NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Psychosocial correlates of marital satisfaction among selected couples in Lagos Metropolis

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Abstract

Cases of separations and divorce among couples have been on the increase in the recent time, particularly in Lagos metropolis; this is due to lack of marital satisfaction. The study aims at examining psychological and social factors that correlate marital satisfaction among selected couples in Lagos metropolis. The research was carried out among married workers in public and private sector in the selected area. The participants consisted of 341 married workers who met the inclusion criteria of being married for one year, having completed secondary school and being at least 19 years old. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in the selection of subjects for the study. Respondents were administered with Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21); a self-report instrument that measures three related negative emotional states which are depression, anxiety and stress. They also responded to Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS). The data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 17th version). The first hypothesis was tested using multiple regression, while the second and third hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The result of the study showed that participants who reported low marital satisfaction were found to be high on measures on depression, anxiety and stress. These three variables were also found to have joint influence on marital satisfaction. ($R^2 = 0.03$, $F(3,337) = 3.71$, $p < .05$); there was no significant relationship between socio-economic status and marital satisfaction ($r = -.05$, $p > .05$) but the study found a significant negative relationship between depression and marital satisfaction ($r = -.13$, $p < .05$). The study discussed how lack of marital satisfaction poses a great threat to the stability and survival of families in Nigeria and thus offered recommendations.
Keyword: Depression, Anxiety, stress, social economic status, marital satisfaction

Introduction

Family as an important social unit of every society is often bedevilled with diverse issues ranging from differences in communication pattern between couples, financial difficulties, psychological distress, emotional turbulence among others.. In the rural African setting, the status of a wife in her husband's family remains shaky and unpredictable until she begets a child. She becomes really secure after the birth of a male child. The birth of the child gives her the title– wife, prior to this time she may simply be referred to as a wife only in anticipation (Obi, 1990).Couples also experience pressure from their relative or in-laws especially when the couples fail to reproduce or give birth to children on time, this may lead to social assault on them and may in turn cause marital dissatisfaction which might lead to separation or divorce. Marital dissatisfaction as a result of poor marital relationship is on the increase in Nigeria especially the south west geopolitical zone of the country, this has implications on social stability, physiological and psychological health of members of society (Rostami-Ganzinour, Nygren & Titcher, 2014).

When a couple's expectations and desires in marriage are not met, due to persistent broken promises, poor attention from the partner, mistreatment etc. tension may arise and

thereby a conflict may ensue. Moreover, communication pattern play a vital role in determining the success of a marriage or satisfaction the couples derive from their marriage. There is a high possibility for marriage with poor and ineffective communication to experience distress compared to a marriage where there is proper and effective communication pattern (Ndlovu, 2013).

Social-economic status of married couples has been found to contribute to positive affect within a marriage (Litcher & Carmalt, 2009). For example, in the African context where it is believed that it is the responsibility of the husband to provide for the household and the wife is just to support the husband and in a situation whereby the husband has become incapable to play this role, this can create a tension and thus affect their satisfaction in their union. It appears logical that those with high social economic status would be satisfied in their marriage compared to those with low social economic status. This view was confirmed in the study of Lichter & Carmalt (2009), although it is doubtful if social economic status alone can determine marital satisfaction.

In Lagos, where there are many married workers, there is a tendency by couples to extend the conflict faced at home to their workplace in terms of dealing with their staff or co-worker, client or customers thereby undermining their productivity and indeed the productivity of others, it thus become imperative to critically examine variable that are antecedents of dissatisfaction in marriage which is the basis of the present study Hence, the main problem investigated in this study is to understand and determine the psychological and social factors that can affect marital satisfaction among selected couples in Lagos Metropolis.

Theoretical Framework

Psychosocial theory of development

Psychosocial theory of human development was propounded by Erikson (1963) and it emphasized the unique psychological and social tasks of an individual throughout life. Unlike Sigmund Freud who emphasized the sexual nature of human development, Erikson stressed the influence of both psychological process and social nature on human development. According to Erickson human development is a consequence of biological and psychological maturation and each stage has its own features regarding the individual's interaction with his or her environment. He therefore, highlighted eight stages of identity development based on psychodynamic theory. The stages are:
Trust vs. Mistrust (ii) Autonomy vs. Doubt and shame (iii) Initiative vs. Guilt (iv) Industry vs. Inferiority (v) Identity vs. role confusion (iv) Intimacy vs. separation (vii) Generativity vs. Regression (viii) Coherence vs. Hopelessness.

