

Role-Based Stress as a Correlate of Marital Conflicts among Nurses

Mgbenkemdi Ejike and Ekwo Jude

Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Enugu State University of Science and Technology.

Corresponding author: iamejike@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

This study investigated Role-based stress as a correlate of marital conflicts among nurses. A total number of one hundred (100) participants, comprising seventy-eight (78) female nurses and twenty-two (22) male nurses from Enugu State University Teaching Hospital, Parklane and University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Ituku-Ozalla, Enugu State, were drawn for this study. The participants were within the age range of 33-58 years, with a mean age of 44 years and a standard deviation of 4.6. Multi-stage sampling technique was used in the selection of the hospitals, units, and participants. Two sets of instruments were used in this study; (i) The Marital Conflict scale, developed by Omeje, (2000) using Nigeria participants reported a reliability index of .94 and a validity index of .80. (ii) Job-related Tension (JT) was developed by Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn and Snoek (1964), while Oseghare (1988) validated the scale in Nigeria. Correlation design was adopted, while Pearson Product – moment correlation coefficient was the statistics applied to test the co-variation between the two variables. However, the findings showed a significant relationship between role-based stress and marital conflicts [$r = (df, 99) = 0.81$ at $p < .01$]. Therefore, it is recommended that nurses should be provided with a conducive environment both internal and external factors to make work easier to reduce role-based stress for marital conflict to be controlled.

Keywords: Role-Based Stress, Marital Conflicts, Nurses, Correlate and Family.

Introduction

The role responsibilities of the helping professionals such as nurses occupy a major part of their lives in terms of time, effort and importance which may result in role-based stress and likely make them vulnerable to marital conflict, hence the need for the present study. Many previous studies have explored the possibility that role-based stress negatively impacts the well-being of a nurse, therefore, leading to marital conflict (Carnes, 2017). The demands of striking a balance between work and family life can be a major source of stress in an individual's life, leading to harmful effects on one's health and wellbeing (Frone, 2003). Everyone experiences stress in life daily, however, excessive amounts of stress can cause diminished performance in life including among other places, at home, work life and relationships as well as the physical and psychological well-being of the individual (Casey, 2011). For many two aspects of life are two important and they are; work and family. As many people take up multiple jobs to have a dual income and an increase in the number of hours spent at work, many find that they are now juggling the dual roles of work and family responsibilities (Welbourne, Johnson, & Erez, 2008). This has led to the phenomenon of

conflict between work role and family responsibility which has generated increased interest in the research surrounding this topic (Karimi, Karimi, & Nouri, 2011).

Kahn and Byosiére (1997) defined role-based stress as the feelings of tension, discomfort, uncertainty, indecisiveness and distress that a worker experiences as a result of the social and physical circumstances of the work setting. Role-based stress is the stress emanating from the demands of the job (Ugwu, Okonkwo & Ngwoke, 2020) which may vary across work settings. For example, studies (Welbourne, Johnson, & Erez, 2008) on causes of psychosocial stress indicate that many occupational settings are potentially stressful. Interestingly, the nursing profession is among the potentially stressful occupational settings. However, Scanzoni (2018) and Suchet & Barling (2008) stated that much role-based stress also favours individual characteristics such as personality, thus indicating that certain working conditions are stressful to some people (Perlow, 2018). And role-based stress occurs in a wide range of work circumstances but is often made worse when nurses feel they have few resources.

In general, role-based stress can be defined as the physical and emotional responses that happen when the employee's capabilities and resources cannot be coped with the demands and requirements of their job (Abraham & Bruyne, 2011; Sveinsdottir, Biering & Ramel, 2006; Mi-Jeung & Sun-Ju, 2020; Li, Cao & Liu, 2015). A phenomenon that is related to work and is known as role-based stress may be expressed differently and affects nurses in different work contexts. Studying role-based stress will demonstrate the perception of stress and its negative effects on nurses' satisfaction and productivity in different contexts and situations (Shakerinia & Mohammadpour, 2010). According to Piko (2006), stressful situations in the workplace make role-based stress leads to harmful effects on both employers and employees. So, role-based stress will have unwelcome results such as absenteeism, loss of productivity and health care resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Role-based stress refers to tension, anxiety, and distress from work (Karasek, 2009; Hawkins, Carrere & Gottman, 2004).

