EXPLORING THE EFFICACY OF EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED THERAPY AND RELIGIOSITY ON MARITAL DISSATISFACTION AMONG NEWLY MARRIED TEACHERS IN IBADAN, OYO STATE

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Abstract
Marital dissatisfaction is the most important issue in marital life which has the highest effect on the stability and failure of couples’ lives. Therefore, this study explored the efficacy of Emotionally Focused Therapy and religiosity on marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers in Ibadan, Oyo State. Pretest-posttest, control group quasi-experimental design with a 2x2 factorial matrix was used in the study. Simple random sampling technique was used in sampling 80 participants from 4 local government areas in the state. The respondents were measured with validated marital dissatisfaction scale with a reliability coefficient of .87 and the data obtained was analysed using t-test statistical analysis. The result showed that there was a significant difference in marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers exposed to emotionally focused therapy and those in the control group and newly married teachers with high religiosity and those with low religiosity. In view of these findings, the study recommended that counselling psychologists should intensify their effort to organize conferences on the implications of emotionally focused therapy and religiosity as effective interventions towards reducing marital dissatisfaction.

Keywords: Emotionally focused therapy, Marital dissatisfaction, Religiosity and Newly married teachers

Introduction
Marriage is considered to represent a lifelong commitment of two people to each other and it is signified by a contract sanctioned by the state (and for many people, by God). It thus involves legal rights, responsibilities, and duties that are enforced by both secular and sacred laws. Every culture of the world recognizes some form of the institution of marriage. In most cultures (societies) and religions, neither man nor woman is considered complete, after reaching maturity, without a spouse. Marriage is an important and fundamental human relationship because it provides primary structures for establishing families and rearing children. Biblically and Quranically, marriage started as soon as the man was created and posted in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 4:1-3 and Quran 2:35-39). Adam and Eve being the first two (man and woman) desired themselves so much that they ended up in procreation. Marriage as a union of man and woman abound, emerging literature in present days, indicates that marital dissatisfaction is not easily achieved (Bruker & Kimberly, 1993). This suggests that a greater proportion of marriage is associated with uncertainty and instability. The danger of uncertainty associated with the problem of dissatisfaction in marriage has therefore created serious challenges to marriage therapists. To this, Owuamanam & Osankinta (2005) ascertain that some marriages even breakdown before their first anniversaries. If marriage is healthy and stable and the couples are satisfied, the society in which the family is the foundation would be strongly built. One of the major tasks of modern marriages is to achieve a state of marital satisfaction in the home.

Marital dissatisfaction is the most important issue in marital life which has the highest effect on the stability and failure of couples’ lives (Fisher & Nulty, 2008). In marriage, couples agree to attain two main goals in the marriage having satisfactory marital relationship with the spouse. Although most individuals emphasize more on having a marital relationship and mental agreement are considered as two inseparable components in a successful marriage. Therefore, a successful marital relationship is formed when a satisfactory relationship and mental agreement shall be created continually and interwoven to each other.
among the wife and husband (Ellis & Harper, 2005). By starting the marriage and creating a marital relationship, sexual satisfaction and life satisfaction change into important variables in association with the marriage quality. Marital dissatisfaction is regarded as one of the most important factors in affectionate instability of couples (Fisher & Nulty, 2008).

