



Emotional-Focused Therapy as a Determinant of Marital Satisfaction Among Postgraduate Students

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates emotional-focused therapy as a determinant of marital satisfaction among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria. A descriptive research design of correlation type was used. The study uses two purposes, two research questions and two research hypotheses. The population of the study was 150 postgraduate students of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. 100 postgraduate student was sampled from three Faculties (Education, Humanity and Social Sciences) from Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria. The first stage involved the use of a purposive sampling technique to select the two Departments; Educational Management and Counselling, Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria. The second stage involved the use of a simple random sampling technique to select 25 postgraduate students from each Department. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance. The result shows that emotional-focused therapy has a positive relationship with marital satisfaction among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria ($r_{cal} = 0.23, < p0.05$). The study found that emotional regulation has a positive relationship with marital satisfaction among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria ($r_{cal} = 0.20, < p0.05$). Based on the results, recommendations were made among others that school counsellors should employ the use of emotional-focused counselling therapy to help improve therapy and regulate the negative emotions of married postgraduate students.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is an intimate relationship between a man and a woman. The marital relationship can be peaceful and as well be hostile depending on the ways and manners the husband and wife want it to be (Olson et al., 2019, Wang et.al., 2021). Peaceful marital relationships enjoy more happiness, effective therapy and understanding one another patterns which enable them to be proactive in conflict management (Beasley 2019; Greenman & Johnson 2022). Marriage is also a socially acknowledged and approved sexual union between two adult individuals (Philips, 2017; Carlin, 2017). It is a unique institution that affirms and supports a distinct sociology in human culture; bridging the gender gap facilitates the generation of life through the fusion of sexes; and promotes the birthright of children to know, to be connected to and to be in a stable relationship with their natural parents (Tesfaye, 2022; Wikle & Ackert, 2022).

Various factors can lead to marital problems among which is the fruit of the womb and finance and the rest (Nana & Zema 2018). From the inception of a marital relationship, husband and wife are wished and blessed with children who are regarded as God's gift to the family. However, if the marriage was unable to produce a child for certain periods, pressure will start to come in from both husband and wife's parents or relatives and friends (Anthias, 2022; Boches et al., 2022; Wright, 2022). This is likely to cause friction between couples and if not managed properly could result in conflict or marital dissatisfaction.

Effective therapy is cemented in the relationship when there is poor therapy between husband and wife; it is bound to bring about conflict in the marital relationship (Abdel, 2022; Sandu, 2019). Marital adjustment is another important aspect of marital satisfaction, this is because its process has to do with couples' performance as one indivisible entity in life, commitment to life, marital life satisfaction, agreement in marital life and manifestation and expression of husband and wife's emotions/feelings in the family (Macabangon, 2022; Upasen & Saengpanya, 2022; Vick, 2009). It was also found that a person's beliefs about marriage and how marital satisfaction was achieved might significantly affect one's expectations and readiness for marriage (Hess, 2018; Nunes et.al., 2022). Findings suggest that a happy marriage is conducive to a long, healthy life (Lazarus, 2011, Bulanda et al., 2016). However assert that Findings also revealed that the majority of the respondents had low marital instability; factor analysis results showed that sociocultural differences, psychological factors, economic factors, marriage-based factors, health factors, sex-related factors, conflict factors and communication-based factor were the major factors associated with marital instability among married persons (Ariyo, 2015; Animasahun & Oladeni, 2012; Esere et al., 2011). Researchers have made efforts to devise means of enhancing marital satisfaction and finding possible solutions to marital conflict in the marriage.

Emotional-focused therapy is one of the counselling approaches which has been researched and found to be effective in resolving marital challenges. A study by Ghahari et al. (2021); Tarkeshdooz et al. (2022) on the efficacy of an emotional-focused couples therapy programme for enhancing couples therapy and marital satisfaction among distressed partners shows that EFCT was more effective than ACT in improving and reducing marital conflict between couples. Also, Roels and Vazahapilly found an emotionally focused couples therapy programme to be effective in enhancing therapy and marriage quality, thus indicating that healthy therapy between couples brings about marital satisfaction in a relationship (Roels et.al., 2022; Vazahapilly & Remez 2018). Another reseerach shows that emotion-focused intervention has been effective in increasing the indicators of marital satisfaction in couples(Aman et.al., 2019; Rostami & Kermani's 2014). Dalglesih and Wiebe

discovers that individuals with higher self-report attachment anxiety and higher levels of emotional control had a greater change in marital satisfaction across EFT sessions (Dalglish et al., 2014; Wiebe & Johnson 2016). Johnson and Moran finding revealed that EFT-C significantly impacted marital adjustment and sexual satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2018; Soleimani et al., 2014).

Previous studies have focused on the effectiveness of emotionally focused couples therapy programmes on marital quality, marital adjustment and sexual satisfaction, acceptance and emotion regulations and little attention has been paid to satisfaction in the marital relationship. Few studies in the area of marital satisfaction were not carried out at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria. This study examines emotional-focused therapy as a determinant of marital satisfaction among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria. Marital dissatisfaction is a great challenge which has given birth to most of the societal problems witnessed in society. In the absence of urgent attention to resolve marital dissatisfaction between couples may likely into the consequences of the following problems like quarrelling, conflict, domestic violence, battery, victimization, divorce and death. It was based on this that study investigates emotional-focused therapy as a determinant of marital satisfaction among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria.

