

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL PHOBIA AND MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG MARRIED PERSONS IN AWKA METROPOLIS, ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

This study explored the relationship between social phobia and marital satisfaction among married persons in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State. A total of 300 participants were sampled for the study. The participants consisted of married individuals residing in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State, and were selected using a convenience sampling technique. Their ages ranged from 20 to 60 years, with a mean age of 37.5 and a standard deviation of 0.214. Two instruments were used for data collection: the Index of Marital Satisfaction developed by Walter W. Hudson (1982) and the Social Phobia Inventory developed by Katharine M. Connor et al. (2000). The study adopted a survey research design with a cross-sectional approach, and Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to test the hypothesis. One hypothesis was formulated, which stated that social phobia would significantly correlate with marital satisfaction. The hypothesis was rejected ($r = 0.051$, $p > .05$), indicating no significant relationship between social phobia and marital satisfaction. Based on the findings, the researchers recommend that therapists, clinical psychologists, and marriage counsellors exercise caution when addressing the behavioural dynamics of social phobia and marital satisfaction among married persons.

Keywords: *Social Phobia, Marital Satisfaction, Married Persons, Awka Metropolis*

Background to the Study

Marital satisfaction is the way married persons view the level of fulfillment and pleasure they derive in their marriages. Marriage is meant to be cherished; it is a vital institution predestined by God for companionship, procreation and mutual support. Yet, many marriages are going through challenges in different areas. Cases of marital difficulties are constantly reported mainly by the women, and this generally cascades to marital dissatisfaction; common difficulties and challenges reported by women include; night crawling, negligence, infidelity, care free attitude, lack of financial support, emotional abuse, lack of respect, verbal abuse and physical abuse from their husbands. These negative behavioural challenges have profound consequences on emotional well-being, contributing to **depression, anxiety, stress and relationship difficulties leading to marital dissatisfaction** which often results in separation, divorce and single parenting. In order to investigate and offer solutions to this problem of marital dissatisfaction among married persons, this study was conceived.

Marital satisfaction elucidates the major aspects in which individuals in marriage can actually express the pleasure, fulfillment and happiness they receive in such marital relationship (Okoli, 2023; Umeaku, 2025b). There are several variables or factors responsible for marital satisfaction and they differ across people (Nwanna, 2021). According to Weber (1922), there are biological, social and psychological aspects of marital satisfaction. Many married persons do not receive sufficient satisfaction in their marriages due to their acts of making comparisons with other marriages. Comparisons and counter comparisons obliterate marriages, and lead to break ups and diminish marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction is a mental and emotional state; many individuals within marriage evaluate their marital satisfaction based on their expectations and actual realities. Marital dissatisfaction is a key problem in our society owing to several child labour, divorces, and societal disharmonies (Bradbury & Fincham, 1991). Due to the forgoing, the relationships between social phobia and marital satisfaction will be examined in this study.

Social phobia can correlate with marital satisfaction. One of the most crucial aspects of human life is forming and maintaining close relationship with other people and social anxiety makes it difficult for some people to form and maintain relationship (Hahn et al., 2021). Social Anxiety also known as social phobia was defined by The American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2013), as the persistent fear of one or more social situations. This intense

anxiety is due to fear of being judged, embarrassed, rejected or humiliated in social settings. And this can lead to avoidance of situations where interpersonal interaction is needed such as speaking in public, meeting new people or speaking to authority figures (Davila & Beck, 2002). Social anxiety is a wide spread condition that is expressed on a continuum of severity, the higher end is what psychologist defined as social anxiety disorder (Heimberg et al, 2010).

Hofmann (2007) pointed out that fear of negative evaluation is the core feature of social anxiety and error in information processing contributes to this fear. This is because one who has social anxiety normally overestimates the dangers of social events; they have this exaggerated feeling of risk in social interaction which makes them to avoid social situations and interactions altogether (Afram & Kashdan, 2015).

Different researchers on social anxiety tried to examine the way people with social anxiety relate with people they are not familiar with; while certain studies have shown that social anxiety has a damaging effect on close relationship as well as romantic relationship (Cumming & Rapee, 2010). Moreover, it is believed that how social anxiety affects romantic relationship may vary depending on the context and the degree of social anxiety (Afram & Kashdan, 2015), while some researchers discovered that social anxiety is associated with avoidance of intimacy with their partners on the other hand, some socially anxious person exhibit excessive dependent behaviour towards their partner for emotional support (Grant et al., 2007).

