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Influence of Internet Addiction, Self Concept and Neuroticism on Marital Conflict.

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Abstract

In our contemporary time, the conflict experienced in marital relationship has become a global phenomenon affecting members of every social class. The study examined the influence of internet addiction, self-concept and neuroticism on marital conflict in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State. Three hundred and four (304) participants (181 males and 123 females) were selected from married people in five archdeaconries in Obio/Akpor L.G.A. These participants were selected using multi stage sampling technique. The criterion sampling technique was used which included being married for at least one year, currently staying with their spouses, of Christian faith etc. Internet addiction test (Young, 1997), semantic differential self-concept scale (Ezeilo, 1982), Neuroticism subscale of the Big five personality inventory (John, Donahue & Kentle, 1991) and marital conflict behavior checklist (Omeje, 1998) were the instruments used in the study. The study utilized a cross-sectional design and a 3 way (2x2x2) analysis of variance (ANOVA). Results revealed that neuroticism significantly influenced marital conflict ($F(1,296) = 15.01, P < .01$) and there was an interaction effect between internet addiction and self concept on marital conflict ($F(1,296) = 7.55, P < .01$). Recommendations were made in the light of the findings indicating that practical applications should be applied managing marital conflict.

Introduction

Marriage as an interpersonal relationship existing between a man and a woman which aids in promoting growth and development in marital life (Idokwa, 2002) has been an issue of concern globally especially in the area of marital conflict. Marital conflict is the process of conflict arising between the two parties in a marriage, which could indicate sexual disagreement, child minding differences, temperamental differences and even religious conflict of interest (Psychology Dictionary, 2013). It is an ill-wind that blows no one any good. As a result of the role the family unit plays in the overall development of the society, the problem of marital conflict calls for urgent attention because when the home, which forms the cradle of the society is settled, the society itself is at peace (Gabb & Fink, 2015).

Research by various scholars show that conflict behaviour may influence couple's marriages. According to behavioural theories of marriage, destructive behaviours result in negative evaluations of marriage and declines in marital satisfaction and stability, whereas constructive behaviours lead to improvement in evaluations of marriages and increases marital satisfaction and stability (Mgbenkedi, 2014).

Among the many factors that have been associated with marital conflict is internet addiction (Lenhart, Duggan & Smith, 2014). Internet addiction is a recent and increasing recognized

disorder that has received much attention globally (Stephanie, Racheal & Henri, 2014). The rate at which people engage in the use of the internet is so alarming including married people. Internet addiction is the inability of someone to control his or her use of the internet which eventually may lead to some psychological and social problems in the individual's life (Okwaraji, Aguwa, Onyebueke and Sheobi-Eze, 2015) has damaging effect on interpersonal relationships and can lead to conflict among married people as they are likely to experience problems in their intimate relationship with diminished time spent together (Young, Griffin-Shelley, Cooper, Mara & Buchanam, 2000; Weinstein & Lejoyeux, 2010).

Another variable of interest is self concept which is seen as how we think of ourselves and how we think, behave and act out our various life roles (Maesineero, 2012). Self concept is a collection of beliefs about one's nature, unique qualities and typical behavior (Ani, 2017). An individual's self concept may change with time as reassessment occurs, which may lead to identity crises in extreme cases (Demidenko, Tasca, Kennedy & Bissada, 2010). Marital conflict and self concept has a negative correlation (Peleg, 2008) as increase in self concept brings about a decrease in marital conflict in both gender. For example, married people correspond to hopes, fears, standards, goals, and threats in their marriage, of which positive evaluation is formed, the interpersonal relationship with each other remain cordial; but when the negative evaluation is formed, the self concept turns low and the marriage in conflict. However, when there is low self concept in the spouse, personality is affected.

Neuroticism is another factor that may predict marital conflict (Mayer, 2014b). Neuroticism is considered by many to be one of the most significant dimensions of personality. Alongside four other traits openness, conscientiousness, extraversion and agreeableness, it is sighted as one of the "Big Five" personality factors (Heady, Muffels & Wagner, 2010). Each spouse brings into a newly created union a legacy of his or her background (Lebowitz, 2016a). Individual traits and behaviours also affect spouse's satisfaction with marriage (Uher & Visalberghi, 2016). Neuroticism is a high order personality related to addiction, irrational thinking, poor impulse control, worry, high negative affect (Costa & McCrea, 1992). It is a strong predictor of psychological problems, especially those related to marital conflict (Timothy & Paula, 2016).