Role-based stress and marital conflict have been common variables which have been used to study their effects and the relationship between themselves and other variables. Kahn and Byosiére (1997) explored the effect of role-based stress on marital conflicts among employees. They found employees having high role-based stress, exhibited a high level of marital conflict than those having low role-based stress. It implies that nurses with high role-based stress are likely faced with marital conflict, while nurses that are faced with low or no role-based stress do not have to bother with marital conflict.

Moreover, marital conflict is a topic of major interest because it has consequential implications for both individuals and organizations (Motowidlo, Pacard & Manning, 2018) and Mgbenkemdi and Eze (2017). Marital conflict is a process which arises between two parties, that is, husband and wife, which can indicate sexual disagreement, child minding differences and temperamental differences. It is not yet just a difference of opinion, rather, it's a series of events that have been poorly handled, to deeply manage the marriage

relationship, which will affect both parties psychologically and lead them to have stress at their job. According to Carmer, (2010) and Casey, (2011) caption "Conflict is King", in his research on marital conflict, he talks about how to prevent the marriage from facing any conflict at home; he said that marital conflict can be the cause, when both spouses refuse to accept their wrong and always front their stubbornness, pride, bitterness, anger, hurt, etc. which affects marriage communication. According to oxford business dictionary, 3 edition 2020, marital conflict is known as a disagreement between a man and a woman who are in a close relationship or marital relationship. Marital conflict has a deleterious effect on marriage which can be physical, mental and family health. Three decades of research have yielded a detailed behaviour that differentiates distressed and none distressed couples. Marital conflict has assumed a special status in the literature on marriage as evidenced by these three decades. Most influential theories of marriage tend to reflect the view that distress results from a couple's aversive and ineffectual response to conflict, (Boles, Johnson, & Hair, 2009).

According to Dildar, Sitwat, and Yasin (2000), Sandole and Staroste, (2014) they said that marital conflict has to be focused on what spouses do when they disagree with each other and reviews of marital interaction, which are dominated by studies of conflicts and problem solutions. Marital conflicts affect the spouses and its implications are physical and family health, which leads to the onset of depressive symptoms which includes among other things like episodic drinking, eating disorder, lack of concentration on their job, always out of home etc. marital also associated with poor health and specific illness such as cancer, cardiac diseases, chronic pain, poor parenting and adjustment of children, increase like the hood of parent-child-conflict (Finchman, Steven, Davila, Joanne, & Beach. (2004).).

Marital conflict can be virtually anything a couple complains about. Sources of this conflict, ranging from verbal and physical abusiveness to personal characteristics and behaviour perceived inequity in a couple's division of labour, which also associate with marital conflict and the tendency for the male to withdraw in response to conflict. Conflicts in marriage always cause marital dissatisfaction and stress at work. Which can bring crisis, misunderstanding and misjudging and this can lead to divorce and being sacked from office. Conflicts in marriage overpower are strongly related to marital dissatisfaction. Spouses reported conflict over extra-marital sex and problematic drinking and this led to divorce. According to Buss, (2007) in his book titled "the essence of marriage" said that marital conflict is an age-long social problem, which connotes sharp disagreement, quarrelling and bitter struggle between couples.

Eze (1994) defined marital conflict as an unfortunate disagreement between married couples which may lead to a hot exchange of abusive words and fighting. Hence a couple is in conflict when one person wants something that the other person does not; the basis of conflict exists when one person's ability to obtain satisfaction, means that the other will experience deprivation. Thus, conflict is simply inevitable in many relationships because it is not possible for two people always want the same thing at the same time. Mental

hygienist affirms that covert conflict is potentially more damaging than open fighting, when people quarrel, they are at least aware of a problem. The chances are there that they will find some sort of solution. In the relationship between role-based stress and marital conflict, it's no doubt that these two variables are likely interwoven and could be said to be the reason for their occurrences. The present study finds it mandatory to investigate the relationship that exists between the two variables.

