



Outcomes of Parents Living with Adult Married Children in Ongata Rongai, Kajiado County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Parents have experienced negative responses from the society as parents who are over involved in their children's lives and fail to launch them. Over parenting has been linked with high levels of narcissism, ineffective coping skills that increases likelihood of anxiety and stress level among adult children. This study explored the outcomes of parents living with Adult Married Children in Ongata Rongai, Kajiado County, Kenya. The study was conducted with parents who reside in Ongata Rongai Kajiado County. The study employed a phenomenological research design. Through snowball sampling techniques, a sample size of 15 parents who are living with adult married children were selected to participate in the study. The study utilized Interview Guide in collecting data. The data collected was analyzed using thematic analysis. The results showed that the outcomes of parents living with their adult married children were financial constraints, conflict with parents, mental health complications and identity crisis. The study recommends to mental health professionals such as counselors and psychologists to sensitize the parents on the importance of promoting independence on their children rather than creating dependence to them.

Key Words: Outcomes, Parents, Adult married children, Ongata Rongai

INTRODUCTION

In United States, over parenting has been linked with high levels of narcissism, ineffective coping skills that increases likelihood of anxiety and stress level among adult children (Segrin et al., 2013). In America, adults living with their parents suffer stigma from their peers, and are perceived as lazy and spoiled children. Additionally, parents also experience negative responses from the society as parents who are over involved in their children's lives and fail to launch them (Lebowitz, 2016). Moreover, according to Segrin et al. (2013) depression and parental conflicts among those children who perceived themselves as the favored, was high and their mothers were mostly disappointed with them.

The association between co-residence with adult children and parental wellbeing has been examined in a number of earlier studies. For instance, Johar and Maruyama (2014), argued that raising adult children has a detrimental impact largely on parents' mental health. Tosi and Grundy (2018) points out that returns to the parental home may be especially stressful for parents, when they result in a disruption of the normative empty nest. Previous studies have shown that parental life satisfaction increases as adult children leave the family nest and achieve adult status. Parents value privacy and prefer for their adult children to live independently, and parents with empty nests report higher marital satisfaction (Zaber, 2018).

A study conducted by Torres et al. (2021) with Mexican population, purported that it is unknown how social economic status of adult children influence parental cognition. Landon et al. (2016) posits that living and taking care of adult children who are schizophrenic has both negative and positive effects. For a parent who has been taking care of an adult child with cancer, when faced by death of their children, they are emotionally affected and overwhelmed by feeling which those around them are not aware (Van Humbeeck et al., 2015). Smith (2022) posits that older women experience problems of unexpected needs of providing financial, residential and emotional support to adult children with mental illness, drug and substance abuse and unemployed. Women are intimidated by their adult children's aggressive behavior towards them as their mothers as they try to balance their roles as mothers and their own self-care. Their commitment to be "good mothers" results in them experience of shame, self-blame and guilt which is a hindrance to them seeking for help.

Grundy and Murphy (2017) conducted a study in 34 countries in Europe about wellness of parents co-residence with adult children. The survey found out that widows living with children were more happier compared to those who lived alone. Additionally, living with a daughter made them more happier than living with a son. Hanum and Firdausi (2020) carried out a study on relationship between perceived closeness and mental well-being among the elderly people in Indonesia reported negative correlation. Relationships with family members are important to lifelong happiness (Thomas, Liu, & Umberson, 2017). Family relationships play a critical role for well-being as the need for family care increases and social networks decreases (Thomas, Liu, & Umberson, 2017). This could be a factor that leads to this phenomenon of parents living with adult married children. According to Marco and Grundy (2018) living with adult children can be a source of emotional and instrumental support for older parents, but it can also be a source of conflict

and stress. Some of the findings indicate that living with adult children could have a positive impact while others found that older parents had worse physical health.