Marital dissatisfaction, therefore, can be referred to as an individual’s subjective experience of marriage in terms of when their needs are not met, and when the individual’s expectations and desires are being dissatisfied. Factors which contribute to marital dissatisfaction include the way and manner of communication between couples at home, the presence of children, influence of in-laws, marriage relationship, the satisfaction of sexual desires and occupational differences. Others are financial misunderstanding, physical violence, lack of love and moral commitment (Target, 1980). The phenomenon has also created psychological and social instabilities among individual couples which have resulted in lack of concentration in their places of work, break-up, rise in children's anti-social behaviour, increase in prostitution among married women and men and irresponsible behaviour by both married men and women (Ellis & Harper, 2005). Due to the points above, there is the need for the use of psychological interventions to address this cankerworm; this is the reason for the choice of exploring the efficacy of emotionally focused therapy and religiosity on marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) is an empirically supported treatment that arose out of emotion theory and attachment theory formulated in the early 1980s by Johnson and Greenberg. It views emotions as centrally important in the experience of self, in both adaptive and maladaptive functioning, and in therapeutic change. From the EFT perspective, change occurs by means of awareness, regulation, reflection, and transformation of emotion taking place within the context of an empathetically attuned relationship. The goals of EFT are to expand and re-organize key emotional responses; create a shift in partners’ interactional positions and initiate new cycles of interaction; and foster the creation of a secure bond between partners (Johnson, 2004). EFT includes a series of steps where partners can explore key issues that are having a negative impact on their relationship. These steps include: delineating of conflict issues in their core struggles; identifying their negative interaction cycle; accessing unacknowledged feelings; reframing the problem in terms of underlying feelings; promoting identification with disowned needs and aspects of self; promoting acceptance of the partner’s experience; facilitating the expression of needs and wants; facilitating the emergence of new solutions; and consolidating new positions. From a systemic perspective, the task of the EFT therapist is to use the emotional experience of the spouses to change interactions by evoking new responses which motivate reciprocal positive behaviour in the partner (Johnson & Greenberg, 1988).

In terms of research, one meta-analysis review of early EFT outcome studies found 70-73% of couples moving into recovery from distress and 86-90% experiencing significant improvement (Johnson, Hunsley, Greenberg & Schindler, 1999). No other couple therapy research has surpassed these results. Three process variables have shown significance across EFT studies (Johnson & Talitman, 1996; Bradley & Furrow, 2004). They are the quality of the therapeutic alliance, particularly the task aspect of alliance; the depth of emotional processing, particularly in stage two of EFT; and the couples’ ability to move into interactions where they can articulate fears and needs. A key change event labelled a “softening”, has been found to predict treatment success (Johnson & Greenberg, 1988). Research has explored the use of EFT for couples facing trauma (Macleosh & Johnson, 2008), depression (Dessaules, Johnson & Denton, 2003), and illness (Walker, Johnson & Manion, 1996). Overall, there is significant research on this approach, and it has been found that 70-75% of couples move from distress to recovery and that the gains are sustained for months to years following the end of EFT-based treatment.

Religiosity as moderating variables in this study is the level at which the married individuals get involved in spiritual worship and activities such as attending religious services, programmes, praying, fasting and giving donations. Researchers have been investigating the relationship between religiosity and marriage for more than five decades. Much of this research is predicated on the idea that couples who are more religious are more likely than other couples to have less marital dissatisfaction. An initial look at empirical findings seems to generally support this idea. Compared to other couples, couples who attend church more frequently have been shown to have lower marital dissatisfaction, are less likely to perpetuate family violence and are less likely to be divorced (Bahr & Chadwick, 2005; Glenn & Weaver, 2016). Couples who score higher in more general measures of religiosity have also been shown to be happier, to have less marital dissatisfaction (Anthony, 2003; Bugaighis, Schumm, Jurich & Bollman, 2005) and to have more stable marriages (Albrecht
& Kunz, 2010; White & Booth, 2001). These relationships have emerged even after controlling for important demographic variables, such as age at marriage (Call & Heaton, 2007; Schrum, 2010).

In addition, researchers have demonstrated that the relationship between these self-report measures of religiosity and marital dissatisfaction is not an artefact of social desirability or conventional responding (Filsinger & Wilson, 2004; Schumm, Bollman & Jurich, 2015). However, some important issues inhibit a complete understanding of how religiosity affects marriage. Convenience samples limit the generalizability of some studies; for example, the use of parents of students, psychology classes and church congregations known by the authors (Snow & Compton, 2016), and acquaintances of the author (Kaslow & Robison, 2016). Some studies have also used psychological techniques that limit the interpretation of findings (Anthony, 2003; Kunz & Albrecht, 2007). The use of heterogeneous married individuals (i.e., couples married for varying lengths of time, couples with and without children, first marriages and second marriages among others) makes it difficult to determine how religiosity might differentially affect various stages in marriage or different types of marriage.

