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Emotional Intelligence, Conflict Resolution Skills as Correlates of Marital Stability among Couples in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study was conducted to find out how emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills predict marital stability among married couples. The sample for this study consists of two hundred and fifty (250) marriage couples (males and females) in Lagos. The research instrument used was a validated questionnaire to measure the independent and dependent variables of the study. Four (4) hypotheses were tested, at 0.05 level of significance using Pearson correlation analysis and t-test statistics. The findings revealed that emotional intelligence had significant relationship with marital stability ($r = .537, P < .05$). There is significant relationship between conflict resolution skills and marital stability ($r = .562, P < .05$). There was no significant difference in the conflict resolution skills of married males and their female counterparts ($t = 1.106, P > .05$). Based on these findings, government should spearhead organization of seminars for married couples. Potential couples and married couples should also be exposed to emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills' training.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Conflict resolution skills, Marital stability

Introduction

Marriage institution is as old as man. At the beginning of creation, God ordained and sanctioned the institution of

marriage (Genesis 2:27). Marriage institution is the mother of all institutions in the world. God established that the man and the woman should be one (Genesis 2:24-25). Similarly, Quran chapter 30 verse 21 describes the marital relationship as cordial intimacy between a wife and her husband as that of a single soul (Esere & Idowu, 2000, 2001). Marriage, therefore, involves the coming together of a man and a woman to raise a family and to meet the satisfaction of security and of an enduring affection and companionship (Omari, 1969).

Stephens (1971) defines marriage as a socially legitimate sexual union, began with a public announcement and undertaken with some idea of permanence; it is assumed with a more or less explicit marriage contract, which spells out the reciprocal rights and obligations between the spouses and future children. Similarly, Landiss (1975) defines marriage as a social institution which constitutes the fundamental and basic community of humanity, two individuals differing in sex are mutually attracted by a mysterious force of instinct and love and commit freely and totally to each other to form a creative dynamic unit; a micro community called family.

Henslin (1980) defined marriage as a social institution cherished and highly approved in every culture of the total world population. According to Danfulani (1998), marriage is a cohesive union binding a husband and a wife together in a monogamous, not polygamous relationship. Adedeji (2002) described marriage as a sacred and permanent life long union between a man and a woman who have by legal implication agree to live together as husband and wife. These definitions bring out few basic components that constitute marriage, namely, social integration of persons, commitment, public acknowledgment, assumption of performance, procreation, reciprocal rights and obligations. Marriage is therefore, more than physical attraction, biological union and social integration; it involves total commitment, total self donation of one another and taking responsibilities that lead to mutual well-being.

However, it has been observed that marriage relationships which were intended to fulfill the above purposes and a lot more, seem to be deteriorating and that

couples no longer seem to enjoy each other's company (Esere, 2002). Surprisingly, a social institution (marriage) which calls for mutual love, co-existence and harmony now leads to acrimony, a place of continued conflict and bitter rancour (Esere & Idowu, 2000, 2001). An example of such bitter experience as the case of Hadiza who stabled her husband to death as a result of the misunderstanding between them just five days after their wedding (Olaitan, 1997). This may be as a result of an unresolved conflict.

According to Click (1975), Alvarez (1982), Adegoke and Esere (1998), marriage all over the world have witnessed an increasing wave of conflicts. In a study carried out by Steinmetz (1977), it was reported that nearly all the respondents reported the use of verbal aggression and physical attack to resolve marital conflicts. Such physical attacks could be pushing, beating, kicking, biting and the likes. According to Webzel & Ross (1983), a little push to get a wife out of the way or holding her to keep in control and other actions that result in injuries requiring hospitalization are all forms of wife battering. Wife battering, according to Stank (1985), is the maltreatment of a wife by her husband. This includes physical assault such as beating, pushing, biting, among others. Despite the teaching and preaching, on the concept of anger, many partners have been known to kill their spouses, deny that they are fathers or mothers to their children, insult or beat up their in-laws, tear up spouses' certificates, etc. (Omojola, 1995).

