

## ATTACHMENT TO MOTHER AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS AS CORRELATES OF MARITAL SATISFACTION

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### ABSTRACT

*The objective of this study was to assess whether attachment to mother and psychological symptoms are correlates of marital satisfaction and to determine if there will be an interaction between different levels of attachment to mother and psychological symptoms in determining the level of marital satisfaction. 294 participants were drawn from the population frame of Staff of University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus. They comprise of 131 married men and 164 married women. The age range of the participants were between 23years and 63years. The mean and the standard deviation of their age were 44.5 and 8.77 respectively. Multi stage sampling technique was adopted to select the sample units and participants. The instruments used to collect data are Attachment to Mother Scale (AMS-26), sub scale of Symptom Distress Checklist (SCL-90) and Index of Marital Satisfaction (IMS). The study adopted a combination of correlation design and cross-sectional survey design. The data were analysed using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ), and Moderated Multiple regression. The result showed that attachment to mother and psychological symptoms correlated significantly with marital satisfaction, while correlation coefficient between hostility and marital satisfaction among the studied sample was not significant. Also, the interaction between anxiety and anxiety attachment; neuroticism and anxiety attachment were significantly positive. While anxiety and close attachment; neuroticism and close attachment; neuroticism and depend attachment; depression and anxiety attachment; depression and close attachment were significantly negative. Some of the findings were concordance with existing research and have implication for therapists in understanding the role of attachment to mother and psychological symptoms in marital harmony. The main limitations of the study were highlighted and suggestions were given for further studies. The study concluded that different levels of attachment to mother and psychological symptoms interact to influence marital satisfaction.*

**Key Words:** Attachment, Psychological Symptoms, Marriage, Satisfaction, Mother

### BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Psychology generally is a science that is interested in human behaviours and cognitive process, (Farnsworth, 2022; Pinel, 2010; Willey, 2022). Psychologists believe that human behaviours and mental processes are determined by the forces of nature and nurture (Bye, 2022; Farnsworth, 2022). By implication human behaviour can be better understood from a multi-dimensional perceptive thus no single factor can completely explain all human behaviours. Another interesting fact in psychology is that different behaviours can co-exist with other factors. Social psychology specifically are interested in dynamic issues that influence social milieu of human existent (Aronson, 2008; Forsyth, 2006). As noted earlier these factors are complex and multifaceted and no single research can exhaust all the possible social psychological factors that influence or interact or correlate with other factors.

Therefore, present research will limit itself to some pertinent constructs/variables such as marital satisfaction, attachment to mother and psychological symptoms which have the potential of destabilizing the individual normal psycho social functions. The issue of marital satisfaction in Nigeria context is very important. Firstly, more than 70% of Nigerian population are in marital union or are ready to enter marital union (World Fact Book, 2016). Secondary, there is geometrical increase in the rate of separation, divorce and marital conflict where by both the couples involve and their children are victims (Izunwa, 2015). Thirdly, infidelity is observed to be on increase among married partners (Adeniran, 2015). Finally, the society at large is feeling the indirect impact of the chaos in the families: as case of incest, rape, drug abuse, school drop outs, single parenting and general break down of the cultural norms and values are in increase (Arugu, 2014; Oyafunke,

et al., 2014). One of the reasons given for these misnormal in marital union could be the level of marital satisfaction (Amadi & Amadi, 2014)

Satisfaction is the general feeling of well-being where an individual's emotionality is relatively stable. When a person is satisfied it tends to extend to numerous activities like work, family, social situations or even in marriage. Lack of satisfaction in one's sphere of life may have a link with other areas of life or even jeopardize the functioning of general well-being. Observation may show that general feeling of health is an indication that one may be psychologically free of symptoms that may function as a catalyst to dissatisfaction in marriage. Absence of dissatisfaction may lead to satisfaction in marriage. Thus, marital satisfaction is a mental state that reflects the perceived benefits and costs of marriage to a particular person. The greater the perceived benefits are, the more satisfied one is with the marriage and with the marriage partner (Wilson, & Joshua, 2021). Unhappy marriage is a significant source of stress, more negative emotion, mental illness such as anxiety, mood and substance use disorder (Fishman, 2017). Having highlighted some of the possible impact of marital satisfaction, it is pertinent to explore more variables which may possibly correlate or co-exist with marital satisfaction. This may give more insight on the phenomenon to look for whenever level of marital satisfaction is suspected to be interfering with a given marital union. The first such variable within the scope of the present research is attachment to mother.

A psychological perspective may conceive attachment as a model that attempt to describe the dynamic of long-term and short-term interpersonal relationships between humans (Waters, et al., 2005). Attachment is not just a connection between two people; it is a bond that involves a desire for regular contact with that person and the experience of distress during separation from that person. The central theme of attachment theory by Anisworth and Bowlby (1991) centers on the fact that caregivers who are available and responsive to their infants establish a sense of security and which in turn create a sense of dependability and secure base for exploring the larger society. The micro system (family e.g., surrogate homes) create an enabling environment for socialization that helps in forming different forms of attachment which in turn helps in molding human traits and behaviour throughout life span (Dunst, et al., 2006; Tronick, & Beeghly, 2011). In Africa, culture is accorded high values and one of the most important institutions is the family. Families can only be incorporated through marriage rites. These marriage rites involve the entire community from both the bride and the groom family. Similarly the entire extended families are also regarded as part of marriage (the concepts of in-laws). It is expected that experiences in marriage be shared among the in-laws to maintain harmony. However, high level of attachment or allegiance to one's family may sometimes be perceived as external interference which may make or mare the marriage.

