

Loneliness as Correlate of Marital Satisfaction among Civil Servants in Nassarawa and Benue States, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study examined loneliness as correlate of marital satisfaction among civil servants in Nassarawa and Benue States. One research question and one hypothesis guided the study. Correlational Design was adopted. Sample size of 400 civil servants out of the population of 56,962 was used. Two self-developed questionnaires titled 'Psycho-Social Factors Questionnaire (PSFSQ) and Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire' (MFQ) were used to collect data. For the reliability of the instrument, the questionnaires were administered on 40 participants comprising of 20 men and 20 women. The test yielded a reliability coefficient of .84 Cronbach's Alpha on Psycho-social factors and .85 Cronbach's Alpha on marital satisfaction. The questionnaires yielded a reliability coefficient of .90 Cronbach's Alpha. Descriptive statistics of frequency count and percentage were employed for the demographic variables while Pearson's Product Moment Correlation coefficient was used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses at .05 significance level. Result showed that, there was significant relationships between the variable (Loneliness) and marital satisfaction of civil servants in Nassarawa States of Nigeria. It was recommended that civil servants should be counselled during premarital counselling and marital counselling to create time for bonding as a couple in order to avert loneliness in their marriage.

Key words: Loneliness, Marital Satisfaction, Civil Servants.

I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is considered a cultural universal, but the definition of marriage varies between cultures and religions, and over time (Haviland, Prins, McBride, & Walrath, 2011), also called matrimony or wedlock, is a culturally recognized union between people usually man and wife, called spouses, that establishes rights and obligations between them, as well as between them and their children, and between them and their in-laws. It can also be described as a union between two biologically unrelated female and male who live together and seek to derive benefits from such union such as sexual gratification, love, companionship, and also use such a union as a legitimate means to procreate (Abra, 2001).

Marital satisfaction is one of the common concepts used for assessing happiness and stability in a marriage. Marital satisfaction can be described as a mental state that reflects the perceived benefits and cost of marriage to a particular person. The more costs a marriage partner inflicts on a person, the less satisfied one generally is with the

marriage and with the marriage partner. Hatami, Habi and Akbari, (2009) defined marital satisfaction as a sense of happiness, satisfaction, and joy experienced by the husband or wife when they consider all aspects of their marriage. It is also one of the most important indicators of life satisfaction and family performance. It is also a process that comes into existence in the life of couples because it requires compliance with tastes, knowledge of personality attributes, establishing rules of behaviour, and formation of relationship patterns. Marital relationship is seen to be the primary source of social support for most couples and acts as a protective factor against both psychological and physiological affliction, it affects physical and mental health, life satisfaction, success in work, self-esteem of and social communication (Hatami, Habi and Akbari, 2009). On a general perspective, marital satisfaction is an overall evaluation of the state of one's marriage and a reflection of marital happiness and function (Schoen, Astone, Rothert, Standish, & Kim, 2002).

Loneliness has been described as a common human experience that is as old as mankind. It is the state of being alone and feeling sad about it. The prevailing definition of loneliness among researchers is a cognitive one proposed by Lena (2001). He defined it as a sense of dissatisfaction arising from perceived deficiencies in one's social relationships. However, there are many definitions of loneliness, most of which emphasize the subjective components of the experience. Even though we do not speak of it, it is obvious that the experience of loneliness seems to be a common factor in many marriages. Couples are motivated to form and maintain close and meaningful relationships with themselves (Baumeister and Leary 1995) and not accomplishing this goal often results in the experience of loneliness. More specifically, loneliness arises when individuals perceive their social relationships as deficient in either quantitative or qualitative aspects (Ernst and Cacioppo 1999; Perlman and Peplau 1981). Thereby leading to dissatisfaction in marriage. Loneliness has manifold negative consequences for personal health and well-being (Ernst and Cacioppo 1999; Hawkley and Cacioppo 2010; Heinrich and Gullone 2006; Holt-Lunstad; 2015) and has, thus, also become an important issue for marital satisfaction. A large body of research has been devoted to identifying contextual and individual factors promoting or protecting against loneliness (Bosma, 2015; Ernst and

Cacioppo 1999; Luhmann and Hawkey 2016). Among these factors, partner relationships stand out as the single most powerful factor protecting individuals from being lonely.

