

# Influence of Marital Stressors on Role Performance of Married Academic Women in Tertiary Institutions in Cross River State and Need for Counselling therein

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## Abstract

This study investigated the influence of marital stressors on role performance of married academic women of tertiary institutions in Cross River State. In order to accomplish the purpose of the study, two objectives and corresponding two hypotheses were postulated to guide the study. The survey research design was adopted in the study. A total of 421 women academics were drawn from the four tertiary institutions used. The instrument that was used in this study is a 61 items questionnaire tagged Influence of Marital Stressors on Role Performance Questionnaire (IMSRPQ). Five experts in Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation were used to establish the face validity of the instrument. The reliability estimate for the instrument was 0.73. Multiple regression analysis was used for testing the hypotheses. The result of the study showed that marital stressors influenced the role performance of the married academic women in tertiary institutions in Cross River State and the influence was significant. Based on the above, recommendations were made that women academics should be encouraged to attend professional conferences, seminars and workshops in their discipline. Organizing professional seminars and workshop for women academics might be indirect ways of assisting them manage their stress etc.

**Keywords:** Marital stressors, role performance, married academic women.

## 1. Introduction

Marriage is a unique commitment in the lives of men and women for which they are expected to enjoy love, happiness, provision, protection, procreation and respect in the society. Burke and weir (1987) noted that one of the most important relationships between a man and woman is marriage. It involves emotional and legal commitment that is very important in adult life. Moreover, selecting a partner and entering into a marital contract is considered both maturational milestone and personal achievement. Therefore, there is no doubt that the choice of marital partner is one of the most important decisions one makes in his/her lifetime.

As observed by Okpechi (2012), people marry for many reasons, such as Love, Happiness, Companionship and desire to have children, physical attraction or desire to escape from an unhappy situation. Marriage is a commitment with love and responsibility for peace, happiness and development of strong family relationship. Marriage is a socially legitimate sexual union, which begins with admiration and undertaken with some ideas of permanence. It is assumed with hope for mutual co-existence. It is a contract which spells out the reciprocal rights and obligations between the spouse and future children with expectations, some of the expectations turn to be realistic while others are unrealistic. This is due to complex nature of marriage and each individual is as complex as the universe. Sometimes where these marital expectations are not met stress may occur.

Stress is a general term for a number of different but related concepts such as anxiety, frustration, threat, conflict and tension. Accordingly these variables negatively do affect one's performance (Lazarus & Deimgis 1983). Granster (1995) and Halt (1997) have revealed nine areas of marital stress namely: value, couple growth, communication, conflict resolution, affection, roles co-operation, sex, money and parenthood.

In the modern world, both men and women find self-expression in the world of work. In most instances, opportunity for involvement in every career is open to men and women. Teaching at the tertiary institutions is one area that both males and females fit into. Traditionally, the institutions of higher learning have a three fold mission; the acquisition of knowledge or research; the transmission of knowledge or teaching and application of knowledge which is Community Service (Rustia, 1983). Academic role is becoming more diverse and more difficult to identify, as multiple requirements are beyond the demands of traditional teaching, where scientific results, research and service now evolve in classroom and laboratory settings. The roles of the academics involve multiple tasks, responsibilities and expectations. As in any profession, a need for proper planning and scheduling, necessary activities are required to accomplish the task. When the realistic goals are identified, priorities are set, and then the effectiveness of the task can be evaluated.

While teaching is the primary role of the academic in the tertiary institution, research, counselling,

advising, administering responsibilities further expand the role. Good teaching is the expectation of any institution of higher learning whether it occurs in the classroom or the laboratory; the reputation of being an excellent teacher is one of coveted rewards to be earned in any faculty, once earned, it is re-earned through a continuing series of activities. Teaching include the instruction of undergraduate and graduates, student and instruction includes preparation of instructional materials, delivering of lectures, evaluating and the grading of student progress and timely submission of result. The challenge of teaching is to motivate the students to learn and facilitate learning. The student's learning should be organized, sequenced and supervised by the instructor so that the new knowledge and skills are consequently gained (Denga, 2002).

