

AGE, YEARS IN MARRIAGE, LEVEL ON PROGRAMME AND STRESS AMONG MARRIED FEMALE SANDWICH UNDERGRADUATES OF EKITI STATE UNIVERSITY, NIGERIA

Joyce Olufunke Ogunsanmi, Ph.D.

Department of Guidance and Counselling, Ekiti State University, Nigeria

Abstract

The study investigated the levels of stress experienced by married female sandwich undergraduates in Ekiti State University, Nigeria. Stressors of interest were occupational stress, family responsibility stress, academic activities stress, financial stress, cultural roles stress, religious roles stress and programme generated stress. The influences of age, years in marriage and level on academic programme on stress experienced among the women were examined. The study was a descriptive research of the survey type. The population was all married female sandwich undergraduates in four hundred (400) and five hundred (500) levels of 2012/2013 academic session of Ekiti State University, AdoEkiti, Nigeria. A sample of 200 women was selected through stratified random sampling techniques. The research instrument was a questionnaire which was validated by the researcher. One (1) research question was raised and one (3) research hypotheses were postulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Results of the analyses revealed that the women experienced different levels of stress. Counselling implications of the findings were highlighted. Based on the findings, it was recommended that young married female should delay participation in the rigorous sandwich programme. Since the years in marriage and level on the programme were significant, interested newly married women should wait for some years into their marriage before embarking on the programme. Also, married female undergraduates should be counseled to develop coping methods to care for their various roles as married women on the programme.

Keywords: Stress, levels of stress, married female sandwich undergraduates, occupational, family responsibility, academic activities, financial, cultural roles, religious roles and programme generated stress

Introduction

Nigeria, like some other nations of the world, values education for her citizens and emphasizes quality education. There is no gain-saying the fact that quality education is very necessary for individuals and national development. Our society is not static but dynamic. If the society is dynamic, it means that it must demand certain priorities as remarked by Allan (1977) in terms of new knowledge, new status, innovations and updating of the existing knowledge. Sandwich programme, as a programme of study, is conducted outside the regular system of study by institutions of higher learning. In Nigeria, students on sandwich programme are not full time students of their respective universities because majority of the participants are teachers. Borisade (2007) observed that the programme met its objectives in that it has continually encouraged academic growth of teachers and improved their productivity and competence. In the same vein, Oyedeji (2011) observed that the University of Ibadan established the Distance Learning Centre develop human capacity in areas not covered by the conventional means of education and in entirely new areas. Undergraduates are expected to spend at least three months each contact period to receive lectures and be examined. The candidates are expected to be physically present, attend all lectures and write examinations during the contact period. The sandwich programme, with its good objectives of providing opportunities of education for workers, improves their levels of education. However, it appears to put a lot of pressures on the students. Students leave their homes, which may be very far away from their Universities to get accommodation and settle down for studies. Women have been observed to have increased in academic activities and have made considerable strides in academic activities (Nonnema, 2000; Dever, Zoe, Dalton & Tayton 2006). Students of sandwich programmes are often times workers who seek to improve their professional status, position or income and educational levels. Nigeria's educational policy, which outlines that the minimum teaching qualification is National Certificate in Education (NCE), has forced many teachers, in particular, to enrol in Sandwich programmes. These programmes attract many people and for years, many graduates have been produced through them and are still benefitting (Njoku, 1996 ; Borisade, 2007). Similarly to this view, is the observation of Tsokar and Okeke (2014), which revealed that to achieve sustainable development in any country, there must be strategic and deliberate strive towards adopting indigenous policy that would engender self- sufficiency. Thus, individuals are encouraged to find means of building their capacity in an attempt to achieve sustainable development. Hence, people are encouraged to acquire knowledge through formal and informal education. In order to achieve this objective, efforts are made towards designing programmes that enable people to go for further

learning at their convenient times. People who have one employment or the other are able to go for higher education without losing their jobs. Hence, there are Distance Learning, Sandwich Programme, Part Time Programmes and Open Learning of the National Open University of Nigeria in higher education in Nigeria (Jegede, 2002).

