

## Marital Satisfaction among Widows and Widowers

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**Abstract** - *This study explores the marital satisfaction among widows and widowers, and the implications of these to their desire of remarrying. Analyses are based on the triangulation method such as two sets of quantitative methods and a qualitative method. Due to respondents' availability thirty (30) respondents used in this study. Widowed men and women has the same level of marital satisfaction however widowers has to have the possibility to remarry than widows who have shown to be more focused with their responsibilities with their children. This study also had shown Age and the Period of being widowed as a great factor why widows and widowers do not consider remarriage. The study also revealed that most widows viewed remarriage and re-partnering as a responsibility. And also the common transitions happened after widowhood. The study had shown not only the financial changes but also the emotional changes had been experienced by most widows and widowers.*

**Key Words:** *Widows, widowers, marital satisfaction, marriage*

### INTRODUCTION

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it." (Book of Genesis 1:27-28). Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. (Book of Genesis 2:24). From the beginning of time, as recorded in the Book of Genesis, God planned for man and woman to unite in love and harmony for continuity of his creation, the human race.

Marriage is defined as the emotional and legal commitment of two people to share emotional and physical intimacy, various tasks, and economic resources (De Frain & Olson, 2003). It is a favorable circumstance to expand an intimate and sharing relationship and is considered as a legitimate end point of adult development. Marriage is also defined

as a formal and durable sexual union of one or two or many more men to one or two or many more women, which is conducted within a set of designated rights and duties (Aquino-Malabanan & Lopez, 2008).

Marriage makes people more motivated to expand the self not only to become more able themselves but also because self-expansion is exhilarating (Smith et al., 2003). Marriage and other committed relationships, like engagement, are important sources of social support for both sexes (Lahey, 2004). For both women and men, married people are far healthier than people who are not in a committed relationship (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, Cited in Lahey, 2004).

This is because engaged and married couples can have social support from each other to safe guard them from the effects of stress. And also, they tend to take care of each other medically, emotionally, spiritually and even in mental aspects. Married couples are much more likely than single people to say that they are happy, whether it is about love, sex, personal growth, or even job satisfaction (Thio, 2005).

Marital satisfaction is a special case of relationship satisfaction, and is the degree to which partners in marriages assess their approval of different aspects of their marital relations which includes all aspects of the relationship between people who are married, including the sexual relationship. So issues around broader male female relations and marital conflict and marital satisfaction are also covered. However, even as marriage is being packaged as a boon to health, there is a new caveat. While people in good, stable partnerships do, on average, have less disease and later death, mounting evidence suggests that those in strained and unhappy relationships tend to fare worse medically. Women seem to bear the brunt of marriage's negative health consequences. In some ways, the physical perils of bad pairings should be obvious, with domestic violence just the most radical illustration of how romance can lead to bodily havoc.

Unfortunately, marriage can also be a cause of isolation. And, not surprisingly, the tensions and arguments of marriage can often lead to depression,

with many studies finding increases in depressive symptoms among those who have reported marital dispute compared with those who have not reported such discord.

Marriages can end in only two ways: divorce and widowhood. While divorce has become much more frequent in the society in the past several decades, widowhood is still the most likely way for marriages to end among older persons, and the most common marital status among the very old (“Widowhood...”).

Not surprisingly, widowed persons have been found to score lower on measures of psychological well-being—and higher on measures of depression, loneliness, and anxiety— than married persons. However, many of these studies have found the adverse effects of widowhood on psychological well-being to be relatively small. This contradicts the common assumption that widowhood tends to be quite devastating psychologically. According to some researches, four years after a spouse’s death, widowed men and women who enjoyed good marriages are less likely to experience depression than those whose marriages were bad.

If a spouse has been deceased for a period of time, a widowed may think about the possibility of once again sharing his life with another. One of the common topic of conversation with every widow and widower of all ages is the possibility of remarriage.

Remarriage is one of the most important determinants of physical and economic well-being among the widowed. The goal of this study is to estimate how hazard rates for remarriage vary among widows and widowers on the basis of both observable and unobservable characteristics. Continuous-time hazard rate regressions indicate strong age and duration dependence effects for middle-aged widows and widowers and for older widowers. Among middle-aged widows, those with dependent children in the home have lower rates of remarriage. For middle-aged widowers, living in urbanized areas limits the prospects of remarriage. For older widowers, education and, to some extent, economic status appears to have positive effects on the remarriage rates. Overall, age and time since widowhood have the strongest and most consistent effects on remarriage rates for different widowed groups.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study was made primarily to (a) to measure the marital satisfaction of the respondent. It aims (b) to determine the respondents’ perceptions of marriage. It was also made (c) to determine the impact of

marriage among widows and widowers. This also aimed (d) to discover transitions happened after widowhood. And last this was intended (e) to determine the factors affecting remarriage among widows and widowers.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study entitled —Marital Satisfaction among Widows and Widowers is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in determining the marital satisfaction of the respondents and their desire of remarriage; two sets of questionnaires, and an interview guide, were needed to come up with the research topic.

