

## Role Conflict of Married Female Students and Academic performance

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### ABSTRACT

The study was carried out to investigate the effect of role conflict on the academic performance of married female students. The study was carried in Delta State University, Abraka. Responses were elicited from (280) married and single (120) female students. Data was collected through questionnaire. Two hypotheses were tested and results showed that role conflict has major effect on academic performance. Based on the findings, it was recommended among the others that role conflict should not be an excuse for poor academic performance. But rather, there is the need for a corresponding adjustment to increasing and conflicting roles.

**Keywords:** Role Conflict; Married Students; Female Students; Academic Performance

### INTRODUCTION

Academic awareness has invaded the consciousness of many Nigerians today. People are rarely compelled, pursued or encouraged to go to school for the purpose of acquiring at least one academic qualification or the other. Education for all by the year 2015 as targeted by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has no doubt, helped in this regard. The enthusiasm is not limited to only the spinsters but also the married female students.

The traditional African society was that which relegated women to the background, as they were not involved in any work except the maintenance of the home front. They were not totally exposed to the opportunities of western education. They were disdained and their contributions were disregarded. However, the contemporary Nigerian society has recognized and embrace the contributions of women in all spheres of life. Women can now take up the jobs that we once strictly classified as “men specifics”. As their roles are changing, education now became the channel through which they can enhance their social status, showcase and express themselves as well as contribute to the sustainable development of their society.

As their participation in the work force increased, the married women therefore have no

choice but to create an atmosphere of fulfilling their academic obligations vis-à-vis their marital responsibilities and other social engagement. They have to go to school, at the expense of the wellbeing of their families, jobs/business, and other engagement of life. This indeed is challenging to those that are involved. It might not be easy for most of them to cope with, but they certainly have to get along. One must not also forget that, students, (married or unmarried) are differently endowed with intellectual skills. This might create stress and strain that is likely to affect either their academic performance or their marital roles.

### WOMEN/EDUCATION

Education is a basic tool that can be given to women in order to fulfill their role as full members of society. This is because education refines the mind and it has the ability to rectify and modify certain elements of human behaviour. Hence, women from different cultures can relate positively to this achieved status if they are educated. According to Onyido (1999);

Education is a weapon that could destroy the negative aspects of tradition like superstition, ignorance and backwardness which paves way for development. It could also eliminate inferiority complex and restrictions that women have often suffered. (p. 205). A society that

accumulates illiterate women stands the risk of having a crop of over half of its adult population, incapable of participating effectively in the political, social and cultural life of the community (Adewole, 1977). This then goes to confirm the old saying, which has been worthy of acceptance; that if you educate a man, you educate an individual but when you educate a woman, you educate a family and ultimately a nation.

Oruwari (1996) considers women as custodians of the future. This is because nature has endowed them with the great responsibility of producing and nurturing children. And since the present children are future adults and of course, hope and wealth, of the nation, it becomes necessary that women who transmit values to subsequent generation be adequately educated. Therefore, the importance of education in the enhancement and empowerment of the Nigerian women cannot be over emphasized.

Adamu (1987) posits that education is an eye-opener for women, and through it, they can have access to sophisticated skills and better employment opportunities. According to her, it has also enabled them to expand their roles and statuses in all sectors of government and organization. Education has therefore made women to occupy a number of important positions which were hitherto designated for men only. Hence, they are able to contribute immensely to social and economic development of their communities (Russel 1994).

It is therefore logical to say that sustainable development in Nigeria will remain a mirage until women are properly motivated to imbibe and project themselves into the virtues of sustainable development through the mainstream of quality education.

### CONCEPTUALIZATION/LITERATURE REVIEW

Otite and Ogionwo (1985) define role as a phenomenon in the affairs of men and in society which spells out duties, persons occupying different positions in social institutions of society. According to Shelton and John, (1996), society cannot exist without role playing by people because the functioning of every society is tied to social positions occupied by individuals in the various social institution that constitute society. Role highlights the social expectations attached to particular social positions and it analyses the working of such expectations.

