



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND APPEARANCE ANXIETY AS PREDICTORS OF MARITAL SATISFACTION

¹Aneke, Queendaline Chinonyelum

²Omeje, Obiageli

³Ezugwu, Andrew Chukwuebuka

⁴Nwatu, Anthonia Chigozie

⁵Ugwuoke, Uzoamaka Francisca

Abstract

This study investigated emotional intelligence and appearance anxiety as predictors of marital satisfaction. One hundred and fifty (150) participants comprising female married teachers drawn from five government secondary schools in Enugu zone, Enugu State Nigeria, participated in this study. The participants age range were 25- 50 years (mean age = 37.70, standard deviation = 7.26) and were drawn using a multi-stage sampling technique (balloting, systematic and simple random methods). The study adopted a correlational research design in which Emotional Intelligence Scale, Appearance Anxiety Inventory and Index of Marital Satisfaction were administered for data collection, while hierarchical linear regression analysis was used for data analysis. Thus, regulation of emotions as a dimension of emotional intelligence positively predicted marital satisfaction among female married teachers ($\beta= 1.526, t = 2.064, p<.05$). Then it also revealed that appearance anxiety positively predicted marital satisfaction ($\beta= 1.143, t = 2.093, P<.05$), while emotional intelligence and appearance anxiety jointly did not predict marital satisfaction ($\beta= -.010, t = -1.138, p>.05$). The results of the study were discussed; the implications of the findings highlighted, and suggestions were made for further studies. Thus, married women should be enlightened on the need to be emotionally intelligent especially in the aspect of regulation of emotions, in that way they will be able to manage and control their own emotion and that of their spouses, thereby minimizing conflict in their marriage and equally resisting the irrational heat from external pressures.

Article's History

Received: 03/08/2024

Revised: 29/09/2024

Accepted: 12/10/2024

Authors' Affiliation

queendalinnamchi@gmail.com

obyomeje@yahoo.com

andrewzugwu@gmail.com

Akirinja Rehabilitation Centre,

Abakpa Nike Enugu

tonia.chigozie@esut.edu.ng

ORCID ID: 0000 0002 0187 0660

uzoamakaugwuoke@gmail.com

^{1,2,4,5}Department of

Psychology

Faculty of Social Science and

Humanities

Enugu State University

of Science and

Technology (ESUT)

Agbani, Enugu State,

Nigeria

Keywords: *Emotional intelligence, Appearance anxiety, Marital satisfaction and Female Married Teachers.*

Introduction

Marriage as an institution plays an important role in helping two individuals to have personal growth and enrichment from established family life. According to Fowers (1995), Love and marriage are the primary sources of individual happiness and meaning in life. These fulfillment, happiness and positive development is possible only when the relationship between couple is coherent and satisfactory. One of the most important goals of marriage is the will to attain marital satisfaction (Zainah et al., 2012). After marriage individuals seek a life full of happiness and satisfaction; therefore more significant than the marriage itself is success in marriage and marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction refers to the overall sense of happiness, contentment, and fulfillment that individuals experience within their marriage or committed relationship. It signifies the emotional well-being derived from positive interactions, shared experiences, and mutual support between partners. In addition, emotional intelligence has been observed to be an important factor that is required for couples to attain the height of being satisfied in their marriage.

Emotional intelligence simply means the capacity to understand, regulate, and handle one's own emotions as well as those of other people. The term emotional intelligence was made popular in 1995 by psychologist and behavioural science journalist Dr. Daniel Goleman in his book, *Emotional Intelligence*. Dr. Goleman described emotional intelligence as an individual's ability to manage his or her own feelings, so that those feelings are expressed appropriately and effectively. Emotional intelligence is a construct that provides a framework for emotional functioning that psychologists can use to guide clinical and educational interventions. From the standpoint of multiple regression (Gardner, 1983), emotional intelligence is a type of intelligence that is unique from IQ and indicative of personal-social adjustment and overall well-being (Bar-On, 2000; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

