

# **Influence Of Attachment Styles On Marital Satisfaction Among Married Individuals In Presbyterian Church Of East Africa Milimani South Presbytery, Nairobi County, Kenya**

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## **Abstract**

*Although studies have been done across the world focusing on attachment styles and marital attachment, limited studies have focused on the influence of attachment styles on marital satisfaction among married individuals. This study investigated the influence of attachment styles on marital satisfaction among married individuals in PCEA Milimani South Presbytery, Nairobi, Kenya. The researcher used proportionate stratified random sampling and simple random sampling techniques to identify participants. The Dynamic goal theory of marital satisfaction which suggests the marital goals are facilitated by communication patterns, conflict resolution, nurturing relationships was considered as the subordinate theory. The Explanatory Survey design was used to test the formulated hypothesis and make accurate predictions. Structured tools were used to collect the data from 340 married individuals at the PCEA Milimani South Presbytery. The data collected was cleaned and analyzed quantitatively using Statistical Package for the Social sciences (SPSS) version 26. The findings of this study established the scores in the three subscales as follows (secure= 35.2%, avoidant = 33.5% and Anxious = 31.3%). The findings from a two dimension ENRICH marital satisfaction scale returned low at 32.2%, moderate at 38.4% and high 29.4%. The study rejected the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ); there was no influence of attachment style on marital satisfaction among married individuals in Milimani South Presbytery Nairobi, Kenya. According to findings  $F$ -value (1, 538.608) = 4.750, and  $P$  value = 0.041, which is less than 0.05. The findings indicated that the regression model was significant in establishing the influence of the predictor on the dependent variable. Therefore, attachment styles influenced marital satisfaction among married individuals in Milimani South Presbytery Nairobi, Kenya. The null hypothesis was rejected. The study recommended that PCEA Milimani South Presbytery Nairobi Kenya to conduct seminars and workshops to equip married individuals with knowledge and skills to enhance their marital satisfaction.*

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## **I. Introduction**

Individuals marry with the expectation of finding support, security, happiness, and satisfaction and despite not being aware of their attachment style and how the style may affect the marital relationship and eventually lead to marital satisfaction. The degree to which a marriage meets a person's expectations is closely tied to how satisfied they feel about the marriage. Since partners are from different attachment styles learnt from their family of origin, they could perceive their partner as different, uninteresting, or unloving. Sepehrian-Azar et al., (2016) defined attachment is an innate human ability that creates strong emotions and relationships with one's caregiver to meet their basic needs and then develops a schema that helps in interacting with the surrounding environment. According to Beitel (2015), marital satisfaction is a subjective assessment of one's marital experience as happy, satisfying, supportive where there is a nurturing relationship, conflict resolution and a clear communication pattern. In a study by Sepehrian-Azar et al. (2016), in Iraq, findings indicated that 18.3% reported being more confident in their interactions with the world since marriage while 34.7% felt safe to explore new possibilities. The conclusion emphasized the significant role secure relationships play in protecting individuals and providing them social and emotional support in the era of quick and unpredictable changes in human existence. In South Africa a study by Loubser (2007) indicated that attachment style and marital satisfaction

were directly related to general wellbeing. Kenya there were 149 divorce cases filed in the Milimani commercial courts civil registry in the month of February 2020. According to Kiplagat (2020), varied reasons were given by the complainants ranging from neglect to cruelty. The "negligence" may be because of the different attachment style which affects how one expresses themselves. To find out the influence of attachment style on marital satisfaction among married individuals in PCEA Milimani South Presbytery, Nairobi, Kenya

