



Influence of Psychological Factors on Marital Satisfaction among Spouses in the North West Senatorial District of Benue state, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated psychological factors influencing marital satisfaction among spouses in Benue north-west senatorial district. In doing this, two research objectives with corresponding research questions and hypotheses were stated for the study. These are; to examine the influence of self-esteem and self-efficacy on marital satisfaction among spouses in Benue North-West senatorial district. The dynamic goal theory of marital satisfaction was used for the study. In the area of methodology, the research adopted the cross-sectional survey design. The population was all the married men and women (spouses) in the area. A sample size of 385 was determined using Cochran's formula. The multi-stage sampling procedure involving systematic sampling technique, fishbowl and convenience sampling technique were used to select Gboko, Gwer-East, and Makurdi local government and wards respectively. A structured questionnaire titled Psych-social Factors and Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire (PSFAMSQ) was used to elicit information from spouses in each of the selected local government area. The descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, and inferential statistics of chi-square to test the two hypotheses. The study found among others that the psychological factors of self-esteem and self-efficacy have significant positive influence on marital satisfaction among spouses in North West Senatorial district of Benue state, Nigeria. The study recommends among others that, government should employ trained psychologists and counsellors and post them to all the community counselling and social welfare centres to help counsel and guide spouses for better marital satisfaction.

Key words: Marital Satisfaction, Psychological factors, self-esteem, self-efficacy, spouses

Introduction

The institution of marriage is as old as the universe. It is the foundational human interaction that offers the main framework for starting a family and raising children. A marriage is defined as a relationship between two biologically unrelated men and women who live together, pursue benefits from their relationship, such as companionship, love, and sexual fulfillment, and use their relationship as a legal way to have children (Abra, 2016). According to Nukunya (2016), a marriage between a man and a woman is considered valid when the children born to the woman are acknowledged as the legal offspring of both parents. This definition is taken from the official handbook of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain. This suggests that marriage is an institution that recognizes interpersonal relationships typically intimate and sexual ones in addition to being a social union or legal agreement between a man and a woman. That notwithstanding, the researcher observed that in most cases spouses pass through marital distress that consequently leads to domestic violence, Loss of love, Loss of interest and regard for each other. These conditions in most cases lead to divorce and separation of couples.

Divorce, separation, and unstable marriages are worldwide occurrences. For example, the United States had a marriage rate of 6 per 1,000 people in 2021, with 1,985,072 marriages (Ionele et al., 2022). Across the 45 U.S. states that provide these figures, there were 689,308 divorces in total that year (Ionele et al., 2022). Crude divorce rates were 5.52 in the Maldives, 4.6 in Kazakhstan and 3.9 in Russia for both annulment and

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divorce. In Canada, there were roughly 2.7 divorces for every 1,000 people in 2019 (Muna, 2014). In Nigeria, the Federal Statistics Service reports that in the past few years, 500 divorces or 50% of all weddings have been documented for every 1000 marriages (Mohammad, 2015). This has made the researcher concerned enough to start this investigation into how psycho-social variables influence marital satisfaction. The researcher observed that the divorce rates continue at an alarming rate in Nigeria and the North-west senatorial district of Benue State in particular. There were reported to be about 12,000 divorce cases in Nigeria in 2017 (Almanac Book of fact, in Afusat, 2019) and also, there was a report of domestic violence, yet marriage continues to be an enduring sociocultural institution boasting of 65,924,317 numbers in 2010 (National Bureau of statistic, in Miller & Kannae, 2019).

Marital satisfaction is one of the most studied aspects of marriage. According to Van et al., (2019), it is the degree of contentment a spouse feels about their relationship or an individual's subjective assessment of the level of happiness, joy, or fulfillment experienced inside the marriage between one's spouse and oneself. It can be deduced that marital satisfaction is the extent to which marriage partners have senses of accomplishment or fulfillment of mutual needs, goals and expectations in marriage. This means the significance of marital satisfaction cannot be overlooked now that society is experiencing high cases of marital violence and subsequently divorce.

