

Influence of Work Stress on Stability of Marriages: A Study of Married Women Bankers in Lagos, Nigeria

¹**Olufemi Adeniyi Fawole**

²**Olufemi Matthias Ojo**

³**James Oluwaseyi Oyinloye**

Abstract

Work performance and invariably stress, has affected quality of marriages especially in Nigeria. This has become a social issue due to the fact that both domains are important aspects of a human life and either one cannot be jettisoned away because they serve different purposes. The main objective of this study was to examine the influence of job stress on the quality of marriage, which includes happiness in marriage and communication in marriage) among married women bankers in Lagos. Participants for this study (N-203) were randomly from prominent banks in Victoria Island and data was obtained through questionnaires and data was analyzed using the regression analysis. Happiness in marriage as well as communication, being indices of marital quality in this study, and were examined separately to establish the influence of job stress on them. Findings revealed that the quality of a marriage of the married women bankers in Lagos was influenced by the stress they experience at their places of work. The study recommended that there should be proper management of time at the workplace so that workers can have time for family affairs after work. Also, proper home planning should be arranged so that there would be smooth family/work relationship.

Keywords: marital quality, work performance, effective marital communication, marital happiness, work place.

Introduction

Marital quality has been closely associated with the terms, marital happiness and marital satisfaction. Both marital happiness and satisfaction refer to positive feelings that a spouse derives from a marriage, and both happiness and satisfaction are broader and more global in their

¹**Olufemi Adeniyi Fawole:** Department of Sociology, University of Ilorin, Kwara State; Email: femifawole.2010@gmail.com

²**Olufemi Matthias Ojo:** Department of Sociology, Crawford University, Ogun State;

³**James Oluwaseyi Oyinloye:** Federal Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital, Yaba, Lagos State

meaning than such concept as enjoyment, pleasure and contentment. According to Campbell, Converse and Rodger (1976), marital happiness is based on an effective evaluation, whereas marital satisfaction seems to have a more cognitive basis that involves a relation of one's circumstances to some standard. They found that marital happiness varied positively with formal education. The most highly educated persons reported somewhat less marital satisfaction than those with less education. However, marital happiness and satisfaction are highly correlated and generally have been found to bear a similar relationship to other variables, thus the common practice of using the two terms interchangeably in literature reviews is sloppy, but not a very serious error. Hence marital quality is broadly used as a blanket term to cover either or both of these terms.

Marital quality refers to the degree of happiness, emotional bond and commitment among couples. Surveys have shown that the quality of marital communication decreases by over 40% under periods of stressful conditions at places of employment. When used by stress researchers as an indication of general dyadic success, marital quality has provided a common point of interest to researchers as it relates to stress related outcomes such as health, wellbeing, psychological distress and marital stability (Bradbury, Fincham and Beach, 2000 1990, Kluwer, 2000).

According to Anderson et al (2007), marital quality is closely related to the communication skills of spouses, including agreement on connotative meanings, accurate role taking, self-disclosure, mutual understanding, friendship, empathy, and the frequency of successful communication and support of each other. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the quality of marital communication was rarely viewed as a marital problem since the dominance of males still prevailed. The marital problems usually included sexual inadequacy, temperamental and attitudinal differences, etc. Only later the degree of marital satisfaction has been addressed and perceived as the result of successful communication between the spouses when both of them have equal rights, demands, share in decision-making and plans for future.

The work environment more recently has seen both men and women competing for available space, whether such job tasks involves strenuous efforts or not. The much obnoxious traffic jams always experienced in the early morning hours in major metropolis is a result of such rush to maintain job efficiency. Due to the recent economic recession, employers of labour have continued to increase job expectations and roles, and both male and female workers are expected to perform according to expectations, not to mention the appalling hour's one has to spend in the

work place, sometimes returning very late at night. The house-wife concept which is absolutely an African phenomenon is being less emphasized due to the recent increase in the number of females acquiring more college degrees and taking up more tasking employment so as to continue to ensure constant cash flow in the home. All the afore mentioned constitute sources of both psychological and physical strain on ones marriage mate, and results in; ineffective marital communication, low level closeness and intimacy amongst marriage mates, naturally culminating into low satisfaction and dwindles real marital happiness which should be a product of effective and consistent dyadic communication between couples.

Fraenkel and Wilson (2000) suggest that the trend towards spending more hours at work has been the single most powerful factor leading to a sense of diminished time for couple relationships. This is unfortunate as the ability to sustain an intimate relationship, build a life together, and solve problems together all requires a certain amount and quality of time together.

