

PERCEIVED PARENTAL ATTACHMENT STYLE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS AS PREDICTORS OF MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG MARRIED PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated perceived parental attachment style and psychological symptoms as predictors of marital satisfaction among married people. A total of 271 participants were drawn from the population frame of married Staff of Post Primary School Management Board (PPSMB). They comprise of 105 male and 166 female with the age range between 28 and 64 years, mean age = 41.59 and standard deviation =10.76. Mixed sampling technique (Purposive, convenient) was used. The Experiences of Close Relationships – Relationship Structures (ECR-RS); Symptom Distress Checklist (SCL-90) and Index of Marital Satisfaction (IMS) were used as research instrument. Correlation design was adopted while Hierarchical Multiple Regression statistics result revealed that perceived parental attachment styles (Secure, $\beta = .45$, $t = 3.21$, $p < .05$; Anxiety, $\beta = -.16$, $t = -2.13$, at $P < .05$) significantly predicted marital satisfaction except for avoidance attachment. The contribution of perceived parental attachment style in explaining the variance in marital satisfaction was 16% ($\Delta R^2 = .16$). On the other hand, psychological symptoms (Anxiety, $\beta = -.27$, $t = -1.74$, $p < .05$; Depression, $\beta = -.10$, $t = -7.07$, $p < .01$; Hostility, $\beta = -.28$, $t = -2.10$, $p < .05$; Neuroticism, $\beta = -.46$, $t = -3.74$, $p < .01$) was a significant predictor of marital satisfaction. The contribution of psychological symptoms in explaining the variance in marital satisfaction was 15% ($\Delta R^2 = .15$). Finding of the study may help parents understand how their daily communications and interactions with their children can impact their children's emotional and social skills, and how this can impact relationships with future partners.

Key Words: Parental, Attachment, Psychological Symptoms, Marital, Satisfaction

Background to the Study

Marital satisfaction is one parameter through which psychological science assesses the well-being of any marital union. However, multiple factors which may be impossible to be exhausted in a single research may play pivotal role in determining the nature of marital satisfaction in a particular marital union. While some of these factors may exit independently others may interact with other independent factors to increase or decrease the levels of marital satisfaction.

Therefore, the present study will limit its scope on two of such factors; Perceived parental attachment style (Secure, Avoidance, Anxiety; Fraley, Heffernan, Vicary, & Brumbaugh, 2011) and psychological symptoms which was delimited to four types (Anxiety, Neuroticism, Depression and Hostility; Derogatis et al., 1977).

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, 2018). 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). 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 misnormals in marital union could be the level of marital satisfaction (Amadi & Amadi, 2014). 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 (Stone & Shackelford, 2007). Individuals are usually satisfied when their needs are being met, and when the individuals expectations and desires are being satisfied.

Unhappy marriage is a significant source of stress, more negative emotion, mental illness such as anxiety, mood and substance use disorder (Cohen, 2004; Whisman & Sbarra, 2012). Having highlighted some of the possible impact of marital satisfaction, it is pertinent to explore



more variables which may possibly predict 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 investigation is perceived parental attachment. Parental attachment in the study focuses on the nurturing connection that parents develop with their children. Parental attachment is based on the idea that babies learn to trust and thrive when their needs are consistently met by a caregiver early in life. Children who never experience this secure attachment early in life; don't learn to form healthy attachments later in life. They suffer from insecurity, lack of empathy, and, in extreme cases, anger and attachment disorders. Perceived parental attachment may have implications in a marriage depending on the nature of attachment (Secure Attachment, Avoidance Attachment and Anxiety Attachment), how the marital partners and the extended families perceive and understand the attachment. Psychologically, attachment is linked to dependency, a disorder which is considered as a psychological disorder (Hernández & Cáceda, 2023). Therefore, the nature of perceived parental attachment may be an indirect pointer to underline psychological problems though not within the scope of this study.

