
**PARENTING RESPONSIBILITIES AND MARITAL CONFLICTS
AMONG MARRIED CIVIL SERVANTS IN DELTA STATE**

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between parenting responsibilities and marital conflicts among married civil servants in Delta State. One research question and one null hypothesis guided the study. The study adopted the correlational research design. The population of the study comprised 29,383 married civil servants in Delta State. The study's sample consisted of 1,023 married civil servants in Delta State, representing 3.48% of the total population. The selection of participants followed a multi-stage sampling procedure, ensuring representation across all local government areas in Delta State. The instrument that was used to collect data for this study is a questionnaire. The psychometric properties of the instrument were established and adjudged to be adequate. In analysing the data, the research question was answered with the aid of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient of determination. Linear regression was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between parenting responsibilities and marital conflict among married civil servants in Delta State. The study recommended amongst others, that married civil servants should learn to share parenting duties more equally and support one another in raising their children.

KEYWORDS: Parenting Responsibilities; Marital Conflicts; Married Civil Servants; Delta State.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a socially and legally recognized union between two individuals, characterized by shared rights, obligations, and long-term commitments. It serves as a fundamental institution for family formation, emotional support, and societal stability. Across cultures, marriage is

often regarded as a lifelong partnership that promotes companionship, affection, and mutual care between spouses (Cherlin, 2020; Karney & Bradbury, 2020). In addition, marriage plays a regulatory role in society by defining expectations regarding inheritance, child-rearing, and legal protection (Amato, 2022). Within this framework, spouses are expected to share responsibilities such as financial management, caregiving, and long-term planning, all directed toward building a stable and fulfilling life together.

For married civil servants, maintaining a stable and conflict-free marriage is essential for both personal well-being and professional effectiveness. A harmonious home environment fosters emotional stability, which enhances individuals' ability to cope with the demands of public service roles that require concentration, accountability, and interpersonal interaction (Greenhaus & Allen, 2021; Obidoa & Okeke, 2022). When marital relationships are stable, civil servants tend to demonstrate higher levels of job performance, commitment, and satisfaction (Adeyemi & Adebayo, 2021). Furthermore, supportive marital relationships contribute positively to mental and physical health outcomes, whereas persistent marital conflict is associated with stress, anxiety, and depression (Robles et al., 2021). Thus, marital harmony provides a foundation for improved decision-making, resilience, and overall life satisfaction.

Despite the recognized importance of marital stability, marital conflict remains a widespread issue among civil servants in Nigeria, including Delta State. Reports from the National Bureau of Statistics (2023) indicate that marital conflict is a major contributor to rising rates of divorce and separation in the country. Empirical evidence also suggests that work-related stress, financial strain, and role conflicts significantly increase the likelihood of marital discord among dual-income earners (Omoniyi & Adesina, 2021; Ezeh & Nwankwo, 2022). Similarly, court records and administrative reports have shown that marital disputes among civil servants often involve issues such as domestic violence, neglect, and incompatible work schedules (Delta State High Court, 2022; Delta State Civil Service Commission, 2022). These patterns highlight the extent to which marital instability affects both personal and professional domains.

Additional evidence from law enforcement agencies and media reports further confirms the prevalence of marital conflict among civil servants. Reports from the Nigerian Police Force (2023) indicate a growing incidence of domestic violence cases involving civil servant couples. Studies have attributed such conflicts to factors including financial disagreements, occupational stress, and interference from extended family systems (Afolabi & Ajayi, 2021; Yusuf & Balogun, 2022). The combined pressures of work demands and family

responsibilities often intensify tensions within marriages, leading to unresolved disputes that may negatively affect workplace productivity and social functioning.

Marital conflict among civil servants has significant implications for both organizational performance and family well-being. At the workplace level, individuals experiencing marital strain are more likely to exhibit reduced concentration, poor decision-making, absenteeism, and decreased productivity (Allen et al., 2020; Bakker & Demerouti, 2021). These outcomes can undermine organizational efficiency and service delivery. At the family level, persistent conflict creates a stressful environment that negatively affects both spouses and their children. Prolonged exposure to marital discord has been linked to psychological distress, anxiety, depression, and weakened family cohesion (Cummings & Davies, 2020; Harold & Sellers, 2021). Children raised in such environments may experience academic difficulties, behavioural problems, and social withdrawal. Additionally, ongoing conflict may reduce parental involvement, further weakening family bonds and long-term developmental outcomes.

Various interventions have been introduced to enhance marital quality among civil servants, including workplace counselling services, flexible work arrangements, marriage enrichment programmes, and financial support initiatives. While these strategies are designed to reduce stress and improve family functioning, their effectiveness has been limited in addressing the root causes of marital conflict (Oladipo & Akinwale, 2021). This underscores the need to examine specific factors that contribute to marital instability in order to develop more targeted and effective interventions. In this regard, the present study focuses on parenting responsibilities as a potential determinant of marital conflict.