Extensive literature was reviewed on the causes of marital conflict and different factors were seen to be the cause of marital conflict. Many of these literatures were obtained mostly in the western studies and may not be applicable in Nigeria and African countries. Substantial research in this area needs to be carried out in Nigeria to cross validate these findings. The high rate of divorce and marital conflict has been an alarming issue in the southern part of Nigeria. It has been observed that children, youths and adults engaging in criminal activities are in most cases products of this faulty background (marital conflict). It is also observed by the researcher that due to this menace, individuals from such homes are exposed at a very young age to such ills as a result of destabilized homes. There is equally little or no research done on this area of study in this geographical area. The objective of this study is to examine the influence of internet addiction, self concept and neuroticism on marital conflict among married people in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State. The study will provide answers to know if;

there will be any influence of internet addiction on marital conflict, self concept on marital conflict, neuroticism on marital conflict, a joint interaction of internet addiction and self concept on marital conflict, self concept and neuroticism on marital conflict and internet addiction, self concept and neuroticism on marital conflict.

In this study, marital conflict is defined as unresolved conflict, misunderstanding, and quarreling, fighting or possible separation in marriage as measured by scores on marital conflict behavior checklist (MCBC) by Omeje (1998). Internet addiction is the addictive use of the internet by married people as measured by scores on the internet addictive test (IAT) developed by Young (1997). Self concept is the way married people see or perceive themselves as seen in two dimensions: low self concept (decline in the level of self confidence) or high self concept (maintaining a steady and stable confidence) as measured by scores in the semantic differential self concept scale modified by Ezeilo (1982) while Neuroticism is the tendency to focus on the negative aspects of self which is characterized by anxiety, sadness, irritability, and nervous tension as measured by scores on the neuroticism subscale of the big five personality inventory by John, Donahue & Kentle (1991).

Married people experiencing marital conflict are affected by a wide range of variables including ethnicity, gender, age, religion, level of education and personality. Married people have distinctive characteristics of personality that make them view the world and their life experiences differently. Taking these differences into consideration can help clinicians to recognize the individual differences existing in them seriously (Helsper & Whitty, 2010).

Participants.

The participants for this study were drawn from five archdeaconries of the Anglican diocese of Niger Delta North in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State. 304 participants were randomly selected using simple random and criterion techniques. They were made up of 181 males and 123 females, 71 participants were from Ikwerre ethnicity, 70 were of Igbo ethnicity, 48 were of Yoruba ethnicity, 48 were of Ijaw ethnicity while 67 belongs to Kalabari ethnic groups. Their ages range from 25 years to 59 years with 39.3 as the mean age.

Instruments

The measuring instruments used in this research included the Internet Addiction Test (IAT; Young, 1997), the Semantic Differential Self Concept Scale (SDSCS; Ezeilo, 1982), the Neuroticism Subscale of the Big Five Inventory (N-BFI; John et al, 1991) and the Marital Conflict Behaviour Checklist (MCBC; Omeje, 1998).

(a) Internet Addiction Test (IAT) - The IAT (Young, 1997) is a 20-item internet addiction test developed by Young (1997) used to assess the addictive use of the internet by married people. This instrument has three dimensions: mild, moderate and severe levels and sample item includes: "How often do you find that you stay online longer than you intended?" The response is patterned on five-point Likert-type format ranging from "Always" to "Rarely". Respondents are expected to indicate the extent to which they agree with the list statements regarding internet addiction. Internal reliability coefficients of .72 and a convergent validity of .70 were obtained by the developer. For Nigerian sample, Okwaraji et. al (2015) reported internal reliability coefficients of .73 and a concurrent validity of .88. The researcher in a pilot study

obtained a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of .71 with a sample of 57 married people and mean of the respondents of 59.98.

(b) Semantic Differential Self Concept Scale (SDSCS)- The SDSCS (Ezeilo, 1982) is a measure for self concept developed by Ezeilo (1982). The 54 item scale measures how various people see themselves by having them judge themselves against series of descriptive scale. Sample items include, “healthy.....unhealthy”, “unattractive....attractive”. This instrument is on a 7-point scale, 1 at the negative end pole and 7 at the positive end. The developer reported reliability Cronbach alpha of .70 and .64. A pilot study conducted by the researcher yielded a Cronbach alpha of .83 with 57 married people and a mean of 24.65.