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). Studies have shown that psychological symptoms can be found among normal population (APA, 2018; Xiong et al., 2020). 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 psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Depression, Hostility, and Neuroticism) as a predictor of self reported marital satisfaction.

Statement of the Problem

Marriage is one of the strongest institutions and is the micro consul of every society. Therefore, every event that occurs in the marriage directly has implication in the well-being of the individuals involved, their children, the extended family and indirectly the society at large. Marital satisfaction has great implication in understanding of how successful or unsuccessful a marital life of family can be. Low marital satisfaction is known to be related to marital conflict, divorce, economic waste, emotional abuse and indirectly untimely death (Whisman, et al., 2018). Maintaining a harmonious and functional marriage through marital satisfaction to avert these negative consequences cannot be complete without understanding some factors that constitute an important component of marriage. Some of these components within the scope of the present study are perceived parental attachment and psychological symptoms. It can be argued that since the variables in this present study have some sort of relationship with marital stability, therefore it may be expected that they will be related to each other (especially perceived parental attachment and marital satisfaction; psychological symptoms and marital satisfaction).

Finally, the study answered these pertinent questions:

Will perceived parental attachment style (Secure, Avoidance, Anxiety) predict marital satisfaction among married people?

Will psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Depression, Hostility, Neuroticism) predict marital satisfaction among married people?



THEORETICAL REVIEW

To establish a starting point for this research, three main theories serve as the sensitizing concepts for the study: Attachment Theory, Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory and The Dynamic Goal Theory of marital satisfaction, were reviewed.

Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1973)

Attachment theory, Bowlby (1973) explains how early childhood relationships with caregivers shape social and emotional development throughout life (McLeod, 2024). Bowlby's work highlights the critical role of a stable and permanent relationship with a mother figure during infancy and childhood (Gardner, 2007). Attachment theory posits that the same motivational system driving the bond between parents and children underlies emotionally intimate relationships in adulthood (Fraley, 2018). Romantic relationships, like infant-caregiver bonds, are considered attachments where romantic love is a property of the attachment behavioral system (Fraley, 2018). Attachment styles developed in childhood influence adult relationships, with secure attachment enabling individuals to form trusting, loving connections (Long-Crowell, 2013). Anxious attachment can lead to a fear of abandonment and clingy behavior, while avoidant attachment may result in emotional unavailability and distrust (Long-Crowell, 2013). Insecure attachment styles can cause difficulties in marriage, potentially leading to dissatisfaction and divorce (Anderson, 2008). Research indicates that early attachment bonds affect mental well-being, relationships, and self-esteem in adulthood, possibly increasing the risk of divorce. Attachment theory provides a framework for understanding relationship difficulties and improving treatment approaches to decrease dissatisfaction and divorce (Fraley, 2018). A trustworthy partner enhances security by offering a safe haven during difficult times and a secure base for exploration and growth. Addressing attachment issues within a marriage can foster stronger, more secure relationships (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999).

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

The theory views families as interconnected systems where emotional connections and patterns influence individual behavior across generations (Healt CareMe, 2024). Key concepts include differentiation of self, which is the ability to distinguish one's thoughts and feelings from others, and triangles, which are three-person relationship systems that form the basis of larger emotional systems (Healt, CareMe, 2024). The theory includes the multigenerational transmission process, which explains how small differences in parental differentiation can lead to predictable differences in their children over generations (Healt, CareMe, 2024). Bowen's approach looks at the family as a multi-generational network that shapes individuality and togetherness (McGoldrick et al., 2005). His theory describes how too much togetherness can create fusion and prevent the development of one's own self, while too much individuality can result in a distant family (McGoldrick et al., 2005). The eight concepts of Bowen's Family Systems Theory are triangles, differentiation of self, nuclear family emotional process, family projection process, multigenerational transmission process, emotional cutoff, sibling position, and societal emotional process (Pollard, 2022). The theory is rooted in the idea that the family functions as a whole, where changes in one part affect the others. Bowen believed that the study of human behavior could be a science, similar to biology. The goal of Bowen's approach is to evaluate family dynamics and provide recommendations for individuals to function better in their relationships (Pollard, 2022).

