

Attachment Styles and Personality Traits as Predictors of Marital Satisfaction among Employed Married Women

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Abstract

The study examined attachment styles and personality traits as predictors of marital satisfaction among employed married women. The participants of the study comprised of one hundred and fifty (150) employed married women who are members of Catholic Women's Organization (CWO) in Awka South LGA, Anambra State. A purposive sampling technique was adopted. Their age ranged from 19 to 55 years, ($M = 35.09$, $SD = 8.076$). Instruments administered include; Index of Marital satisfaction (IMS) by Hudson (1947), Attachment style questionnaire (ASQ) by Feeney & Noller (1994) and Big five inventory (BFI) by John & Srivastava (1999). Multiple linear regression statistical analysis was used as a statistical tool to analyze the hypotheses postulated. Results showed that the first hypothesis which states that attachment style will have a significantly positive prediction on marital satisfaction among employed married woman was confirmed as Avoidant had a positive significant prediction on marital satisfaction at ($\beta = .372$, $p < .01$). As well as Anxious attachment style which had a positively significant prediction on marital satisfaction at ($\beta = .298$, $p < .01$). By implication, this suggests that Attachment style has a significant prediction on marital satisfaction on the avoidant and anxious dimensions, whereas the secure attachment dimension did not predict marital satisfaction at ($\beta = -1.635$, $p > .05$). The second Hypothesis which states that Personality traits will have a significant positive prediction on marital satisfaction among working married women was not confirmed.

Keywords: Anxiety, Attachment style, Gender, Marital Satisfaction, Personality Traits

Introduction

In most societies of the world, most women look up to the day that they will get married. When that day comes, women see that as one of the best days of their life. Perhaps, such feeling comes as an entry point for a fulfilled life. Marriage appears to be the most intimate and simplest human desires that should be established within every family setting, otherwise couples might suffer psychologically and emotionally. In fact, it is the desire of every married woman in particular to be happy and satisfied in their marriage. According to scholars, a few factors may be involved in the desire to achieve this, and they include attachment style, personality traits,

and emotional relationship, (Mohammedi et al, 2016). Over the years, it is believed that marital satisfaction has been one of the most studied constructs in marital research. Some researchers have perceived marital satisfaction as a multidimensional construct (Sousou, 2004). According to Tikumah (2009) decrease in marital satisfaction could be due to the absence of the four purposes of marriage namely; childbearing, sexual satisfaction, companionship and economic satisfaction. Yet not so many married couples achieve satisfaction in marriage. Perhaps, as a result of dearth of research in marital satisfaction, majority of couples come to court of law for dissolution of marriage. Similarly, among religious organizations and traditional settings, married couples still continue to address issues concerning marriage. To this end, it becomes a major problem that may affect humanity in the nearest future. It is believed that issues that bother on marriage may lead to hurt, harm, depression and even death of couples who are victims of marital issues. Since marriage is the smallest unit of human organization, it becomes absolutely necessary for researchers to devote more time and resources in the direction of marital satisfaction. On these challenges rest the motivation of the researchers in delving into the relationship between attachment style and personality traits as predictors of marital satisfaction among employed married women.

Scholars have defined marital satisfaction as, the consistency between the current situation and the expected one (Golestani et al., 2012); adjustment processes between spouses (Abamara et al., 2018), and the subjective feeling of happiness, satisfaction and pleasure experienced by the couple in all areas of their marriage (Baldwin et al, 2010). Earlier studies defined marital satisfaction as pleasure, happiness, subjective feelings, and process of adjustment among couples. However, in the present work, marital satisfaction is the feelings of accomplishment reported by couples in all areas of marital life. Studies have reported of positive consequences of marital satisfaction with lower risk of cardiovascular disease and all-cause mortality (Smith et al, 2010). Similarly, marital dissatisfaction, separation and divorce have been associated with decreases in psychological well-being, sexual satisfaction, unhappiness, low self-acceptance and increases in health problems, risk of mortality, social isolation, financial strain, negative life events, depression, and alcohol use (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010). Other studies have related marital satisfaction with some attachment style (Mohammadi et al, 2016). Several literature have defined attachment style as the relational behaviors that occur between the individual and the primary care giver (Mohammadi et al, 2016); mutual emotional bond that can establish security and determine mental health (Asfichi et al, 2013; Beyranv, et al, 2016), and innate human ability to establish significant emotional and strong relationships with one's

care giver (Bell, 2009). According to Stanton and Campbell (2014), the aim of attachment is to achieve a sense of security and support with attachment figure. Furthermore, Ainsworth and her associates proposed three types of attachment style: secure, anxious-avoidant, and ambivalent attachment styles (Peluso et al; 2004).