Attachment to mother specifically is described in this research as actions, feelings and the way of thinking by individuals that depicts or show being unable to cope with marital issues without relying or seeking mothers consent. This may finally leads to interference of mother in-laws because the parties involve directly or indirectly solicited such interferences. In other words high dependency or involving of one's mother in one's marital union issues is regarded as attachment to mother. The present research, therefore examine if the level of attachment to mother (Anxiety Attachment, Close Attachment and Depend Attachment) reported by married individual will correlate with self reported marital satisfaction. Psychologically, attachment is linked to dependency, a disorder which is considered as a psychological disorder (Heller, et al., 2006; Pearce, 2010). However, some psychological symptoms e.g., depression, anxiety, hostility and neuroticism will be correlated with scores in attachment to mother.

Another important factor considered in this study is psychological symptoms. Generally, psychologists conceived psychological symptoms (e.g., depression, anxiety, hostility and neuroticism) as a continuum which includes low, borderline, and high and are interpreted differently in different individuals with different traits (APA, 2015; Wygant, & Sellbom, 2012).

Studies have shown that psychological symptoms can be found among normal population (Blazer, et al., 1998; Breslau, et al., 2005). It has also empirically observed that the level of different psychological symptoms come with some behavioural consequences which (such as aggression, fighting) constitute threat to both the individual and the society at large (Robertson, et al., 2014). One of the greatest predicaments of psychological symptoms in an individual is being unable to function normally and consistently in the daily routine. Marriage is an institution that requires normal mental functioning to maintain harmony and stability. Therefore it requires equilibrium in the level of psychological symptoms of the individual involved.

Thus, the present study will equally examine the relationship between psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Depression, Hostility, and Neuroticism) and self reported marital satisfaction. Similarly, the study will examine the interaction between the different types of attachment to mother and psychological symptoms on marital satisfaction. It was assumed that the different types and levels of attachment to mother may be an indirect pointer to an underline psychological symptoms; therefore they may interact to further influence marital satisfaction.

Thus, the study will answer these pertinent questions:

- What is the nature (positive or negative) and the extent of correlation between the different sub types of attachment to mother (Anxiety Attachment, Close Attachment and Depend Attachment) and marital satisfaction.
- What is the nature (positive or negative) and the extent of correlation between the different sub types of psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Depression, Hostility, and Neuroticism) and marital satisfaction.
- What is the nature (positive or negative) and the extent of interaction of attachment to mother (Anxiety Attachment, Close Attachment and Depend Attachment) and psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Depression, Hostility, and Neuroticism) on marital satisfaction.

## THEORETICAL REVIEW

### **The Dynamic Goal Theory of Marital Satisfaction (Li & Fung, 2011)**

The Dynamic Goal Theory of Marital Satisfaction explores how the pursuit and achievement of various marital goals influence couples' satisfaction within their relationships. The theory categorizes marital goals into three main types: Personal Growth Goals: These focuses on self-improvement and development, where spouses support each other in achieving individual aspirations. Successful realization of these goals fosters a sense of accomplishment and enhances personal well-being. Companionship Goals: These emphasize the emotional connection and bonding between partners. Achieving companionship goals contributes to intimacy and mutual support, which are crucial for relationship satisfaction and Instrumental Goals: These relate to practical aspects of the marriage, such as shared responsibilities and division of labor. Effective management of these goals is essential for maintaining harmony and reducing conflict within the relationship. The key aspects of the theory are Goal Prioritization: The importance of each type of goal may shift over time and across different stages of the relationship, impacting overall marital satisfaction. Couples may prioritize different goals based on their life circumstances and relationship dynamics. Impact on Satisfaction: The theory posits that the fulfillment of these marital goals is directly linked to relationship satisfaction. When couples successfully achieve their personal growth, companionship, and instrumental goals, they are likely to experience higher levels of marital satisfaction and Life Span Perspective: The theory

incorporates a life-span developmental perspective, suggesting that the significance of marital goals evolves as individual's age and as their relationship progresses.

In summary, the Dynamic Goal Theory of Marital Satisfaction highlights the importance of achieving diverse marital goals for enhancing couples' satisfaction. By focusing on personal growth, companionship, and practical responsibilities, couples can improve their relationship quality and overall satisfaction.

### **Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory (Bowen, 1978)**

Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory posits that families operate as emotional units, where the relationships among family members significantly influence individual behaviours and emotional health. The theory consists of eight interlocking concepts which are: Triangles: The smallest stable relationship unit in a family, where two individuals may involve a third person to alleviate tension or conflict. Differentiation of Self: The ability of an individual to maintain their own identity and emotional autonomy while being connected to others. Higher differentiation leads to healthier relationships (Saeedeh, & Sahar, 2021; Mozas-Alonso et al., 2022). Nuclear Family Emotional Process: This concept examines the emotional patterns and dynamics within the immediate family, including how marital conflict and emotional distance affect overall family functioning. Family Projection Process: Describes how parents may unconsciously project their emotional issues onto their children, influencing the children's development and behaviour. Multigenerational Transmission Process: This concept explores how emotional issues and behavioral patterns are passed down through generations, shaping family dynamics over time. Emotional Cutoff: Refers to the ways individuals may distance themselves from their families to manage unresolved emotional conflicts, often leading to isolation (Mozas-Alonso et al., 2022). Sibling Position: Considers the impact of birth order and sibling dynamics on individual roles and relationships within the family and Societal Emotional Process: Examines how family dynamics are influenced by broader societal factors, suggesting that family systems are interconnected with larger social systems

Bowen's theory suggests that the level of parents' differentiation of self is associated with their marital satisfaction and parenting styles. Specifically: Higher levels of differentiation are related to greater marital satisfaction, as more differentiated individuals tend to have better couple relationships; Emotional cutoff, a dimension of differentiation, is negatively associated with marital satisfaction. Difficulty with intimacy and physical/emotional distancing can put couple relationships at risk and Training based on Bowen's theory, focusing on increasing self-differentiation, can significantly improve marital satisfaction among couples.

