identity and independence in their marriage face the paradoxes of everyday living. All participants strive to be seen and want to strike a balance between performing their duties as wives and mothers, meeting the expectations of the society they live in and exercising a sense of who they are. This self is not static or objectified but needs to be recognised and accepted as the self they are at the moment, even if it is not the same sense of self they had at the beginning of their marriage or who they will be in the future.

5.6. Summary of Discussion

Four themes and nine subthemes generated from the analysis were discussed in relation to existing literature and studies. There were similarities in the findings in this study, existing studies and positions of some literature about marriage and its meaning. However, the aspects of financial independence in marriage as experienced by the participants were not in line with the extant study. This study found that financial independence was crucial to the women's sense of self and value, and it is believed that it could be the key to having a voice, power and freedom in marriage.

According to the participants' accounts, being financially independent and less dependent on their husbands to meet their needs would help women feel respected, enhance their sense of self-worth and feel more valued as women. However, this is not to say that financial independence would help make their marriage more or less meaningful. Being financially independent does not necessarily translate into being in a meaningful marital relationship.

It can be seen from the above that it is safe to go back to the existential concept of freedom, choice and responsibility. As much as some of the participants do not find their current situation satisfactory and hope for things to get better, they have made the conscious choice to remain in their marriage due to various factors mentioned above. Participants make sense of their marriage temporally, the past and present while entertaining the hope for the future. They hope to have a more meaningful marriage by being for themselves through freedom as they engage in continual check for the desired sense of self, unlost identity, and financial independence.

Also, the participants strive to create meaning that is different from the social constructs, seeing their journey in marriage as unique to them and valuing what the

institution has provided them with in terms of dignity, respect and protection. This is unlike the creation and practices of the country from a point in time where identity, self and meaning were collective; now, women can see themselves as separate from the community. This can be owed to the advent of modernisation which is seen as responsible for how people deviate from the original meaning of African identity evidenced in the words of Mbiti (1969:77), who said, "we are therefore I am". This is not to say people are currently independent of their community; instead, there is a blend where people see themselves through the society they belong to, the experience they have acquired over the years, through acculturation, and through the personal meaning they hold for themselves.

This study has contributed to the existing literature and contributed a structured existential and phenomenological angle to studying the meaning of marriage.

The theme, 'the self' with a subtheme, 'financial independence, ' is the only theme that has not been widely explored in relation to meaning-making and was not envisaged in the interview schedule. Financial independence appears to be a catalyst for a stronger sense of self and possibly, a meaningful marriage; therefore, it is a new addition to the existing literature on Nigerian marriage.

5.7. Reflexivity

Much time was dedicated to making sure existing and relevant literature and studies were found to support or refute the findings in my research as I went through the discussion. I felt like I did not do enough because there is much research on marriage, and it made me wonder if there was anything new that could be found in this study. This is probably due to the nature of the research topic; examining studies related to the various aspects of marriage in Nigeria, though would give more

literature to review, there was the possibility of these studies overtaking the phenomenon of focus; meaning. For this, I resorted to engaging with the few studies that deal directly with meaning in marriage.

Being an African study, exploring the historical concept, cultural life and gender roles posed quite a challenge. These backgrounds could easily blind the study or be overtaken by other aspects of culture that are not directly connected to this research. As a result of this, the literature cited and studies examined are quite minimal. In light of this, care was taken to strike a balance and decide what is enough to offer insight into the study.

After the analysis, there was a need to update the reviewed literature chapter, as some findings like financial independence were not initially accounted for.

As everything in the research comes together in the discussion part, I tried to cover every aspect relevant to this study. After searching all sites available to me and using many search terms, I hoped that what was left out was not significant.

More reflection about the whole research will be done in the next chapter.

6. Chapter six: Conclusion

6.1. Reflections

This section focuses on the critical reflections on different aspects of the research, including the research topic, methodology, reflexivity and bracketing, participants, validity and quality of the study. This is followed by contributions, recommendations for future research, and finally, a summary and conclusion.

6.1.1. Research Area

Many research topics come with the phenomenon of marriage, both quantitative and qualitative studies. Many areas of marriage have been explored in many areas of the world. In Nigeria, many studies carried out have not sought the meaning of marriage directly. I believe this IPA study has shed light on an area of marriage that has not been previously explored. This study complements some existing literature and studies conducted on marriage. It brings an additional way of viewing the meaning of marriage relation to the importance of financial independence for the participants.

Given how much the participants spoke about being independent economically, it is somewhat surprising that few studies focus on women's financial independence in Nigerian marriage.

Perhaps seeking to find the meaning of marriage among women in same-sex marriage could be a more up to date research area; however, same-sex marriage has not been legalised in Nigeria. My thought was to know how heterosexual women make sense of their relationships. In my opinion, the fundamental aspect of marriage is not complete if we do not know what it means to individuals.

In analysing my data and engaging with the interview process, I tried to uphold the 'double hermeneutics', and in so doing, I found myself having to zoom in and out of my participants' worlds, making sense of each of them make sense of their own experience. I felt different with each participant, and I allowed myself to be immersed safely into the world of my participants so I could be sure my judgment had not been beclouded or confused by findings from other participants during the analysis.

6.1.2. Methodology

Several methodologies could have been adopted before choosing IPA. As discussed earlier in this study, IPA provided me with the grounding needed by providing a simple way of navigating my way through being a new researcher and learning as I went along. IPA is not entirely new to me, as I have used the methodology once in the past; it is most importantly compatible with my epistemological position. Simply put, IPA's concern, which is appealing to me, is that it is about the meaning the phenomenon of marriage holds for Nigerian women in monogamous marriages.

Other methods could also have given a more in-depth or different insight into the research; perhaps a methodology that uses a more in-depth linguistic analysis could have resulted in a different finding. Participants could be suitable candidates for a narrative approach. Their stories could be relied upon to give a deep insight and possibly, a better understanding of the meaning of marriage to them.

In IPA, researchers are actively involved in the meaning-making process of the participants due to their professional and personal experience (Smith et al., 2009). For this reason, another researcher could have highlighted, found, analysed and generated different themes to those generated in this research. Although I got help from people who have ample knowledge of the methodology and much support

through supervision, there will always be different sides to the research if analysed by another researcher. My personal and my professional experience played a significant part in the interpretation of the data.

However, having SEA as a theoretical tool to support IPA, with particular reference to the four worlds made it possible to explore to a great depth the phenomenon in relation to other dimensions (personal, physical, social and spiritual) of the participants' worlds beyond the personal and social as suggested in IPA.

6.1.3. Reflexivity and Bracketing

As a researcher who is also an insider, I was faced with the issue of bias. As much as I practised self-awareness by bracketing preconceived ideas, I was still brought face to face with the reality of who I am and my marital status. I compared sometimes, and sometimes I felt angry, I felt ashamed to be part of the system that is still actively patriarchal and above all saw myself in some of the participants, which made me more self-aware. The use of reflexive notes and ongoing therapy has helped a lot in that some aspects of the research, most notably the analysis of findings, posed quite challenging to separate from.

Although I thought bias was covered by not doing away with my foreknowledge but noticing and bracketing, there may still be a bit of myself that got in the way of interpreting and analysing the data.

6.1.4. Sample

In IPA, the use of small homogeneous sample is encouraged, and for this research, reasonably small sample size was adopted. The small sample size would be to ensure full attention to the interview process and analytic process. A small sample

would allow me to engage deeper with the participants' sense-making and ensure a thorough analysis of the data gathered. Also, readers can make better sense of me as I seek to make sense of my participants' sense-making.

Given the methodology used, I made use of a reasonably homogenous sample in investigating marriage among women. This has already narrowed the scope of the sample in that selection criteria would make the participants as close as possible in similarity; educated, Nigerian women between the ages of Thirty-five and fifty, all in a monogamous marriage. I made the sample more homogeneous by recruiting women in monogamous marriage only but allowing participation from all religious backgrounds. The country I recruited had women from the same ethnic group participating in the research. However, there was no mention of being from a particular part of the country or practising a particular religion in the invitation to participate.

The study might have benefitted from recruiting participants from different parts of the country encompassing the three major tribes, Yoruba, Hausa and Ibo and the three religions: Islam, Christianity and traditional religion to broaden the scope of the sample.

The closeness in selection criteria made the interview quite saturated in that some of the participants' responses are similar, especially when talking about the general opinion held about marriage. The aim of making my sample very homogenous is to enable me to gain a reasonable depth and a very rich data.

The pilot study went a long way in preparing me for the actual interview process; I adjusted some of my questions and added some prompts due to the pilot interview. The average time prepared for was an hour each. However, I got an average of fifty-eight minutes, with few having to stop because they became upset. While

interviewing my participants, I felt sensitivity to the content of the phenomenon they experienced differed; some spoke with so much detail and passion while some were quite dismissive of some questions, thereby making it difficult to probe further. Some had more to talk about that were not particularly relevant to the topic discussed and lasted for more than an hour.

Open-ended questions could lead to a situation I just described but not getting enough, or too much would make it quite challenging to analyse. Perhaps having more prompts would have helped, but the particular participant who became distressed did not want to go back to the interview as it became too painful to engage with the interview.

I hope that my research has added more depth to the existing research on marriage and has also shed light on the practices of a potential client group that we could come across in both psychotherapeutic and counselling psychological practice.

6.1.5. Validity and Quality

As discussed earlier in the methodology section, I kept in mind the criteria used in qualitative research in assessing validity and quality. With these four criteria in mind, I practised sensitivity to context by bearing in mind the possibility of the interview process evoking some emotions in my participants and put them at ease before the process began and afterwards. I checked with them and looked out for any sign of distress through their facial expression, tone of voice or body language. I was aware of what the process brought out in me and constantly checked to ensure I was not influencing my participants' responses through my questions or prompts. Questions were set in ways that would allow for the idiographic nature of IPA and took care of the participants' individuality.

I was aware of my preconceived ideas and was able to manage them through bracketing. The view of many scholars was considered when carrying out the literature review; theory and research studies, both academic and non-academic, were consulted to ensure my sensitivity to the social context of marriage.

I practised commitment and rigour by engaging with the interviews, transcripts, and findings thoroughly; I read and re-read the transcripts and gave myself time to ponder on and separate my fore-conceptions from the process of analysis. I immersed myself in the transcripts to get a flavour of what my participants were saying, taking time to bring together both similarities and differences in the individual presentation. Themes were generated and discussed in relation to extant literature and theory, taking care to explore as much as possible through relevant search terms in order to conduct rigorous research.

In transparency and coherence, I am aware of the difficulty in expressing myself sometimes and took time to make every part of the research process open to criticism, corrections, teaching and guidance from myself, colleagues, family and most especially, my supervisors. I referenced every material used throughout the research process. After each chapter, I engaged in a reflexive exercise to make the reader know how I have reflected on every aspect of the research process.

During the analytic process, I made known my feelings towards each participant and what they brought out in me both during transcription and after, hoping to satisfy Smith's recommendation of independent auditing as a way of ensuring the validity of the research (Smith et al., 2009).

Finally, on impact and importance, I consider the current research a significant addition to the field of counselling psychology and psychotherapy despite the vast number of studies that have been carried out on various aspects of marriage. As

already mentioned in the introductory chapter, a vast body of research has been carried out on several aspects of marriage; early marriage, child brides, HIV/AIDS, women in politics, gender roles and more. However, this study did not look at women through these lenses, nor at women's experiences in marriage but what marriage means to them. Perhaps when every individual makes sense of what marriage means to them, their sense of self and roles in the marriage could be re-addressed.

6.1.6. Culture and Language

As language plays a significant part in any culture, conducting this research in the English language and ensuring the participants are literate and therefore understand the questions and communicate clearly in the English language is crucial. There is the possibility of getting a whole different analysis from the current study if the interview was conducted in the participants' mother tongue or with less educated women (in this case, all participants speak the Yoruba language). Some words could have been difficult to interpret, thereby watering down or giving an entirely different meaning or emotion to the word used in describing their experiences.

6.1.7. Literature

Several studies discussed in this study are western for a few reasons. The vast majority of literature on meaning stems from the western world. More literature is found generally in the west than in Africa. This is not to say African philosophy does not exist, but many are not documented; therefore, quite difficult to access. There is very little work done in areas of meaning in marriage and certainly none in or about Nigerian women and marriage meaning. Available African thoughts were engaged with however, they were quite few because many of them do not directly relate to the

current study. Those related were duly engaged with; however, care was taken not to digress to other aspects of Africans' experience, thereby losing the focus of this study.

I also wonder if the fact that you were looking for educated women would also skew the findings to a more modern outlook than if I had interviewed less educated women who could not speak English.

Seeking meaning for Nigerian women is a new area and one that has not been explored, especially with an existential dimension. I believe this research, as earlier mentioned, will get Nigerian women if encountered as clients, understood through their relationships with every aspect of their four worlds. The findings make this research more impactful and relevant as there has been no scholarly article on financial independence to make marriage more meaningful in Nigeria.

The findings of this research can only be based on eight participants, and therefore not enough to be generalised. It follows IPA where generalisability is not claimed; the research aims to generate data through participants who are considered experts in the given phenomenon. Through in-depth engagement with them, a better understanding of the phenomenon could be acquired. It is hoped that examining the phenomenon of marriage closely and drawing attention to a small area found could lead to a broader area being seen.

