

MARITAL COMMUNICATION STYLES AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS PREDICTORS OF MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG MARRIED PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated marital communication styles and emotional intelligence as predictors of marital satisfaction among married people. A total of 386 participants drawn from married Staff of Enugu State Universal Basic Education Board (ESUBEB). The participants were made up of 186 (48%) males and 200 (52%) females with age range between 34 years and 52 years; $M = 43.26$ and $SD = 4.77$. Mixed sampling technique (Purposive, convenient) was used to select the participants. Communication Pattern Questionnaire – Short Form; Wong and Law Emotional Intelligent Scale and Index of Marital Satisfaction were used as instrument for the study. Correlation design was adopted while Hierarchical Multiple Regression statistics result revealed that Mutual constructive communication ($\beta = .60$, $t = 17.31$, $p < .01$); Self demand-Partner withdraw communication ($\beta = -.31$, $t = 10.59$, at $p < .01$) and Partner demand-Self Withdraw communication ($\beta = -.07$, $t = -2.66$, at $p < .05$) predicted marital satisfaction. The contribution of marital communication style in explaining the variance in marital satisfaction was 77% ($\Delta R^2 = .77$). Also, Self Emotion Appraisal ($\beta = .36$, $t = 5.49$, $p < .01$); Regulation of Emotion, ($\beta = .23$, $t = 5.06$, $p < .01$); Use of Emotion, ($\beta = .31$, $t = 4.67$, $p < .01$) and Others Emotion Appraisal ($\beta = .13$, $t = 2.19$, $p < .05$) positively predicted marital satisfaction. The contribution of emotional intelligence in explaining the variance in marital satisfaction was 01% ($\Delta R^2 = .01$). Finding of the study may help both unmarried and married couples to understand that the way they communicate and emotionally relate with each other can have lasting impacts on the overall marital relationship.

Key Words: Marital, Communication Styles, Emotional Intelligence, Satisfaction

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The term marital means the state of being married to someone. It can be used to describe the interpersonal dynamics that is shared by a married couple and the legal and social institution of marriage. A number of elements, including as communication, resolving conflict, emotional reasoning, similar values and beliefs and the capacity to accept change and overcome obstacles together, can affect the degree of satisfaction in marriage. To maintain and increase marital satisfaction throughout time, it is crucial for couples to consistently focus on strengthening their bond and resolving any problems that may occur. With regard to the broader topic of positive psychology over the past decade as a change in psychology is considered as well as marital satisfaction, which is a component of psychological wellbeing. The question arises what factors can affect marital satisfaction. Attempts to discover factors that either improve or hinders the situation of families and individuals is the arm of this investigation. In this regard, among the collection of factors influencing marital satisfaction, the research studied couple communication pattern and their emotional intelligence.

Researchers and theorists in the family field suggested that values, social norms, and behaviours have affected the family structure (Sharma, 2024; Berger & McLanahan, 2015; Sánchez et al. 2017). Thus, the ability of family to adapt to these changes is very necessary. This ability is dependent on communication patterns among family members (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Communication is a tool for making meaningful or emotionally connection with one another (Wiley, 2006). It involves the transmission of information via verbal, nonverbal, written, and digital channels (Hancock et al., 2020). It requires the integration of knowledge, reasoning, and abilities in a variety of disciplines, including linguistic, operational, social, and strategic (Light & McNaughton, 2014). Process of communication is intricate and serves various purposes and contexts (Kreitler, 2021). Hence, communication style refers to distinctive manners in which



individuals display verbal, par verbal, and nonverbal communication patterns during social interactions. This style encompasses distinct methods of receiving, interpreting, and delivering feedback, the way response is articulated, and individuals' comprehension of their own identities and interpersonal connections, as well as general interpretation of their messages. Thus, the study will adopt Christensen and Shenk (1991) three forms of communication styles as mutual constructive communication (where both partners initiate discussions about problems, are emotionally expressive and engage in compromise); self demand-partner withdraw (one partner initiates discussions, nags, criticizes and makes demands) and partner demand-self withdraw (the other one partner initiates discussions, nags, criticizes and makes demands) measured as subscales in Communication pattern questionnaire- Short Form (CPQ-SF; Christensen & Heavey, 1990).

