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VALUES ORIENTATION AND MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG MARRIED PERSONS IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study titled "Values Orientation and Marital Satisfaction among Married Persons in Delta State, Nigeria" explores the relationship between value orientation, relational attachment, forgiveness, and marital satisfaction among married individuals in Delta State. The specific objectives of the research were to examine the relationship between various value orientations, relational attachment components, and forgiveness dimensions with marital satisfaction. A correlational research design was used, enabling the investigation of these variables without manipulation, providing insights into their natural interactions. The population comprised 967,693 married individuals across Delta State's three senatorial districts: Delta Central, Delta South, and Delta North. A sample of 900 married persons was selected through a multistage sampling technique. The sample was stratified by senatorial districts, and participants were chosen using a snowball sampling method. Data collection was done via a structured questionnaire that measured values orientation, relational attachment, forgiveness, and marital satisfaction. The questionnaire was validated through face validity and factor analysis, with Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients of 0.885 for the Values Orientation Scale, 0.781 for the Forgiveness Scale, and 0.815 for the Marital Satisfaction Scale. The data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation, multiple correlation, and the coefficient of determination. Findings showed a negative relationship between status values consciousness, societal values consciousness, family values, money values, and religious values with marital satisfaction, suggesting that external pressures can diminish marital fulfilment. Relational attachment and its components (relational anxiety, dependency, and closeness) were positively correlated with marital satisfaction, implying that emotional connection and mutual reliance are key to a satisfying marriage. Additionally, forgiveness, particularly conditional forgiveness, positively impacted marital satisfaction, while self-forgiveness showed no significant effect. The study concluded that prioritizing external values negatively affects marital satisfaction, while emotional closeness, mutual dependence, and forgiveness within the relationship enhance marital harmony. Recommendations include promoting workshops that focus on relational dynamics, strategies for managing relational attachment, and training on effective forgiveness practices to enhance marital satisfaction.

Keywords: Values Orientation, Marital Satisfaction, Relational Attachment, Forgiveness, Emotional Closeness, Correlational Research Design

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INTRODUCTION

Marital satisfaction, a key indicator of the quality of a romantic partnership, reflects a psychological state characterized by positive feelings toward one's spouse and relationship. Various factors, including biological, cognitive, and social elements influence this satisfaction. Research has shown that when negative factors such as depression, intimate partner violence, low self-esteem, and negative affectivity are controlled, negative attributional processes still significantly impact marital satisfaction (Osterhout et al., 2011). These processes determine how couples perceive and respond to events in their relationship, thereby influencing the overall quality of marital life.

Marital satisfaction encompasses several constructs such as global happiness, dyadic consensus, perception of marital life and the partner, satisfaction, and affectionate expression (Graham et al., 2011). The study adopts a holistic view of marital satisfaction, incorporating various characteristics such as idealized cognition, closeness, and overall satisfaction in assessing marriage quality. Despite the importance of marriage as a fundamental institution, evidenced by its ubiquity and centrality to human experience (DeLongis & Zwicker, 2017), current trends suggest that marital dissatisfaction is increasingly common, as demonstrated by rising divorce rates in Nigeria, including Delta State (Vanguard Newspaper, 2020).

A range of studies have identified diverse causes of marital dissatisfaction, including infidelity, lack of love, health issues, poverty, religious differences, and unemployment (Olaniyi, 2015; Cherlin, 2017; Udofia et al., 2021). However, one area that remains underexplored is the impact of values orientation on marital satisfaction. Values orientation refers to an individual's overall attitude towards behaviors, goals, or purposes, categorizing them as good or bad, desirable or undesirable. Values are integral to self-concept and shape cognition and behavior in various ways (Kluckhohn et al., as cited in Ghotbaldinianyazd et al., 2012).

Values orientation, in particular, plays a significant role in shaping marital satisfaction. Values orientations are ranked principles that emerge from the cognitive, affective, and directive aspects of human evaluation, guiding behavior and thought processes in response to common human problems. In both collectivistic and individualistic cultures, certain values like romantic love, gratitude, and forgiveness have been identified as predictors of marital satisfaction (Kazim & Rafique, 2021). These values influence how individuals perceive marriage and family, thus shaping societal expectations and norms around marital relationships.