6.1.6. Participants and Their Four Worlds

Looking at participants' lives as they relate to their physical, personal, social and spiritual lives made it clearer to see what area received the most attention and what aspect of their lives could benefit from being different. Not that the intention is to change the thinking of women, but for those who struggle, it would be easier to

pinpoint areas that are suffering or neglected as they relate to their worlds.

The great impact society has on the sense of self cannot be overemphasised; women find themselves operating between two tensions within and outside their marriage. Although society and family shape whom people become, the need to develop a sense of self and meaning is independent of the cultural teaching or any situation. As Heidegger pointed out (1927), there is always an inner felt sense of who we are, a sense of ownership as we experience our own private and controlled world.

In Nigeria, the infamous status of counselling makes it quite difficult to seek and get emotional well-being and mental health support. Perhaps the role of the religious institutions in providing emotional support would be revised when a structured setting where professional help can be accessed is put in place.

Lastly, I became even more comfortable owning my preconceived ideas and honed my ability to bracket them. As individuals are different, I can only be with participants as another woman and as a professional in a helping profession.

6.2. Contributions

The developing countries and their need to meet basic needs like water, electricity, good roads and security of life and property probably make the practice of counselling psychology and psychotherapy secondary in the people's lives. According to Breuer (1978), some factors affecting proper counselling in Africa include an inadequate understanding of the function of counselling that goes beyond what religious leaders' practice. People need to know the benefits of mental health support and be willing to engage in therapy despite the nature of society not to share feelings with outsiders.

Also, there is little or no financial support on the part of the government to provide free mental health and emotional well-being support to those who are not financially buoyant who probably need the support more as they make up the larger population of the country. Private services end up being too expensive or unaffordable to most people in need of help and support.

Support generally offered starts with the traditional counselling model (which is advisory) doing away with other models, with no philosophical underpinning and no continuity (Breuer, 1978).

However, Breuer's submission was more than three decades ago, there has been a remarkable improvement in the lives of Nigerians in terms of education and exposure to the western world. Although, the state of affairs has not significantly improved in that there is still little that is done in providing mental health and emotional support for the general populace.

It is hoped that through disseminating this research, women will be less ashamed to own their truths and be willing to talk about their challenges. By recognising women as members of the society and not as properties of the husbands, women may begin to express their thoughts and feelings about the state of affairs in their marriage and the country at large.

6.3. Implications for Existential Practice

Counselling psychologists would benefit from considering the client's 'whole world' from this part of the world so that they are not treated in ignorance or just working with symptoms. From the SEA, women see themselves first through the lens of their society, culture, and family before seeing themselves through the personal lens.

Therefore, particular attention should be paid to their lived physical, social, personal, and spiritual world in working with this client group.

At the onset of any therapeutic relation, the practitioner could benefit from being aware of different cultural and intellectual outlooks. As it is very easy to come to a generalised cultural assumption regarding people of African descent.

Without regard for cultural considerations that shape black clients' mental state and well-being, psychological practitioners can unknowingly oppress their clients through standardised means of testing, reporting, or even medicating (Toldson, 2008).

The altering of standards and reshaping of the rules have been reported to enhance the services to black clients and protect them against ill-treatment (Williams, 2005).

Racism is still very much sustained within the educational system, and the awareness of these power gaps could inform Africans behaviour within the therapeutic setting both as practitioners and trainees (Loewen, 1996).

Therefore, due care should be taken in bringing down any barriers that dominance and conformity could have created for the women regardless of their education or social status.

Finally, the avoidance of discussion around intimacy, as evident in this research, begs the question of how comfortable women would be in discussing very private matters when the society to which they belong frowns upon such acts.

Practitioners must note that some topics are not readily addressed and may prove even more challenging to sit with in therapy; this is, however, not to be regarded as a topic to be avoided or forced, rather, an attitude to be acknowledged and worked with in accordance with the understanding of the culture that informs such behaviour.

6.4. Recommendations for Future Research

The field of counselling psychology and psychotherapy could benefit from looking further into other areas of research that could be generated from the current study. In carrying out a study in a country like Nigeria, there will be the need to recruit participants from both different and specific regions bearing in mind that the country has more than two hundred and fifty ethnic groups and three major tribes. The current study ended up being amongst the Yoruba tribe alone. Mentioning how other tribes (Hausa and Ibo) view marriage by the participants sparks an interest in the exploration of marriage within those tribes.

Also, it would be interesting to explore the meaning of marriage among married couples. Meaning of marriage to women in Polygamous marriage would probably have a different outcome as this study only recruited monogamously married women, and their meaning was created based solely on their experiences irrespective of how their husbands make their meaning.

Finally, in a highly patriarchal and traditional country in values and beliefs, same-sex marriage is not yet legalised. However, this does not mean people are not expressing their sexuality, although their unions are not recognised by law and custom. It would be interesting to explore the meaning for same-sex couples especially among males and see what role patriarchy play in marital relationships among men.

6.5. Summary and Conclusions

This research explored, in a phenomenological manner, the meaning of marriage amongst Nigerian women. Eight women were interviewed to answer the research question. The study took place in Nigeria amongst women between the ages of Thirty-five and fifty who have been married for at least ten years. The participants were alike in geographical backgrounds and religion; five Christians and three Muslim women. Participants described their marriage as companionship, slavery, not meaningful, and in relation to their children. Through the themes generated (loss of freedom, the reality of marriage, sociocultural issues and the self), it can be seen that there is a significant level of pressure and influence from the extended family, and the society, on women as they struggle to go through different phases of meaning-making. Women's struggle to find their voice, identity and freedom within marriage and culture make them strive for financial independence. A tool deemed necessary to possess in order to be respected and valued as a woman and wife by the husband and the society they live in.

At the end of the study, participants expressed their desire for marriage and the willingness to do it all over again if possible. Interestingly 6 out of 8 participants would like to be married to the same man provided they were respected and financially independent. They can see themselves as women and not just mothers, capable of being respected and valued whether or not they have children. This is evident in the fact that two of the participants were yet to have children.

The study has highlighted some interesting themes, which I believe have not been found in previous studies on marriage in Nigeria. My participants' responses challenged my preconceived ideas about the Nigerian woman's meaning of marriage.

This is not to say I was testing a hypothesis but merely noticing that women still do not necessarily exercise the power they have to own or make their choices when they embarked on the journey of marriage, as I assumed at the beginning of this research. However, with determination, women can strive for freedom to a certain extent within the confines of their marriages and exhibit the ability to self-reflect and own their voices as women, not just as wives and mothers.

Choosing a phenomenological method made it easier to get as close as possible to the participants' experience and interpret their narratives which in turn gave rise to a continual reflexive process throughout the research.

Although IPA is the primary methodology used for this research and has guided the categorisation of themes, SEA guided the emergence of meaning through the different facets of the participants' lives. The physical, personal, social and spiritual dimensions helped filter the themes, reaching a deeper level of understanding the participants' sense-making of themselves and their meaning within their marriages.

An interesting theme contributing a new dimension to the existing literature is the importance of the self and financial independence for married Nigerian women. This is a significant part of being seen as individuals with worth and value, a personal journey into one's ability and freedom to become who or what one wishes despite the limitations in marriage or culture.

As earlier mentioned, the self can only be created by living through the struggles of two life tensions (Kierkegaard 1980). The creation of the self is described as a struggle between the finite and the infinite while encompassing the past, present and future through relationships between reality and possibility. Which means relating

with others in order to find ourselves, is the reality, while the strife to be for oneself despite what the society expects is the possibility. Zooming in and out of reality and possibility, amid all tensions created by man and those out of man's control is known as the process of becoming oneself. This cuts across all nations as it is ontological, a given which is present in every race, culture, religion or sexual orientation.

Making meaning starts with the relationship with oneself, and it is a developmental process, which keeps changing as situations, and experiences change. As it is with meaning, the strife for oneself is endless, and so are the tensions between the finite and the infinite, thereby making the creation of oneself an ever-continual process (Kierkegaard, 1983; Van Deurzen and Arnold-Baker, 2005).

This submission brings together the submissions of scholars who have examined the concept of self as unique and ever-evolving. It can be seen from the findings that the function of the self is crucial and continues to develop as the meaning of marriage changes through experience over a period. There is the awareness of strength and ability to create private meanings in the participants' marriages which is separate from the collective meaning stipulated by the society as they strive through all the themes in relation to their four worlds.

Okolie (2019) opines that meaning tied to an ultimate goal of any individual is very much connected to personhood; therefore, one must live as a person to achieve a meaningful life. Although the society nurtures the person to learn about themselves, there is always a point where the individual becomes more self-aware and begins to make sense of who they are. This is achieved as they find meaning in their very existence, as a person, independent of relationships and culture.

On a final note, the state of affairs in Nigeria, almost a century ago, is still very much existent today, with the patriarchal nature of the country and the almost non-existent mental health provision and support available to Nigerians.

Women who have a clear sense of who they are can create their unique life meaning, make their own choices, engage in a continual expression of self, pursue personal goals and seek personal and financial freedom. However, this is not to shun customs and traditions or isolate self but rather to keep on evolving as individuals who recognise the difficulty that lies in contending a culture that has contributed significantly to their personhood and how they make their initial meaning in life. A continual strife between the reality and possibility of achieving personhood

With a clear sense of self and a self-derived meaning, women can then choose to be for themselves while being for others, and they can actively choose to remain unabashedly single, get married, or stay married, for better or worse.

7. References

- AbdulHaleem, M.A.S. (2011) *The Quran*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Abraham, W. (1987) "Sources of African Identity" in Alwin Diemer (ed), *Africa and the Problem of Its Identity*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Adamu, F. (2006): "*Women's Struggle and the Politics of Difference in Nigeria*". Available in: [http://web.fu-berlin.de/gpo/pdf/tagungen/fatima I adamu.pdf](http://web.fu-berlin.de/gpo/pdf/tagungen/fatima%20adamu.pdf).
- Adamu, M. (1999) Enrolment of women in tertiary technical in Nigeria: a case study of the 1989/90-1996/97 Federal College of Education technical Gusu. *Journal of Teacher Education*. pp: 124-134.
- Adekson, M. (2003). Indigenous family work in Nigeria: The Yoruba experience. In K. Ng(ed.), *Global perspectives in Family Therapy - Development, practice, and trends* (pp.147-160). New York: Brunner, Routledge.
- Adshade M.E. and Kaiser B.A. (2008) *The Origins of the Institutions of Marriage Queen's Economics Department Working Paper No. 1180*.
- Agius, E. and Chircop, L. (1998) *Caring for future generations: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic perspectives.*, Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Aina, I. O. (1998) "Women, culture and Society" in Sesay, A. and Odebiyi, A. (eds). *Nigerian Women in Society and Development*. Dokun Publishing House, Ibadan.

Akanle, O., Adesina J & Nwobiala U. (2018) Turbulent, but I must endure in Silence: Breadwinner and Survival in *South Western Nigeria Journal of Asia and African Studies* 53(1): 99-114.

Allen, D. and Olson, D.H., (2001) Five types of African American marriages. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy*, Vol. 27, No. 3, 301-314

Aluko, G. B and Alfa, M. O, 1985: Marriage and Family. in *Women in Nigeria Today* Nigeria: Zed Books Ltd.

Alupo, J. (2004) Bride Price and Gender Violence, A Paper Presented to The Participants at The International Conference on Bride Price and Development, Makerere University Kampala Uganda.

Allport, G. (1961). *Patterns and growth in personality*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Amadiume, I. (1987). "*Ritual and Gender*", in *Male Daughters, Female Husbands*. Nigeria: Zed Books

Amzat, J. (2019). Plucking the flower just too early: Some community perspectives on marriage age of adolescent girls in a Nigerian state. *The Nigerian Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 17(1), 1–16

Amzat, J. (2020) 'Faith Effect and Voice on Early Marriage in a Nigerian State', *SAGE Open*. Doi: 10.1177/2158244020919513.

Argyle, M. (2001). *The Psychology of Happiness*, 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.

Arnfred, S. (2002) "Simone de Beauvoir in Africa: 'woman=the second sex?'" *Issues of African Feminist Thought.* *Jenda: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies* <http://www.jendajournal.com/vol2.1/arnfred.html>.

Atanga, Lilian. (2013). African feminism? 301-314. *10.1075/impact.33.20 data*.

Attoe, A. D. (2020) A systematic account of African conceptions of the meaning of/in life. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 39:2, 127139, DOI: 10.1080/02580136.2020.1771822

Attoe, A.D. (2020) Guest editor's introduction: African perspectives to the question of life's meaning, *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 39:2, 9399, DOI: 10.1080/02580136.2020.1778225

Awe, D. (1992) *The Statistical Profile of Nigerian Women*. Nigeria: Grandstand Publishers

Bahr, H. M., & Chadwick, B.A. (1985). Religion and family in Middletown, USA. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 47, 407-414.

Baillie, C., Smith, J. A., Hewison, J. & Mason, G. (2000) 'Ultrasound screening for chromosomal abnormality: Women's reactions to false positive results', *British Journal of Health Psychology*, vol. 5 (4) pp. 377-394.

