



ASSERTIVENESS AND SOCIAL SUPPORT AS CORRELATES OF MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG MARRIED CHRISTIAN COUPLES IN ASABA

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Abstract

This study investigated the role of assertiveness and social support in fostering marital satisfaction among married Christians in Asaba, Nigeria. A total of five hundred (500) married couples were selected for this study. The population of this study was married Christian couples and sample was drawn from three (3) different churches namely: Anglican, Catholic and Pentecostal; all of which were located in Asaba Metropolis, Delta State. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants. The participants comprised 156 males (31.12%) and 344 females (68.8%) married couples who have had (5) years of marital experience. The age of the participants ranges from 20-70 years, with a mean age of 50.97 and a standard deviation of 8.47. The results revealed that assertiveness positively and significantly correlated with marital satisfaction at $r = .28, p < .01$. It was found that perceived family support, friends' support, and perceived significant others positively and significantly correlated with marital satisfaction at $r = .31, p < .01$; $.28, p < .01$, and $.22, p < .01$. The two predictor variables jointly accounted for about 16% of the total variation in marital satisfaction ($R^2 = .16, F(4, 495) = 24.00, p < .001$). Suggesting that assertiveness and social support are linearly related to marital satisfaction. Thus, when assertiveness and social support increases marital satisfaction also increases. The two independent variables contributed independently to the prediction of marital satisfaction: assertiveness ($\beta = .25, t = 6.10, p < .001$) and perceived family support ($\beta = .28, t = 3.19, p < .001$). In conclusion, this study revealed that assertiveness and social support are important factors in marital satisfaction. It is recommended that those who are entrusted with family and marriage therapies especially priests, pastors, counsellors, and psychologists should be trained on, and incorporate assertive therapy in addressing marital or couple relationship problems especially during marriage therapy or marriage preparation sessions.

Keywords: Assertiveness, social support, marital satisfaction, married christian couples, Asaba



Introduction

The prominent aim of every society is to preserve a happy and gratifying family. Though marriage is highly desirable, studies have revealed that marital satisfaction is not easily achieved. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the role of assertiveness and social support in fostering marital satisfaction among married Christians in Asaba, Nigeria. Marriage as an important and fundamental human institution provides the primary structure for establishing a personal and family relationships that culminates in sharing a bond of interpersonal relationships and sustained by procreation and shared common interest (Adesina, 2018). Preserving a happy family is the main goal of any society. This is because it is instrumental in perpetuating human society through the sustenance of conjugal and filial ties. Akanbi, et al. (2014). Where marital relation is based on mutual and collective interests of the parties, it helps to stem down and curtail cases of domestic violence, divorce, suicide, juvenile delinquency, among other filial breakdowns. Even though marriage is highly desirable, statistics indicate that marital satisfaction is not easily achieved (Taghani, et al. 2019). Thus, the need to understand the factors that could lead to a satisfactory marriage is highly pertinent to explore. Although many variables (e.g., financial support, educational background, existence of children, and sexual experience) have been factored in determining satisfaction in the marital

relationship (Schoenfeld, et al. 2017), only a few observations have considered the significance of assertiveness in marriage especially in the context of Nigeria literature. Marriage is a social and legal contract between two individuals that unite their lives legally, economically, and emotionally (Stritof, 2018). This means that marriage is a way of making one big family out of two families, hence, the pressure on the couples to make the marriage work may present issues that will ordinarily influence the two families and strain the generally sincere connection between them (Amiru, 2010). It involves total commitment, self-donation to one another, and taking responsibilities that lead to mutual well-being. Certain practices constitute marriage in most societies, they include companionship, the begetting of children, social integration of persons, approved sexual union, mutual commitment, and mutual growth, bridging of the gender gap, and promoting the birthright of children. Deducing from these, the desire to attain marital satisfaction stands out (Heshmati, et al. 2016). Considering the benefits of marriage to both the individual and the society, when couples form a strong marital bond, there is a chance that they may have fewer marital conflicts (Bradbury, et al. 2000). On the contrary, marital dissatisfaction may lead to crises and conflicts (Adesina, 2018). Empirical evidence has revealed that the reasons most people get married were to fulfill a particular purpose which includes finding meaning in life and longing for a better



