

Psychosocial Factors in Marital Satisfaction among Married couples in Benin-City: An Implication for Couple's therapy.

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ABSTRACT

Marital satisfaction continues to be a significant phenomenon in the present day marriages. However, there has been a significant increase in the numbers of couples that come for couple's therapy in the last one year. Therefore, this study on the communication pattern, gender and age on marital satisfaction. 200 married couple was conveniently sampled. Index of Marital satisfaction and Primary Communication Inventory were used to measure marital satisfaction and communication pattern respectively. Chi-square analysis was used to investigate the relationship amongst all the variables. The result showed that there was a significant relationship between gender and marital satisfaction ($X^2=11.591$; $df=1$; $p<0.05$), also, there was significant relationship between communication pattern and marital satisfaction ($X^2=23.683$; $df=1$; $p<0.05$) while there was no significant relationship between age and marital satisfaction ($X^2=0.207$; $df=1$; $p>0.05$). It can be concluded that gender and communication have significant relationships on marital satisfaction and as such should be a focus in couple's therapy.

Keyword: Psychosocial, Marital Satisfaction, Married couples, Benin-City

INTRODUCTION

The importance of marriage is as old as the (pre)recorded history of man, (Gen 2:18). And cultures the entire world over have testified to this importance as no culture exists which does not believe in man-woman relationship, no matter how inadequate this may seem. For example, divorce rates continue at an alarming rate; there was reported to be about 12, 000 number of divorce cases in Nigeria from 1975, (Almanac Book of Facts, 1977) and, also, there was report of domestic violence (Oladepo et.al., 2011), yet marriage continues to be an enduring sociocultural institution boasting of 48, 924, 317 numbers in 2006, (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010).

One of the most researched factors for continuous relevance of marriage is marital satisfaction. Either defined as the amount of contentment that a couple feels about their relationship, (Rowe, 2004) or as a subjective evaluation by an individual of the degree of happiness, pleasure, or fulfillment experienced within the marital relationship between spouse and self, (Rho, 1989), or in the definition of Gilford & Bengtson (1979) as spouses' evaluation of their relationship on two general dimensions: positive interaction and negative feeling, or Hundson's (1982) definition in the degree, severity or magnitude of problems one spouse or partner perceives to be having in the marital relationship with his or her partner and or Akanbi's (2002) definition of marital satisfaction as an extent to which partners in marriage have a sense of accomplishment or fulfillment of the mutual needs, goals and expectation in marriage; its significance cannot be overlooked.

There is confirmatory evidence of the difference between the way a man and a woman will fare on marital satisfaction, (Johnson & Lebow, 2000; Walker, 1999). Essentially, marriage could be described as a relationship with benefits for men than women, because men are more satisfied in their marriages than women, (Clements & Swensen, 2000, Baslow, 1992; Heyn, 1997, Schumm, Webb, & Bollman, 1998) and women have more negative experiences than men, (Heaton & Blake, 1999), and this seems to be similar in cultures around the world, (Rhyne, 1981, Basat, 2004).

Couples' age can affect marital satisfaction either positively or negatively. Those who marry in their teen age experience worst of marital satisfaction because of some social threats to marriage, (Stanley & Markman, 1997), contrastively, 20 agers experience more marital satisfaction, (Tzeng, 1992).

Another factor contributing to marital satisfaction is communication pattern. Couple's communication pattern has a rewarding significance to marital satisfaction. A communicating couple is in a marital satisfying relationship, (Kirchler, 1989, Rogge & Bradbury, 1999).

This study was aimed at investigating the significant relationship of demographic variables (age and gender) and communication patterns between the spouses on marital satisfaction of married couples in Benin-City as personal observations of these researchers/authors have revealed that numbers of couples that come for couple's therapy have increased in the last one year.

The result of the study would supply an added scientific reason to clinical psychologists both in teaching and practical field of couple's therapy about the reality of factors that can influence marital satisfaction.

METHODS

Participants and Procedure

Cross sectional research design was used as the research design and the participants' were conveniently derived. This was basically to get more and robust participants in as very short time as possible. The study was carried out in Benin City and its environs with questionnaires given to individual participants whether the husband or wife alone or to both of them as the situation may provide after their consent had been duly sought. A total of 200 married couple was used for this study. Male participants were 114 (57 %) and female participants were 86(43 %) with age range 26-65 with mean age of 38.67 and SD of 8.33.

Data Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Sciences software, 17 (SPSS 17) was used to analyze the data. At $P < 0.05$ level of confidence was considered significant, frequency and Chi-square analysis were used to analyze the data.

