

**EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS A CORRELATE OF MARITAL
SATISFACTION AMONG MARRIED PERSONS IN ANAMBRA STATE.**

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Abstract

The study examined emotional intelligence as a correlate of marital satisfaction among married persons in Anambra state. The study was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study comprised 1,469,916 married persons who were statutorily married between 2021-2023 in Anambra state. Taro Yamane was used to draw the sample size of 520 respondents. Stratified random and purposive sampling techniques were employed to draw the sample. Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) and Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) were used for data collection. The instruments were subjected to face validation by three experts. The reliability of the instruments was established using Cronbach Alpha. The computation yielded co-efficient values of 0.79 for EIS and 0.84 for MSI. The researcher administered the instruments to the respondents with the help of two research assistants. Research questions were answered using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, while the hypotheses were tested using test of significance of Pearson. Findings of the study revealed a high positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of married persons. . The results also showed a high positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction for male and a moderate positive relationship for female married

persons. Based on the findings, it was recommended that marriage counsellors should organize seminars, conferences and workshops that promote the learning of emotional intelligence

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Marital Satisfaction, Statutory and Marriage Counsellors.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a formal and legal union between two individuals, typically recognized by law, in which they commit to share their lives together. It is a social institution that signifies a partnership, often based on love, companionship, mutual support, and shared responsibilities. Marriage is a significant institution that serves as the foundation of family structures and societal relationships, providing stability, support, and a framework for personal growth and development within a committed partnership. Marriage begot family that is the most important primary group and the most smallest social unit in the society (Oguejiofor & Onyiorah 2023). Okesina (2022) defined marriage as a social institution under which a man and a woman make a decision to live together as husband and wife by legal commitment and religious ceremonies. In his view, Odebunmi (as cited in Anyamene & Etele, 2020) viewed marriage as the union of man and woman as husband and wife, which constitute the basic and essential unit of the society. The researchers defined marriage as a contract between two people of opposite sex with the aim of living together, sharing their experiences, making children and raising them. Marriage is recognized as a legal relationship between a male and a female adult, which imposes specific rights and obligation on them. Marriage is socially acknowledged and approved by the society for sexual union between two adults. Therefore, it is no means accidental that marriage allows for companionship, social integration of individuals, mutual commitment and growth and promoting the birth right of children.

There are variety of reasons why people get married. In addition to love and sexual attraction, which are the main factors, other reasons that may influence a person's disposition for marriage include financial wellness, companionship, emotional safety, dissipating from solitude, cultural expectations, the adventure of shared interest, social and legal recognition (Lares & Lehenbaur, 2019). Omage (as cited in Etele et al, 2023) stated that a healthy and happy marriage can have a positive effect on mental and physical health. Having a strong relationship with a partner can lead to marital satisfaction, provide support and stability during difficult times, help to maintain overall mental and physical health. Marriage is usually a source of satisfaction and gratification for many individuals in marital relationship.

Marital satisfaction is the overall happiness and contentment that individuals experience in their romantic relationships. It is a measure of how satisfied partners are with their marriage. Anyamene and Etele, (2020) defined marital satisfaction as an individual positive perception and assessment of marital relationship. It is a situation where marital needs and goals are met in marriage. In their view, Abiodun et al (2022) defined marital satisfaction as the physical, emotional and mental state among couples in which there is an overall feeling of happiness and satisfaction with their marriage. The researchers defined marital satisfaction as the level of fulfillment, happiness, contentment experienced by individual within their marriage. Marital satisfaction is a subjective evaluation by an individual of the degree of happiness, pleasure or fulfillment experienced within the marital relationship. It encompasses various aspects of a marriage including communication, intimacy, trust, emotional support, sexual satisfaction and overall sense of partnership and support within the marriage. Marital

satisfaction is a crucial component of general well-being and can have influence on both the individuals and the relationship. To maintain and increase marital satisfaction, it is crucial for couples to consistently focus on strengthening their bond, and resolving any problems that may occur.

