

MENTAL WELLBEING AND SELF-ESTEEM AS PREDICTORS OF MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG CATHOLIC WOMEN ORGANISATION MEMBERS

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated mental wellbeing and self-esteem as predictors of marital satisfaction among members of the Catholic Women Organisation (CWO) in Umunnachi, Dunukofia Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. One hundred and twenty participants were selected using purposive sampling technique during the 2017 Annual August Meeting. They were within the ages of 23 – 60 years with a mean age of 38.05 and a standard deviation of 8.27. The participants were administered with three measures; the Index of Self-Esteem, Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale and the Index of Marital Satisfaction. Cross-sectional survey design was adopted in data collection while multiple regression analysis on IBM SPSS Statistics version 20 was used to analyse data collected. Results showed that high mental wellbeing and self-esteem scores were significant predictors of marital satisfaction among married catholic women. The researcher recommends that intending and married couples should undergo marriage counselling and seminars that could sustain marital satisfaction and ensure successful marital relationships.

Keywords: Catholic Women, Marital Satisfaction, Mental Wellbeing, Nigeria, Self-esteem

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is regarded as one of the most vital and rewarding forms of relationships among the several other forms of relationships existing between men and women. It is a basic aspect of life that could aid the maintenance of an individual's psychological wellbeing and self-esteem. Adequate psychological wellbeing and self-esteem in a marital relationship is

mainly achievable when there is marital satisfaction.

Marital satisfaction is defined as personal feelings of happiness or pleasure and the spouses' happiness considering all current aspects of the marriage (Dinh, *et al.*, 2017). It also refers to an individual's positive assessment of his/her marital relations (Ofovwe, Ofili, Ojetu & Okosun, 2013). It could also be viewed as the

individual's perception and assessment of the overall quality of marriage and the extent the individual sees the relationship as rewarding. Interests in the study of marital satisfaction have continued to grow because of its attendant effect on work, income, health, education and spirituality (Aleem & Danish, 2008; Fallah, *et al.*, 2018; Lopez, Riggs, Pollard, & Hook, 2011; Mirahmadizadeh, Nakhai, Tabatabai & Shafieian, 2003; Ofovwé, Ofili, Ojetu & Okosun, 2013). However, most marriages are merely existing relationships in which partners are dissatisfied but for religious and social obligations, must remain in it. This study therefore aims at investigating the predictive relationships among mental wellbeing, self-esteem and marital satisfaction of catholic married women.

Mental Wellbeing and Marital Satisfaction

The concept of mental wellbeing is not conceptually different from mental health. Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which individuals recognize their abilities, are able to cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and are able to make contributions to the community (WHO, 2007). Mental wellbeing includes the capacity to make health and happiness enhancing relationships with others. People with adequate mental wellbeing know themselves and their needs, have clear

boundaries, relate to others using the skills of emotional literacy and accept and manage conflict without manipulation or coercion (FPH, 2010). Most previous studies on mental wellbeing and marital satisfaction have identified mental wellbeing as a significant predictor of marital satisfaction. Kornaszewska-Polak, (2016) confirmed the existence of a statistical relationship between secure attachment styles, wellbeing, loneliness and marital satisfaction. The study further identified that wellbeing can enhance marital satisfaction in insecurely attached adults. Similarly, Edwards-Stewart, *et al.*, (2018) found that higher average relationship satisfaction was significantly related to lower average mental health status among active-duty military personnel. Oginyi, Ofoke and Francis, (2015) explored religiosity, forgiveness and psychological wellbeing as predictors of marital satisfaction among academic staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, South-Eastern Nigeria. The sample comprised 160 married couples of University staff. The result of the regression analysis indicated positive prediction of religiosity, forgiveness and psychological wellbeing on marital satisfaction.

