

Social and Spiritual Consequences of Marital Mismatch in Contemporary Society: An Exegetical Reflection on 1 Corinthians 6:14

Nwinya Steven Chijioko¹, Nwazonobi Patricia Ebere², Mgbegu

Ikechukwu Ogbu³

Department of Philosophy and Religion, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

Email: ikechukwumgbegu@gmail.com

Tel: 0806 337 4444

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ABSTRACT

Background: Marital mismatch refers to a union in which spouses hold divergent religious beliefs, moral commitments, or spiritual orientations, often generating relational, psychological, and spiritual tensions within the marital relationship. In contemporary society, particularly within Catholic and Anglican contexts, such divergences raise both social and theological concerns regarding the nature of marital unity and spiritual communion.

Methods: This study adopted an exegetical and analytical research design. The text of 1 Corinthians 6:14 was examined using historical and theological exegesis, while Value Congruence Theory and Cognitive Dissonance Theory were employed as interpretative frameworks. Relevant empirical studies on interfaith and religiously incongruent marriages were reviewed to situate the discussion within contemporary scholarship.

Results: Findings indicate that value congruence in core religious and moral beliefs fosters marital stability, effective communication, and emotional bonding, whereas value incongruence predicts recurrent conflict and dissatisfaction. Cognitive dissonance emerges when individuals experience psychological strain arising from inconsistencies between deeply held religious convictions and marital obligations. Empirical literature further shows that interfaith unions frequently encounter challenges related to identity formation, religious participation, and communal belonging. Exegetical analysis of 1 Corinthians 6:14 underscores themes of bodily sanctity and spiritual unity grounded in resurrection theology, thereby highlighting the theological depth of spiritual harmony in Christian marriage.

Conclusion: Marital mismatch has significant social and spiritual consequences, including psychological stress, diminished religious engagement, social marginalization, and theological tension concerning the meaning of spiritual unity in Christian matrimony. These findings suggest the need for deliberate pastoral guidance and practical frameworks to support couples and ecclesiastical leaders confronting religious divergence within marital contexts.

Keywords: Marital mismatch; value congruence; cognitive dissonance; interfaith

Introduction

The term marital mismatch is used to refer to a marital union where religious beliefs, moral values, or spiritual commitments are widely dissimilar between partners and such a case usually causes structural and psychological stress to a relationship (Heaton and Pratt, 1990; Mahoney, 2010). In recent decades, such a lack of fit has been growing as a result of the increasing religious pluralism, secularization, and the increasing focus on individual autonomy in the choice of partners (Pew Research Center, 2016). According to sociological data, interfaith marriages have become a large percentage of marriages in a large number of societies today, which is a part of a larger change in religious affiliation and social identity (Pew Research Center, 2016). Although individual differences in tastes and preferences does not impose a threat to the stability of marriage, the incompatibility of key existential and religious obligations brings in new levels of disputes since the core beliefs determine identity, self-view, and purpose in life (Mahoney, 2010). Catholic and Anglican traditions do not just see marriage as a social or legal contract but as a covenant of faith shared and spiritual unity (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994; Anglican Communion, 2005). The Catholic theological tradition openly indicates marriage as a sacrament that symbolizes the spiritual union between Christ and the Church with unity of faith as a priority to marriage harmony (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994). In the same manner the Anglican teaching acknowledges marriage as spiritual and covenantal union, which is supposed to foster common faith, mutual sanctification and commonness (Anglican Communion, 2005). Therefore, in situations where the partners have the most basic religious devotion, this difference will affect the spiritual ground on which marriage is based theologically. This concern is supported by empirical research that found that religious heterogamy is the least satisfied with marital relationship, more conflict, and less stable marriage than religious homogamy (Lehrer and Chiswick, 1993).

The current paper addresses them in the context of the theoretical framework of the Value Congruence Theory that suggests that relational stability, communication, and psychological well-being are promoted when there exists similarity in basic beliefs and values (Schwartz, 1992; Rokeach, 1973). Values serve as focal points of

Corresponding author's mail: ikechukwumgbegu@gmail.com | Tel: 0806 - 3374 - 444

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organization in human thinking and behaviour and they influence attitudes, decision making and interpersonal relationships (Schwartz, 1992). In couples with congruent religious and moral beliefs, they will tend to give experiences alike meaning, conflict peacefully, and be emotionally attached (Gaunt, 2006). On the other hand, value incongruence brings structural strain as couples perceive moral duty, family roles and priorities to live in different ways and thus they have high chances of not understanding each other and conflicting (Mahoney, 2010). The empirical literature has always found out that perceived value similarity relates to marital satisfaction, emotional intimacy, and relational commitment (Luo, 2009).

