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RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT AS A PREDICTOR OF MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG MARRIED PERSONS IN ONITSHA EDUCATION ZONE OF ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated religious commitment 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 comprised 1,481 married persons in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone, from which 312 respondents were selected through a multi-stage sampling approach. The Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI) and Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) were adapted and used for data collection. The instruments were subjected to face and construct validation by experts, while their reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha. Data were analyzed using simple regression analysis and regression ANOVA Test of significance. The finding revealed that religious commitment did not significantly predict marital satisfaction among the respondents ($r = 0.109$, $N = 312$, $p > 0.05$). However, further analysis showed that religious commitment did not significantly predict marital satisfaction among male married persons ($r = 0.104$, $N = 96$, $p > 0.05$), whereas it significantly predicted marital satisfaction among female married persons ($r = 0.232$, $N = 216$, $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that religious commitment alone may not consistently predict marital satisfaction among married persons. It was recommended that counselling programmes for married persons should consider individual and gender-related differences in the relationship between religious commitment and marital satisfaction.

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

Introduction

Marriage is an important social institution that provides companionship, emotional support, family formation, and social stability. It is a culturally and legally recognized relationship that creates rights and responsibilities between spouses and their families (Haviland et al., 2021). Beyond its legal and social dimensions, marriage involves emotional attachment, shared values, mutual expectations, and the commitment of two individuals to living together. The stability and quality of marriage are influenced by several factors, including communication, trust, financial conditions, conflict management, shared beliefs, and emotional support (Etele et al., 2020).

Marital satisfaction refers to the degree of happiness, contentment, and positive evaluation that an individual experiences within his or her marital relationship (King, 2016). Fincham and Beach (2020) described it as an individual's attitude towards the marital relationship, while Etele et al. (2020) viewed it as a condition of marital happiness influenced by intrapersonal and interpersonal factors. Marital satisfaction is important because it is associated with psychological well-being, family stability, quality of life, and healthy interpersonal relationships (Khorasani et al., 2017). Where marital satisfaction is low, couples may experience persistent disagreements, emotional stress, separation, and other difficulties that can affect both individual and family well-being. In Nigeria, marriage is strongly influenced by cultural, religious, and social values. However, many marriages continue to face 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). In Anambra State, studies have similarly identified communication problems, financial strain, infidelity, and lack of understanding as factors associated with marital dissatisfaction (Ani, 2021; Okeke, 2019). These challenges make it necessary to examine factors that may contribute to the stability and satisfaction of marital relationships.

One factor that may influence marital satisfaction is religious commitment. Religious commitment refers to the extent to which an individual is dedicated to religious beliefs, values, practices, and teachings and incorporates them into everyday life (Pentareddy & Suganthi, 2015). Leland (2014) described religious commitment as the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual acceptance of a set of religious beliefs and behaviours. It therefore goes beyond merely belonging to a religious group and reflects the extent to which religious principles influence an individual's attitudes, decisions, behaviour, and way of life. Religious commitment may be particularly relevant to marriage because religious teachings often emphasize values such as love, faithfulness, forgiveness, patience, compassion, responsibility, and mutual respect. Married couples who share strong religious values may use their beliefs as a framework for managing disagreements, resolving conflicts,

and maintaining commitment to one another. Lazar (2017) observed that couples who engage together in religious practices such as prayer, scripture reading, and observance of religious activities may report higher levels of marital satisfaction. Religious participation may also provide couples with social and emotional support that strengthens their relationships.

The relationship between religious commitment and marital satisfaction has been examined by several researchers. Jafari et al. (2015) found that married persons who were committed to religion reported higher levels of marital satisfaction than couples with lower religious adherence. Similarly, Hajihasani and Sim (2019) and Hood et al. (2018) suggested that religion and family relationships can reinforce one another, thereby contributing to stronger marital bonds. Alghafli (2021) also found that religious teachings may influence perceptions of marital relationships, family ties, gender roles, and mutual responsibilities, suggesting that religious commitment may contribute to marital satisfaction. Religious commitment may also differ according to gender. Some studies have reported that women tend to demonstrate higher levels of religious involvement and commitment than men (Denzin et al., 2017). Binder et al. (2014) found gender differences in religious beliefs and participation, with women more likely to consider religion important and participate in religious activities. Similarly, Garnett et al. (2015) reported that women were more likely than men to engage frequently in prayer, religious reading, and religious services. These differences suggest that gender may be relevant when examining the relationship between religious commitment and marital satisfaction.