Research instruments

Marital satisfaction was measured with Index of Marital satisfaction scale developed by W.W Hudson (1982) to measure problems associated with marital satisfaction. It is a 25-item inventory designed to measure the degree, severity or magnitude of problems one spouse or partner perceives to be having in the marital relationship with his or her partner. IMS is administered individually or in groups after establishing adequate rapport with the client. In scoring IMS items 2,4,6,7,10,12,14,15,18,22,24,25 are scored directly while items 1,3,5,8,11,13,16,17,19,20,21,23 are reverse scored, final score is obtained by adding together the results of the direct scores and the reverse scores to obtain the client's raw score. Subtract 25 from the raw score to obtain the client's final score. The norms for Nigerian samples young adult M & F is 38.84. The reliability coefficients reported by Hudson (1982) are: Cronbach's alpha internal consistency = .96, 2-hour test-retest = .96. A concurrent validity of .48 was obtained by Anene (1994) by correlating IMS with Marital Stress Inventory (MSI) (Omoluabi, 1994). The Primary Communication Inventory (PCI) by Locke, H.J, Sabaght, F., & Thomes, M. M. to measure the degree and pattern of communication in marriage between husband and wife or spouses. The 25-item inventory is designed to assess the quality of both verbal and nonverbal communication between husband and wife in different social settings and social interactions. It is administered individually or in groups after establishing adequate rapport at with the client. In scoring PCI items 8, 9, 15, 17 are reverse scored while the other items are directly scored. The norms for Nigerian samples are: 93.41 for husband and 76.80 for wives. The reliability and validity obtained by Omoluabi (1999) are as follows: Cronbach Alpha = .72, test retest= .84, concurrent validity coefficient of .69 by correlating PCI with Marital Stress Inventory (Omoluabi, 1994).

RESULT

Table 1: socio-demographics of study participants

	Response	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	114	57
	Female	86	43
	Total	200	100
Age	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (SD)
	26	65	38.67(8.33)

Table 1 above shows that 114 (57%) of the participants were male, while 86 (43%) were female. The age of the participants in the study ranges from 26 to 65 with a mean age of 38.67years and standard deviation of 8.33.

Table 2: summary table of cross-tabulation of gender, age, primary communication and marital satisfaction

		Marital satisfaction			df	X ²	P
		Normal	Poor	Total			
Gender	Male	74 (64.9%)	40 (35.1%)	114 (100%)			
	Female	35 (40.7%)	51 (59.3%)	86 (100%)	1	11.591	<0.05
	Total	109 (54.5%)	91 (45.5%)	200 (100%)			
Age group	Young	61 (56.0%)	48 (44.0%)	109 (100%)			
	Old	48 (52.7%)	43 (47.3%)	91 (100%)	1	0.207	>0.05
	Total	109 (54.5%)	91 (45.5%)	200 (100%)			
Communication	Poor	32 (35.6%)	58 (64.4%)	90 (100%)			
	Satisfactory	77 (70.0%)	33 (30.0%)	110 (100%)	1	23.683	<0.05
	Total	109 (54.5%)	91 (45.5%)	200 (100%)			

Table 2 shows significant relationship between gender and marital satisfaction ($X^2=11.591$; $df=1$; $p<0.05$) with 74 (64.9%) male and 35 (40.7%) female satisfied with their marriage, also primary communication was significantly related to marital satisfaction ($X^2=23.683$; $df=1$; $p<0.05$) with 77 (70.0%) of participants having satisfactory communication reporting normal marital satisfaction. However, age group of participants did not significantly relate to marital satisfaction ($X^2=0.207$; $df=1$; $p>0.05$)

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the relationship between gender, age and communication on marital satisfaction. The result suggested that gender has a significant role to play in marital satisfaction with men experiencing more marital satisfaction than women. This is sounding similar sentiments of earlier studies on these variables, as reported by the studies of (Johnson & Lebow, 2000; Walker, 1999 and Clements & Swensen, 2000). A man and a woman basically start marital relationship; the way it turns out depends on the two of them.

Also, communication was found to be another significant factor in marital satisfaction. The studies of (Kirchler, 1989, Rogge & Bradbury, 1999) had same evidence. The more a couple's communicate, the less crack in marital relationship.

However, age was singled out as having no significance on marital satisfaction. Previous studies have not had a particular direction on this variable as some age brackets have found to be more significant on marital satisfaction than others; people who marry in their twenties tend to experience more marital satisfaction (Tzeng, 1992) than those who marry in their teens, (Stanley & Markman, 1997). This result maybe because of the age brackets considered in this study (26-65).

IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

The results of the study have salient implications for practical field of couple or marital therapy. It should be emphasized in therapies that a man and woman enter into marital relationship and they owe it to themselves to talk it through better by engaging in positive communication patterns. Another implication on age is that age is just an ordinary number; it may not necessarily determine satisfaction in marriage, hence, it should be an important factor in premarital counselling for intending couples.

In conclusion, gender and communication have significant relationships on marital satisfaction and as such should be a focus in couple's therapy.

LIMITATIONS

The sample technique (convenience non probabilistic) of this study posed problem of representativeness to the number of participants finally used. As it may be noticed, there was skewness to more male than female in the study.

We cannot reliably generalize the usefulness of the results from this study because of another reason of setting which was restricted to Benin and its environs.

Also, the result should be used with caution especially when we consider other important variables which can potentially influence marital satisfaction. Therefore, further studies should be encouraged to know more about these other variables.

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