

# Psychosocial Factors Influencing Marital Distress In Ghanaian Married Couples

Michael T. Anim\*

Department of Psychological Medicine and Mental Health, University of Cape Coast School of Medical Sciences, Ghana.

\* E-mail of the corresponding author: [m.t.anim@uccsms.edu.gh](mailto:m.t.anim@uccsms.edu.gh)

## Abstract

This study set out to examine how much distress men and women experience in their marital relationships, and what psychosocial factors are associated with marital distress. This was done by using the Marital Happiness Scale, and a questionnaire that measured demographic characteristics, as measuring instruments. Two research questions were answered and one hypothesis was tested. They covered the differences that exist in the marital distress experiences of husbands and wives, and psychosocial factors that impact marital distress. A total of eighty (80) married men and women comprising 40 husbands and 40 wives were conveniently selected to take part in the study. Descriptive statistics was used to answer research question one and two and a t- Tests was used to test the difference between husbands and wives in marital distress. The findings showed that wives tested more distressed than husbands in marriages. Certain psychosocial areas showed as areas of high distress in marriages such as communication, time spent together, sex relations, and friendliness.

**Key words:** Psychosocial, marital distress, married couple, Ghanaian

## 1. Introduction

It is indicated in relationship research that many marriages go through turbulent times that cause great distress for couples. These put couples at risk for developing higher levels of depression and anxiety (Bradbury, Fincham & Beach, 2000). According to Snyder, Heyman & Haynes (2005), because there is a strong relationship between distress and personal emotional disturbance, it is important to research causes for relationship distress and implement effective intervention strategies to either avoid the dissolution of a marriage or entering into one that might end in divorce.

Bramlett and Mosher's (2001) research finding was contained in a report in the USA released by The National Center for Health Statistics that one fifth of first marriages ended within 5 years and one third ended within 10 years. First marriages of teenagers disrupted faster than the first marriages of women who were ages 20 years and older at marriage. The same report estimated that approximately 50% of first marriages end in divorce, one of life's most stressful events; that for those marriages that do not end in divorce, many are unhappy. It has been estimated that at any given time, approximately 20% of all married couples go through marital distress. Despite the risk associated with marriage, almost 90% of the population chooses to marry at least once, and nearly 75% of divorced individuals choose to remarry. Therefore, understanding marital distress, its dynamics and effects and developing effective solutions, have caught the attention of many mental health workers.

According to Sabini (1995), not all unhappy marriages end in divorce. Some stay together for the sake of the children, or for religious or other reasons. Alhassan (1997) had the conviction that many marriages in Ghana could best be described as distressed, unhappy, and in discord, but these had not yet ended in divorce. Amuzu (1997) observed that women sustain injuries as a result of marital violence which includes cuts, broken bones, concussions, miscarriages, as well as permanent injuries such as damage to joints, partial loss of hearing or vision, scars from burns, knife wounds and even death. In Ghana, although the incidence of physical abuse of women is thought to be commonplace and pervasive, only few women report or even admit being victims of domestic violence. In several instances, it is only reported when grievous harm has been caused. In addition, many victims face pressure from society to keep the family together at all costs and many women who are severely battered by their husbands continue to cling to the

relationship hoping that something would eventually happen that would change the bad situation. In Safo's (1997) opinion, women also commit violence against men almost as often as men do against women.

The distress is so prevalent that one finds it difficult to assign a particular reason or factor to the phenomenon. Some authors blame it on factors including differences in the sexes, differences in personality or temperaments, differences in upbringing, communication difficulties, Western education and emancipation of women, intrusion of third parties and failure to adjust (Adei, 1991). Mcvey (1990) highlighted financial problems, immaturity before marriage, in-laws, accommodation problems and sexual incompatibilities as resulting in marital distress. Holtsworth-Munroe & Jacobson (1985) also identified expectations and negative attributions as important.

Recently, self-esteem and assertiveness were researched and found to also affect marital distress in Ghanaians (Anim, 2011). With self-esteem and assertiveness not properly developed in people, they enter marital relationships only to find out that they are not really mature enough to handle physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual conflicts that erupt in marital relationships.