Literature holds that the most important aspect of the attachment theory is that early relationship creates active internal patterns in childhood, which affect future knowledge and relationships (Bell, 2012). Meyers and Landsberger (2002) found among a set of 73 married women in a community based sample in Chicago Illinois, the existence of a direct relationship between adult attachment style and marital satisfaction. In all the studies, it was evident that secure attachment is positively associated with marital satisfaction among couples whereas, insecure attachment styles, especially the anxious attachment predicts a negative correlation between attachment style and marital satisfaction.

The present study appears to be different from the work of Meyers and Landsberger (2002). Mikulincer and Florian (1999) with a sample of 1,260 women aged 21-34 years ($M = 32.52$, $SD = 4.056$) conducted an experimental research and observed the prevalence of significant associations between spouse's attachment style in determining their marital cohesion (an aspect of marital satisfaction) and adaptability (component of marital satisfaction) in which securely attached individuals reported high marital satisfaction and adaptability while anxiously attached individuals reported high marital satisfaction but low adaptability. The present study seems to support earlier scholars (Meyer & Landsberger, 2002) on the aspect of secure attachment and marital satisfaction and also on anxious marital satisfaction. However, both works appear to be inconsistent with the present findings (Meyer & Landsberger, 2002; Mikulincer, 1999). Outcome of studies on attachment style and marital satisfaction appear to be mixed. Although, some studies have linked personality traits to attachment styles (Abou-Amerrh et al, 2018).

Personality trait is consistency and stability which is the basic dimensions in which people differ (Matthews et al; 2003). Research on personality traits has a long history in the study of premarital predictors because marriage is a relationship that endures across situations and conditions; because marital compatibility is affected by the personality characteristics that the two people bring to their marriage (Zoby, 2005). Attari et al (2006) examined personality characteristics and marital satisfaction using 339 married Iranians (168 females and 171 males) with age range of 22 to 48 years ($M = 34.04$, $SD = 8.067$) result indicated that Neuroticism showed a negative correlation with marital satisfaction while Extraversion, Openness,

Conscientiousness and Agreeableness indicated a high positive relationship with marital satisfaction. Similarly, Rajabi and Nabgani (2008) found a negative correlation between Neuroticism and marital satisfaction but a positive correlation between marital satisfaction and traits of Extraversion, Openness to experience, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness.

Costa and McCrae (1992) found that Conscientiousness is a positive predictor of marital satisfaction as individuals high on this trait tend to strive for achievement, are dutiful, self-disciplined, hardworking and reliable. Conscientiousness has also been associated with mate desirability, relationship quality, marriage stability (Gattis et al., 2004; Roberts & Bogg, 2004; Robins et al., 2000) faithfulness (Orzeck & Lung, 2005), satisfaction (McCrae et al., 1998), conflict (Bono et al., 2002). Dyrenforth et al (2010) using a sample participants of 23,250 from Australia Uk and Germany found that Emotional Stability, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness seem to be the “Big Three” personality traits statistically predicting marital satisfaction as individuals with these “Big Three” are more willing to invest in and commit to their intimate relationships. As a result of this, they maintain a good relationship with their partners (Lodi - Smith & Roberts, 2007; Roberts & Wood, 2006). In this section all studies above appear to have found different result from that of the present study (Attari, et al 2006; Rajabi & Nebgani, 2008). Global assessments of personality have shown that the personality characteristics found among satisfied couples are different from those found among unsatisfied couples. Although, research has shown how personality is generally associated with marital satisfaction (Amiri, 2011; Decuyper, 2012).

Many previous studies have revealed significant associations between an individual's attachment style and marital satisfaction. The significant association between secure attachment and partner's relationship quality was reported in a series of studies (Collins & Read, 1990; Shaver & Brennan, 1992; Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994; Feeney, 1994; Feeney et al; 1994). Yet more studies still come up with conflicting reports (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Furthermore, personality trait has been associated in prediction of marital satisfaction with mixed results. It is the intentions of researchers in this study to examine effects of attachment style and personality traits on marital satisfaction among married employed women. Studies over the last few years have found that, approximately 45% of marriages end in dissatisfaction and ultimately divorce, with the United States of America having the highest incidence (Amato, 2010; Cherlin, 2010). Scholars examined predictors of divorce as: marrying as a teenager, poverty, attachment styles, unemployment, low education level, cohabitation, having a pre-marital birth, step children, race differences, personality traits, being in a second