In the support of this structural vision, the Cognitive Dissonance Theory offers a psychological approach to explaining the inner uneasiness of the person whose relationship in life contradicts with his fundamental principles (Festinger, 1957). Cognitive dissonance is the presence of incompatible cognitions within people who experience psychological discomfort to motivate them into attempts to eliminate inconsistency (Festinger, 1957). When the spouse belongs to different religions, religious couples might have lived with unceasing psychological stress in trying to balance their spiritual devotion and closeness to the partner who does not subscribe to their faith (Mahoney, 2010). The dissonance could be in terms of a decline in religious attendance, emotional suffering or efforts to redefine beliefs in a manner that lessens psychological dissonance (Festinger, 1957). The studies found that religious heterogamy correlates with the heightened stress levels, identity discord, and diminished religious participation, especially in the localities that heavily focus on religious identity (Pew Research Center, 2020).

Value Congruence Theory combined with Cognitive Dissonance Theory gives a holistic approach to the aspects of structural and psychological implications of marital mismatch. Value congruence describes why shared beliefs help to maintain relationship stability, and cognitive dissonance describes why there is an internal psychological pressure in situations where such congruence does not exist (Schwartz, 1992; Festinger, 1957). This is especially prominent in the Catholic and Anglican traditions, when marriage has been perceived as a social construct and at the same

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time a spiritual one with theological implications (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994). This paper is a critical consideration of the social and spiritual implications of marital mismatch in these traditions, as well as an exploration of the theological implications of the teaching of Paul in 1Corinthians 6:14 to the Christian marriage spiritual oneness.

Social and Spiritual implication of Marital Mismatch.

The marital mismatch phenomenon between the Catholic and the Anglican traditions creates significant social and spiritual consequences since in both, marriage is a holy covenant built on adherence to a common faith and readiness to mutually foster one another (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994; Anglican Communion, 2005). When considering the Catholic theology marriage is not just a personal affair but a sacramental union that resembles the covenant between Christ and the Church and, therefore, requires spiritual unity between the two spouses (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994). Similarly, shedding light on the Anglican theology, Christian marriage implies joint involvement in the spiritual life, their sanctification, and their belonging together in the body of Christ (Anglican Communion, 2005). This theological belief of unity is hard to maintain when the spouses have different religious obligations, which in turn, introduces structural tension in the marriage and the societal front.

Sociological studies also back up the fact that religious heterogamy is a common cause of measurable relational strain. The studies have always indicated that couples that have different religious affiliations experience lower marital satisfaction, increased conflict, and more probability of experiencing marital instability as compared to same-faith couples (Heaton and Pratt, 1990; Lehrer and Chiswick, 1993). The rationale behind this trend is that religion conveys central features of identity, ethical consideration, and family functions, and long-term life goals, which makes religious conflict more than less fundamental than differences in less central preferences (Mahoney, 2010). In cases where the spouses are not identical with regard to their religious commitments, there might be conflicts with regard to attending worship, religious upbringing of children, making moral decisions, and family rituals, which form the basic pillars of marital cohesion (Pew Research Center, 2016).

Other than interpersonal strain, marriage mismatch may create social implications in religious groups. The social identity, belonging and moral support are usually found in religious institutions, and their defiance to the communal norms can lead to subtle or overt marginalization (Mahoney, 2010). An example is that the Catholic canon law requires a church consent on marriages between Catholics and non-catholics due to the fear of losing faith and spiritual empathy within the family (Code of Canon Law, 1983). This clause recognizes the fact that religious heterogamy poses spiritual dangers especially when it comes to the practice of religious formation of the children and the persistent practice of the faith community (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994). These do not constitute a punitive area of regulation but, nonetheless, point to the perceived significance of the religious cohesion in nourishing the marital and social stability.