Despite the effort of scholars and researchers in finding lasting solutions to the problems of marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers, little studies intend to concentrate on the efficacy of emotionally focused therapy and religiosity on marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers. However, despite several studies on married individuals (Animashaun & Fatile, 2011; Adesina, 2015 among others), researchers have not concentrated on the issues that are related to marital dissatisfaction of newly married individuals. Also, studies related to the effects of emotionally focused therapy and religiosity (Filsinger & Wilson, 2004; Schumm, Bollman & Jurich, 2015) were majorly on the enhancement of marital satisfaction and were studied mostly outside Nigeria. The need to use these intervention strategies in the reduction of marital dissatisfaction makes this present study a peculiar one. In order to fill the gaps in the previous study and add more to the existing literature, the present study intends to explore the efficacy of emotionally focused therapy and religiosity on marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers in Ibadan, Oyo State.

**Statement of the Problem**

There is no doubt that the problem of marital dissatisfaction exists among couples in Nigeria. It is also a fact that it is difficult to arrive at an accurate figure for the rates of occurrence of marital dissatisfaction in Nigeria because people feel that marriage is a very private matter. The most serious issue is that, as far as the knowledge of the researcher is concerned, there are only a few empirical studies on marital dissatisfaction among couples in Nigeria. The issue of marital dissatisfaction as it relates to marital conflict needs to be given priority attention because of its devastating effects on families that have been hitherto intact, peaceful and successful. Marital dissatisfaction as a silent destroyer of marriages, need to be examined thoroughly with a view to finding solutions to them since most of the cases are psycho-social issues such as depression and conflict among others. Marital dissatisfaction is crucial and important to every society and national development. The family experiences diverse issues of psychological distress, financial lack to care for the children, communication between parents and children and emotional problems and frustration; resulting in depression, health problem and unfulfilled marital life.

Couples also experience similar frustrating experiences such as social assault from in-laws, the absence of children in marriage and homes that causes separation, lack of proper communication, and a breakdown in a good marital relationship. In Nigeria, marital dissatisfaction is on the increase, especially among teachers. All these constitute a serious threat to social stability in the country. In Oyo State, where public servants are predominantly married men and women and the increasing conflict and crisis of related family issues can extend to offices and working environment, it becomes necessary to look on these issues and investigate possible ways to remedying the problem. Hence, the main objective of this study is to examine the efficacy of emotionally focused therapy and religiosity on marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers in Ibadan, Oyo State. Specifically, the objectives include; to explore the difference in marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers exposed to emotionally focused therapy and those exposed to conventional lecture method and investigate the difference in marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers with high religiosity and those with low religiosity.

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance: HO1: There is no significant difference between the marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers exposed to emotionally focused therapy and those exposed to conventional lecture method. HO2: There is no
significant difference between the marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers with high religiosity and those with low religiosity.

Methodology

The study adopted the pretest-posttest, control group quasi-experimental design with a 2x2 factorial matrix. The row consists of emotionally focused therapy and the control. The row was crossed with religiosity varied at two levels (high and low). The population for this study comprised of all newly married teachers within the last two years in Ibadan, Oyo State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the participants for the study. The participants were selected from public secondary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria. Four local government areas (LGAs) were selected randomly in the State. One public secondary school was however selected randomly in each LGA. Twenty newly married teachers were selected in each public secondary school through balloting. Overall, 80 newly married teachers were drawn but 5 were dropped in the process of the treatment for this study. However, the sampled participants were divided into 2 groups, one group formed emotionally focused therapy class and the remaining one served as a control group. The emotionally focused therapy class and the remaining one served as a control group.