marriage and growing up without two parents (Brown & Lin, 2012; Bratter & King, 2008), domestic violence, frequent conflict, infidelity, number of perceived relationship problems, weak commitment and low levels of love and trust between couples (Amato & Hohmann - Marriot, 2007; Hall & Fincham, 2006). The 2016 National Bureau of Statistics report on Marital Status Statistics in Nigeria indicates that in 2016, within a total population of approximately 180 million Nigerians, 0.5% (900,000) are divorced while 1% (1,800,000) are separated (The Economist, 2016). This present study hopes to select some personality traits of the big five inventory based on previous studies on the bases of their relevance to marital satisfaction. These three traits are: extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism (Sayehmiri et al, 2020; Bulga et al, 2018; and Elom & Eya, 2016). Also the study examined if attachment style predict marital satisfaction. Previous studies to the best of the researchers knowledge were predominantly western and Asian or at best American. Just a few of these studies were done locally but not with participants in the present study.

The social exchange theory (SET) is a model of human relationship. According to the SET, people are motivated to by desire to maximize profit and minimize loss in their social relationship, similar as it is obtainable to business (Homans, 1961; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Therefore, marital relationship that provide rewards are appreciated as satisfying, while those marriages that cost high are regarded as unsatisfying. According to Thibaut and Kelley (1959), each partner comes to a new relationship with comparison level (CL). At the point of honeymoon of a relationship, the CL may not be very necessary to couples. As the relationship progresses, the CL gradually becomes more important definition of the relationship. The comparative level is an examination of what one expects to receive and what the personal actually actual thing received. If the partner receives more than the expectation, then the comparison level is high he would stay in the relationship. The other important aspect of SET is the comparison level of alternate situation (CLalt). The CLalt is the perception of chances a partner in romantic relationship has in a prospective partner outside the present relationship. If the comparative level is high (that is reward), the spouse may report dissatisfaction in marriage. Furthermore, consistent with SET model is the investment aspect. Investment is the aspect of costs individuals come with in romantic relationship that is rather impossible for them to take back when relationship comes to an end. High investment perception may make it extremely hard for partners to leave a romantic relationship even in abusive situations (Ruburt & Bunk, 1993). It is believed that investment level determines commitment in relationship.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were postulated and therefore will be tested in this study:

1. Attachment style will significantly and positively predict marital satisfaction among employed married women.
2. Personality traits will significantly and positively predict marital satisfaction among employed married women.

Methods

Participants

A sample population of 150 females (members of Catholic Women Organisation) purposively selected from four (4) Roman Catholic Churches in Awka south local government area, Anambra State took part in this study. Participants included women who are currently working, (that is, employed) in an organisation/institution which comprised mostly of teachers, bankers and civil servants. Their ages ranged between 19-55 with a mean age of 35.09 and Standard deviation of 8.076.

Instruments

Index of marital satisfaction (IMS)

This is a 25-item inventory designed by Hudson, (1947) that measures the degree and severity or magnitude of the problems one spouse or partner perceives to have in the marital relationship with his or her partner. Respondents had to indicate on a 5 point Likert scale depending on what is appropriate for them. These are directly scored (items 2, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12, 14, 15, 18, 22, 24, 25) while these items are reversed scored (items 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 11, 13, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21 and 23). The questionnaire adopts a Likert scoring scale which ranges from (1) A little or none of the time (2) Sometimes (3) A good part of the time (4) and most part of the time (5) The reliability coefficients reported by Hudson (1982) are: Cronbach alpha internal consistency = .96, 2 - hour test retest = .96

A concurrent validity coefficient of .48 was obtained by Anene(1994) by correlating IMS with Marital Stress Inventory (MSI) (Omoluabi, 1994). Schaefer & Olson, (1981) reported alpha coefficients reliability of 0.70. For the purpose of this study a pilot study was conducted using a sample size of 30 participants and a Cronbach alpha of $r = .86$ was obtained.

