



Adjustment Strategies for Marital Stress Among Female Teachers in Nigeria: Implications for Counselors

Aminat Adeola Odebode ✉ Eniola K. Ola-Alani and Shakirat Ojuolape Gambari

Department of Counsellor Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

Info Artikel

Sejarah Artikel:

Diterima 14 November 2019
Disetujui 21 November 2019
Dipublikasikan 30 Desember 2019

Keywords:

Marital Stress, Adjustment Strategies, Female Teachers, Nigeria.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.15294/ijgc.v8i2.34644>

Abstract

Stress have devastating consequences when not well managed. This study thus investigated the adjustment strategies of marital stress among female primary school teachers in Nigeria. The study also examined the influence of age, number of children, type of marriage and length of years in service on the respondents' views. The study employed a descriptive survey method. A total of 422 female primary school teachers participated in the study. The participants responded to a researcher-designed instrument titled 'Adjustment Strategies Questionnaire (ASQ)'. The data were analyzed using both percentage, mean, t-test and Analysis of Variance. The result showed that female primary school teachers adopt benefitting adjustment strategies. Result further showed that there were significant differences based on age, number of children, type of marriage and length of years in marriage. Recommendations were therefore made among others that counselors should encourage female primary school teachers to maintain their benefitting adjustment strategies of marital stress.

How to cite: Odebode, A., Ola-Alani, E., & Gambari, S. (2019). Adjustment Strategies for Marital Stress Among Female Teachers in Nigeria: Implications for Counselors. *Indonesian Journal of Guidance and Counseling: Theory and Application*, 8(2), 101-107. <https://doi.org/10.15294/ijgc.v8i2.34644>

* Alamat korespondensi:
Department of Counsellor Education, Faculty of Education,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.
Email: odebode.aa@unilorin.edu.ng

INTRODUCTION

Stress is defined as anything that poses a challenge or threat to a person's well-being. Stress is the feeling an individual experience when under pressure. Situations that cause stress vary from person to person. Stress can be defined as a pattern of reactions that occurs when workers are presented with work demands that do not match their knowledge, skills and abilities, which in turn challenges their capability to cope. It is a biological phenomenon experienced by all persons regardless of their socio-economic status, occupation or age (Scott 2012). Christian (2009) viewed stress as the way the individual responds to conditions that scare, threaten, anger, bewilder or excite them.

Stress could be viewed as an emotional experience that is followed by predictable physiological, biochemical and behavioral changes that are designed to reduce the stressor or by accommodating its effect. Stress is a pattern of cognitive appraisals, physiological responses, and behavioral tendencies that occurs in response to a perceived imbalance between situation demands and the resources needed to cope with them (Passer, 2003). Lazarus (2001a) also defined stress as a very broad class of problems, which tax the system (physiological, social and psychological) and the response to that system. Many psychologists view stress as external or internal demands on a person which is regarded as harmful, threatening, challenging or tasking. This is why Chitty (2005) described stress as all the responses the body make while striving to keep balance and deal with the demands of life. Desirable response to stressful situation motivates an individual to grow and achieve her realistic expectations. However, undesirable response to stressful situation and prolonged stress may result and affect the physical, emotional and cognitive areas of functioning.

Stress in marriage is referred to "marital stress" which can arise from a number of factors including finances, household responsibilities and unresolved misunderstanding between the couples (Kathy, 2009). One of the largest contributing factors to marital stress is financial constraints. When there is insufficient money in the home, the enormous amount of stress can lead to blaming, shaming or arguments that can slowly disrupt into peace in the home. Couples argue over bills, debt, spending and other financial issues. These pose stress

and could result in conflict in marriage (Omoqui, 2009).

According to Adeniran (2006), marital stress could come from different sources such as living and taking care of a family in the present economic situation, political and social environment, family conflict, education and the struggle with daily workloads can be very stressful and lead to burn out. As a result of over load of responsibility, couples may be found yelling at each other over minor incidents such as cooking food late. Similarly interference of in-laws, siblings, children, step children, friends and neighbours can all create stress within marriage. In a study conducted by Odebode (2019) on sources of marital stress working class women in Kwara State. She concluded that the sources of marital stress of are numerous among which are: sexual incompatibility with their spouse, financial constraints, in-laws' interference. Age, type of marriage and length of years in service in marriage have no significant difference in the sources of marital stress of working class women in Kwara State.

