



Marital Distress among Police Personnel in Awka Metropolis: The Influence of Argument and Self-efficacy

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author OJAC conceptualized the study, wrote the protocol and the first draft of the manuscript. Author ANE designed the study and performed the statistical analysis. Author UES managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated whether argument and self-efficacy would have an influence on marital distress among police personnel. A total number of one hundred and ninety-seven (197), Nigeria police force (NPF) personnel working in Police headquarters; served as participants for the study. They were selected using non-probability sampling (convenient sampling techniques). They consist of 87(44.2%) females and 110 (58.5%) males; their age ranged from 22-51 years and their mean age was 34.94 with standard deviation of 6.96. Three instruments were used namely: Marital Stress Inventory, Argumentativeness Scale and General Self-Efficacy Scale. Two by Two Factorial design was adopted. Two Way Analysis of Variance statistics was used to analyze the data. Two hypotheses were tested: the result indicated that hypothesis one which stated that there will be a significant difference between those with positive argument and those with negative argument on marital distress among police personnel and hypothesis two which stated that there will be a significant difference between those with positive self-efficacy and those with negative self-efficacy

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on marital distress among police personnel were both not accepted at $p > .05$. Therefore, the study recommended that counselling/marital psychologist should intensify their efforts to organize seminars/conferences on the implications of these factors (argument and self-efficacy) on marital distress among police personnel.

Keywords: Argument; self-efficacy; marital distress and police personnel.

1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage no doubt is one of the sweetest and distressing experiences in the world today. This mixed experience usually threw some couple off balance that at times some of them started asking questions like why am I in this marriage in the first place?, Did he/she bewitch me?, Am I so blind that I could not see all this before now?. On the other hand, some may be saying thank God I found him/her as a life partner. All this mixed feelings and experiences depict how confusing and distressing marriages could be. And among police personnel, there is no exception in terms of distressing and confusing marriages that often arises when couples begin to argue repeatedly, become emotionally disconnected from one another due to nature of police work, and this decreases the personnel marital satisfaction [1].

Moreover, it is impracticable to expect a marriage to be without problem. Considering that well-paired partners are not absolutely compatible, as such complications and issues are unavoidable. "Just as rust can corrode metal under a coat of paint, a number of factors can eat away at a seemingly blossoming/successful marriage [2].

Distresses in homes or marriages are not unrecognized on the grounds that once a distress exists in marriage, the aura of such a marriage is everything but friendly, – and thus a once happy marriage would become chaotic and further characterized by issues such as substance abuse disorders, personality disorders, mood disorders such as depression, violence of different forms (physical, emotional and verbal), extra-marital affairs and varying degrees of mental health disorders. The inquiry then becomes how these distresses or issues can be controlled to avoid conflicts from occurring.

For instance, Wasson [3] while counseling on 'how to keep hope alive during marriage distresses' maintains that due to human desires, we have different misconceptions, wishes and opinions, about marriage which is expected to fade away as partners (couple). However it is not easy for one to give up his or her identity,

uniqueness, selfdom or personality. As such, attitudes can bring distress in families based on difficulties that exist within the relationship such as poor or ineffective communication, lack of intimacy, sexual difficulties, sudden loss of interest in normal family activities, infidelity and so on.

Hence, marital distress is defined as a person's appraisal about what type of relationship problem he or she is facing, and it is a reason for feeling distressed [4]. Two kinds of marital distress have been identified. The first is perceived threat, which is when a person feels that his or her partner is being hostile, critical, or controlling. The second is perceived neglect, which is when a person feels that his or her partner does not contribute to solving problems or issues that arise or does not show an ample amount of commitment or investment within the marriage: Perceived threat or perceived neglect can cause a dramatic escalation during marital distress. Research has also shown that the sources of marital distress that couples choose to argue about are important when studying marital distress because some issues are more difficult to talk about and solve [4]. Based on the above assertions and observations, this study explored whether argument and self-efficacy would have influence on marital distress among police personnel.

1.1 Distress

Distress in marriage is inescapable, whenever two people bond together eventually some of the belief system and personal habits of one will irritate the other, regardless of the degree of love [5]. In healthy relationships couples learn to accept and resolve distress. But in case of unhealthy relationship marital distress arise due to several reasons. When there is conflict between role performance and role expectation of the spouses it leads to maladjustment of husband–wife relationships and to marital distress.