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

The Dynamic Goal Theory of Marital Satisfaction, proposed by Li and Fung in 2011, suggests that individuals enter marriage with multiple goals that evolve over time (Li & Fung, 2011). These goals can be categorized into personal growth, companionship, and instrumental



goals (Li & Fung, 2011). Personal growth goals involve self-improvement through spousal support, fostering a sense of accomplishment. Companionship goals emphasize emotional bonding and shared meaning, while instrumental goals focus on practical tasks and resource management within the marriage. The theory posits that the prioritization of these goals shifts throughout the marital life cycle; young couples may focus on personal growth, middle-aged couples on instrumental goals, and older couples on companionship. Marital satisfaction is thus dependent on achieving these prioritized goals. Factors such as life transitions and cultural values can influence the prioritization of marital goals, while communication and problem-solving skills can facilitate their achievement (Abreu-Afonso et al., 2021). The theory also acknowledges that external stressors and a couple's vulnerability can lead to modifications in their approach to these goals, impacting marital stability. The Marital Goal Scale (MGS) has been developed to measure these dynamic goals, assessing personal growth, instrumental, and companionship subscales (Li et al., 2020). Research indicates that both the dynamic goal theory and the "suffocation model of marriage" highlight the importance of marital goals in determining marital satisfaction (Li et al., 2020). Furthermore, a study using group-based trajectory modeling identified five distinct trajectories of marital happiness, with the majority of participants reporting high and stable levels of happiness over time.

Theoretical Framework

In the study the dynamic goal theory was adopted as a general theory that links the interaction between attachment, psychological symptoms and marital satisfaction. The theory described marital satisfaction as comprising of multiple goals whereby each individual has his/her dynamics goals. These goals are determined by various elements which may be internal (psychological in nature) or external (family environment). According to Li and Fung (2011), dynamic goal theory has four basic elements and they are: First, people in marital union have multiple goals that they want to achieve in their marriage. Such goals may influenced by the kind of attachment the individual developed with the parents which will determine how much the person relate with the extended family. Second, at various points or stage in life marital goals may change dynamically; such changes may generate different levels of marital satisfaction. Third, whether the prioritized marital goals in a certain developmental stage are met in marriage may determine marital satisfaction. Fourth, there are multiple factors that can influence marital satisfaction by either changing the priority of different marital goals or by facilitating the achievement of the prioritized goals. Such factors may include internal psycho emotional factors such as psychological symptoms, social environmental factors such as extended family and social emotional factors such as attachment to parents.

Specifically, social environmental factor and psycho emotional factor is tested in the work to confirm whether they will be potent determinant of marital satisfaction as proposed by the theory. The three categories of dynamic goal theory are all related to the extend in which an individual in a marital union will experience marital satisfaction. When the expected is not observed in relation to the goals the individual may experience manifestations of psychological symptoms in form of hostility, depression, anxiety, and neuroticism which in turns will determine the degree of marital satisfaction. This is because marital union often results to attaining marital goals that are core determinant of marital satisfaction.

Empirical Review

Perceived parental Attachment Style and Marital Satisfaction

In general, most research regarding attachment and marital satisfaction supports the theoretical expectation that perceived secure parental attachment is associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction than insecure attachment (Fuller & Fincham, 1995; Perrone, & Wright, 2010). In a conducted a longitudinal study that investigated the association between attachment and relationship satisfaction among 150 couples when they were engaged and again at their five



year wedding anniversary. Results indicated that for both couple members secure attachment was related to relationship satisfaction, as well as satisfaction with partner behaviours just prior to their wedding (Crowell & Treboux, 2001; Senchak & Leonard, 1992).

Also, Davila et al., (1998), studies suggested that attachment style is associated with relationship satisfaction as well as marital satisfaction. Individuals with a secure attachment reported satisfaction with their marriage and wives anxiety about abandonment appears to be one of the strongest predictors of marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives. 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. Anxious individuals reported a greater decrease in relationship satisfaction on days with conflict that did other participants and were less optimistic about their relationship future.

Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1992); Simpson, (1990); Bethany and Lorne (2008) showed that individuals with an avoidant attachment were higher in mental health problems, and their levels of life satisfaction were lower. It can be seen that attachment style and well-being play a key role on individuals' personal and social life. People with different attachment styles show different beliefs and feeling about their relationship, love, trustworthiness of love partners and their own love worthiness. As a result of attachment style, people derive different views about themselves from social environment.

Psychological Symptoms and Marital Satisfaction

Evidence exists to demonstrate a negative relationship between marital satisfaction and psychological symptoms. In contrast, relatively few studies have directly tested the relationship between differentiation and marital satisfaction (Skowron, 2000). While little research has been done, the available findings indicate that differentiation of self and differentiation in the couple relationship are related to marital satisfaction. Evidence also exists that demonstrates differentiation is related to psychological symptoms. Bowen Theory proposes lower levels of differentiation as the cause of psychological and interpersonal difficulties. Thus, according to him, low levels of differentiation, as indicated by emotional reactivity and emotional cut-off, would likely result in relationship difficulties.

According to findings of a study by Tempier et al., (1998) the presence of psychological symptoms in an individual may result in a myriad of challenges on many levels – infringing largely on day to day living including financial, emotional and social aspects of one's life. Using data from the Satisfaction with Life Domain Scale (Baker & Intagliata, 1982), in person interviews for the population with mental illness and welfare recipients and mailing questionnaires to survey the general population, the study compared findings regarding feelings about a number of topics including satisfaction with one's home, finances, health, interpersonal relationships and daily activities. The study's findings revealed that people with mental illnesses with psychotic symptoms were as satisfied as the general population in certain aspects of their lives, such as where they lived, their clothing, their day-to-day activities, the use of their leisure time, and their personal finances. That said, people with mental illness in the study were less satisfied than the general population with their "love life", relationships with other family members, the people with whom they were living, their interpersonal relationship skills, and their current friendships. Overall, these findings support the notion that for people with mental illness with psychotic symptoms, their overall quality of life is lower than that of the general population (Mercier et al., 1992). The study in particular, however, highlights the reality that while their overall quality of life is lower, people with psychotic mental illness are least satisfied with all aspects of their lives that involve



relationships with others – including not only friends and roommates, but also family members and romantic partners.

A longitudinal study by Daley, et al, (2000) regarding Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), which included a sample of 155 students from Los Angeles County schools, found that it may not be the disorder itself that impacts the individual's close relationships; rather it may be particular types of symptoms that occur with the disorder that have the greatest impact. Depression (forms of which are classified as mood disorders in the DSM-IV) is one of the most prevalent psychiatric illnesses (Burke, 2003). A review of literature finds that it negatively impacts relationships with families of origin, spouses and children (Burke, 2003). A classic model of depression developed by Coyne (1976) posits that people with depression engage in negative or aversive interactions with their partners that result in a negative social environment and an overall loss of support as well as negative reactions. Coyne (1976) finds that overall, the negativity is present in relationships in which depression is present and this negativity is a key dimension in interpersonal relationships of people with depression.

Spangenberg and Theron (1999) did a study on the relationship between the coping used and the levels of anxiety, depression, and marital maladjustment in the non-depressed spouse. They report that when someone is married to a clinically depressed person that stress is inherent. They further report that the future quality of the marriage is dependent on how the non depressed spouse deals with the stress that is brought on by their partner's depression. Halgin and Lovejoy (1991) indicate that there is a reciprocal relationship between depression in a spouse and maladjustment in the marriage. The depressed spouse may have little interest in social relationships of the couple thus causing the non depressed spouse to feel more isolated, and this can cause further deterioration in the marriage (Halgin & Lovejoy, 1991). Couples bring to their marriage their own level of enduring vulnerabilities (neuroticism). Huston and Houts, (1998) predicted that one's level of those characteristics as well as the characteristics of their partner will shape the psychological infrastructure of their marriage. Their marital relationship is influenced by these traits (Malouf et al., 2010). Neuroticism is one of the personality traits that usually have a bad influence on marital satisfaction. Individuals high on neuroticism tend to be distressed easily and to show negative behaviours under stress. Therefore, this trait is usually related to marital dissatisfaction (Bradbury et al., 2000; Caughlin et al., 2000). Malouf, et al., (2010) did a meta-analysis on the effect of partners' trait to marital satisfaction. They found that neuroticism ($r = -.22$) has the highest correlation.

