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Social Sciences Research

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Nigeria

JOB BURNOUT AND GENDER AS INDICES OF MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG UNIVERSITY LECTURERS IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Job burnout and gender as indices of lecturers' marital satisfaction were examined among two hundred and two lecturers (99 women and 103 men) selected via convenience sampling technique. They were drawn from three higher institutions in South-Eastern Nigeria, all within the age range of 32 and 52 years with a mean age of 43.50 years and standard deviation of 3.53. Two instruments: Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and Index of Marital Satisfaction (IMS) were employed to collect data. Cross-sectional design was adopted while data were analyzed using Pearson r and t-test statistics. The results of the study showed a weak correlation between burnout and marital satisfaction and no gender differences in marital satisfaction. The findings were discussed according to relevant and available literature. The researchers recommend that lecturers should be enlightened on the early signs of burnout and to strive to protect their marital satisfaction.

Keywords: Job burnout, Marital satisfaction, Gender, University lecturers

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Family and work are two important aspects of life. Most psychological researchers, especially in the area of applied psychology have demonstrated that what happens at work, positive and negative, can spill over to the family and vice versa (Cinamon & Rich 2002; Perrone & Worthington, 2001; Voydanoff, 2004;). Marital satisfaction has been used synonymously with marital happiness and success. It is an evaluation of one's state of marriage in

terms of how happy or unhappy one is with his/her marriage. *Adigeb and Mbu* (2015) defined marital satisfaction as an individual's subjective experience of marriage in terms of when their needs are met, and when the individual's expectations and desires are being satisfied. This implies that how satisfied a couple is can only be determined by the couples themselves. In other words, an individual evaluates the satisfaction he derives from his marriage based on his unique needs, expectations and desires for the relationship. Zolotnyik (2014) opined that marital satisfaction is an indicator of several aspects of a couple's life, such as the level of mutual understanding, the level of satisfaction with their sex lives, the tightness of communication in the family, and others. Therefore, marital dissatisfaction happens when the present status of the individual does not correspond with his/her expectations (Shifren, Monz, Russo, Segreti, & Johannes, 2008).

Whismam, Uebelacker & Bruce (2006) reported that being in an unhappy marriage is associated with significantly lower levels of happiness, life satisfaction, self-esteem and overall health along with elevated levels of psychological distress and depression for both men and women. According to Cinamon and Rich (2002), the conflict between work and family had given rise to some dysfunctional results, including job and family dissatisfaction, vocational burnout and a decrease in job and or family well-being. Saginak and Saginak (2005) observed that attempting to create a balance between the work and family domains creates many challenges and causes stress and burnout on the couples' relationship and marriage.

Burnout arises when prolonged stress causes energy to turn to exhaustion, involvement to cynicism (Dehumanization/depersonalisation), and efficiency to become a lack of accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). It is a prolonged response to chronic job-related stressors. Burnout has three aspects; Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization/dehumanization and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1982).

- Emotional exhaustion is the inability to do meaningful and productive work due to being emotionally depleted.
- Dehumanization manifests a callous negative attitude, uncaring excessively detached responses to fellow workers.
- Reduced personal accomplishing refers to feelings of incompetence and lack of efficacy.

According to Maslach (1982), the experience of burnout in work affects all spheres of life: family and friends; and their own emotional and physical happiness suffered as well.

The Nigerian tertiary institutions in recent time have witnessed a tremendous population growth in the number of candidates seeking admissions into these

institutions. This increase has actually raised the workload of most lecturers. In some of these tertiary institutions, the ratio of lecturer to student is 1 to 50 or more. When the lecturer is emotionally exhausted, physically drained, and psychologically depleted, there might be little left to give to the students and family members who ought to benefit from their education. Most often the academic calendar is disrupted by industrial actions like strike which results in crash programs when the strikes eventually end. This also negatively affects the physical and psychological health of the lecturers.