Marital distress often times originates from different sources some of which could be psychological or stress-induced in nature. Tobin

[6] Attesting to the above claim stated that a large number of marriages run into crisis and someday wind up because one partner has or experiences personality disorder. Some of the observable causes of marital distress are as follows:

Social Incompatibility of Marriage Partners:

There is no doubt that some marriages have absolutely no foundation or basis for being contracted at the first instance. This is discovered over time as it becomes evident that the pair is socially incompatible, hence distresses and crisis abound in the home. Many married people become disillusioned when they discover that their union is not all they had expected and that their spouse is not quite what they had envisioned him/her to be [2].

Infertility: Which is the situation whereby one of the couples or both is unable to reproduce in their likeness is one major challenge of marriages mostly in Africa. For instance, In Nigeria and Africa at large, procreation is seen as a tool that establishes lasting relationship and values. However, in some homes where couples have not procreated it usually lead to marital distress, couples frustration and depression.

Sexual Incompatibility and Extreme Sexual Orientation:

Poor sexual-satisfaction which leads to disaffection and loss of trust and extreme sexual orientation such as homosexuality, lesbianism, oral sex and excessive sexual appetite on the part of a marital partner may spring up crisis or distress in a home.

Especially if not detected and managed on time.

Extended Family Affairs/Issues:

Some marriages have hit the rock due to their inability to properly manage extended family issues. These issues are mostly evident in how a spouse accommodates the relations of his or her partner.

Lack of Mutual Respect between Partners:

Mutual respect for one's spouse is crucial for every union's existence and lack of it is a distress factor capable of ending even the strongest marital foundation. The Holy Bible admonishes couples thus: Wives respect your husband who in turn should love their wives as they would their own body. One can quickly assume that each of the above mentioned conditions is a *sine qua non* for the other since a husband might find it difficult to continue to love a wife who does not

respect him or his authority; neither would a wife respect the husband who does not love her. Respect and love are reciprocal variables in every marital union and as such, each spouse owes it as an obligation to respect and love his/her marriage partner.

Dishonesty and Moral Decadence:

Dishonest behaviour and negligence coupled with moral decadence in the home can generate discomfort. For instance, a union without truth, honesty, good morals and care is not healthy and as such gives room for mistrust, doubt, tension, anxiety, heartbreak and anguish which leads to distress and conflict.

Poor Marital Communication and Unwholesome Social Behaviour:

A factor that has occupied central position in all discourse concerning successful marriage is 'marital communication [7]. Inability of spouses to communicate effectively with each other is very unhealthy to the union. It is expected that couples should discuss issues, respond to questions, and call for explanations when necessary without holding back. Bickering, unnecessary criticisms, gossip or what may simple be tagged nagging has rocked some good families. It is not an over statement that majority of the women take to nagging instead of politely confronting their husbands with issues and this often times leads to conflict and distress.

1.2 Argument

Argument is a statement or set of statements that you use in order to try to convince people that your opinion about something is correct or is a conversation in which people disagree with each other angrily or noisily [8]. It is also a disagreement, or the process of disagreeing. Research has shown despite the positive implications of close relationships for our mental health and well-being that argument inevitably occurs regularly in the majority of marriages which in turn translate into marital distress [9]. For this reason, argument is an area of great significance in the study of close relationships. Argument within close relationships requires close attention because the manner in which it is resolved has important implications for relationship instability and functioning as well as personal wellbeing. For example, argument can lead to improved marital distress [10]. In contrast, people in low-satisfaction relationships tend to take an ineffective approach to argument that involves particular behaviours and cognitions that

can lead to negative escalation and marital distress [10]. Also Cherlin [11] argued that because marital distress and argument are part of constraints that accompany marriage, it most likely offers more freedom to negotiate gender roles.

Bandura [12] defined self-efficacy as an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviour necessary to produce specific performance attainments. In other words self-efficacy is the belief related to an individual's skill to think about possible conditions, to organize necessary activities and to successfully practice the activities he or she organized. Moreover, individuals assess their self-efficacy based on certain mission or domain. Individual, who has high level of self-efficacy in certain domain, does not mean that he holds same level in another domain. The foregoing means that it is rather difficult to issue final rule on self-efficacy level due to its changeable mode from situation to another and colloquial reference as to similar stands. More so, self-efficacy in marriage is defined as the personal belief of a married individual that he or she will be successful in overcoming and maintaining marital problems or relationship. Hence, marital self-efficacy is important for the nature and quality of a marriage and the distress associated with it [13].