Abedi et al (2018) postulated that numerous factors which contribute to marital satisfaction include good temperament, trust worthiness, faithfulness, intimacy, empathy, interactivity, sexual fulfillment, and proper management of emotions. In their view, Anyamene and Etele (2020) stated that a number of determinants associated with marital satisfaction include compatibility of personality, education, monogamy, religious homogeneity, income level, level of education, age at marriage and age of marriage. Bajaj and Sharma (2023) noted that marriage contentment is an essential indicator of marital satisfaction. They asserted that interaction, intimacy, including emotional assistance within a marriage are all positively associated with marital satisfaction. Rampel et al (as cited in Bajaj & Sharma, 2023) contended that effective communication is a key factor in determining marital satisfaction. Couples who communicate effectively resolve conflicts in a healthy manner, trust each other and provide emotional support are more likely to experience high marital satisfaction. They asserted that people who were more narcissistic showed less marital satisfaction. Married adult who can speak freely as well as truthfully to one another and successfully express their wants and feeling report better level of marital satisfaction.

Marital satisfaction has a significant impact on couples' physical and mental health, relationship quality and overall life satisfaction. Etele et al (2023) contended that marital satisfaction is not only linked to psychological well-being but also to physical health. Couples who have higher levels of marital satisfaction tend to have better overall health than couples who have lower levels of marital satisfaction. Couples who are satisfied with their marriage tend to have lower level of depression, anxiety, better physical health, reduced risk of heart diseases and longer lifespan. Additionally, couples with high marital satisfaction are more likely to have higher levels of relationship quality, including greater intimacy, communication and emotional support.

Despite the fact that marriage was established as an institution for couples to enjoy themselves, it is unfortunate that many marriages in our communities seem to have either collapsed or about to collapse as a result of marital dissatisfaction. Marital dissatisfaction refers to a state of unhappiness, discontent or frustration within a marriage. Bajaj and Sharma (2023) postulated that marital dissatisfaction can be caused by various factors including poor communication, lack of intimacy, adultery, absence of emotional assistance, unmet expectations, unresolved conflicts, lack of emotional support and financial stress. Marital dissatisfaction can have negative effects on couples and families. Robles et al (2016) noted that those in unhappy marriage are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, hypertension, heart diseases and sleep disturbances. In his view, Amato (2017) asserted that emotional distress, communication breakdown, decreased intimacy, increased stress, frustration, social isolation, separation or divorce are some of the negative effects of marital dissatisfaction. When couples are not satisfied with their marriage, they may express feelings of unhappiness, resentment and frustration which can strain their relationship or create tension between them. Marital dissatisfaction also affect couples physical and marital health. It has been linked to increased levels of stress, which can lead to problems such as headaches, stomach issues, depression, sleep disturbances, anxiety among others. When couples are dissatisfied with their marriage, they may feel unfulfilled and unhappy. This can negatively impact on their quality of life. Some literature had suggested that emotional intelligence is

connected with marital satisfaction. (Abiodun et al, 2022).

Emotional intelligence refers to the capacity to understand, regulate and handle one's own emotions as well as the emotions of others. Goleman (as cited in Bajaj & Sharma, 2023) viewed emotional intelligence as a person's ability to manage his feelings so that those feelings are expressed appropriately and effectively. It involves competence to recognize as well as understand own as well as another people's emotions. In his view, Egbule (as cited in Onyekure & Ugwu, 2017) defined emotional intelligence as the ability to validly reason with emotions and to use emotions to enhance thought. It involves the ability to utilize emotional knowledge to accurately perceive, understand, generate, access and assist feelings or emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth. The researchers conceptualized emotional intelligence as the ability to recognize, understand, manage and effectively express one's own emotions, as well as to perceive, interpret, and respond appropriately to the emotions of others. Mishra and Mohapatra (as cited in Onyekure & Ugwu 2017) noted that there are three parameters of emotional intelligence. These include emotional competence, emotional maturity and emotional sensitivity. Emotional competence is one's ability to effectively respond to emotional stimuli elicited by various situations, having high self-esteem and optimism. Emotional competence encompasses several skills and attributes such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Emotional maturity refers to the ability to understand and manage one's emotion in a way that is balanced, thoughtful, and appropriate to the situation. Key aspects of emotional maturity include self-awareness, self-control, responsibility, empathy, patience, resilience and healthy relationship. Emotional sensitivity refers to the heightened awareness and responsiveness of one's own emotions and emotions of others. People with high emotional sensitivity tend to experience emotions more intensely and are more perceptive to emotional cues in their environment. Key characteristics of emotional sensitivity include heightened empathy, deep emotional experiences, acute perceptiveness, enhanced intuition and rich inner life.