In academics, males and females are involved but most people loose their sleep over the performance effectiveness of some married female academics. Many people tend to express reservation over role performance effectiveness of married academics (Denga, 2002). Sarwar (1994) stated that there are many aspects of the job that the performance of women academics leaves much to be desired. Some of the areas that people such as scholars, administrators, policy makers tend to express reservation over the effectiveness of female academic include: timely submission of students result; academic publication; project supervision; attendance at conferences and regular lectures attendance. Sarwar (1994) equally stated that in order to move along in their work, a good number of them tend to depend on male colleagues in most cases for assistance while those that marry fellow academics tend to depend on their husbands. Huda, (2003) further stated that as a result of the above mentioned findings, females academics do not appear to be progressing as speedily as their male counterparts in the university.

These non-speedy progressions of women academics as noted by Sarwar (1994) could lead to frustration, depression and stress which inhibit role performance effectiveness one then begins to wonder whether the observed non effectiveness is due to marital stress. It is as a result of this that this study seeks to find out how marital stressors influence professional role performance effectiveness of married women academics.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Institution of higher learning generally is a field that requires higher intelligence, concentration and commitment. It entails conducting of research paper publication in reputable professional journals, preparation and delivery of lectures, attendance of professional conferences, counsel and advice students, assess students' work, timely submission of students' results, and sometimes carry out administrative responsibilities. Research findings (Reis, 1984; Sarwar, 1994; Denga, 2002; Theorell & Rahe, 2003) had in different publications reveal that a good number of married academic women in tertiary institution do not perform their professional roles effectively as a result of marital stressors.

This ineffective role performance lead to late preparation and attendance to lectures; low publication in professional journals; less attendance to conferences and workshops; late submission of student's result becoming too sick to work; lack of desire to embark on academics research. The resultant effect is the production of poor quality students, examination mal-practices and cultism and students unrest. This then weakens the standard of education in the society which gives rise to low productivity. Therefore, the major problem of the study is to determine the influence of marital stressors on professional role performance of married women academics in tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

## **3. Purpose of the Study**

The study intended to find out the influence of marital stressors as factors inhibiting role performance of women academics. Specifically, the study was designed to determine the influence of:

1. Child care on role performance of women academics
2. Marital discord on role performance of women academics.

## **4. Significance of the study**

The finding of this study may benefit married academic, school administrators, government and researchers as the result may lead to organizing seminars on marital stress management and general attitude to work in tertiary institutions. The finding will be beneficial because variable that leads to martial stressors were highlighted.

The justification of this study lies in the fact that it identified characteristics that could be very effective in coping with work stressors. This is because proper orientation will be injected into our school programmes which will make our present and future married academic women to perform better than before. School administrators may benefit from the research finding as it may make available information, which may be used by them in solving problems related to role performance of married women academics.

Government may benefit from the result of the study as this would provide information, which is hoped to be useful in making policies that will motivate her staff for increase productivity in their work.

Researchers and writers will benefit from the study as it may provide information, which may assist the researchers and writers that may write or research on the present problem or similar problem in different

locations.

Equally, the married academic women stand to benefit from the findings of this study, as they will see the needs to adjust positively in their ways of communication and ability to resolve their differences immediately, as these can lead to their psychological health both in their role performance and in their marital lives. Hence this can go a long way in checking stressors arising from marital discord.

### 5. Scope of the Study

The study was on the influence of marital stressors as factors in role performance of married academic women in tertiary institutions. It was delimited to married academic women in colleges of education and Universities in Cross River State of Nigeria.

### 6. Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. Stressors arising from child care will have no significant influence on the role performance of married academic women in tertiary institutions.
2. Stressors arising from marital discord will have no significant influence on the role performance of married academic women in tertiary institutions.

### 7. Research Design

Descriptive survey design was adopted. Descriptive survey design is a research design mainly concerned with findings, describing and interpreting “what is” (Best, 1990). This design does not aim at discovering new phenomena, but is concerned with conditions or relationship that exist; practices that prevail; beliefs, point of view or attitude that are held; process that are going on; effects that are being felt; or trends that are developing (Best, 1990). The above research design fits the present study as the variables are all conditions that are already on ground.