Scholars such as Nukunya (2016); Hofstede (2017); Ishor et al., (2022) suggest that marital satisfaction could be defined based on several factors including marriage stability and joy. Diya, (2022) stated that marital satisfaction is one of the main significant factors that influence the quality and stability of marriage. However, within a few decades, studies have shown that marital satisfaction is not very easily achieved because of a wide range of both psychosocial and socio-demographic factors that could affect a husband and wife's behaviour. According to Farah (2018), Iorkosu et al, (2023) psychological factors such as Self-esteem, self –efficacy, emotional intelligence, personality, and affection play an important role in marital satisfaction.

Self-esteem is a factor that probably influences marital satisfaction among spouses. Self-esteem entails a comprehensive, interpretation and emotional reactions of a person and can be determined on the scale of the stress of events (Ada et al, 2021). Ada et al (2021) defines self-esteem as a set of conclusions and convictions that have been expressed in a person's interaction with the outside world. This suggests that everyone has requirements that must be met in order to achieve an appropriate level of health, and that one of the fundamental human needs that is located in the emotional dimension is self-esteem (Erol & Orth, 2017). It would be considered that self-esteem is an important factor for progress and success of persons in all works and marital life, and the environment plays an effective role in shaping it. According to Van et al., (2019), there is unity and coordination between alarm and passion in a person who has high self-esteem. But persons with low self-esteem repress their ability to express sexual and marital inclination. It was seen in some studies that there is a direct and positive relationship between self-esteem and marital satisfaction. It would be valuable to extend the understanding of self-esteem in marriage, hence the desired need for this study.

Self-efficacy is another variable in this study. It can be defined as a person's belief in their ability to complete a task or achieve a goal. It encompasses a person's confidence in them to control their behaviour, exert an influence over their environment, and stay motivated in the pursuit of their goal. Fard and Karoosi (2016) buttressed the point that high and positive self- efficacy is a strong predictor of marital satisfaction. These abilities as Kachooei and Fathi-Ashtiani (2013) noted, help spouses find out the needed strategies for facing challenges such as marital issues. One of these abilities is self-efficacy which describes a person's cognitions about whether he or she is capable of performing the behaviours necessary to produce a wanted outcome. Additionally, self-efficacy, which is people's evaluation of their efficiency, is crucial for successful functioning. Self-efficacy beliefs of teachers as an important cognitive representation would also help to form beliefs about future actions and personal capacities.

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Statement of Problem

Marital satisfaction has become a crucial issue for research in recent times. This is understandable because marital instability, stress, breakdown, and divorce are becoming increasingly rampant in many parts of the world, including Nigeria and Benue state in particular, yet families' stability is crucial to every social and national development. There is no doubt that couples experience diverse issues of psychological distress, emotional problems, and frustration resulting to depression, health problems, and unfulfilled marital life as well as divorce or a breakdown in a good marital relationship.

Scholars such as Ada et al. (2021), Ishor et al. (2022) among others, agreed that in Nigeria poor marital relationship is on the increase leading to a serious threat to social stability in the country. In North-West senatorial district of Benue state, the researcher observed that separation, desertion, and domestic violence are becoming alarming among spouses which probably results to divorce. Conflict and crises among spouses are no longer brought to the deck for settlement but rather are extended to the outside environment where two or three parties are engrossed in supposed family issues. The nature of the marital relationship among spouses in Benue North-West senatorial district could also be influenced by factors like self-esteem and self-efficacy. But not much is known concerning the factors influencing marital satisfaction among the spouses in the area. Numerous academic works demonstrated that there are strong philosophical and anthropological accounts that have described married life in various ways, but there hasn't been a thorough investigation from a psychological perspective to provide an empirical and account of how married life is constructed and experienced.

It is against this background that the researcher has set out to investigate the influence of psychological factors such as self-esteem and efficacy on marital satisfaction among spouses in the North-West senatorial district of Benue state, Nigeria.

Dynamic Goal Theory of Marital Satisfaction by Li, and Fung

Li (2011), was an Associate Professor of applied psychology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Fung (2011), a BS student at Peking University. They are of the view that an action's goal or aim is what the individual is trying to achieve. A fundamental principle of the Dynamic Goal Theory of marital satisfaction is that people's objectives for their marriages are important factors. According to the notion, whether or not married partners achieve their goals especially the ones that are prioritized is the most significant element impacting marital satisfaction. To be more exact, the following is a summary of the four primary elements of the dynamic goal theory of marital satisfaction.