Neuroticism is not only affect marital satisfaction of individuals but also marital satisfaction of their partner. Having a partner with a high level of neuroticism tends to decrease marital satisfaction, because individuals with high level of neuroticism tend to express behaviours such as: criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stone walling. These behaviours are known to have a detrimental effect on marital relationship (Gottman, 1994; Karney & Bradbury (1997)). They measured the partner effect while controlling the effect of actor effect (Dyrenforth et al., 2010). They found the significant effect of actor neuroticism on their level of marital satisfaction. However, the partner effect of neuroticism on marital satisfaction of their partner gave conflicting results. Charania (2006) did not find significant partner effect of Neuroticism, while Dyrenforth et al., (2010) found a significant partner effect of neuroticism on marital satisfaction, although the magnitude is smaller than that of actor effect.

McLeod's (1994) study also considered symptoms of anxiety in relation to marital satisfaction. The study reported findings similar to those of couples in which depression is present. Analyses examining marital quality as a function of the existence of anxiety disorders in the members of a couple indicated that the sex of the partner with the symptoms and the specific type of symptoms present alter overall relationship satisfaction. Whisman (1999) found that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and major depression had the greatest negative impact on

satisfaction for women, and dysthymia – a form of mild, long-lasting depression - had the greatest negative impact on marriage satisfaction for men who had the disorder.

Marital dynamics have been found to have a reciprocal relationship with hostility. Hostility can be thought of as an affective state of anger combined with behavioural expressions of that anger (Spielberger et al., 1995). Gottman (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 (Pasch & Bradbury 1998). Smith and Glazer (2006) reported results of a series of studies showing that wives' trait anger predicted lower marital adjustment scores for both wives and husbands. When studying the impact of marital interaction on state hostility, Roberts and Krokoff (1990) found that for women, state hostility was a response to their husbands' withdrawal behaviour in distressed marriages. Roberts (2000) found that husband hostility was strongly associated with wife withdrawal and lower relational adjustment. Each of these studies suggests that state hostility can be a result of relationship dynamics. Makinen and Johnson (2006) also have found hostile responses to partner withdrawal in the therapeutic setting. Strong relationships are characterized by the relatively infrequent presence of hostile behaviours and interactions in relation to positive behaviours and interactions (Gottman, 1994).

Due to the association between hostility and marital distress, therapeutic interventions often target hostility in an attempt to reduce hostile interactions, thereby improving relational adjustment and stability.

Hypotheses

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

Perceived parental attachment style (Secure, Avoidance, Anxiety) will significantly predict marital satisfaction among married people.

Psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Neuroticism, Depression, Hostility) will significantly predict marital satisfaction among married people.

METHOD

Participants

A total of 271 participants were drawn from the population frame of married Staff of Post Primary School Management Board (PPSMB). They comprise of 105 married and 166 married female. The age ranges of the participants were between 28 years and 64 years. The mean and the standard deviation of their age were 41.59 and 10.76 respectively. Mixed sampling technique (Purposive, convenient) was used to select the Zones and the Local Government Area 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

The Experiences of Close Relationships – Relationship Structures (ECR-RS; Fraley, Heffernan, Vicary, & Brumbaugh, 2011)