Caputo (2019) posits that living with adult children has negative effects on the mental health of parents that is caused by reduced quality of marital relationships that eventually creates parent-child conflicts. In the case where the return of the adult child is driven by the child's need over parental choice it can be depressing to parents. Explanations for this pattern of relationship include that living with adult children can drain parents' financial assets. According to Polenick et al. (2018) parents maintain strong ties with their children and continue to provide emotional and financial assistance throughout their life and this may be a contributing factor to marital strain as the couple may not agree on how often the adult children should receive support. As parents get older, they are faced with physical and psychological challenges which are related to ageing which may increase their need for support compromising their ability to continue supporting their children. Nomaguchi and Milkie (2020) stated that young people now take longer than in the past to reach economic independence due to the changing nature of the labor market, which now more often than not necessitates college degrees in order to obtain quality employment. The lengthened period of active parenting brought on by these economic shifts can be difficult for parents in their middle years and for those who are getting older.

In Uganda for some reason children have been returning home even after ten years of graduation, marriage and with grandchildren. Their returning home has caused parents to experience depression episodes (Agaba, 2022). On the other hand, Kendall and Anglewicz (2018) stated that in Malawi women living with their off-springs have better mental and physical health compared to women living with only their grandchildren. A study by Nzau (2023) in Nairobi argued that living too long with your parents can hinder the psychological process of individuation. In addition, it could be a symptom of dependence which could be unhealthy and can lead stress to parents. It is evident that parents and adult married children living together have its own pros and cons. This kind of situation affects parents' mental health, financial and economic situation as well as their network of relationships. This study explored outcomes of parents living with adult married children in Ongata Rongai, Kajiado County, Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

Research design is the procedure of collecting, analyzing, interpreting and reporting in research studies (Dawadi, Shrestha, & Giri, 2020). The study adopted phenomenological research design. The study targeted mothers living with adult married children who were members of Church at Citam Rongai, Kajiado County which has a congregation of about 30 members. Ongata Rongai is cosmopolitan and therefore the population is comprised of different tribes of Kenya. This was advantageous to the researcher to gather a wide range of parental upbringing styles and cultural beliefs to understand about adult married children living with parents. Through snow balling sampling technique 10 parents who were living with adult married children were identified to participate in the study.

The study employed Interview Guide to collect data from the parent participants. The Interview Guide had two sections. The first section collected data on the demographic details of gender, age range, profession and number of children. The second section collected data on outcomes of parents living with adult married children. Before collecting data, an authorization was sought from Tangaza University and the leadership of Citam Church in Ongata Rongai. The participants filled the consent form before participating in the interviews. The interviews took approximately 1 hour for each participant. The participants were thanked for accepting to participate in the study and assured that their data was only to be used for the purpose of the study. The data collected through interviews was recorded and transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study was set to explore the outcomes of parents live with their adult married children in Ongata Rongai. The study began by presenting the demographic information of the participants. The study presents the results of the study based on the themes that emerged from the objective of the study. The results were supported with verbatim from the participants. Furthermore, the findings are discussed in relation to the literature.

Demographic information of the Participants

Table 1: Demographic Details of the Participants

Respondents	Gender	Age Range	Profession	Number of Children
Pr/001/2023	Female	61-70	Community Nurse	2
Pr/002/2023	Female	61-70	Clinical Psychologist	5
Pr/003/2023	Male	51-60	Accountant	3
Pr/004/2023	Female	61-70	Personal Assistant (Pa)	5
Pr/005/2023	Male	81-90	Civil Servant	6
Pr/006/2023	Male	71-80	Project Manager	3
Pr/007/2023	Male	71-80	Human Resource	5

Pr/008/2023	Female	51-60	Lecturer	4
Pr/009/2023	Male	61-70	Lecturer	4
Pr/0010/2023	Female	61-70	Teacher	3

The results in table 1 shows that gender was equally represented in the study. Most of the participants were between ages 61 to 70. The participants were coming from various professions. The highest participant had six children while the lowest had two children.

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From the data four themes emerged as outcomes of parents living with their adult married children. They were financial constraints, conflict with parents, mental health complications and identity crisis.

