

## **Predicting Marital Satisfaction through Self-Esteem and Sexual Satisfaction in a Ghanaian Orthodox Church**

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### **Abstract**

*The study aimed at predicting marital satisfaction through self-esteem and Sexual satisfaction in a Ghanaian orthodox church. The objectives were to determine the correlation between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction, to ascertain the correlation between self-esteem and marital satisfaction, and to ascertain the gender difference in marital satisfaction. The descriptive survey research design was adopted. The target group was married couples. Simple random sampling was used to select one hundred and sixty married persons with tenure of marriage between two years and fifty years. Questionnaires on Larson's sexual satisfaction and Rosenberg's self-esteem was used for data collection. The cronbach reliability coefficient for the instrument was 0.68 and 0.72, respectively. Results indicate that there was a negative correlation between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction. There was a positive correlation between self-esteem and marital satisfaction. There was no statistically significant difference in gender and marital satisfaction. Based on the discussion of literature review, recommendations were made.*

**Keywords:** *Marital satisfaction, Marriage, Relationship satisfaction, Self-esteem, Sexual satisfaction.*

### **Introduction**

Marriage life is a means through which individual comes together as a couple to achieve their biological goals, and social, emotional, and psychological needs and is regarded as a unique human relationship [1]. We live in an era where there is so much dismay, disappointment and indiscriminate breakdown in societal values and systems and even in marriage as an institution. The unconscious state in this era has led to many divorces in Ghana, and the saddest thing is that many people are not bothered and even not aware of what is happening [2]. In the history of Ghana, traditional marriage was widely practiced and has been the norm. These marriages were hard to break because of the keen interest and attention given to the marriage by the elders and councils of the society to foster the growth and success of the marriage.

Now the shift of intimate society from the former to the present lifestyle of solitudes and a state of unawareness has led to an increasing divorce rate in Ghana. In many cases, such divorces are preventive and can be managed and solved [3]. According to [5], Sub-Saharan Africa, including Ghana, has shown an increasing rate in divorce, even though statistics on divorce in the region are limited and unreliable. Though limited, [4] has shown that more than one-third of women in this region experience marital dissolution before they reach ages forty and sixty in their first marriages. In Ghana, the single parent comprises about 30% of the population as mostly as a result of divorce and death (Ghana Statistical Service, 2008). The 2010 population census reveals that female single parent constitute a higher percentage than males, 22.4% and 5.5%, respectively. This implies that there is a higher rate of female divorcee than males; hence this

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signifies how marriages are becoming unstable and breaking down in Ghana. According to [6], the pleasure and serenity that is experienced and enjoyed by married couples are among the contributing factor towards attaining marital satisfaction. Also, [7] claims that sexual dysfunction and interaction that ensures strong intimacy among couples has been one of the major problems contributing to relationship breakdown and divorces. Sexual interactions and behaviour have greater influence on the level of marital satisfaction experienced and enjoyed being couples. It can positively and negatively affect the mental health of couples when there is good interaction or dysfunction, respectively [8].

In Africa, reproduction (thus, the legal means of giving birth) and economic and social roles are tied to marriage. Hence, marriage remains an integral institution of every individual towards attaining social status in Ghana and the African continent as a whole [9]. In Africa, marriage is a universal institution in regard to the lifestyle and tradition of the individuals. According [10], divorce has come to stay so far as the Ghanaian culture is concerned. People openly talk about their divorce experiences which hitherto was not the case. A lot more advocacy on how to achieve satisfying marriages is put forward by some non-governmental agencies and religious bodies. Further, [10] posits that many married individuals are unaware of what to do to achieve happy marriages or relationships. According to [11] worked on determinants of marital satisfaction among Ghanaian couples with specific reference to the Greater Accra region, while [12] did a cross-cultural study on marital satisfaction in Ghana and Britain. Marital satisfaction has a strong connection with sexual function. Sexual dysfunction in marriages has negatively affected couples leading to the breakdown of the union. One variable of interest in this field of work is the self-esteem of the individual pair. Self-esteem determines couple's marital satisfaction. Higher