Among married persons in public secondary schools, religious commitment may provide an additional source of guidance for balancing professional and family responsibilities. Teachers who strongly adhere to religious values may draw upon these beliefs when dealing with marital disagreements, family pressures, and relationship challenges. However, religious commitment may not necessarily influence all individuals in the same way, as personal beliefs, gender, family circumstances, and social environment may affect how religious values are applied within marriage. Despite previous research linking religious commitment with marital satisfaction, there remains a need to examine this relationship among married persons in the Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State. The existence of marital challenges such as poor communication, financial problems, infidelity, and differences in expectations indicates the need to identify factors that may strengthen marital relationships. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate religious commitment as a predictor of marital satisfaction among married persons in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State**.**

Statement of the Problem

Marriage is an important social institution that provides companionship, emotional support, family stability, and

social continuity. However, despite the high value attached to marriage in Nigerian society, many couples experience marital dissatisfaction arising from poor communication, lack of trust, infidelity, financial strain, cultural differences, religious differences, and lack of understanding between spouses. In Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State, these challenges appear to affect the quality of marital relationships among married persons. Some couples may continue to live together while experiencing emotional disconnection, persistent conflict, and dissatisfaction. Such marital difficulties may also contribute to stress and other negative effects on individual well-being.

One factor that may contribute to marital satisfaction is religious commitment. Religious commitment involves the extent to which an individual is dedicated to religious beliefs, values, practices, and teachings and applies them in everyday life. In marriage, religious commitment may encourage values such as faithfulness, forgiveness, patience, love, tolerance, mutual respect, and commitment to one's spouse. Couples who share and practice strong religious values may therefore have a framework for managing conflicts and maintaining their marital relationships. However, the influence of religious commitment on marital satisfaction may differ among individuals due to differences in gender, personal beliefs, family circumstances, and the way religious teachings are practiced. Although previous studies have examined religious commitment and marital satisfaction, many of these studies were conducted outside Nigeria, while only limited studies have addressed the issue within the Nigerian context. Furthermore, there is inadequate empirical evidence on the extent to which religious commitment predicts marital satisfaction among married persons in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State. This creates a knowledge gap, particularly given the importance of religion and marriage in the social and cultural life of the people. The problem of this study, therefore, is the insufficient empirical evidence concerning religious commitment as a predictor of marital satisfaction among married persons in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State. This study seeks to fill this gap by determining whether religious commitment significantly predicts marital satisfaction among the respondents.

Purpose of the Study

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

1. Ascertain the predictive value of religious commitment marital satisfaction among married persons in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State.
2. Ascertain the predictive value of religious commitment 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 religious commitment on marital satisfaction among married persons in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education zone of Anambra State?
2. What is the predictive value of religious commitment 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. Religious commitment will not significantly predict marital satisfaction among married persons in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education zone of Anambra State.
2. Religious commitment 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 Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10) and the Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)**.** The RCI-10 contained 10 items measuring religious commitment, while the MSQ contained 16 items measuring marital satisfaction. Both instruments were administered using four-point response scales. The instruments were subjected to face and construct validation by three experts in Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University. Construct validity was established using Principal Component Analysis (PCA), which produced a KMO value of .899 and a significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 12876.98$, $p < .001$). Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients were .774 for the RCI-10 and .714 for the MSQ, indicating acceptable reliability.

The instruments were administered with the assistance of five research assistants, and 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. The strength of prediction was interpreted as weak (R = 0.01–0.39), moderate (R = 0.40–

0.59), and strong (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 findings was presented.

Research Question 1: What is the predictive value of religious commitment on marital satisfaction among married persons in public secondary schools in Onitsha Educational Zone of Anambra state?