Describing anger, Omojola (1995) said that anger is an emotional feeling that comes upon us when others, things and situation don't fit into our expectations of them. It expresses itself openly in rage, shouting, throwing things, fighting assault, murder, destruction of properties,... or silently in frustration, resentment, bitterness, hatred, hostility, depression, etc. These are products of conflicts in marriage. No wonder, Azrin, Naster and Jones (1973), Oyeyemi, (1993) said that marital conflict or disharmony has been classified as forming one of the eight most pressing pervasive social problems of the present world.

In Nigeria today, the rate of couples seeking for divorce as a result of unresolved conflicts at customary courts and

social welfare centers are very alarming. A lot of such cases were recently witnessed in certain customary court whereby five (5) of the cases i.e. 62.5% of the court cases among couples ended up in divorce. Only (1) of the cases i.e. 12.5% did not end up in divorce, while two (2) of the cases i.e. 25% were undecided. One often reads or hears from news about couples experiencing marital conflicts. In the news papers one has read about how some couples kicked, punched, maltreated, wounded or even killed one another with guns and matchets. One hears over the radio also about many incidents of how couples fight, disagree over minute issues, insulting each other to the extent of filling for divorce (Oyeyemi, 1993). Giving her reasons for filling for divorces in the customary court on the 25th of May 2005, she was intending to divorce the man as a result of unfaithfulness, wife battering, reckless life, threat to kill her, home-neglect, reckless life, marrying the second wife, stealing and the motion to make use of one of the twins for money ritual.

Recently, a mother of two was granted divorce at Agege Grade "A" Customary court, Lagos, over the allegation of threat by her husband to kill her with acid. When this happens, who suffers? Plateris (1970) ascertained that termination of unhappy marriages by divorce is increasing and also is the number of children who suffer in the disrupted marriages. Bradford, (1978) has described divorce thus: It is the death of marriage, the husband and the wife together with their children are the mourners, the lawyers are the undertakers, the court is the cemetery where the coffin is sealed and the dead marriage buried.

It therefore implies that the husband, the wife and their children together with the society have some little pinch of pain to share when divorce occurs between the husband and his wife. If they had reasonably sat down and counted the cost of divorce, may be they would have considered staying together. The persistent war in almost every home all over the world could be linked to lack of the applicability of emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skill. Alhassan (1998) and Lemon (1985) observed that inevitably, marriage involves conflicts. Conflict, both internal and external, can occur. No two people can live together for years without clashing unless

one of them had decided to give in always. This therefore means that the husband and the wife are the "key players" in marriage who should apply emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills, manage their conflicts, to bring about harmonious living in their home.

Generally, marriage breeds more conflict than most social institutions (Alhassan, 1988). Confirming this, Azrin Naster and Jones (1973) as well Oyeyemi (1993) said that marital conflicts or disharmony has been classified as forming one of the eight most pressing pervasive social problems of the present world.

Marriage involves two incompatible sexes. The interaction between the two may lead to conflicts on many occasions. Such conflicts are not planned for but result unto chains of attended violence, anger, spouse battering and problems. It is necessary therefore to understand factors leading to marital conflicts among the married couples. Dutton and Browing 1988 submitted that a lot of marriages have hit the rock. Some have resulted in divorce, some in spouse abandonment. Men are particularly angered and likely to respond aggressively to situations involving potential abandonment.

The responsible factors for these unintended and unresolved conflicts that lead to spouse battering, separation, divorce, among others, are probably, as a result of the inability of the married couples to apply emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills in resolving marital conflicts. Hence, if these factors are identified and laudable interventions are put in place by the counseling psychologists, society, government, welfare centers and customary courts, the probability of reducing all these associated and attended problems is high.