In Nigeria, marriage is traditionally viewed as an agreement between two families, aimed at establishing familial bonds and promoting solidarity, particularly in child-rearing (Chi et al., 2020). This arrangement often prioritizes family-oriented values, emphasizing the importance of unity and cohesion within the family unit. Values such as romantic love, gratitude, and forgiveness are integral in this context, as they foster positive interactions and promote a sense of commitment and satisfaction in marital relationships.

Values like romantic love play a crucial role in fostering marital satisfaction. Romantic love, characterized by emotional closeness, commitment, and passion, forms the foundation of many marital relationships. In contexts where romantic love is highly valued, couples are more likely to engage in behaviors that promote closeness and emotional intimacy, contributing to greater marital satisfaction (Kazim & Rafique, 2021). Similarly, values such as gratitude and forgiveness help couples navigate conflicts and challenges,

thereby enhancing marital satisfaction. Gratitude fosters appreciation and acknowledgment of the partner's positive contributions, while forgiveness enables couples to move past transgressions and rebuild trust and emotional connection (Kazim & Rafique, 2021).Forgiveness, in particular, is a critical component in sustaining marital satisfaction. Research shows that forgiveness positively affects marital satisfaction by reducing negative emotions such as anger and resentment while fostering positive emotions such as empathy and compassion (Paleari et al., 2009). When couples practice forgiveness, they are better able to navigate conflicts and disagreements, which are inevitable in any marriage. Forgiveness enables couples to let go of past hurts and focus on the present and future of their relationship, thereby enhancing overall marital satisfaction (McNulty, 2008).

Furthermore, values orientation affects how couples perceive their roles within marriage and family. In many African contexts, including Nigeria, marriage is often perceived as a union that serves a higher purpose, such as the continuation of the family line, social status, or economic stability (Chi et al., 2020). These perceptions shape how individuals approach their marital relationships, influencing their level of satisfaction. For example, in cultures that prioritize familial unity and harmony, couples may be more likely to tolerate minor conflicts or disagreements to preserve the family structure. Conversely, in contexts where individual fulfillment is prioritized, couples may have different expectations regarding emotional and psychological needs, which could impact their marital satisfaction. In conclusion, values orientation plays a pivotal role in determining marital satisfaction among married persons in Delta State, Nigeria. Values such as romantic love, gratitude, and forgiveness shape how individuals perceive and respond to various situations in their marital relationships, influencing overall satisfaction. This study aims to examine the nature of the relationship between values orientation and marital satisfaction, providing insights into how different values may contribute to or detract from marital happiness among married persons in Delta State.

Statement of the Problem

Marriage, as a social institution, is fundamentally expected to promote harmony, love, joy, care, and stability; however, these virtues are increasingly absent in many marriages in Nigeria, particularly in Delta State. The researcher has observed numerous cases of marital discord, violence, and broken vows arising from unresolved conflicts, which contribute significantly to the breakdown of marriages. This situation not only affects the couples involved but also has devastating consequences for their children and the larger society, where children deprived of full parental care often seek affection outside the home and may become involved in unhealthy relationships and behaviours. Conversely, the researcher has also noted that some couples in Delta State experience joy and happiness, suggesting a high level of marital satisfaction. This contrast raises important questions about the factors contributing to such divergent outcomes in marriages. Although several reasons have been proposed, the researcher posits that values orientation—how individuals' beliefs, principles, and priorities shape their perceptions and behaviors within marriage—may play a crucial role in influencing marital satisfaction. Therefore, this study aims to investigate to what extent values orientation impacts marital satisfaction among married couples in Delta State, Nigeria, and how it might serve as a critical factor in enhancing or undermining the quality of marital relationships.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What is the relationship between value orientation and its component of status values consciousness (SVC) and its components of societal values consciousness (SVC) family values (FV), money value (M V), socio-cultural values (SV), religious values (RV), with marital satisfaction (MS) among married persons in Delta State?
2. What is the relationship between relational attachment (RA) and its components of relational anxiety (R.AN), dependency (DEP), and closeness (CLO) with Marital Satisfaction (MS) among married persons in Delta State?
3. What is the relationship between forgiveness and its components of conditional forgiveness (CF), self-forgiveness ((SF) with marital satisfactionamong married persons in Delta State?