Western education and its consequent 'emancipation' of women may have also affected marital distress in a society where male dominance is taken for granted. An educated wife may seek to exert 'equal-status' authority in the marriage, and may challenge her husband's final decisions pertaining to the home. Some highly educated couples find it difficult agreeing who controls affairs in the marriage: the husband, wife, or both? Many educated women answer that it is both, for in marriage both should share the same authority or exercise equal-status rights and power. These ideas may make some wives behave in traditionally unacceptable ways in their relationships, and this may spark a lot of friction, communication problems, marital dissatisfaction and distress (Anim, 2011).

Rather than face marital problems when they arise, many married couples get around it, seeking the route of least resistance. McDowell (1985) pointed out such ineffective substitutes for dealing with conflicts as failing to acknowledge the problem, withdrawal, trying to ignore the conflict's significance, spiritualising the problem with religious jargon, keeping scores, attacking the person instead of the problem, blaming someone else, desiring to win no matter the cost, giving up just to avoid conflict, and buying a special gift for the other person.

All these ineffective solutions have one thing in common: they try to avoid dealing with the problem. In the end, the accumulation of unresolved conflicts take their toll with painful physical, psychological, emotional, mental, and spiritual consequences, which can be termed distress in marriage.

The gender of married couples is a factor that is related to the emotional distress that accompanies arguments in marriage. Almeida and Kessler (1998) found that emotional distress which comes from a marital argument is more pronounced for wives than husbands suggesting that wives might be more reactive than husbands to arguments in marriage.

There is a need for further study to determine other psychosocial factors that are responsible for marital distress in Ghana, apart from those above that have been researched empirically. Alder (2010) suggested that another scope of future research could be to explore other demographic variables in marital satisfaction.

In this study, therefore, some potential associates of marital distress are explored in order to understand the dynamics of a distressed marriage. One way to understand the dynamics of marital distress is to identify factors that most likely contribute to marital distress. In this study, age of married couples, religion, communication, and other psychosocial factors have been examined.

## **2. Objectives of the study**

One objective of this study was to find out the intensity of marital distress among married men and women on the measuring questionnaire.

Second, to find out who are more distressed: husbands or wives?

Finally, to find out the degree to which other psychosocial factors are associated with and play a role in influencing

marital distress.

Two questions were answered. First, will persons who report marital distress obtain high distress scores on the marital happiness scale? Second, will wives report higher distress than husbands? Third, will husbands and wives differ in distress scores in different psychosocial areas of the marital relationship?

### 3. Research questions

1. What is the level of intensity of marital distress among married men and women?
2. On which psychosocial variables will husbands and wives, similarly or differently, indicate high distress?

The following hypothesis was tested:

$H_0$  = There is significant difference in the level of distress of wives and husbands. Wives will experience high distress levels than husbands.

**4. Methodology:** This was a descriptive cross-sectional study design whose primary goal was to assess a sample of maritally distressed persons at one specific point in time without trying to make inferences or causal statements.

**4.1 Participants:** Distressed couples who have been married two years or more with a minimum of Middle/Junior Secondary school education were used. The participants were from the University of Ghana, Legon, some churches, some general hospitals, Department of Social welfare, a district grade two court, some schools, and civil service institutions. In all, eighty (80) married men and women who reported marital distress were selected. Participants, whose marital distress was associated with known psychiatric conditions, particularly substance related disorder, schizophrenia, major depressive illness, and other psychotic disorders, were not included in the study.

Sampling for equal numbers of husbands and wives was done in order to include presumably typical groups in the sample. The researcher contacted married men and women in the said areas and purposefully selected forty (40) distressed husbands. Their ages ranged from 28 years to 64 years. The mean age for the group was 40.4 (SD= 7.3796). The wives were also forty (40) and aged from 25 to 56 years. The mean age for the wives was 38.6 years (SD= 7.7849). Refer to Table 1. Twenty five of the husbands (62.5 %) were highly educated and fifteen (37.5%) had low education. Twelve (12) wives were highly educated (30%) while twenty eight (28) wives(70%) had low education as shown in Table 1 (NB: Up to GCE O-level was considered as low education, and from A-level was considered as high education). Husbands in the sample had been married an average of 8.05 years with a range of 3-28 years (mean = 8.05; SD= 6.63). Also wives in the sample had been married an average of 13.9 years with a range of 2- 29 years (mean= 13.9; SD= 7.9). Refer to Table 1.