Role-based stress poses a serious health challenge threat to nurses, a high level of stress during work as a nurse can result in marital conflict. Being a nurse has been proven to be a stressful job, it is expected that nurses not only spend time on instructional activities such as work planning, teaching, and moving patients from one ward to another, but also on tasks such as running co-curricular activities, attending or facilitating professional development activities, and engagement in parenting, and community activities, with all these it is expected that nurses will be faced with role-based stress, therefore increasing the risk of been in marital conflict. Furthermore, individuals who experienced role-based stress have been found to develop increased health risks, inappropriate performance in family roles (marital partner and parent), reduced family and life satisfaction, and poor marital relations, therefore leading to marital conflict.

Conceptual Framework

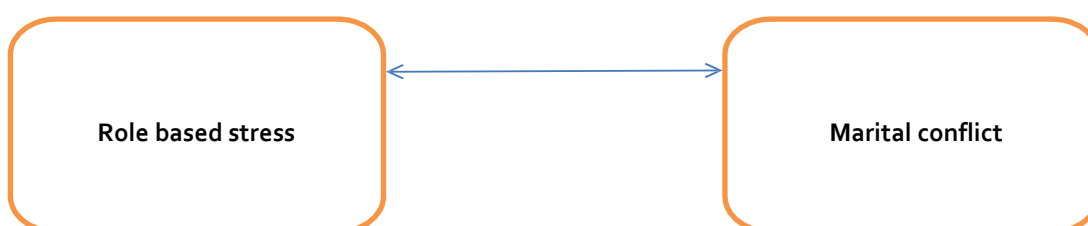


Fig 1: The diagram above shows the correlation between role-based stress and marital conflict among nurses

Theoretical Framework

Bakker and Demerouti (2007) developed the job demands-resources (JD-R) model to explain the relationship between self, life and proactive work behaviour. Job demands are aspects of a job that require psychological and or physical costs; examples of job demands are attending to too many patients and standing long working hours. In contrast, job resources are physical, psychological, and social aspects of work that help employees reduce job demands, achieve work goals, and contribute to personal growth and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Examples of job resources include autonomy in performing tasks, role clarity, positive relationships with supervisors, and opportunities for career advancement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

According to the job demands- resource (JD-R) model, job demands put a strain on nurses which can have negative outcomes (e.g. marital conflict), whereas job resources help employees counteract job demands, therefore, decreasing, role-based stress and marital

conflict. Job demand resources could result from faulty or negative perceptions of the self, workload, stressful events, and a pessimistic view of one's ability. The meanings given to a situation or event determine the response given. If the nurses negatively attribute the role-based stress and job demand control it eventually may lead to marital conflict. The job demand-control model states that the greatest risk to physical and mental health from stress happens to workers facing high psychological workload, demands or pressure combined with low control or decision latitude by meeting those demands. Role-based stress is a function of how demanding a nurse's job, and how much control the person has over his or her responsibilities. Based on this theory of job demand, it is hypothesized in this study that it is the way nurses interpret the cause of their workload that determines their marital conflicts. In other words, the meaning they give to their experiences determines their response.

Statement of the problem

Role-based stress poses a serious health challenge threat to nurses, a high level of stress during work as a nurse can result in marital conflict. Being a nurse has been proven to be a stressful job, it is expected that nurses not only spend time on instructional activities such as work planning, teaching, and moving patients from one ward to another, but also on tasks such as running co-curricular activities, attending or facilitating professional development activities, and engagement in parenting, and community activities, with all these it is expected that nurses will be faced with role-based stress, therefore increasing the risk of being in marital conflict.

Furthermore, individuals who experienced role-based stress have been found to develop increased health risks, inappropriate performance in family roles (marital partner and parent), reduced family and life satisfaction, and poor marital relations, therefore leading to marital conflict. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether role-based stress will significantly correlate with marital conflict among nurses. It was hypothesized as follows:

- That there will be a significant correlation between role-based stress and marital conflicts among nurses.