Literature Review

Marital satisfaction is a multifaceted concept that reflects the overall happiness and quality of a marriage. Different terminologies like marital quality, marital happiness, and marital adjustment are often used interchangeably to describe similar phenomena (Graham et al., 2011). Marital satisfaction is dynamic, changing with life's various stressors and events (Elson, 2009). Several factors, such as value orientation, relational attachment, and forgiveness, significantly impact marital satisfaction among married persons. This review examines the relationship between value orientation, relational attachment, and forgiveness with marital satisfaction among married persons in Delta State, Nigeria.

Relationship between Value Orientation and Marital Satisfaction among Married Persons

Value orientation refers to the trans-situational goals and principles that guide an individual's behavior and decision-making process (Schwartz, 2014). It has several components, such as status value consciousness (SVC), societal values consciousness (SVC), family values (FV), money value (MV), socio-cultural values (SV), and religious values (RV). These components influence marital satisfaction among married persons in different ways.

Status value consciousness (SVC) involves the awareness and emphasis on societal status, family values, money, socio-cultural values, and religious values. Societal values consciousness (SVC) reflects the extent to which an individual or family aligns with the norms, practices, and expectations of society. In Delta State, societal values like community cohesion, respect for elders, and adherence to traditional norms play a pivotal role in marital relationships. High alignment with societal values often leads to better marital satisfaction as it minimizes conflicts and aligns the couple with the community's expectations (Hofstede, 2011).

Family values (FV) emphasize the importance of family cohesion, loyalty, and support, which are critical in collectivist cultures like Delta State. Couples who prioritize family values tend to report higher marital satisfaction due to shared goals and mutual support (Dillon & Beechler, 2010). Similarly, money values (MV) reflect an individual's attitude towards financial management and wealth accumulation. Financial stability is often a significant determinant of marital satisfaction, with couples who share similar financial goals experiencing less conflict and more satisfaction (Azadbakht, 2010).

Socio-cultural values (SV) and religious values (RV) are particularly significant in Delta State, where cultural norms and religious practices are deeply rooted in daily life. Religious values, in particular, have been shown to have a strong positive correlation with marital satisfaction. Adherence to religious practices provides a framework for coping with life's stressors, thus fostering marital harmony (Orathinkal & Vansteewegen, 2006). Studies

have found that couples who share similar religious values and practices are more likely to report higher levels of marital satisfaction (Khodayari, 2007). Overall, value orientation plays a crucial role in marital satisfaction among married persons in Delta State. The alignment of a couple's values with societal, familial, financial, socio-cultural, and religious expectations can significantly enhance marital quality and stability.

Relationship between Relational Attachment and Marital Satisfaction among Married Persons

Relational attachment (RA) refers to the emotional bond between partners and is an essential predictor of marital satisfaction. It encompasses components such as relational anxiety (R.AN), dependency (DEP), and closeness (CLO). These components collectively shape how partners perceive their emotional connection and overall relationship satisfaction.

Relational anxiety (R.AN) is characterized by a fear of rejection or abandonment, which can negatively impact marital satisfaction. High levels of relational anxiety often lead to insecurity, frequent conflicts, and lower marital satisfaction (Ghotbaldinianyazd et al., 2012). Conversely, low relational anxiety fosters trust and emotional security, contributing to higher marital satisfaction.

Dependency (DEP) reflects the extent to which partners rely on each other for emotional support and fulfillment. In Delta State, where collectivist cultural values emphasize interdependence, moderate levels of dependency can enhance marital satisfaction by fostering mutual support and cooperation (Quek & Fitzpatrick, 2013). However, excessive dependency may lead to feelings of suffocation or loss of autonomy, which could reduce marital satisfaction.

Closeness (CLO) pertains to the degree of emotional intimacy and connection between partners. High levels of closeness are generally associated with greater marital satisfaction, as they reflect a deep emotional bond and mutual understanding (Veldorale-Brogan et al., 2010). In Delta State, cultural norms that encourage emotional closeness and shared experiences among couples are likely to enhance marital satisfaction. Empirical studies have demonstrated that attachment styles significantly impact marital adjustment. For example, secure attachment styles, characterized by low relational anxiety and high levels of closeness, are strong predictors of marital satisfaction (Ghotbaldinianyazd et al., 2012). In contrast, anxious or avoidant attachment styles may lead to lower marital satisfaction due to insecurity or emotional distance.

Relationship between Forgiveness and Marital Satisfaction among Married Persons

Forgiveness is a key element in maintaining a healthy marital relationship. It involves overcoming negative emotions, such as resentment and anger, towards a partner after a perceived wrongdoing. The components of forgiveness include conditional forgiveness (CF) and self-forgiveness (SF).