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the study of how humans use the emotions they recognize in themselves and other people to obtain positive outcomes in life (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 2006). The concept was based on the theory brought forward by Thorndike in the early 1900's, named 'social intelligence', which describes peoples' ability to interact with one another and form successful relationships (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019). Emotional intelligence in marriage is one of the keys to a life-long, associated, and satisfying connection. Emotional intelligence in marital life is displayed and practiced when both a wife and a husband are eagerly conscious of their individual emotions, they handle those emotions in a healthy way, and then they are deliberately alert and attentive to the emotions of their spouse. Research has devastatingly demonstrated that one of the qualities common in mates who report a high degree of marital satisfaction is that they purely consider emotionally connected to their spouse (Cikes et al., 2018). They are open and answer to things their mate may want, even in clash, couples who exhibit emotional intelligence in marriage are able to keep on emotionally linked (Abbasi et al., 2016). The study adopted Wong and Law (2002) emotional intelligence scale to emotional intelligence. The instrument is composed of four dimensions: (1) self-emotion appraisal, (2) others' emotion appraisal, (3) use of emotion, and (4) regulation of emotion (Wong and Law 2002). Having a satisfying marriage proves to be an advantage to couples, their children and members of the whole family.

Statement of the Problem

The rising rates of marital dissatisfaction and divorce in Nigeria highlight a critical need for understanding the factors that contribute to these trends (Ajayi & Esere, 2020). Despite the importance of effective communication and emotional intelligence, many couples struggle with these skills, leading to increased marital instability (Adesokan et al., 2019). Second, existing literature suggests a significant relationship between communication styles and marital adjustment; however, the specific role of emotional intelligence in this dynamic remains underexplored (Okesina, 2022). Furthermore, cultural factors unique to Nigeria may influence how communication and emotional intelligence manifest in marital relationships, necessitating context-specific research (Farsole, 2023). Additionally, inadequate training in effective communication techniques exacerbates conflicts among couples, often resulting in unresolved issues that jeopardize marital satisfaction (Mayer, 2014). Therefore, this study aims to investigate how various communication styles and levels of emotional intelligence predict marital satisfaction among married individuals in Enugu, addressing a critical gap in existing research.

Hence, the study answered these pertinent questions:

Will marital communication style (Mutual Constructive Communication, Self demand-Partner Withdraw communication, Partner demand-Self Withdraw communication) predict marital satisfaction among married people?

Will emotional intelligence (Self Emotion Appraisal, Regulation of Emotion, Use of Emotion, Others Emotion Appraisal) predict marital satisfaction among married people?

Theoretical Review

Mayer and Salovey (1990) defined emotional intelligence (EI) as the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively. Their theory posits that EI involves recognizing emotions in one self and others, using emotions to facilitate thought, and understanding emotional meanings. It emphasizes the importance of emotional awareness and regulation for problem-solving and behaviour. The model includes four key capabilities: perceiving, assimilating, understanding, and managing emotions¹. Successfully regulating emotions requires mastering the preceding abilities¹. Their work suggests EI integrates with cognitive processes to enhance thinking. This framework laid the groundwork for understanding how emotions influence adaptive behavior and cognitive functions.

Social Exchange Theory (Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993), as applied to communication styles, suggests individuals seek to maximize rewards and minimize costs in their interactions. Rooted in behaviorism and economics, this framework assumes rational actors evaluate potential communication strategies based on anticipated outcomes. Effective communication yields rewards like understanding and validation, strengthening relationships. Conversely, negative exchanges with punishment, such as criticism or conflict, increase costs and can lead to relationship deterioration. Norms of reciprocity, fairness, and trust influence communication, fostering stability when exchanges are balanced¹. Individuals assess communication styles against personal standards, which vary and evolve¹. Dissatisfaction arises when communication costs outweigh rewards, potentially prompting a search for more profitable exchanges. Sabatelli and Shehan (1993) emphasize these dynamics in understanding relationship formation, maintenance, and dissolution.