### **Participants**

The researcher targeted eighty widowed men and women to come up with the study. Unfortunately, considering the availability of the respondents, only thirty respondents were used. The imbalanced distribution of sex explained that there is gender gap mortality among men and women. And most women are risk in widowhood compared to men.

The researcher used greater number of widows comprising 76.7 percent. Conversely, only 23.3 percent of the respondents were widowers. Studies had shown that women lives longer than men. Widowhood increases with later life in both men and women. In accordance with the respondents’ age, most of the respondents were in their midlife. Pertaining to the number of years they had been widowed, most of the respondents were at their seventh years of widowhood. And in accordance with the age they had been widowed, most of them were 31-50 when they lost their spouse.

### **Instruments**

This study used two quantitative and a qualitative method to come up with the objectives of the study. The researcher used two questionnaires to measure respondent’s marital satisfaction level and an interview to measure respondent’s desire of remarriage.

**Questionnaire 1:** A standardized questionnaire consists of 25 multiple items where the informant is asked to select 1) None of the time; 2) A little of the time; 3) Some of the time; 4) Most of the time; 5) All of the time by placing a check in the corresponding choices. This questionnaire is designed to measure the

degree of satisfaction that the informant has. There is no right or wrong answers.

**Questionnaire 2:** The test questionnaire will be given to the informant where it measures the level of satisfaction that he/she has. There were 12 statements regarding spousal relationships wherein the informant is asked to rank the most appropriate number 1,2,3= Not pleased, 4,5,6,7= Somewhat pleased, 8,9,10= Very pleased.

The interview is composed of six questions supported by follow up questions that will be answered by the participants.

### Procedure

To come up with the objectives of the study, three methods were selected. Each method was tested with different informants.

The mentioned methods and instruments were gathered with the selected widowed participants both males and females. The questionnaire is drawn together by 30 participants, the interview with 15 widowed men and women.

Provided with the pen, the researcher administers two sets of questionnaires to the respondents where they are tasked to respond to the direction given in the questionnaires. The respondents were able to give some insights about his/ her spouse from every question in the questionnaire. Widowed women had given more emotional response compared to men. Subsequently, the respondents will be requested to answer the questions provided by the researcher for the interview. The researcher used voice recorder for the interview session. And after collecting data from 15 respondents, the data will be ready for the transcription.

### Data Analysis

The data is evaluated through strict qualitative analysis of each method. Each method is examined carefully through evaluating each response. The response will serve as basis for conferring the qualitative relationship between each method and consequently the result of the entire study.

The data gathered by interview will be evaluated through examining the response of the informants, extracting the relationships and differences of their responses to the interview, and convert into comprehensive form.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

There was the imbalanced distribution of sex of the respondents in this study. The study affirms that the greater number of widowed were female which

comprises 76.7 percent. Conversely only 23.3 percent of the respondents were male. Studies had shown that women lives longer than men. As of 1997, life expectancies at birth were 73.6 years for men and 79.4 years for women. At age 65, men could expect another 15.9 years of life on the average, while women lived an average of 19.2 more years (Anderson, 1999).

Gorman and Read (2006) stated that the leading explanations for women's advantaged mortality profile can be classified broadly into three categories: biological, social structural, and behavioral. From a biological perspective, it appears that women are offered some protection against mortality. Studies suggest that estrogen helps protect women against heart disease by reducing circulatory levels of harmful cholesterol, whereas testosterone increases low-density lipoprotein. Further, women have stronger immune systems, in part because testosterone causes immune suppression. However, biology alone cannot explain gender difference in mortality, especially since this relationship differs substantially over time and across nations.

The social and economic status of women relative to men has been rising in industrialized nations for some time, and women's health has benefited from these improvements. This also has important implications for the gender gap in mortality because as women's status continues to rise, the mortality gap may start widening again. Substantial evidence documents the health risks associated with aspects of socioeconomic position, including low education and poverty. Yet, despite improvements over time, the socioeconomic status of women remains below that of men. Women in U.S. society are more likely than men to work part-time, participate in unwaged labor, and receive unequal wages, all of which contribute to their lower socioeconomic position and depress their health.

**Table 1. Marital Satisfaction Level**

	Questionnaire 1	Questionnaire 2
<b>Widows</b>	Most of the Time	Very Pleased
<b>Widowers</b>	Some of the Time	Very Pleased
<b>Total</b>	Some of the Time	Very Pleased

Table 1 shows the marital satisfaction level of widowed men and women. The researcher used two sets of questionnaires so as to measure the level of marital satisfaction of the respondents. Through statistical analysis the researcher were able to determine the level of marital satisfaction of both widowed men and women. On the first set of questionnaire, widows got an average level of

marital satisfaction were in contrast, in the second set of questionnaire, widow respondents got a high level of satisfaction.

Apparently, widowers also got the same level as widows. Widowed men got an average level of marital satisfaction on the first set of questionnaire and high level of satisfaction on the second set. However, women have shown to be more emotional compared to men.