Statement of the Problem

There are observed cases of Marital dissatisfaction among civil servants in Nassarawa and Benue State, and in almost every aspect of the society; including the church. Through interactions with some of the members of the congregation who are majorly civil servants, and through interactions with colleagues who are clergymen and women (who have treated cases bothering on marital dissatisfaction). However, Latest statistics as captioned by Vanguard newspapers; October 21, 2020 Print stated the following: “Official statistics suggest that divorce is exceedingly uncommon in Nigeria. Just 0.2% of men and 0.3% of women have legally untied the knot, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. And well under 1% of couples admit to being separated. Yet such counts exclude the vast majority of Nigerians, whose traditional marriage ceremonies are not governed by modern law.” despite such statistical data, one cannot ignore the fact that, the situation with the number of divorce cases in this African state has significantly changed for the worse over the past few years. Of course, the total number of official marriage dissolutions in Nigeria cannot be compared to those in the United States and European countries.

But even the existing statistics mirror a rather negative trend that has managed to form in a very short period of time. Without a doubt, there can be no consensus on this issue because married couples can push the decision to officially end their joint married life for entirely different reasons, which are often very individual and personal. Loneliness is a major psychological factor in most marriage dissolution. It is important to note that, couples who are Public servants who are often transferred from one place to the other, who are far away from home can easily be psychologically affected, due to distance. The one on transfer or the one who is left behind at home may have the challenge of being lonely. Loneliness as a psychological factor can not be ruled out. It is important to note that, truly, so many marriages are indeed in crisis and are far from what marriage truly should be. It is shocking to hear that problems like sexual dissatisfactions, quarreling, fighting, not cooking on time to feed the family, drug and substance abuse and several other factors are the bane of marriages in our society. All these afore mentioned factors can cause a vacuum in marriages, a couple whose partner engages in such act may decide to remain in the marriage but create a wall between himself or herself with the partner, while some may decide to be separated from such a spouse. It is important to mention that some of these cases may later be resolved, but majority of them end in divorce, and this affects individuals involved, children, and the society at large.

Marital satisfaction is important not only for the quality and stability of the marriage, but also for the spouse’s experience as well as the kind of support they give to their children, the kind of support they receive and the nature of their

relationship. That is, if they are staying within the same location or the quality of time they share together, in as much as both partners are still alive. The nature of companionship they share is highly inevitable, if they actually want to maintain a good relationship. This makes their being together necessary. Likewise, the sexual satisfaction derived in sexual intimacy by couples is very important in achieving marital dissatisfaction. This factor (loneliness) could either directly or indirectly be linked to marital dissatisfaction, if it is not well handled by the couples.

Research Question

What is the relationship between loneliness and marital satisfaction among civil servants in Nassarawa and Benue States?

Hypothesis

Loneliness has no significant relationship with marital satisfaction among civil servants in Nassarawa and Benue States.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Dynamic Goal Theory of Marital Satisfaction and the Psychoanalytic Theory of Marriage and Marital Relationships

The Dynamic Goal Theory of Marital Satisfaction was propounded by Li and Fung (2011). According to the theory, marital goals that spouses hope and strive to reach for in their marriage significantly contribute to marital satisfaction. When prioritised marital goals are achieved, the married couple is more likely to feel satisfied within their marriage. The theory argues that people have multiple goals to achieve in their marriages. These marital goals can be classified into three categories they are:

1. Companionship goals,
2. Personal growth goals,
3. Instrumental goals.

The priority of the three types of marital goals is under dynamic changes across adulthood. Companionship goals are focused on couple’s needs for belongingness and relatedness in the marriage. Personal growth goals emphasis a spouse’s desire to develop, grow or actualise oneself within the marriage. Instrumental goals centre on the practical nature of the marriage including sharing household labour and responsibilities with each other, such as housework, managing family finances, and raising children. In general, newly married couples focus on personal growth goals, middle-aged couple’s emphasis instrumental goals, and older couples strive to reach companionship goals.

The Psychoanalytic Theory of Marriage and Marital Relationships, according to Sigmund Freud (1975), the founder of psychoanalysis, marital partner choices, as well as marital relationships, are defined much before marriage was

concluded. Relationship with marital partner is determined by relationships with parents and important persons in one's childhood. Marital relationships are repetitions of relationships with parents' patterns from childhood. Even "jealousy of a person who loves is never without an infantile root or at least an infantile reinforcement". In one's spiritual sufferings or illnesses which come after separation from a loved person "it can be certainly discovered that the mechanism of such an illness is turning back of one's libido to the persons loved in childhood.