Erikson divided life span into eight stages with each stage being characterized by a psychosocial crisis involving transition in important social relationships. In Erikson's view, identity is formed by how individuals resolve their psychosocial crisis. Each crisis has a potential of inducing character change that can yield a different outcome. Again, Erikson believes that identity formation entails three broad domains: Fidelity, ideology, and work. The basic process of identity formation also involves choosing a commitment. e.g, a commitment to a marital relationship, It is a process of active seeking and becoming committed in a dyadic

relationship or to a group of people and to a set of ideas one can trust. If infidelity or dissatisfaction is a regular experience by and individual committed to a choice relationship, then tensions and conflict arises which then have serious implications on identity development.i.e, marital identity.

Literature Review

There exists a substantial volume of literature in psychology on marital satisfaction and the antecedents although statistics on marital distress is hard to come by in Nigeria, official record shows that Crude marital dissolution rate (CMDR) in the country was 11.0 per 1000, divorce rate (CDR) was 5.0; and separation rate (CSR) was 6.0 per 1000 population. This indicates that out of every 1000 Nigerians, five are divorced and six separated (Nigerian Population Census, 2006) as cited in (Ntoimo & Akokuwebe, 2014). This suggests that more people may have sought the dissolution of their union than earlier times. Financial problems and infidelity were identified by Adekola & Okparaocha (2016) as two key reasons of dissatisfaction in marriage. Social factors like communication pattern, social economic status, time spent together were also pointed to by Adigeb and Mbua, (2015) as determinants of marital satisfaction.

The three dimensions of marital goals can be subject to changes across adulthood. Those who are young in marriage stress the personal growth goals, while middle-aged married couples' emphasize the instrumental goals, and old couples' emphasis on the companionship goals (Lee & Shehan, 1989, 2011). Couples' marital satisfaction is related to the achievement of the set and prioritized marital goals. Lee and Shehan also pointed out that change in priority of the set goal or priority of numerous marital goals as a result of life transition and cultural values can also determine marital satisfaction between married couples. In a similar study conducted by Adigeb and Mbua (2015) on the influence of psychosocial factors on marital satisfaction among public servants in Cross River State, they found that psychological factors such as depression, affection and sexual activities significantly relate with marital satisfaction among public servants. They also confirmed that social factor such as number of children, communication and time spent together is significantly related to marital satisfaction among the public servant.

Again, Pateraki and Roussi (2013) reported that there exists a strong relationship between marital satisfaction and depressive symptoms, however, they suggested that this relationship is complex. Walker, Isherwood, Button, Kitwe-Magambo and Luzcz (2013) also confirmed that an individual's own depressive symptoms are related to their levels of marital satisfaction, whereby higher scores on the depression scale predicted lower marital satisfaction scores for the individual.

Low income or material hardship was found to be a threat to marital quality and stability (Lichter and Carmalt, 2009). Although, some studies showed cross-cultural differences in the strength of this association (Kamo, 1993), few studies examine whether education level is related to marital satisfaction. For example, Janssen et al. (1998) found that highly educated women had higher rates of unstable marriages. Using the National Survey of Family Growth data, Heaton (2002) found opposite results, wherein marital dissatisfaction was lower among

women who were more educated. Therefore, the findings regarding the association between marital satisfaction and education level based primarily on Western culture are not clear and raise the question of whether such an association exists globally.

Wenger (2005) suggested that the demand/withdrawal pattern's effect on marital satisfaction may be mediated by the perception of self-verification (feeling understood) in both husbands and wives. They feel less understood withdrawn by partners in time of conflict. Uebelacken, Courtange and Whisman (2003) affirmed that marital satisfaction as a function of depressive symptom, communication and "self-silencing" in women. They affirmed that depressive systems were associated with self-silencing and a pattern of communication characterized as wife-demand and husband withdraw. The negative correlation between depression symptoms and marital satisfaction was significant for women and not for men.

Research Hypothesis
- Depression, anxiety and stress would significantly jointly and independently have negative influence on marital satisfaction among selected couples in Lagos metropolis
- There will be a significant positive relationship between depression and marital satisfaction.
- There will be a significant positive relationship between socio-economic status and marital satisfaction.

Method

The study was a survey research which used purposive sampling technique to select 341 married couples among workers in selected organization in both public and private sector. The respondents selected were those who met the inclusion criteria of the study which included: being married for at least one year, completion of secondary school, and being at least 19years old. The first criteria was based on the assumption of this study that a couple should be in a good position to evaluate his or her experiences in a marriage after spending at least a year in marriage, the second criteria can be justified on the ground that filling the questionnaire satisfactorily without any assistance of an interpreter (which the study did not provide for) would require a minimum of secondary school education, and thirdly minimum legal age for marriage in Nigeria is eighteen years old, to meet the condition of a year in marriage therefore means that a participant must be 19 years old and above.