Similarly, there is an alarming global rate of divorce which makes the study of marital satisfaction very important in today's society. A 1999 National Marriage Project reported that about 50% of marriages are estimated to end in divorce. Marital trends cannot also be analyzed without taking into consideration the changing occupational and economic trends. It is against these backdrops that the researchers ventured into this research

Studies on marital satisfaction have also considered the role of gender. For example Oscharoff (2011) reports that an economic analysis of marriage suggests that marriage became less advantageous to both men and women, as women entered the work force and were able to earn an income. Oscharoff is also of the view that breakdown of sexual division of labour due to involvement in work by both genders, accounts for the increased marital dissatisfaction and high rate of divorce. Thus understanding the roles of burnout and gender on marital satisfaction among lecturers in South-East becomes inevitable.

The Objective List theory of life satisfaction (Nussbaum, 1992; Sen, 1985) holds that happiness consists of a human life that achieves certain things from a list of worthwhile pursuits: such as education, career accomplishments, freedom from disease and pain, material comforts, etc. In Africa and in Nigeria in particular, the list must include having children (especially male children) thus, what comprises this list is determined by culture and individual differences. However, the Existential theory proposes that people need to believe that their lives are meaningful, and that the things they do are significant, useful and important (Frankl, 2000). Thus people expect to derive a sense of existential significance from their work or love relationships and enter them with high hopes and expectations. When they feel they have failed, that is their work or marriage is insignificant, they feel helpless, hopeless and burnout. However, when people feel that what they do is important and significant, they do not burnout even under highly stressful conditions. Hughes & Galmsky (1994) found a direct relationship between the absence of burnout and marital satisfaction. They reported that people who had jobs that were enriching, challenging and experienced a supportive work environment also experience

more marital satisfaction than those who work in a non-supportive work space and whose jobs require high output levels. In a sample of 160 male Seventh Day Adventist pastors and their matched spouses, marital satisfaction was found to be related to burnout, indicating the occurrence of spillover (Anderson, 2011).

Kulit (2002), in his study on marital equality and the quality of long-term marriage reports a significant difference between males and females on marital satisfaction and burnout. Wives reported a high level of burnout and a lower level of marital satisfaction than did their husbands. *A meta-analysis of gender differences in marital satisfaction revealed a statistically significant difference in marital satisfaction between wives and husbands, with wives slightly less satisfied than husbands (Jackson, Miller, Oka & Henry, 2014). Similarly, different levels of marital satisfaction were reported among 100 Taiwanese participants, with men reporting higher level of marital satisfaction than women (Shen, 2002). Earlier researchers (Ying 1991; Kaslow, Hansson & Lundbled, 1994) reported similar findings. However, Clements, Cordova, Markman & Laurenceau, (1997) found higher satisfaction for females.*

Based on the literature reviewed, the following hypotheses were tested in this study:

- There will be a significant relationship between lecturers' burnout and their marital satisfaction.
- Male and female lecturers will differ in their marital satisfaction.

Method

Participants

Participants consisted of 202 married lecturers drawn from three high institutions in South East, namely; Imo State University, Owerri, Federal University of Technology, Owerri and Abia State University, Uturu. They were selected through convenience sampling technique- participants who were readily available and willing to participate in the study were issued a questionnaire at their various institutions and offices. Of the 202 participants, 99 were females (49.01%) and 103 were males (50.99%). Participants' age range is 32-56, with a mean age of 43.50 and standard deviation of 3.53.

Measures

Two instruments (structured questionnaires) were used for data collection. The instruments have provision for eliciting the demographic variables of the participants.

Burnout was assessed with the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) developed by Maslach (1983). The 25-item inventory is designed to assess burnout

syndrome which is a state of physical and emotional depletion resulting from the conditions of work. The scale has subscales: Emotional exhaustion, dehumanization and reduced personal achievement. Addition of the scores of the subscales gives the overall MBI score which was utilized in this study. Maslach & Jackson (1986) provided the properties for Nigeria samples. A Cronbach's alpha of .86 and split-half reliability of .92 were obtained by Coker (1999). The scale is a likert scale with 6 response choices ranging from 1=a few times a year to 6 = every day.

The second instrument, Index of Marital Satisfaction (IMS) (Hudson (1982) , assessed the marital satisfaction of participants. It is also a 25 item inventory that measures the degree, severity or magnitude of the problems one spouse or partner perceives to be having in a marital relationship with his or her partner. Hudson obtained a reliability coefficient (Internal consistency) of .96 and a 2-hour test –retest reliability of .96. Anene (1994) obtained a concurrent validity coefficient of .48 by correlating IMS with marital Stress Inventory (MSI) (Omoluabi, 1994) and hence its validity for Nigerian use.