Freud distinguishes two types of marital partner choice: self - loving or narcissistic, when a person's choice of a partner is based either on a model of a person's own self or on a narcissistic ideal of what a person wanted to become and analectic or incestuous type of a partner choice influenced by fixation on parental figures. Woman makes narcissistic choice governed by an ideal of man she wanted to become in childhood. Sub-types of narcissistic choice are made according to:

- A. What a person was once in the past
- B. What a person is
- C. What a person would like to be
- D. What was once a part of oneself.

Freud points out that, most often, narcissistic type of choice according to Ego - ideal results in romantic love. One attributes to one's object of love such qualities and perfection which one would like to possess. A person loved is usually far away from perfectness attributed by a partner.

According to Freud, women are more inclined to narcissistic type of choice, seeking in man narcissistic ideal they wanted to accomplish, while men tend more to analectic type of choice, looking for a mother in a woman. Incestuous or analectic type of partner choice can be traced back to the earliest years of childhood. This type of partner choice stems from a child's attitude to his parents so that it later chooses its love object according to its parents' model or of those who looked after it. "Even a person who has been fortunate enough to avoid an incestuous fixation of its libido, does not entirely escape its influence. It often happens that a young man falls in love seriously for the first time with a mature woman, or a girl with an elderly man in a position of authority; this is clearly an echo of the phases of development that we have been discussing, since these figures are able to reanimate pictures of their mother or father. There can be no doubt that every partner choice is based, though less closely, on these prototypes. A man, especially, looks for someone who can represent his mother's picture, which has dominated his mind from his earliest childhood; accordingly, if his mother is still alive, she may well resent this new version of herself and meet her with hostility.

Conceptual Framework

This is a loose concept due to differences in culture and religious background. However, Childers (2014), defined

marriage as a personal association between a man and a woman in a marital relationship for mating and reproduction. As a social, legal and religious institution, marriage has undergone number of modifications and changes; nevertheless, its basic realities remain the same. The permanent, indissoluble, sacramental union of the orthodox differs strikingly from the free, easily served, and often not even officially registered marriages, for instance, a modern Russian, and yet both of these marriages have certain underlying elements in common. In both instances, the couple seeks to make their union stable. They assume the freedom and privilege of a sexual relationship, and normally have as their ultimate aim the establishment of a family. Biologically, the object of marriage is not to legalize a sexual union, but rather to ensure the survival of the species and of the race. From this point of view, marriage is not merely a sexual relationship, but a parental association. It is the union of a male and a female for production and care of offspring and reproduction is, therefore, another fundamental object or purpose of marriage.

This is a loose concept, however, Gelles, (2015), defined marital satisfaction as the subjective evaluation of one's marital relationship with his or her spouse. This evaluation is based on the spouse's marital goals (Companionship, personal growth and instrumental). If the goals seem to be achieved, he or she find marriage satisfying, if not, it is dissatisfying. Such goals could range from:

1. Put each other first (emotionally, financially, etc.)
2. Spent time together (be a good companion)
3. Support each other to grow in health and sickness, financially, academically etc.
4. Show love to each other's parents
5. Enjoy sex together
6. Have children
7. Speak positively about each other in public
8. Discuss and settle problems amicably
9. Create partnership, not competition
10. Set good marital goals, expectations and work together; to achieve them: plan for the future together
11. Good communication or feelings, needs, challenges, ideas, fun, love, sex etc
12. Set marital roles for each spouse
13. Build a home/marriage together

Marital satisfaction is not a property of a relationship; it is a subjective experience and opinion. As such, members of the same couple may differ in how satisfied they are with their relationship.

Marital satisfaction depicts a mental state that reflects the perceived benefits and costs of marriage to a particular person. The more costs a marriage partner inflicts on a person, the less satisfied one generally is with the marriage and with the marriage partner. According to Zhang, Ho and Yip (2012), husbands are more likely to be satisfied with their sexual and marital relations if they are two to four years older than their wives, and less likely to be satisfied if their wives were five or

more years older. The literature shows that successful marriage is found mostly if the couple feels satisfied in running their marriage life (Lawrence, Rothman Cobb, Rothman, Bradbury, Fazio, 2008). According to Lavner, Bradbury and Karney (2012), spouses exhibit high, stable satisfaction over the first 4 years of marriage.

Despite a lack of consensus on marital satisfaction and the various forms of conceiving it. Coleta (2012), considered marital satisfaction in a broader sense, as a construct formed by three main axes: (1) interaction with the spouse (what each spouse is satisfied with/the frequency one another seeks interaction); (2) the partner's emotional aspects (how much each spouse is satisfied with the way the other deals with emotions), and (3) the practical aspects of marriage (how much each of the spouses is satisfied with the way the other deals with personal organization, priorities, domestic rules, and problem-solving).