**4.2 Measures:** Instruments used were a questionnaire and a screening interview. The screening interview had structured questions of the closed-ended type to which subjects responded either 'yes' or 'no.' The questions covered alcoholism, substance-related disorders, schizophrenia, psychosis, and depression, and they were meant to eliminate subjects who suffered from these conditions.

The main data collection instrument was a comprehensive questionnaire made up of socio-demographic data such as age, sex, religion, occupation, and number of children.

Then a 33- item 4- point Marital Happiness Scale (being the combination of the marital happiness and the Dyadic Adjustment Scales, were modified by the researcher for Ghanaian respondents).

Method of Scoring the Marital Happiness Scale: This questionnaire was scored to differentiate high scorers and low scorers.

The highest score obtainable = 132

The lowest score obtainable = 33

Range: 132 – 33 = 99

Midpoint:= 49 From: 33 – 82 = low distress

From: 83 – 132= high distress.

**4.3 Procedure:** Pilot Study: The entire questionnaire was much improved by pre-testing. Every part of the questionnaire such as the items, the format, and the introduction were tried out first with friends, church members, and persons similar to the investigator's intended subjects.

Thus, a pilot study which lasted for about a month and a half, with a preliminary sample of twenty distressed married couples (made up of 12 husbands and eight wives), was conducted. The researcher explained that he needed advice, and he questioned his informants about each answer choice and their understanding of each item on the questionnaires. The results showed that the respondents' understanding of some questions and answers were different from his. After allowing days in doing this exercise, some items were modified by rewording and simplifying them. The Marital Happiness Scale had 33 items of a 4-point scale format running through all items. To further validate the instrument, face validity was used. Three lecturers (two clinical psychologists and a counsellor), inspected and vetted the instrument. At this stage, it was ready for administration.

Verbal consent was obtained before the interview, and then the questionnaire was administered. The researcher supervised the completion of the questionnaire which took about thirty minutes on the average for almost all respondents whose level of education was low. In all, 90 questionnaires were administered. Four were not returned. Three were discarded because of incompleteness, and three were not used in the final analyses because the respondents were not distressed. They exaggerated their responses. The completed questionnaires were collected same day.

**4.4 Data analyses:** Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages), were used to answer research question one and two and a t-Test was used to test hypotheses 1. All analysis in this study was done using SPSS 1998 (8.0).

## 5. Results

Demographic characteristics of sample are presented in Table 1.

**5.1 Level of education** . About 38% of husbands had low education as compared to 70% of wives of low education, whilst 63% of husbands had high education compared to 30% of wives who also had high education.

**5.2 Marriage type.** A high percentage (97.5) of husbands were monogamous and only 2.5% of them were polygamous. Compared to husbands, 80% of wives were also monogamous and only 20% were polygamous.

**5.3 Occupation type.** The percentage of husbands who were civil/public servants was 32.5% and 12.5% of wives were of similar job status. Sixteen husbands (40%) were in the teaching field and about the same percentage of wives were also in the teaching field (35%). For farming, 20% of husbands and 7.5% of wives engaged in it. Finally, a small percentage of husbands (7.5%) were traders and a large percentage of wives traded in goods (45%).

**5.4 Age.** Husbands' ages ranged from 28 to 64 years, whilst wives' ages ranged from 25 to 56 years.

**5.5 Years of marriage.** Husbands' years of marriage ranged from 2 - 28 years whilst wives' years of marriage ranged from 2- 29 years.