In a study on the relationship between deteriorating health and marital satisfaction, Booth and Johnson, (1994) observed that a decline in health had an adverse effect on marital satisfaction. They further posit that health seems to

influence the marital quality of persons regardless of gender, education, religion, number of friends, marital duration or age. Ofovwe, Ofili, Ojesu and Okosun, (2013) in a study involving 300 teachers identified a strong association between marital dissatisfaction and psychological disorder. Khajeh, Goodarzi and Soleimani, (2014) examined the relationship of psychological wellbeing and quality of marital relationships and identified that marital quality predicted a percentage of psychological wellbeing among married men and women.

Comparing the marital satisfaction and mental health of working women and housewives, Naeimavi, Maktabi, Tofanizadeh and Zeinali, (2016) reported a remarkable difference in the rate of mental health and marital satisfaction between working women and housewives. Specifically, they observed that working women were less than housewives in terms of the rate of marital satisfaction and mental health. Notably, Karagülle, *et al.*, (2019), in a recent study, found no significant relationship between psychological well-being and marital satisfaction in a study involving obese patients who underwent bariatric surgery.

In spite of the abundant empirical evidence on the direct relationship between mental wellbeing and marital satisfaction, there is a paucity of studies on these variables among a homogenous religious group. Hence,

this study was conducted to fill the gap in knowledge.

Self-Esteem and Marital Satisfaction

Self-esteem reflects a person's overall emotional evaluation of his or her own self-worth. Such evaluation could be categorized as either high or low self-esteem is characterised by a general fondness or love for oneself; low self-esteem is characterised by mildly positive or ambivalent feelings toward oneself (Brown, Dutton & Cook, 2001). In extreme cases, low self-esteem people hate themselves, but this kind of self-loathing occurs in clinical populations, not in normal populations (Baumeister, Tice, & Hutton, 1989). How individuals evaluate themselves play an important role in their relationship. Hally and Pollack, (1993) observed that high self-esteemed individuals are more confident regarding their partners' acceptance, are more likely to take emotional risks especially when such risks are necessary to maintain the relationship. Taghizadeh and Kalhori, (2015) investigated the relationship between self-esteem and marital satisfaction among women in Payame Moor University of Shahre Rey. The findings showed that majority of participants (55.6%) had relative and moderate marital satisfaction. The majority of the samples (92%) had high self-esteem. There was a significant relationship between self-esteem and marital satisfaction. The results further showed

that the probability of marital dissatisfaction in individual with low self-esteem is 9 times higher than normal individuals, 5 times higher among those with low sexual satisfaction and 3 times higher among people dealing with bad economic conditions.

Similarly, Yadalijamalaje, Nasen, Shoshtari, Khaledian and Abrami, (2013) explored the relationship between self-esteem and marital satisfaction among married women in Najafabad and Fualdshahr. They found a positive correlation between marital satisfaction and self-esteem with higher self-esteem resulting to greater marital satisfaction among women in both cities. In another study, Uwaoma, Unamba, Ebeh and Chine, (2016) investigated the influence of self-esteem and gender on marital satisfaction among Igbo married couple. The study which involved 250 participants identified that self-esteem significantly influences marital satisfaction among Igbo married couples. Also, Tavakolizadeh and Nejad, (2016) found a significant relationship between sexual self-esteem and marital satisfaction among mothers with normal and mentally retarded children respectively.

These findings have shown that high levels of self-esteem could significantly influence an individual's level of marital satisfaction. Therefore, this study is set up to investigate whether mental wellbeing and self-esteem will

predict marital satisfaction among Catholic married women.

Hypotheses

1. Mental wellbeing will significantly predict marital satisfaction among Catholic married women in Umunnachi,
2. Self-esteem will significantly predict marital satisfaction among Catholic married women in Umunnachi

METHOD

Participants

One hundred and twenty married Catholic women served as respondents for this study. They were drawn using purposive sampling method during the 2017 August Meeting of Catholic Women Organisation (CWO) in Umunnachi, Dunukofia Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. Their ages ranged between 23-60 years with a mean age 38.05 and a standard deviation 8.27.

