

MARITAL SATISFACTION EXPERIENCES AMONG NON TEACHING STAFF OF UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Marriage satisfaction is a factor that promotes the quality of life of those involved. Although marriage can be very fulfilling, not all married persons are satisfied with their marital union. This study was therefore conducted to determine the Marital Satisfaction (MS) experiences among the Non-Teaching Staff (NTS) of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. A descriptive cross sectional study was used for the study. A total of 344 NTS were purposively selected for the study. A semi-structured questionnaire with four sections comprising socio-demographic characteristics and level of MS. A 150-point adapted MS scale was used to measure MS and categorised into four domains. The four domains included sexual satisfaction (35-point scale), management of the home (35-point scale), compatibility (40-point scale) and communication with spouse (40-point scale). The level of marital satisfaction in management of the home (71.5%), compatibility (78.5%) and communication (81.1%) were higher than sexual satisfaction (69.8%). There was no significant difference in MS between males (51.8%) and females (54.6%). Couples experienced higher marital satisfaction during the early and middle years of marriage when compared to their counterparts married for longer. Therefore marriage seminars should be organized for couples to educate them on all aspects of marriage that will foster marital harmony.

Keywords: Marital satisfaction, University non-teaching staff, Sexual satisfaction

Introduction

Marriage is one of the most important institution affecting people's lives and well-being. Stutzer and Frey, (2006) further stated that marital institutions regulate sexual relations and encourage commitment between spouses. This commitment may have positive effects on spouses' health and their earnings in the labour market. Akinade (1997) on his part defines marriage as the union and cohabitation of two people of the opposite sex with a permanent commitment to each other and their children when they are born are dependent on them. Spouses expect some benefits from their partners such as expressed love, gratitude and recognition as well as security and material rewards (Stutzer & Frey 2006). People marry for many reasons, including one or more of the following: legal, social, libidinal, emotional, economic, spiritual and religious.

A marriage bestows rights and obligations on the married parties, and sometimes on relatives as well, being the sole mechanism for the creation of affinal ties (in-laws). These rights and obligations vary considerably between societies and between groups within society (Leach, 1968). These may include giving a husband/wife or his/her family control over a spouse's sexual services, labor, and property; giving a husband/wife responsibility for the spouse's debts; giving a husband/wife visitation rights when his/her spouse is incarcerated or hospitalized; giving a husband/wife control over his/her spouse's affairs when the spouse is incapacitated; establishing the second legal guardian of a parent's child; establishing a joint fund of property for the benefit of children and establishing a relationship between the families of the spouses. According to statistics on marital trends conducted by the U.S Census Bureau (1996), over 94% of men and women over the age of 60 have married at least once in their lives. Projections show that this trend will continue with 80-90% of the U.S population marrying at some time in their life. Statistics also indicated that of those marriages that end in divorce, over half will remarry (Kreider& Fields, 2001). With a great majority of the population choosing to marry and remarry, it is evident that marriage continues to be a desirable achievement for most people.

The World Health Organization (1976) has defined health as a state of complete physical, mental, social wellbeing of an individual and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Marital satisfaction will increase the health of an individual. Marital distress and conflict are linked to poor physical health (South & Krueger, 2013). In recent years, researchers have paid much attention to the role of marital quality in physical health. These studies generally have shown that positive marital satisfaction is beneficial to physical health, whereas negative marital processes (e.g., marital conflict) can have a detrimental impact on physical health (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001) and that higher levels of negative spousal behaviors uniquely contributed to poor physical health, predicting more physical symptoms, chronic health problems, physical disability, and poorer perceived health (Bookwala, 2005).