quality of married life, expectations of having a baby, and hope of accomplishing the purpose for which marriage is established (Animasahun et al., 2012). But when these expectations are denied or not forthcoming some people tend to experience marital conflict that probably leads to divorce and problems of single parenting. As noted by Oguntayo and Aroniyiaso (2016), marriage is regarded as an important social custom or norm which gives individuals respect and status. Given these consequences, marital satisfaction appear to be a multifaceted and multidimensional concept that integrates psychological, socio-economic, and spiritual components (Ziaei et al., 2014). It is a global evaluation of the state of one's marriage and a reflection of marital happiness and functioning (Farzaneh et al., 2016). Thus, marital satisfaction connotes people's positive assessment of their conjugal relationship (Ofovwe et al., 2013). Marital satisfaction therefore, is a sense of accomplishment or fulfillment of the mutual needs, goals, and expectations in marriage (Animasahun et al., 2012). Marital satisfaction comprises the relationship between the quality of marital relationship and the quality of individuals' mental health (Perin, 2008). Although this may vary across individuals depending on a unique set of culturally enforced norms, obligations, and values (Ziaei et al., 2014), satisfying marital relationships is perhaps an ultimate goal for marriage. Indeed, marital satisfaction may differ from culture to culture and from religion to religion and likewise, the expectations may also vary from individuals

to individuals. There is no consensus regarding components that constitute marital satisfaction among scholars (Perlin & Diniz, 2005). In the traditional African society, many factors are said to influence marital satisfaction such as culture, age, family background, number of children, companionship, mutual commitment, professional achievement, economic independence, social status and so on (Afolabi, Ezemokwe, et al. 2017). Individuals tend to seek a life full of happiness and satisfaction after marriage; therefore more significance is attached to marital satisfaction than marriage itself. This is because the decrease in marital satisfaction does not only create family dysfunction but also leads to psychological problems. Thus, marital satisfaction is an important factor that impacts on the family and society as a whole (Adesina, 2018). Verifiable evidence has suggested that numerous factors play indelible roles in the attainment of marital satisfaction: these include the couples' personality, the level of marital understanding, intellectual maturity, sufficient marital balance, economic factors, compatibility, sexual satisfaction, love, and passion (Farzaneh et al., 2016; Rahmani, et al. 2011). Also, factors like interpersonal relationships, spiritual bonds, religious orientations, communication, and interaction skills have been reported to affect marital satisfaction (Farzaneh et al., 2016). Despite the long research on marital satisfaction, no study has captured whether assertiveness and social support jointly predict marital satisfaction in Nigeria (according to the



researchers' knowledge). Thus, this presented a lacuna in the existing literature that needs to be addressed. Studies have revealed that the assertive trait is a pertinent factor in maintaining a marital relationship (Bakker, et al. 2008). Assertiveness is a direct and open behaviour of one's right with intention of not causing harm to other people (Bakker et al., 2008). It could be seen as a constructive alternative to manipulation and aggressive behaviour (Bishop, 2010). As noted by Sheinov (2018) assertive personality entails many positive social and psychological qualities. Assertiveness is an important factor in communication that could destroy or enhance human relations. This is because being assertive is not only about being confident, it also involves understanding one's spouse, other members of the family, and the empathy that one shares among them (Lee, 2008). This variable (assertiveness) is associated with values, attitudes, and behaviour (Mitrofan & Dumitrache, 2012), which is useful in counseling and psychotherapeutic processes. Individuals with high assertiveness are quite sociable, analytical, and active than individuals with a low level of assertiveness, who are presumed to display irritability, solitude, or passive patience of inconveniences (Tanck & Robbins, 2008). Such individuals display low levels of assertive skills enhancing severity of conflicts and stress (Lounsbury, et al. 2016). Also, assertiveness is perceived as a psychological adaptation and problem-solving construct. This is because assertive behaviour facilitates conflict resolution and