Paula, 1994 posits that, role conflict results when an individual encounters tension as a result of incompatible roles that are built in two distinct statuses. For instance, a mother who is also a student may experience role conflict because the two statuses she occupies are different. She may be expected to spend time taking care of her children while simultaneously trying to advance her career.

Role conflict can occur when conflicting expectations among meaningful multiple roles (Sieber, 1974) are placed upon an individual. Most married female students experience role conflict (Goode, 1960) role expectations (Me Roy & Fisher, 1982). Evolving roles and expectations can be a potential stressor for both graduate and undergraduate students. Research has shown that work and family roles can affect students positively or negatively (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1995).

Choosing the role of student by studying for an examination or working on an assignment rather than attending to the needs of a child can sometimes be a difficult decision. Research has shown that women have a desire to meet the demands of each role (for example wife, mother and academics) but receive less support in those roles (Mallinckodt & Leong, 1992).

Famoriyo and Abifor (2009) noted that academic activities and pursuit by married female students are stressful period in their academic training. They reiterated that many married female students experience substantial level of stress, which contributes to poor academic performance, academic dishonesty, cynicism and substance abuse. Empirical evidence from Barnett, et al. (1991) study indicates that marital and studentship roles are sources of stress that affects physical and psychological health. They also revealed that work load, time and pressures are emitted from role conflict and are therefore sources of stress and strain.

Mistra and Mckean (2000) posit that stress on married female students directly affects all aspects of their lives, Barnett and Barnuch (1985) has suggested that women must put up strategies that will reduce anxiety likely to affect their health situation. Williams and Alliger (1994), Lick and Mitz (1985), noted that married women are more likely to experience role conflict than their male counterparts. Married postgraduate students in the faculty of education at the University of Ibadan have dual roles and other responsibilities. They have jobs, families

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and school which results in conflict that affects not only academic performance but also social interaction and competence.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A fulfilling educational goal attainment for many married female students is almost an uphill task, due to different responsibilities competing for attention. The responsibilities are energy sapping and time consuming. The constrain is compounded by lack of confidence, low self-concept as well as negative attitude towards educational aspiration (Egbule, 2009). More so, the assistance married women once enjoyed in the traditional African setting from extended family members and neighbours through fosterage is no more there, as it is almost eradicated by the advent of western education into the Nigerian society.

Their dual roles seem to emit academic stress, fear anger and incompetence which affect them physically, mentally and psychologically. The only way Out is to put up a coping strategy (Green haus & Beutel, 1985). This study therefore, examines role conflict of married female students and academic performance with a view of recommending some copying strategies

### Hypothesis I

There is no significant relationship between household responsibilities and academic performance.

### Hypothesis II

There is no significant relationship between marital responsibility and academic performance.

### RESEARCH METHODS

The research is an empirical study which involved the collection and interpretation of data. It therefore employed the use of instrument for the collection of information and interpretation of the data.

### Instrument

The instrument for data collection was a close — ended questionnaire with 18 questions. The questionnaire has two (2) sections. Section A included the socio-demographic information section, while section B had the 18 questions to which respondents elicited responses. The instrument had a validity score of t 6.62 and reliability co-efficient of 0.88 at 0.55 level of significance.

### Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The study was carried out in Delia State University, Abraka. A total number of 420 married and single female students were involved in the study. The study was not restricted to any faculty. Questionnaires were therefore randomly distributed to respondents.

### Method of Data Analysis

Frequency distribution, percentage and chi-square statistics were used to analyse the data. They were adopted in order to determine the level of influence on the study.

