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ASSERTIVENESS AS PREDICTOR OF MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG MARRIED PERSONS IN ONITSHA EDUCATION ZONE OF ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated assertiveness as a predictor of marital satisfaction among married persons in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State. The study adopted a correlational research design and was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The population of the study comprised 1,481 married persons in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone, while a sample of 312 married persons was selected using a multi-stage sampling approach. The Patterson Assertiveness Questionnaire (PAQ) and Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) were adapted and used for data collection. The instruments were validated by experts, while their reliability coefficients were established using Cronbach's Alpha. Data were analyzed using simple regression analysis and regression ANOVA Test of significance. The finding revealed that assertiveness significantly predicted marital satisfaction among married persons in Onitsha Education Zone ($r = 0.409$, $N = 312$, $p < 0.05$). Further findings showed that assertiveness significantly predicted marital satisfaction among both male ($r = 0.423$, $N = 96$, $p < 0.05$) and female ($r = 0.403$, $N = 216$, $p < 0.05$) married persons. The study concluded that assertiveness is an important factor in promoting marital satisfaction. It was recommended, among others, that school authorities should organize workshops, seminars, and conferences to create awareness and equip married teachers with appropriate assertiveness skills for improving marital relationships.

Keywords: Assertiveness; Marital Satisfaction; Married Persons; Public Secondary Schools; Onitsha Education Zone; Anambra State.

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Introduction

Marriage is a culturally and legally recognized union between two individuals that establishes emotional, social, financial, and family responsibilities between spouses, their children, and extended family members (Haviland et al., 2021). It is regarded as one of the most important social institutions because it provides companionship, emotional support, family formation, and social stability. The quality and stability of marriage, however, depend on several interpersonal factors, including communication, mutual understanding, trust, conflict management, emotional support, and the ability of spouses to express their needs appropriately (Etele et al., 2020). Consequently, understanding the factors that contribute to successful and satisfactory marriages has become increasingly important.

Marital satisfaction refers to an individual's positive evaluation of and attitude towards his or her marital relationship (King, 2016; Fincham & Beach, 2020). It reflects the degree to which spouses experience happiness, contentment, emotional fulfilment, and the realization of their expectations within the marriage. Etele et al. (2020) described marital satisfaction as a state of marital happiness that may be influenced by both intrapersonal and interpersonal factors. A satisfactory marriage can contribute to psychological well-being, physical health, family stability, and overall quality of life, whereas marital dissatisfaction may result in persistent conflict, emotional distress, separation, and other family difficulties (Khorasani et al., 2017).

In Nigeria, marital relationships are influenced by cultural expectations, economic conditions, religious beliefs, and changing family roles. Although marriage remains highly valued, many couples experience challenges such as poor communication, financial difficulties, infidelity, lack of trust, domestic violence, and disagreements over gender roles (Okafor et al., 2020; Ekwueme & Okoye, 2020). These challenges may reduce the quality of interaction between spouses and consequently affect marital satisfaction. In Anambra State, similar concerns have been identified, with communication problems, financial strain, infidelity, and lack of understanding reported as factors that may contribute to marital dissatisfaction (Ani, 2021; Okeke, 2019). One factor that may be associated with marital satisfaction is assertiveness. Assertiveness can be viewed as a personality characteristic, behavioural pattern, or communication style through which an individual expresses his or her feelings, opinions, needs, and rights confidently without violating the rights of others (Dorland, 2018). Gatchpazian (2021) described assertiveness as a self-assured expression of one's rights or position without dominating others or passively allowing one's legitimate rights to be ignored. Similarly, Vagos and Pereira (2016) viewed assertiveness as the ability to express oneself

confidently while maintaining respect for other people.

In the context of marriage, assertiveness is particularly important because spouses are expected to communicate their feelings, expectations, concerns, and disagreements on a regular basis. An assertive spouse can express dissatisfaction without aggression, communicate personal needs clearly, establish appropriate boundaries, and participate actively in resolving marital disagreements. Such communication may reduce misunderstanding and promote mutual respect between spouses. Conversely, a lack of assertiveness may lead to the suppression of feelings, difficulty expressing concerns, unresolved conflicts, and frustration, which may negatively influence marital satisfaction (Dagan et al., 2014; Maheshwari & Gill, 2015). Assertiveness may take different forms, including verbal and non-verbal expressions and proactive or reactive responses. Proactive assertiveness allows individuals to communicate their needs, opinions, and emotions directly and appropriately, while effective verbal and non-verbal communication can facilitate mutual understanding between spouses (Kilcullen, 2020; Kahn, 2017). Within marital relationships, these skills may assist couples in discussing sensitive issues, negotiating differences, making compromises, and finding mutually acceptable solutions to problems. Alberti and Emmons (2017) therefore noted that assertiveness can help individuals express their emotions, defend their rights, communicate disagreement appropriately, and develop supportive interpersonal relationships.