gives couples a choice of strategies for behaviour that satisfy vital needs (Sheinov, 2015). Persons with low assertiveness can in a conflict situation, display an attitude of caring more about the feelings and well-being of others, rather than about their feelings and well-being (Weiss, 2010). Unassertive behaviour might lead to depression, low self-esteem, and lack of trust, anxiety, and general marital disharmony. Another key element for achieving effective marital satisfaction being investigated in this study is social support. Social support is often identified as a key component of solid relationships and strong psychological health (Zalta et al., 2021). It is the perception and actuality that one is cared for, assisted by other people and that one is part of a supportive social network. These supportive resources can be emotional, tangible informational, companionship, and intangible. Support can come from many sources, such as family, friends, pets, neighbours, coworkers, and organizations. Perceived social support is a recipient's subjective judgment that providers will offer (or have offered) effective help during times of need (Taylor, 2011). Specific supportive actions (e.g., advice or reassurance) offered by providers during times of need may influence the quality of one's relationship (Gurung, 2006). It is believed that family relationships, friends, and membership in clubs and organizations contribute to social integration and support (Lakey, 2011). There are specific functions that members in a social network can provide, such as emotional, instrumental, informational, and



companionship support (Uchino, 2009). Some authors opine that, emotional support plays a more significant role in protecting individuals from the deleterious effects of stress than structural means of support, such as social involvement or activity (Kessler & Mcleod, 1984). Perceived social support is consistently linked to better mental health whereas it cannot be established for received support and social integration (Barrera, 2011). In fact, research indicates that perceived social support that is untapped can be more effective and beneficial than utilized social support (Uchino, 2009). In a marital relationship, perceived social support can be beneficial to couples' psychological well-being, conflicts management, child-rearing, and overall quality of life (Barrera, 2011; Uchino, 2009). Thus, perceived social support seems to define an indispensable part in not just strengthening the conjugal relationship but has a huge commitment to decreasing the degree of depression a couple is confronted with (Kurdek, 2005). These submissions, fume the desire to explore the phenomenon of assertiveness and social support in the domain of marital relationships among Nigerian Christian couples.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the dynamic goal theory of marital satisfaction (Li & Fung, 2011). This theory emphasized that there are three types of marital goals to be achieved to ensure marital satisfaction. They include personal growth goals, companionship goals, and instrumental goals. Personal growth goals are based on the improvement

and development of oneself with the help of the spouse within the marriage. When these goals are met, a feeling of accomplishment helps the spouse to feel capable of future challenges. In the marital context, expansion of the self—the process of acquiring a new identity, experience, knowledge, and social networks—have been identified as an essential element for initiating and maintaining marriage (Aron & Aron, 1986/1996; Aron, et al 2002). This theory argues that a good marriage facilitates people's striving for personal goals. A spouse can help the other to achieve his or her ideal self through an affirmation of that ideal self, which is termed the "Michelangelo phenomenon" (Rusbult, et al. 2009). Companionship goals: This refers to the bonding and emotional meaningful goals that a spouse needs with the other spouse. And finally, the instrumental goals: This is based on the tasks that occur throughout life that include using the spouse's physical and mental resources (Li & Fung, 2011). These three marital goals are often linked to the three components of love in the triangular theory of love (Sternberg, 1986).

The Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory was developed by Thibaut and Kelly (1959). This theory was first applied to the marital relationship by Levinger (1965). This is linked to interdependence theory which emphasizes the dependence of each spouse upon the marital relationship, and the ability of that relationship to fulfill individual needs. The model posited that the stability or instability of couples is produced because the advantages (for example, emotional security and social status) outweigh the barriers to ending the marriage (social and religious restrictions, and financial expenses)



(Levinger, 1976; Huston & Burgess, 1979). The paradigm of social exchange theory which borrows from behavioural psychology, sociology, and classical economics seeks to explain the development, maintenance (solidarity, power), and decay of exchange relationships in terms of the balance between the rewards that marital partners obtain and the costs that they incur by selecting themselves into marital relationships (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). According to Thibaut & Kelley, (1959), costs are the factors that inhibit or deter a performance of a sequence of behaviours within a marriage; rewards are the pleasures, satisfactions, and gratifications that a person enjoys in marriage. Hence, marital satisfaction can be conceptualized as the cyclical patterns of transactions of valued resources, tangible or intangible, between partners and the rewards and costs associated with such transactions, which culminate in dyadic or individual outcomes of profit or loss (McDonald, 1981). This theory is based on research on the behaviours that are exchanged in conflict resolutions and has been guided by the premise that gratifying a positive behaviour improves the global evaluation of marriage whereas punitive or negative behaviours tend to affect said evaluation adversely. Through time, the accumulation of experiences during and after interaction influences the spouses' judgments regarding the quality of their marital relation (Bradbury & Fincham, 1991). When couples are satisfied, each satisfactory interaction increases their satisfaction with the relationship. Hence, marital satisfaction maybe as a result of the rewards that are experienced in the marriage setting.