When exploring the link between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction, it is important to consider studies that examined the impact of emotional intelligence on marital satisfaction, Salovey and Mayer (1997)

theoretical structure of emotional intelligence includes many positive experimental characteristics that are related to the quality of marriage, for instance, Salovey and Mayer (1997) stated that, by thinking into his own and others' emotions, people can share their emotions, understand and manage the emotional information. Another factor that seems to have an impact in marital satisfaction is appearance anxiety. This appearance anxiety refers to the fear, worry, or distress an individual experiences related to their physical appearance. Constantly focusing on appearance and objectifying oneself can lead to lower self-esteem. This diminished self-worth can fuel appearance anxiety, causing individuals to worry excessively about how they are perceived and judged by others. Individuals grappling with appearance anxiety may face challenges in self-awareness and self-regulation, potentially impacting their emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 1997).

Appearance anxiety is the fear that one will be negatively evaluated because of one's appearance (Hart, 2008). Technology has altered the way people communicate and interact with each other. Most people are on various social media platforms, observing and following the latest trends. The negative impact of technology through social media is that it puts pressure on people without the desirable social appearance. The outcome is that such people will feel less confident in public, for instance, there are some people who are fat due to their genes and not necessarily because of eating disorder and if put under social pressure, they end up starving themselves just to have the acceptable body appearance (Beijing review, 2021).

In examining the relationship between appearance anxiety and marital satisfaction, research suggests that appearance-related distress can have profound implications for various aspects of individuals' lives. Lower self-esteem, altered communication patterns, and diminished intimacy and sexual satisfaction are among the observed consequences. Notably, the support and coping mechanisms employed by partners plays an important role in mitigating the negative effects of appearance concerns on marital satisfaction. Understanding these behavioral manifestations is essential for promoting healthy relationships, emphasizing

the need for further research and interventions in couples dealing with appearance anxiety (Feeney & Collins, 2015).

Marriage is a process by which a man and a woman are legally joined to spend the rest of their lives together. It is an institution designed to bring companionship, strong emotional attachment and procreation to the individuals involved. Marital satisfaction is a relevant aspect of a successful marriage, and various factors can influence it. Often time, people are judged by their physical appearance such as their height, skin colour, face, body weight and quality of clothing. When people start seeing themselves as objects of evaluation by others, they tend to feel anxious while appearing to them. Therefore, the present study investigated the extent emotional intelligence and appearance anxiety predicts marital satisfaction. The focus of the study is to learn ways to maintain a healthy relationship between couples.

Therefore the study addressed the following problems:

1. Will emotional intelligence independently and jointly (self-emotions appraisal, regulation of emotions, use of emotion and others-emotion appraisal) significantly predict marital satisfaction?
2. Will appearance anxiety significantly predict marital satisfaction?
3. Will emotional intelligence (self-emotions appraisal, regulation of emotions, use of emotion and others-emotion appraisal) and appearance anxiety jointly predict marital satisfaction?

The major objective of this study was to investigate emotional intelligence and appearance anxiety as predictors of marital satisfaction. Specifically, the aims were to:

1. Determine if emotional intelligence (self-emotions appraisal, regulation of emotions, use of emotion and others-emotion appraisal) will significantly predict marital satisfaction.
2. Examine whether appearance anxiety will significantly predict marital satisfaction.
3. Find if emotional intelligence (self-emotions appraisal, regulation of emotions, use of emotion and others-emotion appraisal) and appearance anxiety will jointly predict marital satisfaction.

Amidst many theories linked to the study variables, Attachment Theory as proposed by Bowlby (1960) for this research is a well-considered choice. This theoretical framework is apt for comprehending the intricacies of interpersonal relationships, particularly within the context of marriage. Attachment Theory delves into how early interactions with caregivers shape individuals' attachment styles, influencing their adult relationships. It recognizes the profound impact on early attachment experiences how individuals approach and navigate their adult relationships, including marriage.