Conditional forgiveness (CF) occurs when one partner forgives the other based on specific conditions, such as an apology or demonstration of remorse. While conditional forgiveness can help repair relationships by providing a clear path to reconciliation, it may also create a sense of obligation or resentment if the conditions are perceived as too demanding (Gordon & Baucom, 2008). In Delta State, where social norms emphasize forgiveness and reconciliation, conditional forgiveness may play a critical role in marital satisfaction.

Self-forgiveness (SF) involves an individual's ability to forgive themselves for perceived wrongdoings, which can positively impact marital satisfaction. Individuals who are capable of self-forgiveness tend to exhibit lower levels of guilt and self-criticism, fostering a healthier emotional environment within the marriage (Fincham, 2009). In Delta State, where cultural and religious norms often promote forgiveness, self-forgiveness can enhance marital satisfaction by reducing internal conflicts and fostering emotional well-being.

Studies have shown that forgiveness is positively correlated with marital satisfaction. For instance, couples who forgive each other after conflicts tend to experience higher levels of marital satisfaction and stability (Paleari et al., 2005). However, forgiveness should be context-specific; forgiving frequent and severe offenses may not always lead to increased marital satisfaction, particularly when negative behaviors persist (McNulty, 2008). Overall, forgiveness, whether conditional or self-directed, plays a crucial role in enhancing marital satisfaction among married persons in Delta State. It fosters emotional healing, reduces negative emotions, and promotes a positive relationship environment.

Methodology

The study adopts a correlational research design, which is appropriate for investigating the relationships between these variables—value orientation, relational attachment, forgiveness, and marital satisfaction—without manipulating or controlling them, thereby providing insights into their natural interactions. The population for the study comprises 967,693 married persons in Delta State, distributed across three senatorial districts: Delta Central, Delta South, and Delta North, as sourced from the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (2022). A total sample size of 900 married persons was selected through a multistage sampling method. Initially, the population was stratified by senatorial districts, with 300 participants selected from each district, ensuring representation from all areas. In the next stage, six local government areas were randomly selected from each district using a simple random sampling technique. Following this, five communities were chosen from each local government area, and within each community, 10 married persons were identified using the snowball sampling approach, where each participant referred other married persons in their community to the researcher. This method ensured a comprehensive and diverse sample representative of the married population in Delta State.

Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire designed to gather detailed information pertinent to the study's objectives. The questionnaire included clusters of items measuring values orientation, forgiveness, and marital satisfaction. Each cluster used scales adapted from existing validated instruments: the Values Orientation Scale, the Relational Attachment Scale, the Forgiveness Scale, and the Marital Satisfaction Scale. All items were measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (4), ensuring consistent data measurement.

The validity of the research instruments was established through both face validity, evaluated by experts in the field, and through factor analysis for content and construct validity. The Principal Component Analysis method confirmed satisfactory content validity for all scales, with percentages ranging from 61.82% to 75.99%. Construct validity was confirmed using rotated factor loadings of the varimax method, with eigenvalues above 1 indicating robust construct representation across the various scales. The scales demonstrated a range of factor loadings, from 0.53 to 0.92, further affirming their suitability for measuring the intended constructs.

The reliability of the research instruments was tested using the Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient. A pilot study involving 100 married persons in Edo State was conducted, and the results showed high reliability coefficients for each scale: Values Orientation Scale (r = 0.885), Forgiveness Scale (r = 0.781), and Marital Satisfaction Scale (r = 0.815), all significant at $p < 0.05$. These coefficients indicate strong internal consistency, confirming that the instruments are reliable for the study's purpose.

The researcher collected data directly, assisted by three trained research assistants. The team collected the data over six weeks, ensuring that all respondents provided informed consent and were aware of their rights, including the voluntary nature of their participation and the option to withdraw at any time. The questionnaires were administered and retrieved immediately to ensure a high response rate and data accuracy.