The psychological consequences of marital mismatch are also very significant. According to Cognitive Dissonance Theory, people feel mentally upset when there is a conflict between their current activities or relationships and their strongly held beliefs and make attempts at restoring their internal consistency (Festinger, 1957). Religious spouses might also experience internal conflict between spiritual commitment and relational attachment in interfaith context of marriage when there is no opportunity to share religious practices (Mahoney, 2010). Empirical researchers support this assumption by stating that interfaith couples often experience stress, identity conflict and emotional strain more than same-faith couples (Pew Research Center, 2020). This distress can be in the form of decreased religious involvement, emotional depression or an ongoing state of mental disequilibrium where the individuals will struggle to settle conflicting commitments (Festinger, 1957).

These conflicts often reach their finest heights when issues pertaining to child upbringing are under discussion. Religion plays a pivotal role in passing moral values and identity between generations and differences in religious formation of children may form a long form of conflict (Mahoney, 2010). According to sociological research, children were brought up in religiously heterogeneous households have

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fewer chances to be religiously active in adulthood compared to children brought up in religiously homogenous families (Pew Research Center, 2016). This finding indicates structural incompatibility as well as lowered level of clarity in terms of religious identity, which could undermine long-term religious adherence.

Personal spiritual growth of religious spouses may also be hampered by marital mismatch. Religious practice togetherness- praying, worship, and attendance of religious ceremonies strengthens the marital and spiritual relations through strengthened identity and mission (Mahoney, 2010). In cases where these practices cannot be shared, religious spouses can become spiritually isolated and less religious (Pew Research Center, 2020). The lack of mutual religious practice is not purely the lack of a common religious practice, but this isolation also indicates the absence of mutual spiritual support which is the other personal bolster that enhances religious devotion in marriage.

However, it is critical to note that in some interfaith marriages, there are adaptive measures that help the two parties to be stable and respect each other. Studies have shown that interfaith marital satisfaction increases when the marital partners create a great communication, respect their beliefs, and develop a mutual system of morals despite the theological disparities (Mahoney, 2010). Nevertheless, these results are achieved through intentional actions and other psychological adaptation, and it does not eliminate the structural and spiritual conflicts that come with conflicting religious allegiances (Heaton and Pratt, 1990).

The consequences of marital incompatibility thus go beyond the personal relationships and into more expansive questions of identity, belonging and spiritual development. Value Congruence Theory argues that similar values give the basis of relationship stability and emotional bond, and of value incongruence, structural instability and conflict ensue (Schwartz, 1992). The Cognitive Dissonance Theory also elaborates on the inside psychological pain that come into effect when relationship commits collide with fundamental beliefs (Festinger, 1957). Combined, these theoretical frameworks cast light on how complex social, psychological, and

spiritual are the effects of marital inconsistency, especially in religious communities, where spiritual oneness is a central focus in marriage.

An Exegetical Reflection of 1 Corinthians 6:14.

The teaching in 1Corinthians 6: 12 20 by Paul is a subset of his broader moral ethics to the Corinthian community about the purity of the body, sexual ethics and the theological significance of the physical body of the believer. The community context that Corinthians thrived in was that of Greco-Roman culture where sexual permissiveness that included temple prostitution was a societal norm hence creating a conflict between Christian moral teaching and the cultures to which they existed (Keener, 2005; Thiselton, 2000). Paul resolves this conflict by basing the sexual ethics not only on moral prohibition but on theological anthropology, that is, the body of the believer is part of Christ and shares in the redemption of God (Fee, 2014).

In this context, 1Corinthians 6:14 says that the Lord was raised by God and He will also raise believers through His power. This declaration sets the resurrection to be the theological premise of the sanctity of the body. The continuity between the resurrection of Christ and the future resurrection of believers is emphasized in the argument by Paul where the body is said to have an eternal meaning and not just a temporary physical purpose (Thiselton, 2000). Fee notes that the focus on resurrection specifically goes against Greek dualistic views which undervalued the body and substituted it with the declaration that the body is a part of human being and divine redemption (Fee, 2014). This theological statement gives the moral importance of the bodily behavior higher, as the body is part of the redemptive activities that God has.