Evidence suggest that self-efficacy in romantic relationships influences interaction with the spouse and likewise the quality of the relationship leading to lesser or higher distress. While a high level of relationship self-efficacy decreases marital distress, a low level of relationship self-efficacy causes marital distress in the individual. Similarly, experiences can influence an individual's marital distress and self-efficacy [14]. More so, psychological events that occur throughout marriage can be said to be crucial elements that contribute to marital distress and low self-efficacy. The emotional state of individuals, who experience depression due to negative relationships with their spouse, will affect their functionality in other areas and their self-efficacy will decrease [15]. The negative emotional state, which is due to various reasons, of an individual's psychology will be evident in other areas and the individual's self-efficacy belief in a relationship will be affected by this. Similarly, an individual's physiology which is in a positive emotional state can have positive effects on other areas [15]. Pajares [16] stated that for self-efficacy belief to increase, negative emotional states need to be decreased. Also this will increase physical and emotional well-being.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Attachment Theory

Attachment theory by Ainsworth and Bowlby [17] will serve as theoretical framework guiding the study because it provides a biosocial explanation for why humans form and maintain close relationships, and explicates the processes through which some relationships become distressed and ultimately dissolve. Through evolutionary processes, humans have developed a drive to form and maintain close relationships in order to feel comforted, supported, physically safe, and emotionally secure. Secure attachment relationships are consistent and reliable sources of these needs, and experiences with attachment partners in which these needs are met bolster trust in the relationship and enhance individual functioning. In contrast, insecure attachment relationships fail to provide consistent need fulfilment which, in turn, can lead to individual distress and emotional detachment from one's partner [18].

However, the process of relationship distress has been conceptualized as the loss of an attachment bond [19]. And no published research has explicitly linked processes of marital distress, argument and self-efficacy to attachment theory. Nevertheless, attachment theory provides an excellent theoretical framework for this study, because the process through which an individuals' romantic attachment bond becomes progressively more avoidant over time and the individual may detach is conceptually identical to marital distress, argument and low self-efficacy. In addition to depicting a process of marital distress, argument and self-efficacy applying an attachment theoretical perspective helps explain why distress is detrimental to individual specifically police personnel and their relationship well-being, and this suggests individual differences and contextual variables that may forecast marital distress among personnel.

Against this backdrop, the following hypotheses have been formulated to guide the study.

- There will be a significant difference between those with positive argument and those with negative argument on marital distress among police personnel.
- There will be a significant difference between those with positive self-efficacy and those with negative self-efficacy

on marital distress among police personnel.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 Participants

A total number of one hundred and ninety-seven (197), Nigeria police force (NPF) personnel working in Police headquarters, Awka, Anambra State; served as participant for the study. They were selected using convenient sampling; because the participants work on duty shift and the researcher cannot access the entire participants at a given time and the ranks of officers used were corporal, constable, sergeant, inspector and assistant superintendent of police. They consist of 87(44.2%) females and 110 (58.5%) males; their age range from 22-51 years and their mean age was 34.94 with standard deviation of 6.96. Their educational level shows that 72(36.5%) have senior secondary certificate examination (SSCE), 43 (21.8%) have ordinary national diploma certificate (OND), 44(22.3%) have higher national diploma certificate (HND), while 38(19.3%) have Bachelor of Science certificate (B. sc) respectively.

3.2 Instruments

The First instrument adopted was Marital Stress Inventory (MSI), developed by Omoluabi [20], a 50 items scale: Designed to measure specific cause of marital discord and distress among spouse. And it has 5-point response scale format where 1 = slightly effect, 2 = Mild effect, 3 = moderately effect, 4 = Severe effect, and 5 = very severe effect. The instrument has Cronbach alpha reliability of 0.92, Spearman-Brown split half of .92, Gutman split half of .92, Beta coefficient of .96: And a concurrent validity coefficient of .32 as was determined by the original author Omoluabi [20] while correlating MSI with Marital Satisfaction Index (MSI) by Hudson. For the use of the instrument in this study a Cronbach alpha coefficient reliability of .69 was confirmed.

The second instrument adopted was Argumentativeness Scale (ARGS), developed by Infante and Rancer [21]: A twenty (20) items scale: Constructed to measure tendency to argue about controversial issue; the predisposition by an individual to advocate positions for the self during communication with others; the tendency to verbally attack the position of other people in controversial communication; dysfunctional communication; and the extent of social conflict.