Table 1: Simple regression of religious commitment predicting marital satisfaction among 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	.109[a]	0.012	0.009	5.807	0.012	3.602	1	300	0.059

a. Dependent variable: Marital satisfaction
b. Predictors: (constant); Religious commitment

As displayed in Table 1, the correlation coefficient (R) was .109, indicating a weak prediction between religious commitment and marital satisfaction among married persons. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is .012 which meant that religious commitment explained 1.2% of the variance in marital satisfaction among married persons. On the other hand, this meant that 98.8% of the variance in marital satisfaction is explained by other factors not accounted for in this model.

The small difference between R^2(.012) and adjusted R^2(.009) showed that the model's estimate is stable. The SE of the estimate was 5.807 meaning that on average, the predicted score for marital satisfaction among married persons differ from the actual score by 5.807 units. This indicated that while religious commitment contributes substantially in predicting marital satisfaction among married persons, a portion of the variation is unexplained and is likely due to other factors not considered in the model.

Research Question 2: What is the predictive value of religious commitment 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 religious commitment 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	·104[a]	0.011	0.000	5.9011	0.011	1.032	1	94	0.312
Female	0 .232[a]	0.054	0.049	2.443	0.054	11.645	1	204	0.001

a. predictor (constant), Religious commitment of male married persons
b. predictor (constant), religious commitment of female married persons.

Table 2 revealed the predictive value of religious commitment predicting marital satisfaction among male and female married persons. The model p produced a correlation coefficient ® of .104 for male married persons. This displayed a weak positive prediction of religious commitment of male married persons on marital satisfaction. The associated R^2 value was .011 which is the coefficient of determination meant that religious commitment accounted for 1.1% of the variance of marital satisfaction of male married persons. At this juncture, 98.9% of the variance in marital satisfaction of male married persons remain unexplained and can be attributed to other factors not included in this model. The adjusted R^2 was .000 for male married persons. The small difference between R^2(.011) and adjusted R^2(.000) depicted that the estimate of explained variance was stable and reliable. The SE of the estimate was 5.9011. This implied that the predicted scores of marital satisfactions in male married persons deviate from their actual scores by 5.9011 units on average. Notwithstanding, this suggested that religious commitment of male married persons made a small prediction to marital satisfaction, while most of the variation in marital satisfaction of male married persons are influenced by other factors.

Furthermore, the model in table 4 revealed a correlation coefficient (R) of .232 for female married persons. This indicated a weak positive prediction of religious commitment of female married persons on marital satisfaction among female married persons. The associated R^2 value was .054 which is coefficient of determination meant that religious commitment accounted for 5.4% of the variance in marital satisfaction of the female married persons. Subsequently, 94.6% of the variance in marital satisfaction of female married persons remained unexplained and can be attributed to other factors not included in this model. The adjusted R^2 was .049. The small difference between the R^2 (.054) and the adjusted R^2 (.049) suggested that the estimate is reliable. Nevertheless, the SE of the estimate was 2.443 meaning that the predicted values of female marital satisfaction deviated from the actual values on average by 2.443 units. The result showed that religious commitment of female married persons made only a small prediction to marital satisfaction of married

persons while most of the variation in marital satisfaction of female married persons are influenced by other factors.

Testing of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

Hypothesis 1: Religious commitment will not significantly predict marital satisfaction among married persons in public secondary schools in Onitsha Educational 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 religious commitment.

Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
1 Regression	121.480	1	121.480	3.602	0.059	Not
Residual	10118.388	30	33.728			Significant
Total	10239.868	301				

Dependent variable: marital satisfaction
Predictor:(constant), Religious commitment

Result in Table 3 displayed that the variation in marital satisfaction among married persons that was predicted by religious commitment was not significant (F (1,300=3.602, p= .059). The associated probability value of .059 when compared with 0.05 level of significance at which the hypothesis was tested was found not to be significant because .059 was greater than 0.05. However, the null hypothesis was not rejected and conclusively, there was no significant variation in marital satisfaction among married persons that was predicted by religious commitment in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education zone of Anambra state.

Hypothesis 2: Religious commitment 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.