Paul goes on to develop the argument by saying that the bodies of believers are the body parts of Christ Himself, thus making believers and Christ deeply connected spiritually (1Corinthians 6:15). This is not just a figurative union but the union with Christ by the Holy Spirit that changes the spiritual identity as well as the ethical duty (Keener, 2005). According to Thiselton, the covenant nature of union whereby the activities of the body have spiritual implications is reflected in the reasoning of Paul since the identity of the believer cannot be separated to Christ (Thiselton, 2000). By

extension, sexual behavior cannot be viewed as a simple physical activity but must be viewed as something that has spiritual, theological aspects.

Paul supports this theological reasoning with references to Genesis 2: 24 and highlights that sexual intercourse creates a one-flesh bond between two people that connects them both physically and spiritually (Fee, 2014). This source shows continuity of the creation theology and redemption theology, where the bodily union has a long-term spiritual meaning. According to Garland, the fact that Paul used the Genesis text is indicative of the fact that sexual union helps to ameliorate relational and spiritual unity and thus makes sexual ethics a matter of theological significance and not a social norm (Garland, 2003). This religious model highlights the gravitas of joining body together since it is the unity of personal identity and spiritual reality.

The mention of resurrection in verse 14 is thus a theological point of reference in the moral argument that Paul is making. Through the assertion that God will raise believers in the same way He raised Christ, Paul emphasizes the fact that the body will be glorified and will consequently engage in the kingdom of God eternally (Thiselton, 2000). This future fate is an ethical necessity now, as the body needs to be handled according to its eternal tele. According to Fee, the main argument presented by Paul turns around normal Greco-Roman beliefs, wherein the body cannot be discarded, but remains always important, which requires morality and spiritual discipline (Fee, 2014).

This theological argument can be of significant consequence with regard to the interpretation of marital and relational cohesion. Since the bodies of the believers are owned by Christ and are in a spiritual communion with Him, they also give bodily connection in marriage which has spiritual meaning. According to Keener, the teaching of Paul is based on the holistic nature of human identity whereby the relationships between people and the spiritual reality cannot be divided (Keener, 2005). The view supports the theological significance of the unity of marital partners, as there is the emotional and physical union and, at the same time, the spiritual one when a person marries.

Moreover, in the larger lesson found in 1Corinthians 7, Paul touches upon the spiritual consequences of intermarriage between Christians and non-Christians and admits that this can be a reality as well as the spiritual conflict it can cause. Paul admits that spiritual power can also be at work in such marriages and at the same time understands the significance of spiritual unity in strengthening belief and sustaining relationship (Fee, 2014). This lesson is pastoral and theological in its essence and addresses complexity of marital relationships but insists on spiritual coherence.

Theologically, the resurrection available in Paul would outline the ultimate fate of the faithful ones to be engagement in the glorified life of Christ, and therefore, solidify the sacredness of bodily existence (Thiselton, 2000). This eschatological system gives the concept of bodily relationship, such as marriage, the moral worth as the body shares in the redemptive goals of God. Garland underlines that Paul has connected the current ethical behavior and future resurrection and his view of Christian morality is based on theological hope rather than on the feeling of social duty (Garland, 2003).

In this respect, 1Corinthians 6:14 adds to a greater theological perspective of unity in marriages by highlighting the spiritual values of bodily union and the value of consistency between spiritual being and relationships commitment. The doctrine of Paul confirms that the body of the believer is involved in the divine redemption, which uplifts the moral and spiritual aspects of the marital relations. This theological model assists in gaining valuable understanding of the spiritual conflict that can be created through marital relationship when the bodies are united in an outer framework of the spiritual identity and the eschatological fate.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed critically the social and spiritual implications of marital mismatch in the Catholic and Anglican settings in the theoretical perspectives of Value Congruence Theory and Cognitive Dissonance Theory, as well as through exegetical interpretation of 1Corinthians chapter 6 verses 14. The results indicate that marital affiliations, which have divergent religious commitments, are subjected to

structural, psychological and spiritual issues, which go beyond normal disagreements in relationships. According to the Value Congruence Theory, the commonness of beliefs and moral orientation offers a stable platform to marital functioning, emotional attachment, and understanding between partners, but structural instability with relational conflict is likely to occur when there is a divergence in core values (Schwartz, 1992; Gaunt, 2006). As religious beliefs form the basis of key aspects of identity, purpose and morality, religious incompatibility between spouses creates more profound sources of conflict than differences in less vital preferences (Mahoney, 2010).