The scale has three constituent or subscale: ARGS-Argument approach; Av-Argument avoidance; and AT-Argument traits. It has 5-Point response format ranging from Never true=1, Rarely true=2, Occasionally true=3, Often true=4, and Almost always true=5. The ARGS-Argument approach instrument has .91 Cronbach alpha and test-retest of .87; Av-Argument avoidance has .86 Cronbach alpha and test-retest of .86; and AT-Argument traits has .91 was determined by Infante and Rancer [21] and Omoluabi [22], confirmed concurrent validity of .67 for ARGS-Argument approach; .32 for Av-Argument avoidance, and .59 for AT-Argument traits by correlating ARGS with Primary Communication Inventory [23]. For the use of the instrument in this study a Cronbach alpha coefficient reliability of .84 was confirmed.

The third instrument was General Self-Efficacy Scale, developed by Jerusalem and Schwarzer [24]: A 10 item scale designed to assess the belief that one's actions are responsible for successful outcomes. It has 4-point rating format ranging from "Not at all true =1, Hardly true = 2, moderately true =3, and exactly true=4. The scale has Cronbach's alpha between .76 and .90. For the use of the instrument in this study a Cronbach alpha coefficient reliability of .74 was confirmed.

3.3 Procedure

The researcher went to Nigeria police force (NPF) headquarters Awka, Anambra state and obtained permission from the commissioner of police Anambra state command through the station officer (SO) of the command and then, proceeded to the personnel's individually. The researcher introduced himself to them and the purpose of the study. After gaining their consent he gave out the necessary instructions and administered the copies of the questionnaire to them. The researcher encouraged them to answer all the questions and do that with honesty; emphasizing that no answer is either right or wrong. However, the researcher was able to administer 210 copies of the questionnaire but 205 copies were returned while 197 copies were properly answered which was used as sample for the study. The process took the researcher seven working days.

3.4 Design and Statistics

The study was a survey study; and Two by Two Factorial design was adopted. While Two Way Analysis of Variance statistics was used to analyze the data.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the statistical analysis of the data obtained in the study is presented in this section.

Based on the Table 2, the results indicated that the overall model is not statistically significant with marital distress at R Squared = .006, Adjusted R Squared = -.010, ($F_{3, 193}$) = .37, $p > .05$, (N=197). The variable argument is not statistically significant with marital distress at ($F_{1, 193}$) = .16, $p > .05$, (N=197). Also the mean differences and standard deviation within the argument: M=148.68, SD=14.25 (positive) and M=147.02, SD=12.54 (negative), N=197. This means that personnel with positive argument experience more marital distress than those with negative argument.

While self-efficacy is not statistically significant with marital distress at ($F_{1, 193}$) = .14, $p > .05$, (N=197). Also the mean differences and standard deviation within the self-efficacy: M=148.86, SD=14.99 (positive) and M=146.94, SD=15.29 (negative), N=197. This means that personnel with positive self-efficacy experience more marital distress than those with negative self-efficacy. More so, that interaction between argument and self-efficacy is not statistically significant with marital distress at ($F_{1, 193}$) = .09, $p > .05$, (N=197).

Consequently, hypothesis one which stated that there will be significant difference between those with positive argument and those with negative argument on marital distress among police personnel and hypothesis two which stated that there will be significant difference between those with positive self-efficacy and those with negative self-efficacy on marital distress among police personnel were both not accepted at $p > .05$. This implied that argument and self-efficacy of the personnel did not influence with their marital distress.

Pondering over the findings, hypothesis one which stated that there will be significant difference between those with positive argument and those with negative argument on marital distress among police personnel was not accepted. This shows that argument has no significant influence on marital distress. The result is not in line with the assertion of Van et al. [25], that cohabiters had more disagreements about housework, and money, but fewer disagreements about paid work than did married people. Also, it disagreed with the assertion of Burgoon [26] who noted that diverse world

perception, beliefs and values based on couples' different cultural background produce inconsistent expectancies which usually at times lead to argument and marital distress. This finding implies that argument is not a factor that contributes to marital distress of police personnel in Awka metropolis. This shows contrary to popular belief and opinion that argument fuels marital distress is not entirely true rather other variables that are peculiar to these personnel in their marriages which the general public is not aware of but to them alone since marriage is business between partners, hence a private matter not a public affair. This interestingly indicate that marriage should not be perceived or judged from what we think but from what the parties involved in the marriage are experiencing whether positive or negative. Since, they are ones that know the origin of their marital problem and possible ways of resolving it without getting third party involved.

