



Effect of Marital Stress on Married Nurses: A Stockholm's Marital Stress Scale Approach

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Abstract

Marital stress is something that is tearing many homes apart, marital status is not easy to assess not only because of the divergent view on marital stress but also due to dearth of validated and culture fair assessment tool in Nigeria. The Stockholm's marital stress scale is a 17 item questionnaire, a Likert format of three response categories. The study reported a Cronbach alpha of .77 with no validity information. The purpose of this study is to validate the Stockholm's Marital Stress Scale (SMSS) on Nigerian married nurses. This instrument is foreign, the authors validation was about twenty (20) years ago and it has not been validated for Nigerian population. These justify the need for re-validation of the scale. Also, this validation is on a specific occupation group (nurses) which the original author did not capture. 180 nurses in Federal Medical Centre Keffi, Nigeria, participated in the study and a survey method was employed in this study. Items 9 and 17 of the original instrument loaded very low and not bench marked and were deleted, the Cronbach alpha for the new version is 863 and the norm is 34.76. Nurses that score above the norm have high marital stress while those that score below the norm have low marital stress. The Stockholms Marital Stress Scale (SMSS) correlates significantly with marital stress inventory (MSI), ($r_{xy}(180) = .734, p < .001$) and the items- total correlation ranges from .265 ($p < .01$) - .764 ($p < .001$). Authors conclude that the SMSS provide a brief, valid and reliable measure of marital stress among Nigerian nurses.

Keywords: Marital Stress, Married Nurses, Serving Nurses, Validation Study

Introduction

It is often believed that when an individual is married, it is an opportunity to share life's problems with someone, and have that someone help you get back on your feet in times when you seem to be at your lowest ebb. After all, the vows exchanged at the wedding have a certain phrase that reads "for better for worse, in sickness and health", and it is expected that the couple will provide much needed solace for each other in time of difficulty. But is this really the case in contemporary society today? Granted, in the African context, the institution of marriage is one which cannot be broken easily, with a lot of expectation being set for the new family by friends, well-wishers and society in general. According to Abraham Maslow (1957), one primary need of man, is the need for love and belongingness, without which, according to him, the individual cannot continue on to the path



of self-actualization. It is sometimes because of this and the need for attention, that drive most people to seek the comfort of the other mate and in the process, shield the individual from marital stress, which could take many forms. However, it is becoming increasingly evident that this is no longer the case.

Marital stress is a problem that can affect anyone regardless of age, social status and means of livelihood. However, marital issues also seem to be related to stress. Omena Elom and Egba, (2015) pointed out that marital satisfaction was an essential and important component of emotional and psychological wellbeing, and has a positive association with general happiness and perception of overall individual health. In Nigeria, psychological problems abound in the society with experts looking for various reasons and solutions to the myriads of problems out there. Depression, aggression and violent behavior are just some of the symptoms of marital stress. But the question is, how do we measure and define marital stress?

Marital stress is specifically defined as a condition of negative effects, such as frustration and anxiety, which results from aspects of the marriage (Omena, Elom, & Egba, 2015). According to Gelvin (2007), stress is a response syndrome of negative affects resulting from aspects of a teacher's marriage and mediated by the perception that the demands constitute a threat to self-esteem and coping mechanisms activated to reduce the perceived threat.

Studies have shown that many factors, such as violence in relationships, family relations and in some extreme cases, the use of technology could play a significant role in causing marital stress to any one (Sharaievskia, 2012). Marital stress could be any emotional turmoil which directly interferes with the individual's capacity to function at optimal level at all times. As of result of increasing reports of marital problems reported by individuals who are married and lack of recent validated instrument that measures marital stress, this research has been undertaken in attempt to validate Stockholm's marital stress scale.

In Nigerian homes, it is rather difficult to pinpoint where the cause of marital stress emanates from. Some may attribute it to spiritual problems, external factors such as financial strain, or strained relationship with other family members. Current research however, has pointed to marital stress among the leading causes of marital problems among married couples in many parts of the world (Horwitz, 1998). In addition, measuring marital stress is not easy because of lack of consensus on definition of marital stress. Beside some of the instrument that is adopted in measuring marital stress is foreign scale which has not been locally validated. Even the marital stress inventory that was developed by Omoluabi (1994) is now outdated without current revalidation.

It on this premise that this study is geared towards revalidating The Stockholm's marital stress scale among Nigerian population using married nurses serving in FMC Keffi as a reference point.

Method

Design

The study adopted survey method through the use of questionnaire. The questionnaire examines marital stress amongst married nurses serving in FMC KEFFI. This method was adopted because there was no manipulation of variables and it gave the research an opportunity to interact with the participants.



Sampling Procedure

The sample size was 180 nurses serving in FMC KEFFI in Nasarawa state, Ile-Ife. The sample consists of both genders without age limit but married, as an important requirement to be among the sample. The method of sampling used was purposive and simple random sampling technique. A purposive sampling was adopted because the researcher already chose the participants (married nurse) that participated in this study.