Big five inventory (BFI)

The BFI contains 44 items designed by John & Srivastava (1999) to measure personality from a five dimension perspective or subscales (I.e. Extroversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to experience). The instrument is scored in 5 – point Likert-format ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Item, 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 36, 38, 39, 40, 42 and 44 of the BFI are scored directly, while items 2, 8, 9, 12, 18, 21, 23, 24, 27, 31, 34, 35, 37, 41 and 43 are reversely scored. John et al. (1991) obtained a Coefficient alpha of .80 and a 3-month test-retest Coefficient of .85. The Big Five Inventory has mean convergent validity coefficient of .75 and .85 with the Big Five Instrument authored by Costa and McCrea (1992) and Goldberg (1992) respectively. Umeh (2004) validated the Big Five Inventory (BFI) and provided the psychometric properties for Nigerian Samples. The divergent validity coefficient obtained by Umeh (2004) correlating the BFI with University maladjusted scale (Kleinmuntz, 1961) are Extroversion .05, Agreeableness .13, Conscientiousness .11, Neuroticism .39, and Openness .24. The norms for the scale are extroversion 27.10, agreeableness 28.75, conscientiousness 29.60, neuroticism 24.48, and openness to experience 35.18. For the purpose of this study three subscales out of the big five inventory subscales were utilized and their reliability scores after a pilot test was carried out include; agreeableness $r = .80$, extroversion $r = .84$, neuroticism $r = .75$. The choice these three personality traits were based on earlier works on marital satisfaction (Sayehmiri et al, 2020; Mear & South, 2017; Bulga et al, 2018; and Elom & Eya, 2016).

Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ)

The Attachment style questionnaire is a broad based self-report developed by (Feeney's & Noller, 1994) to clarify the dimensions underlying adult attachment, regardless of the adult age of the respondents or their experience with adult romantic relationships. The 40 items of the measure are scored using a six point likert scale ranging from 1= totally disagree to 6= totally agree, which targets the respondents view of self and others. The factors in the final model of this questionnaire were labelled by Feeney et al (1994) as Confidence (items 1, 2, 3, 19, 31, 33, 37, and 38), Discomfort with Closeness (items 4, 5, 16, 17, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26 and 34), Need for Approval (items 11, 12, 13, 15, 24, 27 and 35), Preoccupation with Relationship (items 18, 22, 28, 29, 30, 32, 39 and 40), and Relationships as Secondary (items 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 36). Items: 20, 21 and 33 are reversely scored. A pilot test was conducted on the subscales and Cronbach's alpha scores of Secure $r = 0.89$, Avoidant $r = 0.85$, Anxious $r = 0.91$, were obtained.

Procedure

The researcher visited four (4) Catholic Churches in Awka south local government area with copies of questionnaire which were administered exclusively to members of Catholic Women Organisation (CWO). This was done after establishing adequate rapport with the help of a member. Copies of the questionnaires were distributed just before the commencement of their weekly meeting. Out of 180 copies of the questionnaires administered, 150 copies were properly completed and returned while 30 copies were discarded due to incomplete response.

Design and Statistics

The study adopted a correlational design and a multiple linear regression analysis was used for data analysis.

Result

This is the result summary of the analysis of the relationship between attachment style and personality trait on marital satisfaction.

Table 1: Summary table of relationship between Attachment Style and Personality traits on Marital Satisfaction

N	Factors	R.cal	P. value
150	Extraversion	-.449**	.000
150	Agreeableness	-.819**	.000
150	Neuroticism	.815**	.000
150	Secure	-.862**	.000
150	Avoidant	.881**	.000
150	Anxious	.875**	.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to research findings, Extraversion personality trait had a significant negative correlation with low marital satisfaction at ($r = -.449, p < .05$). This implies that negative and significant relationship does exist between Extraversion personality trait and marital satisfaction. Similarly, Agreeableness personality trait had a significant negative correlation with marital satisfaction at ($r = -.819, p < .05$). Neuroticism personality trait had a significant positive correlation with marital satisfaction. Secure attachment style had a significant negative correlation with marital satisfaction at ($r = -.862, p < .05$). Avoidant attachment style, had a significant positive correlation with marital satisfaction at ($r = .881, p < .05$). Anxious

attachment style, similarly to avoidant attachment style had a significant positive correlation with marital satisfaction at ($r = .875, p < .05$). This means that anxious attachment style has significant positive relationship with marital satisfaction.

Table 2: Statistical significance of the Model Summary

Model I	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
Regression	.898 ^a	.806	.797	10.117

From the table, using multiple linear regression enter method, results show that Attachment Styles (Anxious, Avoidant, Secure) and personality traits (Agreeableness, Extroversion, Neuroticism) predicted 80% of marital satisfaction of the present participants. The Adjusted R² which is called the coefficient of determination is approximately (.80). Therefore 80% is proportion of variance of marital satisfaction that is accountable by attachment style and personality traits.