The term "adjustment" is used in reference to perpetual, cognitive or behavioural responses that are used in managing, avoiding or controlling situations that could be regarded as difficult (Zeidner & Endler, 2006). According to Lazarus (2001b), adjustment strategies connote "management". Cox, Griffiths and Rial-Gonzalez (2000) pointed out that adjustment is an important part of the overall stress process since there is no complete cure for stress; its management is the only thing possible. The concept of traditional adjustment can be explained from two different theoretical backgrounds. Dewe, O'Driscoll, and Cooper, (2010) stressed that the two backgrounds, the traditional animal experiment and the psychoanalytic ego psychology model provide relevant information on stress management. They described adjustment in the animal model as the acts that control evasive environmental conditions in order to avoid, escape, or overcome threat conditions. In the animal model, adjustment focuses on avoidance and escape behaviours and a lack of cognitive-emotional complexity, which is normally an integral part of human functioning. The same authors described adjustment in the psychoanalytic ego psychology model as realistic and flexible thoughts and acts that solve problems and reduce stress. The psychoanalytic ego psychology model focuses on the person's relationship with the environment in

terms of perceiving and thinking; the animal model describes the biological processes involved in the person's relationship with the environment.

It is important to note that the type of adjustment a person uses is determined by the person's appraisal of the situation's amenability to change (Edwards & Holden, 2001). Some studies (Daniels, Beesley, Cheyne, & Wimalasiri, 2008) have suggested that cognitive appraisal of a situation can be associated with adjustment strategies. This suggests that adjustment strategies will change according to context and can be important in determining health outcomes. According to Health Safety Executive (2006), there are healthy ways to overcome stress like adopting good lifestyle, diet, social solidarity, work which can broaden one's social ties; as well as avoiding unhealthy ways of reacting, such as over or under eating, excessive drinking, angry outbursts, defensiveness which can lead to lack of quality sleep, decreased exercise and social isolation. Negative reactions/anxieties and ongoing emotional issues can be reduced if there is support available; but they can be aggravated if there are others outside circumstances which also put a strain on the individual. Auerbach and Gramling (2008) opined that social support systems can provide one with emotional sustenance and tangible resources when in need. People with social support feel cared and valued by others which enhances a sense of belonging to larger social network.

Stress seems to be a household name in the daily activities of every woman. Most times, women are aware that they are working under stress as a result of merging work with family, they proclaim it but for the pressure of the work load and the time frame, they could not do anything about it and they continue to work until they breakdown. This situation could even be worse for women who are primary school teachers, who have to cater for the need of many pupils in schools. In the process of combining home and work responsibilities, they sometimes become impatient, exhausted, depressed, bored and even lack control over their emotions. As a result, stress creeps in and if not managed adequately, could lead to reduction in levels of productivity and cause stress in their families. A high degree of conflict exists between professional and family responsibilities which in turn increases an individual's risk of stress and depression. Some of the causes of marital stress for female teachers include

meeting tough deadlines at work, difficulties in carrying out daily routine tasks, having to combine household chores with work, or having to act in difficult circumstances or under external pressures. These in no doubt could lead to depression and anxiety among female primary school teachers. Based on the background information, the study focused on providing answer was provided to the question: what are the adjustment strategies employed to overcome marital stress by female primary school teachers in Nigeria?

RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher employed a descriptive survey research method to investigate the adjustment strategies for marital stress among female primary school teachers in Nigeria. The target population was therefore female teachers in selected public primary schools in Kwara State. Proportional, purposive and simple random sampling techniques were employed to select 422 respondents that participated in the study. The instrument used for data collection from the respondents was a researcher-designed questionnaire titled "Adjustment Strategies Questionnaire (ASQ)". The questionnaire was patterned after the four point Likert type rating scale format reflecting different levels of respondents responses as SA=Strongly, A = Agree, D= Disagree, and SD= Strongly Disagree. The psychometric properties of the instrument was validated by five experts in University of Ilorin, Nigeria. A Co-efficient of 0.65 was obtained; this implies that the instrument was reliable for use in the study. In order to answer the research questions for the study, the assigned four point Likert-Type scoring was modelled on average mean scores. This follows that mean scores from 2.5 and above indicated the adjustment strategies of marital stress among female teachers while mean scores below 2.5 were not regarded as the adjustment strategies of female teachers. It was hypothesized that: there is no significant difference in the adjustment strategies employed by female primary school teachers on the bases of age, number of children, type of marriage and length of years in service. The t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical procedures were used to test the hypothesis.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the

adjustment strategies employed by female primary school teachers in Kwara State?