Instruments

Three measures were adopted for this study. The first was the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) developed by Tennant, *et al.*, (2007). WEMWBS was designed to measure mental well-being itself and not the determinants of mental well-being. It contains 14 items scored on a five-point response scale with all items scored directly. WEMWBS shows high levels of internal consistency and

reliability against accepted criteria (Tennant, *et al.*, 2007). Also, Onyeonu (2015) using Nigerian samples had obtained a reliability coefficient of .87 with corrected item-totals of WEMWBS exceeding the .31 benchmark (Pallant, 2005) thus indicating that the scale measures the same construct.

The second instrument, Index of Self-Esteem (ISE) was developed by Hudson (1982a). It is a 25-item inventory designed to measure the level of self-esteem/self-concept of individuals. Hudson (1982a) obtained a coefficient alpha of .93 and a two hour-retest coefficient of .92. Onighaiye (1996), using a Nigerian sample obtained coefficients of validity by correlating ISE with the Symptom Check List (SCL) (Derogatis, Lipman, & Covi, 1973), in scale C – interpersonal sensitivity = .46, scale D – Depression = .38. To obtain a client's total score in the ISE, the participants' scores are added and then subtracted from 25. Scores higher than the norm indicate low self-esteem.

The third instrument, the Index of Marital Satisfaction (IMS) was developed by Hudson, (1982b). IMS is a 25-item inventory designed to measure the degree of satisfaction an individual has with his or her present marriage. The IMS items are scored on a 5-point Likert type response pattern. Omoluabi, (1999) obtained Chronbach alpha coefficient of .96 for the IMS while Anene, (1994) obtained a

concurrent validity coefficient of .48 both using Nigerian samples; thus confirming the reliability and validity of the IMS among Nigerian samples. To obtain the final score for IMS, the participants' scores are added and then subtracted from 25. The score obtained after subtracting reflects the participants level of marital satisfaction. Higher scores indicate dissatisfaction of participants in their marital relationship while lower scores imply satisfaction of participants in their marital relationship.

Procedure

The researcher approached the leadership of the CWO of three parishes in Umunnachi, Dunukofia Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria during their one-week 2017 Annual August Meeting. The three parishes include St Gabriel Catholic Church Nkwelle, St. Anthony's Parish Mgbuke and St. Peter's Parish Ozzuh. After obtaining permission from the leaders, the researcher approached participants, built rapport and explained the objective of the study. Participants who were willing to participate were given the questionnaires to complete. Those who were unable to complete it themselves were guided in the process. One hundred and forty-six questionnaires were distributed within the period. However, only 120 were found usable for the study.

Design and Statistics

The study employed the cross-sectional survey design. This was to enable the collection of data so as to make descriptive inferences about a population when research is to be executed at a single point in time

(Babbie, 2007). To analyse data collected, multiple regression analysis was utilised because of its suitability in exploring the predictive relationship between one continuous dependent variable and a number of independent variables or predictors.

RESULTS

Table 1: Summary Results of Two Steps Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses for Marital Satisfaction on Mental Wellbeing and Self Esteem

Predictors	Marital Satisfaction	
	Step 1 β	Step 2 β
<i>Step 1</i>		
Mental Wellbeing	-.40***	-.20**
<i>Step 2</i>		
Self Esteem		.62***
ΔF	22.45***	81.04***
R^2	.16***	.51***
ΔR^2		.35***
Df	1,117	1, 116
Dublin Watson	2.12	

Note: $N = 120$, ** $p < .001$, *** $p < .0005$.

The result of a hierarchical multiple regression analysis as presented in Table 1 above tested the two hypotheses of the study. The overall model of the regression analysis was significant [$R^2 = .51$, $F(1, 116) = 81.04$, $p < .0005$]. The overall fit of the model shows that 51% of the variation in catholic married women's marital satisfaction has been explained. Also, the Durbin-Watson of 2.12 falls within the accepted range ($1.5 < D < 2.5$), indicating that there is no autocorrelation problem in the data and that the error term is independent.