For data analysis, correlational statistics were employed to explore the relationships between the key variables (value orientation, forgiveness, and marital satisfaction). Pearson's correlation, multiple correlation, and coefficient of determination were used to answer the research questions, providing a comprehensive understanding of how these variables interrelate. All statistical tests were conducted at a 0.05 level of significance, ensuring that the findings are statistically robust and meaningful in understanding the complex relationships between value orientation, relational attachment scale, forgiveness, and marital satisfaction among married persons in Delta State.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between value orientation and its component of status values consciousness (SVC), societal values consciousness (SVC) family values (FV), money value (M V), sociocultural values (SV), religious values (RV), = with marital satisfaction (MS).

Table 1: Correlation Matrix and Descriptive Statistics of Mean and Standard Deviation of Value Orientation and its Component of Status Values Consciousness (SVC), Societal Values Consciousness (SVC) family Values (FV), Money Value (M V), Socio-cultural Values (SV), Religious Values (RV), with Marital Satisfaction (MS).

Variable	**MEAN**	**SD**	STVC	SVC	FV	M V	S V	RV	MS
STVC	23.09	2.19	1						
SVC	13.20	1.52	.16**	1					
FV	13.17	1.59	.16**	23**	1				
MV	9.11	3.13	.04	-.01	.08*	1			
SV	7.09	2.76	.04	-.05	-.06	-.01	1		
RV	7.01	2.50	-.05	.13**	.02	.00	-.04	1	
MS	25.33	2.23	-.10**	-.12**	-.07*	-.09*	.05	-.09**	1

Value Orientation and its Component of Status Values Consciousness (SVC), Societal Values Consciousness (SVC) family Values (FV), Money Value (M V), Socio-cultural Values (SV), Religious Values (RV), with Marital Satisfaction (MS).

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and correlation matrix for various value orientations and their relationship with marital satisfaction. The mean and standard deviation for each value component reveals that Status Values Consciousness (STVC) has the highest mean (23.09) with low variability (SD = 2.19), while Marital Satisfaction (MS) has a mean of 25.33 with a standard deviation of 2.23. The correlation matrix shows that several value orientations are significantly related to marital satisfaction. Status Values Consciousness (STVC), Societal Values Consciousness (SVC), Family Values (FV), Money Value (MV), and Religious Values (RV) all exhibit negative correlations with marital satisfaction, meaning individuals who place higher importance on these values tend to report lower marital satisfaction. Specifically, STVC (r = -0.10), SVC (r = -0.12), FV (r = -0.07), MV (r = -0.09), and RV (r = -0.09) are all negatively correlated with MS, while Socio-Cultural Values (SV) do not show a significant relationship with MS (r = 0.05). The inter-correlation between value components also indicates that values such as SVC, FV, and STVC are positively related to each other, while socio-cultural and money values show weaker associations with other variables. This suggests that prioritizing status, societal, family, financial, and religious values may be linked to lower marital satisfaction, whereas socio-cultural values have no significant impact.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between relational attachment (RA) and its components of relational anxiety (R.AN), dependency (DEP), and closeness (CLO) with Marital Satisfaction (MS)?

Table 2: Correlation and descriptive statistics of Mean and Standard deviation of Relational Attachment (RA), Relational Anxiety (R.AN), Dependency (DEP), Closeness (CLO), and Marital Satisfaction (MS)

Model	Mean	SD	MS	RA	RAN	DEPCLO	
MS	25.33	2.2	1				
RA	15.43	3.99	.38 *	1			
R.AN	6.84	2.05	.36*	.87*	1		
DEP	5.29	3.10	.14*	.38*	.27*	1	
CLO	3.53	1.16	.25*	.65*	.51 *	.18*	1

Relational Attachment (RA), Relational Anxiety (R.AN), Dependency (DEP), Closeness (CLO), and Marital Satisfaction (MS)

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics and correlation matrix for Relational Attachment (RA), Relational Anxiety (R.AN), Dependency (DEP), Closeness (CLO), and Marital Satisfaction (MS). The table shows that Marital Satisfaction (MS) has a mean of 25.33 and a standard deviation of 2.2, while the other variables—RA, R.AN, DEP, and CLO—exhibit varying means and standard deviations, indicating different levels of these

relational traits among participants. Importantly, all the predictor variables (RA, R.AN, DEP, and CLO) are positively correlated with Marital Satisfaction. For instance, RA shows a moderate positive correlation with MS (r = .38), while R.AN also correlates positively with MS (r = .36), suggesting that higher relational attachment and anxiety are associated with greater marital satisfaction. Dependency (DEP) and Closeness (CLO) have weaker positive correlations with MS (r = .14 and r = .25, respectively), indicating that although these factors are related to marital satisfaction, the associations are less pronounced. Additionally, all predictor variables are inter-correlated, with RA and R.AN sharing a strong correlation (r = .87), and CLO showing moderate correlations with both RA (r = .65) and R.AN (r = .51). These relationships suggest that higher levels of relational attachment, anxiety, dependency, and closeness are associated not only with each other but also with increased marital satisfaction.