The Dynamic Goal Theory (Li & Fung, 2011) of Marital Satisfaction posits that individuals have multiple, evolving goals within marriage, impacting their satisfaction. These goals fall into three categories: personal growth, instrumental, and companionship. Young couples often prioritize personal growth, middle-aged couples emphasize instrumental goals (tasks and responsibilities), and older couples focus on companionship. Marital satisfaction hinges on achieving these prioritized goals, with factors like communication and problem-solving facilitating their attainment. Life transitions and cultural values can also shift the importance of these goals throughout adulthood. This theory suggests marital satisfaction isn't static but dynamically linked to goal achievement. The couple's vulnerability and stressful events within their environment, help them to modify their life to the environmental changes that interact and combine together influencing the couple's marital stability.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Dynamic Goal Theory of Marital Satisfaction (Li & Fung, 2011) was adopted as the theoretical framework for the study. The theory argues that marital goals are the core foundation of the marriage and need to be achieved to reach marital satisfaction. The theory argues that there are three types of marital goals to be achieved. Personal growth goals are based on the improvement and development of oneself with the help of the spouse within the marriage. When these goals are met, a feeling of accomplishment helps the spouse to feel capable of future challenges. Companionship goals show the bonding and emotional meaningful goals that a spouse needs with the other spouse, while the instrumental goals focus on the tasks that occur throughout life that include using the spouse's physical and mental resources (Li & Fung, 2011). Their marital satisfaction is the main factor that influences the dynamic goal theory of marital satisfaction, which looks at the marital quality and the emotional aspect of the marriage (Li &



Fung, 2011). According to the researchers emotional intelligence can be influential on marital satisfaction (Mayer & Salovey, 1990; Tamaren, 2010). Couples' intimate relationship needs communication skills such as: paying attention to other person's viewpoint and emotions, being able to empathizes perception with what their partner has experienced, and also being sensitive and aware of his / her needs (Gottman & Levenson, 2002).

Empirical Review

Marital Communication Styles and Marital Satisfaction

Studies have shown that both the communication styles and mutual communication are determining elements of marital success, which includes personal satisfaction, relationship quality, and health" (Esere et al., 2011; Sánchez et al., 2017, Tahira, 2019). Estévez et al., (2007) found that one factor leading to marital dissatisfaction is communication and the different styles between married couples. Four styles of communication were examined within stressed and satisfied couples. Their findings and results demonstrate how these different styles play a highly influential role in achieving satisfaction. Sánchez et al., (2017) tested whether the communication style used by each partner was related to the partner's satisfaction and dissatisfaction. They based their study on Nina's (1991) "theory of communication" and a scale that measures attitude satisfaction, enjoyment satisfaction, and frequency satisfaction. The results indicated that a positive style of communication was consistently related to marital satisfaction. In contrast, the inability to communicate in certain areas and the way in which communication is made was strongly associated with marital dissatisfaction.

However, other studies examining communication problems between couples, have also found that the level of satisfaction with marriage is associated with the degree to which couples communicate with each other in constructive or unconstructive ways (Epstein et al., 2005; Gordon et al., 1999). Also, negative communication style refers to a lack of communication or negative have found that the most common issues experienced between couples were the inability to comprehend the spouse's point of view, as well as accusing, criticizing, or humiliating the partner (Akkaya, 2010; Kansız & Arkar, 2011). These findings are indicative not only of the role communication styles play in marital satisfaction, but also its importance in solving and dealing with conflict. Esere, et. al. (2011) argue that "satisfaction of marriage depends on many things to be successful, such as, trust, love, friendship, understanding, honesty, loyalty, sincerity and above all, effective communication which helps in building up marital unity." When only one spouse makes an effort to communicate and solve conflicts, most likely both spouses will experience dissatisfaction and all other areas of a marital relationship may tremble.

A large literature spanning several decades has examined couple communication as a predictor of future satisfaction (Leuchtmann et al., 2019; Ross et al., 2019). Meta-analytic results have shown that negative interactions are associated with lower relationship satisfaction and positive interactions with higher satisfaction, cross-sectionally (Woodin, 2011) and longitudinally (Karney & Bradbury, 1995), though many individual studies have produced findings counter to this pattern.