Studies have shown that married people live up to eight (8) years longer than divorced or never-married people (Waite, 2000). Other studies show that over 90% of married people live to be at least 65 years old, while only 60% of divorced and never married people live to this moderate age (Cohen, 1997; Waite, 2000). Similar studies found that the incidence of all forms of mental and physical illness were reduced among married people compared with unmarried or divorced people; percentages of people engaging in unhealthy levels of alcohol or drug consumption were also significantly lower among married people than their non-married counterparts. Married people have sex twice as often as single people, and report deeper levels of satisfaction with their sexual relations (Waite, 2000). The author opined that unmarried couples who live together also have active sex lives but get less emotional satisfaction from it than married people. Married people have more than twice as much total net asset, on average, as unmarried people.

Married men and women report greater satisfaction with family life, report greater sexual satisfaction, higher levels of physical and psychological health and experience less depression than their never married counterparts (Horwitz, 1996; Waite, 2000; and Scott, 2000). Women appeared to obtain greater health benefits from marriage than men (Chung & Kim 2015). Married women are less likely to be victims of domestic violence, and married couples are more likely to be happy and less likely to attempt suicide. The studies also found many positive effects of marriage on children. For example, Horwitz, (1996), Waite, (2000) and Scott, (2000) indicated that children in married families are less likely to suffer serious child abuse, less likely to end up in jail as adults, less likely to be depressed as adolescents and less likely to be expelled from school. Children in married families are less likely to repeat a grade in school, to have developmental problems, to have behavioural problems, to use drugs (marijuana, cocaine) and are less likely to be sexually active. Also, they are better off financially and are generally healthier physically and emotionally when they reach adulthood than children from other home situations (Dobson, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

Although marriage is still very popular and there are clear psychological, psychosocial and health benefits accruing from it such as decreases in mortality rates and risk taking behavior, separation and divorce abound. Approximately one third of marriages end in divorce in the first ten years (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). In a study on the long term effects of parental divorce on the mental health of young adults (Chase-Lansdale; Cherlin & Kiernan, 2008), it was discovered that the relative risk of serious emotional disorders increased in the aftermath of divorce and the association between marital satisfaction, mental health and wellbeing was made (Scorsolini-Comin & Santos 2012). Studies have generally shown that spousal illness is related to lower levels of marital satisfaction (Korporaal, Broese van Groenou & Tilburg, 2013). This negative partner effect is shown with vision impairment (Strawbridge, Wallhagen, & Shema, 2007), with poor and declining general health (Booth & Johnson, 1994; Yorgason, Booth, & Johnson, 2008), with the presence of chronic illness (Hafstrom & Schram, 1984), and with cancer (Langer, Yi, Storer, & Syrjala, 2010).

Other studies have been carried out on different aspects of marital life. For example studies on husbands' support towards his wife conducted by Brunstein, Dangelmayer & Schultheiss (1996) and Hood (as cited in Roger, 1999) found that giving and receiving marital support in the pursuit of marital goals was found to be predictive of marital satisfaction. The study by Onyishi (2012), found that a positive relationship exists between number of children and marital satisfaction among the Igbo ethnic group in Nigeria. Another study was conducted by Animashaun & Oladeni (2011) on the effects of length of marriage and the number of children on Marital Satisfaction among Baptist couples in Lagos, Nigeria. The study revealed that there was significant positive effect of length of marriage and marital satisfaction. Only a few studies have explored the level of marital satisfaction of couples in Nigeria, hence the need for this study.

Objectives of the Study

In view of the aforesaid, the objectives of the study are to:

- i. Investigate the extent in which married people are satisfied with their marriage with regard to communication with spouse.
- ii. Examine the extent in which married people are satisfied with their marriage with regard to sexual activities with spouse.
- iii. Explore the extent in which married people are satisfied with their marriage with regard to compatibility with spouse.
- iv. Find out the extent of married people's satisfaction with their marriage with regard to management of the home.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- v. To what extent are married people satisfied with their marriage with regard to communication with spouse?
- vi. To what extent are married people satisfied with their marriage with regard to sexual activities with spouse?
- vii. To what extent are married people satisfied with their marriage with regard to compatibility with spouse?
- viii. To what extent are married people satisfied with their marriage with regard to management of the home?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The population for this study comprised of non-teaching staff of the University of Ibadan totaling 3199 as at the time of this study. Inclusion criteria were non teaching staff who were married and who agreed to participate in the study while exclusion criteria were non teaching staff who were not married and those who did not agree to participate in the study. A sample of three hundred and forty-four (344) adults in the University of Ibadan was used for the study. Multi stage sampling technique was used for the study

Stage 1: Selection of departments was done through balloting (three departments were selected from each faculty (13 faculties)

Stage 2: Using proportionate sampling method, respondents were selected from the departments
Stage 3: Selection of respondents was done through balloting. All faculties were included in the study.