Stress is the body's reactive response to any unusually challenging or overwhelming situation. It has been observed by this researcher that the nature and design of the programme appear to generate stress in the students. The programme on the whole, appears to be a stressor. Many undergraduates on the programme appear to experience stress as married women. They experience personal-social-psychological, marital and financial problems as undergraduates (Ogunsanmi, 2011). Trockel, Bernes, & Egget (2000) examined stress among married students in their first year in college and found that as they combined the roles of being mothers, wives and students, they experienced a lot of stress. A related study indicated a significant difference between the level of stress perceived by married and single women lecturers in universities in Southwest Nigeria (Omoniyi & Ogunsanmi, 2011)

Undergraduates on the programmes did not receive scholarships, grants or aids as others on regular programmes in institutions. Thus, cost of cost materials, schools fees, family needs and care appear to constitute stressors. Also, they seemed to experience ill-health and emotional breakdown. Other observed problems experienced by the married women on the programme included non-availability of hostels and inadequate lecture rooms and facilities (Njoku, 1996). The Centre for Continuing Education of Ekiti State University recently built lecture rooms in the sandwich village of the university. However, these are still inadequate. In a review of various Open and Distance Learning (ODL) programmes in Nigeria towards women empowerment, Akomolafe (2011) observed that in empowering women in Nigeria through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) programmes, which included education through the sandwich method, did not give much emphasis to accommodation as it was generally, a non-regular programme. Observation showed that one of the problems in the education sector in Nigeria is the underlying problem of low political commitment and low funding of adult education (Ogunsanmi, 2012). Thus, inadequate facilities for lectures and hostel accommodation appear to be stressors in the education sector (Omoniyi & Ogunsanmi, 2012). Nkechinjeyre (2008) opined that teaching-learning activities for the sandwich programme should be made less stressful by the provision of favourable environment, well-laid-out lecture and examination facilities. Cultural demands of marriage in some cultures in Nigeria, expect a wife or mother to care for and support both the husband and children in the home (Ogunsanmi, 2001). Hence, married female

undergraduates' stress appeared to be caused by their multiple roles and responsibilities mothers, wives, religious leaders, employed workers and role-models in the society. So, they are faced with mind boggling schedules of home care, child care, being mothers, wives, role models, mentors and leaders in the society. In the same vein, Omoniyi and Ogunsanmi (2012) observed that married, young and junior academic staff members in universities in Southwest Nigeria also experienced stress. On the contrary, Thind and Jaswal (2006) observed that married Indian women went through being educated and still coped well with marital responsibilities around them.

In the development of females in Nigeria, it has been observed that important psychological processes have been affected by personal family stressor. Hence, associating stress load of conflict, frustration and tension have increased (Cutrona, 2006). In analyzing the delay in school attendance and imbalance of gender in school enrolment, Obodoegbulam (2006) revealed that social discrimination, economic deprivation, political marginalization and cultural annihilation had no intellectual justification in the issue of women education. However, Ogunboyede (2004) had earlier observed in analyzing women education and academic achievement in national development in Nigeria that gender did not influence the achievement of women. Some other researchers observed cultural constraints such as early marriage and preference for male child as negative influences on female education in Africa and Nigeria in particular (Mammam, 2000; Ogunlade, 2000; Obi, 2001; & Ugwu, 2002).

Age of the female married women on the sandwich programme appear to be significant as they go through the stress. Age was found to be significant to the level of stress experienced by women lecturers in Southwest Nigeria (Ogunsanmi & Omoniyi, 2011). In addition, Ogunsanmi (2011) observed that undergraduates of the Open, Distance and Sandwich Educational Programmes in Southwest Nigeria fall within the age bracket of 20 years - 25 years.

The exact levels of the stress experienced and the influence of age, years in marriage and level on the programme on stress among the women are not clearly defined. Therefore, this study attempted to examine the influence of age, years in marriage and level on programme on stress among married female undergraduates of Ekiti State University. The study is significant in that data generated contributes to issues on gender in education and literature on women education in Nigeria.

Research method

The descriptive research of the survey type was adopted for the study. The population for the study consisted of all married female sandwich

undergraduates on four hundred (400) and five hundred (500) levels of 2012/2013 academic session of Ekiti State University, AdoEkiti. The sample consisted 200 women selected using stratified random sampling techniques. The research instrument was a self-constructed questionnaire which solicited opinion of the selected women on the influence of age years in marriage and level on the sandwich educational programme. Face and content validities of the instrument were ensured. Using test-retest method, reliability co-efficient of 0.81 was obtained for the instrument. The internal consistency of the instrument was also determined using split-half reliability method and reliability co-efficient of 0.85 was obtained. These were significant at 0.05 level of significance. The research instrument was administered by the researcher in lecture rooms. Data generated were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics- frequency count, percentage and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Results

Research Question 1:What are the levels of stress experienced by married female sandwich undergraduates in Ekiti State University?