In summary, Bowen's Family Systems Theory highlights the importance of differentiation of self in maintaining healthy marital relationships. Couples with higher levels of differentiation tend to experience greater marital satisfaction, as they are better able to regulate their emotions and maintain their sense of self within the relationship.

### **Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1973)**

The theory emphasizes the importance of early emotional bonds between children and their primary caregivers, positing that these attachments significantly influence psychological development and interpersonal relationships throughout life. This theory is particularly relevant to understanding marital satisfaction, as it provides insights into how attachment styles formed in childhood can affect adult romantic relationships. Hazan and Shaver (1994) expanded on Bowlby's Attachment Theory by applying it to adult romantic relationships. Their work established that the attachment styles formed in childhood significantly influence adult relationship dynamics, particularly marital satisfaction. Key Components of Attachment Theory are: Attachment Bonds: Bowlby suggested that children are biologically predisposed to form attachments with caregivers, which serve as a secure base for exploring the world. The quality of these early attachments shapes an individual's internal working model of relationships; Internal Working Models: These

are mental representations of self and others formed based on early attachment experiences. They influence expectations and behaviours in adult relationships, including marriage and Attachment Styles. Bowlby's theory, further developed by Mary Ainsworth, identifies different attachment styles—secure, (Individuals with secure attachment styles tend to have healthier, more satisfying marriages. They are generally more capable of emotional intimacy, effective communication, and conflict resolution, all of which contribute to higher marital satisfaction). Anxious (Those with anxious attachment may experience insecurity in their relationships, leading to dependency, jealousy, and heightened emotional reactivity. This can create strain and dissatisfaction within the marriage). While avoidant (Individuals with avoidant attachment often struggle with intimacy and may distance themselves emotionally from their partners. This avoidance can lead to feelings of isolation and dissatisfaction in the marriage). These styles impact how individuals interact with their partners in adult relationships.

Bowlby's theory underscores the significance of early attachment experiences in shaping adult relationship dynamics. Disruptions in early attachments can lead to difficulties in forming and maintaining satisfying marital relationships. For example, individuals who experienced inconsistent care giving may find it challenging to trust their partners or may exhibit fear of abandonment, impacting their marital satisfaction. In summary, Attachment Theory highlights the critical role of early emotional bonds in determining how individuals relate to their partners in marriage. Secure attachments foster healthier relationships, while insecure attachment styles can lead to challenges that negatively affect marital satisfaction. Understanding these dynamics can help couples navigate their relationships more effectively.

## **Empirical Review**

### **Attachment and Marital Satisfaction**

A study involving 124 couples found that secure attachment combinations (both partners being securely attached) were associated with the highest levels of marital satisfaction. In contrast, avoidant-avoidant combinations resulted in the lowest satisfaction for wives, while husbands in anxious-avoidant marriages reported the most dissatisfaction. This underscores the importance of partner matching in attachment styles for overall marital happiness. Research has shown that insecure attachment styles (anxious and avoidant) are negatively correlated with marital satisfaction (MacLean, 2001). A study focusing on employees from a specific company indicated that insecure attachment styles predicted lower marital satisfaction, while secure attachment did not show a significant relationship with satisfaction. This suggests that insecure attachment styles can hinder interpersonal relationships in adulthood (Mohammadi et al., 2016). Another study highlighted the role of communication patterns in the relationship between attachment styles and marital satisfaction. It found that attachment styles significantly influenced communication behaviours, which in turn affected marital satisfaction. Specifically, attachment anxiety and avoidance were linked to less effective communication, leading to lower satisfaction levels (Kanaganayagam, 2024).

Campbell, et al., (2005) hypothesized that individuals who have an anxious attachment would perceive greater conflict in romantic relationships on a daily basis. They also hypothesized that anxious individuals would report feeling more hurt by conflicts and weigh these conflicts more heavily when reporting their relationship satisfaction. They found that anxiously attached individuals reported greater daily conflict and perceived a greater number of conflicts than their partners. Anxiously attached participants also reported a greater number of conflicts that escalated beyond the topic of conflict to other issues and described feeling more hurt by the arguments. Participants also reported that their anxiously attached partners felt more hurt from conflicts. Anxious individuals reported a greater decrease in relationship satisfaction on days with conflict than did other participants and were less optimistic about their relationship future.

Furthermore, research show that individuals with a secure attachment are higher in life satisfaction (Feeney, 1999). While Sharon and Wendy (2009) showed that individuals with anxious and avoidant attachment were lower in life satisfaction. But individuals with avoidant attachment are lower life satisfaction and commitment to the enduring relationship (Simpson, 1990). Previous research has indicated that attachment style is a comprehensive, effectual and determinant fact in human life, particularly humans' social life. Kafetsios & Sideridis (2006) found that anxious attachment and well-being were inversely associated and this was stronger for the younger group than it was for the older group. The other research's findings revealed that avoidance dimension of attachment, gender, and anxiety dimension of attachment predicted the life satisfaction (Pahlevan, et al., 2021).