**5.6 Number of children.** Both husbands and wives had number of children ranging from no child to six (6).

**5.7 Religious Type.** A small number (10%) of husbands and 7.5% of wives were Catholics. Seventy percent of husbands and 60% of wives were Protestants. Husbands (17.5%) and wives (22.5%) were Pentecostal/Spiritual. Husbands (2.5%) and no wives were of the Islamic faith. And ten percent of wives did not indicate their religious backgrounds.

**5.8 Research question one** asked what the level of intensity of marital distress was among married men and women. Would husbands and wives who experience marital distress score high on the Marital Happiness Scale? Table 2 shows data on the levels of marital distress for both husbands and wives.

Table 2 shows that out of a sample size of 40 distressed husbands, 20 (50%) fell in the low distress level, and 20 (50%) fell in the high distress level. Unlike the husbands, 11 wives (27.5%) had low distress while 29 (72.5%) had high distress. In aggregate, 49 (61.5%) husbands and wives had high distress and 31 (38.75%) had low distress levels. The answer seemed to be that many husbands and wives together, experienced high distress.

**5.9** Research question two asked on which psychosocial variables husbands and wives would similarly or differently indicate high distress?

**5.9.1** Descriptive analyses of responses on the Marital Happiness Scale revealed that the following areas presented in Table 3 were high distress areas for most husbands and wives.

Table 3 indicates areas in which husbands and wives were distressed the most. In sharing of deep concerns, 72.5% of husbands and 75% of wives were distressed; in engagement in outside interest together, 72.5% and 75% of husbands and wives respectively were distressed; in having interesting exchange of ideas, 70% of husbands and 77% of wives reported high distress; in frequency of annoying each other, 70% and 77.5% of husbands and wives respectively reported that they were highly distressed; in agreement with partner's choice of friends, husbands (75%) reported much distress, wives (62.5%) reported much distress; in amount of time spent together, 67.5% of husbands and 57.5% of wives reported much distress; in sex relations, 55% husbands and wives (52.5%) experienced distress. Then in calmly discussing something, 55% and 57.2% of husbands and wives respectively experienced much distress.

In the following areas, however, husbands and wives seemed to differ in distress: in the degree of understanding, only about 48% of husbands but 65% of wives expressed that their spouses understood them negatively. A small percentage of husbands (32.5%) felt that their wives were not friends to them; whereas 65% of wives felt their husbands were not their friends. Furthermore, more husbands (57.5%) considered separation or divorce most of the time than the percentage of wives (42.5%) who considered separation or divorce. Finally, husbands (47.5%) compared to wives (62.5%) disagreed to the way family finances were handled.

On the other hand, in the areas of low distress, it is noteworthy that only a small percentage of both married men (33%) and women (30%) fought.

**5.9.2** Hypothesis: It was hypothesized that there would be significant difference in the level of distress of wives and husbands. That wives would differ significantly from husbands in distress levels. This hypothesis was tested using an independent t-Test. Results are summarized in Table 4. Table 4 shows that husbands and wives differed significantly on marital distress ( $P = 0.013 < 0.05$ ). Results showed that wives were more distressed ( $m = 92.4$ ;  $SD = 19.4$ ) than husbands ( $m = 82.6$ ;  $SD = 19.2$ ).

## 6. Discussion

This study set out to answer the following two research questions: First, what was the level of intensity of marital distress among married men and women? Second, on which psychosocial variables would husbands and wives, similarly or differently, indicate high distress? The hypothesis that was tested stated that there was significant difference in the level of distress of wives and husbands.

This discussion considers the degree to which the results of the study answered the above questions and gave support to the hypothesis.

**6.1 Marital Distress Level of Husbands and Wives.** The result seemed to indicate that equal numbers of husbands reported low and high distress. Unlike the husbands, a few number of wives (27.5%) had low distress while the majority (72.5%) had high distress. This result suggests that wives in this population were highly distressed in their marriages. This is to say that there were relatively more wives testing distressed on the marital happiness scale than husbands in the population studied. In aggregate, however, relatively more married men and women (61.3%) who reported distress tested highly distressed on the research instrument than those who tested low distress (38.8%).