Attachment Theory classifies individuals into attachment styles (secure, anxious-avoidant, anxious-ambivalent, and disorganized) based on their early experiences each associated with distinct relationship patterns. Marital satisfaction is closely linked to these attachment styles; individuals with protective attachment often experience more positive relationships, while those with unsure attachment styles may face challenges. Emphasizing the role of early attachment experiences in shaping emotional regulation, Attachment theory suggests that securely attached individuals navigate challenges more effectively, contributing to greater marital satisfaction. In contrast, those with insecure attachment may struggle with emotional regulation, impacting their overall marital experience.

The inclusion of emotional intelligence and appearance anxiety aligns with Attachment Theory's exploration of anxiety within relationships. Insecure attachment styles, particularly anxious attachment, may heighten anxiety about appearance and self-worth, thereby influencing marital satisfaction by shaping individuals' perceptions within the relationship. Furthermore, Attachment Theory's longitudinal perspective, considering early experiences and their lasting impact, provides a comprehensive lens for examining predictors of marital satisfaction. It allows for an exploration of how emotional intelligence and appearance anxiety, rooted in attachment dynamics, may manifest and evolve over the course of a marriage.

Past studies such as Gedhof and Eddy (2017) and Thompson and Stice (2018) found that

appearance anxiety contributes to marital dissatisfaction. In the same vein, Anghel (2019) conducted a study on emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction, however, it seems none of the past studies sampled female married teachers thereby increasing the researchers curiosity via the following hypotheses.

1. Emotional intelligence (self-emotions appraisal, regulation of emotions, use of emotion and others-emotion appraisal) will significantly predict marital satisfaction of female married teachers.
2. Appearance anxiety will significantly predict marital satisfaction of married female teachers.
3. Emotional intelligence (self-emotions appraisal, regulation of emotions, use of emotion and others-emotion appraisal) and appearance anxiety will jointly predict marital satisfaction of married female teachers.

Method

Participants

Participants in this study were 150 married female teachers drawn from five government secondary schools in Enugu Zone, Enugu State. There are 6 educational zones in Enugu State, using ballot sampling Enugu zone was selected from the 6 educational zones. Thus, using systematic sampling, there are 30 government secondary schools in Enugu zone and has been serial numbered by the Post Primary School Management Board (PPSMB) every school that falls at the 6th position was selected for this study. The age range of the participants is 25 to 50 years with mean age of 37.70 and standard deviation of 7.26. The participants are Christians and Igbo by tribe.

Instruments

Three questionnaires administered include: Wong and Law (2002); Emotional Intelligence Scale; Hart, Leary, and Rejeski, (1998); The appearance anxiety inventory and Hudson, (1982) the Index of Marital Satisfaction.

Emotional intelligence scale (Wong & Law, 2002)

Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) was developed by Peter Wong and Kenneth Law in 2002 as a measuring instrument of emotional intelligence. The WLEIS is based on a theoretical model of emotional intelligence that includes four dimensions: Self-emotions appraisal,

Regulation of emotions, Use of emotion and Others-emotion appraisal. The scale consists of 16 (sixteen) items that assess each of these domains with four items for each domain. Wong and Law (2002) reported Cronbach alpha of .93 as an index of the scale's internal coefficients.

The Appearance Anxiety Inventory (Hart et al., 1998)

The Appearance Anxiety Inventory (AAI) is a commonly used scale for measuring appearance anxiety. It was developed by Hart et.al (1998) and assesses the extent to which individuals experience anxiety in relation to their appearance. The appearance anxiety inventory is a 10-item self-report scale that examines the extent to which an individual experience anxiety in relation to their appearance. In the study by Hart et.al (1998), the Appearance Anxiety Inventory demonstrated good internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .93.