### **Psychological Symptoms and Marital Satisfaction**

A study examined the longitudinal associations between depressive symptoms and marital satisfaction over a two-year period. It found that increases in depressive symptoms were associated with declines in marital satisfaction for both partners. Specifically, the study supported the idea that depressive symptoms predict lower marital satisfaction, rather than the reverse, highlighting the importance of addressing mental health to improve relationship quality (Pruchno et al., 2009; Jenkins et al., 2021). Research using an Actor-Partner Interdependence Modeling framework revealed that an individual's depressive symptoms predicted their own and their partner's marital satisfaction. This suggests a bidirectional influence, where one partner's mental health can significantly affect the other's perception of marital quality. Wives' depressive symptoms, for instance, were linked to declines in husbands' marital satisfaction, particularly in contexts of high racial centrality (Jenkins et al., 2021). Another study confirmed that marital satisfaction was negatively correlated with both partners' levels of depression. Higher marital satisfaction was associated with lower levels of depressive symptoms, indicating that a supportive marital environment can enhance psychological well-being (Liu et al., 2023). The relationship between marital satisfaction and psychological symptoms can be influenced by various factors, including individual characteristics, relationship dynamics, and external stressors. For example, the stress generation model suggests that individuals with low psychological well-being may create stressful interactions within their marriages, further exacerbating marital dissatisfaction (Pruchno et al., 2009). The findings collectively indicate that interventions aimed at reducing depressive symptoms may lead to improvements in marital satisfaction. Conversely, improving marital satisfaction alone may not necessarily alleviate depressive symptoms, emphasizing the need for integrated approaches in therapy (Pruchno et al., 2009; Jenkins et al., 2021).

Research on the facets of neuroticism, including angry hostility, anxiety, and depression, found that angry hostility had a significant negative impact on marital satisfaction. This study highlighted that while depression and anxiety also negatively affected satisfaction, only angry hostility demonstrated significant partner effects, indicating that a spouse's angry behavior can directly influence the other's marital satisfaction (Renshaw, et al., 2010). A study examining the moderating roles of marital warmth in the relationship between marital hostility and satisfaction found that higher levels of warmth could buffer the negative effects of hostility. Specifically, wives' expressions of warmth were associated with better outcomes in terms of their well-being, even in the presence of their husbands' hostile behaviors. This suggests that fostering positive interactions can mitigate the adverse effects of hostility on marital satisfaction (Proulx, et al., 2009). Longitudinal studies have shown that hostility can lead to declines in marital satisfaction over time. For instance, couples exhibiting high levels of hostility are more likely to experience increased conflict and dissatisfaction, reinforcing the idea that hostility is a significant predictor of long-term relationship outcomes.

Research indicates that individuals with anxiety experience lower levels of marital satisfaction compared to their non-anxious peers. For instance, studies have shown that anxiety

is one of the largest known determinants of lower marital quality, with individuals suffering from anxiety disorders, including generalized anxiety and social anxiety, reporting significant difficulties in maintaining satisfying relationships due to issues such as lack of vulnerability and misperceptions of partner responsiveness (Tara, 2020). The relationship between anxiety and marital satisfaction is often bidirectional. Some studies suggest that anxiety can precede relationship distress, meaning that heightened anxiety levels can lead to dissatisfaction in marriage. Conversely, marital distress can also lead to increased anxiety, creating a cycle that exacerbates both issues (Tara, 2020; Renshaw, et al., 2010). For example, newlywed couples have reported higher levels of anxiety and depression when experiencing marital distress, indicating that relationship quality can influence psychological well-being (Tara, 2020)

High levels of neuroticism are associated with lower marital satisfaction, as individuals with these traits may experience heightened emotional distress that impacts their relationships negatively (Renshaw, et al., 2010). Moreover, the presence of anxiety can magnify the effects of neuroticism on marital satisfaction, particularly in women, who may exhibit more pronounced relational difficulties due to their anxious tendencies (Liu et al., 2023). Given the strong correlation between anxiety and marital dissatisfaction, interventions aimed at reducing anxiety may improve relationship quality. Couples therapy that addresses both individual mental health and relational dynamics can be beneficial in enhancing marital satisfaction (Tara, 2020; Maroufizadeh et al., 2018).

### Hypotheses

Based on the literature on prior research on attachment to mother, psychological symptoms, and marital satisfaction, the following hypotheses were tested in the study:

1. Different levels of attachment to mother (Anxiety attachment, Close attachment and Depend attachment) will correlate significantly with marital satisfaction among study sample.
2. Different levels of psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Neuroticism, Depression, and Hostility) will correlate significantly with marital satisfaction among study sample.
3. There will be statistically significant interaction between different levels of attachment to mother (Anxiety attachment, Close attachment and Depend attachment) and different levels of psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Neuroticism, Depression, and Hostility) on marital satisfaction.

### METHOD

#### Participants

A total of 294 participants were drawn from the population frame (The Academic and Non Academic Staff of University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus). They comprise of 131 married men and 164 married women. The age range of the participants were between 23years and 63years. The mean and the standard deviation of their age were 44.5 and 8.77 respectively. Multi stage sampling technique was used to select the Faculties/Units that participated in the study (see appendix v). However, the main participants for the study were selected using purposive sampling and convenient sampling (this is because the inclusion criteria for participating in the study are those who are married and are willing to participate in the study). In all 108 members of Academic and 186 members of Non-Academic Staff participated in the study.

#### Instrument

Three types of instruments were used in this study; they are Attachment to Mother Scale (AMS-26), Symptom Distress Checklist (SCL-90) and Index of Marital Satisfaction (IMS).