Measures

1. Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21

The study adopted *Depression Anxiety Stress Scale* (DASS-21) developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995) for the research. The DASS-21 is a self-report instrument that measures three related negative emotional states which are depression, anxiety and stress. It is rated on a four-point scale as follows: 0 = does not apply to me at all, 1 = applied to me to some degree, or some of the time, 2= applied to me to some considerable degree or a good part of time 3 = applied to me very much or most of the time. The DASS -21 has a correlation coefficient of .74 and .81. (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). Again, it was reported by the authors as having internal consistency coefficient of .96, .89, & .93 for depression, anxiety and stress

respectively. For the present study the Cronbach Alpha were found as follows: depression: 0.72, anxiety: 0.79, Stress: 0.62

2. Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS)

The scale was developed by Snyder (1979). The scale has a response format ranging from 1-strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3-Undecided, 4-Agree, and 5-Strongly agree. High score on this scale signifies satisfaction with marriage, while low score on the scale indicates no- satisfaction with the marriage. The scale developer reported a Cronbach alpha of α= .98. However, this study reported a Cronbach alpha of α= .73.

Procedure

The researcher recruited and trained five (5) research assistants on how to administer the instruments to the participants. Thereafter, the researcher and the research assistants went to different selected public and private organist ion to administer the scale to the workers, this was after they have been briefed about the objectives of the study and assured them of unanimity as well as confidentiality of any response they may provide for the conduct of the study, the participants thereafter gave their consent freely to participate in the study research with the assurance of confidentiality and animosity. After this, some responded immediately while some told the researcher to come back and pick the questionnaire at a later day. It took the researcher about 1 week (7 days) to collect back the questionnaires. In the end, out of the distributed five hundred 400copies of the questionnaires, only three hundred and eighty 380 were returned and out of this number, only three hundred and forty- one (341) were properly filled and therefore used for analyses.

Results

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents on Demographic Variables

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age group (years)		
19-25 years	79	23.2
26-35years	105	30.8
36-45years	100	29.3
46-55 years	44	12.9
56-65years	10	2.9
65 years above	3	0.9
Sex		
Male	160	46.9
Female	181	53.1
Marital Status		
Separated	22	88.0
Married	300	6.5
Divorce	12	3.5
Widow	7	2.1

Duration in Marriage		
1-5years	123	36.1
6-10years	134	39.3
11-15years	35	10.3
16-20years	42	12.3
21 years above	7	2.1
Educational level		
FLSC	34	10.0
SSCE	95	27.9
ND/NCE	78	22.9
HND/B.Sc	107	31.4
M.Sc	22	6.5
Ph.D	5	1.5
Income (₦)		
50,000 and below	183	53.7
51,000-100,000	92	27.0
101,000-200,000	42	12.3
200,000-300,000	14	4.1
301,000-400,000	5	1.5
400,000-500,000	4	1.2
500,000 and above	1	0.3
Total	341	100

Table above reveals that 79 (23.2%) of the respondents were between the age of 20-25 years while larger proportion 105 (30.8%) fall between the age brackets of 26-35 years, 100(29.3%) belong to age group between 36-45 years, 44(12.9%) fall between age range of 46-55 years, 10(2.9%) fall between age bracket of 56-65 years and 3(0.9%) were 65 years and above; majority 160(46.9%) of the respondents were males, while 181(53.1%) were females; 300(88%) of the respondents were in a marriage, 22(6.5%) were separated, 12(3.5%) were divorcee and 7(2.1%) were widows; majority 123(36.1%) of the respondents spent between 1-5 years in marriage, 134(39.3%) spent between 6-10 years, 35(10.3%) spent between 11-15 years, 42(12.3%) spent between 16-20 years and spent 21 years and above in marriage; 34 (10%) acquired primary school certificate, 95(27.9%) had secondary certificate, 78(22.9%) possessed OND/NCE certificate, 107(31.4%) possessed HND/B.Sc certificate, 22(6.5%) were Master's Degree 183(53.7%) of the respondents earned 50,000 naira below, 92(27%) earned between 51,000-100,000 naira, 42(12.3%) reported earning 101,000-200,000, 14(4.1%) earned 201,000-300,000 Naira, 5(1.5%) earned between 301,000-400,000 Naira monthly, 4(1.2%) earned between 400,000-500,000 Naira and 1(0.3%) reported earning 500,000 and above.

Test of Hypothesis
- **Hypothesis 1 :** Depression, anxiety and stress would significantly jointly and independently have negative influence on marital satisfaction among selected couples in Lagos metropolis

Table 2: Showing the summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Showing joint and independent Influence of depression, anxiety and stress on marital satisfaction

Predictors	B	T	P	R	R^2	F	P
Depression	-.036	-.493	>.05				
				0.18	0.03	3.71	<.05
Anxiety	-.171	-2.189	<.05				
Stress	.030	.421	>.05				

The result from table 2 shows that depression, anxiety and stress jointly predicted marital satisfaction (R^2 = 0.03, F (3,337) = 3.71, p <.05). When combined the depression, anxiety and stress accounted for 3% of the change observed in the marital satisfaction. This revealed that the collective presence of depression, anxiety and stress has significant influence on the marital satisfaction. The result also revealed that anxiety (β = -.17, t= -2.19, p<.05) have significant independent influence on marital satisfaction. While depression (β = -.04, t= -0.49, p>.05) and stress (β = .03, t= 0.42, p>.05) were found to have no independent significant influence on the marital satisfaction. The hypothesis was thus partly supported.