- i. People first want to accomplish a range of objectives in their marriage.
- ii. The significance of different marriage goals changes dynamically as persons age.
- iii. Whether or not the marriage accomplishes the top priorities outlined in a specific developmental stage determines marital satisfaction.
- iv. Other variables may also affect marital satisfaction by influencing the relative importance of other marital goals or by assisting in the achievement of prioritized goals.

The theorists define goals as internal representations of desired states, where states are broadly interpreted as outcomes, occurrences, or processes. The content of goals varies greatly; they might be anything from a peaceful world to a high quiz score. Most researchers agree that there is a hierarchy that may be used to organize different kinds of goals. High-order goals are vast, abstract, and have a long time horizon. Self-actualization (Maslow, in Hana, 2016) and chasing one's ideal self are two examples of this. Conversely, lower-order goals are more time-bound and targeted, such as getting a good career or learning a second language. A higher-order goal can be specified into numerous lower-order goals, and a single behaviour can simultaneously activate goals of different orders.

They concluded that once particular goals are activated, different cognitive resources are focused on the motivating occurrences. Perception, memory, and task performance can all be enhanced when dealing with motivated events; nevertheless, attention and information processing may be skewed in favor of the desired. According to research on regulatory focus, for example, when people's avoidance motivation is activated,

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they make greater efforts to avoid losses and feel more threatened by negative models; conversely, when people's approach motivation is activated, they make greater efforts to succeed and are more encouraged by positive models. The importance of objectives is further emphasized by the self-determination hypothesis, which contends that internal motivation, as opposed to external incentive, has a higher impact on behaviour regulation. Furthermore, when goals are not achieved, psychological health may deteriorate. People would feel agitation-related negative emotions like guilt and fear if their self-goals were not met; conversely, they would feel dejection-related negative emotions like disappointment and frustration if their ideal-self goals were not met.

How do dynamic marital goals relate to marital satisfaction is the question at hand. The answer is that marital goals especially the ones that are prioritized determine marital satisfaction. Prior research has indicated that marital satisfaction is influenced by satisfaction of each partner's expectations and needs. The implication is that marital satisfaction is significantly influenced by the goals that are prioritized in the marriage. This is due to the fact that every couple sets marital goals, and when those goals are achieved, marital satisfaction follows. Individuals go into intimate relationships with specific expectations, and the degree to which these expectations are fulfilled often dictates the level of satisfaction derived from the relationship.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

- 1 How does self-esteem influence marital satisfaction?
- 2 In what way does self- efficacy influence marital satisfaction among spouses?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses are formulated to be tested at a 0.05 level of significance;

1. Self-esteem has no significant influence on marital satisfaction among spouses.
2. Self- efficacy does not significantly influence marital satisfaction among spouses.

Methodology

The research area is the Benue north-west senatorial district also known as Zone B Area of Benue state, Nigeria. The North-west senatorial district lies in the northwest of Benue state. The area comprises 7 Local Governments area namely Buruku, Gboko, Guma, Gwer-East, Gwer-West, Makurdi, and also Tarka. The overall population of the area is 1,933,500 (NPC, 2017 estimation).

This research adopted the cross-sectional survey design. In this study, the target population was all the 903,828 married men and women (spouses) in North- West senatorial district of Benue State (NPC, 2006). The sample size for the study is 385 spouses. The sample size determination formula developed by Cochran (in Ishor et al., 2022) was used.

The multi-stage sampling technique involving systematic sampling technique, fishbowl and convenience sampling techniques were used for this study. Firstly, the researcher selected three local governments using a systematic and fishbowl method. Using this procedure, Gboko Local government, Gwer-East, and Makurdi local government were picked.

Secondly, the researcher adopted a convenience sampling technique. Using this technique, the researcher therefore selected and located respondents in their households using a list of households obtained from the primary health care clinic of the district that listed the households for immunization exercise. The convenience sampling methods was used in selecting the households that responded to the questionnaire.

A structured questionnaire titled Psycho-social Factors and Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire (PSFAMSQ) was used to elicit information from spouses in each of the selected Local Government Areas. The questions were close-ended using the four points rating with responses as Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A) Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). This was administered through face-to-face interaction by the researcher. This provided responses that made it easy to be processed.