Role-Identity Theory

This model was developed by McCall and Simmons (1978). Role-identity theory supports the position that marital satisfaction is influenced by shared identities to a salient recreation role and by role support provided by a spouse for a salient recreation role identity for her or his partner. It assumes that people become committed to and identify with particular roles. People develop identities from their performance in roles. Role identities are said to be a major source of individuals' self-conceptions and self-esteem. According to the theorist, role identity give people a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives and provide behavioural guidance (Thoits, 1991). In any social situation, specific expectations, demands, identities, and skills are associated with different positions that various individuals in the social setting occupy. In the family setting, one spouse may have nurtured a role identity as expert decision maker and the other may have accepted a follower role identity, devoid of initiative and action on important decisions. Role theory might lead us to predict that the expert decision maker will advance the desirable options and that the follower will accept and acknowledge passively the superiority of those decisions. According to the role theory model, individuals maintain multiple role identities, with these identities being organized into a salience hierarchy based on the relative importance of particular roles (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Thoits, 1991). Commitment to a particular role results in that role being higher on an individual's salience hierarchy of role identities (Burke & Reitzes, 1991). Both couples and individual spouses within a marriage may be identified by others in terms of these roles and commitments. A couple, for example, might be referred to as a running couple or a cycling couple and a



spouse might have an identity as a runner's husband or a cyclist's wife. The main notion of role salience is central to understanding how recreation may be related to marital satisfaction. Among a population of individuals who have strong role salience with respect to a particular recreation identity, it would be reasonable to expect that marital satisfaction would be highest under one of two circumstances: (1) Both spouses share a strong commitment to an activity, or (2) only one spouse is highly committed to a recreation activity but that spouse receives significant role support from her or his non-committed partner. In the first of these situations, marital satisfaction would be expected to follow from the congruence of interest and commitment. Congruence of commitment would be expected to involve collective sharing, problem solving, and communication that would promote levels of dyadic cohesion, consensus, affection, and satisfaction that define marital adjustment and satisfaction (Spanier & Thompson, 1982). Conversely, in the case in which only one spouse is highly committed to a particular recreation activity role identity, significant support from that individual's spouse could be expected to affirm the salient role of the spouse and promote marital satisfaction. Such support might be expressed in a number of ways, examples of which might include arranging schedules to accommodate participation in the activity, engaging in conversations about the spouse's performance in the activity, and providing equipment related to the activity as gifts (McCall & Simmons, 1978). Studies have shown that the accumulation of role identities is beneficial for psychological well-being (Thoits, 1991). It is the subjective importance a person attaches to each identity (Thoits, 1991). According to

McCall and Simmons (1978), the overall salience of a role identity is dependent on six factors: (a) its prominence, (b) its degree of self- and role support, (c) intrinsic and (d) extrinsic gratification gained through its performance, (e) one's degree of commitment to and investment in it, and (f) the perceived degree of opportunity to enact the role identity in a given situation. Identities have been determined to be a source of motivation for action (Burke & Reitzes, 1991). Thus, as role-identity salience increases the higher the probability that an individual will behave in accordance with that identity.

Self-regulation theory

This theory was developed by Baumeister (2000). The theory is based on conscious personal management that involves the process of guiding one's own thoughts, behaviours, and feelings to reach goals. Self-regulation consists of several stages, and individuals must function as contributors to their own motivation, behaviour, and development within a network of reciprocally interacting influences. In brief, self-regulation models are concerned with what individuals choose to do and how they go about trying to accomplish their goals. Prior to Baumeister theoretical framework, there have been three components of the self-regulation process: (1) goal selection, (2) preparation for action, and (3) a cybernetic cycle of behaviour (made up of several component processes) (Markus & Wurf, 1987).

Goal Selection: Before they can effectively regulate their behaviour, people must select a goal; they must decide what they intend to do. Many motivational theorists assume that goals arise in the context of an expectancy-value framework (Atkinson, 1964).