Cigna (2018), defined loneliness as a sense or feeling of disconnection, isolation and disengagement from others. In terms of loneliness in marital relationship, this feeling would apply to one's spouse or partner. This sense or feeling of disconnection, isolation and disengagement from their spouses or partners can lead to dissatisfaction in marriage. It is actually relatively common to feel alone in a marriage: One in three married people over age 45 report being lonely, according to Ernst & Cacoppo (1998). But that doesn't mean loneliness in a marriage is necessarily normal. If you feel alone in a marriage, it is often a sign that there is an underlying issue in the relationship or in your own personal life that must be addressed.

A marriage is a long-lasting, committed partnership between two people, but that doesn't mean that married people can never feel lonely. That's because there's a big difference between being alone and being lonely (Sullivan, 2005), a licensed marriage therapist and author of *Hard Work or Harmony*. Being alone simply means you are in a physical state of not being around or attached to anyone else, whereas being lonely has more to do with how much your relationships nourish you and how full your life feels.

Fromm-Reichmann (1980) Loneliness is a deeper thing because it is more of a psychological state where people feel like their relationships, the quantity of their relationships, the quality of their relationships, are not where they need to be, he explained further that, couples can be lonely and not be alone. You can literally be surrounded by a whole bunch of people and still feel like you're lonely. In the context of a marriage, if your marriage isn't fulfilling your need for companionship, love, affection, or other social needs, you may very well feel lonely despite technically having a life partner. Physical proximity isn't the sole factor when it comes to experiencing closeness in a relationship as explained by Horwitz, French, & Anderon (1982). A couple have to consider emotional proximity, that is, how in tune are you with your partner? If there is an emotional gap [or] chasm in

the relationship, your partner could be sitting next to you, and still feel oceans apart."

What causes loneliness in a relationship or a marriage is when partners are not emotionally connecting with each other. Peplau & Puman (1989) likened to a distance between them, which can feel very lonely for one or both spouses. They noted that this usually happens after there has been some sort of shift in the relationship: At a certain point, the couple stopped being in alignment with each other, hence the distance.

Here are some things that can cause partners to feel distant from each other and therefore feel lonely, according to Shaver & Brenman (1991), sometimes couples struggle to separate the role of being parents and the role of being spouses, focusing entirely on their parental responsibilities and neglecting their relationship. Our role as a parent is very important, but you also have to give time and energy into your marriage, and when you do not, you can feel lonely. Spending all your energy on caring for others and not receiving any dedicated affection yourself can feel isolating, not to mention draining.

John, Rosen, Chang & Li (2015), in their study of 1,400 heterosexual married couples in their 50s through their 70s, the researchers noted that married couples are dealing with increased enmeshment, wherein their lives are unhealthily intertwined. When couples exclusively rely on each other as their primary social connection, it can put a strain on the relationship and leave the individual people susceptible to loneliness when the relationship inevitably goes through phases of disconnection.

It is easy to fall into the trap of making your spouse wholly responsible for your sense of fulfillment and validation. But people need to be able to feel full and complete on their own as individuals, whether they're in a long-term relationship or not. In other words, your marriage cannot be the only thing that keeps you from feeling lonely.

A couple should not be seeking full validation from his or her partner when they are married. You can't look for another person, whether that is your spouse, to fulfill you 110%. You have to be happy with you. You have to give your own self joy. You have to have your own career goals. You have to have your own passions. If the idea of having a feeling of a totally complete life outside of your partner and having goals and relationships outside your marriage that make you feel full, makes you feel uncomfortable or scared, it's probably a good sign that this is something you need to work on.

John (2015) emphasize the importance of telling your partner how you're feeling, in a heterosexual marriage, husbands' and wives' levels of loneliness weren't correlated, meaning it is fully possible that your spouse has no idea how lonely you are. Couples often think that their partners are mind readers, and their partner is not a mind reader. You

might be feeling lonely or alone in your marriage, but your partner might not be feeling that way.