Emotional intelligence revolves around knowing and controlling one's emotions and this can help married people understand each other better. Married persons who are equipped to manage their emotions are more satisfied in their marriage. Individuals with high emotional intelligence tend to be better equipped to understand and manage their own emotions, as well as emotions of their spouse. This makes them to communicate effectively, resolve conflicts in a healthier manner, and maintain a stronger sense of intimacy and connection (Rabbani, 2020). They are also empathetic and address conflict constructively focusing on problem-solving rather than letting emotions dictate their actions. High emotional intelligence fosters resilience in relationships, enabling couples to navigate difficulties together which enhances long-term marital satisfaction and provides better emotional support during stressful situation. It also contributes to a more harmonious and fulfilling relationship, leading to greater long-term marital satisfaction.

Conversely, individuals with low emotional intelligence may struggle with these aspects of their relationship, leading to lower marital satisfaction (Brackett et al as cited in Samad & Mahmud, 2021). They may have difficulty expressing and managing their own emotions, which can lead to conflicts and misunderstandings. They may struggle to understand and empathize with their spouses emotions, which can further stain the relationship. Low emotional intelligence can also lead to ineffective communication, which is crucial for maintaining a healthy and satisfying marriage. Individuals with low emotional intelligence may have difficulty expressing their emotions and needs in a clear and respectful manner, or they may have difficulty listening to and understanding the emotions and needs of

their partner. This can result in feelings of resentment, frustration, and isolation, which can negatively impact marital satisfaction. Furthermore, low emotional intelligence can make it more difficult for individuals to navigate conflicts and disagreements in their marriage. Individuals with low emotional intelligence may be more prone to engaging in destructive conflict patterns, such as criticism, defensiveness, or contempt, which can further erode marital satisfaction.

Gallagher and Wilson (2018) contended that gender can relate to marital satisfaction. Buttler referred to gender as role and responsibilities of men and women that are created in our families, society and cultures, (Buttler 2016). Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and expectations that a particular society considers appropriate for men and women. Gender is not the same as biological sex, which is as male or female based on physical characteristics such as reproductive organs, chromosomes among others. Gender is a social construct that varies across cultures, and different social groups. It influences how individuals perceive themselves, how they are perceived by others, and how they interact with the world around them.

However, gender gap is one of the variable that tends to relate with marital satisfaction of married persons. Research on gender differences in marital satisfaction revealed that males showed more marital satisfaction than females married persons (Rabia & Khalid, 2019). Another study by Uwaoma et al (2016) found that female showed more marital satisfaction than male married persons. While Emery (2019) indicated no gender difference in marital satisfaction among married persons.

Understanding the factors that contribute to marital satisfaction remains a critical issue to researchers. Although a good number of researchers like Farsole and Sons, (2023) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of married persons, the problem of marital dissatisfaction still persist and remains a source of worry to many researchers. This has necessitated this study that sought to explore emotional intelligence as a correlate of marital satisfaction among married persons in Anambra state.

Statement of the Problem

Marital satisfaction is the overall happiness and contentment that people experience in their romantic relationships. It encompasses various aspects of a marriage, including communication, intimacy, trust and emotional support. Despite the challenges and difficulties that couples may face, maintaining marital satisfaction is crucial for the well-being and longevity of a relationship.

However, observation has shown that most married people seem not to really experience marital satisfaction. This could be as a result of poor communication, lack of intimacy, unmet expectations, unresolved conflicts, absence of emotional assistance among others. Lack of marital satisfaction can lead to depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, decreased intimacy, communication breakdown, unhappiness, and frustration. It can also affect couples physical and mental health and has been linked to increased level of stress. Furthermore, marital dissatisfaction can lead to separation or divorce.

Although previous research efforts have been made to determine factors that contribute to marital satisfaction of married persons, none known to the researcher have explicitly delved into investigating the relationship between emotional intelligence, and marital satisfaction among married persons in Anambra state. It was therefore, the need to fill this gap that motivated the researchers to carry out the study on emotional intelligence, as a correlate of marital satisfaction among married persons in Anambra state.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of married persons in Anambra State.
2. find out the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of male and female married persons in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed

1. What is the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of married persons in Anambra State?
2. What is the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of male and female married persons in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study

1. There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of married persons in Anambra State
2. There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of male and female married persons in Anambra State.