The Relationship Structures (ECR-RS) questionnaire is a self-report instrument designed to assess attachment patterns in a variety of close relationships. The same 9 items are used to assess attachment styles with respect to 4 targets (i.e., mother, father, romantic partner, and best friend). The items were written in a way that allows them to be used for a variety of interpersonal targets (not just romantic relationships) and for a variety of age groups. If desired, the 9 items can be used to target only one kind of relationship and, therefore, this instrument can be used as a 9-item version of the [ECR-R](#). For the purposes of the study, the measure was modified to measure

only married participants (romantic partners). In the instructions for this measure, participants were asked to answer the questions with respect to how they felt in their current relationship with their partners. To answer an item, the participant chose a number on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Within each relational domain, three subscales of this measure identify attachment related secure, (items: 1, 2, 3), avoidance (items: 4, 5, 6) and anxiety, (7, 8, 9). Scores within each subscale can range from one to seven with higher scores related to increased secure, anxiety and avoidance attachment dimensions.

Fraley et al. (2011) tested the psychometric properties of the scale on a population of adults. They found criterion-related validity evidence for scores on the ECR-RS in comparison to the Emotionally Close Relationships – Revised (ECR-R) scale developed by Fraley et al. (2000). Bivariate correlates between the anxiety subscales were reported for relationships with mothers ($r = .13$), fathers ($r = .10$), partners ($r = .66$), friends ($r = .27$), and globally ($r = .47$). On the avoidance subscales, they reported coefficients for mothers ($r = .15$), fathers ($r = .14$), partners ($r = .56$), friends ($r = .13$), and globally ($r = .31$). They reported good test-retest reliability of scores on the ECR-RS after a span of 30 days for parents ($r = .80$) and romantic relationships ($r = .65$). Scores on the anxiety subscale produced Cronbach's values for the same sample ranging from .83 to .87; reliability estimates for scores on the avoidance sub scale ranged from .81 to .92 while reliability estimates for scores on the secure sub scale ranged from .71 to .83. The researcher obtained Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .71 = anxiety attachment, .65 = avoidance attachment and secure attachment using 60 participants from Enugu State Examination Development Center.

Symptom Distress Checklist 90 (SCL – 90)

46 items extracted from symptoms distress checklist 90 (SCL-90) designed by Derogatis, Limpman and Covi (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.

Validity: Erinoso (1996) reported a coefficient of concurrent validity between retirement stress inventory (Omoluabi, 1996) and SCL-90 scales which ranged from .26 to .47.

Reliability: 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 researcher obtained Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .76 = Anxiety, .84 = Depression, .67 = Hostility, and .83 = Neuroticism = .83 using 60 participants from Enugu State Examination Development Center.

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 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.

Validity: Concurrent validity coefficient of .48 was obtained by Anene (1994) by correlating index of marital satisfaction (IMS) with marital stress inventory (MSI) Omoluabi (1994).

Reliability: 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 researcher obtained a Cronbach Alpha of .94 using using 60 participants from Enugu State Examination Development Center.

Procedure

The researcher received approval/letter of identity from the department for the study (see appendix 1). There six (6) Education Zones, out of which Enugu Zone was selected using convenient sampling technique. Within Enugu Education Zone, there are three Local Government Area: Enugu North (9 Schools); Enugu East (12 Schools) and Isi-Uzo (12 Schools). Letter of identification for the study was attached to each of the research instruments. Only married Staff were issued the instrument (purposive sampling). The administration of the research instrument took the form of group testing at Post Primary School Management Board (PPSMB) office during Teachers workshop and was administered with the help of the Zonal Inspectors and Supervisory Principals. The research instrument was administered during break period of the workshop. The research instruments were collected at the point of administration without time limit.

Design and Statistic

The design for the study is correlation design. This is because the primary objective of the study is to examine the relation between the study variables. Also, the participants were asked to complete copies of the questionnaires without manipulation of experimental variable. Therefore, the researcher will adopt Hierarchical Multiple Regression statistics to account for the contribution of each of the independent variable (Perceived parental attachment and Psychological Symptoms) on the dependent variable (Marital Satisfaction).