Previous research has also suggested a connection between assertiveness and marital satisfaction. Qorbanali et al. (2018) found that marital satisfaction tends to be higher among married persons who are able to communicate their needs, wants, and emotions assertively. Similarly, Vinayak et al. (2017) identified assertiveness as an important contributor to marital satisfaction, noting that couples who communicate openly, acknowledge each other's needs, negotiate differences, and make compromises tend to report better marital relationships. Onsy and Amer (2014) further identified interaction, conflict management, problem-solving, gender roles, and romanticism as factors associated with marital satisfaction, indicating that effective communication skills such as assertiveness may play an important role in marital functioning. For married persons working in public secondary schools, the demands of teaching and family responsibilities may create additional pressures. Teachers are expected to perform instructional, administrative, and interpersonal duties while simultaneously meeting their responsibilities as spouses and family members. Their ability to communicate effectively with their spouses and manage disagreements constructively may therefore be important in maintaining satisfactory marital relationships. Since assertiveness facilitates

the appropriate expression of feelings, needs, and opinions, it may serve as an important personal resource for maintaining marital satisfaction among married persons.

Despite the importance of assertiveness in interpersonal and marital relationships, there is still a need for empirical evidence concerning its predictive role in marital satisfaction among married persons in the Onitsha Educational Zone of Anambra State. Existing studies have identified several factors associated with marital satisfaction, but the specific contribution of assertiveness among married persons in this educational zone requires further investigation. It is against this background that this study seeks to examine assertiveness as a predictor of marital satisfaction among married persons in Onitsha Educational Zone of Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

Marriage is an important institution in the lives of individuals and families, and achieving a happy and satisfactory marriage is the desire of many couples. However, many marriages experience persistent difficulties that result in dissatisfaction, emotional disconnection, conflict, and, in some cases, separation. In Nigeria, where marriage is highly valued culturally and socially, marital dissatisfaction remains a concern. In Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State, married persons appear to experience challenges that may affect the quality of their marital relationships. These challenges include poor communication, lack of trust, infidelity, financial strain, cultural differences, and lack of understanding between spouses. The consequences of marital dissatisfaction may extend to individuals' emotional and physical well-being, including stress, changes in appetite, and other health-related difficulties.

One factor that may contribute to marital satisfaction is assertiveness. Assertiveness enables individuals to express their feelings, needs, opinions, and concerns clearly and respectfully while recognizing the rights of their spouses. In marital relationships, appropriate assertiveness may promote effective communication, constructive conflict resolution, mutual understanding, and the negotiation of differences. Conversely, a lack of assertiveness may result in suppressed feelings, poor communication, unresolved disagreements, frustration, and declining satisfaction within the marriage. This is particularly relevant to married persons who are teachers and must balance professional responsibilities with family obligations. Although previous studies have examined several factors associated with marital satisfaction, including communication, trust, financial conditions, and interpersonal relationships, limited attention has been given to the specific predictive role of assertiveness among married persons in Onitsha Education Zone. While studies conducted in other settings have suggested that assertiveness may contribute to better marital relationships, there is insufficient empirical evidence to establish whether the

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same relationship exists among married persons in the study area. The problem of this study, therefore, is the lack of sufficient empirical evidence on whether assertiveness significantly predicts marital satisfaction among married persons in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the extent to which assertiveness predicts marital satisfaction among the respondents.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate assertiveness as a predictor of marital satisfaction among married persons in Onitsha Education zone of Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examine the predictive value of assertiveness marital satisfaction among married persons in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State.
2. Determine the predictive value of assertiveness on marital satisfaction among male and female married persons in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the predictive value of assertiveness on marital satisfaction among married persons in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education zone of Anambra State?
2. What is the predictive value of assertiveness on marital satisfaction among male and female married persons in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education zone of Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Assertiveness will not significantly predict marital satisfaction among married persons in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education zone of Anambra State.
2. Assertiveness will not be a significant predictor of marital satisfaction among male and female married persons in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education zone of Anambra State.

Research Method

The study adopted a predictive correlational research design. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study The population comprised 1,481 married persons in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State, consisting of 655 males and 826 females (PPSSC, 2022). A sample of 312 married persons, comprising 96 males and 216 females, was selected from 12 public secondary schools using a multi-stage sampling technique. Two instruments were used for data collection: the Peterson

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Assertiveness Questionnaire (PAQ) and the Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ). The PAQ contained 20 items for measuring assertiveness, while the MSQ contained 16 items for measuring marital satisfaction, with both instruments using four-point response scales. Face and construct validity of the instruments were established by three experts in Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University. Construct validity was determined using Principal Component Analysis (PCA), with a KMO value of .899 and a significant Bartlett's test of sphericity (χ^2 = 12876.98, p < .001). Reliability was established through Cronbach Alpha, yielding coefficients of .831 for the PAQ and .714 for the MSQ, indicating acceptable internal consistency. The instruments were administered with the assistance of five research assistants. A total of 302 copies were correctly retrieved, representing a 97% return rate. Data were analyzed using simple regression analysis in SPSS Version 26. The research question was answered using regression analysis, while the hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance using regression ANOVA. Prediction was interpreted as weak where R = 0.01–0.39, moderate where R = 0.40–0.59, and strong where R = 0.60–0.99, following Nworgu (2015).