Procedure

A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed in each of the three high institutions giving a total of 300 questionnaires. Each questionnaire contained an identification letter revealing the researchers' identity and mission. These scales were administered individually to the various lecturers met at their respective offices in their respective institutions and who were willing to participate in the study. Out of the 300 questionnaires distributed, 60 were retrieved from Abia State University, 74 from Imo State University, Owerri while 68 were retrieved from Federal University of Technology, Owerri, making a total of 202 participants.

Design & Statistics

The design is descriptive cross-sectional survey while the Pearson correlation coefficient (Pearson r) and the t-test were used to test hypotheses 1 and 2 respectively

Results

Table 1

Pearson correlation between marital satisfaction and burnout

Variables	N	M	SD	df	r	p
Marital Satisfaction	202	29.66	16.82			
					.18	.004
			200			
Burnout	202	63.45	13.92			

The result of the analysis using Pearson showed a significant correlation between marital satisfaction and burnout, $r(200) = .18$, $p = .004$. This significant positive correlation implies that the higher the burnout experienced, the higher the level of marital dissatisfaction among lecturers. Thus this result upholds the first hypothesis.

Table 2
Summary of t-test Results Showing Gender Differences in Marital Satisfaction

Variables	Source	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Gender	Females	99	29.92	16.54	200	.26	.858
	Males	103	29.41	17.17			

Similarly, the t-test result, indicating marital satisfaction between males ($M = 29.41$, $SD = 17.17$) and females ($M = 29.92$, $SD = 16.54$) revealed no gender differences, $t(200) = .26$, $p = .858$. Gender therefore did not make any significant difference in marital satisfaction of lecturers.

Discussion

The study examined the role of job burnout and gender differences in marital satisfaction of lecturers. The result of the initial analysis performed showed that job burnout predicts marital satisfaction. As level of job burnout increases marital dissatisfaction also increases. This finding supports previous empirical evidence (Anderson, 2011; Whisman, Uebelacker, & Bruce 2006; Hughes & Galmsky (1994). Also, the result revealed that on the average, the Nigerian lecturers experience high levels of burnout ($M = 63.45$). Thus the mean score of 63.45 is above the mean score for the MBI which indicates a high level of burnout. As Maslach (1994) opined, burnout can be contagious among colleagues and by creating Interpersonal and intrapersonal disorders, lead to psychosocial disorders. In the researchers' opinion, there is no doubt the Nigerian lecturers work in a stressful environment with poor and non-frequent salaries as well as work overload which generate burnout that is eventually carried to their homes.

There was no statistically significant difference in marital satisfaction between female lecturers and their male counterparts. This finding, however contradicts

the findings of Kulit (2002); Shen (2002); Kaslow, Hansson and Lundbled, (1994); and Ying (1991). Thus under a conducive work and marital environment, both males and females can experience marital satisfaction and vice versa.

The implication of these findings is that the management of Nigerian tertiary institutions should ensure that work load role conflict, poor and irregular salaries, and other factors that can lead to burnout are reduced to the barest minimum. Similarly the work environment (both physical and psychological) should be made conducive to enable the worker operate optimally with less stress.

The researchers therefore recommend that enlightenment programme should be carried out to enable lecturers dictate early signs of burnout. The programme should also include measures that will enable the lecturers adjust so that spill over effects will be avoided. Free marriage counseling services should be provided for the lecturers by these institutions without stigmatization. Also, management of universities and other institutions of higher learning should endeavour to make provisions for breaks (holidays) in their academic calendar regardless of the programmes run by such institutions.

Two limitations of this study are the small sample size and the survey nature of the study which made causal inference impossible. Thus caution should be applied in making generalizations from the present findings. In the light of these limitations, the researchers suggest that subsequent researchers should increase the sample size and focus on job satisfaction, life satisfaction as well as age and length of marriage on marital satisfaction. A study of gender differences on burnout is also encouraged.

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