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study used attachment theory as the major theory and goal dynamic theory of marital satisfaction as a subordinate theory to anchor the findings. Bowlby and Ainsworth (2013) observe, the attachment theory offers a valuable way for scholars to understand how different early childhood attachments impact a person's future social development. The concept of attachment is attributed to Bowlby (2014) who regarded attachment as the propensity to make strong emotional and affectional bonds to 'particular others.' For Bowlby, the desire to bond is instinctual and people have a prewired relational experience that helps them develop bonding behavior (Au et al., 2020). The attachment relationship was categorized into three styles, namely secure attachment, anxious attachment, and avoidant attachment. For Chung (2014), secure attachment creates a sense of emotional closeness in a marital relationship, trust, willingness to discuss and resolve emerging issues with the spouse, and comfort of being close to one another. As a result, the partners experience greater degrees of relationship satisfaction and marital quality. Conversely, anxious attachment is founded in constant fear of abandonment and a sense of insecurity and of being underappreciated. Ng et al. (2013) observe that anxiously attached spouses are also regarded as having preoccupied with attachment disorder. They tend to be highly nervous about being rejected or separated from their spouses. These individuals are always concerned about their relationship and have no confidence in their partner's ability to love them back (Castellano, et al., 2014a). The dynamic goal theory on the other hand postulates that individuals in marriage have multiple goals to achieve. The goals are classified as personal growth goals, companionship goals and instrumental goals. These goals are dynamic, and they are emphasized differently across adulthood. When the individual in marriage is having their prioritized goals met then this contributes to marital satisfaction.

The attachment theory focuses on early childhood experiences and ignores the adult experiences that may have shaped the individual along the path of life. The theory is very subjective and does not consider other factors that may contribute to how humans relate, including social factors. Austin and Vancouver (1996) and Lang and Fingerman (2004) both suggest Dynamic Marital Goals are self-serving and they feed social goals by allowing the networking, development of individual's identity, knowledge, experience which are necessary in maintaining the marriage. According to (Aron et al., 2002; Aron & Aron, 1986, 1996), this theory creates spaces and times during the marriage where individuals in the marriage cease to be in a marriage and push their own agendas.

## **II. Methodology**

The study was carried out at the PCEA Milimani South Presbytery, Nairobi. This was an administrative division of the church (Presbytery Session, 2020). The PCEA Milimani South Presbytery covered Langata, Karen, Dagoretti, and Satellite areas in Nairobi. The region had different socioeconomic factors and therefore enriched the study. The region is home to many types of families ranging from young individuals newly married to older individuals who have settled their families in farms and the outskirts of Nairobi. This study adopted a positivism framework which argues that the world is real, and the researcher can be real while studying a phenomenon without influencing or being influenced by the world. The explanatory survey design was deemed appropriate because it enabled the researcher to make accurate predictions by testing the formulated hypothesis (Majid, 2018). The target population for this study comprised 5676 married individuals between one to twenty-five years of marriage at the PCEA Milimani South Presbytery, Nairobi. The researcher used proportionate stratified random sampling and simple random sampling techniques to identify participants. A sample of 360 was selected using Fisher Formula. Enrich Marital Satisfaction scale and Adult Attachment scales were used to collect data and score the tools as provided. Pretesting the tool was done in Waithaka Parish targeting ten married individuals. The participants filled in the questionnaires. The data collected was analyzed quantitatively and presented using inferential and descriptive statistics. The researcher first cleaned and coded the raw data to facilitate quantitative analysis. Descriptive analyses were used to examine the characteristics of the variables. Ethical considerations in research ensure that the process does no harm to the participants. Important ethical principles like informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation must be considered before commencing the data collection process. The researcher attached an introduction letter assuring the participants that the research was for study purposes only. This was attached with the consent form and had contact details to enable the participants have a communication channel in case of any communication need. To adhere to the ethical principles, the research topic was approved by the Institute of Youth Studies, the presbyterian church also gave consent for the researcher to conduct the research within their parishes. The following documents were also obtained: - a research letter from

the university administration and ethics committee, NACOSTI to approve the use of the questionnaires. An introduction letter from the university explaining the primary purpose of the study, and it was given to the participants to help them understand their role in the process.

### III. Findings/Results

**Table 1: Comparison between gender and attachment styles**

	Mean	SD	Levene's test for equality of variance F	Sig.	T	Df	Test for equality of means			
							Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Diff Lower upper -
Males N=170	52.34	7.80	0.27	.87	.44	34	.66	1.23	2.80	4.43 6.90
Females N= 170	51.13	6.72								

#### Levels of Marital Satisfaction among married individuals in PCEA Milimani South Presbytery

The second objective of this study was to assess the levels of marital satisfaction among married individuals in PCEA Milimani South Presbytery, Nairobi, Kenya.