The definite plan of God for marriage is not that it should collapse. But marriages all over the world have been witnessing an increasing wave of conflicts (Click, 1975, Alvarez, Adegoke & Esere, 1998). The case of a husband (in Frank Olize's NTA Newslines) who poured concentrated acid on his wife to 'check' her infidelity is just one of the numerous examples of violent acts against women.

According to Gelles (1977) one of the social factors related to family abuse and violence is "cycles of violence" in which observers or victims of violence during childhood are more likely than those not reared in violent homes to be violent in their future relationships. It seems that the greater the frequency of violence in a family, the greater the probability that the person from the family will grow up to be violent spouse or parents (Gelles, 1977). For example Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980) found that spouse battering increased from 2% to 200% as a function of having parents who abused each other. What a serious calamity!

Emotional intelligence can be considered a mental ability that involves the ability to reason validly with emotional information, and the action of emotions to enhance thought. Emotional intelligence is a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action (Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 1999). Emotional intelligence represents an ability to validly reason with emotions and to use emotions to enhance thought. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional intelligence knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth. Emotional intelligence is needed for any marriage to be stable and well organized. If a spouse or the spouses are emotionally intelligent they will be able to resolve their matters quickly.

Conflict resolution is the systematic attempt to avoid interpersonal crises or to manage those crises events that do occur (Folger & Poole, 2001, De Dreu, 2006). People who are good at managing conflicts look for some point of agreement and use good skills to get others to see a different point of view. It is evident that the most important feature of conflict is that it is based on interaction (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). Conflict can therefore, be best understood and managed between spouses by concentrating on specific behavioural patterns and the forces shaping them.

This study was necessitated because of the increasing wave of conflicts resulting to violence marked with spouse

battering, verbal assault, physical assault, killings, among others, in most marriages. What compounded the problem of marital conflict is the immediate and remote consequences on the spouses, their children, relations and the society at large. This study therefore aims at finding out how emotion intelligence and conflict resolution skills can predict marital stability.

Researches by Onakoya, 2005, Esere 2002 and Gelles (1990) have revealed the increase rise in divorce, wife battering, killing, verbal aggression, among others, globally, especially in African countries which may not be unconnected with unresolved marital conflicts. According to Straus and Gelles (1990), each year in the United States of America, one out of every eight men uses physical aggression against his female partner. They advanced further from the national survey they conducted that up to two (2) million women are severally assaulted by their husbands. For instance, in the South Western part of Nigeria, the love between a couple went sour as the husband decided to turn his lovebird to a punching bag like a possessed man until, one day, the beating took toll on the wife and she died (Onakoya, 2005).

Using college students, Straus (1973), found that 16% of them (about one out of every five) accepted that their parents used physical force to resolve marital conflicts. Steinmetz (1977), in his own findings revealed that nearly all the respondents reported the use of verbal aggression and physical attack to resolve marital conflicts.

In a study conducted by Esere (2002), it was revealed that the students who reported incidence of wife battering in their own family background have mean score (37.52) which is greater than the mean score (34.82) of those students who did not report incidence of wife battering in the family of orientation. Wife battering, according to Stank (1985), is the maltreatment of a wife by her husband. This includes physical assault such as beating, biting, pushing, kicking and the likes. Corroborating this, Wetzel and Boss (1983), said that a little push to a wife out of the way or holding her to keep her in control and other actions may result in injuries requiring hospitalizing are all forms of wife battering.

A recent survey of women presenting for treatment at community emergency departments found that 37% reported experiencing emotional or physical abuse by an intimate partner during their life times (Dearwater, Coben, Campell, Nah, Glass, Mcloughlin, and Bekemeier 1998). In fact, the possibility is high for the women or men experiencing emotional or physical abuse to think of divorce. Owuamanam (2005) reported that a woman axed her husband to death to avert an impending divorce sue to marital infidelity.

According to Carlson (1979), research revealed that only about 3% of older men and women are currently divorced. However, 11,000 older Americans divorce each year and although the increase in the divorce rate is lower among the middle aged and elderly, the divorce rate has gone up among adults of all ages.

