Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), Vol.4 No.2 June, 2021; p.g. 48 – 54; ISSN: 2695-2319 (Print); ISSN: 2695-2327 (Online)

COMMUNICATION STYLES AND SEXUAL SATISFACTION AS PREDICTORS OF MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG COUPLES IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated communication styles and sexual satisfaction as predictors of marital satisfaction among couples in Anambra State. Two *hypotheses guided the study. The study employed correlational research design. The population of this study consisted of all married persons in Anambra State. There is no reliable record of the actual number of couples in the state. The sample size of 630 couples was chosen for the study, through a multistage sampling procedure. Three instruments were used for the study: Communication Pattern Questionnaire (CPQ) developed by Christensen and Sullaway (1984).The Golombok-Rust Sexual Satisfaction Inventory (GRISS Rust and Golombok (1983). Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire* developed by Fornier et al. (1983). *The data collected was analysed using a simple regression analysis. From the findings of the study, couples' communication style significantly predicted their marital satisfaction and couples' sexual satisfaction significantly predicted their marital satisfaction. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations were made. The researcher recommended among others that Counsellors should organize workshops, seminars and conferences where couples will be sensitized on the role of communication styles and sexual satisfaction on marital satisfaction. Also, the churches and government should make premarital counselling compulsory for intending couples to equip them with the communication skills for handling marital issues.*

Keywords: Counselling, sexual satisfaction, communication style, marital satisfaction, Anambra State.

Introduction

The importance of marriage in African community cannot be over emphasized. In Africa, Marriage is regarded as a God-given institution for the continuation of society and the human race through the family unit. Marriage in African perspective, is the major rite of passage into adulthood, hence, marriage in African context is not an option but an obligation and indeed a sacred duty. Marriage is expected to be an affair of intimacy and compromise, where spouses complement each other. It is expected to be "for better for worse" but the current trend in the marriage departs from these traditional assertions, as the marital union in recent time, is

marred with conflict and marital dissatisfaction. One of the basic concepts to show the bliss and stability of marriage is the concept of conjugal satisfaction (Fatehizadeh & Ahmadi, 2006).

Marital satisfaction according to Rusu and Muresan (2014) is defined as the individual emotional state of being satisfied with the interactions, experiences and expectations concerning life in a couple. Marital satisfaction is a condition in which couples are happy and satisfied with one another. Ziaee (2014) posited that marital satisfaction is the extent of contentment regarding certain aspects of marital relationship as well as the whole relationship. It is a situation in which couples have satisfaction and feel happy living together (Shakerian, 2010). A couple is said to be satisfied when marital relationship is in line with their marital expectations (Sayehmiri, 2020). Several factors, such as socio-economic status, education, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, physical attractiveness, attitudes, intelligence quotient and personal values influence marital satisfaction. Moreover, Kajbaf, Aghai and Kaviani (2004) opined that marital satisfaction depends on factors such as, personality problems, sexual satisfaction, socio-economic status, communication styles, leisure activities, the role of egalitarianism and religious orientation.

Studies have shown that, marital satisfaction has numerous dimensions, such as sexual satisfaction, personality attributes, relationship with partner's family, common religion and religious beliefs and communication styles (Javanmard & Garegozlo, 2013). Other studies such as Imhonde, Aluede and Ifunanyachukwu (2008) posited that effective communication can influence effective marital satisfaction. Khajeddin, Riahi and Izadi (2011) carried out a research on the relationship between communication skills and marital satisfaction among married students. The study showed that a significant positive correlation exists between communication skills and marital satisfaction. Other studies by Ziaee et al. (2014) revealed a significant relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction; hence, increase in sexual satisfaction can lead to increase in marital satisfaction. On the other hand, Fallah et al (2018) reported a positive and highly significant correlation between sexual and marital satisfaction.