Emotional Intelligence and Marital Satisfaction

Much research has confirmed a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among married couples (Abbasi et al., 2016; Anghel, 2016; Yediri & Hamart, 2015). Lavalekar (2013) did a study on marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence. The purpose of the study was to determine how marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence are related. For this purpose Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS) and Exploring Emotional Abilities (EEA)



were employed. Sample of 316 respondents (ranging from 25 to 65) were selected. The results showed a strong correlation among marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence. The study investigated how different traits of emotional intelligence interact with marital satisfaction.

Anghel (2016) conducted research on marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence. The results revealed a strong relation among marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence components involving majorly balancing one's emotions and others. Safitri and Yudiana (2019) did a comparative research on marital satisfaction across different relationship kinds in the marriage setting. The research was aimed at assessing marital satisfaction with individuals who were married. For this purpose sixty two couples from Jakarta with a median age of 25.35 years. The findings indicate that there is a significant difference in relationship satisfaction between couple types in general, and especially among husbands. Yet, among wives, marital pleasure is unaffected by the type of couple. Another research conducted by Anghel (2016), Yedirir and Hamarta (2015) revealed a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among 226 married individuals in Iran. In the study, people with a high degree of emotional intelligence had coordination in social situations, higher self-control, higher social skills, more cooperative responses, closer relation, and eventually more marital satisfaction.

Furthermore, Schroder-Abe and Schutz (2011) showed a relationship between emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction and shed light on the processes through which emotional intelligence affects the quality of a romantic relationship. Meanwhile, Madahi et al. (2013) stated that demanded-withdraw communication would lead to dissatisfaction within the relationship. Spouses who constantly communicate with each other will have more understanding of emotion and helps to increase their relationship satisfaction.

Hence, it can be concluded that emotional intelligence can significantly influence marriage and is associated with a couple's marital and relationship satisfaction (Abbasi, et al., 2016; Bracket et al., 2005; Schroder-Abe & Schutz, 2011). That couples with low emotional intelligence in both partners would have the lowest depth, support, positive relationship quality scores and the highest conflict and negative relationship quality scores. Married couples should have an awareness of how to regulate their emotion to channel into adaptive actions. Thus, both partners are responsible for improving their emotional intelligence to achieve a quality of life after marriage.

Hypotheses

These hypotheses were tested in the study:

Marital communication style (Mutual Constructive Communication, Self demand-Partner Withdraw communication, Partner demand-Self Withdraw communication) will significantly predict marital satisfaction among married people.

Emotional intelligence (Self Emotion Appraisal, Regulation of Emotion, Use of Emotion, Others Emotion Appraisal) will significantly predict marital satisfaction among married people.

METHOD

Participants

A total of 386 participants drawn from married Staff of Enugu State Universal Basic Education Board (ESUBEB: Administrative and Supplies= 79: 20%; Finance and Account = 53: 14%; Planning Research and Statistics = 65: 17%; School Services Monitoring and Evaluation = 50: 13%; Social Mobilization = 72: 19%; Teachers Training and Curriculum Development = 67: 17%) participated in the study. The participants were made up of 186 (48%) males and 200 (52%) females. The age range of the participants were between 34 years and 52 years; the mean age = 43.26 and the standard deviation = 4.77. Mixed sampling technique (Purposive, convenient) was used to select the participant that participated in the study. This is because the inclusion



criteria for participating in the study are those who are married and are willing to participate in the study. The total numbers of participants were determined using Yamane (1967) sample size formula.