Financial Constraints

Majority of the respondents reported that the adult married children were entirely depending on their parents while their parents were straining financially and had a lot of needs and bills to pay. Most of the parents argued that the budget of the house was straining and they were struggling with scarce resources when others argued that their pension was not enough to sustain them as one of the parent said,

At that time I can say it was quite difficult and it really burdened me because you see you're running two homes and also my grandson was there, he needed pampers, he needed food and of course now you're doing a diet that is not for everyone because this is a small child. There was a cost constraint because you have to make sure that there's food for the little child, there's food for us so definitely you're not doing the same thing the way you'd love to do it on your own so there was a bit of financial strain (Pr/001/2023).

Because of these constraints parent's felt burdened and were straining to provide. Additionally, their sons became too demanding and, in a situation, where, they had money, they used that money to boast around as one parent said,

But you see also when they feel like you can manage, they only want to overstay, to stay, so that they save money. Not actually for their own benefit, but saving so that maybe if they get friends, they can have money to boast around. Because they know their mother, their parent is able to maintain them, they will eat, they will drink and they have a free house (Pr/004/2023).

Adult married children entirely depended on their parents. These parents were straining financially with a lot of needs and bills to pay. The finding affirms Kimega (2022) who noted that in Kenya there are concerns over how long young adults should remain in their parents' homes. Adult married children settle down in their parent's home with their own families and the pension of the elderly parents is what the entire family depends on. The present study found that most of the parents were struggling with scarce resources. For those who were depending on their pension, it was not enough to sustain them and their adult married children's families. As parents get old, they are faced with a number of challenges. These challenges lead to an increased need for support. In addition, the findings were consistent with findings of Polenick et al. (2018) who found that as parents get older, they are faced with physical and psychological challenges which are related to ageing which may increase their need for support compromising their ability to continue supporting their children.

Conflicts with Parents

As parents are growing old, they are changing. They at times need silence and peace. But their married adult children play loud music that interferes with their silence and peace. This makes the parents dissatisfied and they tend to criticize the lifestyle of their children which brings a conflict and in turn affects their relationship. This conflict brings friction between them and their children leading to the breakdown of family communication. Additionally, these conflicts bring forth disagreements in the house that reduces freedom of expression in the house as one parent said,

When parents are bringing up children depending on the type of parenting they have for example, it could be that parenting of overprotection and that overprotection usually mostly affects the mothers they are the ones who overprotect children so much, that is through reading and my own experience they are the ones who have the greater tendency of overprotecting the children. When they grow like that and then this couple remains there that over protectiveness may continue with the mother especially and that one can interfere with the communication between the mother and the son and the daughter-in-law. The mother sometimes can actually put a barrier which even the wife may find it hard to break to really communicate effectively with the husband (Pr/009/2023).

Moreover, conflicts affect the sharing of family resources such as a vehicle and the marriages of their children can lead to separation as one of the parents said,

About sharing our vehicle, we talked over with my wife and agreed since we are the ones who allow him to use the vehicle if it breaks down, we do not want to put a strain on him to repair it. Normally when there is a strained relationship, eventually what the most common outcome of that is separation of them going, packing and going (Pr/009/2023).

Often parents feel the need of being alone and they feel they have no private time to plan for themselves. This affects their social life. This makes the parents to result using domineering and narcissistic personality to gain control of their houses which has been invaded by the adult married children.

Their adult married children start perceiving their parents as a hindrance when they bring home their friends whom the parents do not approve of as one of the parents said, *"Your social life is somehow affected. Sometimes, friends that come in the house are not the friends that you like. So that would be, you know, it brings disagreement and conflicts"*(Pr/006/2023).

The present study findings showed that parent-adult married children relationships may result to conflict. The conflict affects the freedom of the couple making them uncomfortable. The findings were in agreement with findings of Zaber (2018) who found that parents who values privacy and encourage their to be independent reports higher marital satisfaction.

Mental Health Complications

Most of the participants stated that parents were struggling with mental health issues as one participant said:*"It can affect parents mentally if the children are not obeying or are not doing what the parents expect them to do. You know, they start thinking differently and then you start having pressure and that's how it affects you mentally"* (Pr/005/2023).