Leman and Revel (2002) identified that the distance between residence and workplace have necessitated that couple's wakeup early at appalling hours with the sole aim of getting to work on time, thus hindering effective marital communication. The effects of work stress on marital quality among couples have taken an overtly negative undertone which has facilitated the increase in broken homes, unstable interpersonal relationships between couples, reduced marital happiness, emotional bond and commitment. The issue of the decreasing degree of communication between couples also has deteriorated the geometrically declining bonds among couples. Another line of research shows that marital communication is especially affected by stress. The spillover effect of work stress on marital communication has been demonstrated, based on systematic behavioral observations illustrating that daily workload led to more negative dyadic interaction at home. Stressed partners were either more withdrawn towards their partner at home, or they showed more angry and hostile behavior.

Workplace stress is geometrically on the increase, which is gradually culminating into a major marital problem, and is eating deep into the emotional lives of couples. Employment stress or strain is identified as contributing to the loss of meaningful communication and subsequently, emotional bond among couples, especially with the increase in general job demand, efficiency and dexterity. Societal changes and technological advances have in an incidental way created a serious potential for interference, conflict and competitive demands between workplace and personal needs at home. Often, the pressure from the job and family

domains are mutually incompatible and thus can create conflict or dissonance (Peelers, Montgomery, Bakker, &Schaufeli, 2005).

Marital happiness is craved for by couples and by extension families. However, couples are consciously or unconsciously allowing the quality of their marriages to dwindle. We hear much about marital instability and divorce; these however are caused by low quality of couples relationships and intimacy. The employment place has been emphasized more seriously in recent times than marital happiness; this has made a big hole in the lives of couples. There should be a balancing between work activities and marital satisfaction and happiness. This research is geared towards couples and the importance of happiness and satisfaction in their marriages.

Majority of women have chosen certain jobs which are more demanding for them in recent times, and these include banking, insurance, oil and gas employment, only to mention a few without realizing the time and energy they will expend. Experience in the Nigerian situation shows that couples tend to transfer their aggression from work, to members of their family especially the husband if the woman had a bad time at work. Available statistics in the Nigerian situation shows that educated women were more likely to end their marriage in divorce, and marital instability among the working women is 1.25 times higher than in the non-working group (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1998).

Overwhelmingly, Nigerian men are not interested in the woman's femininity when it comes to working for her pay, which creates frustration for women in particular because they expect the men to "understand". Nigerian society places premium more on the male in terms of their capacity to achieve more at work rather than the female. The inability of the woman to do as much as her male counterpart in terms of work output, makes her to lose out of many plum jobs. The hostility towards her male counterparts might be responsible for the transfer of aggression to her spouse, family members, thereby resulting into marital instability. This is the reason why taking part in professions unsuitable for the woman's personality could have daring implications on marital relations. (Dimkpa, 2011)

According to Bradbury and Fincham (1990), marital quality also refers to a global evaluation of one's marriage. To them, marital quality refers to the degree of happiness, emotional bond and commitment among couples. Surveys have shown that the quality of marital communication decreases by over 40% under periods of stressful conditions at places of employment. When people are asked to rate or rank their life goals, having a happy marriage is usually among the most important. Most adults throughout the

modern world strive hard for a happy and satisfying marriage. Given the prominence and prevalence of this goal, family social scientists and psychologists could hardly avoid trying to assess the extent of its attainment and to identify the conditions under which it is likely to be attained. These efforts have been extensive, and the academic and clinical literature that deals with marital happiness and satisfaction is huge, with the number of relevant books, articles, and chapters published in some countries like the united states alone numbering in the thousands. When used by stress researchers as an indication of general dyadic success, marital quality has provided a common point of interest to researchers as it relates to stress related outcomes such as health, wellbeing, psychological distress and marital stability(Kluwer, 2000).

Marital quality is not self-perpetuating. Without effort and attention, relationships deteriorate and become stale, as is the case with systems. Maintenance efforts reaffirm the centrality of the relationship for partners through positive actions and words, and sharing tasks and activities that further the relationship. Previous studies have regularly found strong associations between use of maintenance behaviors and positive evaluations and perceptions of the relationship from both partners (Canary & Stafford, 1992).