#### **Attachment to Mother Scale (AMS – 26) (Agu, 2014)**

This is a 21 item scale developed by Agu (2014) to measure a person's frequent or high degree of positive relationship with his/her mother. The scale is made for adult males and females who are married. AMS-26 is to be administered individually or in groups after establishing adequate rapport with the participants. The participants are encouraged to read and follow instructions at the top of the scale form. There are no right or wrong answer and no time limit for completing AMS-26. AMS-26 is made up of three subscales which are anxiety attachment, closeness attachment and depend attachment. Anxiety attachment scale items are items 4, 6, 11, 18, 19, 20, and 24; close attachment scale items, 1, 2, 9, 12, 13, 14, 16, 23, 25 and 26 while depend attachment scale items are 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13, 17, 21 and 22. AMS-26 is scored on a 5 points Likert format: 1 = never; 2 = rarely; 3 = sometimes; 4 = often and 5 = almost always. The majority of the items are directly scored, except for item 6, 19 and 24 as reverse score items. In other to get the final score, add together the result of the direct scores and the reverse scores. Predictive validity test was conducted to assess the direction of relationship between Attachment to Mother Scale and Interpersonal Dependency Inventory (IDI) (Makinde, 1999). Results showed that the correlation coefficient  $r$  between Sub-Scales of Attachment to Mother (Anxiety Attachment, Close Attachment and Depend Attachment) and IDI were  $r = -.40, .48$  and  $.43, P < .05$  respectively. Cronbach Alpha reliability for the three Sub-Scale of Attachment to Mother (Anxiety Attachment, Close Attachment and Depend Attachment) were Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) = .69, .73, and .78 respectively.

### **Symptom Distress Checklist 90 (SCL – 90)**

46 items extracted from symptoms distress checklist 90 (SCL-90) designed by Derogatis, et al., (1977) was used to assess the four dimensions of psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Depression, Hostility and Neuroticism). The scale is scored directly on 5-point Likert format: 0 = Not at all, 1 = a little bit, 2 = moderately, 3 = quite a bit and 4 = extremely. Erinoso (1996) reported a significant coefficient of concurrent validity between retirement stress inventory (Omoluabi, 1996) and SCL-90 scales which ranged from .26 to .47. Derogatis et al (1977), using one week interval test-retest reliability, reported alpha coefficients for the symptoms distress checklist 90 (SCL-90) subscales which ranged from .77 to .90. Furthermore, Jeo-Akunne and Onyekuru (2013) reported a reliability coefficients (Cronbach alpha) which ranged from .70 to .89 while Akinsola and Nwajei (2013) reported a reliability coefficients (Cronbach alpha) of .70; Split half = .63 and one week test-retest of .88. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the participants are Anxiety = .76, Depression = .84, Hostility = .67 and Neuroticism = .83

### **Index of Marital Satisfaction (IMS)**

This is a 25 item inventory designed by Hudson (1982) to measure the problems associated with marital satisfaction. This was administered individually after establishing a rapport with the subject in other to measure the degree, severity or magnitude of the problems, one spouse or partner perceives to be having in their marital relationship with his or her partner. The participants are encouraged to read and follow instructions at the top of the test form. The direct score items are 2, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12, 14, 15, 18, 22, 24, and 25; while the reverse score items are 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 11, 13, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, and 23. To get the final score, add together the results of the direct scores and the reverse scores to obtain the clients raw scores, Subtract 25 from the raw score to obtain the clients final score. Concurrent validity coefficient of .48 was obtained by Anene (1994) by correlating index of marital satisfaction (IMS) with marital stress inventory (MSI) Omoluabi (1994). Hudson (1982) found a Cronbach Alpha coefficient = .96. In Nigeria, Ezech (2009) reported Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .72 and split half (Spearman Brown) of .79, while Oyewo (2012) reported a Cronbach Alpha coefficients of .82. The Cronbach Alpha for the present study is .94.

### **Procedure**

The researcher received approval/letter of identification from the department of Psychology, Enugu State University of Science and Technology for the study. There are 12 Faculties/Units including 6 academic Faculties and 6 Non academic Units. Out of the 6 academic Faculties and 6 Non academic Units, 3 each were selected for the study. Letter of identification for the study was attached to each of the study instruments. Only married Staff were issued the instruments (purposive sampling). The researcher employed the help of a member of Staff from each selected Departments or Units to administer the instruments.

These research assistants were given some token for them to administer and collect the instruments after the participants must have completed them. A total of 300 copies of the instruments were administered within a space of 6 working weeks. However, only 294 (98%) were completed properly. Therefore were used during the final analysis.

### Design and Statistics

The design for the study is a combination of correlation design (because the primary objective of the study is to examine the relation between the study variables) and cross-sectional design (because the participants were made up of both male and female and the data for the analysis were collected via questionnaire at a particular point in time and used for analysis and inferences). Therefore, the statistics for the study is Pearson product moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ), while  $r^2$  was also used as coefficient of determinants.

Also, moderated Multiple regression was used to analyze and test the interaction effect for the third hypothesis (SPSS version 22 was the soft ware used in the analysis).