Research Instruments

The questionnaires are made up of two standardized instruments namely: Stockholm Marital Stress Scale (SMSS) and Marital Stress Inventory (MSI). The Stockholm Marital Stress Scale (SMSS) is a structured questionnaire to measure marital stress which is designed by Orth Gomer (2000) to research women with heart disease. Yet, it could also be used for research on men and other health disorders. The original scale has 17 items that are scored zero or one. The minimum scale score is 0 and maximum score is 27. The higher the score on this scale shows the higher stress in the relationship with partner. Orth Gomer (2000), through the use of associated scales, reported the internal consistency of this scale (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.77$) and its construct validity satisfactory.

The Marital Stress Inventory (MSI) was developed by Omoluabi (1994). The scale is used to determine causes of stress among couples and evaluate their stress reaction level. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.9238, Gutman Split half co-efficient of 0.9226 and beta coefficient scale were obtained.

Data Collection Techniques

In order to collect data, the researcher first sought the permission of the ethical board of the teaching hospital to administer the psychological test batteries on their nurses. As part of seeking permission, the researcher verbally explained the purpose of the study and possible benefits it may bring to the entire hospital and the general population. In addition to this, the researcher sought the consent of nurses who were available for at their duty post in participating in the research and highlighted the purpose of the study to them and it was emphasized that anyone who felt like not participating would lose nothing for not participating and that their names, address and location were not needed.

Also, it is important to state that all the instruments were individually delivered as the nurses various departments (offices) after briefing them and they were encouraged to fill it. Finally, the distribution and filling of the questionnaire was done in three weeks. It was discovered that over one hundred of the test instrument were not returned and about twenty were not completely filled, this one hundred and twenty were not included in this study.

Data Analysis

The data collected were entered into SPSS version twenty. Reliability analysis, and split-half reliability was done to test the reliability of the instrument.

Ethical Consideration

The followings are the ethical considerations that were avoided in this study: falsification and fabrication of data, faulty data, misleading authorship and plagiarism. In addition to this because the research used human subjects (nurses).The researcher also ensured that as part of ethical consideration that their consent was sought at all levels of the nurses who volunteered and



participated in the study. The researcher took part in an online ethics training on human subjects and was issued a certificate of completion by the Nigerian National Code of Health Research Ethics.

Results

Reliability Test

To determine the reliability of the Stockholm's Marital Stress Scale (SMSS), item analysis was conducted based on the data obtained from respondents. Item analysis shows the internal consistency of items. To check the internal consistency of the scale, the 17 items of the Stockholm's Marital Stress Scale (SMSS) were subjected to item analysis. After the analysis, the 17 items produced a high Cronbach's alpha reliability of .855. However, 2 items did not meet the standard level of .3 corrected total item correlation which has been acknowledged by previous researchers. As a result of this, they were subsequently deleted. These items are 17 and 9. After these items were deleted, the scale contained 15 items. The Cronbach's alpha reliability of .863.

The SPSS tables backing up this interpretation clearly shows chronological tables of the reliability statistics, item statistics, and total item statistics of the analysis from the original sixteen items to the fourteen items which were finally adopted.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.855	17

The reliability test for the Stockholm's marital stress scale is Cronbach's Alpha = .855.



Item - Total Statistics

		Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted ¹		Corrected Item	-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
ms	1	26.816 7	59.61	4	.28	2	.87 1
Ms	2	27.516 7	59.81	5	.57	5	.84
Ms	3	27.111 1	60.35	6	.54	7	.84
Ms	4	26.550 0	59.78	0	.46	5	.84
Ms	5	27.333 3	62.16	8	.43	9	.84
Ms	6	27.400 0	63.59	3	.35	0	.85
Ms	7	27.366 7	58.22	2	.70	9	.83
Ms	8	27.366 7	58.22	2	.70	9	.83
Ms	9	26.922 2	65.60	3	.19	5	.86
Ms	10	26.922 2	60.10	6	.58	5	.84
Ms	11	27.061 1	59.47	7	.76	4	.83
Ms	12	27.061 1	59.81	2	.73	4	.83
Ms	13	27.366 7	59.02	7	.71	5	.83
Ms	14	27.533 3	65.74	7	.26	5	.85
Ms	15	27.566 7	65.07	4	.33	3	.85
Ms	16	27.500 0	65 .07	8	.46	4	.85
Ms	17	27.538 9	67.46	8	.16	6	.85

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
28.933 3	69.04 6	8.3093	8

Item 17 deleted

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.85	7

*Item-Total Statistics*

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Correlation	Item-Total	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
ms 1	25.422	2 57.92	1	.29	1 .87
ms 2	26.122	2 58.14	1	.59	0 .84
ms 3	25.716	7 58.76	3	.55	5 .84
ms 4	25.155	6 57.97	6	.48	6 .85
ms 5	25.938	9 61.05	2	.40	9 .85
ms 6	26.005	6 62.33	0	.33	0 .85
ms 7	25.972	2 57.06	6	.68	6 .83
ms 8	25.972	2 57.06	6	.68	6 .83
ms 9	25.527	8 64.29	5	.17	7 .86
ms 10	25.527	8 58.46	3	.59	8 .84
ms 11	25.666	7 57.94	4	.77	0 .83
ms 12	25.666	7 58.27	9	.73	9 .83
ms 13	25.972	2 57.40	1	.72	9 .83
ms 14	2 6.138	9 63.91	9	.29	2 .85
ms 15	26.172	2 63.27	2	.35	9 .85
ms 16	26.105	6 63.89	4	.41	9 .85