- Balogun, O. (2008). "Philosophy: What Social Relevance?" *Philosophia Africana* 11 (2): 103–116. doi:10.5840/philafricana20081122
- Battista, J. & Almond, R. (1973). The development of meaning in life. *Psychiatry*, 36, 409-427.
- Baumeister, R. F. (1991). *Meanings of life*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Becker, G., Landes, E., and Michael, R. (1977). An Economic Analysis of Marital Instability. *Journal of Political Economy* 85:1141-88.
- Becker, G.S. (1974). A Theory of Marriage: Part I. *The Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 82, No. 2, Part 2: *Marriage, Family Human Capital, and Fertility* pp. S11-S26.
- Berger, P., & Kellner, H. (1970). Marriage and the construction of reality: An exercise in the microsociology of knowledge. In H. P. Dreitzel (Ed.), *Recent sociology: Patterns of communicative behavior* (pp. 50-72). New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Bernard, J. (1964). "The Adjustments of Married Mates." In *Handbook of Marriage and the Family*, Christensen, H.T. (ed). Chicago: Rand McNally and Co.
- Beskow AP & Miro MT (2004). *Cognitive psychotherapy and the development of consciousness. Living with conviviality*. Intellecta DocuSys, Goteborg, ISBN 9789163157103, pp168.
- Binswanger, L. (1963). *Being-in-the-world: Selected papers of Ludwig Binswanger*. New York, NY, US: Basic Books.

Blackman, H.J. (1959) *Six Existentialist Thinkers*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.

Bloch, F., and V. Rao, (2002). "Terror as a Bargaining Instrument: A Case Study of Dowry Violence in Rural India" *American Economic Review*, Vol. 92, N° 4, pp. 1029-1043.

Bojuwoye, O. (2001). Crossing cultural boundaries in counselling. *International Journal for The Advancement of Counselling*. 23. 31-50.

Bourdieu, P. (2001) *Masculine Domination*. trans. Richard Nice, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bramlett, M. D., & Mosher, W. D. (2002). *Cohabitation, marriage, divorce, and remarriage in the United States. Vital and Health Statistics No. Series 23, Number 22*. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics.

Brentano, F. (1995/1874) *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, edited by McAlister, L. London: Routledge.

Brewer, M., & Gardner, W. (2004). Who is this "We"? Levels of collective identity and self-representations. In M. J. Hatch & M. Schultz (Eds.), *Organizational identity: A reader* (pp. 66-88). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Brocki, J., & Wearden, A. (2006) 'A critical evaluation of the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in Health Psychology'. *Psychology and Health*, vol. 21 (1) pp.87 -108.

Buber, M., 2000. *I and Thou*, transl., R. G. Smith. New York: Scribner Classics.

Burleson, B. R. (2003), The experience and effects of emotional support: What the study of cultural and gender differences can tell us about close relationships, emotion, and interpersonal communication. *Journal of Personal Relationships*, 10: 1–23.

Burke, P. J. (2006). Identity change. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 69, 81-96.

Burkett, L. (1989). *Debt-free living: How to get out of debt (and stay out)*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

Campbell, J. D. (1990). Self-esteem and the clarity of the self-concept. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59(3), 538-549.

Cancian FM. (1987) *Love in America: Gender and Self-Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Canel, A.N (2013). The development of the marital satisfaction scale (MSS). *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 13 {1), 97-117.

Call, V. A., & Heaton T. B. (1997). Religious influence on marital stability. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 36, 382-392.

Carbone, J. and Cahn, N. (2014) *Marriage Markets: How Inequality is Remaking the American Family*. England: Oxford University Press.

Card, C. (1996) "Against Marriage and Motherhood" in *Hypatia* Vol. 11 No. 3, p. 14 of online version.

Carol, S. (2005) Same Sex Couples and Marriage: Negotiating Relational Landscapes with Families and Friends. *The Sociological Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2007.00747.x> [Accessed on 30/07/2016]

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Charmaz, K. (2009). Shifting the ground: *Constructivist grounded theory methods*. In J. M. Morse (Eds.), *Developing grounded theory: The second generation* (pp. 127-154). Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press

Chaney, C. (2010). "Like Siamese twins": Relationship meaning among married African American couples. *Marriage & Family Review*, 46, 510-537.

Charmaz, K. (2008). Grounded theory as an emergent method. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.) *Handbook of emergent methods* (pp. 155-172). New York, NY: Guildford Press.

Chamberlain, K., & Zika, S. (1988). Measuring meaning in life: An examination of three scales. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 9, 589-596.

Chambers, D. (2001) *Representing the Family*. London: Sage.

Cherlin, A.J. (2004) The deinstitutionalization of American marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family*/Volume 66, Issue 4.

Christensen, M., Welch, A., Barr, J. (2017) Husserlian Descriptive Phenomenology: A review of intentionality, reduction and the natural attitude. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice* 7 (8), 113-118.

Chuwa, L. (2012). Interpreting the Culture of Ubuntu: The Contribution of a Representative Indigenous African Ethics to Global Bioethics (Doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University). Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/etd/408> (Accessed on 24/05/2021)

Circle of Prevention (2002) Economic Independence for Women Leaving or Living in Abusive Relationships. A Discussion Paper https://www.gov.nl.ca/vpi/files/economic_independence [Accessed online on 5th/072019].

Clark, S., & Brauner-Otto, S. (2015). Divorce in sub-Saharan Africa: Are Unions Becoming More Stable? Paper presented at the Population Association of America Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.

Cleary, S. (2015) *Existentialism and Romantic Love*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cleek, M. G. & Pearson, T. A. (1985). Perceived causes of divorce: An analysis of interrelationships. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 47, 179-183.

Cohen, D. and Crabtree, B. (2006) Qualitative Research Guidelines Project.

<http://www.qualres.org/HomeEval-3664.htm> [Accessed on 29/06/2016]

Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria [Nigeria], Act No. 24, 5 May 1999,

<http://www.refworld.org/docid/44e344fa4.html>, 30/12/2017.

Coontz, S. (2005). *Marriage, a history: From obedience to intimacy or how love conquered marriage*. New York: Viking.

Cooper, M. (2004) *Existential Therapies*, London: Sage Publications.

Copur, Z.& Eker, I. (2014). The relationship between financial issues and marital relationship. *International Journal of Arts and Sciences*. 7. 683-698.

Cotten, S. R. (1999). Marital status and mental health revisited: Examining the importance. *An Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies*, 48(3), 225-233.

Crawford, J., Kippax, S., Onyx, J., Gault, U. and Benton, P. (1992) *Emotion and Gender: Constructing Meaning from Memory*. London: Sage.

Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, Canada: Sage

Cronan, S (1973. "Marriage." In *Radical Feminism*, edited by Koedt, A., Levine, E. and Rapone, New York: Quadrangle Books

Curran, M. A., Utleay, E. A., & Muraco, J. A. (2010). An exploratory study of the meaning of marriage for African Americans. *Marriage & Family Review*, 46, 346-365.

Curtis, K. T., & Ellison, C. G. (2002). Religious heterogamy and marital conflict. *Journal of Family Issues*, 23(4), 551-576.

Dahlberg, K, Dahlberg, H. & Nystrom, M. (2008) (eds) *Reflective lifeworld research*. 2nd edition. Lund, Sweden: Studentlitteratur.

Day, S., & Rottinghaus, P. (2003). The healthy personality. In W. B. Walsh (Ed.), *Counselling psychology and optimal human functioning* (pp. 1–23). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Deaux, K. (1993). Reconstructing social identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 19, 4-12.

De Beauvoir, S. (1949) *The Second Sex*. Translated from French by Borde, C. Malovany-Chevallier, S. 2010 Edition. London: Vintage.

Debats, D. L., van der Lubbe, P. M., & Wezeman, F. R. A. (1993). On the psychometric properties of the Life Regard Index (LRI): *A measure of meaningful life*. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 14, 337-345.

De Breuer, S.E (1978). The Role of Counselling in Developing Countries *International Journal of Advance Counselling* 1: 81.

Dechter, A.R. (1992). The Effect of Women's Economic Independence on Union Dissolutuion. (Working Paper No.92-28). *Centre for Demography and Ecology*,

University of Wisconsin- Madison, Madison, WI

Dey, I, (1999) *Grounding Grounded Theory: Guidelines for Qualitative Inquiry*.

London: Academic Press.

DeBartolo, P. M., & Barlow, D. H. (1996). Perfectionism, marital satisfaction, and contributing factors to sexual dysfunction in men with erectile disorder and their spouses. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 25(6), 581.

Diener, E., Wirtz, D., Tov, W., Kim-Prieto, C., Choi, D.W, Oishi, S., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2010). New well-being measures: Short scales to assess flourishing and positive and negative feelings. *Social Indicator Research*, 97, 143-156.

Doherty, W. J. (2001a). *Take back your marriage*. Guilford Press: New York.

Dollahite, D. C., Marks, L. D., & Goodman, M. (2004). Religiosity and families: Relational and spiritual linkages in a diverse and dynamic cultural context. In M. J. Coleman & L. H. Ganong (Eds.), *The handbook of contemporary families* (pp. 411-431). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Duncan, E. M. (2011). African American marriages: The impact of levels of acculturation, commitment and religiosity upon marital satisfaction. Dissertation Abstracts International: Section A. Humanities and Social Sciences, 72(10-A), 3907.

Durodoye, B. A. (1997). Factors of marital satisfaction among African American couples and Nigerian male/African American female couples. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 28, 71-81.

Eagleton, T. (2007). *The Meaning of Life: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Elliott, S., & Umberson, D. (2008). The Performance of Desire: Gender and Sexual Negotiation in Long-Term Marriages. *Journal of marriage and the family*, 70(2), 391-406.

England, P. (2010), "The Gender Revolution: Uneven and Stalled". *Gender & Society* 24(2): 149-166.

Eatough, V. and Smith, J.A. (2008) Interpretative phenomenological analysis' in The Sage Handbook of Qualitative research in psychology. Willig, C. and Stantoin-Rogers, W (ed). London: Sage.

Fadipe, N.A., (1970), *The Sociology of Yoruba: Nigeria*: Ibadan University Press.

Fanon, F. (1967). *Black Skin, White Masks* (C. Markmann, Trans.). New York: Grove Press.

Fasoranti, O.O and Olusola, G.O (2012) Strains in Traditional values in a Yoruba community: A study of families in Akoko-land in Ondo state. *Nigeria. European scientific journal*. November edition, vol.8, No.26 ISSN: 1857-7881.

Feldman, D. B., & Snyder, C. R. (2005). Hope and the meaningful life: Theoretical and empirical associations between goal-directed thinking and life meaning. *Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology*, 24, 401–421.

Ferguson-Cain, D. (2015) A Qualitative Study of Marriage and Marital Satisfaction of African American Couples: past and present. A dissertation submitted to the office of graduate studies. A&M university, Texas.

Firestone, S. (2003). *The Dialectic of Ssex: The case for feminist revolution*. Farrar: Straus and Giroux.

Finnis, J.M, (1994) "Law, Morality, and 'Sexual Orientation, *Notre Dame Law Review* 1049, 1066

Finlay, L. (2011) *Phenomenology for Therapists: Researching the Lived World*, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Finlay, L. (2003) 'Through the looking glass: intersubjectivity and hermeneutic reflection', in Finlay, L. & Gough, B. (eds.) *Reflexivity: a practical guide for researchers in health and social sciences*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Fisher, H.E. (1992) *Anatomy of Love: The Natural History of Monogamy, Adultery and Divorce*. New York: Norton.

Fisher, H.E. (2004) *Why we Love: The Nature and Chemistry of Romantic Love*, New York: Henry Holt.

Fisher, B. A., & Adams, K. L. (1994). *Interpersonal communication: Pragmatics of human relationships*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Foucault, M. (1972) *The Archeology of Knowledge and The Discourse of Language*.
Trans. Sheridan-Smith, A.M. New York: Pantheon books.

Frankl, V. E. (1959). *Man's search for meaning*. New York, NY: Pocket Books.

Friedan, Betty (1963). "The Problem that Has No Name". *The Feminine Mystique*.
New York: W. W. Norton.

Friedan, Betty (1963). "*The Problem that Has No Name*". *The Feminine Mystique*.
New York: W. W. Norton.

Frankl, V. (1963). *Man's search for meaning* (Revised ed.). London: Hodder &
Stoughton.

Frankl, V.E. (1946) *Man's Search for Meaning*, London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Frankl, V.E. (1967) *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Frankl, V. E. (1984). *Man's search for meaning: An introduction to Logotherapy*. New
York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Frankl, V. E. (1986). *The Doctor and the Soul: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy*.
New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Gadamer, H. (1975/1997) *Truth and Method*, New York: Crossroad.

Gadamer, H.-G. (1994). *Truth and method* (trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall, 1960). New York: Continuum.

Gadamer, H.G., 1976. *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Transl. & ed. D.E. Linge. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gergen, Kenneth. (1985). The Social Constructivist Movement in Modern Psychology. *American Psychologist*.