Expectancy-value models assume that people select goals according to their expectancy of reaching the goal, in conjunction with the positive value they place on attaining the goal and the negative value they place on not attaining the goal. For example, a wife might be striving to be a good wife in order to please the husband not to cheat.

Preparation for Action: Having adopted a goal, people prepare to attain it. For instance, people may gather information, construct scenarios regarding possible outcomes, and engage in behavioural practices (rehearsal) in order to attain their goals. In short, they may design and prepare to implement a plan to achieve their goals. Although not all behaviours fit this process, in marriage, people may decide to act impulsively without a good deal of forethought. Impulsive behaviour of this type is not considered in this framework.

Cybernetic Cycle of Behaviour: in this stage, self-regulation process conceptualizes the cybernetic cycle of action. Cybernetics is the study of how entities use information to regulate their actions (Wiener, 1948). It is also called control theory; as it emphasizes negative feedback control as the means by which machines (thermostats, guided missiles, cruise control settings in automobiles) as well as animals adjust their behaviour to match some standard. The Processes that make up the Cybernetic Cycle of Behaviour includes;

1. Initial behaviour
2. Observe behaviour (Time oneself)
3. Compare against some standard (Compare time against goal)
4. Expectancy (individuals tend to form expectancy that future behaviour will reduce

the discrepancy between present behaviour and the standard)

5. Emotional reaction (React emotionally to discrepancy between performance and goal)
6. Behavioural adjustment (Continue striving toward goal or quit)

This study would help to bridge the gap in the existing literature by providing empirical evidence that would create an understanding on how to improve and sustain marital satisfaction among couples in Nigeria thereby improving and sustaining marital harmony. Practically, the study would guide policymakers, family counselors and prospective couples on factors to consider before getting into marriage and how to manage their roles in marriage. The result of this study will be beneficial to the psychologists and educationists in organizing workshops and seminars for married couples.

Research Questions

This research aims to answer the following questions;

1. Will assertiveness positively correlate with marital satisfaction among married Christian couples in Asaba metropolis?
2. Will social support positively correlate with marital satisfaction among married Christian couples in Asaba metropolis?
3. Will assertiveness and social support jointly and positively correlate with marital satisfaction among married Christian couples in Asaba metropolis?

Hypotheses

1. Assertiveness would positively and significantly correlate with marital satisfaction among married Christian couples in Asaba Metropolis.
2. Social support would positively and significantly correlate with marital



satisfaction among married Christian couples in Asaba Metropolis.

3. Assertiveness and social support will jointly and significantly correlate with marital satisfaction among married Christian couples in Asaba Metropolis.

Method

Participants

Five hundred (500) married couples were randomly selected for this study. They were drawn from three (3) different churches (Anglican, Catholic, and Pentecostal) located in Asaba Metropolis, Delta State, using a multi-stage sampling technique (this entails dividing the population into groups or clusters such as married couples that attend 6:00 am to 8:00 am and those that attend 9 O'clock to 10:30 am Sunday Church services). The participants comprised 156 males (31.12%) and 344 females (68.8%) married couples who have had five (5) years of marital experience; 374 (74.8%) married; 71 (14.2%) separated and 55 (11%) widowed. The age of the participants ranges from 25-70 years, with a mean age of 50.97 years and a standard deviation of 8.47. Educational qualifications of the participants showed that 57 (11.4%) of the participants had senior secondary certificate education, 228 (45.6%) had Bachelor's degree and 130 (26%) were holders of higher national diploma, 20 (4%) were Undergraduates, 51 (10.2%) were Master's degree holders and 14 (2.8%) Ph.D. 184 (36.8%) of them were Catholics, 177 (35.4%) were Anglicans, and 139 (27.8%) Pentecostals

Instruments

Index of Marital Satisfaction Scale: This is a 25-item inventory designed to measure the degree, severity, or magnitude of problems one spouse or partner perceives to be having in the marital relationship with his or her partner (Hudson, 1982). The scale is in Likert-type response format ranging from 1= none of the time, 7= all of the time. It contained direct and reverse scoring items. Direct score items include, 2,4,6,7,10,12,14,15,18,22,24, and 25 and the reverse score items 1,3,5,8,9,11,13,16,17,20,21, and 23. The final score is obtained by adding together the results of the direct scores and the reverse scores to obtain the client's raw score. The norms for Nigerian samples of young adult males and females are 38.84. Scores higher than the norm are regarded as poor or problematic marital satisfaction while scores lower than the norm are regarded as normal or adequate marital satisfaction. Hudson (1982) reported a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of .96 and a 2-hour test-retest of .96. In Nigeria, Agu (2017) reported a Cronbach Alpha of .82. From a pilot test using 50 participants, the present study reported a concurrent validity coefficient of .32 by correlating marital satisfaction with the Sexual satisfaction Inventory (Hudson, 1982). Also, a Cronbach alpha internal consistency of .93 was obtained for the marital satisfaction scale.

Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS):

This is a 30-item standardized psychological assessment tool developed by Rathus (1973) to assess assertive behaviour as a component of personality. The scale is the rate in Likert-type response format ranging from 3 = very much like me; 2 = rather like me; 1 = slightly like me. It contained direct and reverse scoring items. The reversed scores



include 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 23, 24, 26, and 30. The final score is obtained by adding together the results of the direct and reverse-scored items which could range from +90 to -90. Separate norms have been reported for male and female Nigerian samples as follows; males = 48.25, females = 48.61 (Anumba, 1995). Scores higher than the norms indicate that the participant is assertive, while scores lower than the norms indicate non-assertiveness. Rathus (1973) reported a split-half reliability coefficient of .77, and an eight-week interval test-retest reliability coefficient of .78, while Anumba (1995) obtained a concurrent validity coefficient of .25 by correlating RAS with the Index of Peer Relations among Nigeria sample. In the present study, a Cronbach alpha of .74 was obtained for Rathus Assertiveness Schedule.

Multidimensional Scale for Perceived Social Support: This 12-item questionnaire was developed by Zimet, et al. (1988) to assess individuals' outcomes from different social contexts namely, family, friends, and significant others. Each subscale has four items that are rated in a Likert type-response pattern ranging from strongly disagree = 1, to very strongly agree = 7. Dahlem, et al. (1991) obtained a Cronbach's alpha (α) of .91 and alphas of .90, .94 & .95 for significant others, family and friends support respectively. In Nigeria, Akanbi and Oyewo (2014) reported a reliability of .91 across the subscales. From a pilot test, the present study obtained a Cronbach alpha of .75 for significant others, .76 for family, .77 for friends, and .81 for all items in the scale.

Procedure

The instrument for the assessment was collapsed into one questionnaire with 4 (four) sections to which participants were

expected to respond to. Permission and identification letter certified by the head of the Department of psychology, Faculty of social sciences, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Nigeria was obtained before the data collection. Informed consent of participation was verbally obtained before test administration. Rapport and confidentiality were established with the participants and they were encouraged to read and follow the instruction at the top of the test form. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select three (3) churches (Anglican, Catholic and Pentecostal) located in Asaba metropolis. The three churches were selected due to their large population. Infinite sample size formula (Mensah, 2013), was used to determine the number of participants from each church. And the participants were selected utilizing purposive sampling techniques (that is, those that were willing to participate in the study were sampled). The questionnaire was administered to the selected participants immediately after the church service. Three research assistants (M.Sc qualification) were employed to assist in administering the questionnaires. Thereafter the questionnaire was collected, screened, scored, and used for data analysis. A total of 510 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the selected participants, however, 10 copies were wrongly filled and were discarded.

Design and Statistics

The study employed a correlational research design. Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient was used as a statistical test to analyze the data to test the hypotheses and multiple regression analysis was used to determine the predictive effect of the study variables. The justification of these statistics is to assess the relationship between the study variables. Statistical



Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 was used to manage the data

Result

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations and Correlation Coefficients of assertiveness and social support

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Marital satisfaction	26.68	9.55	1				
Assertiveness	46.07	10.39	.29**	1			
Perceived family support	75.45	6.97	.31**	.12**	1		
Perceived friends Support	75.13	8.17	.28**	.09**	.88**	1	
Significant others	74.02	11.06	.22**	.09**	.65**	.74**	1

Note, ** means $p < .01$ level of significant, * $p < .05$

The result in the above table showed that assertiveness positively and significantly correlated with marital satisfaction at $r = .28$, $p < .01$, level of significance. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was accepted. Also, it was found that perceived family support, friends' support, and perceived significant others positively and significantly correlated with

marital satisfaction at $r = .31$, $p < .01$; $.28$, $p < .01$, and $.22$, $p < .01$ respectively (see Table 2). Thus, hypothesis 2 was accepted. By implication, this means that assertiveness and social support are linearly related to marital satisfaction. Thus, when assertiveness and social support increases marital satisfaction also increases.