The Index of Marital Satisfaction (Hudson, 1982)

Index of Marital Satisfaction (IMS) is a 25-item questionnaire designed by Hudson, (1982) to assess the severity or magnitude of the problem one partner perceives to be having in the marital relationship with their partner. Thus, the items of the questionnaire were worded direct and reverse with direct worded items scored as follows: 5 points for most of all of the time, 4 points for good part of the time, 3 points for some of the time, 2 points for a little of the time, and 1 point for rarely or none of the time while the reverse is the case for the reverse items. An established concurrent validity coefficient of .48 was obtained by Anene, (1994) using Nigeria samples. Mean for women: 127.3, Standard deviation for women: 32.2, Mean for men: 102.1, Standard deviation for men: 27.9.

Design and Statistics

Correlational design was adopted as the study design because relationship is sought between and among variables. The statistical test that was used for data analysis is hierarchical multiple regression using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25 software. The choice of the statistics is because there are two predictor's variables (emotional intelligence with four dimensions and appearance anxiety) and one criterion variable

(marital satisfaction) in addition to one demographic variable.

Results

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and Inter-Correlation among variables (emotional intelligence, appearance anxiety and marital satisfaction).

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Marital satisfaction(1)	38.81	19.78	1						
Emotional intelligence(2)	62.01	12.82	-.383*	1					
Appearance anxiety(3)	32.40	10.95	.344*	-.134	1				
Self-emotions appraisal(4)	13.53	4.40	-.244*	.593*	-.056*	1			
Regulation of emotion(5)	14.97	4.84	-.184**	.825*	-.045	.498*	1		
Use of emotion(6)	15.91	4.67	-.223**	.707*	-.089	.097	.503*	1	
Others- emotion appraisal(7)	17.37	3.97	-.437*	.646*	-.228**	.196**	.355*	.353*	1

* correlation is significant at $P < .001$, ** at $p < .05$

$N = 150$

Table 2: Hierarchical Multiple Regression coefficient analysis of emotional intelligence and appearance anxiety and marital satisfaction

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Sta. Coe.	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	32.366	21.054		1.537	.126
	Emotional intelligence	-.169	.336	-.109	-.501	.617
	Appearance anxiety	1.143	.546	.632	2.093	.038
	Emotional intelligence_appearance anxiety	-.010	.009	-.390	-1.138	.257
2	(Constant)	35.988	25.146		1.431	.155
	Emotional intelligence	-.640	.551	-.415	-1.160	.248
	Appearance anxiety	1.293	.637	.716	2.031	.044
	Emotional intelligence_appearance	-.014	.010	-.534	-1.338	.183
	Self-emotions appraisal	.180	.728	.040	.247	.805
	Regulation of emotions	1.526	.740	.374	2.064	.041
	Use of emotion	.687	.769	.162	.894	.373
	Others-emotion appraisal	-.465	.795	-.093	-.585	.560
3	(Constant)	28.916	25.756		1.123	.263
	Emotional intelligence	-.561	.554	-.364	-1.012	.313
	Appearance anxiety	1.560	.672	.863	2.322	.022
	Emotional intelligence_appearance	-.037	.022	-1.425	-1.719	.088
	Self-emotions appraisal	.634	.816	.141	.777	.438
	Regulation of emotions	.098	1.379	.024	.071	.943
	Use of emotion	1.189	.870	.280	1.367	.174
	Others-emotion appraisal	.112	.922	.022	.121	.904
	Appearance anxiety_regulation of emotion	.076	.062	.865	1.226	.222
4	(Constant)	22.747	26.315		.864	.389
	Emotional intelligence	-.625	.557	-.405	-1.123	.263
	Appearance anxiety	1.520	.672	.841	2.261	.025
	Emotional intelligence_appearance	-.039	.022	-1.482	-1.786	.076
	Self-emotions appraisal	.666	.816	.148	.817	.416
	Regulation of emotions	.045	1.379	.011	.032	.974
	Use of emotion	1.278	.873	.301	1.465	.145
	Others-emotion appraisal	.213	.926	.043	.231	.818
	Appearance anxiety_regulation of emotions	.083	.062	.940	1.328	.186
	Age	.222	.198	.081	1.121	.264

a. Dependent Variable: marital satisfaction

Summary of Findings

The result of emotional intelligence (EI) and appearance anxiety on marital satisfaction was summarized as follow:

- ❖ There is no statistical significant prediction of emotional intelligence (EI) on marital satisfaction except one of its dimensions (regulation of emotions).
- ❖ There is a statistical significant positive prediction of marital satisfaction by appearance anxiety.
- ❖ Emotional intelligence and appearance anxiety failed to jointly predict marital satisfaction.