(c) Neuroticism Subscale of the Big Five Inventory (N-BFI)- The N-BFI (John et. al, 1991) is a subscale of 8 items of neuroticism components drawn from 44-item designed to measure five dimensions of personality namely; Extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience. John et al (1991) provided the original psychometric properties for American samples of 24.00 on neuroticism while Ume (2004) earlier provided psychometric properties for Nigerian sample M (n=60) 23.43 and F (n=60) 24.48 for neuroticism. A pilot study by the researcher yielded a Cronbach alpha of .89 and mean of 19.14 for neuroticism sub scale of BFI which has only 8 items.

(d) Marital Conflict Behaviour Checklist (MCBC) - The MCBC (Omeje, 1998) was designed to measure the behavior spouses usually engage in during conflict. It is a 37-item scale with 4-point response scale 1= rarely, 2=occasionally, 3=often and 4= always. The psychometric properties are .94 reliability coefficient and concurrent reliability coefficient of .80. The researcher yielded a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of .67, N=57, mean= 101.39.

Procedure

The researcher obtained introductory letter from the Head of Psychology department, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, which was addressed to the clergymen in charge of the selected five churches from the archdeaconries in the Anglican diocese of Niger Delta North of Rivers state. The church clerks were recruited and trained as research assistants to administer and collect copies of the questionnaires in all the churches. Participants who met the criteria for selection using criterion sampling technique were selected. Selected married people were drawn from each of the five archdeaconries making use of multistage sampling technique for effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002) and copies of the questionnaires administered. A total of 400 copies of the questionnaires were distributed. 338 were filled and returned representing 84.5%, 34 copies were discarded due to inappropriate filling and lack of inclusion criteria, while 304 representing 76% were used for analysis.

Design and Statistics

The design for this study was a cross sectional survey research design, descriptive statistics and three-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) F-test were used for statistical analysis through SPSS version 20.

Results

Table 1: Summary Table of Means and Standard Deviation on Internet Addiction, \times Self-Concept \times Neuroticism on Marital Conflict among Married People.

Internet Addiction	Self-Concept	Neuroticism	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	
Addiction	Low Self-concept	Not Neurotic	93.6140	31.78148	57	
		Neurotic	100.9759	32.41310	83	
		Total	97.9786	32.24735	140	
	High Self-Concept	Not Neurotic	74.0000	23.64502	47	
		Neurotic	94.0526	26.07676	38	
		Total	82.9647	26.57579	85	
	Total	Total	Not Neurotic	84.7500	29.91761	104
			Neurotic	98.8017	30.62668	121
			Total	92.3067	31.03813	225
	No Addiction	Low Self-concept	Not Neurotic	75.1364	32.23913	22
			Neurotic	99.6316	39.75230	19
			Total	86.4878	37.54605	41
High Self-Concept		Not Neurotic	91.0000	25.76820	20	
		Neurotic	101.4444	31.26024	18	
		Total	95.9474	28.59876	38	
Total		Total	Not Neurotic	82.6905	30.07267	42
			Neurotic	100.5135	35.38959	37
			Total	91.0380	33.66785	79
Total		Low Self-concept	Not Neurotic	88.4684	32.77931	79
			Neurotic	100.7255	33.68790	102
			Total	95.3757	33.75734	181
	High Self-Concept	Not Neurotic	79.0746	25.34269	67	
		Neurotic	96.4286	27.77825	56	
		Total	86.9756	27.75994	123	
	Total	Total	Not Neurotic	84.1575	29.87299	146
			Neurotic	99.2025	31.69616	158
			Total	91.9770	31.69069	304

The above table shows the mean and standard deviation of CGPA, addiction and no addiction; high and low self concept; neurotic and not neurotic married people. The CGPA mean= 91.98, SD=31.69. Internet addicted mean= 92.31, Not internet addicted mean= 91.04, low self concept mean=95.38, high self concept mean=86.98, not neurotic mean=84.16 while neurotic mean=99.20. Comparing the mean scores of the respondents show index of married people who are neurotic obtained the highest group of 101.44 while index of CGPA has the lowest with a value of 74.00.