Method

Participants

A total number of one hundred (100) participants, comprising seventy-eight (76) female nurses and twenty-two (24) male nurses from Enugu State University Teaching Hospital, Parklane and University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Ituku-Ozalla, Enugu State, were drawn for this study. The participants were within the age range of 33-58 years, with a mean age of 44 years and a standard deviation of 4.6. Multi-stage sampling technique was used in the selection of the hospitals, units and participants' demographic variables such as age, educational qualification, gender and length of service were explored.

Instrument

Two sets of instruments were used, namely, marital conflict questionnaire and job tension scale.

Marital Conflict Behavior Checklist (MCBC) Omeje (2000)

The 37-item marital conflict behaviour checklist scale was designed to assess the presence of conflict based on its frequency in marital relationships. Each item in the instrument was scored on a four-point scale: rarely = 1, Sometimes = 2, Often = 3 and always = 4. The participants were instructed to place a check mark (v) in the column that best described their status.

Based on the scores reflected by the frequency of the items in the lives of the participants, they were classified into high or low conflict groups using the median score as the point of discrimination. The developer of MCBC (Omeje, 2000) obtained a reliability Coefficient Alpha of .94 and a validity index of .80 for the instrument. And to revalidate its reliability the researcher administered the instrument to 30 Nurses from Eastern Medical Center, Uwani, Enugu State and equally obtained a Split-half Reliability Coefficient of .89. According to Guilford (1956), a correlation coefficient of .90 to 1 is a very high and dependable. Therefore, the instrument was considered reliable for the study.

Job related Tension (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn & Snoek 1964)

This is a 15-item questionnaire designed to measure organizational stress. The response was designed on a 5-point Likert response format, ranging from never to nearly all the time. All scores are directly scored. Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn and Snoek (1964) provided the psychometric properties for American samples. While Oseghare, (1988) provided the properties for Nigerian samples through extrapolation of his finding on stressors. The coefficient of alpha reported by Sheridan, (1978) and Oseghare, (1988) are .87 and .39 respectively. A concurrent validity coefficient of .01 was obtained by correlating JT with rated performance (Sheridan et al 1978), while Oseghare (1988), obtained a coefficient of .46 when he correlated JT equivalent with checklist symptoms stress by Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978). And to revalidate its reliability the researchers administered the instrument to 30 Nurses from Eastern Medical Center, Uwani, Enugu State and equally obtained a Split-half Reliability Coefficient of .97.

Procedure

A letter of introduction was obtained from the Head of Department, Psychology to the selected hospitals for identification and approval to go ahead with the research in their establishment. The participants who are nurses were selected with the aid of multi-stage sampling techniques. A total number of 100 participants (76 females and 24 males) were drawn from 3 hospital units namely, (42 from the emergency ward, 38 from the maternity ward, and 20 from the female ward) among nurses in Enugu State University Teaching

Hospital, Parklane, Enugu State and University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Ituku- Ozalla, Enugu State. The hospitals and units were selected through balloting while the participants were drawn with the help of the availability sampling technique. Permission was obtained from the heads of each unit selected giving the researchers access to nurses in each of the units; nursing students on internship were used as research assistants for easy access to the participants.

A total of one hundred and thirty (130) copies of each instrument were distributed within two (2) weeks. Out of the one hundred and thirty (130) copies distributed, twenty-seven (27) copies were not returned, while three (3) copies were invalid and thus discarded. A total of one hundred copies (100) correctly filled were used to test the hypothesis.

Design and Statistics

A correlation design was adopted to find out the relationship between the two variables (role base stress and marital conflict) without any manipulation. Moreover, the Pearson Product moment correlation coefficient was the statistic applied to test the relationship between role-based stress and marital conflict.

Results

The present chapter mainly featured result analysis and interpretation. Hence, data obtained from participants were analyzed by computing the means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables.

Table 1: Number of participants based on gender

		Value Label	N	Percent
Gender	1	Male	24	24
	2	Female	76	76
Total			100	100

Mgbenkemdi & Ekwo. (2022)

Table 1 shows that out of 100 participants for the study, 24 (24%) are male nurses while 76 (76%) are female nurses. Hence, more female nurses participated in the study.