Instruments

Marital Dissatisfaction Scale

Marital dissatisfaction will be measured using the marital dissatisfaction index scale (MDIS) developed by Azize (2013). Marital dissatisfaction index scale is a 25-item inventory. Examples of items in the scale include: “When we quarrel, my spouse helps us to find a midway, Sometimes I want to leave my spouse, I do not feel like exhibiting love to my spouse and We do not have any common topics to talk about with my spouse”. Each item was rated on a 4-point scale (1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree). This scale is a summative scale base on the items with cognizance of some items being reversed in scoring. All answers given were scored and added up to indicate the level of marital dissatisfaction among married individuals, with a high number indicating a greater incidence of marital dissatisfaction. Language validity findings of the original version of the scale indicated a range from .76 to .91. The internal consistency reliability coefficient was .89.

Religiosity Scale

Religiosity scale (RS) developed by Margreet, Joseph and Marinus (2012) was used as a measure of religiosity of married individuals. It consists of 16 items with a 4-point scores in which respondents rate their religiosity from strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree (1). Examples of the items in the scale include: I have the idea that I entrust myself more and more to God, The meaning and significance of my life is in my relationship with God, I believe sincerely, not mainly out of obligation or fear, My faith is oriented to values that transcend physical and social needs and I am willing to be accountable to God and my fellow humans about my way of life. This scale is a summative scale base on the items with cognizance of some items being reversed making a total of 64 points in religiosity level of married individuals. The candidates below 21 points will be regarded as couples with low religiosity, 21-42 points moderate religiosity and those above 42 points will be categorized as couples with high religiosity. The internal consistency reliability coefficient of the instrument according to the Authors was .81. Participants respond to items by indicating their choice of responses.

The validity of the Instruments

For content and face validity of the instruments designed for the study, the researchers gave the instruments to experts in the field of Guidance and Counselling and experts in the area of research. After all these people had given their suggestions and made necessary correction on the instrument, the researcher then submitted them to the reviewers who made the final corrections. This is done to make the instrument relevant to the present year and environment of the participants.

The reliability of the Instruments

After content and face validity of the instruments, twenty (20) copies of the instruments were administered to newly married teachers in Osogbo, Osun State in order to re-establish the psychometric properties of the instrument. The test retested analysis of reliability was then used to test their reliability to ensure that they are consistent in measuring what they were designed to measure. The results from the analysis carried out yielded 0.87 reliability value.
Procedure for Data Collection
The study was carried out in four phases: pre-sessional activities, pre-test, treatment and post-test. At the pre-session, activities included the screening, recruitment and assignment of participants to the experimental and control group. An advertisement was made to request for participants in the school. A preliminary meeting was organised to familiarise with the interested participants and to solicit their willingness to participate in the study. At the pre-test stage, marital dissatisfaction scale was administered to the participants. Participants in the experimental group (EFT) only were exposed to 8 sessions of treatment. Each session spanned for an average of 60 minutes. Though the control group was not treated, they were exposed to a lecture titled “Teaching as a Profession”. The post-test was administered following the conclusion of the programme.

Methods of Data Analysis
T-test statistical analysis was employed to examine the data in this study. A T-test was used to establish any significant difference in marital dissatisfaction of participants in the treatment group and control as well as religiosity level.

Results
Hypothesis One: There is no difference between the marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers exposed to Emotionally Focused Therapy and those in the control group.

Table 1: Summary of t-test of Students Exposed to Emotionally Focused Therapy and those exposed to Conventional Lecture Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally Focused</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>36.46</td>
<td>11.71</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>72.41</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>* S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Method</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>71.74</td>
<td>22.83</td>
<td>7.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at p<0.05

Result in Table 1 showed that there was significant difference between the marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers exposed to emotionally focused therapy and those in the control group (t= 72.41; p<0.05). The mean value of the table further revealed that the teachers in emotionally focused therapy had lower marital dissatisfaction than their counterparts in the control group. This further meant that the treatment had significant influence on marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers.