self-esteem is associated with greater marital satisfaction [13]. Nevertheless, paucity of studies to confirm these findings among couples of other nationalities. Researchers agree that the influences of gender (male and female) and gender roles have been mostly neglected in the explanation of marriage despite evidence in the literature that points to differences in marital satisfaction for men beings and women [14]. Notices of recent happenings within the Ghanaian society have shown increasing breakdowns in marriages among the people living at Adabraka, Accra. Divorces and separations seem to be on the ascent. Several factors could be attributed to this growth. Nevertheless, the lack of marital satisfaction seems to clear the mark. Though a large slew of efforts has been put in by society and religious groups to improve this family problem, there is still the need to study some psychological variables perceived to be fuelling breakdowns in marriages. It is against this premises that the study assumes to investigate a study on marital satisfaction, the role of self-esteem and sexual satisfaction in Adabraka in Accra. The purpose of the study was to investigate the case of marital satisfaction, the role of self-esteem and sexual satisfaction in Adabraka, Accra. The objectives are; to examine the factors influencing marital satisfaction among members of Adabraka, Accra, to determine the correlation between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction among members of Ernest Bruce Memorial Methodist Church, Adabraka, Accra, to ascertain the correlation between self-esteem and marital satisfaction among members of Ernest Bruce Memorial Methodist Church, Adabraka, Accra, to ascertain the gender difference in marital satisfaction among members of Ernest Bruce Memorial Methodist Church, Adabraka, Accra. The hypotheses are there will be a statistically significant positive correlation between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction, there will be a statistically significant positive correlation exists between

self-esteem and marital satisfaction, there will be a statistically significant gender mean difference in marital satisfaction.

## Methods

The study adopted a descriptive design. The target population comprised all married couples of the Reverend Ernest Bruce Memorial Methodist Church. Simple random sampling was used to sample 160 participants of married couples. A standardised questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The sexual satisfaction of those chosen was measured by the Larsson sexual satisfaction questionnaire, which has been proven to be valid and reliable. The questionnaire contains 25 questions with multiple-choice answers based on a Likert scale of 1-5 scores. Scores of 25-50, 51-75, 76-100, and 101-125 denote zero, low, intermediate, and high sexual satisfaction levels, respectively. The self-esteem of respondents was measured using the Rosenberg self-esteem questionnaire which contains 10 questions with agree/disagree choices. A 10-item scale that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self was used. The scale is uni dimensional. All items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale

format. Items 2, 5, 6, 8, 9 are reverse scored. The Lee marital index (LMI) for measuring marital satisfaction was used. The Lee marital questionnaire is made up of 5 subscales that include empathy, sexual satisfaction, doing things together, emotions and relationships, which includes 27 items in the form of the Likert spectrum from totally agree to totally disagree. The reliability of the instruments was tested by means of Cronbach Alpha of 0.7.

## Data Analysis

Research question 1 was analysed using descriptive statistics, thus is frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation. The stated hypothesis 1 was analysed using Pearson Moment Correlation. Hypothesis 2 was analysed using Pearson Moment Correlation. Hypothesis 3 was analysed using a t-test. The demographic information of the respondents was based on gender, age, marital status, and educational level. To analysis, the five-point Likert scale was reduced to a two-point Likert scale. Strongly agree and agree were merged to be agree, while strongly disagree and disagree were also merged to disagree. Table 1 shows a description of the gender distribution of respondents sampled for the study.

**Table 1.** Gender Distribution of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	(%)
Male	80	50.0
Female	80	50.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field data, 2020

**Table 2.** Age Distribution of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	(%)
25-30 years	22	13.8
31-35 years	31	19.4
36-40 years	12	7.5
41-45 years	29	18.1
46-50 years	27	16.9
51- 55 years	31	19.4
56-60 years	8	5.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field data, 2020

Table 2 shows a description of the age distribution of the respondents for the study. Table. 2 reveals that a majority of the respondents, 31(19.4 %), represented respondents between the ages of 31-35 years and 51-55 years, and the minority of the

respondents, 8(5.0 %), were between 56-60 years. The age of the respondents could influence their marital satisfaction, the role of self-esteem and sexual satisfaction in the Ernest Bruce Memorial Methodist Church, Adabraka, Accra.

**Table 3.** Distribution of Respondents' Level of Education

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>(%)</b>
WASSCE	19	11.9
Diploma	43	26.9
Higher National Diploma	32	20
Degree	52	32.5
Master's in Education	12	7.5
Professional qualifications	2	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: field data, 2020

Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents' levels of education. Table 3 reveals that 43 (26.9%) of the respondents were diploma holders. A minority of the respondents,

2 (1.3%), had professional qualifications. Respondents' educational level could significantly influence their level of self-esteem and marital satisfaction.