**Table 2. Common Perceptions of Widow(er)s toward Marriage**

Theme	Category
Gender role	Education
	Housework
Emotional aspect	Love
	Acquaintances
	Companionship
	Disclosure
Decision Making	Contemplate
Principles in selecting partner	Gender role
	Emotional aspects

As shown in Table 2 was the common perceptions of widows and widowers toward marriage. Most widowed men and women prefer most is that before entering marriage both should finished first education so that both could have better opportunities and to have a better future. For the emotional aspect, some said in entering marriage, both partners should share things in common such as love, acquaintances and for some; age doesn't matter for it was more about love and the agreements between the partners. It should come out with a thorough decision making.

**Table 3. Common Reasons Why a Widow(er) not Remarry**

Theme	Category
Age	Too old
	Period of time widowed (Era)
Contentment	Happiness
	Lack of desire
	Financial security
Responsibilities	Too much obligations
	Too much tasks
	Children-focused
	Work-centered

Table 3 affirms the common reasons of most widows and widowers on not to consider remarriage. Most widowed women prefer not to remarry due to their age. Most of them assumed that it was too old for them to be in a marriage again.

Considering the years they had been widowed, if a widowed men or women had been widowed for so long, the least of probabilities of remarrying she has. Compared to widowers, most widows have lack of desire since they were already pleased in terms of the happiness given by the other members of the family especially their children. These include the support they acquire from them, Emotional and financial support in particular. This study also found out that most widowed women do not consider remarriage because they don't want too much responsibility. Besides sustaining and upholding the needs of their children or other family members, they consider having a partner/ spouse again is a responsibility. Most of them focused with their responsibility with their children. Through this result, the desire of remarrying among widowed men and women was barred by these themes and categories.

Widowers may be more likely than widows to desire remarriage because marriage provides men with instrumental and health-enhancing support (Cancian & Oliker, 2000). The desire for remarriage may be most acute among men who were most dependent on their late spouse, and who feel most compelled to fill the void left by their wife's death. For older women, conversely, dating may be preferable to remarriage.

They welcome lovers but value the freedom to pursue individual interests without the constraints of marriage (Hamilton, n.d.).

Older widow's attitudes toward involvement with men are a complex subject. Variables include how long they have been widowed, how active they are, and the level of their social and emotional supports, remaining family relationships and personal preferences ([rfriedman.info/index.php](http://rfriedman.info/index.php)).

Friedman presented four choices that older widows can make about involvement with men such as marriage, long-term commitment, dating and having little or no interest in such involvement. He enumerated the incentives of a widow for engaging with men such the need for intimacy or closeness, desire for sex, a wish to return to the dating scene, the potential of a long-term relationship, financial security. Correspondingly, the negative pulls could be the fear of rejection, previous unfavorable relationships with men, and wariness about AIDS or STD'S, guilt about a perceived betrayal of the deceased spouse ([rfriedman.info/index.php](http://rfriedman.info/index.php)).

Older widowed persons' preferences for re-partnering, the way these preferences change as time passes after the loss of a spouse, and the ramifications of these preferences for psychological well-being. Men and women who enjoyed high

levels of social support from friends did not differ substantially in their re-partnering preferences.

**Table 4. Common Marital Transitions after Widowhood**

Theme	Category
Emotional aspects	Aloneness
	Emotional help
	Attachment
Financial Issues	Financial support
	Financial security
Gender Role	Responsibilities

Table 4 revealed the common marital transitions take place after widowhood. It has resulted that the most changes happened after widowhood was the emotional aspects of an individual. Most widowed men and women afflicted by losing not only the emotional help from their deceased spouse but also the financial support they acquire from them and also the responsibilities that they had shared before. All of these were a great marital transitions happened after widowhood.

Findings underscore the resilience of older women and their capacity to re-establish connections, but point to the need for services that strengthen social support among women who have difficulty during this transition. (PsycINFO Database Record I 2010 APA, all rights reserved).

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Dating has been described by older women as having someone to go out with "rather than someone to come home to" (Davidson, 2002, p. 51).

## CONCLUSIONS

The research found out that the demographic profile of the respondent does not correlate with the level of marital satisfaction he had. Most widowed men and women prefer to finish study before entering marriage. Most widowed women do not desire for remarriage because they do not want another responsibilities anymore. They thought re-partnering is also a responsibility which most of them don't want

to experience again. There were lots of transitions happened after widowhood in the emotional aspect for instance, also in financial issues and their gender role. The demographic profile of a widowed men and women is pertinent to his desire of remarrying. Age and period of time widowed as the number one factor why widows do not consider remarriage. The study confirms that women are more risk toward widowhood than men.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher suggested on revising the questions of the interview to sort for a more precise answer form the respondents. For the further researchers, it is suggested that they may also gather data from those widow(er) who considered remarriage so as to explain profoundly the reasons why some widowed men and women consider remarriage. For those widowed who want to consider remarriage, if you have children, it should be better to discuss with your children about it.

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