Most of the participants expressed their concern that many parents put too much pressure onto themselves, spending sleepless nights and are stressed because of their adult married children who are abusing drugs, alcohol and bang and have become violent. These children become a burden to their parents who are constantly worried, some freak out, feel anxious, tired and frustrated as one respondent said,

I felt frustrated, at times I felt really down and I felt like I'm not matching up to what they would need because sometimes my daughter-in-law would say, "Why don't we make this kind of food?" And yet I had planned to make this kind of a meal so that really affected my mental health because I felt I had to do what she wanted me to do (Pr/001/2023).

The fatigue, the worry, the strain and the tiredness from the parents manifests themselves into a physical ailment. Majority of the parents reported to have an issue with their personal health sighting the need of medication as one respondent said,

Personally I would like to say that it affected my personal mental health because I found it very tedious having to live with another family yet I had my own family, I had my other son so it was like I was taking two families into consideration, my own family and my son's family and that really tore me up. I felt frustrated, at times I felt really down and I felt like I'm not matching up to what they would need because sometimes my daughter-in-law would say why don't we make this kind of a food and yet I had planned to make this kind of a meal so that really affected my mental health because I felt I had to do what she wanted me to do (Pr/001/2023).

Majority of the parents were upset and also their children. This created constant worry, anxiety and depression which acted as a catalyst to mental illnesses as one respondent said,

So, it becomes more of a marriage that has got porous boundaries. It becomes an issue of who takes the lead. It becomes an issue of sometimes not being assertive because you do not want to hurt the other person or seem to infringe on the other person. So, you just hold on to whatever happens. Again, that could be a catalyst for mental illness (Kr/004/2023).

The present study found that most parents were struggling with mental health issues. Constant worry, anxiety and depression acts as a catalyst to mental illness. These findings concurred with Agaba's (2022) study findings. Returning home for adult married children has caused parents to experience depression episodes. Additionally, the present study finding agreed with Johar and Maruyama (2014) who argued that raising adult children has a detrimental impact largely on parents' mental health. Tosi and Grundy (2018) points out that returns to the parental home may be especially stressful for parents, when they result in a disruption of the normative empty nest.

Identity Crisis

Majority of the parents continue to live with their adult married children and constantly refer to them as children. This prevents them from growing and becoming independent, hence they become irresponsible. The young couple does not grow and mature as one key respondent said,

You'll find many have become irresponsible because they are used to things being done for them. So, you find now this is a person who doesn't take up any responsibility, any role in society, even in their marriage. You find that this is somebody who is still dependent on their parents because they've never learned how to take things by themselves, how to be proactive (Kr/004/2023).

These children ride on the parent's identity and they are not able to develop their own identity as one respondent said,

So, they continue depending on the parents and so, cannot grow or develop and are unable to build their own identity but hold on to the identity of the parents. You know even Biblically we are told the man will leave the parents, the lady the same and the two will join and become one. But when they live under the watch of the parents, they tend to grow with the identity of the parents and not their own identity (Kr/003/2023).

The study found that Majority of the parents who continue to live with their adult married children constantly refer to them as children. This has been found to prevent them from growing and becoming independent, hence they become irresponsible. This finding affirms Mahasneh et al. (2013) who pointed how parents raise their children has an impact on the child's personality, ability to communicate with others, and ability to form deep relationships with other people.

CONCLUSION

The outcome of parents living with adult married children has negative effects to parents and their children. It leads to financial constraints in terms of paying bills and meeting the needs of their children. Parents living with adult married children interfere with their need for silence and peace. This makes the parents dissatisfied and they tend to criticize the lifestyle of their children which brings a conflict and in turn affects their relationship. This conflict brings friction between them and their children leading to the breakdown of family communication. Additionally, these conflicts bring forth disagreements in the house that reduces freedom of expression in the house. The conflicts between parents and their adult married children lead to mental complications. As a result of conflicts, the parents experience sleepless nights, anxiety and frustrations because of their children who seem not live a responsible life. Majority of the parents continue to live with their adult married children and constantly refer to them as children. This prevents them from growing and becoming independent, hence they become irresponsible. The young couple does not grow and mature. The study recommends to mental health professionals such as counselors and psychologists to sensitize the parents on the importance of promoting independence to their children instead of creating dependence on them.

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