Instrument

Communication Pattern Questionnaire – Short Form (CPQ-SF; Christensen & Heavey, 1990)

Communication Pattern Questionnaire – Short Form (CPQ-SF; Christensen & Heavey, 1990) comprising 10 self-report items is an abbreviated version of 35 items Communication Pattern Questionnaire developed to assess couples' typical styles of communication. Christensen and Shenk (1991) outlined three subscales for the CPQ: Mutual Constructive Communication (MCC) in which both partners initiate discussions about problems, are emotionally expressive and engage in compromise (e.g., "Both members suggest possible solutions and compromises"); Self Demand-Partner Withdraw (SDPW) (in this study self-demand is the participant in the study) in which one partner initiates discussions, nags, criticizes and makes demands, whereas the other partner withdraws; and Partner Demand-Self Withdraw (PDSW) (in this study partner demand is the participant spouse) in which the spouse initiates discussions, whereas the participant withdraws. The CPQ-SF is rated on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 9 (very likely). The semi illiterates' participants are helped to carry out the instructions. There are no right or wrong answer and no time limit for completing CPQ-SF. Items of the sub scales are: MCC = 1, 4, 5, 6; SDPW = 2, 7, 9 and PDSW = 3, 8, 10. Sample of items in CPQ-SF are as follows: "Both my partner and I try to discuss the problem", "My partner criticizes while I defend myself" and "Both my partner and I express our feelings to each other".

The value of the number shaded in each item is added to obtain the participants score in each of the subscales. The higher the scores on each subscale the greater likelihood of using that communication pattern during conflict interactions. Subscale Cronbach alphas range from .62 to .86 (Christensen & Shenk, 1991). Cronbach's alpha for the three sub scales are .77, .75, and .75, for MCC, SDPW and PDSW respectively. Crenshaw et al., (2017) obtained an alpha coefficient of $\alpha > .7$, indicating good internal reliability. For the present study the researcher obtained a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .67, .70 and .82 for Mutual Constructive Communication, Self Demand-Partner Withdraw and Partner Demand- Self Withdraw respectively in a pilot test using 40 participants from married Staff of Post Primary School Management Board (PPSMB) Enugu, Enugu State.

Wong and Law Emotional Intelligent Scale (WLEIS) (Wong & Law, 2002)

The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS, Wong & Law, 2002) is a popular self-report measure of EI. The WLEIS was designed to be used for self and other ratings. This EI scale is based on Davies et al.'s (1998) four-dimensional definition of EI. The WLEIS consists of 16 items with each sub scale measured with 4 items. The Self Emotion Appraisal (SEA: items: 1, 2, 3, 4) dimension assesses individuals' ability to understand and express their own emotions. A sample item is "I really understand what I feel." The Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA: items, 5, 6, 7, 8) dimension measures peoples' ability to perceive and understand the emotions of others. A sample item is "I always know my friends' emotions from their behaviour." The Use of Emotion (UOE: items, 9, 10, 11, 12) dimension denotes individuals' ability to use their emotions effectively by directing them toward constructive activities and personal performance. A sample item is "I always tell myself I am a competent person." The Regulation of Emotion (ROE: items, 13, 14, 15, 16) dimension refers to individuals' ability to manage their own emotions. A sample item from this dimension is "I have good control of my own emotions."

The WLEIS was measured with a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). Wong & Law (2002) reported Cronbach Alpha of .93 as an index of the total



scale's internal coefficients while Law, Wong, and Song (2004) obtained a mean scores from a sample of 418 undergraduate students in Hong Kong showed an average score of 4.01 for Self-emotions Appraisal, 3.78 for Regulation of Emotions, 4.09 for Use of Emotion and 4.15 for Others-Emotion Appraisal. A second sample of factory workers in China showed an average score of 4.84 for self-emotion appraisal, 4.27 for Regulation of Emotions. 4.57 for Use of Emotion and 4.60 for Others-Emotions Appraisal. Previous research has found support for the underlying four-factor structure, reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity of the WLEIS scores (Law et al., 2004; Wong & Law, 2002). Kong (2017) obtained an alpha reliability of WLEIS subscales ranged from 0.74 to 0.87. Likewise, the WLEIS also has shown good psychometric properties in samples of managers in several Latin American countries (Acosta-Prado & Zárate, 2019). Chinaweze (2015), in a pilot study using 86 staff of the Nigeria Police Force, Oji River Area Command obtained Cronbach's Alpha of .77, and mean = 50.90, SD = 8.52, V = 72.53. In addition, the researcher obtained a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of .81 for Self Emotion Appraisal; .76 for Regulation of Emotion; .71 for Use of Emotion and .77 for Others Emotion Appraisal in a pilot test using 40 participants from married Staff of Post Primary School Management Board (PPSMB) Enugu, Enugu State.