## RESULTS

**Table 1**

Zero order correlation coefficient matrix showing attachment to mother and psychological symptoms as correlates of marital satisfaction

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Anxiety Attachment	1							
2 Close Attachment	<b>-.40**</b>	1						
3 Depend Attachment	<b>-.00</b>	<b>.40**</b>	1					
4 Anxiety	<b>.24**</b>	<b>-.22**</b>	<b>-.07</b>	1				
5 Neuroticism	<b>.14**</b>	<b>-.19**</b>	<b>.14*</b>	<b>.11</b>	1			
6 Depression	<b>.19**</b>	<b>-.15**</b>	<b>-.01</b>	<b>.10</b>	<b>.47</b>	1		
7 Hostility	.05	-.01	.01	.06	.21**	.34**	1	
8 Marital Satisfaction	<b>-.55**</b>	<b>.71**</b>	<b>.15**</b>	<b>-.23**</b>	<b>-.27**</b>	<b>-.23**</b>	<b>-.07</b>	1

\*\*;  $P < .01$ , \*;  $P < .05$  Bold are relevant coefficient for research hypothesis

The result shows that attachment to mother (Anxiety attachment, Close attachment and Depend attachment) correlated significantly with marital satisfaction (see Table 1). Table 1 shows that correlation coefficients were as follows; Anxiety attachment and marital satisfaction  $r = -.55$ ,  $P < .01$ ,  $r^2 = .30$ ; Close attachment and marital satisfaction  $r = .71$ ,  $P < .01$ ,  $r^2 = .50$ ; Depend attachment and marital satisfaction  $r = .15$ ,  $P < .05$ ,  $r^2 = .02$ .

By implication anxiety attachment has negative and significant relationship with marital satisfaction, while close attachment and depend attachment have positive and significant relationships with marital satisfaction. However, the coefficient of determinant ( $r^2$ ), showed that the depend attachment has a very small effect size (2%) when compared with anxiety attachment and close attachment (30% and 50%) respectively.

Secondly, the result also showed that the correlation between psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Neuroticism, and Depression) and marital satisfaction were significant. Their correlation

coefficient with marital satisfaction were ( $r = -.23$ ,  $P < .01$ ,  $r^2 = .05$ ;  $r = -.27$ ,  $P < .01$ ,  $r^2 = .07$ ;  $r = -.23$ ,  $P < .01$ ,  $r^2 = .05$ ) respectively. However, the correlation coefficient between hostility and marital satisfaction among the studied sample was not significant  $r = -.07$ ,  $P > .05$ . Furthermore, the present study also tested whether attachment to mother (Anxiety attachment, Close attachment and Depend attachment) will significantly interact with psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Neuroticism and Depression) to determine marital satisfaction among the studied sample. The interaction inclusion criteria assumed that only the factors that have significant coefficient would be considered for interaction test. Thus hostility was excluded during the interaction test because it did not significantly correlate with the other variables (see Table 1).

**Table 2**

Moderated Multiple Regression table for interaction between attachment to mother and Psychological Symptoms on Marital Satisfaction

Latent Variable: Marital Satisfaction	R <sup>2</sup>	Df1(Df2)	F	Std Error	Beta	LLCI	ULCI
Observed Variables							
<b>Model 1</b>	.31	3(293)	46.28**				
A-Anxiety				.16	-.38*	-.70	-.06
B- Anxiety Attachment				.01	-1.32**	-1.56	-1.07
<b>A*B</b>				.02	.04*	.001	.08
<b>Model 2</b>	.55	3(293)	122.12**				
A-Anxiety				.14	-.05*	-.78	-.23
C- Close Attachment				.09	1.41**	1.22	1.59
<b>A*C</b>				.02	-.11*	-.15	-.07
<b>Model 3</b>	.39	3(293)	62.7**				
D-Neuroticism				.47	-2.91**	-3.85	-1.97
B-Anxiety Attachment				.01	-2.54**	-3.07	-2.02
<b>D*B</b>				.01	.10*	.06	.13
<b>Model 4</b>	.56	3(293)	126.47**				
D-Neuroticism				.12	-.53**	-.77	-.29
C- Close Attachment				.09	1.41**	1.24	1.60
<b>D*C</b>				.02	-.08*	-.11	-.05
<b>Model 5</b>	.11	3(293)	12.84**				
D-Neuroticism				.17	-.85**	-1.19	-.52
E- Dependent Attachment				.16	.61**	.29	.92
<b>D*E</b>				.02	-.04	-.08	.01
<b>Model 6</b>	.36	3(293)	56.36**				
F-Depression				.29	-1.58**	-2.15	-.99
B- Anxiety Attachment				.02	-2.87**	-3.55	-2.18
<b>F*B</b>				.02	.06*	.03	.08
<b>Model 7</b>	.56	3(293)	129.31**				
F- Depression				.22	-.90**	.48	1.34
C- Close Attachment				.26	2.98**	2.46	3.49
<b>F*C</b>				.01	-.06*	-.08	-.04

### Anxiety and Anxiety Attachment

Interaction between anxiety and anxiety attachment is significantly positive ( $\beta = .04$ ,  $P < .05$ ; LLCI, ULCI = .001, .08). It means that the more positive or increase anxiety attachment (the moderating variable), the more positive or increase is the effect of anxiety on marital satisfaction

### Anxiety and Close attachment

Interaction effect between anxiety and close attachment is significantly negative ( $\beta = -.11$ ,  $P < .05$ ; LLCI, ULCI = -.15, -.07). It means that the more positive or increase in close attachment (the moderating variable), the more negative or decrease is the effect of anxiety on marital satisfaction

### Neuroticism and Anxiety Attachment

Interaction effect between neuroticism and anxiety attachment has significant positive effect ( $\beta = .10$ ,  $P < .05$ ; LLCI, ULCI = .06, .13). It means that the more negatively or decrease in anxiety attachment (the moderating variable), the more negatively or decrease the effect of neuroticism on marital satisfaction.

#### **Neuroticism and Close attachment**

Interaction effect between neuroticism and close attachment is significantly negative ( $\beta = -.08$ ,  $P < .05$ ; LLCI, ULCI = -.11, -.05). It means that the more positive or increase in close attachment (the moderating variable), the more negative or decrease is the effect of neuroticism on marital satisfaction.