Hypothesis Two: There is no difference between the marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers with high religiosity and those with low religiosity

Table 2: Summary of t-test of Students with High and Low Religiosity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>35.98</td>
<td>12.03</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>42.77</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>* S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>69.87</td>
<td>9.94</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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* Significant at p<0.05

Table 2 showed that there was significant difference between the marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers with high religiosity and those with low religiosity (t= 42.77; p<0.05). The mean value of the table further revealed that the teachers with high religiosity had lower marital dissatisfaction than their counterparts with low religiosity. This further meant that religiosity had significant influence on marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers.

Discussion of Findings
The result in table 1 showed that there was a significant difference in marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers exposed to emotionally focused therapy and those in the control group. The mean value of the table further revealed that the teachers in Emotionally Focused Therapy had lower marital dissatisfaction than their counterparts in the control group. This further meant that the treatment had a significant influence on marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers. This is in line with the finding of Johnson (2004), who found that the goals of EFT are to expand and re-organize key emotional responses; create a shift in partners’ interactional positions and initiate new cycles of interaction and foster
the creation of a secure bond between partners. In terms of research, one meta-analysis (Johnson et al., 1999) review of early EFT outcome studies found 70-73% of couples moving into recovery from distress and 86-90% experiencing significant improvement. No other couple therapy research has surpassed these results. Research has explored the use of EFT for couples facing trauma (MacIntosh & Johnson, 2008), depression (Dessaulles et al., 2003), and illness (Walker et al., 1996). Overall, there is significant research on this approach, and it has been found that 70-75% of couples move from distress to recovery and that the gains are sustained for months to years following the end of EFT-based treatment.

The result in table 2 showed that there was a significant difference in marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers with high religiosity and those with low religiosity. The mean value of the table further revealed that the teachers with high religiosity had lower marital dissatisfaction than their counterparts with low religiosity. This further meant that religiosity had a significant influence on marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers. Researchers have been investigating the relationship between religiosity and marriage for more than five decades. Much of this research is predicated on the idea that couples who are more religious are more likely than other couples to have less marital dissatisfaction. An initial look at empirical findings seems to generally support this idea. Compared to other couples, couples who attend church more frequently have been shown to have lower marital dissatisfaction are less likely to perpetuate family violence and to be divorced (Bahr & Chadwick, 2005; Glenn & Weaver, 2016). Couples who score higher in more general measures of religiosity have also been shown to be happier and to have less marital dissatisfaction (Anthony, 2003; Bugaighis et al., 2005) and to have more stable marriages (Albrecht & Kunz, 2010; White & Booth, 2001). These relationships have emerged even after controlling for important demographic variables, such as age at marriage (Call & Heaton, 2007; Schrum, 2010).

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings in this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Counselling/Educational psychologists should intensify their effort to organize seminars on the implications of emotionally focused therapy as effective interventions for reducing marital dissatisfaction among newly married teachers.
2. Counsellors and other stakeholders in the school system are to be trained on how to improve on the religiosity of newly married teachers. This will serve as collaborative efforts to assist in improving marital dissatisfaction of newly married teachers.
3. Counsellors and preservice counsellors should be encouraged and trained in the effective usage of emotionally focused therapy. This will make the counsellors to adopt effective skills and principles in solving clients’ problems and invariably reduce marital dissatisfaction.
4. There is the need for the enlightenment of newly married teachers on the need to reduce their marital dissatisfaction through EFT as proved in this study.
5. The curriculum planners should try as much as possible to include in the scheme of guidance and counselling, training on emotionally focused therapy. This will help in improving their marital satisfaction.

**Conclusion**

The need to evaluate the marital dissatisfaction of newly married teachers is of paramount importance in the practice of professional counselling. An appraisal of counselling competence is necessary to understand the counselling process and ascertain why and under what conditions counsellors are effective. Based on the findings of this study, marital dissatisfaction of newly married Nigerian teachers due to some factors should not continue indefinitely. There is hope that with the improvement of marital satisfaction, the situation can be changed for the better. The study discovered that EFT and religiosity had a significant influence on marital dissatisfaction of newly married teachers. As such, it is very crucial to improve these factors to eradicate the persistent occurrence of marital dissatisfaction not only in Oyo State but also in other States in Nigeria.

**References**