Gergen, K. J., & Gergen, M. M. (1988). Narrative and the self as relationship. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 21, pp. 17-56). New York: Academic Press.

Giddens, A. (1984). *The construction of society*. Cambridge: Polity.

Gill, R. (2007) Postfeminist media culture: elements of a sensibility. *European journal of cultural studies*, 10 (2). pp. 147-166.

Giorgi, A., & Giorgi, B. (2003). The descriptive phenomenological psychological method. In P. M. Camic, J. E. Rhodes, & L. Yardley (Eds.), *Qualitative research in psychology: Expanding perspectives in methodology and design* (pp. 243-273). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Giorgi, A. & Giorgi, B. (2008) 'Phenomenology', in Smith, J. *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Methods*, 2nd edition, London: Sage Publications.

Glaser, B. (1998). *Doing grounded theory: Issues and discussions*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Godwin, D. D. (1990) Family financial management. *Family Relations*, 39, 221-228

Goode, W. J. (1971) Family Disorganization. In R.K. Merton and R. Nisbet, eds., *Contemporary Social Problems*. 3rd ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Grosz, E. (2005) *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power*. Crow's Nest, Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Hague, G; Thiara, R (2009) Bride-Price, Poverty and Domestic Violence in Uganda, Final Report; An International Collaboration between MIFUMI Uganda Violence Against Women Research Group, University of Bristol, UK Centre for the Study of Safety and Well-being, University of Warwick, UK.

Hall, J. (2006). Spirituality at the beginning of life. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 15, 804–810.

Haviland M.,I, Decker, R.M.,.S., Latimore, A.D., Yasutake, S., Ahmed,S., Blum, R.W., Sonenstein, F., & Astone, N.M. (2015). Gender-Based Violence Against Adolescent and Young Adult Women in Low- and Middle-Income Countries *Journal of Adolescent Health* Volume 56, Issue 2,Pages188-196

Heaton, T.B and Pratt, E.L, (1990) The effects of religious homogeny on marital satisfaction and stability. *Journal of Family issues*, 11:191-207

Harper, R.A. (1949). *Marriage*, New York: Appleton Century CROFTS.

Heidegger, M. (1927/1962) '*Being and Time*' (Macquarie J. & Robinson E. trans), New York: Harper & Row.

Herrington, R. L., Mitchell, A. E., Castellani, A. M., Joseph, J. I., Snyder, D. K., & Gleaves, D. H. (2008). Assessing disharmony and disaffection in intimate relationships: Revision of the marital satisfaction inventory factor scales. *Psychological Assessment, 20*, 341–350.

Hobson, P.R (1990) Concerning knowledge of mental states *British Journal of Medical Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8341.1990.tb01613.x> [Accessed on 12/06/2019]

Hooks, B. (1981). *Ain't I a woman: Black women and feminism*. Cam., Mass.: South End Press.

Hooks, B. (1984) *Feminist Theory. From Margin to Center*. (2nd Ed.). Cambridge MA: South End Press.

Hooks, B. (2000) *Feminism is for Everybody. Passionate Politics*. Cambridge MA: South End Press.

Hurt, T. R. (2013). Toward a deeper understanding of the meaning of marriage among Black men. *Journal of Family Issues, 34* (7), 859-884

Husserl, E. (1931). *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology* (D. Carr, Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Husserl, E. (1952) *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book. Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, Translated by R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989.

Husserl, E. (1982). *Ideas pertaining to a pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*. Trans. F. Kersten. The Hague: Martinus Nijhof

Ibrahim, R., & Hassan, Z. (2009). Understanding singlehood from the experiences of never-married Malay Muslim women in Malaysia: Some preliminary findings. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(3), 395-405.

Igbafen, M. (2017). "Human Life and the Question of Meaning in African Existentialism." In: *Themes, Issues and Problems in African Philosophy*, edited by Isaac Ukpokolo, 237–254. Cham: Palgrave Macmillian. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-40796-8_16.

Ipaye, B. (1995) *Guidance and Counselling for Nigerian Schools*. Lagos: Chayoobi Printers and Publishers.

James, E. O. (1952). *Marriage and Society*, London: Hutchinson's University Library.

Jaramillo-Sierra, A. L., & Allen, K. R. (2013). Who pays after the first date? Young men's discourses of the male-provider role. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 14(4), 389-399.

Johnstone, B. (2000) *Qualitative Methods in Sociolinguistics*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kaye, D. K., Mirembe, F., Ekstrom, A. M., Bantebya, G.K., & Johansson, A. (2005). Implications of Bride price on Gender Violence and Health. *Journal of African Health Sciences*, Makerere University, Medical School.

Kayongo-Male, D., Onyango, P. (1984). *The sociology of the African family*. London: Longman.

Kennedy, P. and Whitlock, M. L. 1997. Therapeutic implications of conservative clergy views on sexuality: An empirical analysis. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 23(2): 140–153.

Kenyon, G. M. (2000). Philosophical foundations of existential meaning. In G. T. Reker & K. Chamberlain (Eds.), *Exploring existential meaning: Optimizing human development across the life span* (pp. 7-22). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kierkegaard, S. (1846/1992) *Concluding unscientific postscript to philosophical fragments. Kierkegaard's Writings*. Vol II. (trans). H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong. NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kierkegaard, S. (1847/1962) *Works of Love*. Trans. Hong, Howard and Edna Hong. New York: Harper & Row.

Kierkegaard, S. (1850/1983) *Fear and Trembling*, V. Howard & E. H. Hong, Trans., New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Kingston, A. (2004) *The meaning of Wife*. Canada: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd.

Kohn, C. S. (2001). Risk factors for marital discord among interfaith and interracial couples. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 61(8-B) (UMI No. 9982764).

Korinjo, PM (1987). Marital problem among the Tiv. BSc Psychology dissertation: Nigeria: University of Jos.

Kvale, S. (1996a) The 1000-page question. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 2(3): 275–84.

Labeledodan, M.O. (2001) The Family Lifestyle in Nigeria. A Trial Study for the School of Statistics and Actuarial Science University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Langdrige, D. (2007) *Phenomenological Psychology: Theory, Research and Method*. Essex: Pearsons Education Ltd.

Laing, R.D. (1967) *The politics of experience*. New York: Pantheon books.

Larkin, M., Watts, S., & Clifton, E. (2006). Giving voice and making sense in interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 102-120.

Larson, L. E., & Goltz, J. W. (1989). Religious participation and marital commitment. *Review of Religious Research*, 30, 387-400.

Lesolang-Pitje, N. (2003). African traditional healing and psychotherapy, in Madu, S. N. (Ed.) *Contributions to Psychotherapy in Africa* Sovenga, South Africa: UNIN Press.

Loewen, J.W. (1996). *Lies my teacher told me: Everything your American history textbook got wrong*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Lopata, H.Z. (1973) Self-Identity in Marriage and Widowhood, *The Sociological Quarterly*, 14:3, 407-418.

MacIntyre, P. D., R. Clement, Z. Dornyei, and Noels K. A. (1998). 'Conceptualizing willingness to communicate in a L2: a situational model of L2 confidence and affiliation,' *Modern Language Journal* 82: 545–62.

Madill, A., Jordan, A. and Shirley, C. (2000) Objectivity and reliability in qualitative analysis: realist, contextualist and radical constructionist epistemologies, *British Journal of Psychology*, 91: 1–20.

Madanes, C. & Madanes, D., (1994) *The secret meaning of money* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Madu, S.N. 2003. The relationship between parental physical availability and child sexual, physical and emotional abuse: A study among a sample of university students in South Africa. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* 44 (4): 311–318.

Maguire, P. (1987) *Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach*, Amhurst: Centre for Continuing Education, University of Massachusetts.

Malterud, K. (2001) Qualitative Research: Standards, Challenges, and Guidelines. *The Lancet*, 358, 483-488. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(01\)05627-6](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(01)05627-6)

[Accessed on 07/09/2015]

Mama, A. (1997). "Heroes and Villains: Conceptualizing Colonial and Contemporary Violence against Women in Africa" in Alexander, M.J. and Mohanty, C.T. (eds), *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. New York: Routledge.

Marcus, H., & Cross, S. (1990). The interpersonal self. In Pervin L. A. (Ed.), *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (pp. 576-608). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Mariach, L. (2003). Psychotherapy in Africa (The mental health of indigenous and tribal peoples of Africa) in Madu, S.N. (Ed.) *Contributions to Psychotherapy in Africa*. Sovenga, South Africa: UNIN Press.

Marks, L. D., Nesteruk, O., Hopkins-Williams, K., Swanson, M., & Davis, T. (2006). Stressors in African American marriages and families: A qualitative exploration. *Stress, Trauma and Crisis, 9, 203-225. Doi:10.1080/15434610600854061*

Maslow, A.H. (1971). *The farther reaches of human nature*. New York: Viking Press

Mastekaasa, A., (1992). Marriage and Psychological Well-Being: Some Evidence on Selection into Marriage. *Journal of Marriage and the Family 54(4): 901-911*.

Matembe, M. (2004) The relationship between domestic violence and bride price, paper presented at the International Bride Price Conference, MP Mbarara and Pan African Parliamentarian, February, Kampala, Uganda.

Malembanie, N.K. (2014) Women's Rights in Africa: From Feminism to Reality
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2429404> (Accessed May, 14 2021).

May, R. (1975). *The courage to create*. New York: Norton.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1945/2002) *The Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge.

Metz, T. 2013. *Meaning in Life*. Oxford: Oxford University press.

Doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/97801995993recruitment18.001.0001

Metz, T. (2019). "Recent Work on the Meaning of 'Life's Meaning'." *Human Affairs* 29 (4): 404–414. Doi:10.1515/humaff-2019-0035

Metz, T. (2020) African theories of meaning in life: A critical assessment Article in *South African Journal of Philosophy* · DOI: 10.1080/02580136.2020.1770429
201

Mbiti, J. S. (1969). *African Religions and Philosophy*. London, Heinemann Pub.

Mbiti, J.S. (1990). *African Religions & Philosophy*. Second Edition ed. Gaborone: Heinemann Educational Botswana.

Merleau-Ponty, M (1962) *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. C. Smith. London: Routledge.

Melike, K. (2017). The Meaning of Marriage According to University Students: A Phenomenological Study. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*. 17. 679-711.

Morgan, D. L. (2010). Reconsidering the Role of Interaction in Analyzing and Reporting Focus Groups. *Qualitative Health Research*, 20 (5).

Moran, D. (2000) *Introduction to Phenomenology*. London: Routledge.

Morse, J.M. (2000) Researching illness and injury: methodological considerations. *Qualitative Health Research* 10, 538-546

Moustakas, C. (1994) *Phenomenological Research Methods*. London: Sage.

Murray.M. (2003) Narrative Psychology, in J.A. Smith (ed) *Qualitative health psychology: Theories and methods*. London: Sage

Musana, P. (2018) The African Concept of Personhood and its Relevance to Respect for Human Life and Dignity in Africa and the Global Context. *African Study Monographs, Suppl. 56: 21–32*.

Myers, D. G. (2000). The funds, friends, and faith of happy people. *American Psychologist*, 55, 56-67.

National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria (2019) <https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng> [last accessed 10/11/2019].

Ndira, P. (2004) Bride Price: A Rights based view, paper presented at the International Bride Price Conference, February, Kampala, Uganda.

Nefale, M. C., & Dyke, G. A. J. V. (2003). Ubuntu therapy - A psychotherapeutic model for the African client. In N. S. Madu, *Contributions to psychotherapy in Africa* (pp. 7-20). Sovenga, South Africa: UNIN Press.

Nettleton, S. (2009). Ten tips for a great marriage according to Friedrich Nietzsche. *Indo - Pacific journal of phenomenology*, 9(2), 1-9.

Nietzsche, F. (1883/1968) Thus spoke Zarathustra, transl. Tille A., New York: Dutton.

Nietzsche, F. W., In Shapiro, H., & In Fuss, P. (1971). *Nietzsche: A self-portrait from his letters*. Ed. and transl.by Fuss, P. and Shapiro, H. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Nietzsche, F. (1888/1986a). *Ecce homo: How one becomes what one is* (R. J. Hollingdale, Trans.). Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books.

Nietzsche, F. (1882/2001) *The Gay Science*, New York: Random House.

Nietzsche F. (1888/2005), *Twilight of the Idols*, Trans. Hollingdale R.J., Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Ntoimo, L.F.T and Abanihe, U.I. (2014) Patriarchy and Singlehood Among Women in Lagos, Nigeria. *Journal of family issues*, Volume: 35 issue: 14, page(s): 1980-2008. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X13511249> [Accessed on 5th/07/2019]

Oakley, A., 1987 *House wife, high value –low cost*. London: Penguin Books.

Obilade A. O., (1979) *The Nigerian Legal System*, Ibadan, Sweet & Maxwell.

Odah, A. (2003) *Military Rule and Nigerian Women*. Lagos: Frankad Publishers

Ofofwe, C., Ofili, A., Ojetu, O. and Okosun, F. (2013) Marital satisfaction, job satisfaction and psychological health of secondary school teachers. *Journal of Health*, 5, 663-668.