Index of Marital Satisfaction (IMS: Hudson, 1982)

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 order 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. On the other hand 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. The researcher obtained a Cronbach Alpha of .75 using 40 participants from married Staff of Post Primary School Management Board (PPSMB) Enugu, Enugu State.

Procedure

The research was carried at Enugu State Universal Basic Education Board (NSUBED). The researchers introduced themselves to the Chairman and with the help of the Chairman the researchers were introduced to the Directors who took them to the Head of the six Departments. The researchers educated the Heads of Department on what the research is all about; that it is for academic purpose. Hence, the Head of the Departments serves as research assistants in administering the research instruments to their respective Staffers. Only married Staffers (purposive sampling) and those who are willing (convenience sampling) participated in the study. The administrations of the research instruments took the form of individual testing in their respective offices and were collected at the point of administration without time limits.

A total of 405 copies of each of the instrument were administered within a period of five working weeks. However, out of the number distributed 391 copies were collected while 386 copies correctly filled were scored and analysed taking note of the proportion from each Departments. Hence, 5 copies (1.00%) that were not correctly filled were discarded while 386 (99%) that were correctly filled were scored and analysed for the study.

Design and Statistic

The design for the study was correlation design this is because the primary objective of the study is to examine the relation between the study variables.

Therefore, the researcher adopted Hierarchical Multiple Regression statistics to account for the contribution of each of the independent variable (Marital Communication Styles and Emotional Intelligence) on the dependent variable (Marital Satisfaction).

RESULT

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and Correlation table on marital communication styles and emotional intelligence as predictors of marital satisfaction among married people

	Mean	S.D	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
AGE	43.26	4.77	1									
GENDER	.52	.50	.17**	1								
MCC	19.8	8.63	.10*	-.21**	1							
SDPW	10.4	6.75	-.09	.15**	-.73**	1						
PDSW	11.3	6.19	-.14**	.27**	-.66**	.46**	1					
SEA	11.2	4.30	.15**	-.19**	.91**	-.75**	-.62**	1				
ROE	10.4	3.18	-.07	-.28**	.71**	-.51**	-.51**	.74**	1			
UOE	10.8	3.60	.09	-.16**	.85**	-.63**	-.56**	.90**	.86**	1		
OEA	11.23	3.28	.08	-.19**	.81**	-.60**	-.54**	.87**	.86**	.92**	1	
MS	77.3	22.15	-.07	-.28**	.87**	-.78**	-.61**	.79**	.63**	.75**	.71**	1
Coefficient Of Determinant (r^2)					.76	.61	.37	.62	.40	.56	.50	

Note* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

The result shows that marital communication style (Mutual Constructive Communication, Self demand-Partner Withdraw communication, Partner demand-Self Withdraw communication) correlated significantly with marital satisfaction (see table 1). Table 1 shows that correlation coefficients were as follows; mutual constructive communication (MCC) and marital satisfaction, $r = .87$, $P < .01$, $r^2 = .76$; self demand-partner withdraw communication (SDPW) and marital satisfaction, $r = -.78$, $P < .01$, $r^2 = .61$; Partner demand-self withdraw communication (PDSW) and marital satisfaction, $r = -.61$, $P < .01$, $r^2 = .37$. By implication marital communication style (Mutual Constructive Communication) has a positive and significant relationship with marital satisfaction; while self demand-partner withdraw communication and partner demand-self withdraw communication has a negative and significant relationship with marital satisfaction among married people.