Empirical Review

Farsole and Soni (2023) carried out a study on the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of married persons in Surat city in Gujarat. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction. In the same vein, Anyamene and Etele (2020) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of male and female married teachers in Anambra state. Findings of the study showed a significant low relationship between married teachers' emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction. Abiodun et al (2022) conducted a study on emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of Christian couples CAC, Akure, Nigeria. The results showed a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among couples. Bajaj and Sharma (2023) explored emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among married adults. The aim of the study was to assess the relationship between marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence male and female married adults. The findings of the study revealed a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of male and female married adults. Aliakbari-dehikordi (2016) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of couples in Tehran. The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of married women and their husbands. The results showed a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of women and their husbands. Eze and Mba (2018) carried out a study on emotional intelligence and self esteem as predictors of marital satisfaction among married couples in Assemblies of God church, Abakiliki District, Ebonyi state. The results revealed positive predictive value of emotional intelligence and self-esteem on marital satisfaction of married couples. Thuo et al (2023) investigated on the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among married men and women in Nairobi county in Kenya. The findings of the study showed a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction. Similarly, Gupta (2023) examined

the correlation between marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence among married couples in Pune. The results indicted a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence. Anhange et al (2017) explored emotional intelligence, happiness, hope and marital satisfaction among married people in Makurdi metropolis. The findings of the study indicated that there is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of married people.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study comprised 1,469,916 married persons between the age of 25-55 years, who were statutorily married between 2021-2023 in Anambra state. Taro Yamane was used to draw the sample size. Stratified random and purposive sampling techniques were used to draw the sample. The sample of the study consisted of 520 (260 males and 260 females) married persons in Anambra state.

Two instruments used for data collection were Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Shutte et al (1998) and Marital Satisfaction Inventory developed by Snyder (1981). The instruments were validated by three professionals from Faculty of Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University. The reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha. The computation yielded co-efficient values of 0.79 for Emotional Intelligence Scale and 0.84 for Marital Satisfaction Inventory. The researcher administered the instruments to the respondents with the help of five research assistants. On the spot delivery for administration and retrieval of the instruments was adopted. The data collected were analyzed thus: Research questions were answered using Pearson Product Moment Correlation while the hypotheses were tested using test of significance of Pearson.

RESULTS

Research Question One: What is the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of married persons in Anambra State?

Table 1: Pearson's Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Marital Satisfaction of Married Persons in Anambra State.

Variables	1	2	Remark
1. Emotional Intelligence	1.00	0.60	High Positive Relationship
2. Marital Satisfaction	0.60	1.00	

The Pearson's correlation displayed in Table 1 shows that the correlation between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction yielded a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.60. This suggests that the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among married persons in Anambra state was highly positive. This implies that as married persons' emotional intelligence increases, their marital satisfaction also increases to a high degree.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of male and female married persons in Anambra State?

Table 2: Pearson’s Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Marital Satisfaction of Male and Female Married Persons in Anambra State.

Variables	1	2	Remark
Male			
1. Emotional Intelligence	1.00	0.70	High Positive Relationship
2. Marital Satisfaction	0.70	1.00	
Female			
1. Emotional Intelligence	1.00	0.48	Moderate Positive Relationship
2. Marital Satisfaction	0.48	1.00	

Table 2 shows that the Pearson’s correlation between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among male married persons was 0.70. On the other hand, the Pearson’s correlation between the two variables for the female sample was 0.48. The values indicates that there was very high positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among male married persons while the relationship between the variables for the female married persons was moderate positive relationship. This implies that as emotional intelligence of male married persons increases, their marital satisfaction also increases to a high degree, while that of female married persons increases at a moderate level.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of married persons in Anambra State.

Table 3: Significance of Pearson’s Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Marital Satisfaction of Married Persons in Anambra State.

Variables	1	2	p-value	Remarks
1. Emotional Intelligence	1.00	0.60	0.000	Significant
2. Marital Satisfaction	0.60	1.00		

The results displayed in Table 3 shows that there was a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among married persons in Anambra state, $r = 0.60$, $p < 0.05$. Since the p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of male and female married persons in Anambra State.