#### **Neuroticism and Depend Attachment**

Interaction effect between neuroticism and depend attachment is negative ( $\beta = -.04$ ,  $P > .05$ ; LLCI, ULCI = -.08, .01). However, this value is not significant implying that the more positive depend attachment (the moderating variable), the more negative the effect of neuroticism is on marital satisfaction, but this effect is not significant.

#### **Depression and Anxiety Attachment**

Interaction effect between depression and anxiety attachment is significantly positive ( $\beta = .06$ ,  $P < .05$ ; LLCI, ULCI = .03, .08). It means that the more negative or decrease anxiety attachment (the moderating variable), the more negative or decrease the effect of depression on marital satisfaction.

#### **Depression and Close Attachment**

Interaction effect between depression and close attachment is significantly negative ( $\beta = -.06$ ,  $P < .05$ ; LLCI, ULCI = -.08, -.04). It means that the more positive or increase in close attachment (the moderating variable), the more negative or decrease is the effect of depression on marital satisfaction.

### **DISCUSSION**

The present study has two major objectives, one is to assess whether attachment to mother and psychological symptoms will independently correlate with marital satisfaction. Second, is to examine whether there will be significant interaction between different levels of attachment to mother (Anxiety Attachment, Close Attachment and Depend Attachment) and different levels of psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Neuroticism, Depression and Hostility) on marital satisfaction. The results showed that attachment to mother correlated significantly with marital satisfaction. Specifically, all the levels of attachment to mother have significant correlation with marital satisfaction. This finding is in agreement with previous studies reviewed in the study.

A study involving 124 couples found that secure attachment combinations (both partners being securely attached) were associated with the highest levels of marital satisfaction. In contrast, avoidant-avoidant combinations resulted in the lowest satisfaction for wives, while husbands in anxious-avoidant marriages reported the most dissatisfaction. This underscores the importance of partner matching in attachment styles for overall marital happiness. Research has shown that insecure attachment styles (anxious and avoidant) are negatively correlated with marital satisfaction (MacLean, 2001). This suggests that insecure attachment styles can hinder interpersonal relationships in adulthood (Mohammadi et al., 2016). Furthermore, research show that individuals with a secure attachment are higher in life satisfaction (Feeney, 1999). While Sharon and Wendy (2009) showed that individuals with anxious and avoidant attachment were lower in life satisfaction. But individuals with avoidant attachment are lower life satisfaction and commitment to the enduring relationship (Simpson, 1990). Pistol (1989) examined the impact of

attachment orientation conflict resolution and satisfaction in interpersonal relation, he conclude that individuals with a secure attachment orientation enjoyed more satisfactory relation, and were more competent in conflict resolution than anxious individuals. Kirkpatrick and shaver (1992) showed that individuals with an avoidant attachment were higher in mental health problems, and their levels of life satisfaction were lower.

Also, the results showed that psychological symptoms correlated significantly with marital satisfaction. Specifically, all the levels of psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Neuroticism, and Depression) have significant correlation with marital satisfaction except for hostility. A study examined the longitudinal associations between depressive symptoms and marital satisfaction over a two-year period. It found that increases in depressive symptoms were associated with declines in marital satisfaction for both partners. Specifically, the study supported the idea that depressive symptoms predict lower marital satisfaction, rather than the reverse, highlighting the importance of addressing mental health to improve relationship quality (Pruchno et al., 2009; Jenkins et al., 2021). Research using an Actor-Partner Interdependence Modeling framework revealed that an individual's depressive symptoms predicted their own and their partner's marital satisfaction. This suggests a bidirectional influence, where one partner's mental health can significantly affect the other's perception of marital quality. Wives' depressive symptoms, for instance, were linked to declines in husbands' marital satisfaction, particularly in contexts of high racial centrality (Jenkins et al., 2021). Research on the facets of neuroticism, including angry hostility, anxiety, and depression, found that angry hostility had a significant negative impact on marital satisfaction. This study highlighted that while depression and anxiety also negatively affected satisfaction, only angry hostility demonstrated significant partner effects, indicating that a spouse's angry behavior can directly influence the other's marital satisfaction (Renshaw, et al., 2010).

Research indicates that individuals with anxiety experience lower levels of marital satisfaction compared to their non-anxious peers. For instance, studies have shown that anxiety is one of the largest known determinants of lower marital quality, with individuals suffering from anxiety disorders, including generalized anxiety and social anxiety, reporting significant difficulties in maintaining satisfying relationships due to issues such as lack of vulnerability and misperceptions of partner responsiveness (Tara, 2020). The relationship between anxiety and marital satisfaction is often bidirectional. Some studies suggest that anxiety can precede relationship distress, meaning that heightened anxiety levels can lead to dissatisfaction in marriage. Conversely, marital distress can also lead to increased anxiety, creating a cycle that exacerbates both issues (Tara, 2020; Renshaw, et al., 2010). A study focusing on infertile couples utilized dyadic data analysis to explore how anxiety affects marital satisfaction. It found that both partners' anxiety levels significantly influenced their own marital satisfaction and that women's anxiety had a notable partner effect on their husbands' satisfaction. This suggests that anxiety in one partner can adversely affect the other, highlighting the interconnected nature of marital relationships (Maroufizadeh et al., 2018).