Table 1 shows the mean and rank order of the adjustment strategies adopted by female primary school teachers in Kwara State. Since the cut-off point for taking decision on the adjustment strategies adopted by female primary school teachers in Kwara State is 2.5 and 14 out of the 15 items on the table have mean scores above the cut-off, this shows that the adjustment strategies adopted by female primary school teachers in Kwara State are planning vacation with their husband to have some silent time together, trying to be patient with their husband, making their opinions clear to the understanding of their husband, seeking for clarification in my husband's statement, discussing what hurts them with their husband, encouraging their husband to tell them what hurts them among other adjustment strategies.

Hypotheses Testing

The hypothesis was formulated and tested for this study. The hypotheses were tested using t-test and ANOVA statistical methods at 0.05 level of significance. The results are presented as follows:

Hypothesis:

There is no significant difference in the adjustment strategies adopted by female primary school teachers in Kwara State based on age, number of marriage, type of marriage and length of years in service.

Table 2 indicates that there is a significant difference in the adjustment strategies adopted by female primary school teachers in Kwara State based on age, type of marriage, number of children and length of years in marriage. However, a post-hoc analysis Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) was further conducted to identify where the difference lies amongst the variables. This is shown on table 3.

Table 3 shows the Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) output for significant differences noted in age, type of marriage and number of marriage. The finding shows that respondents between ages 48yrs and above, who have spent 11years and above years in service and those with only one child adopted better adjustment strategies when compared to those of other age groups.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study showed that adjustment strategies adopted by female primary school teachers in Kwara State which

were: planning vacation with their husbands to have some quiet time together, trying to be patient with their husbands, making their opinions clear to the understanding of their husbands, seeking for clarification in their husbands statement, discussing what hurts them with their husbands, encouraging their husbands to tell them what hurts them among other adjustment strategies. This finding agrees with Weiten and Lioyd (2006) who found that adjustments strategies among couple involves releasing pent-up emotions, distracting hostile feelings and mediating through systematic relaxation procedures such as hanging out with spouse. Similarly, the finding of the study corroborated that of Nicholls and Polman (2006) that women often employ emotion-focused adjustment strategy such as trying to be patient with their husbands and making their opinions clear to the understanding of their husbands. The findings of this study could be that no woman wants stress in her matrimonial home, hence women would adopt problem-focused strategy that will cut short negative emotions by engaging in some actions to modify, avoid or minimize stress in the home; there by changing their behaviour to deal with the stressful situation.

Result showed that there was a significant difference in the adjustment strategies adopted by female primary school teachers in Kwara State based on age. This meant that adjustment strategies of marital stress among female primary school teachers differed on the basis of age. This finding tallied with that of Cox, Griffiths and RialGonzalez (2000) which revealed that age influences adjustment strategies as adjustment is an important part of the overall stress process. However, the findings further revealed that respondents between 48years and above, adopt more adjustment strategies when compared to those of other age groups. This could be due to experience which is associated with increase in age. When individuals have experienced stress over time; there is every possibility that the individual would have developed certain adjustment strategies, knowingly or unknowingly.

Result showed revealed that there was a significant difference in the adjustment strategies adopted by female primary school teachers in Kwara State based on number of children. This implies that number of children influences the adjustment strategies adopted by female primary school teachers in Kwara State. This is in line with the finding of Kathy (2009) which

Table 1: Mean and Rank Order of Adjustment Strategies Adopted by Female Primary School Teachers in Kwara State