RESULTS

Table 1: Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Marital Satisfaction (N=271)

	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3	
	β	t	β	t	β	t
Age	.33	6.26**				
Gender	.39	7.42**				
Secure Attachment			.45	3.12*		
Avoidance Attachment			.00	.02		
Anxiety Attachment			-.16	-2.13*		
Anxiety					-.27	-1.74*
Depression					-1.10	-7.07**
Hostility					-.28	-2.10*
Neuroticism					-.46	-3.74**
R	.52		.66		.27	
R^2	.27		.43		.15	
ΔR^2	.27		.16		.16	
F	49.83(2,268)		25.19(3,265)		22.99(4,261)	

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) significantly predicted marital satisfaction ($\beta = .33$, $t = 6.26$, $p < .01$). Also, the demographic variable (gender) significantly predicted marital satisfaction ($\beta = .39$, $t = 7.42$, $p < .01$). Hence, the demographic variable (age and gender) serves as control variables in the study and that is why they are keyed in step 1

In step 2, perceived parental attachment styles (Secure, Avoidance, Anxiety) was entered, it was a significant predictor of marital satisfaction except for avoidance attachment. Secure attachment positively predicted marital satisfaction ($\beta = .45$, $t = 3.21$, $p < .05$), while anxiety attachment negatively predicted marital satisfaction. (Anxiety, $\beta = -.16$, $t = -2.13$, at $P < .05$). The contribution of perceived parental attachment style in explaining the variance in marital satisfaction was 16% ($\Delta R^2 = .16$). Therefore, attachment style (Secure, Anxiety) is a significant predictor of marital satisfaction among married people.

In step 3, psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Depression, Hostility, Neuroticism) was entered, it was a significant predictor of marital satisfaction. Anxiety, ($\beta = -.27$, $t = -1.74$ $p < .05$); depression, ($\beta = -1.10$, $t = -7.07$, $p < .01$) and hostility, ($\beta = -.28$, $t = -2.10$, $p < .05$); neuroticism, ($\beta = -.46$, $t = -3.74$, $p < .01$) negatively predicted marital satisfaction among married people. The contribution of psychological symptoms in explaining the variance in marital satisfaction was 15% ($\Delta R^2 = .15$). Therefore, psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Depression, Hostility, Neuroticism) is a significant predictor of marital satisfaction among married people.

DISCUSSION

The present study has two major objectives; one is to assess whether perceived parental attachment style (Secure, Avoidance, Anxiety) will predict marital satisfaction while the second is to examine whether Psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Depression, Hostility, Neuroticism) will predict marital satisfaction among married people. The results showed that perceived parental attachment style (Secure, Avoidance, Anxiety) significantly predicted marital satisfaction among married people. Specifically, secure attachment style and anxiety attachment styles predicted marital satisfaction although at different direction. Hence, secure attachment style positively and significantly predicted marital satisfaction. On the other hand anxiety attachment styles significantly and negatively predicted marital satisfaction among married people. This means that there is an existing negative prediction between anxiety attachment styles and marital satisfaction among married people.

Research has indicated that attachment style is a comprehensive, effectual and determinant fact in human life, particularly humans' social life. In addition, many studies have found secure attachment styles are differentially related to positive outcomes, such as life satisfaction, social efficacy (Perrone, & Wright, 2010); career exploration (Chapeland. Croity-Belz, Fillipis, Garcia & Vignoli, 2005), high subjective well-being (Fuller & Fincham, 1995). Senchak and Leonard (1992) studied the same three attachment configurations among marital couples, including approximately 300 recently married couples (1st marriage). Couples were included in the study if husbands were between the ages of 18 and 29. The investigators found that secure couples had better marital adjustment than both mixed and insecure couple types.

Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, and Kashy (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 that did other participants and were less optimistic about their relationship future.