The hypothesis tested indicated that wives were significantly more distressed than husbands. This could be accounted for by the fact that even in a distressed relationship with a husband, a wife in Ghana would strive to keep

the home from disintegrating or stay for the sake of the children, or for religious reasons (Sabini, 1992), or stay because of pressures from family members or society; or still stay hoping that something would eventually happen which would change the bad situation (Safo, 1997). All or most of these and other reasons kept wives in distressed relationships. Here, they suffered more than their husbands who although distressed too, might have other outlets for their distress. Some of these outlets, as revealed by male respondents, were having girlfriends, staying away from home for long periods, and sheer pretence as if they were alright. Some resorted to drinking alcoholic beverages and use of other drugs to alleviate their distress.

Another possible reason for the women's report of high distress is that in our society, women are noted for reporting their emotions more readily and frankly than men. This is reflected in their distress score. This is in consonance with Adei's (1991) statement that 'men are not expected to display emotions and vulnerability. These are feminine characteristics.

The results also indicated that husbands' and wives' distress showed in particular areas of their marriages more than it showed in other areas (see Table 3). For instance, more than average percentage (a greater number) of husbands and wives in the sample studied were highly distressed in sharing deep concerns with the partner. They rarely or never shared deep concerns with each other. If marriage is about companionship, and a matter of exchange of concerns, then we might expect the degree to which husbands and wives disclosed concerns to each other to be related to how satisfied the partners are (Franzoi, Davis and Young, 1985). Moreover, couples discrepant in degree of self-disclosure also seemed to be less satisfied (Davidson, et, al, 1983).

Other areas of high distress were engagement in outside interests together, having an interesting exchange of ideas and calmly discussing something. More than average percentage of husbands and wives (72.5% and 75% respectively) reported rarely or never to these. In sex relations, choice of friends of spouse, amount of time spent together and handling family finances, a greater number of respondents (more than 50%) reported they most of the time or always disagreed with their spouses. Majority of respondents (70% and 77.5% of husbands and wives respectively) also frequently annoyed each other and perceived the way their spouses understood them and related to them as friends as negative. A good marriage brings a feeling of security and understanding because a spouse knows the partner will accept him/her and be a true friend. As a husband faces many problems and difficulties, his wife is the best friend to listen and encourage and share the problems. In Ghana, as a wife tries to care for babies, cook the meals, and settle house problems, she expects that her husband will listen, encourage and work out her problems with her. This means husband and wife must be able to talk with each other in truth, patience and understanding and share personal and common problems together. This true friendship is a blessing in a relationship. In its absence, women might report distress.

The above are some of the typical areas of high distress for the studied sample. It is worthy of note, however, that fighting (physical abuse or violence) did not occur frequently among couples. This did not agree with Simpson's (1991) suggestion that women have accepted violence as part of the male-female relationship. It could be that with the presence of the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit of the Ghana Police Service (DOVVSU), the Federation of African Women Educationalists (FAWE) Ghana Chapter, the National Commission on Women and Development (NCWD), as well as various radio and television programmes like Mmaa Nkommo (literally translated "women talk"), and the numerous pro women human rights activists' activities, designed to condemn domestic violence and discrimination against women, the phenomenon is lessening. Nevertheless, psychological abuse, as shown in the areas above, is increasing. Only 12 wives fought occasionally. Though the majority did not fight physically, they were highly distressed. Nevertheless, 57.5% of husbands rarely or never considered divorce and 43% of wives did not. They also tolerated and stayed in the distressed marriage.

**6.2 Age and marital distress.** It was theorized that young people are (on average) worse at being spouses than older people or young people are worse at picking spouses than are older people. (Booth & Edwards, 1985). The evidence at the moment seems to favour the hypothesis. The youngest age in this present study sample for husbands was 28 years and for wives, it was 25 years. The oldest for husbands was 64 and 56 years for wives. But it is not known which age group in this study is more distressed. Age and distress of wives were correlated. And Pearson's correlation coefficient revealed a negative low correlation (-.081), which suggests that, in this study sample, the lower the age of wives, the higher their distress. As they grow older, their distress level decreases. (That of husbands

was not correlated). One possible explanation may be that as wives grow older, they are able to handle or cope with their distress better.