Research question 3: What is the relationship between forgiveness and its components of conditional forgiveness (CF), self-forgiveness ((SF) with marital satisfaction?

Table 3: Correlation and descriptive statistics of Mean and Standard deviation of Forgiveness, Conditional Forgiveness (CF), Self-Forgiveness ((SF) and Marital Satisfaction.

Model	Mean	SD	MS	Forgiveness	CF	SF
MS	12.39	3.05	1			
Forgiveness	6.97	1.97	.27*	1.		
CF	1.83	.74	.28*	.77*	1.	
SF	25.33	2.22	.03	.49*	.38 *	1

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics and correlation matrix for Forgiveness, Conditional Forgiveness (CF), Self-Forgiveness (SF), and Marital Satisfaction (MS). Marital Satisfaction (MS) has a mean of 12.39 and a standard deviation of 3.05, while Forgiveness, CF, and SF exhibit varying levels of means and standard deviations. The correlation data reveal that both Forgiveness (r = .27) and Conditional Forgiveness (r = .28) are positively correlated with Marital Satisfaction, indicating that higher levels of general and conditional forgiveness are associated with greater satisfaction in marriage. However, Self-Forgiveness (SF) shows no significant correlation with Marital Satisfaction (r = .03), suggesting that self-forgiveness does not directly impact marital satisfaction in this context. Additionally, Forgiveness is strongly correlated with CF (r = .77) and moderately with SF (r = .49), indicating that those who practice forgiveness are more likely to engage in conditional forgiveness and self-forgiveness. CF also shows a moderate correlation with SF (r = .38), highlighting the interconnectedness of these forgiveness-related constructs. Overall, the table demonstrates that while forgiveness and conditional forgiveness are related to marital satisfaction, self-forgiveness appears to have no significant direct effect.

Discussion of the Findings

The outcome of research question one shows that several value orientations such as Status Values Consciousness (STVC), Societal Values Consciousness (SVC), Family Values (FV), Money Value (MV), and Religious Values (RV) all exhibit negative correlations with marital satisfaction, meaning individuals who place higher importance on these values tend to report lower marital satisfaction. The implication is that a strong focus on external status, societal expectations, familial obligations, financial concerns, or religious ideals could create tensions or unmet expectations within marriages, potentially hindering emotional closeness and relationship fulfilment. According to the researcher, this could be because these value orientations shift focus away from the core relational dynamics necessary for marital happiness, such as emotional intimacy and mutual support, toward external factors that can create pressures and unrealistic expectations in the relationship. Consequently, the researcher posits that an overemphasis on societal or external values may detract from the nurturing of personal connections and shared goals essential for marital fulfilment.

The findings disagree with those of Hofstede (2011); Dillon and Beechler (2010); and Khodayari (2007) which support the idea that alignment with societal, familial, and religious values generally promotes marital satisfaction. In Delta State, societal cohesion, respect for elders, and adherence to traditional norms are believed to reduce conflicts within marriages, while family and religious values foster shared goals and emotional support, leading to stronger marital bonds. Financial stability, as emphasized by Azadbakht (2010), is also associated with marital satisfaction, with couples who share similar money values experiencing fewer conflicts.

The output of research question two indicates that higher levels of relational attachment, anxiety, dependency, and closeness are associated not only with each other but also with increased marital satisfaction. According to the researcher, this suggests that deeper emotional connections and a sense of dependence or attachment between partners contribute to greater relationship fulfillment. While anxiety and dependency are often seen as negative traits, the researcher argues that within the context of a secure relationship, these factors can foster closeness and interdependence, reinforcing emotional bonds and enhancing overall marital satisfaction. Therefore, the researcher believes that cultivating emotional closeness and mutual reliance is key to a successful and satisfying marriage.