Hence, the result in relation to hostility did not show a significant correlation with marital satisfaction. Contrary it did not agree with the work of Rogge, Bradbury, Hahlweg, Engl, and Thurmaier, (2006), they found that hostility of both spouses predicted couple instability over a 5-year period. Gottman (1993, 1994) has consistently found defensive and critical interactions, characteristics of state hostility, to be predictive of relationship dissolution. Beyond relationship dissolution, hostility has long been established to be a precursor to marital and overall relationship difficulty (Roberts 2000; Pasch & Bradbury 1998). A study involving 122 married couples examined the role of hostility and anger in marital adjustment over 18 months. The findings

indicated that both husbands' and wives' hostility and anger were correlated with concurrent ratings of marital adjustment. Notably, wives' hostility and anger were predictive of changes in marital adjustment, suggesting that these negative emotions can erode relationship quality over time. Wives' anger was particularly influential, affecting both their own and their husbands' marital satisfaction, mediated by husbands' perceptions of conflict in the marriage (Baron, et al., 2006).

Finally, the result showed that interaction between anxiety and anxiety attachment was significantly positive. This means that the more positive or increase anxiety attachment as a moderator, the more positive or increase was the effect of anxiety on marital satisfaction. Anxiety attachment as a moderator increased the effect of anxiety symptom on marital satisfaction. On the other hand, it was observed that the interaction between anxiety and close attachment was significantly negative. This means that the more positive or increase in close attachment as a moderator, the more negative or decrease was the effect of anxiety on marital satisfaction. Close attachment as a moderator reduced the effect of anxiety as a psychological symptom on marital satisfaction. In addition, the result showed a significant positive interaction effect between neuroticism and anxiety attachment. This means that the more negative or decrease in anxiety attachment as a moderator, the more negatively or decrease the effect of neuroticism on marital satisfaction. Anxiety attachment as a moderator increased the effect of neuroticism on marital satisfaction. While the interaction effect between neuroticism and close attachment was found to be significantly negative. This means that the more positive or increase in close attachment as a moderator, the more negative or decrease was the effect of neuroticism on marital satisfaction.

Also, the result showed a negative interaction effect between neuroticism and depend attachment. However, this value was not significant implying that the more positive depend attachment as a moderator, the more negative the effect of neuroticism was on marital satisfaction, but this effect was not significant. Furthermore, the result showed a significantly positive interaction effect between depression and anxiety attachment. This means that the more negative or decrease anxiety attachment as a moderator, the more negative or decrease the effect of depression on marital satisfaction. The outcome of the result also showed a significantly negative interaction effect between depression and close attachment. This means that the more positive or increase in close attachment as a moderator the more negative or decrease was the effect of depression as a psychological symptom on marital satisfaction. From the result it was observed that the psychological symptoms (anxiety, depression, and neuroticism) studied in the study have decreased effect on marital satisfaction where close attachment served as a moderator.

### **Implications/Relevance of the Study**

The study has general implications and relevance for different levels of ecological systems (Individual, Family, and Society) and intervention programmes targeted to preventing and reducing the levels of marital disharmony. As indicated in the result, various forms of attachment have different directions of relationships with marital satisfaction. Specifically, close attachment seem to be positive and have higher coefficient of determinant with marital satisfaction. In practice, individuals could be encouraged to have better marital satisfaction through encouragement of behaviours that show confident, balance and understanding in dealing with people. Society, counselors and therapies can encourage this positive attributes of close attachment in an individual (in marital setting). It is predicted that such individual may likely experience more marital satisfaction.

Although depend attachment have positive correlation with marital satisfaction, however, the coefficient of determinant is so low (.02) to be rely on in making generalization. Though it is better than anxiety attachment which is negatively higher when correlated with marital satisfaction.

The result has implication for families and society in general. Family and societal practices that encourage negative styles of attachment (e.g., permissive parenting style, tentative



adherence to cultural values at the expense of cultural freedom, authoritarian theocracy and other religious extremism) which have contrary relationships with marital satisfaction. Furthermore, it creates a general lead way to therapies that work with people in marital conflict.

The study also call for multiple assessment during therapeutic or counseling interventions since various forms of psychological symptoms can interact with attachment style to significantly reduce marital satisfaction. For instance, result showed that when close attachment interact with various forms of psychological symptoms there is reported decreased probability of psychological symptom influencing marital satisfaction negatively. Thus, close attachment acting as positive moderator against the negative impact of psychological symptom on marital satisfaction. A good therapist can integrate this knowledge into practice.

Generally, relevance of these findings is that it is concurrent with the fact that psychological symptoms and negative attachment styles have negative impact on marital satisfaction. While a normal attachment style can reduce the impact of psychological symptom on marital satisfaction.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The major limitation of the study was the choice of survey technique and the use of moderated regression to test interaction. This is often criticized since interaction effect seems to be better for experimental designs where manipulation and cause effect are inferred. However, studies have used moderated regression in a survey design where experiment is impossible and caution is applied in interpreting the results by not inferring cause effect rather stronger relationships are inferred (Joe-Akunne, 2016; Oguebe, 2016). The present study benefitted from this knowledge, where interactions are seen as stronger relationships.

Secondly, in a survey study like this, random sampling is not always possible at all levels, thus, the choice of purposive and convenient sample which is often criticized as not being probabilistic. However, it is the most suited choice for a mix design like the present work. Also, random sampling was used to select the Faculties/Units that participated in the study while meticulous attempt was made to ensure representative sample for each Faculty/Unit. Furthermore, the instruments for the research were highly reliable and valid.

### **Suggestion for Further Studies**

Based on the outcome of the study one may suggest that future researchers should adopt couple oriented approach, whereby husband and wife as a couple should be selected to participate. Further, future researchers should adopt sex oriented approach in studying attachment to mother to verify whether male children or female children exhibit more attachment to mother. In addition, future researcher should increase the sample size when conducting a similar study in order to enhance the external validity towards making generalization and accurate predictions.

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