#### Presentation and Analysis

#### Hypothesis I

Responses	Married women without house help	Married women with house help	Single parents in the hostel	Total
No	18(13%)	46 (33%)	25(18%)	89
Yes	122 (87%)	115(82%)	94(67%)	331
Total	140	140	140	420

Fo	Fe	(Fo-fe)	(Fo-fe) <sup>2</sup>
18	29.7	-11.7	4.61
122	110.3	11.7	1.24
46	29.7	16.3	8.95
94	110.3	-16.3	2.41
25	29.7	-4.7	0.74
115	110.3	4.7	0.20
			$\chi^2 = 18.15$

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The computed value of  $X^2$  (18.15) is greater than the total table value (5.991). The null hypothesis is thereby rejected. The analysis indicated that; there is significant relationship between household responsibilities and academic performance.

### Hypothesis 2

Responses	Married women without house help	Married women with house help	Single parents in the hostel	Total
No	39(28%)	45 (32%)	59(42%)	14
Yes	101 (72%)	95(68%)	81(38%)	277
Total	140	140	140	420

F <sub>o</sub>	F <sub>e</sub>	(F <sub>o</sub> -f <sub>e</sub> )	(F <sub>o</sub> -f <sub>e</sub> )
39	47.7	-8.7	1.59
101	92.3	87	0.82
45	47.7	-2.7	0.15
94	92.3	2.7	0.08
59	47.7	11.3	2.68
81	92.3	-11.3	1.38
Chi-square			$X^2 = 6.7$

The calculated value or chi-square  $x^2 = 6.7$  is greater than the table value of 5.991. The null hypothesis is thus rejected and supporting the fact that there is a significant relationship between marital status and academic performance.

## DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

### Hypothesis I

The empirical study revealed a significant relationship in the two hypotheses tested. In hypothesis one, the responses elicited showed that women who are not assisted at home experienced academic problems. Some of the married women are not full-time house wives but engaged themselves in other activities outside the home. The highest percentage of responses came from the women who are not assisted at all. See table 1 (72%). These are mothers and caregivers, who also attend to household chores and still have to attend to their academics. This is followed by the other category of married females assisted with domestic chores students who at home (68%). The study revealed that as a result of their

various roles in different activities, they seldom have sufficient time for their academics.

The other category of respondents is married female students who are full time students, who live in off-campus hostels. They attend to their academics from such hostels and not from, their homes. It was noted from responses elicited that despite their being away from home does not mean they do not go home once a while to check what is going on at home. Certainly, their absence from school creates academic gap that is likely to affect them directly or indirectly. Table 1 also shows their frequency distribution, percentage and chi-square analysis.

### Hypothesis II

The result revealed that married female students with children emitted the highest responses (71%) and single parents with children (69%). The result revealed the lapses in academic performance been as a result of their marital status. The result of the single student is lower (38%) compared to the two groups. The response emitted indicated that marital status and its responsibilities hinders high academic performance.

### SUMMARY

Role conflict is very stressful for married female students in tertiary institutions, as a result of marital responsibilities. The study clearly defines the fact that dual role responsibilities are the reasons why married female students do not have quality time for their academic activities, which in-turn leads to poor academic performance.

The result aligned with similar studies of Sheldon and John (1996) and Famoriyo and Abifor (2009), that multiple roles affect academic performance of married female students.

### CONCLUSION

Students in this dilemma, would rather be more interested in the certificate and not the knowledge that is expected to impact and improve their status. It becomes the case of pursuing the shadow rather than the substance. In a bid to this, they will do everything possible within their reach to achieve their academic goals. This may include examination cheating and other forms of examination malpractice. If this continues, many students will be unable to demonstrate their intellectual prowess in their areas of specialization.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings the following are recommended:

- Female married students should imbibe the principle of prioritization. This means that special consideration must be given to priority. In other words, they should do first thing first and also in the order of importance.
- Students should learn to compartmentalize their roles that are conflicting. For example, if a student has an assignment to do and a breakfast for the husband, she should wake up early enough to be able to complete the school assignment before the time for the preparation of breakfast.
- There is also the need for a corresponding adjustment to increasing and conflicting role should be done in such a way that marital role should not be an excuse for poor academic performance.

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