**6.3 Occupation type and marital distress.** As compared to husbands (7.5%), more wives (45%) traded in goods. As compared to husbands (32.5%), a fewer percentage of wives (12.5%) worked as civil/public servants. These only go to buttress the finding that the greater percentage of wives of low education (70%) could not work as government workers. So they undertake business and trade in goods which, in our economy today, is the fastest growing and economically rewarding sector. Hence, wives become more economically powerful than the husbands. Either this threatens the man's power status in the marriage or it makes the wives nonsubmissive so as to spark power conflicts.

In any case, factors differentiating stable and unstable marriages were studied (Gelles, 1976). It was found that husband's increase in income led to marital stability, but wives income increase led to marital instability. The idea here is that, a wife's ability to be independent through her education and occupation lessens the propensity for her to remain in a marriage and thus lessens stability. And in the extreme, there is evidence that wives who are being physically abused by their husbands are more likely to leave the marriage if they are able to support themselves and their children than if they are not (Strobe & Barbour, 1984). The idea could also be that some husbands feel threatened as their wives obtain more economic power. This could also reduce marital stability. Moore and Waite (1981) showed that as wives' income increases relative to total household income, marital satisfaction decreases.

**6.4 Religion and marital distress.** Table 1 indicates that a greater percentage of both husbands and wives were of a Protestant background and smaller percentages were of Catholic and Islamic backgrounds. Sabini (1995) noted that Catholics divorce less than do Protestants and those without religion divorce most often. Since majority of husbands and wives in this sample attend church, it agrees with Sabini that the more frequently one attends church, the less likely that person will divorce. Religion, especially the more traditional (and conservative) Catholic and Protestants, fosters both a conservative way of life supportive of marriage and provides barriers against divorce. Greater involvement in religion appears to be tied to spouses being satisfied with marriage. Mahoney et al. (2001) found that church attendance more frequently co-varied with greater marital satisfaction ( $r = .07$ ), and that religion being personally relevant related to greater marital satisfaction ( $r = .15$ ). Two moderators for links between religion and marital satisfaction can be discussed. First, Sullivan (2001) found that if partners portray healthy behavior (mental health), religion could increase marital satisfaction; however, couples with a partner in distress or "neurotic" might experience an increase in marital difficulties. Second, Mahoney et al. (2001) found that religiousness on a personal level is very predictive of marital happiness for people attending church.

## 7. Conclusions

The primary purpose of this study was to find out the marital distress level of married men and women who report distress and what psychosocial factors might account for distress in the Ghanaian population. This study was conceived against the background of reported increased marital distress in Ghana and its attendant marital separation, divorce and use of medical and mental health facilities by victims. Thus, the research focused on marital distress and psychosocial factors. The main results of the study might be summarized as follows: In the aggregate, more married persons in the sample experienced, reported and tested high distress than the number that reported low distress; that wives were more distressed than husbands. Finally, both husbands and wives were highly distressed in areas like communication, spending time together, sex relations and not being friendly to each other. They were, however, not distressed due to physical abuse/violence and many wives than husbands considered divorce/separation, but did not separate. The study has shown that in terms of who experienced the greatest distress in marriage relationships in Ghana, it is the wives. Some studies (Adu- Gyamfi, 1986) found (as in this present one) that women were more likely to report problems in the emotional and social domains more readily, but that sex differences might lie in differences in ability to admit and to report certain kinds of marital problems. Unlike adults seeking psychological services in the US for the most common presenting problem of marital dissatisfaction (Behrens, Brett, & Sanders, 1994), most Ghanaian distressed women (and men) do not look for psychological services. They look for solutions in church or religious and traditional/indigenous resources and suffer distress in the name of religion, culture and tradition, and for the sake of the children. Finally, this was a descriptive cross-sectional study design whose primary goal was to assess a sample of maritally distressed persons at one specific point in time without trying to make inferences or causal statements. The reasons were to identify areas in marital distress for further research, to conduct

needs assessment in counselling for maritally distressed couples, and to provide psychosocial information about marital distress in Ghana. This study helped to reveal patterns and connections that might otherwise go unnoticed in marital relationships in Ghana.