The instrument for this study was a self-structured questionnaire which was in two sections. Section A was on demographic characteristics of the respondents while section B contained items on communication and marital satisfaction, sexual activity and marital satisfaction and compatibility and marital satisfaction. The instrument was validated by three experts in the Department of Health Promotion and Education in the University of Ibadan. A statistical analysis involving the Cronbachs Alpha test reliability was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The Cronbachs Alpha Reliability Statistics value was 0.766 which was greater than 0.5; therefore the instrument was adopted as reliable. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents after careful explanation by the researcher with the aid of 2 trained research assistants and retrieved immediately after completion. Frequency counts, percentages and Chi Square were used to analyze the data. Ethical approval was sought and gotten from the UI/UCH Ethics committee.

Results

The results are presented in Tables 1-5

Research Question One: To what extent are married people satisfied with their marriage with regards to communication with spouse?

Table 1: Communication as a determinant of marital satisfaction (n = 344)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>		<i>Not Satisfied</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
The degree to which my spouse is honest with me	325	94.5	19	5.5
The way disagreements are settled	319	92.7	25	7.3
The frequency with which my spouse listens to me	307	89.2	37	10.8
How well my spouse listens to me	306	89.0	38	11.0
The quality of communication between my spouse and I	303	88.1	41	11.9
My spouse's philosophy of life	291	84.6	53	15.4
The degree of disclosure I received from my spouse	300	87.2	44	12.8

Table 1 shows that the respondents' experiences on communication revealed that 319 (92.7%) were satisfied and 25 (7.3%) were not satisfied with the way disagreements are settled in their home. On the frequency with which a spouse listens to one another, 307 (89.2%) and 37 (10.8%) were satisfied and not satisfied respectively. Responses to the degree of disclosure spouses received from each other, 300 (87.2%) were satisfied while 44 (12.8%) were not satisfied. Respondents experiences on their spouses' honesty revealed that 325 (94.5%) were satisfied while 19 (5.5%) were not satisfied. About 306 (89%) were satisfied because their spouse does not listen to them while 41 (11.9%) were dissatisfied

Research Question Two: To what extent are married people satisfied with their marriage with regards to sexual activities with spouse?

Table 2: Sexual satisfaction as a determinant of marital satisfaction (n= 344)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>		<i>Not Satisfied</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
The affection I receive from my spouse	309	89.8	35	10.2
The manner in which affection is expressed between my spouse and I	307	89.2	37	10.8
The frequency of sexual or other intimate relationship with my spouse	290	84.3	54	15.7
The quality of sexual or other intimate relationship with my spouse	300	87.2	44	12.8
The emotional support I receive from my spouse	298	86.6	46	13.4
The day to day support and encouragement provided by my spouse	305	88.7	39	11.3
My spouse's faithfulness to me	305	88.9	38	11.1

Table 2 above shows that respondents' experiences on sexual satisfaction revealed that 309 (89.8%) were satisfied and 35 (10.2%) were not satisfied with the affection they received from their spouse. On the frequency of sexual or other intimate relationship with spouse, 290 (84.3%) and 54 (15.7%) were satisfied and not satisfied respectively. Responses to the day to day support and encouragement provided by a spouse 305 (88.7%) were satisfied while 39 (11.3%) were not satisfied. On spouses' faithfulness, 306 (89.0%) and 38 (11.0%) were satisfied and unsatisfied respectively.