Also, hypothesis two which stated that there will be significant difference between those with positive self-efficacy and those with negative self-efficacies on marital distress among police personnel was not accepted. This indicated that self-efficacy have no significant influence on marital distress. The result is not in tandem with the statement of Sahebihagh et al. [27] study that self-efficacy could lead to a rise in the levels of marital satisfaction and a decline in emotional divorce rate. It also does not support the assertion of Bandura [12], which hypothesized that an individual's choice of activities, persistence, and effort is affected by Self-Efficacy beliefs. For example, people who have a low sense of efficacy for accomplishing a task may avoid it and those who believe they are capable should participate readily. Those individuals who feel efficacious are hypothesized to persist longer and work harder when they encounter difficulties as opposed to those who doubt their capabilities. The most reliable guide for assessing self-efficacy is the individuals' own performance. Self-efficacy may go up or down depending on success or failure, but once Self-efficacy is developed in an individual, failure may not have much of an impact. This suggests that the level of self-efficacy has nothing to do with marital distress among police personnel in Awka metropolis. The findings confirmed the fact that people can control their life events, assume greater responsibility for their life, have more confidence in their capabilities to control their lives, as a result of having certain beliefs about their lives.

Table 1. Summary of descriptive statistics of argument, self-efficacy and marital distress

| Argument | Mean | Std. deviation | N |
|----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Positive | 148.68 | 14.25 | 164 |
| Negative | 146.94 | 15.29 | 33 |
| Self-efficacy | Mean | Std. deviation | N |
| Positive | 148.86 | 14.99 | 147 |
| Negative | 147.02 | 12.54 | 50 |
| Total | 148.39 | 14.41 | 197 |

Table 2. Summary of two-way ANOVA of argument, self-efficacy and marital distress

| Source | Type III sum of squares | df | Mean square | F | Sig. |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|-------------|
| Corrected model | 230.51 | 3 | 76.84 | .37 | .777 |
| Argument | 33.24 | 1 | 33.24 | .16 | .691 |
| Self-efficacy | 29.64 | 1 | 29.64 | .14 | .707 |
| Argument * Self-efficacy | 18.64 | 1 | 18.64 | .09 | .766 |
| Error | 40440.39 | 193 | 209.54 | | |
| Total | 4378581.00 | 197 | | | |

R Squared = .006 (Adjusted R Squared = -.010)

Theoretically, the overall findings supported the assertion of Ainsworth [17] that humans form and maintain close relationships, and explicate the processes through which some relationships become distressed and ultimately dissolve. Through evolutionary processes, humans have developed a drive to form and maintain close relationships in order to feel comforted, supported, physically safe, and emotionally secure. This might be the reason argument and self-efficacy did not indicate any significant difference on marital distress in this study, because of human emotional need mostly among police personnel which if not met will leave them comfortless, emotionally insecure, and chaotic tendencies that are characterized by workplace violence, such as extra-marital affairs, spousal violence, drug addiction, and in extreme cases health problems such as hypertension, heart-attack/failure and emotional breakdown.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study will have contributions to theories, research, practice and marriages. In the area of theories, it will widen the theoretical literature in this study by making a new impact via linking between argument, and self-efficacy in explaining marital distress. In research, it will inspire to provide more answers to the study variables by using other participants or even including or considering new variables to this study area. In practice, the outcome will aid expert like psychologists on best ways to guide those experiencing marital distress in order to avert divorce and separation among married

persons. In marriages, it will aid married couples in knowing the interplay between self-efficacy, argument and marital distress.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers made the following recommendations:

- That more studies should be done on marital distress in order extract more factors that may contribute to marital distress.
- Psychologist should intensify their efforts to organize seminars/conferences on the implications of these factors (argument and self-efficacy) on marital distress among police personnel.
- The religious organizational leaders are to inculcate into their teaching effective ways through which distressed couples could be minimized or totally eradicated in the society.

7. CONCLUSION

Consequences of marital distress are colossal ranging from spousal violence, alcoholism, extra-marital affairs, gambling, drug addiction and in extreme cases health problems such as hypertension, heart-attack/failure and emotional breakdown. These problems prompted this study that revealed that argument and self-efficacy had no significant influence on marital distress. And that implies that argument and self-efficacy of

police personnel, Awka metropolis are not contributing factors to their marital distress. Additionally, the researchers detailed implications and recommendations.

CONSENT

As per international standard written participant consent has been collected and preserved by the authors.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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