Secondly, the result also showed that the correlation between emotional intelligence (Self Emotion Appraisal, Regulation of Emotion, Use of Emotion, Others Emotion Appraisal) and marital satisfaction were significant. Their correlation coefficient with marital satisfaction are as follows; Self Emotion Appraisal (SEA: $r = .79$, $P < .01$, $r^2 = .62$); Regulation of Emotion (ROE: $r = .63$, $P < .01$, $r^2 = .40$); Use of Emotion (UOE; $r = .75$, $P < .01$, $r^2 = .56$); and Others Emotion Appraisal (OEA: $r = .71$, $P < .01$, $r^2 = .50$). By implication emotional intelligence (Self Emotion Appraisal, Regulation of Emotion, Use of Emotion, Others Emotion Appraisal) have a positive and significant relationship marital satisfaction among married people.

Table 2: Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting marital satisfaction (N=386)

	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3	
	B	T	β	t	β	t
Age	-.03	-.51				
Gender	-.27	-5.44**				
MCC			.60	17.31**		
SDPW			-.31	-10.59**		
PDSW			-.07	-2.66*		
SEA					.36	5.49**
ROE					.23	5.06**
UOE					.31	4.67**
OEA					.13	2.19*
R	.28		.92		.93	
R ²	.08		.84		.86	
ΔR^2	.08		.77		.01	
F	15.90(2,383)		620.50(3,380)		11.59(4,376)	

Note* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Results of the hierarchical multiple regression for the test of the first factors of marital satisfaction index is shown in the Table 2 above. The variables were entered in stepwise models. The demographic variable (age) did not significantly predict marital satisfaction ($\beta = -.03$, $t = -.51$, $p < .05$). On the other hand the demographic variable (gender) significantly predicted marital satisfaction ($\beta = -.27$, $t = -5.44$, $p < .01$). Hence, the demographic variables (age and gender) serves as control variables in the study and that is why they are keyed in step 1

In step 2, marital communication style (Mutual Constructive Communication, Self demand-Partner Withdraw communication, Partner demand-Self Withdraw communication) was entered and it was a significant predictor of marital satisfaction. Mutual constructive communication positively predicted marital satisfaction ($\beta = .60$, $t = 17.31$, $p < .01$), while Self demand-Partner withdraw communication ($\beta = -.31$, $t = 10.59$, at $p < .01$) and Partner demand-Self Withdraw communication ($\beta = -.07$, $t = -2.66$, at $p < .05$) negatively predicted marital satisfaction. The contribution of marital communication style in explaining the variance in marital satisfaction was 77% ($\Delta R^2 = .77$). Therefore, marital communication style is a significant predictor of marital satisfaction among married people.

In step 3, emotional intelligence (Self Emotion Appraisal, Regulation of Emotion, Use of Emotion, Others Emotion Appraisal) was entered, it was a significant predictor of marital satisfaction. Self Emotion Appraisal (SEA: $\beta = .36$, $t = 5.49$, $p < .01$); Regulation of Emotion, (ROE: $\beta = .23$, $t = 5.06$, $p < .01$); Use of Emotion, (UOE: $\beta = .31$, $t = 4.67$, $p < .01$) and Others Emotion Appraisal (OEA: $\beta = .13$, $t = 2.19$, $p < .05$) positively predicted marital satisfaction. The contribution of emotional intelligence in explaining the variance in marital satisfaction was 01% ($\Delta R^2 = .01$).

DISCUSSION

The results showed that marital communication styles significantly predicted marital satisfaction among married people. From the result it was observed that mutual constructive communication significantly and positively predicted marital satisfaction among married people.



On the other hand Self demand-Partner Withdraw communication and Partner demand-Self Withdraw communication negatively predicted marital satisfaction among married people. Hence, Communication in marriage is like a river, when a husband and a wife are not communicating, a huge dam is built stopping the flow of water. This causes everything around them to suffer and slowly die. Seeds that were once planted cannot grow any more, and the couple starts developing inward thirst for their unmet needs, which in turn causes multiple problems throughout the relationship. Yahaya (2008) observed that most marital problems stem from the inability of the couples to talk to each other. He further described communication as the life wire of an affection and productive marriage and when this life wire is cut, the marriage is heading towards the rocks. To become a good communicator, one has to pay attention to what the partner is saying through his moods, attitudes, movements, and actions. In a marriage, communication keeps ideas and emotions flowing between the couple (Dell 'Aglia, 2012).