The Concept of Marital Quality

Happiness in Marriage

This can be said to be a judgment made by a spouse that indicates the sense of well-being or satisfaction he or she experiences in the marital relationship. To this day, what has been variously labeled marital happiness, satisfaction, adjustment, success, companionship or some synonym reflective of the quality of marriage remains the most frequently studied aspect of marriage. It is the level of personal happiness a person feels about his/her marriage which is evaluated. Marital happiness is a powerful indicator of marital quality, although it does not captures specific behavioral correlates. For instance, it correlates with other indicators of marital quality such as marital interaction, marital conflict and divorce proneness. It has also been found to correlate with the presence of children in the household, household income, welfare use, egalitarian attitudes, traditional marital attitudes, religiosity and the interdependence of familial and friendship networks(Umberson, Williams, Powers, Chen and Campbell, 2005). Thus marital happiness is used to indicate variables used in past research to measure satisfaction with various domains of the marriage while marital quality indicates global evaluations of marriage that may include behavioural indicators or indicators of social comparison. Much work on marital happiness over the life course has focused on mean

changes in marital happiness over time. Previous work found out that marital happiness followed a u-shaped trajectory, declining in the early years of marriage and increasing through the later years. Consistent with the work of Beach et al. (2005), about 20% of respondents were in unhappy marriages while the remaining 80% were found between middle and high marital trajectories over time. Another research has it that about half of the respondents found to be happy were in a middle marital happiness trajectory over time whereas, the other half were in the most happy of marriages in the high marital happiness trajectory.

Communication in Marriage

Effective communication involves both the sending and receiving skills, the ability to exchange ideas and information, facts, feelings, attitudes and beliefs so that the message from the sender is accurately heard and interpreted by the receiver and feedback given. According to Olson, (2006), the healthy, well-functioning family is characterized by positive communication that provides a basis for improved cohesion and adaptability (the ability of a family to be flexible and adapt to the challenges of everyday life). It is an important way to relieve stress and build a healthier bond between couples, healthy communication brings about trust which is very vital in a marital home. Harpraz and Snir (2003), also stated that lack of communication is the primary reason why marriages fail. Couples have to learn how to communicate and listen to one another effectively.

One of the major foundations for a successful marital relationship is effective communication. Communicating together involves a two-way sharing of information and helps to develop a common understanding among families. When it is effective, members of the family will have genuine interest in each other, build honest, trusting, and respectful relationship. Communication occurs verbally and non-verbally. Verbal can be in form of spoken conversations (either face to face or phone calls) and written messages while non-verbal is less direct and usually observed in form of gestures, body language, tone of voice or facial expressions. In most instances, couples rely more on non-verbal communication than words to convey their messages. This is especially so when they try to communicate complex feelings, ideas and concepts. It also indicates the willingness to engage in a conversation and create pathways for communication between two adults (Class and Wright, 1985). It is important for couples to feel comfortable with each other in order to initiate communication.

Marital Quality and Work Performance

Nigeria is a patriarchal society, where the impact of work-life on employees particularly married women is challenging. This is in view of the realities of patriarchy that puts women in a position where family commitments come into serious conflict with occupational life (Aziz and Cunningham, 2008). This is essentially one of the major reasons Nigerian women are subjected to serious work stress as well as work-life imbalance that affects their motivation and commitment to work (Aluko, 2009; Mordi et al, 2010). In addition to this standpoint, recently, and given the pressures on women to contribute to sustaining family in terms of financial as well as economic support, women have taken paid employments that have brought conflict in homes as demands of the jobs they do conflict with their family life and vice versa.

Work-family conflict is a form of inter role conflict in which the demands of work and family roles are incompatible in some respects so that participation in one role is more difficult because of participation in the other role. Both tangible and emotional support from one's family can enable the individual to cope more effectively with work-related problems and reduce the extent to which family interferes with work. Support from a partner or spouse (tangible and emotional) is associated with high levels of income and career satisfaction (Forster, 2001). In part, this effect can be explained by the fact that individuals who receive substantial support from a spouse or partner tend to more time at work and therefore may demonstrate high levels of job performance (Peterson and Gravett, 2000).

However, the benefits of social support go beyond the instrumental assistance that frees up time for work. Business professionals who receive extensive emotional support from their partners have been found to experience greater opportunities for career development through such mechanisms as coaching and visible job assignments (Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000). Presumably, the understanding, acceptance and encouragement of a family member provide an individual with the information, self-confidence or motivation to seek out career-building experiences.

Maintenance devices such as spousal support strengthen the stressed partner's coping efforts through encouragement during interaction and by bolstering esteem and confidence (Campbell et al, 1996). Dysfunctional and unsatisfying marital satisfaction has undeniably negative effects on work performance. Research over time had proven that when an employee carries the burden from the home to the work place, the person has divided attention and along the line may lose concentration with work. Thereby, hindering level of performance.