Table 2: Means and standard deviations of demographics and studied variables

Variable	Mean	SD	N
Gender	1.32	.52	100
Age	34.24	2.51	100
Role based stress	101.54	11.32	100
Marital-conflict	61.42	7.45	100

Mgbenkemdi & Ekwo. (2022)

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the demographics, independent and dependent variables as follows gender ($M = 1.32$; $SD = .52$), age ($M = 34.24$; $SD = 2.51$), role based stress ($M = 101.54$; $SD = 11.32$) and marital-conflict ($M = 61.42$; $SD = 7.45$).

Table 3: Summary table of correlation between variables of interest ($N=100$)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Marital Conflict	Role Based Stress
Marital Conflict	110.01	21.92	1	
Role Based Stress	53.47	14.72	.81	1

*Note:*** indicates significance at $p < .001$ at two-tail. Mgbenkemdi & Ekwo. (2022)

From the table above, 100 married nurses were surveyed about their marital conflict experiences ($M = 110.01$; $SD = 21.92$) as well as their role-based stress experiences ($M = 53.47$; $SD = 14.72$). A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between role-based stress and marital conflict among married nurses. There was a strong, positive correlation between the two variables, $r = .81$, $N = 99$; more so, the relationship was highly significant ($p = .001$). Meaning that nurses with high role-based stress do have a high level of marital conflict and verse-versa, hence the alternate hypothesis of this study is accepted. Marital conflict being experienced by married nurses appears to be associated with the stress they experience based on the role they play in their workplace.

Summary of Results

The present study investigated the relationship between role based stress and marital conflict among nurses, and with the above result, it implies that role based stress and marital conflict are strongly correlated among nurses.

Discussion

The result of the findings showed that a positive correlation between role-based stress and marital conflict. This means that the stated hypothesis "there would be a positive significant relationship between role-based stress and marital conflict among nurses" was accepted. The result of the present study is in support of the findings of other researchers like, (Mohsen, Adnan, Sultan & Sabira 2013, Mgbenkemdi, (2014). observes the role of negative affectivity and conflict styles on newlywed couples marital satisfaction. Previous studies that are not in consonant with the recent findings, Schneewind and Gerhard, (2002) who examined the relationship between marital conflict and role based stress. In general, role based stress was related to marital conflict. The study was aimed to uncover the moderating role of role based stress to reduce marital conflict.

Finally, the result of this study implies that role based stress is not nurses' thing, rather role-based stress happen to bring the best in them. But the research shows that nurses that are faced with role-based stress, it happens to weigh them down, rather than to motivate and bring out their best. This shows that role-based stresses do cause nurses to be prone to marital conflict. According to the result obtained, if any is expressing marital conflict it is as a result of role-based stress.

Implications of the Findings

The result obtained is in line with the theoretical framework of Bakker and Demrouti (2007), Anyan and Hjemdal, (2016). developed the job demands resources (JD-R) model to explain the relationship between self, life and proactive work behaviour. Job demands are aspects of a job that require psychological and or physical costs; examples of job demands are attending to too many patients and standing long working hours.

The result obtained implies that role-based stress is strongly correlated with marital conflict among nurses. This shows the presence of role-based stress can cause the presence of marital conflict among nurses. Therefore, it will be advisable that nurses are advised to consider the joy they will derive from making patient feel better as a motivational tool that will help to keep marital conflict absent even if role based stress is present.

Conclusion

This study investigated on role based stress as a correlate of marital conflict among nurses. The result obtained shows that role-based stress strongly correlate with marital conflict among nurses. Therefore, it is recommended that nurses should be provided with conducive environment to reduce role-based stress for marital conflict to be controlled.

Recommendations

- That nurses should be provided with a conducive environment both internal and external factors to make work easier in order to reduce role-based stress for marital conflict to be controlled.
- We suggest that future scholars to consideration other organizations/ institutions with the same study variables to know the relationship between role-based stress and marital conflict.
- We suggest increase in sample size of participants from the targeted population.
- Just as role-based stress could cause the presence of marital conflict among nurses the researchers suggest that the Government should employ more nurses to reduce the workloads.
- Future researchers should try to sample participants from other geo-political regions where there is no indiscriminate call to sit at home, to give room for more participants.

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