Ogoma, D.E. (2014) Reflection on an African Traditional Marriage System. *Journal of Social Sciences and Public Affairs Volume 4, Number 1*

Oguli Oumo, M. (2004) Bride Price and Violence Against Women: The Case of Uganda, paper presented at the International Bride Price Conference, February, Kampala, Uganda.

Ogunyemi, C.O. (1985/86) "Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* II: 63-80.

Okafor, E.E, Fagbemi, A.O. and Hassan, A.R. (2011). Barriers to women Leadership and Managerial Aspirations in Lagos, Nigeria: An Empirical Analysis *African Journal of Business Management* Vol. 5, No. 16; Pp. 6717-6726.

Okere, T. (2005). *Philosophy, Culture and Society in Africa: Essays by Theophilus Okere*. Nsukka: Afro-Orbis Publications.

Okin, S.M. (1994) Political Liberalism, Justice and Gender, *Journal of Ethics*, 105: pp23-43.

Olomjobi, Yinka, Marriage in Nigeria Across Ages: Problems and Prospects (September 24, 2016). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2858618>.

Okolie, C. N. (2019). "Harmonious Relationship as an African Ethical Demand for Meaningful Existence: An Exposition and Critique." Paper presented at the Second International Conference on Philosophy and Meaning in Life held at Waseda University in Tokyo, 7–9 October.

Okunna, S. (2000). Gender and Communication in Nigeria. Is this the twenty first century? A paper presented at the 2000 summit. Barcelona: Barcelone Youth Children and Women.

Onuche, J. (2013). Same Sex Marriage in Nigeria: A Philosophical Analysis *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Vol. 3 No. 12*.

Onyewere, J. (2017). Women and governance case study of Nigerian women; Research thesis Talinn University of Technology.

Omokhodion, J. D. (2001). Sociological perspectives of women in sport. In A. Intifada & K. Dosunmu (Eds). Emergent issues in the sociology of sport. *Lagos virtuoso consultancy* 67-78.

Oppenheimer, V. K., Kalmihn, M., & Lim, N. (1997). Men's career development and marriage timing during a period of rising inequality. *Demography*, 34 (3), 311-330.

Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L. & Wynaden, D. (2000). 'Ethics in Qualitative Research', *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, vol. 33 (1) pp. 93-96.

Orbuch, T. L., Veroff, J., Hassan, H., & Horrocks, J. (2002). Who will divorce: A 14-year longitudinal study of Black couples and White couples? *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 19, 179-202.

Orubuloye, I. O., Caldwell, J. C., & Caldwell, P. (1995). The cultural, social and attitudinal context of male sexual behaviour in urban south-west Nigeria. *Health Transition Review*, 5, 207-222.

Osborne, J. (1994). Some similarities and differences among phenomenological and other methods of psychological qualitative research. *Canadian Psychology*, 35(2), 167-189.

Otite, D. (1999). On conflicts, their resolutions, transition and management, in: Otite, O. & Albert, I. O. (eds), *community conflicts in Nigeria: Management Resolution and Transformation*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd

Oyewumi, O. (1997). *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Discourse*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.

Ozyigit, K. M. (2017). The meaning of marriage according to university students: A phenomenological study. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 17, 679–711. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12738/estp.2017.2.0061>. [Accessed on 12/06/2019]

Pals, J. L. (1999). Identity consolidation in early adulthood: Relations with Ego-resiliency, the context of marriage, and personality change. *Journal of Personality*, 67(2), 295–329.

Parker, G. (1993), Disability, Caring and Marriage: The Experience of Younger Couples when a Partner is Disabled after Marriage, *The British Journal of Social Work*, Volume 23, Issue 6, December 1993, Pages 565–580.

Pattakos, A. & Dundon, E. (2017) Discovering Meaning Through the Lens of Work, *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 30:1, 4249, DOI: 10.1080/10720537.2015.1119084

Peltzer, K. (1999) Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms in a Population of Rural Children in South Africa. *Psychological Reports*, vol. 85, 2: pp. 646-650.

Philips, A. (1953) *Survey of African Marriage and Family Life*. Oxford University Press.

Pimentel, E. E. (2000) Just How Do I love thee? Marital relations in urban China. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 62(1), pp. 32-47.

Platteau, J.P. and Gaspart, F. (2007) Strategic Behavior and Marriage Payments: Theory and Evidence from Senegal. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*
Page: 37

Plummer, J.T. (2000) How personality makes a difference. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 40(6), 79-83

Poulter, S. (1979) "The Definition of Marriage in English Law", 42 MLR (4) 409.

Pringle J, Drummond J, McCafferty E et al (2011) Interpretative phenomenological analysis: a discussion and critique. *Nurse Researcher*. 18, 3, 20-24.

Radcliff- Brown, A.R. (1953) *Method in Social Anthropology*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Radcliffe-Brown, A.R. and Ford, D. (1987) (eds) *African systems of kinship and marriage*. New York: Routledge

Radziejewski, C. (2011) The portraits of marriage according to Frankl's existential perspective. M.Sc. dissertation: Trinity Western University.

Ramos, M.C. (1989) 'Some ethical implications of qualitative research', *Research in Nursing & Health*, vol. 12 (1) pp. 57-63.

Reid, K., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. (2005) 'Exploring lived experience', *The Psychologist*, vol. 18 (1) pp. 20-23.

Reiners, G.M (2012) Understanding the Differences between Husserl's (Descriptive) and Heidegger's (Interpretive) Phenomenological Research, *Journal of Nursing & Care*, vol. 1 (5) p.119.

Renne, K. S. (1970). Correlates of dissatisfaction in marriage. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 32, 54-67.

Rhodes JR & Jakes S (2000). Evidence given for delusions and personal goals: a quantitative analysis. *British Journal of Medical Psychology*. Vol. 73(2): 211–225.

Richmond, V. P., McCroskey, J. C., & Roach, K. D. (1997). Communication and decision-making styles, power base usage, and satisfaction in marital dyads. *Communication Quarterly*, 45, 410-427.

Rose, N. (1998) *Inventing Ourselves: Psychology, Power and Personhood*.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Ruggles S. (1997/2016) Marriage, Family Systems, and Economic Opportunity in the USA Since 1850. In: McHale S., King V., Van Hook J., Booth A. (eds) *Gender and Couple Relationships. National Symposium on Family Issues*, vol 6. Springer, Cham.

Russell, B. (1959) *Marriage and Morals*. London: Routledge

Ruiz, D.S. (1990). *Handbook of mental health and mental disorder among Black Americans*. New York: Greenwood Press

Sagay A.S., Imade G.E., and Nwokedi E. E (1999). Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection in Pregnant Women in Nigeria. *International Journal of. Gynaecology and Obstetrics*. 66:183 – 184.

Sambe, N., Avanger, M. Y., and Agba, S.A. (2013) The Effects of High Bride-Price on Marital Stability. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* Vol. 17, Issue 5 PP 65-70

Sanders, M. R. (1998). The empirical status of psychological interventions with families of children and adolescents. In L. L'Abate (Ed.), *Family psychopathology: The relational roots of dysfunctional behavior* (pp. 427-465). New York: Guilford Press.

Sandfield, A. & Percey, C. (2003) Accounting for single status: heterosexism and ageism in heterosexual women's talk about marriage. *Feminism & Psychology* 13(4): 475-488.

Santoni, R. (2003). Sartre on Violence Curiously Ambivalent. Bibliovault OAI Repository, the University of Chicago Press.

Sartre, J.P. (2003.) *Being and nothingness* (trans: Hazel Barnes). London and New York: Routledge.

Sartre, J. P. (2004). *Critique of Dialectical Reason, The principle theoretical text of Sartrean Existential-Marxism. Articulates Sartre's theory of groups and history. Volume 1.* London: Verso.

Sawhill, I.V. (2014) *Drifting into Sex and Parenthood without Marriage.* Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Schimmel, J., Arndt, J., Pyszczynski, T., & Greenberg, J. (2001). Being accepted for who we are: Evidence that social validation of the intrinsic self reduces general defensiveness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 80, 35–52.*

Schleiermacher, F. (1998) *Hermeneutics and criticism and other writings* (A. Bowie, Trans.). Cambridge: CUP.

Schram, T.H. (2006) *Conceptualising and proposing qualitative research* (2nd edition) Pearson merill prentice hall, Upper Saddle River, N.J.

Seiffge-Krenke, I. (1999). Families with daughters, families with sons: different challenges for family relationships and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 28, 325.*

Sharp, E. A., & Ganong, L. (2011). "I'm a loser, I'm not married, let's just all look at me": Ever single women's perceptions of their social environment. *Journal of Family Issues, 32, 956-980.*

Shaw, R.L. 2010. Embedded reflexivity within experiential psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 7(3): 233–243.

Schnell, T., & Becker, P. (2006). Personality and meaning in life. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 41, 117–129. doi: 10.1016/j.paid.2005.11.030 [Accessed on 13/12/2017].

Shindi, J (1989). Marital and psychosexual dysfunction. In K. Peltzer & PO Ebigo (Ed). *Clinical Psychology in Africa (south of the Sahara, the Caribbean and Afro Latin America)*. Working Group for Africa Psychology: Enugu: University of Nigeria Publishers.

Sillars, A., Leonard, K. E., Roberts, L. J., & Dun, T. (2002). Cognition and Communication during marital conflict: How alcohol affects subjective coding of interaction in aggressive and nonaggressive couples. In P. Noller & J. A. Feeney (Eds.), *Understanding marriage* (pp. 85-112). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, D. J. (2001). Romance, Parenthood, and Gender in a Modern African Society. *Ethnology*, 40(2), 129–151. <http://doi.org/10.2307/3773927> [Accessed on 30/12/2006].

Smith J.A (1996) Beyond the divide between cognition and discourse: Using interpretative phenomenological analysis in health psychology, *Psychology and health*, 11:261-71.

Smith, J.A, Flowers, P. and Larkin M, (2009) *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, method and Practice*. London: Sage.

Smith, J.A., Jarman, M. & Osborne, M. (1999). Doing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. In M. Murray & K. Chamberlain (Eds.) *Qualitative Health Psychology: Theories and Methods*. London: Sage.

Snyder-Hall, R. C. (2008). The ideology of wifely submission: A challenge for feminism? *Politics & Gender*, Vol 4, page 563-586.

Spanier, G. B. (2001). *Dyadic adjustment scale: User's manual*. Toronto, ON: MHS.

Speed, M. C. (2005). Heterosexual African American couples' perception of being happily married. Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B. Sciences and Engineering, 66(4- B), 1975.

Stillman, T. F., Baumeister, R. F., Lambert, N. M., Crescioni, A. W., DeWall, C. N., & Fincham, F. D. (2009). Alone and without purpose: Life loses meaning following social exclusion. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 45, 686–694.

Stinnett, N. 1983. "Strong families: A portrait". In *Prevention in family services*, Edited by: Mace, D. R. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. 1990. *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques.*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Stryker, S., & Burke, P. J. (2000). The past, present, and future of an identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63, 284-297.

Stone, H.M. & Stone, A. (1939) *A Marriage Manual: practical guidebook to sex and marriage*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson

Toldson, I. A., Anyanwu, K. C., Maxwell, C. (2008) "Counseling Persons of Back African Ancestry," in *Counseling Across Cultures*, eds. Paul B. Pedersen, Juris G. Draguns et al. Newbury Park, CA <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483329314.n10> (Accessed April,24 2021).

Trafimow, D., Triandis, H. C., & Goto, S. G. (1991). Some tests of the distinction between private self and collective self. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60, 649-655.

Umberson, D. (1992). Relationships between adult children and their parents: Psychological consequences for both generations. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 54:664 – 674.

Van Deurzen-Smith, E. van (1984) Existential therapy. In Dryden, W.(ed.) *Individual Therapy in Britain*. London: Harper and Row.

Van Deurzen –Smith, E. (1984) Existential Therapy in Dryden, W. (ed) *Individual Therapy in Britain*. London: Harper and Row.

Van Deurzen-Smith, E. (1997) *Everyday Mysteries*, Hove: Brunner-Routledge.

Van Deurzen, E., 1998. *Paradox and Passion in Psychotherapy: An Existential approach to therapy and counselling*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Van Deurzen, E. (2010) *Everyday Mysteries: A Handbook of Existential Psychotherapy*, Second Edition London: Routledge.

Van Deurzen, E. (2012) *Existential Psychotherapy and Counselling in Practice*, Third Edition London: Sage Publications

Van Deurzen, E. (2014) Structural Existential Analysis (SEA): A Phenomenological Method for Therapeutic Work. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*
DOI 10.1007/s10879-014-9282-z Springer Science+Business Media: New York.

Van Deurzen, E. & Arnold-Baker, C. (2005) *Existential Perspectives on Human Issues: A Handbook for Therapeutic Practice*, London: Palgrave Macmillan

Van Manen, M. (1990) *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Van Laningham, J., Johnson, D. R., & Amato, P. (2001). Marital happiness, marital duration, and the U-shaped curve: Evidence from a five-wave panel study. *Social Forces*, 78, 1313-1341.

Vos, J. (2018) *Meaning in Life: An Evidence based Handbook for Researchers*. London: Palgrave.

Wagstaff C, Williams B. (2014) Specific design features of an interpretative phenomenological analysis study. *Nurse Research*. Jan;21 (3):8-12.