The problem faced by women is stress caused by role conflict or multiple roles. Research has suggested that the use and choice of coping strategies may be a factor in reducing such stress. A coping resource that has been found to reduce stress is social support. The particular social support mechanisms most helpful to working women are emotional support and tangible support. Tangible support is defined as providing some sort of assistance for another person. There is a work/family conflict that particularly affects working women. There is research that suggests that a child's well-being suffers as a result of lack of time with parents (Piotrkowski et al 1987). Specifically, the lack of sensitive, responsive, and consistent care from overworked parents or substitute providers can lead to decreased cognitive and social skills.

However, while the career woman is facing challenges at the home-front, the work environment is also tense for her. For instance, result of a study carried out by Adesinaola (2012) revealed that almost half of the participants indicated that their jobs at home are interfering negatively with their jobs or assignment. When the job is at risk, there is the conflict of either satisfying the home front, or the job. This puts the woman in the middle of a dilemma.

For the female, work-life imbalance causes them to put more time and energy to work in order to provide for their children and families, particularly single parents or divorcees. In doing this, the length of time as well as level of commitment that women employees bring to work is being affected adversely as stress from taking care of their children or wards, including social pressures impinge on their level of commitment and vice versa (Harpaz & Snir, 2003).

Methodology

This research focused on married women working in prominent banks in Victoria Island, Lagos State. Such banks include; Access Bank, Diamond Bank, First Bank, First City Monument Bank, Guarantee Trust Bank, Keystone Bank, Skye Bank, Union Bank, Stanbic IBTC Bank, Sterling Bank, Wema Bank and Fidelity Bank. A total of 224 married women participated in this study, out of which 203 returned their questionnaires validly filled out. Questionnaires were used to elicit information to enhance the reliability of the instrument. The two hypotheses formulated for this study were analyzed using regression.

Results

Table 1. Regression Analysis for Hypothesis One
ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.150	2	1.075	4.735	.010 ^b
	Residual	45.397	200	.227		
	Total	47.547	202			

a. Predictors: (Constant): Female Banker's schedule

b. Dependent Variable: Happiness in marriage

From the analysis above, the ANOVA analysis is significance i.e. ($p < 0.05$). Also, the F ratio (4.735) with degree of freedom (2) is greater than the critical F value (3.09). This means that there is significant relationship between female banker's schedule and happiness in marriage.

Table 2. Regression Analysis for Hypothesis Two
ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.703	7	.386	7.955	.000 ^b
	Residual	9.465	195	.049		
	Total	12.167	202			

c. Predictors: (Constant): Female Banker's schedule

d. Dependent Variable: Communication in marriage

From the analysis above, the ANOVA analysis is significance i.e. ($p < 0.05$). Also, the F ratio (7.955) is greater than the critical F value (2.10). This means that female banker's schedule has significant influence on communication quality of the married couple.

Discussion

Dimenci (2010) found that where wives indicated that long distance relationship because of work is stressful, and the separation can have a negative impact on spousal relationship. From the analysis above, it is discovered that marital quality using the indices of (marital happiness, marital satisfaction and marital communication) has positive influence on the workers performance. From the respondent's opinion, it is deduced that workers with marital happiness and marital satisfaction goes to their workplace with great enthusiasm transferring their happiness to their work regardless of the work environment. In the same vein, communication is seen as a key tool to make all possible. This is because through communication, ideas, opinions and feelings are shared. More-so, problems shared and resolved such as issues from workplace with co staff, boss or some work activities. This is in relation with the work of Williams (2003), who opined that marital quality is an important factor in achieving

high level of work performance. As opposed to the claims of Rogers and May (2003) which states that “increase in marital quality is related to a decline in job productivity regardless of the gender” it is discovered that increased marital quality positively influences work performance. Peterson and Gravett, (2000) observed that the double workload of traditional female duties combined with work life did contribute to the stress faced by these women at their workplace thus making them less happy in the home and having low motivation to work. Adesinaola (2012) was of the view that while the career woman faces challenges at the home-front, the work environment is also tense for her. They indicated that their jobs at home interfered negatively with their jobs or assignment. When the job is at risk, there is the conflict of either satisfying the home front, or the job. Forster (2001) reports that some married women had opted to put their careers on hold because of domestic and family responsibilities. A few have resigned themselves to never achieving senior positions because of these commitments.

Peterson and Gravett, (2000) observed that the double workload of traditional female duties combined with work life did contribute to the stress faced by these women at their workplace thus making them less happy in the home and having low motivation to work.

Levenson and Roberts (2001), where they stated that job stress can be a great hindrance to the likelihood of a successful marriage in considering how emotional exhaustion can make it much harder for dual career couples to interact with each other, thus work stress transfers to the marriage and creates a distressed marriage, poor communication thus becomes the outcome.