So say it out loud to your partner so they know something is off in your marriage. Once they are on the same page as you, then you can work together to figure out how to help you feel less lonely. Johnson (2015), mentioned that, often when people start to notice they're feeling lonely in their marriage, it's because there's been a recent shift in the relationship that's thrown the partners out of sync and created that feeling of distance. If you can pinpoint what caused the shift, you'll know what to focus on as a couple to heal the divide. Backtrack and see if you both can identify when the shift started happening, and collaborate on ways to mitigate the feelings of loneliness. If this is proving to be difficult, seek professional help in order to work strategically as a unit.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

The study employed a correlational design method to establish opinions of civil servants on the current situation regarding their perceived opinions on the research work; psychosocial factors as correlates of marital satisfaction among civil servants in Nassarawa and Benue States, Nigeria. Data were collected through two structured questionnaires titled "Psychosocial Factors Questionnaire (PSFQ) and "Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)"; from a sample of 400 respondents out of population of 56,962 civil servants in the two states which is Nassarawa and Benue States. Comprising of Nassarawa State having 12,962 civil servants and Benue State having 44,000 civil servants. For the reliability of the instrument, the questionnaires were administered on 40 participants that is; 20 men and 20 women. The test yielded a reliability coefficient of .84 Cronbach's Alpha on psychosocial factor (loneliness) and .85 Cronbach's Alpha on marital satisfaction. The researchers were assisted by 2 research assistants in administering the research instruments, direct to respondents to complete and return immediately. This was done in order to forestall attrition rate of questionnaire return. A total of 400 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents.

In analyzing the data generated by means of questionnaire, Pearson's product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to answer the research questions and was also used to test the null hypothesis of the study at 0.05 level of significance.

IV. RESULT

Research Question: What is relationship between loneliness and marital satisfaction among civil servants in Nassarawa and Benue States?

Table 1: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation score on relationship that exists between loneliness and marital satisfaction among civil servants in Nassarawa and Benue States

		Loneliness	Marital Satisfaction
Loneliness	Pearson Correlation		-.302**
	Sig (2-tailed)		.000
	N	400	400
Marital Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	-.302**	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	400	400

** Correlation is significant at 0.001 (2-tailed)

Result in table 3 shows that there was a strong significant negative relationship between loneliness and marital satisfaction among married couples in Nassarawa and Benue States $r = -.302$, $N = 400$. This means that the lonelier married couples are, the less satisfied they are with their marriage. On the other hand, when married couples are close to their partners either physically or emotionally, they become more satisfied.

Hypothesis: Loneliness has no significant relationship with marital satisfaction among civil servants in Nassarawa and Benue States. This was tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and the result is presented in table 9.

Table 2: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient showing the relationship that exists between loneliness and marital satisfaction among civil servants in Nassarawa and Benue States

		Loneliness	Marital Satisfaction
Loneliness	Pearson Correlation		-.302**
	Sig (2-tailed)		.000
	N	400	400
Marital Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	-.302**	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	400	400

** Correlation is significant at 0.001 (2-tailed)

Result in table 9 shows a correlation coefficient (r) of $-.302$ at $p = .000 < .05$ [$r(398) = -.302$; $p < .05$]. Since $p .000$ is less than the alpha value of $.05$, the null hypothesis which stated that 'loneliness has no significant relationship with marital satisfaction among civil servants in Nassarawa and Benue States was therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between loneliness and marital satisfaction among civil servants in Nassarawa and Benue States.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings are discussed in hypothesis by hypothesis in order as follows:

The finding in hypothesis 2 showed that there was a significant negative relationship between loneliness and marital satisfaction among civil servants in Nassarawa and Benue States. This is an indication that ones' level of loneliness has a way of affecting his marriage such that the lonelier married couples are, the less satisfied they become with their marriage. This finding is consistent with that of Najafi (2017) who found that there was a significant positive relationship between companionship in marriage and marital satisfaction. There was significant negative relationship between loneliness and marital satisfaction. Also, there was a significant negative relationship between loneliness and marital satisfaction. In confirmation, Eysenck and Wakefield (2013) looked at psychological factors of loneliness predicting marital satisfaction and found that loneliness has a significant relationship with marital satisfaction among couples. The result indicated that participants who are not lonely in their relationship were more satisfied in marriage than those who are lonely in marriage. This implies that, it makes sense to cultivate a bond among couples in order to strengthening their marital relationships. When both partners feel safe and connected, it creates a positive cycle that bounds couples together in increasing level of intimacy. Intimacy is good for self-confidence.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study has established that there is a significant relationship between psychological (loneliness) factor and marital satisfaction. Loneliness on the other hand had negative relationship with marital satisfaction meaning that when married couples are lonely either physically or emotionally, their level of marital satisfaction reduced but when they feel closeness to their partners, their level of marital satisfaction increases.

VII. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the finding of this study, the following recommendations were made;

Civil servants should be counselled during premarital counselling and marital counselling to create time for bonding as a couple in order to avert loneliness in their marriage.

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