Table 3: Summary table of unstandardized coefficients

Model II	Unstandardized coefficient			T	Sig
	B	Std.	B		
Constant	13.669	15.457		.884	.378
Extroversion	.103	.168	.028	.612	.541
Agreeableness	-.103	.215	.046	-.479	.633
Neuroticism	.108	.206	.047	.525	.600
Secure	-.335	.205	-.179	-1.635	.104
Avoidant	.755	.249	.372	3.034	.003
Anxious	.514	.196	.298	2.626	.010

From the above table, Secure attachment dimension did not significantly and positively predict marital satisfaction at ($\beta = -.335, P > .05$). Avoidant had a positive and significant prediction of marital satisfaction at ($\beta < .755, P < .05$). Anxious attachment style which have positively and

significant prediction on marital satisfaction at ($\beta = .298, P < .05$). Therefore, hypothesis one was confirmed. Extraversion has no significant and positive prediction on marital satisfaction at ($\beta = .103, P > .05$). Agreeableness also has no significant prediction at ($\beta = -.103, P > .05$). Neuroticism has no significant and positive prediction on marital satisfaction at ($\beta = .108, P > .05$). By implication, this means that Personality traits has no significant and positive prediction on marital satisfaction, hence hypothesis two was not confirmed.

Discussion

The results of the present study shows a significant prediction was indicative between marital satisfactions and anxious-ambivalent as well as avoidant attachment dimensions, Nonetheless Secure attachment style did not significantly predict marital satisfaction. The finding appears to be inconsistent with earlier studies (Meyer & Landsberger, 2002). Thus, hypothesis one was confirmed. Perhaps, been a married employed woman may have given rise to the result of the study. Also, earlier studies were conducted in the western and Asian cultures, and it appears that quite scant studies have been done in the locality. It is assumed that upbringing of the spouses may have given rise to the present result. According to the social exchange theory, it may be possible that the participants due to occupational status are investing more than they are receiving reward in relationship. Therefore, as more investment is provided for the welfare of the relationship, the cost line becomes quite enormous for the woman to bear, when this happens report of less satisfaction may come. The danger with this situation is that the woman may gradually be less committed in the marital relationship. This state may give room for comparison level, once it high the woman becomes less satisfied in marriage. At this point, the possibility of comparison level of perceived alternative relationship may lead to more reports of less satisfaction if she appraises high chances of less cost in that relationship. Therefore, the tendency of separation or divorce may be eminent at this stage. More so, the result also indicated a no significant prediction of personality traits on marital satisfaction. Thus hypothesis two was not confirmed. This was clearly evident in the Extraversion; Agreeableness and Neuroticism dimensions indicated a non-significant prediction with marital satisfaction. This result disagrees with Attari et al (2006) and Amiri et al (2011) studies found a significant relationship between the big five personality traits and marital satisfaction. This is to say in other words, that certain personality traits are not responsible for marital satisfaction among working married women. Perhaps, the SET may have explanation in this result. For instant, as individuals employed married women irrespective of their traits, is compelled to make sacrifice

in the relationship (marriage). As this goes on, during the honeymoon period most people do not notice amount of resource that the new relation is demanding. According to the SET, a time comes when the honeymoon is over and costs are analyzed. Once, the woman perceives that the amount of stress and resource she needed to sustain the marital relationship is high she will be unsatisfied. Therefore, confirming the result of the present study, that no significant difference between personality traits and marital satisfaction may be a reflection of employed married women especially as a result of more challenges in assisting or even bread winning for the general house hold.

Limitation of the Study

The major limitation to the study was that the sample was drawn from a local church in Awka, Anambra state. Literature on the effects of the independent variables and dependent variables appear to be scan with respect to local studies. Therefore, most focus of the empirical were drawn from western and Asian works.

Recommendations

Marriage counselors should enlighten couples about the effects of the dynamics in the SET. This will go a long way in ensuring that they understand the reasons for their behavior especially when it comes with deciding to leave a marital relationship. This hopefully may create awareness to the understanding of behaviors couples come up with in relationship. This may permit the understanding of individual differences that may enhance marital satisfaction. Psychologists should also offer premarital counseling to intending couples. This will no doubt help them prepare for marriage.

Conclusions

This study provided empirical data to suggest a significant relationship between attachment styles and marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction may be sustained if the attachment is associated with less cost in the relationship. However, if the cost or investment from the employed working woman is high with respect to comparison level and or comparison level for perceived alternative relationship, irrespective of the attachment style may report dissatisfaction in marriage. Literature on personality traits has been quite inconsistent with respect to marital satisfaction. However, findings from the present study suggest that personality traits may not have any significant relationship with marital satisfaction with participants of the present study. Therefore, the only plausible explanation of the empirical

result falls within the framework of the SET. In this regard, cost in relationship of marriage appears to be the main reason for marital satisfaction.

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