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

Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
1 Male						
Regression	35.930	1	35.930	1.032	0.312	Not
Residual	3273.404	94	34.823			Significant
Total	3309.333	95				
Female						

Regression	69.524	1	69.524	1.645	0.001	
Residual	1217.899	204	5.970			Significant
Total	1287.422	205				

Dependent variable: male and female marital satisfaction
Predictors: (constant), Religious commitment 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 religious commitment of male and female married persons as shown in Table 4 revealed that F-ratio associated with regression was 1.032 for male and p-value of .312, while F-ratio associated with regression was 11.645 for female and p-value of .001. Since p-value of .312 for male married persons was greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis of no significant prediction of marital satisfaction was not rejected. On the other hand, the p-value (.001) for female married persons was less than 0.05 level of significance, therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant prediction of marital satisfaction among female married persons was rejected. Although, male religious commitment did not significantly predict male marital satisfaction among male married persons, however, female religious commitment significantly predicted female marital satisfaction among female married persons in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of the study as shown in table 1 showed a weak prediction between religious commitment and marital satisfaction with the correlation coefficient (R) of .109. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is .012 which meant that religious commitment explained 1.2% of the variance in marital satisfaction among married persons. The variation in marital satisfaction among married persons that was predicted by religious commitment was not significant (f (1,300=3.602, p=.059). The null hypothesis was not rejected and there was no significant variation. The associated probability value of .059 when placed side by side with 0.05 level of significance at which the hypothesis was tested was found not to be significant because .059 was greater than .05. The result of this study agrees with Agu and Nwankwo (2022) who found out that religious commitment did not significantly influence marital satisfaction. However, the result of this study contradicts with the findings of early researchers who found a positive relationship between religious commitment and marital satisfaction, Perry (2016); Davis et al (2018). The findings of this study are not surprising because people who are not religious also marry and have marital satisfaction too. This means to say that it is not only religious people that have sense of satisfaction in marriage.

The result of the findings in Table 4 showed a weak positive prediction of religious commitment of male married persons on marital satisfaction. The

associated R^2 value was .011 which is the coefficient of determination, meant that religious commitment accounted for 1.1% of the variance of marital satisfaction of male married persons. Also, the associated R^2 value for female was .054 which is the coefficient of determination. This means that religious commitment accounted for 5.4% of the variance in marital satisfaction of female married persons. The F-ratio associated with regression was 1.032 for male and P-value 0f .312, while F-ratio associated with regression was 11.645 for female and P-value of .001. Since P-value of .312 for male married persons was greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis of no significant prediction of marital satisfaction was not rejected. On the other hand, the P-value (.001) for female married persons was less than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant prediction of marital satisfaction among female married persons was rejected. This is in line with the study of Perry (2016); Davis et al. (2018); who posited that religious commitment in female married persons predict marital satisfaction more than it does in their male partners. This stand is not surprising due to the fact that females are more emotional and clingier in nature, hence, these traits will spur them more towards marital satisfaction.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that religious commitment alone is a weak predictor of marital satisfaction among married persons in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Religious commitment accounted for only 1.2% of the variation in marital satisfaction and did not significantly predict overall marital satisfaction. However, the gender-specific findings showed that religious commitment did not significantly predict marital satisfaction among male married persons, whereas it significantly predicted marital satisfaction among female married persons. This suggests that the influence of religious commitment on marital satisfaction may differ according to gender and other personal or relational factors. Nevertheless, when considered jointly with assertiveness, religious commitment contributed to a substantial 74.6% of the variance in marital satisfaction, indicating that religious commitment may have greater relevance when combined with other interpersonal factors that support healthy marital relationships.

Recommendations

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

1. Marriage counsellors and guidance counsellors should consider the religious backgrounds and levels of religious commitment of married persons during counselling, while recognising that religious commitment may not have the same influence on all individuals.
2. Religious organisations and marriage ministries should provide premarital and marital enrichment programmes that emphasise values such as love,

forgiveness, patience, fidelity, mutual respect and peaceful conflict resolution.

3. Male married persons should be encouraged to translate religious beliefs and commitments into practical behaviours that promote mutual respect, emotional support, forgiveness and effective communication within marriage.

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