### 8. Research Area

This study is on marital stressors as factors in role performance of married academic women in tertiary institutions. It will be confined to married academic women in College of Education, and Universities in Cross River State of Nigeria; Cross River State is one of the thirty six (36) states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. From a publication of Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Cross River State (2006) Cross River State occupies a total landmass of 23,074,425 square kilometers of south-south zone of the Niger Delta regions. Calabar is the state capital. The state emerged as it is on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1987, when then the Armed Force Ruling council restructures the nineteen states in the country into twenty one (21) states with Abuja remaining as the Federal Capital Territory and the seat of government. Cross River State is situated within the topics. The state shares common boundary with Cameroon Republic in the East, Benue State in the North, Enugu and Abia State in the West and Akwa Ibom State in the South.

There are three major language groups in Cross River State namely: Efik, Bekwarra and Ejaghem. Other groups North of Calabar are the Ekois, Mbembe, Yakurr, Boki, Yala/Yache, Ukele, Mbube, Bete and Utugwang. The work force of the people is largely small scale farmers, government worker and private entrepreneurs. According to ministry of information, youth and sports publication (2006) the state has more than 240 pre-primary schools, 648 primary schools 150 post-primary schools and Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH), and Federal institutions namely; university of Calabar and Federal College of Education Obudu.

### 9. Population of the study

The population for the study consisted of all married women academics in the state. As at the time of the present study, a total number 421 married women academic served in the institutions of higher learning in Cross River State (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Cross River State 2006). The distribution is shown below.

Table 1: Population distribution married women academics in Cross River State

S/N	Institution	No. married women academics
1.	University of Calabar	207
2.	CRUTECH	158
3.	Federal College of Education Obudu	25
4.	College of Education Akamkpa	21
	<b>Total</b>	<b>421</b>

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Cross River State (2010)

## 10. Sample and Sampling Techniques

All the four hundred and twenty one (421) married women academics in the area of study were used for the study. In essence, there was no sampling for the selection of the married women academic because the population was of a manageable size.

## 11. Instrumentation

The instrument that was used in these study is a 61 item titled: Influence of Marital Stressors on Role Performance Questionnaire (IMSRPQ) (see Appendix A) it is in the questionnaire we gathered from literature. The questionnaire consists of seven sections A-G. Section A contains three item on personal data of respondents. Section B, is made up of eleven items, numbered 4-14, meant to elicit information on the extent of stressors arising from child care, section C, contains six items numbered 15-20, meant to elicit information on extent of stressors arising from domestic work and section D, contains fifteen items numbered 21-35, meant to elicit information on the extent of stressors arising from marital discord. Furthermore, section E contains five item numbered 36-40, and meant to elicit information on the extent of stressors arising from financial situation and section F, contains eight items numbered 41-48, and meant to elicit information on extent of stressors arising from in-law social relationship.

Finally, section G contains thirteen items, numbered 49-61 meant to measure role performance. The respondent were required to indicate on a 4 point likert scale, the extent of stress they experience on each item in section B-F and the extent to which they are able to accomplish each roles in section G; namely' VGE= Very great Extent, GE= Great Extent, LE= Less Extent, VLE= Very Less Extent.

### 11.1 Validity

Experts in Guidance and Counselling as well as measurement and evaluation were used to establish the face validity of the instrument. These experts were drawn from Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki and Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH). The essence of the face validity was to ensure clarity of instruction to the respondents, proper wording of items, appropriateness and adequacy of the items in addressing the objectives of the study. The corrections and suggestions made by the experts were incorporated in the final version of the instrument.

### 11.2 Reliability

To determine the reliability of the questionnaire Cronbach co-efficient Alpha reliability was used. This method of reliability measure was preferred to others because it lends itself to the measure of reliability when the items in the questionnaire are not measured dichotomously and when the trial testing is administered once. The reliability estimate for the instrument was 0.7343. This value was considered high to justify the use of the instrument for the study. This is because, according to Ogbazi and Okpala (1994), if the correlation co-efficient obtained in an instrument is up to 0.60 and above, the instrument should be considered good enough to be used for a study.