Waite, M. (2012) *The Oxford English Dictionary*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Walker, K. L., & Dickson, F. C. (2004). Exploration and implications of health-related talk in marriages: Identification of health identity scripts. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 21, 527-544.

Warnock, M. (1987). *Memory*. London: Faber

Waring, E. M. (1984). The measurement of marital intimacy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 10, 185–192.

Weiss, R.S. (2004). In Their Own Words: Making the Most of Qualitative Interviews
Research Article Volume: 3 issue: 4, page(s): 44-51

Winfield, H. (2016) *Marriage: A review of the documented state of the union in England* Civitas: Institute for the Study of Civil Society.

Wilcox, P., Winn, S. and Fyvie-Gauld, M. (2005) ‘It was Nothing to Do with the University, it was Just the People: The Role of Social Support in the First-Year Experience of Higher Education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 30 (6), pp. 707-722.

Willig, C. (2001) *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Willig, C. and Rogers, S.W (eds) (2008) *Handbook of Qualitative research in psychology*. London: Sage.

Willig, C. (2008). Interpretive phenomenology. In C. Willig (Ed.) *Introducing qualitative research in psychology* (2nd edn, pp.50–69). Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Wole-Abu, N. (2018). Nigerian Women, Memories of the Past and Visions of the Future through the Communication Narratives of the Media. *Global media journal*, 16, 1-7.

Wolf, S. 2002. "The True, the Good, and the Lovable." In: *The Contours of Agency, Essays on Themes from Harry Frankfurt*, edited by S. Buss and L. Overton, 227–244. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press

Wolf, S. (2010). *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Wong, A.K.W. (2013) The ethics and poetics of the 'Package Tour': Marriage in Hong Kong unpacked and repacked, *Sexualities*. *Sage Journals*, Volume: 16 issue: 1-2, page(s): 128-136 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460712471024> [Accessed on 05/07/2019]

Wyatt, J. (2006). The Impossible Project of Love in Sartre's Being and Nothingness, Dirty Hands, and The Room. *Sartre Studies International*, 12 (2): 1-16.

Yardley, L. (2000). Dilemmas in qualitative health research. *Psychology and Health*, 15, 215–228.

Yarhouse, M. and Nowacki, S. (2007). The Many Meanings of Marriage: Divergent Perspectives Seeking Common Ground. *The Family Journal*. 15. 36-45.

Yates, W. (1985). The Protestant view of marriage. *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 22(1), 41-81

8. Appendices

8.1. Appendix 1

Ethical Approval

Middlesex University Department of Psychology Ethics Committee

Application for Ethical Approval and Risk Assessment

No study may proceed until an authorised person has granted approval. For collaborative research with another institution, ethical approval must be obtained from all institutions involved. If you are involved in a project that has already received ethical approval from another committee or that will be seeking approval from another ethics committee, please complete form 'Application for Approval of Proposals Previously Approved by another Ethics Committee or to be approved by another Ethics Committee'

UG and M.Sc. STUDENTS: Please email the completed form to your supervisor from your University email account (...@live.mdx.ac.uk). Your supervisor will then send your application to the Ethics Committee (Psy.Ethics@mdx.ac.uk). You should NOT email the ethics committee directly.

PhD Students and STAFF: Please email the completed form to Psy.Ethics@mdx.ac.uk from your University email account (...@mdx.ac.uk)

This form consists of 8 sections:

- 1) Summary of Application and Declaration
- 2) Ethical questions
- 3) Research proposal
- 4) Information sheet
- 5) Informed consent
- 6) Debriefing

7) Risk assessment (required if research is to be conducted away from Middlesex University property, otherwise leave this blank. Institutions/locations listed for data collection must match original letters of acceptance)

8) Reviewer's decision and feedback

Once your file including proposal, information sheet, consent form, debriefing and (if necessary) materials and Risk Assessment form is ready, please check the size. For files exceeding 3MB, please email your application to your supervisor using We Transfer: <https://www.wetransfer.com/> this will place your application in cloud storage rather than sending it directly to a specific email account. If you/ your supervisor has confidentiality concerns, please submit a paper copy of your application to the Psychology Office instead of proceeding with the electronic submission.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Application No.:	Click here to enter text.	Decision:	Click here to enter text.	Date:	Click here to enter a date.
-------------------------	----------------------------------	------------------	----------------------------------	--------------	------------------------------------

Required:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Signed by:	<input type="checkbox"/> Student <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supervisor <input type="checkbox"/> Programme Leader
Date:	Click here to enter a date.		

RISK ASSESSMENT (complete relevant boxes):

	Date	From	Checked by
All	13/01/17 13/01/17	University of Ilorin teaching hospital, Ilorin, kwara state Nigeria University of Ilorin teaching hospital, Ilorin, kwara state Nigeria	NSPC <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supervisor <input type="checkbox"/> Ethics Admin
Part	Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor <input type="checkbox"/> Ethics Admin
Part	Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor <input type="checkbox"/> Ethics Admin

LETTER/S OF ACCEPTANCE/PERMISSION MATCHING FRA1 (RISK ASSESSMENT) RECEIVED (SPECIFY):

DBS certificate required?	Yes	Seen By:	Sasha Smith NSPC
DBS Certificate Number:	001545619571	Date DBS Issued:	21/09/16 21/09/16

DBS Certificate(s) Required? (complete relevant boxes):

1 Summary of application (researcher to complete)

Title of Proposal:	For better or worse: A phenomenological study of the meaning of marriage among Nigerien women in monogamous marriages.For better or worse: A phenomenological study of the meaning of marriage among Nigerien women in monogamous marriages.		
Name of Principal Investigator/Supervisor	Prof. Emmy Van DeurzenProf. Emmy Van Deurzen		
Name of Student Researcher(s) and student number(s)	Zainab Abdul M00518760		
Please click one of the following:			
Proposed start date	01/05/1701/05/17	Proposed end date	01/02/1801/02/18
Details of any co-investigators (if applicable) Not Applicable			

1.1	Are there any sensitive elements to this study (delete as appropriate)? If you are unclear about what this means in relation to your research, please discuss with your Supervisor first	YESYES
1.2	If the study involves any of the first three groups above, the researcher may need a DBS certificate (Criminal Records Check). PG students are expected to have DBS clearance. Does the current	YESYES

	project require DBS clearance? Discuss this matter with your supervisor if you unsure	
1.3	Does the study involve ANY of the following? Clinical populations; Children (under 16 years); Vulnerable adults such as individuals with mental or physical health problems, prisoners, vulnerable elderly, young offenders; Political, ethnic or religious groups/minorities; Sexually explicit material / issues relating to sexuality; Mood induction; Deception	YESYES
1.4	Is this a resubmission / amended application? If so, you must attach the original application with the review decision and comments (you do not need to re-attach materials etc. if the resubmission does not concern alterations to these). Please note that in the case of complex and voluminous applications, it is the responsibility of the applicant to identify the amended parts of the resubmission.	NONO

By submitting this form, you confirm that:

- You are aware that any modifications to the design or method of the proposal will require resubmission;
- Students will keep all materials, documents and data relating to this proposal until completion of your studies at Middlesex, in compliance with confidentiality guidelines (i.e., only you and your supervisor will be able to access the data);
- Staff will keep all materials, documents and data relating to this proposal until the appropriate time after completion of the project, in compliance with confidentiality

guidelines (i.e., only you and other members of your team will be able to access the data);

- Students will provide all original paper and electronic data to the supervisor named on this form on completion of the research / dissertation submission;
- You have read and understood the British Psychological Society’s Code of Ethics and Conduct, and Code of Human Research Ethics.

2 Ethical questions – all questions must be answered

2.1	Will you inform participants of their right to withdraw from the research at any time, without penalty?	YESYES
2.2	Will you provide a full debriefing at the end of the data collection phase?	YESYES
2.3	Will you be available to discuss the study with participants, if necessary, to monitor any negative effects or misconceptions?	YESYES
2.4	Under the Data Protection Act, participant information is confidential unless otherwise agreed in advance. Will participant anonymity be guaranteed?	YESYES
2.5	Is this research or part of it going to be conducted in a language other than English? Note, full translations of all non-English materials must be provided and attached to this document	NO
2.6	Is this research to be conducted only at Middlesex University? If not, a completed Risk Assessment form - see Section 8 – must be completed, and permission from any hosting or collaborative institution must be obtained by letter or email, and appended to this document, before data collection can commence. If you are	NONO

	conducting an online survey or interviews via skype or telephone whilst you are at Middlesex University, you do not need to fill in the risk assessment form.	
--	---	--

If you have answered 'No' to questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 above, please justify/discuss this below, outlining the measures you have taken to ensure participants are being dealt with in an ethical way.

For 2.6, Please see the venue section, page 22 of the research proposal where it was addressed.

Are there any ethical issues that concern you about this particular piece of research, not covered elsewhere on this form? If so, please outline them below

The ethical issues that are of concern and how I will go about discussing them are on pages 20-22 of the research proposal.

Research proposal

This section should contain sufficient information to enable the ethics committee reviewer to evaluate the ethical status of the research. A research proposal would normally be around 2 A4 pages in length (about 800 words) excluding references and additional materials. The headings below are indicative, and you may choose whether or not to use them.

Aims and Hypotheses/Research Questions

Supporting literature and rationale

This section should include a brief discussion of previous research in the area, which justifies your choice of topic, aims, hypotheses and research questions

Method

The four sub-headings under method (design, participants, materials and procedures) should contain details about the design, participants, recruitment (including how and from whom will be informed consent be obtained), provision of information and, where necessary, deception.

Design

Participants

Materials (if appropriate)

Procedures

Details of the procedures, and what the participant will experience as part of the research are critical.

Analysis

You should also include some discussion of how the data will be analysed.

References

Full references and any materials developed or adapted for this research should also be included (this includes but is not limited to questionnaires, rating scales, and images). If due to the addition of these materials your file exceeds 3 MB, or if materials cannot be scanned for copyright reasons, they should be clearly identified in the research proposal. You need to provide references for Questionnaires, which have been previously published/validated.

Please see research proposal

8.2. Appendix 2

Risk Assessment:

INDEPENDENT FIELD/LOCATION WORK RISK ASSESSMENT FRA1

This proforma is applicable to, and must be completed in advance for, the following field/location work situations:

1. All field/location work undertaken independently by individual students, either in the UK or overseas, including in connection with proposition module or dissertations. Supervisor to complete with student(s).
2. All field/location work undertaken by postgraduate students. Supervisors to complete with student(s).
3. Field/location work undertaken by research students. Student to complete with supervisor.
4. Field/location work/visits by research staff. Researcher to complete with Research Centre Head.
5. Essential information for students travelling abroad can be found on www.fco.gov.uk

Name:	Zainab Abdul	Student No: M00581765 Research Centre:(staff only)
Supervisor:	Prof. Emmy Van Deurzen	Degree course Doctorate in Counselling psychology and psychotherapy

FIELD/LOCATION WORK DETAILS

<p>NEXT OF KIN</p> <p>Telephone numbers and name of next of kin who may be contacted in the event of an accident</p>	<p>Name:Dr I.F AbdulDr I.F Abdul</p> <p>Phone+2348037075430+2348037075430</p> <p>Dr. N.N Akanbi</p> <p>+2348033728393</p>
<p>Physical or psychological limitations to carrying out the proposed field/location work</p>	<p>Fatigue as a result of the long journey</p> <p>Fatigue as a result of the long journey</p>
<p>Any health problems (full details) Which may be relevant to proposed field/location work activity in case of emergencies.</p>	<p>Not applicable</p> <p>Not applicable</p>
<p>Locally (Country & Region)</p>	<p>Ilorin, Kwara state, Nigeria</p> <p>Ilorin, Kwara state, Nigeria</p>
<p>Travel Arrangements</p> <p>NB: Comprehensive travel and health insurance must always be obtained for independent overseas field/location work.</p>	<p>Travel by flight and use a designated driver and vehicle for the duration of my stay. I have both travel and health insurance.</p> <p>Travel by flight and use a designated driver and vehicle for the duration of my stay. I have both travel and health insurance.</p>

Dates of Travel and Field/location work	After ethical approval
--	-------------------------------

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION VERY CAREFULLY

Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment

Examples of Potential Hazards:

Adverse weather: exposure (heat, sunburn, lightening, wind, hypothermia)

Terrain: rugged, unstable, fall, slip, trip, debris, and remoteness. Traffic: pollution.

Demolition/building sites, assault, getting lost, animals, disease.

Working on/near water: drowning, swept away, disease (weils disease, hepatitis, malaria, etc.), parasites', flooding, tides and range.

Lone working: difficult to summon help, alone or in isolation, lone interviews.

Dealing with the public: personal attack, causing offence/intrusion, misinterpreted, political, ethnic, cultural, socio-economic differences/problems. Known or suspected criminal offenders.

Safety Standards (other work organisations, transport, hotels, etc.), working at night, areas of high crime.

Ill health: personal considerations or vulnerabilities, pre-determined medical conditions (asthma, allergies, fitting) general fitness, disabilities, persons suited to task.