Cognitive Dissonance Theory also helps shed more light on the psychological effects of marital mismatch since it describes how people develop psychological discomfort when their relationships are not in tandem with their deeply held beliefs (Festinger, 1957). Interfaith married couples can develop a sense of internal tension trying to balance spiritual obligations and relational commitment especially when religious activities and spiritual identity cannot be completely accommodated in the marriage relationship (Pew Research Center, 2020). This psychological conflict can be expressed as decreased religious interest, emotional agony, and identity conflict, which are an expression of the core role of religious faith in developing individual and social identity (Mahoney, 2010).

Sociologically, marital mismatch could as well have an impact on the social belonging and integration in the community. Religions serve as identity, moral and social bonders and transgression of common religious conformity can lead to less involvement or a kind of marginalisation (Lehrer and Chiswick, 1993). The Catholic doctrine clearly admits that mixed marriages come with spiritual and pastoral issues especially in terms of faith and religious development of children (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994). Correspondently, Anglican pastoral theology also acknowledges that a common faith enhances marital wholeness and spiritual growth as religious disenfranchisement might need a deliberate pastoral care in order to maintain relational and spiritual well-being (Anglican Communion, 2005). These

institutional views indicate that even though marriage is a personal affair, it is also spiritual and a community fact that is incorporated in the larger religious systems.

These sociological and psychological observations have theological insight with the exegetical analysis of 1Corinthians 6:14. The importance Paul gives to bodily resurrection confirms that the body of the believer is involved in the redemption of the deity hence it has permanent spiritual meaning (Fee, 2014; Thiselton, 2000). This religious doctrine glorifies the ethical and spiritual aspects of a physical relationship, such as matrimony, focusing on the unification of the physical life and the spiritual personality. The fact that Paul taught that the bodies of believers are under Christ develops a theological background to the marital union as not only physical and emotional but also spiritual unity (Keener, 2005). The given view emphasizes the spiritual conflicts which can occur in cases of marital relations between partners belonging to different religious denominations, as physical union is presented in the context of spiritual identity and of salvation destination.

Such discoveries have significant pastoral and practical implication on Christian couples and religious communities. In the case of couples, evidence highlights the significance of paying close attention to religious compatibility in getting married since common ideologies offer structural and psychological foundations to stability in the relationship (Gaunt, 2006). Nonetheless, it is also significant to note that interfaith marriages are very complicated facts that cannot be judged simplistically, but pastorally. Studies have shown that marital stability in interfaith marriage rises when a couple freely communicates, respects one another, and tries hard to find constructive ways of managing religious differences (Mahoney, 2010). Religious communities consequently have role to play in offering pastoral care which leads to spiritual wholeness as well as relational well being.

In the case of church leaders, this discovery underlines the value of pastoral care, premarital counselling, and spiritual assistance of couples who need to cope with the issues of religious divergence. Both the Catholic and Anglican traditions of pastoral care are keen on helping the believers sustain their marital relationships without

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affecting their spiritual wellness (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994; Anglican Communion, 2005). The appropriate pastoral care must thus be based on theological issues and psychological facts with the acknowledgment of complex interplay of faith, identity, and commitment to relationships.

Theologically, the teaching of Paul in 1Corinthians 6:14 eventually confirms the identity of the believer as being linked to the resurrection of Christ, and thus making it to be the spiritual coherence at the center of Christian life (Fee, 2014). This theological value supports the significance of spiritual unity in marriage, as well as offers the concept of the spiritual struggles individuals experience in the condition of the lack of spiritual unity. In the Christian theology, marriage is not just a social institution, but rather a spiritual calling that is involved in the redemptive purposes of God (Thiselton, 2000).

It is in this light that marital mismatch is not just a sociological phenomenon but a very spiritual fact that has an implication on identity, faith and belonging within a community. The combination of the psychological theory, sociological study, and biblical theology proves that religious adherence enhances marriage stability, psyche, and intergenerational religious persistence. Meanwhile, pastoral wisdom demands the acknowledgment of the lived complexity of interfaith marriages and thus the conscientious support which is both theologically sound and pastoral in nature. Finally, when the theological vision of 1Corinthians is considered, human relations, and marriage in particular, are seen to be in the greater context of the divine redemption, and hence the long-term spiritual importance of marital union.

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