Hypothesis II

Hypothesis two states that there will be a significant relationship between depression and marital satisfaction. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson Moment correlational analysis. The result is presented in table 3.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment correlation showing the relationship between depression and marital satisfaction

Variables	Mean	S.D	Df	r	P
Depression	5.8123	4.28403	339		
				-.130*	<.05
Marital satisfaction	28.8827	7.64032	339		

The results obtained from the test are shown in table 2. shows that there was significant inverse relationship between depression and marital satisfaction (r= -.13, p<.05). The result implies that married couples who are low on depression significantly report high marital satisfaction. The hypothesis is thus accepted.

Hypothesis III

There will be a significant positive relationship between socio-economic status and marital satisfaction

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment correlation showing the relationship between socio-economic status and marital satisfaction

Variables	Mean	S.D	Df	r	P
Socio-economic status	7.8358	2.56378	341		
Marital satisfaction	28.8827	7.64032	341	-.053	>.05

The results obtained from the test are shown in table 4. The table shows that there was no significant relationship between socio-economic status and marital satisfaction (r= -.05, p>.05). The result indicates that increase or decrease in socio-economic status did not significantly relate to increase or decrease in marital satisfaction among selected married couple sampled. The hypothesis is thus rejected.

Discussion

The first hypothesis which stated that depression, anxiety and stress will jointly and independently influence marital satisfaction was partly supported. This revealed that the collective presence of depression, anxiety and stress have significant influence on the marital satisfaction. The result also revealed that anxiety has significant independent influence on marital satisfaction while depression and stress were found to have no independent significant influence on marital satisfaction. This result is in the expected direction, there is high incidence of depression and anxiety being reported in many psychology clinics in Lagos (Egwuonu et, al (2019). obviously unpleasant experiences within marriage can account for this prevalence as partly revealed in this study. This result corroborates the study by Walker, Isherwood, Button, Kitwe-Magambo and Luzcz (2013) who found that individual's own depressive symptoms are related to their levels of marital satisfaction, whereby higher scores on the depression scale predicted lower marital satisfaction scores for the individual.

The second hypothesis which stated that there will be a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and depression, the result shows that there was significant inverse relationship between marital satisfaction and depression. The result implies that couples who are low on depression significantly report high marital satisfaction. The result is in line with study by Uebelacken, Courtange and Whisman (2003) found that marital satisfaction as a function of depressive symptom, communication and "self-silencing" in women. They affirmed that depressive systems were associated with self-silencing and a pattern of communication characterized as wife-demand and husband withdraw. The negative correlation between depression symptoms and marital satisfaction was significant for women and not for men. Also, Pateraki and Roussi (2013) confirmed the strong relationship between marital

satisfaction and depressive symptoms, but also suggested that this relationship is complex The implication of this sad reality is that partners in a marital relationship may resolve to use of drugs or engage in alcoholism to cope with depression while in some cases, depressed couples may have suicidal ideation due to their depressive moods. This problem can impact negatively on relationship with children, neighbours colleagues at work and can affect productivity at work place

The third hypothesis which stated that there will be a significant relationship between socio-economic status and marital satisfaction. The results showed that there was no significant relationship between socio-economic status and marital satisfaction. The result indicates that increase or decrease in socio-economic status did not significantly relate to increase or decrease in marital satisfaction among selected couple sampled. The result contrast the study by Lichter and Carmalt (2009). This result was not in the expected direction and very surprising, one possible explanation for this unexpected result might be due to the demography of participants selected, as they were gainfully employed spouses with regular source of income.

Conclusion

Collapse of marriages may consequently spell a doom for the stability and continuity of the society especially going by the Functionalist's view of social institutions wherein they believe that there would be an experience of social disorder if a critical unit of a social system like the family disintegrates (on account of the psychosocial variables examined in this paper). The breakdown of family thus affect the social system negatively (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013), The role of families that consist of offering emotional support to its members giving of socialization to new members of the society among several other important roles would greatly suffer if the rate of divorce and separation of spouses is not halted or minimized, A lot must be done by relevant authorities/profession to offer necessary support to individuals who are in marriage, such support could be in easier access to professional services/resource which are in a very short supply in the city. Relevant professionals can do more by way of more advocacy to call attentions to these variable that constitute a great threat to marital satisfaction which consequently may lead to marriage dissolution.

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