## 8. Recommendations

Future research may consider details of how each of the psychosocial variables negatively affects marital distress and why. For instance, how do sex relations bring marital distress about? What is the nature and character of communication between a couple and how does that contribute to distress? At what age do couples usually marry and at what point in their relationship does distress set in? In what specific ways does religion or spirituality moderate marital distress? Qualitative research data will be more helpful this way than mere survey data. Further research may also consider specifically the role psychosocial factors play in moderating specific marital conflicts like arguments, finances, and communication. For instance, what role does education/amount of schooling play? Also, the role they play in maintaining distressed marriages that do not end in divorce. The role home of origin plays in marital distress needs urgent research. More powerful statistics could have been used in analysing the psychosocial factors. Future research may consider using statistics with more power other than or in addition to descriptive statistics.

## References

- Adu-Gyamfi, J.G. (1989). Sex Status, Cognitive Style, and Report of Psychiatric Symptoms.(Unpublished M.Phil thesis presented to) Psychology Department, University of Ghana, Legon.
- Adei, Stephen (1991). *The Secret of a Happy Marriage: Communication*. Achimota: Africa Christian Press.
- Alder, Emily S., (2010). Age, Education Level, and Length of Courtship in Relation to Marital Satisfaction. *School of Professional Psychology*. Paper 145.
- Alhassan, Z. (1997, March 1). Why men are jealous. *The mirror*. pg 11.
- Almeida, D. M., & Kessler, R. C. (1998). Everyday stressors and gender differences in daily distress. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75, 670-680.
- Amuzu (1998, Dec. 10). Women suffer unseen violence. *Daily graphic*. pg. 19
- Anim, M.T. (2011). A Study of Self-esteem as a Psychological Factor Influencing Marital Distress in Ghana. *Ghana Journal of Education and Teaching*, No. 12, 186-196..
- Behrens, Brett, C., & Sanders, Matthew, R. (1994). 'Prevention of Marital Distress: Current Issues in Programming and Research.' *Behavior change*, 1994, Vol 11 (2) 82-93.
- Booth, Allan & White (1980). *Journal of marriage and the family*. 42, (3)
- Bradbury, T.N., Fincham, F.D., and Beach, S.R.H. (2000). Research on the nature and determinants of marital satisfaction: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62, 954-980.
- Bramlett, Matthew and William Mosher.(2001). "First marriage dissolution, divorce, and remarriage: United States," *Advance Data From Vital and Health Statistics*; No.323. Hyattsville MD: National Center for Health Statistics: 2 1.
- Davidson, B., Balswick, J., & Halverson, C. (1983). 'Affective self-disclosure and marital adjustment: a test of equity theory'. *Journal of marriage and the family*.45, 93-102.
- Davis, M. H., & Franzoi, S.L. (1986). Adolescent loneliness, self-disclosure, and private consciousness: A longitudinal investigation'. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 51, 595-608.



- Gelles, R.J. (1976). Abuse wives: why do they stay? *Journal of marriage and the family*, 38, 659-668.
- Holtzworth-Munroe, A., & Jacobson, N. S. (1985). Causal attributions of barried couples: when do they search for causes? What do they conclude when they do? *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 48, 1398 – 1412.
- Jacobson, N. S., McDonald, D. W., Follette.,&Berley, R. A. (1985). Attributional Processes in distressed and nondistressed married couples. *Cognitive therapy and research*, 9, 35 – 50.
- Mahoney, A., Tarakeshwar, N. (2005). Religion’s role in marriage and parenting in daily life and during family crises. In Paloutzian, R., & Park, C. (Ed.), *Handbook of the psychology of religion and spirituality* (pp.177-195). New York: Guilford.
- McDowell, Josh (1985). *The secret of loving*. N. P.: Here is Life Publishers.
- McVey, D., (1990). *Preparing for marriage*, Ghana Christian Press, Tema.
- Moore, K. A., & Waite, L. J. (1981). Marital dissolution, early motherhood and early marriage. *Social Forces*, 60, 20-40.
- Safo, M. (1997, March, 1). Husbands who beat their wives. *The mirror*. pg. 12.
- Sabini, J. (1995). *Social psychology*, New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Ltd.
- Simpson, G. (1991). *Explaining sexual violence. Some background factors in current socio-political context*, university of the Witwatersrand, 1991.
- Strobe, M. J. & Barbour, L. S. (1984). Factors related to the decision to leave an abusive relationship. *Journal of marriage and family*, 46, 837 – 844.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Sample**