The structured questionnaire developed by the researcher was subjected to face or content validation by one research expert in the Department of Measurement and Evaluation, Benue state University, Makurdi and

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two experts from Guidance and Counselling, Benue State University, Makurdi. The initial draft copy of items was constructed by the researcher. The researcher administered 50 copies to spouses outside the sampled population specifically in Ushongo local government area. The essence of this was to ensure smooth administration of the questionnaire during the actual study, by reducing problems, and ambiguity. After this, some items were dropped because they were found unmeasurable leaving only items that produced a reliability index of .000 using the Cronbach alpha method.

Relevant statistical tools appropriate for the nominal, ordinal and ratio scales of measurement were used to analyse the data to achieve the research objectives. The tools used to analyse data for descriptive statistics were mean, and standard deviation. The respondents circled the number that indicated their feelings to the statements using the following scales: 4 – Strongly Agree, 3 – Agree, 2 – Disagree, 1 – Strongly Disagree. The scores' boundary limit for decision making was 3.25-4.00 – strongly agree, 2.50-3.24 Agree, 1.75-2.49 – Disagree, 1.00-1.74 – Strongly Disagree. The Chi-square analysis was used to test the hypotheses concerning the influence of psycho-social factors on marital satisfaction at 0.05 alpha.

Result

Table 1: Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of Respondents on the influence of self-esteem influence on Marital Satisfaction

Item description	N	SA	A	D	SD	X	St.D	Decision
I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with my partner.	381	192	150	29	10	3.38	.739	Accepted
Sometimes I feel I am fit to marry my partner	381	39	55	162	125	2.02	.940	Rejected
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	381	27	109	165	80	2.22	.857	Rejected
I am so proud of my partner too and don't want to lose her/him to another person.	381	149	142	66	24	3.09	.900	Accepted
I have a positive attitude towards myself and my partner.	381	195	156	17	13	3.40	.732	Accepted
At times I think I am not good at all.	381	16	34	122	209	1.62	.816	Rejected
Total						2.62	0.83	Accepted

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Table 1 showed that item 1-6 had the mean score of 3.38, 2.02, 3.09, 3.40 and 1.62 with correspond standard deviation of 0.737, 0.940, 0.857, 0.900, 0.732 and 0.816 respectively. Based on the criteria for decision making, it means that the mean score for item 1, 3, 4 and 5 were rated above the range of 1.00-1.49 and 1.50-2.49, while item 3 and 4 were rated below the range 2.50-3.49 and 3.50-4.00. The cluster mean of 2.62 with corresponding standard deviation 0.83 means that the respondents agreed that high self-esteem influences marital satisfaction among the spouses in the area. This implies that spouses with high self-esteem stand a better chance of succeeding in their marital relationship. People high in self-esteem tend to be more likable and attractive, to have better relationships, and to make better impressions on others.

Table 2: Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of Respondents on the Influence of Self-Efficacy on Marital Satisfaction

Item description	N	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	Decision
My partner trusts me and offers me the social and emotional support needed.	381	170	189	7	15	3.35	.708	Accepted
I believe in my performance even when things are tough in the course of discharging my marital responsibilities.	381	192	151	27	11	3.38	.742	Accepted
I believe I can succeed in the marital endeavour in which I engage and this cements the relationship with my partner.	381	153	197	25	6	3.30	.662	Accepted
I believe that I can perform effectively on many different tasks for a smooth marital relationship with my partner.	381	194	165	12	10	3.43	.683	Accepted

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My partner is at peace with my divinity and faith, and this enhances our marital stability.	381	176	179	22	4	3.38	.645	Accepted
In general, I believe that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me and my partner for marital stability.	381	213	160	4	4	3.53	.578	Accepted
Total						3.39	0.66	Accepted

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The table 2 showed that item 13-18 had mean score of 3.35, 3.38, 3.30, 3.43, 3.38 and 3.53 with correspond standard deviation of 0.708, 0.742, 0.662, 0.683, 0.645 and 0.578 respectively. Based on the criteria for decision making, it means that the mean score for item 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30 were rated above the range of 1.00-1.49 and 1.50-2.49. The cluster mean of 3.39 with corresponding standard deviation 0.66 means that the respondents agreed that high self-efficacy is capable of influencing marital satisfaction among the spouses in the area. This implies that spouses with high self-efficacy stand a better chance of experiencing good marital relationship.