## 12. Data Collection Procedure

The researcher provided basic guide and instructions on the methods of distribution and collection of questionnaire to two research assistants who assisted in the data collection. In order to gain access to the women academics, a letter of introduction from the Head of Department (HOD) in the institutions selected for the study. Subsequently, each HOD introduce the researcher and the research assistants to the women academics, thereafter, the researcher and the research assistant administered the 421 copies of the questionnaire on the respondent in their offices. The respondents were requested to complete the questionnaire and return same to the research assistant on the spot. This method was adopted to enhance a high rate of return of the instrument and reduce distortion of information.

## 13. Procedure for Testing Hypotheses

The response columns of the (IMSRPQ) were allocated score as follows: VGE= 4, GE=3, LE=2, VLE= 1 as the case may be. All the 421 copies of the questionnaire were properly completed and returned; and were used for data analysis.

Pearson Correlation Co-efficient "r" was employed to answered the entire hypotheses in order to describe the influence marital stressor had on role performance, Wilson's (1989) interpretation, of the value of "r" was adopted. In the interpretation value of 0.01-0.19 was considered "very low" influence; 0.20-0.39 "low" 0.40-0.69 "moderate" 0.79-0.89 "high", 0.90-0.99 very high influence. A plus (+) or (-) sign indicates that the influence is positive or negative. Stepwise multiple regression analysis was employed to test the two hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

### 13.1 Hypotheses one

Stressors arising from child care will have no significant influence on the role performance of married academic women in tertiary institutions. Data in testing the hypotheses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of stepwise multiple regression analysis on influence of stressors arising from child care on role performance of married academic women in tertiary institutions in Cross River State

Variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	B	F-cal	df	F-critical
Role Performance	0.431	0.246	0.361	6.453*		
PLW	0.440	0.194	0.236	8.940*		
SEQ	0.453	0.184	0.347	9.609*		
MES	0.430	0.185	0.266	8.429*		
CAR	0.359	0.129	0.255	5.509*		
SES	0.402	0.162	0.222	7.172*		
RAL	0.417	0.174	0.285	7.842*	0.419	3.84
MSA	0.314	0.098	0.240	4.061*		
PMG	0.359	0.129	0.219	5.494*		
ACR	0.408	0.165	0.375	7.344*		
RSP	0.355	0.126	0.264	5.357*		
STP	0.361	0.145	0.291	6.320*		
PTP	0.383	0.147	0.257	6.387*		
ABM	0.389	0.151	0.262	6.624*		

\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$

Table 2 shows that the multiple regression (R) values for PLW is .440, while the F-Cal = 8.940. The F-Cal is greater than the critical F-value of 3.84 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, stressors arising from child care have a significant influence on the role performance of the married academic women with regard to PLW. The value of regression weight  $B = 0.236$ , which accounts for 23.6% variance indicating a positive influence and a low predictive value of PLW by the women. The table also shows that the R-value for SEQ is 0.453 and MES is .430, while their F-Cal values are 9.609 and 8.429, respectively. The F-Cal for each is greater than the critical F-value of 3.84 at .05 level of significant. Therefore, stressors arising from child care have a significant influence on the role performance of the married academic women with regard to SEQ and MES. The value of regression weight  $B = .347$  on SEQ, which is about 34.7% indicates a positive influence and a low predictive value of MES by the women.

The table also shows that the F-cal for each of the rest of indices of role performance is greater than the critical F-value of 3.84 at .05 level of significant. Therefore, stressors arising from child care have a significant influence on the role performance of the married academic women with regard to each of the indices. Their value of regression weight B ranges from 0.219 to 0.375, which account for 21.9% to 37.5% of the variance for respective index of role performance, indicating a positive influence and a low predictive value of the respective index of role performance of the women.

The table further shows that when role performance is considered as a unit, the R-value is 0.431, while the F-Cal= 6.453. The F-cal is greater than the critical F-value of 3.84 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, stressors arising from child care have a significant influence on the role performance of the married academic women in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. Hypotheses 1, which states that stressors arising from Child care will have no significant influence on the role performance of married academic women in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, is therefore rejected.