Studies like those by Veldorale-Brogan et al. (2010); Quek and Fitzpatrick (2013) align with the research finding that emotional closeness and moderate levels of dependency enhance marital satisfaction by fostering strong bonds, mutual understanding, and support, particularly in collectivist cultures like Delta State, where interdependence is culturally valued. However, the research presents a more nuanced view by suggesting that anxiety and dependency, typically seen as negative, can also strengthen emotional closeness and marital satisfaction in secure relationships. While Ghotbaldinianyazd et al. (2012) argue that relational anxiety leads to insecurity and conflict, the study contends that in supportive relationships, anxiety may deepen emotional bonds by fostering reliance and interdependence. This challenges the traditional negative view of anxiety and aligns with the notion that even traits like dependency when balanced, can reinforce trust and emotional intimacy. The findings suggest that the role of anxiety and dependency in marital satisfaction is context-dependent and more complex than previously recognized, emphasizing the importance of emotional intimacy and mutual reliance in building fulfilling marriages.

The results of research question three reveal that higher levels of general and conditional forgiveness are associated with greater satisfaction in marriage. However, self-forgiveness appears to have no significant direct effect on marital satisfaction. The researcher posits that the ability to forgive one's partner, both unconditionally and based on circumstances, plays a crucial role in fostering harmony and emotional closeness in a marriage, as it helps resolve conflicts and promotes long-term relationship stability. However, the researcher points out that self-forgiveness may not directly affect marital satisfaction, possibly because it is more inwardly focused and less connected to the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, implying that forgiveness within the couple is more impactful for marital fulfilment than personal self-forgiveness.

Studies like Paleari et al. (2005) support the idea that forgiveness, by reducing negative emotions such as resentment and anger, plays a key role in enhancing marital satisfaction. This is particularly true in Delta State, where cultural norms strongly favor reconciliation and forgiveness as essential elements of relationship harmony. However, the study's finding that self-forgiveness does not significantly impact marital satisfaction challenges the work of Fincham (2009), who argues that self-forgiveness can improve marital relationships by alleviating internal conflicts and promoting emotional well-being. The current study posits that self-forgiveness is more self-directed and less influential in the interpersonal dynamics necessary for marital satisfaction. Furthermore, the study agrees with Gordon and Baucom (2008) in asserting that conditional forgiveness (CF), when used correctly, can restore relationships and foster closeness, though it may lead to tension if perceived as overly demanding. The study highlights the importance of relational forgiveness in strengthening emotional bonds, while downplaying the role of self-forgiveness, thus offering a more relationally focused perspective on forgiveness within marriage.

Conclusion

The study on values orientation and marital satisfaction among married persons in Delta State, Nigeria, concludes that the balance between external values and internal relational dynamics significantly influences marital satisfaction. Findings indicate that an emphasis on external values—such as societal status, financial concerns, and religious ideals—negatively correlates with marital satisfaction, likely because these values can overshadow essential aspects of emotional intimacy and mutual support. In contrast, higher levels of relational attachment, anxiety, and dependency within a secure relationship contribute positively to marital satisfaction by fostering deeper emotional connections. Additionally, while general and conditional forgiveness enhances marital satisfaction by resolving conflicts and promoting harmony, self-forgiveness does not directly impact marital satisfaction, suggesting that forgiveness within the relationship is more crucial for marital fulfilment. The study highlights the importance of nurturing personal connections and relational forgiveness over external pressures to achieve a satisfying and stable marriage.

Recommendations

Based on the outcomes of the findings, the researcher proposed the following recommendations:

1. Relationship counsellors and therapists should facilitate workshops and counselling sessions that help couples shift their focus from external pressures to strengthening personal connections and shared goals. This can be achieved through exercises that promote open communication, empathy, and shared activities that reinforce their emotional bond, thereby reducing the influence of external values on marital satisfaction.

2. Marriage therapists and relationship coaches should offer strategies for developing secure attachments and managing anxiety and dependency in a way that strengthens the relationship. This could involve creating safe spaces for emotional expression, practicing active listening, and setting mutual goals that reinforce the sense of partnership and support, ensuring these traits contribute positively to marital satisfaction.
3. Relationship counsellors should provide training on effective forgiveness practices, emphasizing the importance of resolving conflicts and fostering harmony through both unconditional and conditional forgiveness. Sessions should include conflict resolution techniques and strategies for expressing forgiveness in a way that strengthens the relationship, while also understanding that personal self-forgiveness, though valuable for individual well-being, may not have a direct effect on marital satisfaction.

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