Sánchez et al., (2017) confirmed the outcome of the study that a positive style of communication was consistently related to marital satisfaction. In contrast, the inability to communicate in certain areas and the way in which communication is made was strongly associated with marital dissatisfaction. However, other studies examining communication problems between couples, have also found that the level of satisfaction with marriage is associated with the degree to which couples communicate with each other in constructive or unconstructive ways (Epstein, et al., 2005; Gordon et al., 1999).

A large literature spanning several decades has examined couple communication as a predictor of future satisfaction (Leuchtmann et al., 2019; Ross et al., 2019). Meta-analytic results have shown that negative interactions are associated with lower relationship satisfaction and positive interactions with higher satisfaction, cross-sectionally (Woodin, 2011) and longitudinally (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Esere, et.al., (2011) argue that "satisfaction of marriage depends on many things to be successful, such as, trust, love, friendship, understanding, honesty, loyalty, sincerity and above all, effective communication which helps in building up marital unity." When only one spouse makes an effort to communicate and solve conflicts, most likely both spouses will experience dissatisfaction and all other areas of a marital relationship may tremble.

Also, the results showed that emotional intelligence (Self Emotion Appraisal, Regulation of Emotion, Use of Emotion, Others Emotion Appraisal) significantly predicted marital satisfaction among married people.

Much research has confirmed a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among married couples (Abbasi et al., 2016; Anghel, 2016; Yediri & Hamart, 2015). Another study by Smith et al., (2008) and Madahi et al. (2013) highlighted emotional intelligence and effective communication patterns on relationship satisfaction. The study's outcome showed that the most satisfied couples did not avoid discussing relationship issues and assessed their partners' emotional intelligence as high (Smith et al., 2008). Lavalekar (2013) found a strong correlation among marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence. The study investigated how different traits of emotional intelligence interact with marital satisfaction. Anghel (2016) conducted research on marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence. The results revealed a strong relation among marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence components involving majorly balancing one's emotions and others. A study conducted by Abbasi et al. (2016) and Eslami et al. (2014) showed that emotional intelligence has a significant positive relationship with marital satisfaction, and it is the crucial factor in achieving marital satisfaction.

Implications of the Finding

The study revealing that marital communication styles and emotional intelligence significantly predict marital satisfaction has several practical, counseling, and theoretical implications. Practically, couples can benefit from workshops that enhance communication skills and emotional intelligence, fostering healthier interactions and deeper connections (Nasim &



Pandey, 2023). Counselors can integrate emotional intelligence training into therapeutic practices, equipping couples with strategies to manage emotions effectively and communicate more openly, thereby improving relationship satisfaction (Bajaj & Sharma, 2023). Theoretically, this study reinforces existing literature on the importance of emotional intelligence and communication in relationship dynamics, suggesting that future research should explore these constructs across diverse cultural contexts to enhance generalizability (Gharahhajlou et al., 2015). Overall, understanding the interplay between communication styles and emotional intelligence can inform interventions aimed at promoting marital satisfaction and reducing relational conflicts.

Limitations of the Study

One major shortcoming of the study was the use of small sample size out of the myriad of married people in Enugu, making generalizability low. Also, the study is not couple oriented instead only married individual participated.

Suggestions for Further Study

Future research could differently approach other factors like, number of children, frequency of marriage, and educational level to determine their role in a marriage. These results cannot be generalized for the Enugu population because the sample is only representative of one section, they can only be generalizable if the same study participants cover every part of Enugu and similar results were found. A further study can be conducted to investigate the relationship between marital satisfaction and divorce. It is suggested that these psychosocial factors should be considered important elements in programmes aimed at improving and enhancing optimal marital satisfaction.

Conclusion

The researchers conclude that there is an existing prediction of marital communication styles (mutual constructive communication, self demand- partner withdrawal, partner demand- self withdrawal) and emotional intelligence (Self Emotion Appraisal, Regulation of Emotion, Use of Emotion, Others Emotion Appraisal) on marital satisfaction among married people.

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