Table 4: Significance of Pearson’s Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Marital Satisfaction of Male and Female Married Persons in Anambra State.

Variables	1	2	p-value	Remark
Male				
1. Emotional Intelligence	1.00	0.70	0.000	Significant
2. Marital Satisfaction	0.70	1.00		
Female				
1. Emotional Intelligence	1.00	0.48		Significant
2. Marital Satisfaction	0.48	1.00		

As displayed in Table 4 there was a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among male married persons in Anambra state, $r = 0.70$, $p < 0.05$. Likewise, the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among female married persons in Anambra state was significant, $r = 0.48$, $p < 0.05$. Since the p-values were less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that there were a high positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction among married persons in Anambra state. The result of the corresponding null hypothesis indicated that the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of married persons in Anambra state was significant. The findings are in consistence with the study of Darband (2022) who found a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction. The results of this study also agree with the findings of Abiodun et al (2022) and Farsoe and Soni (2023) who studies indicated a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of married couples. The possible reasons for this finding could be that emotional intelligence plays a critical role on how individuals perceive, understand, manage, and express emotions, which in turn influences their marital satisfaction. Emotional intelligence enhance marital satisfaction by improving communication, empathy, conflict resolution and emotional regulation. One of the qualities common among couples who report a high degree of marital satisfaction is that they are emotionally connected to their spouses. They noted that their partners legitimately care about them and kind in their relations. Emotionally intelligent persons are conscious of what is going on in their spouses world and demonstrate care for the world. Highly emotional intelligence persons are generally better equipped to handle the challenges of marriage leading to a more fulfilling and stable relationships.

The findings of the study showed a high positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of male married persons, and a moderate positive relationship between self-efficacy and marital satisfaction of female married persons. The findings showed that increase in emotional intelligence of married persons will likely lead to corresponding increase in the marital satisfaction of both male and female married person. However, the magnitude of the relationship differed significantly such that while that of male was high, that of female was moderate. The result of corresponding null hypothesis revealed a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of male and female married persons. The results of this study is in line with the findings of Bajaj and Sharma (2023), Thuo et al (2023) who reported a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of male and female married persons. However, the results are in disagreement with the findings of Anyamene et al (2020) who reported a low positive relationship between married male teacher's emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction and a very low positive relationship between married female teacher's emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction. The reason for this findings could be attributed to factors of emotionality that tend to manipulate marital satisfaction as highlighted by Kumara (2014). The study showed that emotional management, social relationship, emotional sensitivity skills have significant effect in marital satisfaction. Most often, the level of males emotional intelligence is responsible for couples marital satisfaction. It is therefore possible that males possess more ability to process these seemingly complex factors of emotionality than the females.

Conclusion

The study investigated emotional intelligence as a correlate of marital satisfaction among married persons in Anambra state. Based on the findings, the study concluded that there was a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of married persons in Anambra state. The study also concluded that the relationship between

emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of male and female married persons in Anambra state was positive.

Implications of the Study

The results of the study have implications for marriage counsellors, policymakers, and married persons. Understanding the couples' level of emotional intelligence can provide insight into potential areas of strength and vulnerability within the relationship, allowing for more targeted and effective interventions. In addition, understanding between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction can help marriage counsellors integrate training in emotional intelligence into their programmes, helping married person develop necessary skills before entering marriage, thereby reducing the likelihood of future marital dissatisfaction.

The implications of this study are profound for policymakers. These findings can inform the development of policies and programmes that support marital satisfaction. By integrating these findings into public policy, education mental health services and social programmes, policy makers can foster healthier relationships and stronger families. This inturn can lead to improved overall wellbeing and a reduction in the social and economic costs associated with marital discord and divorce.

Recommendations

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

1. Marriage counsellors should organize seminars, conferences and workshops that promote the learning of emotional intelligence. These sessions can help married persons to better understand and manage their emotions, as well as those of their partners and build confidence in their ability.
2. Governmental and non-governmental organizations in partnership with the marriage counsellors should organize enlightenment programmes for both those intended to marry and married persons focusing on building emotional intelligence of couples for satisfactory marital relationship.
3. Marriage counsellors should be called upon to render effective counselling services to married persons. They should organize seminars of topics like self-awareness, emotion recognition and emotional regulation for married persons in order to broaden their understanding of emotional intelligence.

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