In answering the question, mean score (120.99) and standard deviation (27.83) on stress were used to categorize the subjects into “Low”, “Medium” and “High “levels of stress as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Level of Stress of Married Female Sandwich Undergraduates

	Frequency	Percentage
Low	22	11.0
Medium	159	79.5
High	19	9.5
Total	200	100.0

Hypothesis 1:There is no significant difference in the level of stress experienced by married female sandwich undergraduates of Ekiti State University based on age.

Table 2:Oneway ANOVA showing the level of stress experienced by female sandwich undergraduates by age.

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	F	Sig. F
Between Groups	5206.189	7	743.741	2.258*	<.05
Within Groups	63234.366	192	329.346		
Total	68440.555	199			

*P< 0.05

Table 2 shows that F (7,192) -2.258,P<0.05. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference in the level of stress experienced by married female sandwich undergraduates of Ekiti State University based on age.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the level of stress experienced by married female sandwich undergraduates of Ekiti State University based on years in marriage.

Table 3: Oneway ANOVA showing the level of stress experienced by female sandwich undergraduates based on years in marriage.

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig. F
Between Groups	2861.127	4	715.282	2.774*	<.05
Within Groups	40746.837	158	257.891		
Total	43607.963	162			

*P<0.05

The results of the ANOVA were significant, $F(4,158)=2.774, P<0.05$. It implies that there is significant difference in the level of stress experienced by married female sandwich undergraduates of Ekiti State University based on years in marriage.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the level of stress experienced by married female sandwich undergraduates of Ekiti State University based on level of programme.

Table 4: Oneway ANOVA showing the level of stress experienced by female sandwich undergraduates based on level of programme.

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig. F
Between Groups	3208.894	4	802.224	2.398*	<.05
Within Groups	65231.661	195	334.521		
Total	68440.555	199			

P<0.05

Table 4 shows that the ANOVA results were significant, $F(4, 195) = 2.398, P<0.05$. Hence, there is a significant difference in the level of stress experienced by married female sandwich undergraduates of Ekiti State University based on level on programme.

Discussion

The findings revealed significant differences in the level of stress experienced by married female undergraduates in Ekiti State University. Stress was experienced differently among the women. However, a great number (79.5%) experienced it. The number that experienced it highly (9.5%) is a matter of concern as it affected homes. Generally, the results imply that women had high and positive expectations of benefits after the programme like the attainment of higher educational degrees and improved social status as they went through the stressful conditions of receiving education. This is similar to the observation of Thind and Jaswal (2006) concerning some Indian women who went through stress of academic activities as mothers and housewives. This finding is similar to the findings of Trockel, Barnes & Egget (2000) who examined stress in women who

combined academic work and being housewives and mothers and found that they experienced stress. Education through the sandwich educational system has been established and effective since a few decades in the past in Nigeria. This system of education has proved to be an effective method of building human capacity, especially, women towards sustainable development of Nigeria. The observation of Tsokar and Okeke (2014) that there must be strategic and deliberate strive towards adopting indigenous policy that would engender self-sufficiency towards sustainable development and human capacity building agrees with the efforts of married women struggling to improve their lot educationally.

Conclusion

The following conclusions could be drawn from the analysis of data and interpretation of the findings of the study:

- i. Married female sandwich undergraduates experience stress in at different levels.
- ii. The age, years in marriage and level on programme of married female undergraduates influence stress among them.

Counselling Implications of the Findings and Recommendations

The establishment of community counselling clinics is essential in communities because of the negative consequences of stress on women as they perform their multiple roles. They need counselling on strategies to help them develop coping skills in their attempts to obtain more education and acquire higher certificates as wives, mothers, career women and role models in the society. Counselling sessions could involve their husbands, in-laws and other significant individuals in their lives, who can give assistance in the care of the home generally. Thus, the significant stressors of cultural roles and family responsibilities could be minimized as they seek to improve on their educational levels to build up their human capacity. In addition, institutions of higher learning require well- established counselling centres to meet the psychological needs of married female undergraduates while undergoing academic activities on campus.

Based on the findings and their interpretations in this study, it is recommended that female married undergraduates should as a matter of practice, visit counselling clinics in their communities and campuses often. Both marriage counsellors and women undergoing studies through the sandwich educational programme, should take note of the variables that have been found to be significant in this study. Husbands and significant individuals in the lives of such married women should be of assistance to them at home and outside the home. Young married women should who may

want to further studies should delay such so as to meet demands and expectations of culture as married women.

Limitation

The study was able to use married female sandwich undergraduates of 2012/2013 session only of Ekiti State University, Nigeria.

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