Variables	Husbands (No.)	%	Wives (No.)	%
<b>1. Educational Level</b>				
Low (Up to O-level)	15	37.5	28	70
High (A-Level upwards)	25	62.5	12	30
<b>2. Marriage Type:</b>				
Monogamy	39	97.5	32	80
Polygamy	1	2.5	8	20
<b>3. Occupation Type:</b>				
Civil/Public Service	13	32.5	5	12.5
Teaching	16	40	14	32
Farming	8	20	3	7.5
Trading	3	7.5	18	45
<b>4. Religious Type:</b>				
Catholic	4	10	3	7.5
Protestant	28	70	24	60
Pentecostal/Spiritual	7	17.5	9	22.5
Islam	1	2.5	0	0
Religion not indicated			4	10
<b>5. Age:</b>	Minimum	Maxim	Mean	St. Dev.
Husbands	28	64	40.5	7.38
Wives	25	56	38.6	7.78
<b>6. Years of Marriage:</b>				
Husbands	2	28	8.0	6.62
Wives	2	29	13.9	7.9
<b>7. Number of Children:</b>				
Husbands	00	6	2.6	1.7
Wives	00	6	2.5	1.6

**Table 2: Marital Distress Levels for Husbands and Wives.**

Distress Level	Husbands			Wives		Total	Percentage
	Score	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		
33-82		20	50	11	27.5	31	38.75
83-132		20	50	29	72.5	49	61.25
Total		40	100	40	100	80	100

**Table 3: Summary Table of Percentages Showing Psychosocial Areas of High Distress for Husbands and Wives**

Area	Husbands (n = 40)	Wives (n = 40)
1. Sharing of deep concerns	72.5%	75%
2. Engagement in outside interest together	72.5%	75%
3. Having interesting exchange of ideas	70%	77%
4. Frequency of annoying each other	70%	77.5%
5. Agreement with partner's choice of friends	75%	62.5%
6. Amount of time spent together	67.5%	57.5%
7. Sex relations	55%	52.5%
8. Calmly discussing something	55%	57.2%
9. Degree to which partners understand each other		
10. Feeling about your partner as a friend to you	47.5%	65%
11. Frequency of considering separation/divorce		
12. Handling family money	32.5%	65%
13. Area of low distress: fighting	57.5%	42.5
	47.5	62.5%
	33%	30%

N = 80

**Table 4: Summary Table of t-Test Showing Mean Comparison of Husbands and Wives on Marital Distress**

Marital Distress		
Variable	Husbands (n = 40)	Wives (n = 40)
Mean	82.6	92.6
SD	19.2	19.4
Mean Difference	-9.8	
One-tail significance	P = 0.013 < 0.05	Significant

N=80; p< .05

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to thank Felix Yirdong, Senior Research Assistant of the Department of Psychological Medicine and Mental Health, University of Cape Coast School of Medical Sciences, for his invaluable contributions to this article in the form of providing administrative support, data analysis and financial arrangements.

This academic article was published by The International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE). The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open Access Publishing service based in the U.S. and Europe. The aim of the institute is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the publisher can be found in the IISTE's homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

## CALL FOR PAPERS

The IISTE is currently hosting more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals and collaborating with academic institutions around the world. There's no deadline for submission. **Prospective authors of IISTE journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** <http://www.iiste.org/Journals/>

The IISTE editorial team promises to review and publish all the qualified submissions in a **fast** manner. All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Printed version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

### IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