Item No.	I adopt these strategies to cope with my marital stress:	Mean	Rank Order
15.	going on holiday with their spouses to have some quiet time together	3.26	1 st
10.	trying to be patient with my husband	3.22	2 nd
13.	making my opinions clear to the understanding of my husband	3.20	3 rd
11.	seeking for clarification of my husband's statement	3.10	4 th
7.	discussing what hurts me with my husband	3.04	5 th
12.	encouraging my husband to tell me what hurts him	3.01	6 th
9.	encouraging my husband to belief that God does all things	2.95	7 th
1.	seeking for multiple sources of income	2.87	8 th
2.	discussing my sexual incompatibility with my spouse	2.86	9 th
3.	seeking support with household responsibilities	2.85	10 th
14.	denial of ill feelings	2.84	11 th
8.	seeking assistance from professionals/counsellors	2.82	12 th
5.	tolerating my spouse's irritable habits	2.63	13 th
4.	seeking emotional closeness with my husband	2.62	14 th
6.	encouraging my husband to be more religious	2.32	15 th

Table 2: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value on Adjustment Strategies adopted by Female Primary School Teachers in Kwara State Based on Age, Number of Children, Types of Marriage and Length of Years in Service

Age	SS	df	MS	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	p-value	Decision
Between group	4063.663	4	1015.916	21.06*	2.37	0.00	Significant
Within group	20110.337	417	48.226				
Total	24174.000	421					
Number of Children	SS	df	MS	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	p-value	Decision
Between group	896.477	2	448.239	8.07*	3.00	0.00	Significant
Within group	232777.53	419	55.555				
Total	24174.000	421					
Marriage Type	Mean	SD	df	Cal. val.	Crit. val.	Decision	
Monogamy	345	43.62	7.58	2.20*	1.96	Significant	
Polygamy	77	45.71	7.38				
Length of Years In Service	SS	df	MS	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	p-value	Decision
Between group	4391.605	3	1463.868	30.93*	2.60		0.00 Significant*
Within group	19782.395	418	47.326				
Total	24174.000	421					

*Significant, p<0.05

Table 3: Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) Output for Differences in the Strategies adopted by Female Primary School Teachers in Kwara State Based on Age

Age	Group	N	Mean	Duncan's Grouping
48yrs & above	1	68	47.74	A*
38-47years	2	54	44.49	B
28 -37years	3	107	41.92	C
19-27years	4	68	41.03	D
Below 18years	5	25	40.49	E

Number of Children	Group	N	Mean	Duncan Groupings
1	1	112	36.05	A*
2-4	2	25	32.00	B
5&Above	3	285	28.19	C

Length of Years in Service	Group	N	Mean	Duncan's Grouping
11years and above	1	139	55.76	A*
6-10years	2	130	45.83	B
1-5years	3	127	42.78	C
Less than 1year	4	21	41.45	D

showed that number of children affect the adjustment strategies adopted by couples. However, further analysis showed that respondents who have 1 child adopted better adjustment strategies when compared to those of other groups. This could be that taking care/parenting a child cannot be as tedious as parenting 2 -5 children. It could also mean, less children, less problem and vice versa. It would be a lot easier for female primary school teachers with work responsibilities and that of home.

Result showed that there was a significant difference in the adjustment strategies adopted by female primary school teachers in Kwara State based on based on marriage type. This implies that marriage that has a significant influence on the adjustment strategies of female primary school teachers in Kwara State. This also means that marriage type influences the expression of female primary school teachers on their adjustment strategies of marital stress. This finding is not in agreement with that of Cooper, Dewe and O'Driscoll (2001) which showed that marriage type does not have any influence in the adjustment strategies of married adults. The findings of this study further revealed that female primary school teachers who are in polygamous marriages adopt more

adjustment strategies than those in monogamous marriages. This could be that those in polygamous marriage have to compete with some other wives visible to them; therefore, they would adopt more adjustment strategies to cope with stress.

Result showed that there was a significant difference in the adjustment strategies of female primary school teachers in Kwara State based on length of years in service. This implies that length of years in service has a considerable influence on the adjustment strategies of female primary school teachers in Kwara State. This also meant that length of years in service influenced the expression of female primary school teachers on their adjustment strategies of marital stress. This finding is not in consonance with Taylor (2006) and Nicholls and Polman (2006) who concluded in their study that length of years in service has nothing to do with adjustment strategies of married adults. Further analysis showed that respondents who have spent 11 and above years in service adopted more adjustment strategies to cope with marital stress when compared to other groups. This finding could be that female primary school teachers who have spent 11 years and above in service have gained enough

experience to cope with marital stress. It is also reasonable to assume that increase in length of years in service is tantamount to increase in age, maturity and experience; which when put together could culminate in to being able to cope well with marital stress, better than other group.