Statement of the Problem

Marital satisfaction is an essential concept in marital growth, accomplishment and fulfillment. Therefore, its absence hampers the optimal development and success of a union or family. Basically, family is the component of every society and marital dissatisfaction constantly create negative vicious cycle in several aspects of people's lives, and it is capable of harming work and other human relationships (Umeaku et al., 2022).

Many works have been carried out in the area of marital satisfaction, using diverse research designs, variables as well as different localities or ethnic groups; yet, there are still lacunae in proffering the enduring solutions for marital dissatisfaction; separation, divorce, domestic violence and mental disorders seem to be on the upward trajectory due to its menace (Umeaku, 2025b). In addition, different studies have been done in diverse cultures and localities, but there seems to be a dearth of research in the area of studying marital satisfaction and its relationship with social phobia in our urban areas, especially in the South Eastern part of the country (Goel et al., 2012). Therefore, this research work has come to provide more literature in this area, evaluate the relationship between social phobia and marital satisfaction across married persons, and to close the gap in knowledge by establishing if married persons in the cities truly derive marital satisfaction.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to ascertain whether social phobia will correlate with marital satisfaction. Specifically, the study sought to investigate:

1. Whether social phobia significantly correlates with marital satisfaction.

Research Questions

Based on the current study the further research question will guide the study;

1. Will social phobia significantly correlate with marital satisfaction?

Significance of the Study

This study will have both practical and theoretical significance. The outcome of this study will provide some important information that will guide not just researchers, but practitioners as well as married persons. As a body of research this work will look into empirical, theoretical and conceptual aspect considering the various variables that correlate with marital satisfaction, thereby educating the readers and the stakeholders of the impact as well as the relationship among these factors.

Theoretical Framework

The Big Five Personality Theory was developed by (McCrae & Costa, 1987). It was derived from the Trait theories, and was adopted to anchor this work because of its suitability. This is because being a personality theory; it explains certain traits (domains) across genders as well as traits that are susceptible to social phobia and can influence marital satisfaction among married persons. It is capable of articulating the relational interface between social phobia and marital satisfaction since every human has a personality and social phobia is usually linked to a particular type of personality called neuroticism. In the light of the above therefore, the big five personality theory is suitable for this study, and it is adopted as the theoretical framework of this study.

A research conducted by Davila and Beck (2002), and the research title was *Is Social Anxiety Associated with Impairment in Close Relationships? A Preliminary Investigation*. In this research, one hundred and sixty-eight adults with a range of social anxiety were interviewed, and the data was analyzed. The design used for analysis was multiple regression analysis. In their result, their first analysis predicting avoidance of expressing strong emotion from social anxiety was significant ($\beta = .19, t = 2.35, p = .02$). The second analysis predicting fear of rejection to social anxiety was also significant ($\beta = .30, t = 4.11, p < .001$) and lastly the third analysis predicting interpersonal chronic stress and social anxiety was also significant ($\beta = -.25, t = -3.38, p = .001$). In summary, they discovered that social anxiety were strong predictors of interpersonal style.

Research conducted by Montesi et al (2012), and the research title was *On the Relationship Among Social Anxiety, Intimacy, Sexual Communication, and Sexual Satisfaction in Young Couples*. Participants were one hundred and fifteen undergraduate and their partners in monogamous, heterosexual, committed intimate partnerships of at least three months. A predictive part model was used to test the hypothesis. The statistics used to analyze data are; Goodness of fit (X^2), Comparative fit index (CFI)(Bentler, 1990) and Root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The final result for this analysis are $X^2 (16, N=206) = 3.85, p = .80, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .052$ (90% confidence interval = .00–.18). And their findings were interpreted as; Social anxiety predicted fear of intimacy ($p < .001$), which, in turn, predicted dissatisfaction with ability to communicate openly about sex ($p < .01$). Finally, dissatisfaction with ability to communicate openly about sex predicted sexual dissatisfaction ($p < .01$).