Table II: Summary table of 3-way ANOVA *F*-test on influence of internet addiction \times self-concept \times neuroticism on marital conflict

Influence of Internet Addiction

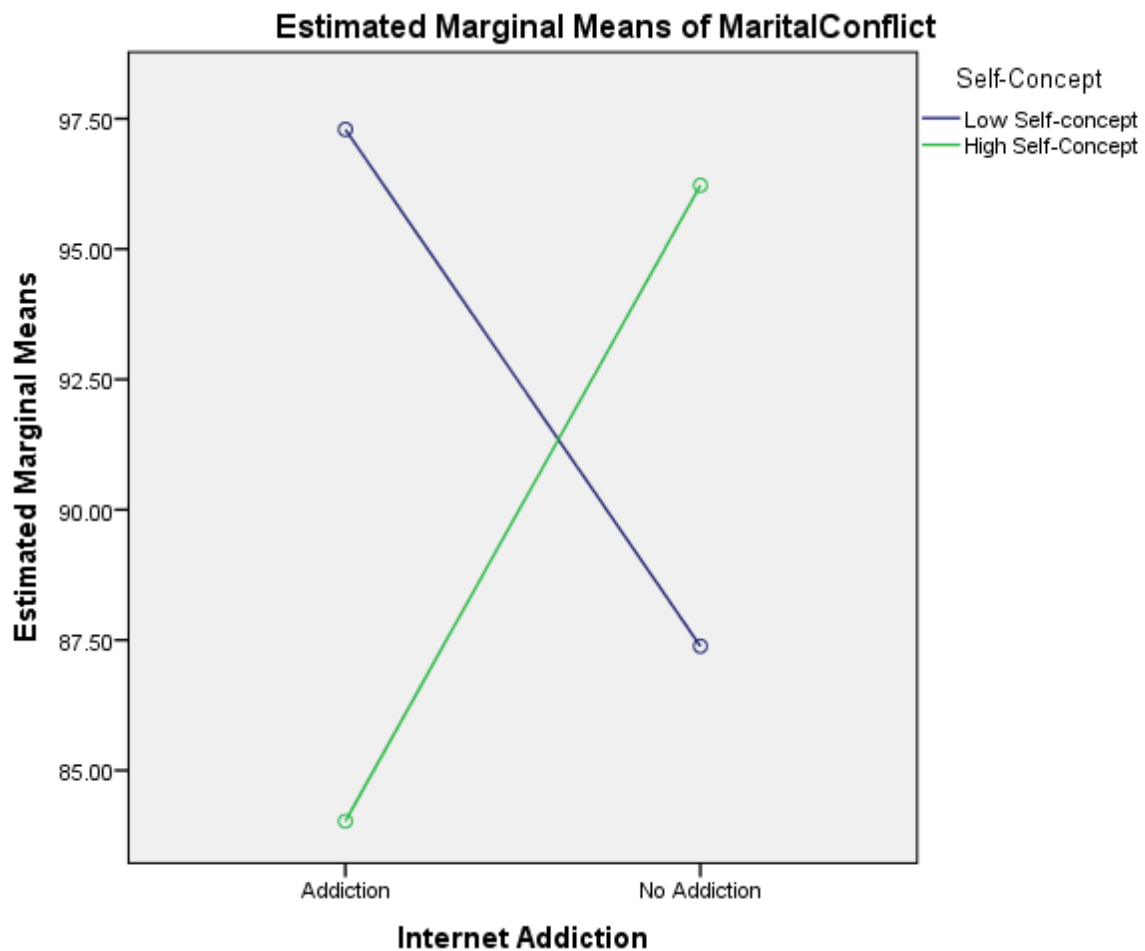
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	31212.027 ^a	7	4458.861	4.833	.000
Intercept	1896861.529	1	1896861.529	2055.986	.000
Internet Addiction	74.364	1	74.364	.081	.777
Self-Concept	279.582	1	279.582	.303	.582
Personality Trait	13845.013	1	13845.013	15.006	.000
Internet Addiction * Self-Concept	6961.108	1	6961.108	7.545	.006
Internet Addiction * Neuroticism	201.648	1	201.648	.219	.640
Self-Concept * Neuroticism	6.586	1	6.586	.007	.933
Internet Addiction * Self-Concept * Neuroticism	2546.450	1	2546.450	2.760	.098
Error	273090.812	296	922.604		
Total	2876071.000	304			
Corrected Total	304302.839	303			

a. R Squared = .103 (Adjusted R Squared = .081)

b. Computed using alpha = .05

ANOVA in table III above shows that married people who were neurotic significantly exhibited marital conflict more than those who were not neurotic.