Table 3: Multiple linear regression analysis of assertiveness and social support on marital satisfaction among married couples

Models	R	R ²	Adj R ²	DF	F	β	T	Sig
Constant	.403	.162	.156	4(495)	24.00**		-3.003	.003
Assertiveness						.253	6.101	.000
Perceived family support						.279	3.188	.002
Perceived friends support						-.021	-.216	.829
Perceived significant others						.038	.627	.531

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$; Note: * = the test is significant at the .05 level.



The result in the multiple regression analysis using an enter method showed that the two variables (assertiveness and social support) contributed 16% of the variation in marital satisfaction. Similarly, the result showed that assertiveness statistically and significantly predicted marital satisfaction at ($\beta=.25$, $t=6.10$, $p<.001$) level of significance. Thus, hypothesis 1 of the study was accepted. This means that as positive assertiveness increase in marriage, satisfaction also increases. Also, perceived family support ($\beta= .28$, $t=3.19$, $p<.001$) positively and significantly predicted marital satisfaction while perceived friends support ($\beta= -.02$, $t= -.22$, $p>.05$) and significant others ($\beta=.04$, $t=.63$, $p>.05$) did not predict marital satisfaction among married couples. Hence, hypothesis two (2) of the study was accepted. By implication, family support encourages stability and patience in marriage which may materialize to marital satisfaction. However, the two independent variables, assertiveness, and social support jointly, positively and significantly predicted marital satisfaction among married couples at $R^2 =.16$, $F(4, 495) = 24.00$, $p<.001$ (see table 3). Thus, Hypothesis 3 of the study was accepted. This means that both variables significantly determine marital satisfaction among couples.

Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to examine whether assertiveness and social support would correlate with marital satisfaction among married Christian couples in Asaba Metropolis. The findings affirmed that assertiveness positively and significantly correlated with marital satisfaction among couples. This means that as assertiveness increases in marriage, marital satisfaction also increases. This result can be attributed to the fact that

assertiveness is an important ingredient in psychological adjustment for individuals, especially in marriage. Thus, none assertive couples tend to live unhappily. For example, spouses who express themselves and their feelings honestly to their partner may feel more positive and confident in their marriage which may lead to marital satisfaction. Also, they would feel more relaxed and comfortable with their partners. This finding is in tandem with Dastyar et al. (2019), who found that assertiveness counselling had a positive effect on the marital satisfaction of female students. Thus, assertiveness can boost satisfaction among couples. Also, Sayyadiorcid et al. (2018) found that a significant positive correlation exists between sexual assertiveness and positive feeling towards a spouse. They suggested that sexual assertiveness and positive feelings towards a spouse are significantly associated, and they affect couples' emotional and sexual relationships. However, Onyekachi et al. (2015), found a significant negative relationship between assertiveness and marital satisfaction. The result also disagreed with Anim (2010), who found that assertiveness correlated positively with marital distress. It may be considered that over-assertiveness may lead to problems in a relationship. If assertiveness behaviour is exercised adequately it would lead to marital harmony. This result is explained by the self-regulation model which assumed that individuals must function as contributors to their motivation, behaviour, and development within a network of reciprocally interacting influences. These may be subtle factors that influence marital satisfaction. The result of this study also revealed that social support positively and significantly correlated with marital satisfaction among couples. By implication, this means that adequate social support helps



to build and sustain marital satisfaction. Receiving social support, especially from emotionally close persons, are protective factors that may help individuals deal with stress and buffer the negative effects of life stress on marital satisfaction. For example, in the traditional African society, family support is very necessary as it provides the partner with effective and instrumental support which may be unique in the time of need (such as during childbirth, child-rearing, and marital conflict). Furthermore, friend support and significant others are beneficial because the support from other sources can entirely compensate for what is lacking in a spousal relationship, where couples share an intimate and physical relationship that differ in both degree and kind from relationships with other network members (Cutrona et al., 2005).