Research conducted by Cuming and Rapee (2010), and the research title was *Social anxiety and self-protective communication style in close relationships*. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 15.0.1 was used to calculate descriptive statistics and carry out correlational analyses. Participants used in the study were drawn from a community which ages range from 18 to 74. Total number of 312 participants (75 males and 237 females) were used in the study. Analysis was done separately for males and females. For males, social anxiety was not significantly correlated with any of the disclosure, relationship quality or relationship duration variables, but was positively correlated with depression. For females, with respect to both romantic relationships and close friendships, social anxiety was negatively correlated with self-disclosure, disclosure of negative emotions, disclosure of positive emotions and support, and was positively correlated with conflict.

A research conducted by Afram and Kashdan (2015), and the research title is *Coping with rejection concerns in romantic relationships: An experimental investigation of social anxiety and risk regulation*. The aim of their study was to investigate whether people with greater social anxiety respond defensively when the threat of being rejected by one's romantic partner becomes salient. Participants were 51 couples recruited from Mid-Atlantic university. Statistic uses to analyzed data was multiple regression analysis. As hypothesized, greater social anxiety predicted more negative partner assessments in the rejection condition ($B = -.47, SE = -.17, t (94) = -2.77, p < .0$). Surprisingly, social anxiety also predicted more positive partner assessments following the neutral condition ($B = -.46, SE = -.17, t (94) = -2.63, p < .01$).

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was postulated and tested in the study:

1. Social phobia will significantly correlate with marital satisfaction.

Methods

Participants

A total of 300 married persons from Awka Metropolis in Anambra Senatorial Zone of Anambra State served as participants for the study. The towns that were involved in the study were towns under Awka South Local Government in Anambra Central Senatorial Zone which include; Amawbia, Umuopku and Awka (the Core-Multi-Nuclei Urban Design). The males were one hundred and eighteen (118) in number, while the females were one hundred and eighty-two (182) in number, representing thirty-nine percent (39%) and sixty-one percent (61%) respectively. Their ages ranged from 20 (twenty) to 60 (sixty) years. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the villages, while convenient sampling technique was used to select the participants of this study, because the selection of the participants was based on availability, accessibility and willingness of the participants to participate in the study.

Instruments

The instruments used for collecting data in this study are:

1. Index of Marital Satisfaction (IMS):

The instrument used in this study for data collection on marital satisfaction was the index of marital satisfaction by Hudson (1982). This instrument is a 25-item inventory that is designed to measure the degree or severity of

the problems or satisfaction that one's spouse or partner perceives to be having in the marital relationship with his or her spouse. The instrument has a Likert response pattern ranging from 1 to 5, where 1= Rarely or none of the time, 2 = A little of the time, 3= sometimes, 4= A good part of the time and 5 = Most or all of the time. There are direct scoring and reverse scoring items. Where the direct scoring is for negative word items which are items: 2, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12, 14, 15, 18, 22, 24, and 25; while the reverse scoring items are the positive word items which are: 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 11, 13, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21 and 23.

To obtain raw scores, the result of the direct scores and the reverse scores were added together and 25 was subtracted from the raw score to obtain the clients final score, scores below 30 will be taken to indicate a satisfaction in relationship, while any score above 30 will be taken to indicate dissatisfaction in marital relationship. The items in the questionnaire include: I feel my partner is affectionate enough, I feel that my partner treats me badly, I feel that my partner really cares for me, I feel that I would not choose the same partner if I had it to do over, I feel that I can trust my partner and I feel that our relationship is breaking up.

The reliability coefficients reported by Hudson (1982) are, Cronbach Alpha internal consistency = .96, 2-hour-test-retest = .96. A concurrent validity coefficient of .48 was obtained by Anene (1994) by correlating Index of Marital Satisfaction (IMS) with Marital Stress Inventory (MSI). Also, Abamara (2019) reported alpha coefficient reliability of 0.70.

2. Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN):

The instrument used in this study for data collection of social anxiety would be the Social Phobia Inventory by Conner et al (2000). The social phobia inventory is a 17 item self reporting scale that tends to measure the level or degree of social anxiety that an individual has. The instrument is a Likert style response pattern ranging from 0 to 4, where 0 = Not at all 1 = A little bit 2 = Somewhat 3 = Very much 4 = Extremely. The scale is rated over the past week and includes items assessing each of the symptom domains of social anxiety disorder (fear, avoidance, and physiologic arousal). The items corresponding to these scales are as follows: Fear - 1, 3, 5, 10, 14, 15 (Range 0-24); Avoidance - 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 16 (Range 0-28); Physical symptoms: 2, 7, 13, 17 (Range 0-16). All the items in the questionnaire are recorded using direct scoring by adding score together, the total SPIN score ranges from 0-68. Where the degree of social anxiety is measured depending on the score of the participants, this means that very high scores indicate higher severity while very low score indicate absence of social anxiety in the participant. Some questions like I am afraid of people in authority, I am bothered by blushing in front of people, Parties and social events scare me, I avoid talking to people I don't know, being criticized scares me a lot, etc. are found in this instrument.

Conner et al (2000) examined the reliability of SPIN using Test retest validity and internal consistency. In test retest validity, Spearman correlation coefficient was used and 0.78 ($P < 0.001$) was obtained. In internal consistency Cronbach alpha was used and the score obtained was 0.94 for the full scale. The validity of the instrument was measured also by Conner et al (2000) using Convergent, Divergent and construct validity. The SPIN showed good convergent validity as it was significantly correlated with Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) (0.72) and Social Interaction Anxiety scale (SIAS) (0.68). The SPIN showed good Divergent validity as it was not significantly correlated with measures of depression and self-esteem. Correlating the SPIN and the Beck Depression Inventory was 0.51, and the correlation between the SPIN and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was 0.48. Finally, for construct validity, the correlation between the SPIN and the FNE was 0.81, and the correlation between the SPIN and the SIAS was 0.86.

It is also important to state that the SPIN was validated in Nigeria by Chukwujekwu and Olose (2018). According to them, the internal consistency of the SPIN in the Nigerian sample was 0.93, and the test-retest reliability was 0.86. And the factor structure of the SPIN was found to be consistent with the original version of the measure. Overall, the study found that the SPIN was a valid and reliable measure of social anxiety in a Nigerian sample.

Procedures

The researchers with the help of two research assistants went to the field, with copies of questionnaires which were administered to married persons in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State and this was done by tracing the locations or places where they could be found, which are; the churches (Roman Catholic, Anglican and Perfect Life Message International Ministry), schools (Nnamdi Azikiwe University) and workplaces (Nnamdi Azikiwe University and Anambra State Civil Service's Ministries and Departments).

A combination of simple random sampling techniques and convenience sampling techniques were used to select the villages and participants in this senatorial zone respectively. To select the villages, the names of the villages were written down in pieces of papers, and the villages picked were selected and used for the study. This enabled

a true representation of the Core-Multi-Nuclei urban design across the Anambra Central Senatorial Zone. To select the participants, convenience sampling technique was adopted. Ethically, before completing the questionnaire, rapport was established, and the purpose of the study was adequately explained to the participants. Firstly, the informed consent was established with the participants and confidentiality was guaranteed. Secondly, they were assured of anonymity as well as privacy in the study. Thirdly, the consents of the participants were obtained before the copies of the questionnaires were administered and they were adequately informed about choice to withdraw from the research at any given time they deem fit, they were given the assurance that whatsoever their responses were, would continue to be confidential. Three hundred and twenty (320) copies of questionnaires were administered, three hundred and ten (310) copies were returned, but three hundred (300) copies were valid; by the end of their responses, when the questionnaires were gathered, the valid ones were coded and analyzed using SPSS Version 21 with the appropriate statistics.

Inclusion Criteria

Married persons who live in Awka Metropolis

Exclusion Criteria

Engaged, married or divorced persons who live in Awka Metropolis

Design and Statistics

The study is a survey with a cross-sectional design, and SPSS version 21 was used for statistical analyses. Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used for data analyses; the Pearson Correlation was adopted to ascertain the relationships among the variables of interest, because it is the appropriate inferential statistics to handle the data of this nature.