Research Question Three: To what extent are married people satisfied with their marriage with regard to compatibility with spouse?

Table 3: Compatibility as a determinant of marital satisfaction (n= 344)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>		<i>Not Satisfied</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
The degree to which my spouse and I share common interests	316	91.9	28	8.1
The degree to which my spouse motivates me	317	92.2	27	7.8
My spouse's overall personality	288	83.7	56	16.3
My overall compatibility with my spouse	295	85.8	49	14.2
Overall, how satisfied are you in your marriage right now?	295	85.8	49	14.2
My spouse's relationship with God	317	92.2	27	7.8
My spouse's emotional health	304	88.4	40	11.6
My spouse's ability to tolerate my weakness	295	85.8	49	14.2

The results generated on respondents' compatibility with spouse and marital satisfaction (Table 3) were generally positive as 288 (83.7%) were satisfied with their spouse's overall personality while 56 (16.3%) were not satisfied. A total of 295 (85.8%) respondents were compatible with their spouses while 49 (14.2%) were not compatible. On the ability of a spouse to tolerate one's weakness, 295 (85.8%) were satisfied while 49 (14.2%) were not satisfied. On the degree to which spouses share common interests, 316 (91.9%) and 28 (8.1%) were satisfied and unsatisfied respectively. On one's spouses' emotional health, 304 (88.4%) were satisfied while 40 (13.2%) were not satisfied.

Research Question Four: To what extent are married people satisfied with their marriage with regard to management of the home?

Table 3: Management of the home as a determinant of marital satisfaction (n= 344)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>		<i>Not Satisfied</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
The amount of consideration showed by my spouse	318	92.4	26	7.6
How decisions are made in my home	306	89.0	38	11.0
My overall relationship with relatives of my spouse	290	84.3	54	15.7
The care and maintenance of the home	314	91.3	30	8.7
The preparation of food	316	91.9	28	8.1
How food is served in the home	314	91.3	30	8.7
The financial support I receive from my spouse	289	84.0	55	16.0

The respondents experiences on management of the home (Table 4) revealed that 306 (89.0%) were satisfied with the way decisions are made in their home while 38 (11.0%) were not satisfied. A total of 290 (84.3%) respondents were not satisfied with the visit from relatives while 54 (15.7%) were satisfied with relatives' visit. On the financial support respondents receive from their spouses, 289 (84.0%) were satisfied while 55 (16.0%) were not satisfied. A total of 314 (91.3%) and 30 (8.7%) respondents were respectively satisfied and dissatisfied on the care and maintenance of their homes. On the preparation of food and how food is served in the homes, 316 (91.9%) and 28 (8.1%) as well as 314 (91.3%) and 30 (8.7%) were respectively recorded.

Discussion

The level of marital satisfaction in communication shows that females were more likely to be satisfied than males. This could be because women are better able to express their innermost thoughts and feelings to a loved one. It is a widespread view that marital communication may have different significance for both sexes as women tend to be more relationally-oriented than their male counterparts (Wood, 1993; Acitelli, 1992; Thompson & Walker, 1989). Women are naturally more sensitive than men and would be the first to ask if something is wrong with their partner. Their greater sensitiveness to interpersonal problems and subtleties of communication is reflected in women's role as 'relationship architects' (Woods, 1993). A woman is more likely to ask her husband about his work place, friends, family etc. and is in most cases the first to initiate a conversation at home. It also corresponds with studies conducted by Weigel and Ballard-Reisch, (2001) and Canary et al., (2001) when they observed that women are more likely to talk about daily events and relationships with men.