**Table 2: Levels of Marital Satisfaction**

Levels	Frequency	Percentage
Low	110	32.2%
Moderate	130	38.4%
High	100	29.4%
Total	340	100%

**Table 3: Comparison between gender and marital satisfaction**

	Mean	SD	Levene's test for equality of variance F	Sig.	T	Df	Test for equality of means			
							Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Diff Lower upper -
Males N=170	42.16	4.97	1.02	.32	-.59	46	.56	-1.14	1.92	5.01 2.73
Females N= 170	43.30	6.93								

#### Comparison between years of marriage and marital satisfaction

A one-way between-subjects (ANOVA test) was conducted on years in marriage and marital satisfaction among married individuals in PCEA Milimani South Presbytery, Nairobi, Kenya.

**Table 4: Years in Marriage**

Period	f	%
1-5	149	43.8%
6 -10	107	31.5%
11-15	48	14.1%
16 - 25	36	10.6%
Total	340	100.0

**Table 5: Influence of Attachment Styles on Marital Satisfaction**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	121.83	1	121.83	4.75	.041 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	538.61	339	25.65		
Total		340			

- a. Dependent Variable: Marital Satisfaction
- b. Predictors: (Constant) Attachment

**Table 6 :Hypothesis Testing**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	121.83	1	121.83	4.75	.041 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	538.61	339	25.65		
	Total	660.43	340			

- a. Dependent Variable: Marital Satisfaction
- b. Predictors: (Constant) Attachment Styles

According to findings on Table 11, F- value (1, 538.61) = 4.75, and P value = 0.041, which is less than 0.05. This indicated that attachment styles influenced marital satisfaction among married individuals in Milimani South Presbytery Nairobi, Kenya. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

#### IV. Discussion

Respondents’ demographics in the study included gender and number of years in marriage. Table 3 illustrates a fair representation of both male and female respondents from PCEA Milimani South Presbytery, Nairobi, Kenya; 50% (n=170) male and 50% (n=170) female. The 50% tie in the respondents’ percentages was attributed to the nature of the study which focused on married individuals only and the exclusion criteria that blocked individuals who were divorced, widowed, or separated. The balanced demography emphasized the role of gender in attaining satisfaction as revealed in the study by Rauer (2015) which concluded that male actions towards conflict resolution have a greater impact on the results than those of female partners (r=-.342: p=0.05).

The objective of this study intended to find out the influence of attachment styles on marital satisfaction among married individuals in Milimani South Presbytery Nairobi, Kenya. Regression analysis was conducted results in table 10 showed that F- value (1, 538.608) = 4.750, and P value = 0.041, ≤ 0.05. This pointed that attachment styles influenced marital satisfaction among married individuals in Milimani South Presbytery Nairobi, Kenya.

#### V. Conclusion

The results showed that F- value (1, 538.608) = 4.750, and P value = 0.041, ≤ 0.05. These findings held that the regression model was significant in establishing the influence of the predictor on the dependent variable. Therefore, these pointed results showed that F- value (1, 538.608) = 4.750, and P value = 0.041, ≤ 0.05. These findings held that the regression model was significant in establishing the influence of the predictor on the dependent variable. This, therefore, pointed that attachment styles influenced marital satisfaction among married individuals in Milimani South Presbytery Nairobi, Kenya. The Study therefore concluded that attachment styles influence marital satisfaction among married individuals in PCEA Milimani Presbytery, Nairobi County, Kenya.

#### VI. Recommendation

PCEA Milimani South Presbytery Nairobi Kenya to develop a curriculum that is the basis for continuous seminars and workshops that aim to equip married individuals with knowledge and skills such as communication and conflict resolution skills to enhance their marital satisfaction. This will continue to build on the secure attachment and grow marital satisfaction from moderate to high. The study also recommends that *Marriage and Family therapists* explore attachments issues during couple therapy and premarital counseling sessions. This will bring insight into the issues that individuals may present in therapy and give them a direction towards a fulfilling and enriching relationship. It is recommended that future studies be done to establish why there is secure attachment and moderate marital satisfaction instead of high marital satisfaction among married individuals in PCEA Milimani South Presbytery, Nairobi, Kenya.

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