Results

Table 1: Summary of descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation

GENDER	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
MALE	3.0895	118	.23625
FEMALE	3.1336	182	.19724
Total	3.1163	300	.21414

Table 2: The Correlational Analysis of the Study Variables: Social Phobia and Marital Satisfaction

		SP	MS
SP	Pearson Correlation	1	.051
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.382
	N	300	300
MS	Pearson Correlation	.051	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.382	
	N	300	300

The hypothesis which stated that social phobia will significantly correlate with marital satisfaction was rejected at $r = -.051$; $p < .382$.

Summary of Result

1. Social phobia did not significantly correlate with marital satisfaction at $r = -.051$; $p < .382$.

Discussion

This study investigated the title Exploring the Relationship between Social Phobia and Marital Satisfaction among Married Persons in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State. The hypothesis which stated that social phobia will significantly correlate with marital satisfaction was rejected and this in consonance with the study of Davila and Beck (2002), and the research title was Is Social Anxiety Associated with Impairment in Close Relationships? A Preliminary Investigation, in this research, one hundred and sixty-eight adults with a range of social anxiety were interviewed, and the data was analyzed. The design used for analysis was multiple regression analysis. In their result, their first analysis predicting avoidance of expressing strong emotion from social anxiety was significant (beta = .19, $t = 2.35$, $p = .02$). The second analysis predicting fear of rejection to social anxiety was also significant

(beta = .30, $t = 4.11$, $p < .001$) and lastly the third analysis predicting interpersonal chronic stress and social anxiety was also significant (beta = $-.25$, $t = -3.38$, $p = .001$). In summary, they discovered that social anxiety were strong predictors of interpersonal style. It is further supported by the work of Montesi et al (2012), who investigated the relationship between socially anxious person's and marital satisfaction examining the mediators of both variables, these researchers concluded that individuals with social anxiety experiences less sexual satisfaction in their intimate sexual partnership, and as sexual intimacy is the overall quality of determine romantic relationship. Finally, it is in agreement with the study of Cuming and Rapee (2010) and the research title was Social anxiety and self-protective communication style in close relationships. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 15.0.1 was used to calculate descriptive statistics and carry out correlational analyses. Participants used in the study were drawn from a community which ages range from 18 to 74. Total number of 312 participants (75 males and 237 females) were used in the study. Analysis was done separately for males and females. For males, social anxiety was not significantly correlated with any of the disclosure, relationship quality or relationship duration variables, but was positively correlated with depression. For females, with respect to both romantic relationships and close friendships, social anxiety was negatively correlated with self-disclosure, disclosure of negative emotions, disclosure of positive emotions and support, and was positively correlated with conflict.

Unarguably, the findings of this study, when compared with the findings of previous studies, it can be evidently observed that diverse factors are responsible for the findings of this present study. This current study established that social phobia did not significantly correlate with marital satisfaction among married persons in Awka Metropolis. The outcomes signify that marital satisfaction amongst urban dwellers does not have a significant relationship with the variable of interest.

Implications of the Study

The study has implications in both theoretical and practical perspectives. These implications include; Marital satisfaction is low if any of the partners is suffering from social phobia; therefore, psychotherapists and counsellors should pay adequate attention in handling and advising married persons on the several implications of social phobia in marriage, and marital satisfaction.

Limitations of the Study

The primary limitation of the present study is geographically inclined; because, the study participants were drawn from Awka Metropolis of Anambra State only and this can affect the extrapolation of the findings of the study to the general population of interest.

Recommendations/Suggestions for Further Studies

Further studies should be done in another geographical zone of the country for a more corroboration, and relative studies should be done across the younger and older married persons with respect to social phobia and marital satisfaction; and across cultures to ascertain cultural effects.

Conclusion

The study titled *Exploring the Relationship between Social Phobia and Marital Satisfaction among Married Persons in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State* employed a survey research design with a cross-sectional approach. Pearson's product-moment correlation was adopted for data analysis, and one hypothesis was tested but was not supported.

The findings revealed that social phobia did not significantly correlate with marital satisfaction. Consequently, there is a need for further studies to investigate other variables and constructs that may significantly correlate with marital satisfaction among urban dwellers. Research of this nature will be valuable to scholars, counsellors, and psychotherapists due to their roles in promoting healthy human relationships and marital satisfaction.

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