Results were mixed for sexual satisfaction among males and females. The females seemed a little better satisfied than the males in relation to sex and this could be linked to fact that females are better communicators and more sensitive and would communicate their intimate needs to their spouse easily compared to their male counterparts. Diamond (2003) argued that neural mechanisms of the sexual and attachment systems overlap more strongly among women than men. Specifically, Diamond describes evidence from research on non-human animals that oxytocin mediates attachment behaviors as well as sexual behaviors (Carter, 1992). Crucially, oxytocin's effects are estrogen dependent, suggesting that women, who are generally higher in estrogen than men, are biologically more likely to link sex and love. Therefore, since women link love and sex, they are more easily satisfied sexually than the men. Those who fall within the 30- 39 and 40-49 years age group were more sexually satisfied than their counterparts of less than thirty and fifty and above. This could be because more and more young men and women are getting married later because of education and these people in their thirties and forties are still new in marriage and at the peak of their sexuality. These groups especially for the women fall within the reproductive years and at this time the hormones are at their peak before they begin to diminish at the onset of menopause.

Being compatible with one's spouse means being able to share common ideas and leisure activities. Education was statistically significant in compatibility and the researcher deduced that when couples share ideas even in education (respondents are mostly degree holders who in most cases would marry people like themselves), they would be better satisfied. It is clear that leisure activities play a significant role in relationship formation and maintenance (Orthner, Barnett-Morris & Mancini, 1993). When both spouse derive pleasure from watching the same programmes on television, reading the same books, and visiting the same places, marital satisfaction is enhanced but conflict easily arises when their leisure activities are different (e.g. who controls the television remote is a simple matter but could lead to serious disagreement). Some authors argue that there is no significant relationship between the amount of time a couple spend together in leisure activities and the level of marital satisfaction (Berg, Trost, Schneider & Allison, 2001). When people of different personalities come together, one may take on the dominant role while the other the submissive role. If both of them have dominant personalities, they

may always have conflict in marriage and such reduces marital satisfaction. The behaviors associated with specific personality characteristics can contribute to tranquility or conflict in the relationship in recognition of Craig & Olson's, (1995) contention.

Management of the home was not directly linked to marital satisfaction as respondents were not influenced by how their homes were run. This can be linked again to the individual's (husbands or wives) neatness or lack of. Sutor (1991) found, across almost all life cycle stages, satisfaction with domestic labor arrangements to be only moderately related to marriage quality for men and women. Women were more satisfied concerning the daily running of the home because it is generally a job left for the woman of the house. For men, there is a curvilinear relationship between economic dependency and participation in household labor (Brines, 1994). Both men who earn more than their partners and men who earn less tend to do less household labor but for different reasons. If men earn more than their partners, they view their responsibility as "breadwinner" as compensating for doing housework. It is argued that men who earn less than their partners eschew housework to protect and assert their threatened masculinity (Brines, 1994).

Implications for Health Education

The findings of the study have implications for the emotional, psychological and social well-being of members of staff of the university as well as their productivity. The outcome of this study suggests that predictors of marital satisfaction of the university staff need to be taken into cognizance and used in spousal education and counseling. Since healthy marriages will produce healthy children and improve the productivity of members of staff, assistance should be given to both senior and junior staff to improve the quality of marriage by (i) establishing a counselling department in which the services of a marriage counsellor will be employed to improve the marital satisfaction of staff; (ii) marriage seminars and workshops should be organized for staff on better communication skills between couples, sexual intimacy in middle and later years of marriage, improving compatibility between spouses and maintenance of the home; and (iii) organizing pre marriage seminars and workshops to educate the unmarried members of staff on marriage requirements, roles, expectations and the concomitant satisfaction thereof.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the study, it was deduced that half of the staff of the University of Ibadan in Ibadan North Local Government Area had good marital satisfaction scores and senior staff seemed more satisfied than the junior staff. Having children or not did not seem to affect couple's satisfaction in their marriage but years in marriage affected their marital satisfaction as well as a host of other interpersonal factors.

The following recommendations were made:

- i. Educational programmes should be developed on marriage to educate couples.
- ii. Pre-marriage counselling should be encouraged among young adults preparing for marriage.
- iii. Continuous education after marriage in addressing couples unique transitional needs in marital life should be instituted.
- iv. Seminars and conferences should be organized for couples to help them overcome the challenges in marriage.

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