The findings of this study imply that counsellors should enlighten female primary school teachers on more healthy adjustment strategies. All female primary school teachers should also be encouraged to adjustment strategies for sustainability as this will foster a happy and healthy home. This should be done for all female primary school teachers irrespective of age, number of children, type of marriage and length of years in service.

Similarly, In view of the findings of this study and the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations are made that female primary school teacher irrespective of age, number of children, length of years in service and type of marriage should be encouraged to maintain their benefiting adjustment strategies to help ameliorate and cope with marital stress. Couples should be encouraged to include appropriate and effective communication in their adjustment strategies so as to be able to talk over many numerous issues causing marital stress, age, number of children, type of marriage and length of years in service notwithstanding.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the adjustment strategies adopted by female primary school teachers in Kwara State are benefitting such as: travelling alone with their husband to have some silent time together, trying to be patient with their husband, making their opinions clear to the understanding of their husband, among other adjustment strategies. Similarly, age, number of children, type of marriage and length of years in service have significant differences in the adjustment strategies adopted by female primary school teachers in Nigeria.

REFERENCES

- Adeniran, I. S. (2006). *Causes and management of marital stress among couples in Ogbomosho metropolis*. An Unpublished B.Ed project submitted to the Department of Guidance and Counseling University of Ado-Ekiti.
- Auerbach, S.M. & Gramling, S.E. (2008). *Stress*. Red-mind, W.A: Microsoft Corporation.
- Chitty K.K. (2005). *Professional nursing: concepts and challenges (4th ed)*. Elsevier Saunders: St Loius Missouri U.S.A., 475 – 480
- Christian, N. (2009). *What is stress? How to deal with stress*. Retrieved July 18, 2014 from <http://www.medilexicon.org>.
- Cooper, C. L., Dewe, P. J. & O'Driscoll, M.P. (2001). *Organizational stress: A review and critique of theory, research, and applications*. California: Sage Publications.
- Cox, T.; Griffiths, A. & Rial-Gonzalez, E. (2000). *Workplace stress. A research conducted by European Agency for Safety and Health at Work*.
- Daniels, K., Beesley, N., Cheyne, A., & Wimalasiri, V. (2008). Coping processes linking the demands-control-support model, affect and risky decisions at work. *Human Relations*, 61(6), 845–874.
- Dewe, P., O'Driscoll, M., & Cooper, C. (2010). *Coping with work stress: A review and critique*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Edwards, M.J. & Holden R.R. (2001). Adjustment, meaning in life and suicidal manifestations: Examining gender differences. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 59(10), 1133-1150.
- Health Safety Executive (2006). *Work related stress and psychological disorders*. Retrieved June 6, 2014 from <http://www.Hse.gov.uk/stress/index.htm>.
- Kathy, N. (2009). *Keeping stress in a marriage from causing problems*. Retrieved September 9, 2009, from <http://eziearticle.com/?/expert.html>
- Lazarus, R. S. (2001a). *Relational meaning and discrete emotions*. In K. Scherer, A. Schorr, & T. Johnstone (Eds.), *Appraisal processes in emotion: Theory, methods, research* (pp. 37–67). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lazarus, R.S. (2001b). *Stress and emotion: A new synthesis*. New York: Springer Publishing Company. Inc.
- Odebode, A. A. (2019). Marital stress among working class women in Kwara State, Nigeria: Implications for counselling practice. *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth*, 11(1), 20-40.
- Omoqui, T. Y. (2009). *Personality correlates of item response changing behaviour in two objective test formats*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
- Passer, M.W. (2003). *Psychology, frontiers and applications*. Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Scott, M.S. (2012). *Common marriage problems and solutions sources of marriage problems*. Retrieved December 12, 2012 from <http://www.about.com>.
- Taylor, S.E. (2006). *Health psychology*. New York: MC Graw-Hill.
- Weiten, W. & Lloyd, M.A. (2006). *How to deal with stress*. Retrieved from <http://www.explore-living-well>.
- Zeidner, M. & Endler, N.S. (1996). *Handbook of adjustment* (pp. 505-531). New York: Wiley.