Also, the results showed that psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Depression, Hostility, Neuroticism) negatively and significantly predicted marital satisfaction among married people. Specifically, all the dimensions of psychological symptoms significantly predicted marital satisfaction among married people. This means that there is an existing negative prediction between psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Depression, Hostility, Neuroticism) on marital satisfaction. In general, numbers of relationships in which psychology symptoms are present as a result of less differentiation in relationship have lower relationship satisfaction than those in which no symptoms are present, regardless of the type of symptoms (Burke, 2003; Daley et al., 2000; Whisma, et al., 2004; Zlotnick et al., 2000). According to findings of a study by Tempier et al., (1998) the presence of psychological symptoms in an individual may result in a myriad of challenges on many levels infringing largely on day to day living including financial, emotional and social aspects of one's life. Depression was found to play a significant role in negatively impacting relationship satisfaction in a study by Zlotnick et al., (2000).

Implications of the Finding

The study has general implications and relevance for individual, family and society, also intervention programmes targeted to preventing and reducing the levels of marital disharmony. As observed in the result various dimensions of perceived parental attachment styles have different directions of relationship with marital satisfaction. Specifically, secure attachment positively predicted marital satisfaction with high coefficient of determinant. In practice, individuals could be encouraged from childhood to have better marital satisfaction through encouragement of behaviours that show confidence, balance and understanding in dealing with people. Society, counsellors and therapists can encourage this positive attributes of secure attachment in an individual. It is predicted that such individual may likely experience more marital satisfaction. On the other hand anxiety attachment significantly predicted marital satisfaction negatively and should be discouraged. Parents are advised not to train their children in such a manner that they will perceive their attachment to them in an anxious way.

Based on the findings of the study some problems identified have strong relevance in relation to perceived parental attachment and psychological symptoms towards achieving marital satisfaction. Problems like negative attitude to marital union, and inability to cope with marital stress is observed to result from and also motivation to persistence of the degree of attachment and psychological symptoms. These could be alleviated through marital/family therapy (Clinical Psychologists, Counsellors, Clergy and Medical Sociologists), and attitude change (Social Psychologists, Political Scientists, and Public Administrators). Therapists may find the results of the study helpful in understanding some of the causes as to why couples experience low marital satisfaction. This will help them to inculcate them during counselling section. Also, the findings of the current study point to the importance of the quality of a child's early attachment to later adult partner relationships and marital satisfaction. Findings from this study may help parents understand how their daily communications and interactions with their children can impact their children's emotional and social skills, and how this can impact relationships with future partners.

Limitations of study

The study, with its advantageous prospects, still experienced some limitations. In a survey study like this, age was not considered as a variable that can influence marital satisfaction and may be a limitation to the present study. However, age is not the same as length of marital experience as some older people may have entered marriage late when compared with younger participants. Thus, years of experience may as well be a factor which the present study did not consider. But previous studies had shown that length of marriage is not a significant factor in determining marital satisfaction (Boden et al., 2010; Hirschberger et al., 2009).

**Suggestions for Further Study**

Based on the outcome of the study one may suggest that future researchers should adopt couple oriented approach, whereby husband and wife as couple should be selected to participate. Further, researcher should adopt sex oriented approach in studying marital satisfaction to verify if males or females exhibit more satisfaction in marital union. Finally, future researcher should increase the sample size in order to cross validate the outcome of the study.

Conclusion

The present study examined perceived parental attachment styles and psychological symptoms as predictors of marital satisfaction among married people. This is relevant in the present day Nigeria given the increase on marital problems in the country as observed by the researcher that precipitated the study.

Hence, secure perceived parental attachment style significantly predicted marital satisfaction positive while anxiety perceived parental attachment style significantly predicted marital satisfaction negatively.

Also, psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Depression, Hostility, Neuroticism) negatively and significantly predicted marital satisfaction among married people.

Hence, the researcher concludes that there is an existing prediction between secure and anxiety perceived parental attachment styles and marital satisfaction among married people.

Also, there is an existing prediction between psychological symptoms (Anxiety, Depression, Hostility, Neuroticism) and marital satisfaction among married people.

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