Sexual satisfaction according to Ji and Norling cited in Ziaee (2014) defined sexual satisfaction as an effective response arising from one's subjective evaluation of the negative and positive dimensions in connection with one's sexual relationship. Shakerian et al. (2014) defined sexual satisfaction as a person's pleasant feeling out of that type of sexual relationship which forms a vital part of couples' impression of each other which in turn maintains their marriage. The investigation of the role of sexual satisfaction among couples has been largely neglected in the literature. Carey in Litzinger (2003) posited that couples are sexually satisfied when they agree about sexual matters and when men understand women's sexual preferences, which implies that when couples can communicate successfully about sexuality, there may be an added benefit to the sexual satisfaction of couples. Various factors affect sexual satisfaction, such as occupational stress, gender, couples' relationship, age, culture and education (Givi & Setayesh, 2018). The same authors posited that the cause of many mental disorders and marital maladaptation is due to sexual dissatisfaction. Another variable to be considered in this study is couples' communication styles.

Communication styles in relationship are defined as the styles of communication that people typically use to deal with problems in relationship (Sakmar, 2010). No marriage is without

problems but the couples' ability to handle relationship conflict is the key to marital satisfaction. Marital dissatisfaction comes to play when spouses fail to express themselves especially as regards to their marital relationship. According to Awujo and Onwukwe (2019), communication in marital relationship involves the ability of couples to share and examine all their perceptions, feelings, ideas and thoughts to come to an accurate understanding of what is happening; with the aim of facilitating marital progress, harmony and marital satisfaction. Communication in any marriage is very important for a successful marriage. Oniye, Yahaya., Odebode and Alade (2016), opined that communication is an essential ingredient in marriage and when communication styles are not recognized and implemented early in the marital relationship, it can cause damage and lead to instability. The quality of communication in marital relationship has continued to gain evidence over time. For instance, Woko in Awujo and Onwukwe (2019) reported a strong relationship between communication styles and marital happiness. Khajeddin, Riahi and Izadi (2011), conducted a research on The Relationship Between Communication Skills And Marital Satisfaction Among Married Students Of Psychology And Counseling. The findings revealed a there were significant positive correlation between communication skills and its subscales with marital satisfaction. Studies conducted on the association of marital satisfaction and communication styles reported that individuals who indicated better communication styles have higher marital satisfaction. For instance, Byers (2005) showed that poor communication styles lead to a decrease in marital satisfaction.

Based on this, the study was carried out to investigate communication styles and sexual satisfaction as predictors of marital satisfaction among couples in Anambra state, with view of providing empirical data that will guide counsellors, social workers and couples in handling contending issues in marriage.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the communication styles and sexual satisfaction as predictors of marital satisfaction among couples in Anambra state. Specifically, the study sought to find out:

1. Whether communication styles will significantly predict marital satisfaction among couples in Anambra state.
2. Whether sexual satisfaction will significantly predict marital satisfaction among couples in Anambra state.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study, at 0.05 ($P < .05$) level of significance.

1. Communication style does not significantly predict marital satisfaction among couples in Anambra state.
2. Sexual satisfaction does not significantly predict marital satisfaction among couples in Anambra state.

Methods

The research design for this study is correlational research design. A correlational design according to Nworgu (2006) seeks to establish the relationship that exists between two or more variables. The study was carried out in Anambra state. The population of this study consisted of all married persons in Anambra State. There is no reliable record of the actual number of

couples in the state. The sample size of 630 couples was chosen for the study, through a multistage sampling procedure. The sampling procedure involved dividing the state into three senatorial zones. Each senatorial zone consists of at least 7 local government areas. Four local government areas were randomly selected from each of the senatorial zones. From each local government area 210 participants were selected.

Three instruments were used for the study:

Communication Pattern Questionnaire (CPQ) developed by Christensen and Sullaway (1984), the aim of the scale is to assess spouse's behaviours when some problems in the relationship arise, during discussion of a relationship problem and after a discussion of a relationship problem. Each item is rated on a 9-point scale and response options range from "very unlike (1)" to "very likely (9).

The Golombok-Rust Sexual Satisfaction Inventory (GRISS) is a 28-item self-report scale developed by Rust and Golombok (1983). The aim of the scale is to measure the quality of sexual relationship and the existence and severity of both male and female sexual problems. Each item is rated on a 5-point scale and response options range from "never" to "always". Scores of scales are calculated by summing up item scores after necessary items are converted. Higher scores demonstrate higher level of sexual dysfunction and lower level of sexual quality.

Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire is a 47 item scale developed by Fornier et al. (1983). Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert method and response options range from "totally agree and totally disagree" that are scored 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, scores; below 30 indicate severe marital dissatisfaction, 30 to 40 indicates Dissatisfaction, 40 to 60 shows average satisfaction, 60 to 70 indicates a high degree of marital satisfaction, and scores above 70 represent an excellent marital satisfaction. The reliability of the marital satisfaction questionnaire was done using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and it yielded 0.92.

The questionnaire instrument was personally administered on the respondents by the researcher and research assistants. The data collected was analysed using a simple regression analysis.

Results

Hypotheses One: Communication style does not significantly predict marital satisfaction among couples in Anambra state.

Table 1: Summary of regression analysis on communication styles as predictor of marital satisfaction among couples

Variable	r	R^2	R^2 change	B	BETA	Cal. F	Df	Crit. F	Remark
Communication	0.228	0.052	0.048	0.562	0.863	24.23	628	3.85	S

The result shows that the calculated F-value is 24.23 while the critical F-value at 628 degrees of freedom and 0.05 alpha level is 3.85. Since the calculated F-value is higher than the critical

F-value, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This implies that couples' communication style is a significant predictor of their marital satisfaction.

Hypotheses Two: Sexual satisfaction does not significantly predict marital satisfaction among couples in Anambra state.

Table 2: Summary of regression analysis on sexual satisfaction as predictor of marital satisfaction among couples

Variable	r	R^2	R^2 change	B	BETA	Cal. F	Df	Crit. F	Remark
Sexual Satisfaction	0.242	0.059	0.041	0.554	0.893	23.32	628	3.85	S

The table above is the summary of regression analysis on sexual satisfaction as predictor of marital satisfaction among couples. From the table above, at 1 df numerator and 628 denominator and 0.05 level of significant, the calculated F value 23.32 is higher than the critical F value of 3.85. Since the calculated F-value is higher than the critical F-value, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This implies that couples' sexual satisfaction is a significant predictor of their marital satisfaction.

Discussion of Findings

The findings in hypothesis one showed that couples' communication style is a significant predictor of their marital satisfaction. It is obvious that couples with marital conflict do have problems in communication with each other; hence, effective communication styles can play a vital role in determining marital satisfaction. In order to safeguard the sanctity of family structure, there is need for professional counsellors to highlight the importance of communication in promoting a healthy family life. This finding is in line with the study of Christensen et al. (2006) that showed that success in communication led to an increase in marital satisfaction while Byers (2005) reported that poor communication led to a decrease in relationship satisfaction. Syder (2015) also reported a significant association between verbal communication and marital satisfaction among couples in River state.

The findings in hypothesis two showed that couples' sexual satisfaction is a significant predictor of their marital satisfaction. The findings of this study indicate that a higher sexual satisfaction can improve marital life quality and decrease marital problems between couples; this will go a long way in decreasing divorce rate and marital dissatisfaction among couples. The finding is in line with Litzenger and Gordon (2005) who found that greater sexual satisfaction is associated with higher marital satisfaction. More so, the study also reported that lower levels of sexual satisfaction are associated with lower levels of marital satisfaction. Hence, changes in sexual satisfaction have a predictive role on marital satisfaction.

Conclusion

The study investigated communication styles and sexual satisfaction as predictors of marital satisfaction among couples in Anambra state. Following the findings of this study, the following conclusions have been drawn:

- Couples' communication style is a significant predictor of their marital satisfaction.
- couples' sexual satisfaction is a significant predictor of their marital satisfaction

Recommendations

Sequel to the findings and discussions from the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Counsellors should organize workshops, seminars and conferences where couples will be sensitized on the role of communication styles and sexual satisfaction on marital satisfaction
2. The churches and government should make premarital counselling compulsory for intending couples to equip them with the communication skills for handling marital issues.

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