Parenting responsibility refers to the duties and obligations associated with raising children, including meeting their physical, emotional, educational, and social needs. It encompasses activities such as providing basic necessities, ensuring safety, guiding behaviour, and supporting overall development (Bornstein, 2022; Adeyemi & Ogunleye, 2021). The way these responsibilities are shared between spouses varies depending on cultural norms, family structure, and individual circumstances. Research indicates that cooperative and shared parenting is associated with improved family functioning and reduced conflict (Feinberg, 2021; Adeyemi & Ogunleye, 2021).

However, parenting responsibilities may also contribute to marital conflict, particularly in dual-income households such as those of civil servants. When parenting duties are unevenly distributed, it can lead to feelings of frustration, resentment, and dissatisfaction among spouses (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020; Okonkwo & Nwachukwu, 2020). The demanding

nature of civil service jobs often limits the time available for family responsibilities, thereby increasing the likelihood of tension and disagreement. Studies have shown that unequal parenting roles and lack of coordination in child-rearing practices are significant predictors of marital conflict and dissatisfaction (Yucel & Latshaw, 2021; Okonkwo & Nwachukwu, 2020).

In view of the foregoing, this study seeks to examine the relationship between parenting responsibilities and marital conflict among married civil servants in Delta State.

Research Question

The following research question was raised to guide the study:

1. What is the relationship between parenting responsibilities and marital conflict among married civil servants in Delta State?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was formulated to guide the study:

2. There is no significant relationship between parenting responsibilities and marital conflict among married civil servants in Delta State

METHODS

This study adopted the correlational research design. The population of the study comprised 29,383 married civil servants in Delta State, made up of 14,641 male and 14,742 females. The population distribution is shown in Appendix I (**Source:** Civil Service Commission, Asaba, 2024). The study's sample consisted of 1,023 married civil servants in Delta State, representing 3.48% of the total population. This sample size was based on the recommendation of Gill et al. (2010), whose research on sample size determination indicated that for a population ranging from 25,000 to 49,999, a sample of 1,023 is sufficient at a 97% confidence level (see Appendix II). The selection of participants followed a multi-stage sampling procedure, ensuring representation across all local government areas in Delta State. In the first stage, a proportionate sampling technique was used to determine the number of married civil servants to be selected from each local government area. Specifically, 3.48% of married civil servants in each sector were included in the study. In the second stage, a stratified sampling technique was applied to categorize participants into male and female groups. Following this, the third stage involved convenience sampling to select the final participants. Only married civil servants who were available and willing to participate were included in the study.

The instrument that was used to collect data for this study is a questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided into three sections. Section A of the questionnaire contains demographic data of the respondents such as sex and duration of marriage. Section B and C contains the following:

Section B Parenting Responsibilities Rating Scale: This scale was constructed by the researcher. It contains 30 items structured on a fourpoint scale, ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 4 for strongly agree. **Section D Spousal Support Rating Scale:** This scale was adapted from the Spousal Support Scale (SSS), developed by Yildirim (2004). The scale contains 27 items structured on a four-point scale, ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 4 for strongly agree.

Section C Marital Conflict Rating Scale: This scale was adapted from the Kansas Marital Conflict Scale (KMCS-22), developed by Miller and Bradbury (1995). The scale contains 27 items structured on a four-point scale, ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 4 for strongly agree.

The face validity of the instruments was established by three experts in Guidance and Counselling Department. These experts assessed the instruments for appropriateness and suitability to the objective of the study, and their suggestions were reflected in the final version. After the face validity, 100 copies of the questionnaire were administered to 100 married civil servants in Edo State and the data obtained were subjected to factor analysis. The principal component analysis of the extraction method was used to estimate the content validity of the instrument. It yielded the following values: 75.02% for Parenting Responsibilities Rating Scale; and 67.71% for Marital Conflict Rating Scale. In order to estimate the construct validity of the instruments, the rotated factor loading of the varimax method was done, which yielded the following values: 0.65-0.94 for Parenting Responsibilities Rating Scale; and 0.53-0.86 for Marital Conflict Rating Scale. In order to establish the reliability of the instruments. The data generated were analysed with Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient in order to determine whether the instruments have internal consistency. It yielded the following coefficients 0.79 for Parenting Responsibilities Rating Scale; and 0.81 for Marital Conflict Rating Scale.

The questionnaire was administered to the respondents directly by the researchers with the help of five research assistants. The research assistants were recruited and trained by the researcher. The scope of the training covered the objectives of the study, how to collect and collate the data in good condition. The researcher was on ground throughout the period to offer guidance. For ethical reason, the respondents were assured of the confidentiality of

information provided. They were told that the process is completely voluntary and that they were free to discontinue the activities if and when they felt uncomfortable. The questionnaire was retrieved immediately to avoid loss of data. The data obtained were collated, scored and entered into a computer system through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The package was also used to analyse the data according to the research question raised and hypothesis formulated. In analysing the data, the research question was answered with the aid of Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Coefficient of determination. Linear regression was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between parenting responsibilities and marital conflict among married civil servants in Delta State?