Articles and equipment: inappropriate type and/or use, failure of equipment,

insufficient training for use and repair, injury.

Substances (chemicals, plants, bio- hazards, waste): ill health - poisoning, infection, irritation, burns, cuts, eye-damage.

Manual handling: lifting, carrying, moving large or heavy items, physical unsuitability for task

List the localities to be visited or specify routes to be followed (Col. 1). For each locality, enter the potential hazards that may be identified beyond those accepted in everyday life. Add details giving cause for concern (Col. 2).

If no hazard can be identified beyond those of everyday life, enter 'NONE'.

1. LOCALITY/ROUTE (Specify here the exact name and address of each locality/organization)	2. POTENTIAL HAZARDS
University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria	<p>Some parts of the country tend to experience riots, but these parts are going to be avoided.</p> <p>The venue of the interview is a peaceful part of the country.</p> <p>The weather can be quite harsh and temperature very high, but air conditioning will be made use of to</p>

	<p>prevent any adverse impact.</p> <p>Nigerians are prone to a very dangerous illness (malaria) but taking prophylaxis to prevent malaria and other dangerous diseases can prevent this.</p>
--	--

The University Field/location work code of Practice booklet provides practical advice that should be followed in planning and conducting field/location work.

Risk Minimisation/Control Measures

PLEASE READ VERY CAREFULLY

For each hazard identified (Col 2), list the precautions/control measures in place or that will be taken (Col 3) to "reduce the risk to acceptable levels", and the safety equipment (Col 5) that will be employed.

Assuming the safety precautions/control methods that will be adopted (Col. 3), categorise the field/location work risk for each location/route as negligible, low, moderate or high (Col. 4).

Risk increases with both the increasing likelihood of an accident and the increasing severity of the consequences of an accident.

An acceptable level of risk is a risk which can be safely controlled by person taking part in the activity using the precautions and control measures noted including the necessary instructions, information and training relevant to that risk. The resultant risk should not be significantly higher than that encountered in everyday life.

Examples of control measures/precautions:

Providing adequate training, information & instructions on field/location work tasks and the safe and correct use of any equipment, substances and personal protective equipment. Inspection and safety check of any equipment prior to use. Assessing individuals' fitness and suitability to environment and tasks involved. Appropriate clothing, environmental information consulted, and advice followed (weather conditions, tide times etc.). Seek advice on harmful plants, animals & substances that may be encountered, including information and instruction on safe procedures for handling hazardous substances. First aid provisions, inoculations, individual medical requirements, logging of location, route and expected return times of lone workers. Establish emergency procedures (means of raising an alarm, back up arrangements). Working with colleagues (pairs). Lone working is not permitted where the risk of physical or verbal violence is a realistic possibility. Training in interview techniques and avoiding /defusing conflict, following advice from local organisations, wearing of clothing unlikely to cause offence or unwanted attention. Interviews in neutral locations. Checks on Health and Safety standards & welfare facilities of travel, accommodation and outside organisations. Seek information on social/cultural/political status of field/location work area.

Examples of Safety Equipment: Hardhats, goggles, gloves, harness, waders, whistles, boots, mobile phone, ear protectors, bright fluorescent clothing (for roadside work), dust mask, etc.

If a proposed locality has not been visited previously, give your authority for the risk assessment stated or indicate that your visit will be preceded by a thorough risk assessment.

3. PRECAUTIONS/CONTROL MEASURES	4.RISK ASSESSMENT (low, moderate, high)	5.SAFETY/ EQUIPMENT
<p>Listening to news to know if there is any form of political unrest</p> <p>Appropriate clothing</p> <p>Familiarising myself with the environment</p> <p>And letting people know about my movement</p> <p>Stay in public building</p> <p>Knowing where the fire exit is</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>Mobile phone</p> <p>Office telephone and Alarm</p>

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION AND SIGN AS APPROPRIATE

DECLARATION: The undersigned have assessed the activity and the associated risks and declare that there is no significant risk or that the risk will be controlled by the method(s) listed above/over. Those participating in the work have read the assessment and will put in place precautions/control measures identified.

NB: Risk should be constantly reassessed during the field/location work period and additional precautions taken or field/location work discontinued if the risk is seen to be unacceptable.

Signature of Field/location worker (Student/Staff)	Zainab AbdulZainab Abdul	Date :	02/03/1702/03/17
Signature of Student Supervisor	Click here to enter text.	Date :	Click here to enter a date.
APPROVAL: (ONE ONLY) Signature of Director of Programmes (undergraduate students only)	Click here to enter text.	Date :	Click here to enter a date.

8.3. Appendix 3

Participant Information Sheet

Title: For better or worse: A phenomenological study of the meaning of marriage among Nigerian women in monogamous marriage.

Being carried out by Zainab Abdul

As a requirement for a Doctorate in Counselling Psychology Psychotherapy from NSPC and Middlesex University

NSPC Ltd

61-63, Fortune Green Road

West Hampstead

London, NW6 1DR

Middlesex University

The Burroughs

London NW4 4BT

Dated: 10/02/2017

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take your time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take your time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the research?

This study is being carried out as part of my studies at NSPC Ltd and Middlesex University.

Marriage is a universal concept and a very important part of the Nigerian culture. It is also a very well researched area. Studies have been conducted throughout the world, mostly in the developed countries, some amongst African Americans and in sub-Saharan African countries but not many have researched what meaning women make of their marriage. Most studies found in Nigeria are limited to specific parts of the country, widely held are quantitative studies. Few qualitative researches on marital relations/satisfaction exist.

My study is designed to explore through qualitative methods, the lived experience of Nigerian women; how they make sense of their marital relationships and describe how satisfying these relationships are.

In doing this, I hope the study will update the existent literature and shed more light on the phenomena of marital relationships, meaning and satisfaction in Nigeria, improve the understanding and experience of Counselling psychologists and psychotherapists working therapeutically with client groups from this cultural background. It will also contribute to the body of psychological knowledge, to professionals in the field of psychotherapy and generate more idiographic researches in similar areas.

You are being asked to participate because you have responded to my advertisement for married, Nigerian women between the ages of 35 and 50 years who have been married to Nigerian men for at least 10 years, to volunteer to participate in this project.

What will happen to me if I take part?

I will like to interview you at an agreed time that is convenient for you. This interview will last for about one hour and it will take place in an office in the paediatric department of University of Ilorin teaching hospital (UIITH) Ilorin Kwara state, Nigeria.

What will you do with the information that I provide?

Being a qualitative research method, this interview will be recorded on a digital recorder. The interview will be transcribed by me and later, analysed alongside those of others participating in this research. The information you provide will be kept safe by transferring it on to an encrypted USB stick for storage. Your real name will not be used to protect your identity and everything relating to the interview will be kept in a locked filing cabinet.

The information will be kept at least until 6 months after I graduate and will be treated as highly confidential. If my research gets published, I will make sure that neither your name nor other details relating to your identity are used.

Data will be stored according to the provision of the Nigerian data protection act or in the UK, the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

It is unlikely that the interview will cause any physical harm but there could be possible disadvantages to participating in the research, which might include a feeling of distress during the interview, which comes about for various reasons. If you wish to stop the interview at any time as a result of this, please do let me know and I will stop.

Whatever you tell me will remain confidential but as very unlikely as this is, should you tell me something that I am required by law to report during or after the interview, I will have to do so.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Although there is no direct benefit of taking part, being interviewed about your experience in marriage could be of benefit, in that some people may see it as an opportunity to reflect on personal issues that they haven't found a way of talking about in the past and could find being able to share their feelings and thoughts beneficial.

Consent

You will be given a copy of this information sheet for your personal records, and if you agree to take part, you will be asked to sign the attached consent form before the study begins.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you decide to take part, you may withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is self-funded

Who has reviewed the study?

An Ethics Committee reviews all proposals for research using human participants before they can proceed. The NSPC research ethics sub-committee has approved this study

Thank you for reading this information sheet.

If you have any question, you can contact me at:

ZA274@live.mdx.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the conduct of the study, you may contact my supervisor:

Prof. Emmy Van Deurzen

NSPC Ltd. 61-63,

Fortune Green Road

West Hampstead

London NW6 1DR

Admin@nspc.org.uk

0044 (0) 20 7624 04

8.4. Appendix 4

Written Informed Consent

Title of study: For better or worse: A phenomenological study of the meaning of marriage among Nigerian women in monogamous marriages

Academic year 2016/2017

Researcher's name: Zainab Abdul

Supervisor's name and email: Prof. Emmy Van Deurzen admin@nspc.org.uk

- I have understood the details of the research as explained to me by the researcher and confirm that I have consented to act as a participant.
- I have been given contact details for the researcher in the information sheet.
- I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, the data collected during the research will not be identifiable, and I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time without any obligation to explain my reasons for doing so.
- I further understand that the data I provide may be used for analysis and subsequent publication, and I provide my consent that this may occur.

Print name _____

Sign Name _____

Date: _____

8.5. Appendix 5

Debriefing

At the end of the interview, participants will be given the opportunity to say how they feel about their participation and interview process. Some participants may decide to postpone the debriefing aspect till later while some would like to take part immediately after the interview. For those who are interested in taking part in the debriefing immediately after the interview, the researcher will explain that the aim of the research is to discover how Nigerian women make sense of their marriage and what it means for them. The researcher will then ask the participants what it was like to take part in the research, how they felt about answering the questions and talking about their marriage.

The researcher will also bear it in mind that some participants may find the interview process upsetting. The interviewer will discuss the fact that participants may feel that they need to talk about this further with someone and a charity organisation that supports women in Nigeria will be suggested to participants if they wish to discuss

their feelings with professionals. At the end of the debrief, participants will be encouraged to contact researcher if they have any questions or concerns.

Research title: For better or worse: A phenomenological study of the meaning of marriage among Nigerian women

Researcher: Zainab Abdul

Email, ZA274@live.mdx.ac.uk

(Mobile number will be added when I get one in Nigeria before the recruitment process starts)

Academic supervisor: Prof. Emmy Van Deurzen

Email, admin@nspc.org.uk

Phone: +44(0) 2074358067

Thank you for your participation in today's study. Although the area of marriage itself is not new and it has been widely researched upon, this is a relatively new area in the research of marriage. My study is exploring how Nigeria women make sense of their marriage and what meaning it holds for them.

All the information collected in today's interview will remain confidential, and anonymous, as mentioned at the beginning of the interview, the recorded interview will be transferred to a USB stick which will, in turn, be saved in a locked filing cabinet.

Your participation today is highly appreciated and will help Counselling psychologists and psychotherapists in gaining more knowledge and understanding about this client group when working with them in future.

If you wish to seek professional support, you may contact Women's Health Attention Focus (WHAF) on their phone number on +234805504714

If you have any questions or concerns relating to this research or wish to withdraw from participating in this research, please do contact me.

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

8.6. Appendix 6

Interview Schedule

Interview questions:

Questions are constructed with hopefully little or no need for prompts, but some do have prompts in case the participants' response is not doing justice to the question. The research questions have been structured with the four dimensions in mind to capture all aspects of the participant's life. I have carried out an initial interview on myself and this resulted in the interview questions being adapted to allow for a richer response, which goes deeper than a possibly scripted or rehearsed response.

I would be asking the following questions:

1. What is your general view on marriage in Nigeria?
2. It is the belief of people that husbands own women in Nigeria due to the bride price paid, how has this affected your sense of self?
3. What made you get married at the time you did?

4. What does your marriage mean to you?
5. How has your marriage and or husband affected your life? (Prompt-positively/negatively)
6. How satisfied are you in (with) your marriage?
7. At what point would you walk away from your marriage, if ever?
8. Is there anything you would change in your marriage if you could start from the beginning again?