Figure I. Graph of the effect of self-esteem and internet addiction



The estimated mean of marital conflict shows that there was a significant interaction between internet addiction and self concept in influencing the exhibition of marital conflict in married people.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that neuroticism significantly influenced married people's manifestation of marital conflict with neurotic married people having more marital conflict than married people who are not neurotic counterpart. This indicates that the third hypothesis was accepted. The outcome of this study was found to be in agreement with separate studies by (Claxton, Rourke, and Smith 2012; Shiota & Levenson, 2007; Jarareh & Temadi, 2008) which agree that people who manifest neuroticism, create persistent vulnerabilities in marital relationships and increase the negative emotion in either or both partners which tend to be toxic to one's marriage. This result is in accordance with Drake, Morris & Davis (2017) which revealed that married people high in neuroticism are more likely to report inadequate and unhelpful support from their spouses especially in the areas of finance, chores, sexual

gratification etc. These findings may suggest that neurotic spouses without adequate support may experience conflict more due to their volatile nature. Due to negative perception of self and others, they may also complain of relatives like in-laws not supporting in running errands for them always while those without neuroticism tend to think positively which predisposes them to see their partners as supportive and in turn help in building their relationship stronger.

The last table revealed that, internet addiction and self concept jointly contributed to the exhibition of marital conflict. At internet addiction condition, people with low self concept exhibited marital conflict more than those with high self concept. At not internet addicted condition, people with high self concept exhibited marital conflict more than those with low self concept. This finding suggests that internet addiction and self concept influenced marital conflict. The result suggested that to deal with marital conflict, married people who are internet addicted ought to develop high self concept as those with low self concept suffer more marital conflict. Again, the result opined that those who are not addicted and have low self concept experience marital conflict less than those who have high self concept. This finding is in line with the work done by Judge et al., (2002) who found that high neuroticism is related to difficulties in life, including addiction, low self concept and unhealthy adjustment to life's challenge which affects relationship in married people. Possible explanation being that individuals who are always irritated, easily stressed by happenings around them also perceive themselves as failures in their marriage resort to internet addiction due to low self concept to pacify themselves by showing off online (Fisher & McNulty, 2008). This finding may suggest that the constant usage of the internet by such a spouse with low self concept may bring about arguments, quarrels and disagreement between the two which triggers conflict in the home as no spouse would condone seeing the partner abstaining from his/her responsibility in the home.

Conclusion

This research investigated the influence of internet addiction, self concept and neuroticism on marital conflict. This study through due process of empirical research asserts that marital conflict is an issue of concern among married people in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State as married people with neuroticism are exposed to marital conflict. Also, there are married people with no addiction of the internet but with high self concept who are prone to experience marital conflict.

Recommendations

Since this study has indicated reliable relationship between neuroticism and marital conflict, most married people should be encouraged to take personality tests and close monitoring should be done for people who score very high on neuroticism. These set of people according

to research are prone to marital conflict than others. Secondly, since this research has also established an interaction between internet addiction and self concept in influencing married people's exhibition of marital conflict, it is pertinent to note that young married people should be educated to ascertain their level of similarities and differences in the exhibition of marital conflict. First limitation is the scope of study, the sample of the study was not large representatives of the married people in Obio/Akpor local government area as samples were drawn from one denomination. Future research should employ a larger sample from other denomination so that results can be generalized. Another limitation is that the study employ a cross-sectional survey design, which cannot affirm causal effect relationship. A mixture method can help to elicit quality data to address the objectives of the study barrier. Given these limitations, the results provide strong empirical evidence for the literature in terms of correlations between neuroticism and marital conflict and also interaction effect between internet addiction and self concept on marital conflict may be a critical component of any successful intervention effort to reduce the global marital conflict rate.

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