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The researcher presented the results and the analysis of data collected for the study. The data obtained from the field by the researcher were presented and analysed in relation to the research questions and hypotheses in the study. At the end of the presentation, a summary of the finding was presented.

Research Question 1: What is the predictive value of assertiveness on marital satisfaction among married people in public secondary schools in Onitsha Educational Zone of Anambra State?

Table 1: Simple regression of assertiveness predicting marital satisfaction among married persons.

Model	R	R Square	Adj R^2	SE of the Estimate	R^2 Change	F change	df_1	df_2	Sig F change
1	.409[a]	0.167	0.165	5.33103	0.167	60.307	1	300	0.000

a. Dependent variable: Marital Satisfaction
b. Predictor: (constant); Assertiveness.

Table 1 displayed the analysis as it produced a correlation coefficient (R) of .409 . This implied a moderate positive prediction of assertiveness on marital satisfaction among married persons.

The associated R^2 value is the coefficient of determination was .167

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meaning that assertiveness accounted for 16.7% of the variance of marital satisfaction. Conversely, 83.3% of the variance on marital satisfaction among married persons was explained by other factors not included in this model. The minimal value between R^2(.167) and adjusted R^2(.165) suggested that the model reliably estimated the prediction without being influenced by model complexity.

The standard error (SE) of the estimate was 5.331 indicating that on average, the actual marital satisfaction among married persons deviates from the predicted scores by about 5.331 units. In practical terms, this implied that while assertiveness was meaningful predictor of marital satisfaction among married persons, some degree of prediction error is likely unexplained and may be attributed to other variables that are not included in the model.

Research Question 2: What is the predictive value of assertiveness on marital satisfaction among male and female married persons in public secondary schools in Onitsha Educational Zone of Anambra State?

Table 2: Simple regression of assertiveness predicting marital satisfaction among male and female married persons.

Model	R	R^2	Adj R^2	SE of the Estimate	R^2 Change	F change	df_1	df_2	Sig F change
1 Male	.423[a]	0.179	0.170	5.376	0.179	20.471	1	94	0.000
Female	.403[a]	0.162	0.158	5.335	0.162	39.443	1	204	0.000

a. Predictors (constant), Assertiveness of male married persons
b. Predictor (constant), Assertiveness of female married persons.

Table 2 depicted that the model produced a correlation coefficient ® of .423. This indicated a moderate positive prediction of assertiveness on marital satisfaction among male married persons. The associated R^2 value was .179. This meant that assertiveness of male married persons accounted for 17.9% of the variance in marital satisfaction. Subsequently, 82.1% of the variance in marital satisfaction of male married persons was explained by other factors not included in this model. The minimal difference between R^2 (.179) and adjusted R^2 (.170) indicated that the estimate of explained variance was stable and reliable. Moreover, the SE of the estimate was 5.376. This meant that the predicted scores for marital satisfaction of male married persons deviate from the actual scores by 5.376 units on average. Nonetheless, while assertiveness of male married persons is slightly predicting marital satisfaction, other factors not included in the model play a significant role.

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Invariably, the model produced a correlation coefficient® of .403 for female married persons. This deduced a moderate positive prediction of assertiveness on female marital satisfaction of female married persons. The associated R^2 value was .162. This indicated that assertiveness of female married persons explained 16.2% of the variance in marital satisfaction. Meanwhile, 83.8% of the variance of marital satisfaction among female married persons was explained by other factors not included in this model. The adjusted R^2 was .158 for female married persons. The minimal difference between R^2 (.162) and adjusted R^2(.158) deduced that the estimate of explained variance was reliable. Therefore, the SE of the estimate was 5.335 for female married persons. This indicated that the predicted scores for marital satisfaction among female married persons deviated from their actual scores by 5,335 units on average. IN the same vein, while assertiveness of female married persons is slightly predicting marital satisfaction, other factors not included in the model played a considerable role.

Testing of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

Hypothesis 1: Assertiveness will not significantly predict marital satisfaction among married persons in public secondary schools in Onitsha education zone of Anambra state.

Table 3: Regression ANOVA test of significance for the variation in marital satisfaction among married persons that can be predicted by assertiveness.

Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
1 Regression	1713.913	1	1713.913	60.30	0.000	Significant
Residual	8525.955	30	28.420			
Total	10239.868	301				

Dependent variable: Marital satisfaction among married persons
Predictor (constant), Assertiveness

Analysis in Table 3 denoted that the variation in marital satisfaction among married persons that was predicted by assertiveness was significant (F (1,300=60.307, p=.000). The associated probability value of .000 when compared with 0.05 level of significance at which the hypothesis was tested was found to be significant because .000 was less than 0.05. Henceforth, the null hypothesis was rejected and inference drawn was that there was a significant variation in marital satisfaction among married persons that was predicted by

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assertiveness in public secondary schools in Onitsha Educational Zone of Anambra state.

Hypothesis 2: Assertiveness will not be a significant predictor of marital satisfaction among male and female married persons in public secondary schools in Onitsha Educational zone of Anambra state

Table 4: Regression ANOVA test of significance for the variation in marital satisfaction among male and female married persons that can be predicted by assertiveness of male and female married persons.

Model	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
1 Male						
Regression	121.480	1	591.801	20.471	0.000	Significant
Residual	10118.388	94	28.910			
Total	10239.868	95				
Female						
Regression	1122.711	1	1122.711	39.443	0.000	Significant
Residual	5806.726	204	28.464			
Total	6929.437	205				

Dependent variables: male and female marital satisfaction
Predictors: (constant), Assertiveness of male and female married persons.

The Regression ANOVA test of significance for the variation in marital satisfaction among male and female married persons that can be predicted by assertiveness of male and female married persons as shown in Table 4 revealed that F-ratio associated with regression was 20.471 for male and p-value of .000, while F-ratio associated with regression was 39.443 for female and p-value of .000. Since the p-values (.000 and .000) were less than 0.05 level of significance, invariably, the null hypothesis of no significant prediction of marital satisfaction among male and female married persons by male and female assertiveness was rejected. Meanwhile, male and female assertiveness significantly predicted male and female marital satisfaction in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study as shown in table 1 revealed that assertiveness has a moderate positive predictive value on marital satisfaction among married persons in public secondary schools in Onitsha education zone of Anambra state with a correlation coefficient® OF .409. The result of the null hypothesis showed that assertiveness is a significant predictor of marital satisfaction. The variation in marital satisfaction among married persons that was predicted by

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assertiveness was significant (FCI, 300= 60.307, P=.000). The associated probability value of .000 when compared with .05 level of significance at which the hypothesis was tested was found to be significant because .000 was less than .05. The findings of the study are in consonance with the results of Bradbury et al (2019); Becky (2014); who found a positive relationship between assertiveness and marital satisfaction. The reason for this finding may be based on the fact that an assertive individual would be very open to his or her partner, who now knows what the partner wants or hates. This will increase satisfaction in marriage.

The findings of the study in Table 2 showed that assertiveness has slight prediction on marital satisfaction among male and female married persons in public secondary schools in Onitsha educational zone of Anambra state. However, the predictability is stronger among male married persons with 17.9% of variance while the female married persons explained 16.2% of the variance in marital satisfaction. The result of the null hypothesis revealed that male and female assertiveness significantly predicted male and female marital satisfaction in public secondary schools in Onitsha education zone of Anambra state. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant prediction of marital satisfaction among male and female married persons by male and female assertiveness was rejected. The rejection is because F-ratio associated with regression was 20.471 for male and P-value of .000; while F-ratio associated with regression was 39.443 for female and P-value of .000. Since P-values (.000 and .000) were less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. The present study is in line with Bradbury et al (2019); Becky (2014); whose study attested that assertiveness predicts marital satisfaction not minding the gender.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that assertiveness is an important predictor of marital satisfaction among married persons in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Assertiveness accounted for 16.7% of the variation in marital satisfaction and significantly predicted marital satisfaction among the respondents. The findings further showed that assertiveness significantly predicted marital satisfaction among both male and female married persons, accounting for 17.9% and 16.2% of the variance in their marital satisfaction, respectively. This indicates that the ability of married persons to express their feelings, opinions, needs and concerns openly and appropriately may contribute positively to the quality and satisfaction experienced in marriage. Therefore, strengthening assertive communication skills among married persons could contribute to improved marital relationships and greater marital satisfaction.

Recommendations

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

1. Guidance counsellors and marriage counsellors should organise regular workshops and counselling programmes that equip married persons with assertive communication skills, particularly skills for expressing feelings, needs and concerns appropriately.
2. Public secondary school authorities should encourage counselling and wellness programmes that address interpersonal and marital relationship challenges among married staff, especially those arising from poor communication.
3. Married persons should be encouraged to develop healthy assertiveness by expressing their opinions, expectations and emotions respectfully rather than suppressing feelings or communicating through aggression and hostility.

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