**Table 4.** Distribution of Respondent's Duration of Marriage

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>(%)</b>
2-5 years	9	5.6
6-10 years	61	38.1
11-15 years	80	50
16-20 years	5	3.1
20-25 years	4	2.5
26 and above	1	.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field data, 2020

Table shows the description of the distribution of respondent's duration of the marriage. Table 4 suggests that many of the respondents, 80 (50%), had married for a period of 11-15 years, while a minority of the respondents, 1 (.7%), had married for a period of 26 and above years. Respondents' years of

marriage could influence their marital satisfaction and individual self-esteem, affecting their overall perception of the stated variables.

Hypotheses 1: There will be a statistically significant positive correlation between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction.

**Table 5.** Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation of Sexual Satisfaction and Marital Satisfaction

Variable	M	SD	r	P
Sexual satisfaction	95.15	26.73	-	-
Marital satisfaction.	113.30	18.47	-	-
<b>Total</b>	-	-	<b>-.298</b>	<b>.000</b>

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

A product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to determine whether there will be a statistically significant correlation between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction.

Table 5 shows a Pearson moment correlation analysis between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction. Table 5 suggests a negative correlation between sexual satisfaction. Marital satisfaction ( $r = -.298^{**}$ ,  $N = 160$ ,  $\text{Sig} = .000$   $p < 0.01$ ). It can be therefore inferred from the test that the more/increase in sexual activities

reduces/decreases the couples' level of marital satisfaction. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there will be no statistically significant positive correlation between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction is rejected. The alternative hypotheses: There will be no statistically significant positive correlation between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction is accepted.

Hypothesis 2 There will be a statistically significant positive correlation exists between self-esteem and marital satisfaction.

**Table 6.** Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation of Self-esteem and Marital Satisfaction

Variable	M	SD	r	P
Self-Esteem	104.52	25.65	-	-
Marital Satisfaction	103.69	20.67	-	-
<b>Total</b>	-	-	<b>.214</b>	<b>.000</b>

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

A product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to determine whether there will be a statistically significant positive correlation existing between self-esteem and marital satisfaction. Table 6 shows a Pearson moment correlation analysis between self-esteem and marital satisfaction. Table 4.7 depicts a positive correlation between self-esteem and marital satisfaction. ( $r = .214^{**}$ ,  $N = 160$ ,  $\text{Sig} = .000$   $p < 0.01$ ). It could be deduced from the test that the

higher the self-esteem of the couple, the higher their marital satisfaction. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there will be a statistically significant positive correlation existing between self-esteem and marital satisfaction was accepted.

Hypothesis 3: There will be a statistically significant gender mean difference in marital satisfaction. The independent sample t-test was adopted for the analysis.

**Table 7.** Summary Statistics and Independent Samples t-test on Gender Mean Difference in Marital Satisfaction

Group	M	SD	df	t	P
Male	1.2483	.11976	-	-	-
Female	1.2826	.10075	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.2711</b>	<b>.10121</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>-2.310</b>	<b>.11</b>

Table 7 presents the results of an independent-samples t-test which was conducted to find out if there will be a statistically significant gender mean difference in marital satisfaction. The t-test revealed no

statistically significant difference at 0.05 alpha level ( $t = 2.310$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) at  $df = 218$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis that there will be a statistically significant gender mean difference in marital satisfaction was rejected. The

alternative hypotheses that There will be no statistically significant gender mean difference in marital satisfaction was accepted.

## Results

The study concludes that; age difference, sexual activities, increasing years of married life and marital adjustment, relationship with God, marital coping strategies, emotional intelligence, exposure to formal education, gender role as male and female, physiological experiences like menopausal/andropause, respondents' parents' marital behaviours, marital attributions, expectancies, and assumptions, income and economic status, norms, beliefs, and values of culture and self-esteem influenced respondents marital satisfaction. If these findings are abated, married couples' marital satisfaction would be significantly improved leading to a better standard of living and marriage life. There was a negative correlation between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction ( $r = -.298^{**}$ ,  $N = 160$ ,  $\text{Sig} = .000$   $p < 0.01$ ). This denotes that the higher the increase in sexual satisfaction among married couples, the reduced/decreased in the couple's level of marital satisfaction. Likewise, the increase in marital satisfaction the decrease in sexual satisfaction. If this finding is effectively tackled, it will stabilise marriages and improve on couple's sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction. There was a positive correlation between self-esteem and marital satisfaction. ( $r = .214^{**}$ ,  $N = 160$ ,  $\text{Sig} = .000$   $p < 0.01$ ). It means that the higher the self-esteem of the couple, the higher their marital satisfaction. The higher the couple's marital satisfaction, the higher the self-esteem of the individual. If this relationship could be improved, the couple's self-esteem and marital satisfaction would be improved. There was no statistically significant difference at 0.05 alpha level ( $t = 2.310$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) at  $df = 218$ . This translates that male and female couples have similar marital satisfaction levels with no significant difference. They experience marital