### 13.2 Hypothesis two

Stressors arising from marital discord will have no significant influence on the role performance of married academic women in tertiary institution. Data testing the hypothesis are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of stepwise multiple regression analysis on influence of stressors arising from marital discord on role performance of married academic women in tertiary institutions in Cross River State

Variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	B	F-cal	df	F-critical
Role Performance	0.539	0.274	0.418	11.792*		
PLW	0.558	0.312	0.414	12.229*		
SEQ	0.553	.0309	0.313	11.896*		
MES	0.511	0.261	0.346	8.533*		
CAR	0.408	0.167	0.242	5.394*		
SES	0.435	0.189	0.223	6.304*		
RAL	0.544	0.296	0.308	11.355*	1,419	3.84
MSA	0.442	0.196	0.244	6.563*		
PMG	0.519	0.269	0.289	9.961*		
ACR	0.486	0.236	0.333	8.347*		
RSP	0.432	0.186	0.254	6.188*		
STP	0.401	0.161	0.253	5.180*		
PTP	0.497	0.247	0.423	8.834*		
ABM	.0457	0.209	0.308	7.135*		

Table 3 shows that the multiple regression (R) value for PLW is .558, while the F-Cal = 12.229. The F-cal is greater than the critical F-value of 3.84 at .05 level of significant influence. Therefore, marital stressors arising from marital discord have a significant influence on the role performance of the married academic women with regard to PLW. The value of regression weight B = 0.414, which account for 41.1% variance indicates a positive influence and a moderate predictive value of PLW by the women. The table also shows that the R-value for SEQ is .553 and MES is .511, while their F-cal values are 11.896 and 8.533 respectively. The F-cal for each is greater than the critical F-value of 3.84 at .05 level of significant. Therefore, marital stressors arising from marital discord have a significant influence on the role performance of the married academic women with regard to SEQ and MES. The value of regression weight B=.313 on SEQ, which accounts for 31.3% indicates a positive and a low predictive value; and the value of regression weight B=.346 on MES, which account for 34.6% of the variance indicates a positive influence and low predictive value of MES by the women.

The table also shows that the F-cal for each of the rest of indices of role performance is greater than the critical F-value of 3.84 at .05 level of significant. Therefore, marital stressors arising from marital discord have a significant influence on the role performance of the married academic women with regard to each of the indices. Their value of regression weight B ranges from 0.242 to 0.423, which account for 24.2% to 42.3% of the variance for respective index of role performance, indicating a positive influence and a low to moderate predictive value of the respective index of role performance of the women.

The table further shows that when role performance is considered as a unit, the R-value is 0.539, while the F-cal= 11.792. The F-cal is greater than the critical F-value of 3.84 at .05 level of significance influences on the role performance of the married academic women in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. Hypothesis 3 which states that stressor arising from marital discord will have no significant influence on the role performance of married academic women in tertiary institutions in Cross River State is therefore rejected. The value of regression weight B = 0.418, which account for 41.8% of the variance, indicates a positive influence and a moderate predictive value of the role performance of the married academic women.

The above result is in line with findings from Denga and Ekpo (1994), when states that marital discord indirectly decreasing the effectiveness of parental skills as discord between her and the husband and once a quarrel is ignited according to them, tension as stress may precipitate anxiety. When the stress arising from discord reached a breaking point performance may become zero.

### Conclusion

Stressors arising from child care had a significant influence on the role performance of married academic women in tertiary institutes. Hypothesis one which stated that stressors arising from child care will have no significance on the role performance of married academic women in tertiary institutions was therefore rejected.

Again stressors arising from marital discord had a significant influence on the role performance of married academic women in tertiary institutions. Hypothesis two which stated that stressors arising from marital discord will have no, significance influence on the role performance of married academic women in tertiary institutions was therefore rejected.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed.

1. Women academics should be encouraged to attend professional conferences, seminars and workshops in their discipline. Organizing professional seminars and workshop for women academics might be

- indirect ways of assisting them manage their stress.
2. Women academics should take notice of the factors of performance effectiveness and avoid them when performing the roles. It is only when they have done this that they will be more productive.
  3. Women academics should learn to cope with stressful situation at home by strategizing ways of overcoming such. For instance, the women have been naturally endowed to take care of their children and as such should not see child caring as a burden. However, they can hire house help or bring their relations to help them therein.

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