According to Burke (1993), emotional exhaustion is one of the most prominent aspects of job burnout among workers; burnout and emotional exhaustion should be a concern for workers. Roberts and Levenson (2001) contends that job stress can be a great hindrance to the likelihood of a successful marriage in considering how emotional exhaustion can make it much harder for dual career couples to interact with each other. Job stress can increase the rate of the heart while at the same time decrease the bodily movements. The reaction is similar to the “freeze” response that comes from fear. When conversing with one’s spouse, the “freeze” response is thought to occur on days of high job stress. Men’s’ unconscious reaction to stress can be detrimental to marital interaction because they can have a hard time just talking to and relaxing around their wives. Thus, job stress can eventually affect homes. When work stress affects the home, the spouse is often the recipient. Studies concerned with the spouses of dual earner workers have found that more than 75% of the spouses deal with

stress that is a direct result of the officer's police work (Miller, 2007). When work stress transfers to the marriage and creates a distressed marriage, poor communication is the outcome (Roberts & Levenson, 2001). The reason that communication is not easy in a distressed marriage is because the distress creates a large gap between what the person speaking is trying to say and what the listener actually hears (Friesen & Friesen, 1989). With female officers, communication is a way to connect emotionally.

When a husband cuts off the emotional interaction, this crushes his wife. The extreme control that working couples invoke upon their emotions severely impacts the quality of communication and emotional connection between a man and his wife (Borum & Philpot, 1993). One example of how work stress on working couples can emotionally disconnect spouses is in how they tend to keep their work life somewhat secretive. According to Gillan (2008) and Miller (2007), the impact of work stress upon marriage especially dual earner couples doesn't just end with poor communication, communication problems can lead to greater marital issues such as infidelity and divorce.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that marital quality and work performance can have a symbiotic relationship as opposed to the conflicting view. Happiness in marriage and communication in marriage can be collectively seen as making up or contributing to what we know as marital quality. When it is positive, it influences the level of work performance in the workplace. A worker with happiness written all over her with satisfaction carries these to the workplace working with enthusiasm will achieve more than one who is dissatisfied and unhappy.

Recommendations

From the foregoing findings, the marriage institution holistically is experiencing an overturn in its norms. The pride of the Nigerian marriage institution, which used to be devoid of issues such as lack of satisfaction among married couples and divorce is geometrically under alteration. This can be traced to many factors, and a major factor is the way the work place is structured today. Employers of labour have continued to make work unbearable for workers for their economic gratification. Also, the economy of Nigeria has made it a necessity for couples to become dual earners, and this has a concomitant effect on their marriages.

In view of the findings in this research work, the following recommendations are being offered.

Dual career couples should be aware of the effects pursuing their individual careers will have on their relationship. This is important because, each partner will know what he or she is risking because the structure of most firms in recent times does not give any room for consideration in the time an individual whether married or not is spending at the work place, and this is especially pertinent for employed coupled.

Couples should try to spend more time together at home during the weekends, so as to make up for lost times. This is important because, it gives room for dyadic communication between spouses, and this might go a long way to reinvigorate their intimacy

Working couples should endeavour to postpone certain tasks at work, until the pressure to do them subsides, maybe postponing such tasks till the next day. This will thus help the individual to retain some energy which one could use in reintegrating with his or her spouse.

In addition, a clear organizational structure and practices should be provided for workers by their employers. Employees should be provided with clear information about the structure, purpose and practices of the organizations. This knowledge will go a long way in reducing stress at work as each employee will be conversant with his job specification and challenge. When working couples have a clear picture of their job expectations, they will outline their schedule to fit their work responsibility, which thus reduces stress at work.

Dual working partners should reduce the amount of time they spend on leisure activities with friends and colleagues when not at work. About 60% of off-work activities should be spent with their spouse. This however is very much applicable to men, as many men love to socialize with their colleagues while not at work, and their wives are left at home in boredom. The degree of attachment is furthermore enhanced.

Also, couples should cultivate the habit of freely discussing with one another, especially about work activities and the various challenges they faced at work. Compliments should be dyadic at such times and loving reassurances should thus be made. This has a psychological effect on the bonding process between couples.

Finally, although couples in recent times are very keen at operating a dual-career or dual-earner family style, they should also be keen at satisfying the emotional and sexual needs of their partners. This goes a long way in strengthening their marital bonds and thus ensuring their marital happiness and satisfaction which are blanket terms for the quality of their marriage.

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