The main aim of this study is to investigate emotional-focused therapy as a determinant of marital satisfaction among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study is to investigate emotional-focused therapy as a determinant of marital satisfaction among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria. A descriptive research design of correlation type was used. Descriptive correlational research is a type of research design that tries to explain the relationship between two or more variables without making any claims about cause and effect (Apuke, 2017; Mohajan, 2020). It includes collecting and analyzing data on at least two variables to see if there is a link between them. The study uses two purposes, two research questions and two research hypotheses. The population of the study was 150 postgraduate students of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. 100 postgraduate student was sampled from three Faculties (Education, Humanity and Social Sciences) from Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used.

The first stage involved the use of a purposive sampling technique to select the two Departments; Educational Management and Counselling, Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria. The second stage involved the use of a simple random sampling technique to select 25 postgraduate students from each Department. The respondents were measured with a relevant adopted Emotional Focus Therapy Questionnaire and adapted Marital Satisfaction Scale (Kansas, 2019; Ursu & Turliuc, 2022). Data collected were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between emotional-focused therapy and marital satisfaction among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria.

Table 1: Relationship Between Emotionally Focused Therapy and Marital Satisfaction Among Postgraduate Students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria.

Variable	N	df.	Mean	Std.	r.cal.	r.Crit.	p.	Remark
Emotionally focused therapy					0.23	0.2	.000	Sig.
Marital satisfaction	100	98	12.6020	1.5914				

The relationship is significant at r -value $0.23 < p. 0.05$.

Table 1 revealed a significant relationship between emotional-focused therapy and marital satisfaction (14.53; 1.30) and (12.60; 0.59). It was also confirmed from the table that there was a significant relationship between emotional-focused therapy and marital satisfaction among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria ($r_{cal.} = 0.23, < p0.05$). The implication of this show that emotional-focused therapy has a positive relationship with marital satisfaction among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between emotional regulation and marital satisfaction among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria

Table 2: Relationship Between Emotional Regulation and Marital Satisfaction Among Postgraduate Students in Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria

Variable	N	df.	Mean	Std.	r.cal.	R.Crit.	p.	Remark
Emotional Regulation			10.8301	1.3205				
Marital satisfaction	100	98	8.6402	1.5026	0.20	0.2	0.000	Sig.

The relationship is significant at r -value $0.20 < p. 0.05$.

Table 2 shows a significant relationship between emotional regulation and marital satisfaction (10.83; 1.32) and (8.64; 0.50). It was also from the table that there was a significant relationship between emotional regulation and marital satisfaction among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria ($r_{cal.} = 0.20, < p0.05$). The implication is that emotional regulation has a positive relationship with marital satisfaction among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria.

The study found that emotional-focused therapy has a positive relationship with marital satisfaction among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria. This finding suggests that emotional-focused therapy such as awareness of their emotions through self-observation makes to avoid strong feelings of hate and jealousy. Also, it has assisted them in expressing maladaptive emotions which may constitute in vivo emotional exposure thereby accepting feelings of acceptance and commitment which have a positive relationship with marital satisfaction. This finding agreed with [Roels et al. \(2022\)](#); [Vazahapilly & Remez's \(2018\)](#) result which shows that an emotionally focused couples therapy programme was effective in enhancing therapy and bringing about marital satisfaction in a relationship. Similarly, [Aman et al. \(2019\)](#); [Rostami & Kermani's \(2014\)](#) result shows that emotion-focused intervention has been effective in increasing the indicators of marital satisfaction in couples.

The study found that emotional regulation has a positive relationship with marital satisfaction among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria. The finding concurs with the response of the respondents that gaining reflection and emotional insights

helps them to integrate the fact that certain maladaptive emotions can occur in interpersonal relationships. Also, corrective emotional experiences are required to modify emotions and only a more adaptive emotion can modify a maladaptive emotion. Most of them agreed that they do regulate or manage emotional intensity when the need arises. This finding is in agreement with Ghahari et al. (2021); Tarkeshdooz et al. (2022) result that EFCT was more effective than ACT in reducing marital conflict between couples. Dagleish et al. (2014) confirmed that individuals with higher levels of emotional control had a greater change in marital satisfaction across EFT sessions.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide evidence for the effectiveness of EFT as a determinant of marital satisfaction among postgraduate students. The study also highlights the importance of addressing emotional issues in marriage, as they can have a significant impact on overall relationship satisfaction. The results suggest that EFT can be used as a therapeutic intervention to improve the quality of relationships among couples and it may be useful for counsellors working with postgraduate students. Based on the findings, the study concludes that emotional-focused therapy has a positive relationship with marital satisfaction among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria. The study also concludes that emotional regulation has a positive relationship with marital satisfaction among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria.

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