The findings of this study is inconsistent with Navid et al. (2018), who found a significant correlation between marital satisfaction and social support in infertile women with and without polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). Several other studies agreed with the findings of this study, Nawaz et al (2014), found that a significant positive relationship exists between perceived social support and Marital Satisfaction. This indicates that perceived social support is a significant predictor of marital satisfaction among married couples. Ebebuwa-Okoh and Osho (2016) found that components of spousal support (esteem, emotional task) has a positive and significant relationship with marital satisfaction. This is in accord with Courtney, Kira, and Steven's (2018), findings that people are more satisfied with their marriage when they gave more frequent nontangible support to their children. This result disagreed with Navid et al. (2018), who found that there was no significant

difference between infertile women with or without polycystic ovary syndrome in terms of marital satisfaction and social support. The result of this study is succinctly explained by Gottman's theory of marital satisfaction, with the preconceived idea that positive interaction and friendship are the keys to marital satisfaction and the prediction of marital stability over time (Gottman, 2000). Social support is beneficial especially in the context of marital stress like child-rearing and health issues.

Furthermore, the result confirmed that there is a positive and significant correlation between assertiveness, social support, and marital satisfaction. This means that as assertiveness and social support increase marital satisfaction tends to increase among couples. Consequently, this finding is in congruence with the dynamic goals theory of marital satisfaction (Li et al., 2011). It is assumed that assertive behaviour develops or manifests in the context of personal growth goals (e.g., improving oneself with the help of one's spouse in a marital domain). Personal growth is attained when an individual has value and respect for his/her partner. In effect, companionship goals and instrumental goals are linked with social support. People's need for belongingness and relatedness in marriage is essential in determining the bond and emotional meaningful satisfaction that a spouse needs with the other spouse (Li & Fung, 2011).

Implications of the Study

The study would help to close the lacuna in the existing knowledge by providing a novelty theoretical model of assertiveness and marital satisfaction. This study has established that there is a link between assertiveness, social support, and marital



satisfaction. Thus, affirming that assertiveness improves marital satisfaction. It also makes a strong case for social support in marriage. Since social support has been found to have a positive relationship with marital satisfaction, it is believed that showing supportive hands to married couples will enhance the quality of their marriage. Moreso, the enthronement of collective lifestyle enshrined in our family system ought to be encouraged and supported and individualism needs to be reversed. It is important to encourage marital support from family, friends, and significant others. This study provides salient implications for the practical field of couple or marriage therapy. It should be emphasized in therapies that a man and woman enter into a marital relationship and they owe it to themselves to enjoy a stable and harmonious union by engaging in positive communication patterns and expression of feelings. This study would guide other researchers in understanding salient factors that influence marital satisfaction. Since assertiveness and social support determine satisfaction in marriage, the variables should be important factors to be taken seriously in premarital counseling for intending couples. The study would therefore guide priests and pastors, marriage counselors, psychologists, and educationists on how to improve and sustain marital satisfaction among couples in Nigeria.

Limitation of the Study

The result of this study should be viewed within the context of these limitations.

The study was restricted to Asaba and its environs. Thus, there should be caution in generalizing the findings of this study. This is because the sample size may not be a true representative of the entire population. Also, when considering other important variables

which can potentially influence marital satisfaction, further studies should be encouraged to know more about other variables like sexual satisfaction, quality of life, narcissism, age, and so on.

Recommendations

This study recommends the following:

Priests, pastors, marriage counsellors, and psychologists should incorporate assertiveness training in the programme of educating married or intending couples for marriage during the marriage course. Marriage counsellors should educate couples on all the factors and variables that can affect their satisfaction in marriage. In this case, the likelihood of dissatisfaction would be reduced. Furthermore, churches should ensure that before any married couple gets into a divorce, they are made to pass through counseling where the counselors would educate them about the factors responsible for their conflict so that if possible, the situation can be managed. Also, efforts should be made towards developing traditional African theory that would explain the need for social support and assertiveness among married couples. This is because the African mode of relationship is collectivism and anything that goes contrary to that norm affects the marital satisfaction of couples. There is a need for policymakers to formulate family-friendly laws for married couples. Such policies/laws will help to create an opportunity for families and enable friends to identify with each other and build a happy home. For example, the establishment of social groups like old friends association, old school mate club should be encouraged. Finally, churches should celebrate couples on their



anniversaries and organize annual seminars for couples.

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