8.7. Appendix 7

Analysis of theme

Excerpts from the transcript of a Participant

(Shola):

Initial comments	Transcript	Emerging themes
<p>Believe marriage is slavery</p> <p>Pretending all is well in marriage</p> <p>Not expected to complain (wonder how that came about)</p> <p>What would happen if one did?</p> <p>Stifled?</p> <p>Must hold no bad opinion of the husband even if being hurt by him</p> <p>The shame of being seen</p> <p>Suffering and Smiling- more burden to bear (putting others into consideration even in sadness)</p> <p>To have and to obey Husband is the head of the family and you must obey him</p>	<p>S: My general view is that marriage is, that, I think marriage is slavery. I believe marriage is slavery</p> <p>S: I believe that you are expected not to complain even if though you are not enjoying it, you will pretend you are enjoying it. You are not expected to complain, you are not expected to have a negative opinion of the other partner even though he is hurting you, and you say that it's a right. it's okay.</p> <p>S: yes, in Nigeria, most women in Nigeria, we pretend a lot even though things are not smooth, we will be pretending that things are well especially those people that you like, you don't want other people to have a negative opinion, they pretend as if everything is going on fine.</p> <p>Just like Fela's song, they will be suffering and smiling so that's my own opinion about marriage in Nigeria</p>	<p>Marriage as slavery</p> <p>Undesired acceptance</p> <p>All is well in marriage</p> <p>Suffering in silence</p> <p>The shame of being seen</p>

<p>Cultural expectation that the wife is less than the husband</p> <p>Inability to voice own opinion in marriage</p>	<p>T: so, when you talk about marriage, you said it is slavery, they are not allowed to complain does that mean they don't have their own voice?</p> <p>S: You have to follow what he says even if it's wrong, you must follow what he says because they believe he is the head, he is the head of the family and so, whatever he says is final</p> <p>S: hmnn, I don't know, one other thing I think is happening in Nigeria, I don't know how to explain this. if for example God lifted you above your husband, you are not expected to show it. I don't know if you understand what I am saying</p> <p>T: like if you are richer?</p> <p>S: richer, you are not expected to show it because they believe that men are supposed to be all in all so if you are richer you are not expected to show it that you are richer than the husband</p> <p>T: and if you do</p> <p>S: they will think you are using the head of the husband (Yoruba translation: used spiritual means to render the husband's riches yours) maybe you are using the man's glory or fortune so it's not expected that the woman should be richer than the husband</p> <p>T: thank you for that. My next question is about bride price. People are of the opinion that the husband is the owner of the</p>	<p>Seemingly happy life</p> <p>To have and to obey</p> <p>Culturally proclaimed master</p> <p>Stifled in wealth</p> <p>Undeserved affluence</p> <p>To love and not to own</p> <p>My life for your money</p> <p>Purchased wife</p> <p>Communal gift of life</p> <p>Readiness and timing</p>
<p>Referring to a cultural belief that the wife has taken the husband's fortune through a diabolical means</p>	<p></p>	<p></p>

<p>No bride price is taken so that daughter is not treated as a slave</p> <p>The bride price means they own the wife Some cultures pay so much so they own the wife</p> <p>Even though no bride price taken the husband still owns his wife</p>	<p>wife because he has paid bride price during their wedding, how does that make you feel as a wife?</p> <p>S: for my own side, they don't collect bride price although the man is expected to bring bride price then the parents will now return the bride price and they will tell the husband that they didn't collect the bride price so the husband can take care of their daughter and not own her or treat her like a slave so we don't collect bride price</p> <p>T: some others collect</p> <p>S: some other tribes do collect it and the moment they collect the bride price that means the life of the woman dead or alive belongs to the husband, whatever he likes he can do with the woman</p> <p>S: they own the wife. For example, I heard that the Ibos they pay a huge amount of money, so they have everything, they own the woman</p> <p>T: talking about this, how do you feel as a wife? Do you feel owned?</p> <p>S: owned as how?</p> <p>T: like a property</p> <p>S: yes now, when you pay for something you own it, it's just like buying a vehicle, you are entitled to it, the vehicle belongs to you so far you have paid</p> <p>T: so, despite the fact that the</p>	<p>Right timing</p> <p>Family influence</p> <p>Marrying for the sake of it</p> <p>Marriage as a restricting factor</p> <p>Master/servant relationship</p> <p>Others before self</p> <p>End of a dream</p>
---	--	---

<p>No place to go when in trouble with the husband but the husband's house</p>	<p>bride price is being returned to the husband, although they didn't let him pay, they gave it to him free, he is still seen as the owner.</p>	
<p>Parents won't take you back if you leave your husband</p>	<p>S: yes, no matter what happens, they will tell you to go back to your husband's house and settle the problem or you have an issue with your husband and you pack your things to your parents' house, they will tell you to go back that they have given you to your man so whatever it is</p>	
<p>No place with parents, n matter what. Men aware?</p>	<p>you should go and settle it T: what made you get married when you did, why that time and not another?</p>	<p>Dream and reality</p>
<p>Too much pressure to get married, from self from others</p>	<p>What made the time right? S: because I felt I was getting old. I was thirty something, so I felt I was getting old and my relatives have been asking me when you will get married when will we know your husband, so I felt I was getting old that is why I got married?</p>	<p>Different aspiration</p> <p>Making peace</p>
<p>The later it is the higher the pressure (looking sad and into space)</p>	<p>T: why that particular time why not before S: I thought I was still young, if I get married, I will just be under someone so why not enjoy it now but when the time was going I now thought let me get married because people have started asking me when will they see the man? T: by saying people do you</p>	<p>The next right thing</p>

<p>Whose desperation?</p> <p>Any man will do?</p> <p>No say in the matter</p>	<p>mean?</p> <p>S: my relation, my relation was asking me, they said where is your man? We need to know your man, my parents my mother then was asking me if there was something wrong with me so they can seek solution to it</p> <p>T: was a man waiting or you just felt enough is enough let me just marry the next person I see or how did that happen?</p> <p>S: hmmnm, though I just, though I felt it's high time I got married so the person that came my way and I felt okay this man is okay for me, I just married him</p> <p>T: you got married and talked about bride price, I will now ask you about your marriage itself, what does it mean to you?</p> <p>S: like I said, it means slavery</p> <p>T: I mean on a personal note</p> <p>S: yes, on a personal note, I felt if I am not married there are some things I intend doing and some things I intend achieving but because of marriage I cannot so I feel to me marriage is a kind of slavery you can't do what you want if your husband doesn't support you, I can't go anywhere I want if he does not allow it, I believe marriage is slavery to me</p>	<p>The need to settle</p> <p>Settling</p> <p>Marrying for others</p>
---	--	--

Family as active party to the slavery

Deprivation of freedom

Master themes	Page	Quotes
<u>Loss of freedom</u>	1:3	
Marriage as slavery	2:107	I believe marriage is slavery
		It means slavery
	1:24	
Marriage and the surrender of control	3:113	You must follow what he says
	1:26	I can't go anywhere
Limitation to freedom	4:152	What he says is final
Relegation of the woman's post	4:155	Should be at home cooking
A servant to in -laws	4:166	You are more or less a slave to them also
Restrictive potential to better self	3:116	
	3: 120	I cannot further
Dreams given up	1:55	I compare it to when I was single
The process of being owned	1:60	
	1:66	
Payment for being owned		So many things you just have to give up
Ownership free of charge	5:205	
	5:206	

<u>Being for others</u>		They own the wife
	5:206	
Society respects the title		When you pay for something you own it
	5:203	
Responsible only through status	1:12	They have given you to your man
Wife Vs. Self	1:15	
Shame	1:8	People will give you respect
		You are Mrs.
Pretending all is well	5:293	
Tolerance for the sake of peace	6:275	
Staying in spite of immorality	4:178	Believe that the person is responsible
Inauthentic self	1:9	Bear his name
Seeming responsible	1:16	We pretend a lot
Meeting husband's expectations for peace		Pretend as if everything is going on fine
Appearing happy for people	1:15	You are not expected to complain
<u>The power of culture</u>	1:66	You have to endure
	6:298	Subdue myself
Cultural influence on marriage	1:67	You have to do it
		You say that it's alright,

Cultural expectation of wife	2:90	It's okay
Influence of people on marriage	2:80	Suffering and smiling
Parental influence on being owned	4:174	
Parents' expectation of a grown female child		You don't want other people to have a negative opinion
Family expectations of a grown woman	3:138	
In-laws' influence on marriage		Husband is the head
		They say I should wait
<u>Lost dream and lost reality</u>	5:212	
Past self vs. Present self	3:129	No matter what happens you cannot go back,
Marital expectations unmet	6:293	They were asking me
Hope of a religious marriage	5:251	
Hope of a better union	5:221	Relatives have been asking
Wish for happiness	3:139	You have to run helter-skelter to satisfy them
Hope of finding a companion in husband	4:192	
	5:216	I remember when we were newly married
Expectation to be in company of husband more		Not positive

Paying the price with own health	5:218	Someone that we will pray together
Lost dream	7:311	You have to endure
Too late to leave now	5:216	Happiness is not there
Unmet wishes	5:234	
Unsatisfactory marriage	4:192	My own dream
Lonely heart		I will feel like following him
Lack of happiness at home		I suffered a stroke due to high blood pressure
	5:254	Not envisaged
<u>Being for self/Independent self</u>	5:257	So far I'm married
Strong self, silent self	6:260	That alone is something
Being there for self		Not satisfied
Self-dependence		Burdens on your heart
Self-reliance	6:255	
Responsibility		I am in this condition because of how unhappy I am
		Learnt to keep quiet
		No one to encourage you

The need to be free	6:262	
Manliness in self dependence	5:231	
Entitled to self-dependence	5:258	I will go ahead and do it
		I am strong
	6:264	Take up responsibility
		Feel free I feel like a man You don't have to wait

8.8. Appendix 8

Themes Across all Cases

<p>SHOLA:</p> <p>Loss of freedom</p> <p>Being for others</p> <p>The power of culture</p> <p>Lost dream and lost reality</p> <p>Being for self/Independent self</p>	<p>IRE:</p> <p>The place of culture</p> <p>Being owned</p> <p>Timing and marriage</p> <p>What marriage is not</p> <p>Given up freedom</p> <p>Being self</p> <p>Familial influence</p> <p>Daring to be free</p>	<p>HANNAH:</p> <p>External influences on marriage</p> <p>Finding one's feet</p> <p>Undesired state of being</p> <p>Marriage and meaninglessness</p> <p>Finding strength in self/ Self independence</p> <p>Failing health</p> <p>Lack of freedom and esteem</p> <p>Finding solace</p>	<p>SUMAYAH:</p> <p>Influences in marriage</p> <p>Marriage at the wake of modernization</p> <p>Act of being married</p> <p>Finding one's place</p> <p>Meaning over time</p> <p>Impact on self</p>
<p>ROSE:</p> <p>Cultural and religious influence on marriage</p> <p>Lack of freedom</p> <p>Being owned</p> <p>Timing in marriage</p> <p>Sacrificing for marriage</p> <p>Fulfilment of duty</p> <p>Being faced with new reality</p> <p>Seeking the real self</p> <p>Marriage here and now</p> <p>The pain of loss</p> <p>Recreating self</p>	<p>TAYO:</p> <p>Cultural influence on marriage</p> <p>Belief in the unseen</p> <p>Restriction of freedom</p> <p>What might have been</p> <p>Worth in financial independence</p> <p>Satisfaction in marriage</p> <p>What marriage means</p>	<p>ANNE:</p> <p>Influence on marriage</p> <p>Marriage through the eyes of society</p> <p>Benefit of marriage</p> <p>Shame</p> <p>Viewing self</p> <p>Decreased freedom</p> <p>An unlost sense of self</p> <p>Making it work</p> <p>Saying no</p>	<p>JENNY:</p> <p>Culture and Family</p> <p>Servitude in marriage</p> <p>Place in marriage</p> <p>Coping with discontent</p> <p>Sense of self</p> <p>Limited freedom</p> <p>Voice in marriage</p> <p>Submission</p> <p>Being owned</p> <p>Marriage as slavery</p> <p>Taking care of self</p> <p>Marriage over a period</p>

8.9. Appendix 9

Abstraction- Super ordinate Themes:

Cultural perspective on marriage = Limitation of knowledge to culture = To love and to serve = Marriage as modern day slavery = Marriage as a whole family affair = The more you serve the peaceful your marriage = Expectation of a wife and as woman = Personal view as marriage as slavery = Cultural influence on parental attitude = Force to assume new self/identity = Marriage as eternal test = Family colluding = Interdependent self = The only way is submission

= Marriage at the wake of modernisation = Self of sense versus state of being = Feminism within slavery

= Being as you ought to be = Limitations in freedom = The right to be = Husband as lord and master = Power imbalance = Husband as lord and master = Culture meeting religion = Confused motive = The gift of buying = Valuing life

= Bending the rule in culture = Striving to own = To have and to own = The surrendered self = Master servant relationship = Silent discontentment = Disjointed sense of self/change across situations = Expectations versus reality

= Culture versus self = Striving for balance = Active loss of control = Fighting to be heard = Lost self worth = Unreciprocated way of loving = Temporality of relationship = The grab bag self husband = Same self different experience = Making sense of the other = Marriage as cultural decision

= Caving under pressure = God's time is the best? = Marriage as foundation of childbearing = Marriage as elevating status = Marriage as status elevator = Marriage as a secure base = A renewed sense of belonging = Experiencing a comfort zone = Children as marital gains = Husband as source of peace = Emergence of a new self = Constrained self

= Questioning value in relationship = Drowning voice = Soundless noise = ripping one of one's self = constrained self

= Re-evaluating self/ sense of responsibility = Permission to serve self = Seeking peace in patience = Spirituality and peace = Consequence of ill health = Self health care as priority = Health and relating issues

= Discomfort within accommodation = Awareness of physical needs = Bending the rules-paying the price

= desire of the rightful position/place = Satisfaction in perspective = Freedom to be = Dissatisfaction and relegation

= When silence is not peace = Re-evaluating marriage = Self amid cultural connections = Certainty of stance

= Turning the hands of time = Wishful thinking = Part played in retrospect = The woman within versus the woman to be = What/who really matters = Emphasising need for recognition

KEY:

Cultural influence – red

Personal meaning of marriage – blue

Servitude in marriage – blue font

Place in marriage - green

Coping with discontentment - pink

Sense of self – yellow

Family influence – purple

Wishful thinking – brown

Voice in marriage - light blue

Limitation of freedom – grey

Taking care of self – teal

Benefits of marriage – dark yellow

Price to pay for peace – red font

Marriage over a period – yellow font

Blank Page