Discussion

This study investigated emotional intelligence and appearance anxiety as predictors of marital satisfaction. The first hypothesis which stated all dimensions of emotional intelligence would significantly predict marital satisfaction. Only the emotional regulation dimension of emotional intelligence showed a significant positive correlation with marital satisfaction. Overall emotional intelligence score did not predict satisfaction. This suggests that the ability to manage emotions effectively is crucial for marital success. The second hypothesis which stated appearance anxiety will significantly predict marital satisfaction. Apparently, a statistically significant positive correlation emerged between appearance anxiety and marital satisfaction. This indicates

that individuals with high appearance anxiety prioritize physical attractiveness towards their partners, leading to marital satisfaction based on appearance. The third hypothesis which stated that emotional intelligence and appearance anxiety would jointly predict marital satisfaction. Emotional intelligence and appearance anxiety did not jointly predict marital satisfaction. This suggests that the effects of emotional regulation (from EI) and appearance anxiety on marital satisfaction might be independent.

Implication of the Findings

From the theoretical implications standpoint, the finding that only emotional regulation from emotional intelligence significantly impacts marital satisfaction suggests a need to refine existing models of emotional intelligence. Future research could explore whether specific aspects of emotional regulation, like emotional expression or stress management, are particularly important for marital success. While from the empirical implications standpoint, this study paves the way for further research on marital satisfaction. Longitudinal studies tracking couples over time could shed light on how emotional intelligence and appearance anxiety interact and change within a marriage. And lastly from the practical implications standpoint, understanding the importance of emotional regulation for marital satisfaction can inform premarital interventions. Programs could incorporate exercises to help couples develop healthy communication skills, identify emotional triggers, and practice effective emotional expression.

Limitations of the Study

The study employed a correlational design, which can identify relationships between variables but cannot establish causation. It's possible that marital satisfaction itself might influence emotional intelligence or appearance anxiety over time, not the other way around. Future research using longitudinal designs could provide more robust evidence of cause-and-effect relationships. The study relied on self-reported measures for emotional intelligence and appearance anxiety. These measures can be susceptible to social desirability bias, where participants might report their experiences in a way that is viewed more favorably. Utilizing additional methods,

like behavioral observations or partner reports, could provide a more objective assessment.

Suggestions for Further Study

This study's exploration of emotional intelligence (EI) and appearance anxiety as predictors of marital satisfaction has opened doors for further investigation. Here are some key suggestions for future research: Employing a longitudinal design that tracks couples over time would allow researchers to explore the causal relationships between emotional intelligence, appearance anxiety, and marital satisfaction. This would provide a more nuanced understanding of how these factors influence each other and evolve within a marriage. Utilizing a multi-method approach that combines self-reported measures with behavioral observations or partner reports could provide a more objective assessment of emotional intelligence and appearance anxiety. Also, moving beyond a single measure of appearance anxiety, future research could explore more nuanced aspects of appearance concerns.

Summary and Conclusion

This study investigated emotional intelligence and appearance anxiety as predictors of marital satisfaction. While overall emotional intelligence did not significantly predict marital satisfaction, the emotional regulation dimension emerged as crucial. Partners adept at managing emotions experience greater satisfaction. A positive correlation emerged between appearance anxiety and marital satisfaction. Further investigation is needed to understand this unexpected finding. Emotional intelligence (emotional regulation) and appearance anxiety seem to influence marital satisfaction independently. Emotional regulation equips married people to navigate challenges, while appearance anxiety might impact physical attraction or self-consciousness.

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