Table 1: Pearsons’ Correlation and Coefficient of Determination on the relationship between parenting responsibilities and marital conflict among married civil servants in Delta State.

Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i> ²	<i>r</i> ² %	Remark
Parenting Responsibilities	1,023	0.131	0.017	1.7	Positive Relationship
Marital Conflict					

In Table 1, the researcher presented the result of a Pearson’s correlation and coefficient of determination. In the Table, *N* represents the number of participants for the study, *r* represents the correlation coefficient, *r*² represents the coefficient of determination while *r*²% represents the percentage of variability in the dependent variable as explained by the independent variable. The result shows that *r* = 0.131, *r*² = 0.017 and *r*²% = 1.7. The result implies that a positive relationship exists between parenting responsibilities and marital conflict among married civil servants in Delta State. Parenting responsibilities contributes 1.7% variability to marital conflict among married civil servants in Delta State.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between parenting responsibilities and marital conflict among married civil servants in Delta State

Table 1: Regression analysis of the relationship between parenting responsibilities and marital conflict among married civil servants in Delta State

Model	Sum of Square	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig
Regression	4749.119	1	4749.119	17.469	.000 ^b
Residual	273767.541	1022	271.864		
Total	278516.660	1023			

Variables in Equation					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	T	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	66.854	3.755		17.806	.000
Parenting Responsibilities	-.154	.037	-.131	-4.180	.000
$\alpha = 0.05, R = 0.131, R\text{-Square} = 0.017$ a. Dependent Variable: Marital Conflict b. Predictors (Constant): Parenting Responsibilities					

In Table 2, the researcher presented the result of a regression analysis, which was used to test the hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between parenting responsibilities and marital conflict among married civil servants in Delta State. The result shows that $F(1, 1022) = 17.469, p < 0.05$ level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between parenting responsibilities and marital conflict among married civil servants in Delta State. The R^2 value of 0.017 showed that parenting responsibilities contributed 1.7% to the variability in marital conflict among married civil servants in Delta State. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for predicting marital conflict from parenting responsibilities is -0.154; the standardized coefficient (β) was -0.131, $t = -4.180$. Parenting responsibilities is significant at an alpha level of 0.05.

DISCUSSIONS

The finding showed that there is a significant relationship between parenting responsibilities and marital conflict among married civil servants in Delta State. This finding suggests that disagreements over child-rearing duties such as who cares for children, how discipline is handled, and who manages schooling and related logistics, are a measurable source of tension in these households. Practically, when parenting tasks are perceived as uneven, unclear, or inconsistent between spouses, the result is more frequent arguments, resentment, and erosion of emotional closeness, which in turn contributes to broader marital discord. Several possible reasons could explain this relationship. First, civil servants juggling demanding work schedules and parenting duties may feel overwhelmed, which reduces patience and emotional availability at home. Secondly, if one spouse (often the partner with less flexible hours) carries a disproportionate share of parenting work, they may feel undervalued and resentful. Disagreements about discipline, education, or childcare strategies can also become recurring triggers for conflict. Finally, the cumulative effect of these strains depletes relational

resources such as time, energy, and empathy, making constructive conflict resolution more difficult and increasing the likelihood of chronic marital tension.

The above finding is in line with recent studies showing that unequal or contested parenting responsibilities predict higher marital conflict among working couples. For example, Akinlabi and Adeola (2021) found that differences in parental involvement were linked to lower marital satisfaction among dual-earner households, and Okafor and Obinna (2022) reported that perceived imbalance in childcare duties was a leading cause of domestic disputes among civil servants. Similarly, Adeoye and Bello (2022) observed that parenting burden combined with work demands significantly increased the risk of marital discord in public-sector employees. Thus, the finding agrees with Akinlabi and Adeola (2021), Okafor and Obinna (2022), and Adeoye and Bello (2022), who all found that unequal or contested parenting responsibilities are significant predictors of marital conflict among employed couples in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that parenting responsibilities, when not clearly defined and mutually managed between spouses, constitute a subtle but meaningful source of strain in marriages, highlighting the importance of role clarity and cooperation in sustaining marital stability among married civil servants. In view of this, the following recommendations have been provided:

1. Married civil servants should be encouraged to adopt a balanced distribution of parenting duties to reduce feelings of overload, resentment, and conflict.
2. Government and workplace institutions should organize counselling and sensitization programmes to help couples develop effective communication and conflict management skills related to parenting.
3. Employers, especially in the civil service, should introduce flexible work schedules, parental leave, and support systems that reduce the stress associated with combining work and parenting roles.
4. Couples should be exposed to training on modern parenting strategies, role negotiation, and cooperative decision-making to minimize disagreements over child-rearing practices.
5. Since parenting responsibilities account for only a small proportion of marital conflict, future studies should examine other factors such as financial stress, emotional intelligence, and work-related pressures for a more comprehensive understanding.

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