In the first hypothesis, mental wellbeing explained 16% of the variations in marital satisfaction. Mental wellbeing was found to be significantly predictor of marital satisfaction among married catholic women ($\beta = -.40$, $p < .0005$). The result further show that mental wellbeing had an inverse relationship with marital satisfaction ($t = -4.74$). Since high scores on IMS imply dissatisfaction in marriage, the result infers that as mental wellbeing scores reduces, marital dissatisfaction increases. Therefore, high mental

wellbeing increases marital satisfaction among Catholic married women.

Analysis of the second hypothesis shows that self-esteem explained 51% of the variations in marital satisfaction. The result also shows that self-esteem is a significant and strong positive predictor of marital satisfaction among married catholic women ($\beta = .62, p < .0005; t = 9.00$). Therefore, high self-esteem scores (low self-esteem) results in high marital satisfaction scores (marital dissatisfaction) and vice versa. The results summarily infer that marital satisfaction increases alongside with mental wellbeing and self-esteem among married catholic women.

DISCUSSION

The study investigated mental wellbeing and self-esteem as predictors of marital satisfaction among Catholic married women in Umuunnachi. Two hypotheses were postulated and tested. The first hypothesis which states that mental wellbeing will significantly predict marital satisfaction among Catholic married women in Umuunnachi was accepted. Mental wellbeing was found to be a significant predictor of marital satisfaction. This finding is in line with previous studies. For instance, Kornaszewska-Polak, (2016) identified a statistical relationship between wellbeing and marital satisfaction expressing further that wellbeing can enhance marital satisfaction in insecurely attached adults. Similarly, Oginyi, Ofoke and Francis, (2015)

found a positive predictive relationship between psychological wellbeing and marital satisfaction. Following the same trend, Ofovwe, Ofili, Ojesu and Okosun, (2013) identified a strong association between marital dissatisfaction and psychological disorder while Khajeh, Goodarzi and Soleimani. (2014) established that marital quality predicted a percentage of psychological well-being among married men and women. A likely reason for this outcome could be that satisfied marital relationships are most likely to result to an individual's happiness, contentment, improved relaxation and sleep, less worry and several other positive outcomes. These outcomes are high correlates of mental wellbeing.

The second hypothesis which states that self-esteem will significantly predict marital satisfaction was also accepted with self-esteem found to be a strong positive predictor of marital satisfaction among Catholic married women. This finding concurs with the study of Taghizadeh and Kalhori, (2015), who found a significant relationship between self-esteem and marital satisfaction. The findings of the current study has been further strengthened by a study carried out by Uwaoma, Unamba, Ebeh and Chine, (2016) which identified that self-esteem significantly influences marital satisfaction among Igbo married couples. Thus, this present finding further corroborates earlier research confirming that marital satisfaction

increases alongside with mental wellbeing and self-esteem.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Marriage is a thing of choice. Therefore, there is need for individuals to make careful choices during courtship, engage in standardized marriage counselling, and develop the right mental attitude before entering into marriage agreements. Also, Intending and married couples should take out time to evaluate themselves in order to create a strategy of managing and treating each other, so that peace and satisfaction will be maintained in marriages.

Apart from attending marriage counselling prior to getting married, couples should endeavour to attend, from time to time, regular family counselling sessions and marriage seminars. These could go a long way in teaching them better techniques that will make them adjust properly in their marital relationship.

There is also a strong need for individuals entering a marital relationship to evaluate and re-evaluate their levels of self-esteem from time to time. As studies have shown that this factor is very vital in enhancing marital satisfaction (Uwaoma, Unamba, Ebeh & Chine, 2016) which can then result in adequate mental wellbeing (Oginyi, Ofoke & Francis, 2015)

Although this study only investigated two factors that have received recognition in previous studies, it was

able to throw new light into the marital satisfaction debate. The findings have clearly indicated that mental wellbeing and self-esteem predict satisfaction among members of the Catholic Women Organisation. In other words an individual's global evaluations of self and mental ability do affect their happiness in marriage irrespective of religious level.

However, a more elaborate study is suggested. Such a study should involve married women in other denominations and religious divides in Nigeria and beyond. By so doing, the marital satisfaction debate will be broadened and be better understood.

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