satisfaction in almost the same manner. If this finding is considered and abated, male and female couples will perceive marital satisfaction as a collaborative endeavour. Therefore, Age difference, sexual activities, increasing years of married life and marital adjustment, relationship with God, marital coping strategies, emotional intelligence, exposure to formal education, gender role as male and female, physiological experiences like menopausal/andropause, respondents' parents' marital behaviours, marital attributions, expectancies, and assumptions, income and economic status, norms, beliefs, and values of culture and self-esteem all influenced respondents marital satisfaction. There was a negative correlation between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction, and this denotes that the higher the increase in sexual satisfaction among married couples, the reduction in the couple's level of marital satisfaction and vice versa. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between self-esteem and marital satisfaction. High self-esteem of the couple leads to high marital satisfaction and vice versa. Male and female couples have similar marital satisfaction levels. Based on the findings of the study, the following were the results.

## Discussion of Results

The study identified a series of factors influencing marital satisfaction which is discussed below. [9] noted in their research on sexual satisfaction in relation to marital happiness that amongst the several factors they looked at, only the age difference of couples has a significant impact on their marital satisfaction. However, the appropriate age gap between individual couples cannot be determined by the researcher due to the absence of consensus. A possible reason for the decline in marital satisfaction with advancement in age could be the fact that advanced age comes with reduced sexual urge and performance [16]. The possible resulting mismatch of sexual desire and performance creates areas of dissatisfaction

among couples who have a wider age gap, as noted by [17]). Duration of the relationship was also a factor that could dictate the satisfaction of the couple. Increasing years of married life and marital adjustment influenced respondent's marital satisfaction. The result does not conclusively dictate whether a couple who has lived longer will be happier or vice versa. Existing research proves that it depends on each couple's circumstances and their interest in their spouse. The work of [10] indicates that most people who get married have a high level of marital satisfaction at the beginning. On the contrary, there has been a decrease in satisfaction over the years. Marital burnout is linked to how couples connect, fix disputes, and solve problems, with couples who are better at these skills experiencing less burnout. Emotional intelligence and exposure to formal education also influenced respondent's marital satisfaction. [18] found that emotional intelligence and measures of marital success, such as marital change and conflict resolution, have a significant positive relationship. The components of emotional intelligence, according to [19], can be useful in marital satisfaction. They clarified that having a higher degree of emotional intelligence aids couples in better understanding each other and controlling their emotions. These couples are better able to control their own and their partners' feelings, and as a result, they are happier with their marriages, as indicated by the findings [20]. Respondents' marital satisfaction was affected by their gender roles as male and female, with the majority of wives in the study showing a reduction in feelings of emotional intimacy. It was clear that a woman with a strong non-traditional gender position and high expectations is more likely to be dissatisfied.

## **Conclusions**

Age difference, sexual activities, increasing years of married life and marital adjustment,

relationship with God, marital coping strategies, emotional intelligence, exposure to formal education, gender role as male and female, physiological experiences like menopausal/andropause, respondents' parents' marital behaviours, marital attributions, expectancies, and assumptions, income and economic status, norms, beliefs, and values of culture and self-esteem influenced respondents marital satisfaction. If these findings are abated, married couples' marital satisfaction would be significantly improved, leading to joy in marital life. An increase in sexual satisfaction among married couples does not necessarily lead to an increase in marital satisfaction. There was a positive correlation between self-esteem and marital satisfaction. A couple with marital satisfaction has higher self-esteem. Males and females have the same levels of marital satisfaction. It is recommended that the leadership of the Church, in collaboration with the Ghana Psychological Association and Counselling Psychology Fraternity, should organize intensive counselling outreach programmes to psycho-educate church members on the various factors influencing marital satisfaction.

## **Acknowledgement**

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## **Conflict of Interest**

The researchers considered the exploration of factors affecting marital satisfaction with the variable's sexual satisfaction, self-esteem and gender. Other variables could be considered in a related study. The use of a qualitative approach to the study could bring interesting outcomes. The sample size is relatively small for a survey.

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