4.1 Test of Hypotheses

This section dwells on the test of four hypotheses using a Chi-square. These are presented as follows.

Table 3: Chi-Square Analysis on Significant Influence of Self-Esteem on Marital Satisfaction among Spouses

	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Df	χ^2	P=Value	Decision
Observed	195	83	69	29	381	9	25.743	.002	Sig
Expected	195.0	195.0	195.0						

Note: $P=0.00 < 0.05$

Table 3 indicated chi-square=25.743 at Df =9, $P=0.00 < 0.005$. Since probability value of 0.00 is less than the alpha level of 0.05. This means that the null hypothesis which states that Self-esteem has no significant influence on marital satisfaction among spouses is rejected. This showed that self-esteem has significantly high influence on marital satisfaction among spouses in the North-west senatorial district of Benue state, Nigeria.

Table 4: Chi-Square Analysis on Significant Influence of Self-Efficacy on Marital Satisfaction among Spouses

	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Df	χ^2	P=Value	Decision
Observed	192	151	27	11	381	9	176.673	.000	Sig
Expected	153.0	153.0	153.0						

Note: $P=0.00 < 0.05$

Table 4 indicated chi-square=176.673 at Df =9, $P=0.00 < 0.005$. Since the probability value of 0.00 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, this means that the null hypothesis which states that Self-efficacy has no significant influence on marital satisfaction among spouses is therefore rejected. This showed that self-efficacy has positive significant influence on marital satisfaction among spouses in North-west senatorial district of Benue State, Nigeria. It can be inferred that spouses with high and positive self-efficacy stand a chance of experiencing marital satisfaction.

Discussion of findings

Based on the results of the analysis of the two research questions and the two hypotheses posited for the study, the following findings were organized and discussed for ease of understanding.

The first finding of the study revealed that positive self-esteem has significant influence on marital satisfaction in the North-West Senatorial District of Benue State, Nigeria. This entails that marital satisfaction cannot only be preserved but could also be enhanced when couples take certain measures to establish self-esteem in marriage. This finding is in sync with Eze and Mba (2017) who found a positive

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prediction of self-esteem on marital satisfaction. Also, the finding tallies with Ada et al (2021) who found that the probability of marital dissatisfaction in individuals with low self-esteem is 9 times higher than in those with high self-esteem, 5 times among those with low sexual satisfaction, and 3 times among people dealing with bad economic condition. The finding also corresponded with Ishor et al., (2022) who found that marital satisfaction was found to be positively correlated with self-esteem, so that higher self-esteem was associated with greater satisfaction.

The second finding of the study revealed a strong significant positive influence of self-efficacy on marital satisfaction in the area. This implies that a strong sense of self-efficacy enhances marital accomplishment and personal well-being. It also implies that spouses with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult mental tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. This study agreed with Fard and Karoosi (2016) who found that self-efficacy was an effective factor that significantly influences marital satisfaction of couples. The study was also in line with Taghani, Ashrafizaveh, Ghanbari and Azmoude (2019) who found that self-efficacy can significantly have a mediating role between extraversion & neuroticism and marital satisfaction. The researcher discovered that self-efficacy, which is people's evaluation of their efficiency, is crucial for successful functioning and marital satisfaction.

Conclusion

The study has established that there is a significant relationship between psycho-social factors in the North-West Senatorial District of Benue State, Nigeria. This is based on the fact that there is a significant positive influence of self-esteem, self-efficacy, on marital satisfaction among the spouses in the area. The implication is that spouses who maintain the above-mentioned psychological factors stand a better chance of having marital satisfaction. Marriage and its related issues are believed to be associated with psychological wellbeing, therefore it must be safeguarded to ensure marriages are stable and successful.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Counsellors should educate spouses through counselling on the importance and benefits of positive high self-esteem for the success of marital relationship. This should be done by organizing family workshops and seminars across the area.
2. Psychologists and counsellors should help clients develop high self-efficacy. They should keep in mind that a couple's gender roles may prevent them from recognising their high efficacy for each other. By encouraging spouses to confront and challenge their own gender biases, they become more receptive to considering their partner's gender-biased perspective as well, creating a culture of high self-efficacy.

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