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
27.538 9	67.46 8	8.2138 8	1 6

Item 9 deleted

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.86 3	1 5

*Item – Total Statistics*

		Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted		Corrected Item-Total Correlation		Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	
Ms	1	25.422	2 57.92	1	.29	1	.87	3
Ms	2	26.122	2 58.14	1	.59	0	.84	4
Ms	3	25.716	7 58.76	3	.55	5	.84	6
Ms	4	25.155	6 57.97	6	.48	6	.85	0
Ms	5	25.938	9 61.05	2	.40	9	.85	3
Ms	6	26.005	6 62.33	0	.33	0	.85	6
Ms	7	25.972	2 57.06	6	.68	6	.83	9
Ms	8	25.972	2 57.06	6	.68	6	.83	9
Ms	9	25.527	8 64.29	5	.17	7	.86	3
Ms	10	25.527	8 58.46	3	.59	8	.84	4
Ms	11	25.666	7 57.94	4	.77	0	.83	7
Ms	12	25.666	7 58.27	9	.73	9	.83	9
Ms	13	25.972	2 57.40	1	.72	9	.83	8
Ms	14	26.138	9 63.91	9	.29	2	.85	7
Ms	15	26.172	2 63.27	2	.35	9	.85	5
Ms	16	26.105	6 63.89	4	.41	9	.85	4

*Item – Total Statistics*

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted		Scale Variance if Item Deleted		Corrected Item -Total Correlation		Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	
Ms 1	23.411	1	53.55	1	.35	4	.87	6
Ms 2	24.111	1	54.45	7	.64	6	.84	7
Ms 3	23.705	6	55.48	3	.57	9	.85	1
Ms 4	23.144	4	55.67	7	.44	3	.85	9
Ms 5	23.927	8	58.33	6	.38	5	.86	1
Ms 6	23.994	4	59.95	0	.27	6	.86	5
Ms 7	23.961	1	54.55	2	.65	3	.84	7
Ms 8	23.961	1	54.55	2	.65	3	.84	7
Ms 10	23.516	7	56.02	8	.55	6	.85	2
Ms 11	23.655	6	55.16	6	.75	5	.84	4
Ms 12	23.655	6	55.43	4	.72	9	.84	5
Ms 13	23.961	1	54.14	9	.75	7	.84	3
Ms 14	24.127	8	60.33	6	.34	0	.86	2
Ms 15	24.161	1	59.75	6	.40	3	.86	0
Ms 16	24.094	4	60.91	3	.40	4	.86	0

Mean and standard deviation of marital stress based on the participants' scores

Mean	Std. Deviation	N of Items
25.527	8.0184	4

The table one above shows that the participants had a mean of (M 25.52;SI) 8.01). This means that anyone that scores above the mean had a high marital stress while some below the mean has low marital stress.



Correlation Analysis

Correlation between the Stockholm Marital Stress Scale and marital stress inventory

	SMS	SMS	I
SMS	S 1		
SMS	1 - 203	1	

The result above shows significant 'r' value of -0.203* (at $p < 0.05$). This result established the fact that there is a significant negative relationship between Stockholm Marital Stress Scale and Marital Stress Inventory.

Conclusion

The instrument validated (SMSS) has a cronbach alpha of .863 and the norm is 25.52. Nurses that score above the norm have high marital stress and those that score below have a low marital stress. The Stockholms Marital Stress Scale (SMSS) correlates significantly with marital stress inventory (MSI), ($r_{xy} (180) = -0.203, p < .05$). It is therefore concluded that the SMSS provide a brief, valid and reliable marital stress among nurses.

References

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**Appendix: Stockholms Marital Stress Scale**

SN	QUESTIONS	YES	NO	NOT SURE
1	Is the relationship with your spouse loving ?			
2	Is the relationship with your spouse friendly ?			
3	Is the relationship with your spouse routine-like?			
4	Is the relationship with your spouse problematic ?			
5	Do you engage in leisure activities together with your			
6	Do you have your own private life outside the relationship			
7	Is your spouse your closest confidant ?			
8	Does your spouse consider you his closest confidant ?			
9	Are there things you can't talk openly about which each other ?			
10	Have you had serious problems in the relationship with your spouse previously?			
11	Have you had serious problems in the relationship with your spouse currently ?			
12	Have you had serious crisis in your relationship ?			
13	Have you solved problems actively together			
14	Do you have sexual relationship with your spouse ?			
15	Do you find sexual relationship with your spouse satisfactory' ?			
16	Has your sexual relationship been affected with your work schedule ?			
17	Has your sexual relationship reduced due to your work demands?			