Realistically speaking, when divorce occurs in the home, both the intimate partners and their children greatly feel the outcome. A study by Weber and O'Brien, (1999) found that children who were exposed to aggressive marital conflict were more likely to endorse attributions of blame for marital conflict than were children who had not been exposed to aggressive marital conflict

Gelles (1977) has also found that social factors related to family abuse and violence. One of such factors is a "cycle of violence" in which observers victims of violence during childhood are more likely than those not reared in violent homes to be violent in their future relationships. He said further that the greater the probability that the person from the family will grow up to be violent spouse or parents is very high. For example, Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980) found that spouse battering increased from 2% to 200% as a function of having parents who abused each other. Honestly, the cost of unresolved conflicts is doubly greater than the price couples will pay in resolving the conflict.

The American National Commission on the cause and prevention of Crime and Violence found in large representative samples that between one-fourth and one-fifth of the adults questioned felt that it was acceptable for spouses to hit each other under certain circumstance (Stark & McEvoy, 1970). Kumuyi (1993) found that newlywed

husbands and wives experienced greater percentage of conflict and withdrawal when hostility and defensive personally characteristics existed within the marriage. In India, according to Jain (1996) 94% of the marriages are very successful and the divorce rate is only 8%.

Another study reveals that problems of crime and delinquency are greater for children who are products of conflict homes. About fifty percent (50%) of patients admitted to mental hospitals result from marital stresses as the single major precipitating condition (Beiser & Glasser, 1986). Supporting evidence indicates that distressed couples have greater numbers of both unresolved problems and conflict episodes than do non-distressed couples (Billings, 1979, Birchler & Webb, 1977).

Steinmetz (1977), found that physical aggression occurred in approximately 70% of the families to resolved parent-child and sibling conflict, and 30% to resolve husband-wife conflict. Some of the couples engaged in physical aggression without considering the possible outcome. An example is a woman who stabbed her husband to death with a broken bottle over feeding allowance - claiming that her husband did not give her enough money for feeding the family (Okoro, 2005).

Madden and Janoff-Bulman (1981) interviewed married women in an investigation of attributions of control and blame for marital conflict and satisfaction with one's marriage. Each respondent was asked to discuss two standard conflict situations and two conflicts from her own marriage of the 32 respondents, 15 assigned the major part of the blame to themselves across the four situations.

Davis, Hops, Alpert, and Sheeber (1998) found that adolescent aggression (14 to 18 year old) was sequentially related to marital conflict in a laboratory conflict paradigm. Cummings and Davis (1994) suggested that children's reaction vary as a function of the forms of marital conflict to which they are exposed. On the basis of the diary responses of 51 couples with children between 4 and 11 years of age, Cummings, Goeke-morey, Papp, and Dukewish (2002) indicated wide varying reactions by children as a function of

different marital conflict expressions i.e., conflict tactics and, parents' emotionality.

According to Weber and O'Brien (1999) two years after a programme for 75 alcoholics and their wives, reports of spousal (husband-to-wife) violence dropped from 48 percent to 16 percent. Among 88 alcoholics and their wives participating in marriage -centered alcohol-treatment programmes, both husbands and wives showed significant, substantial reduction in verbal aggression two years after the programme (O'farell & Timothy 2000). This shows the indication that the issue of verbal aggression as a result of alcoholism still linger. It was only a reduction not a termination.

In conclusion, a recent survey of women presenting for treatment at community emergency departments founds that 37% reported experiencing emotional or physical abuse by an intimate partner during their life time (Dearwater, Coben, Campell, Nah, Glass, Mcloughlin, Bekemeier, 1989), and Adeniji (2005) reported that an old man of 65 years old killed his wife while she was sleeping due to the little quarrels that occurred between them. This show that both men and women all over the world could engage in any form of conflict or the other.

Palmer, Donaldson, and Stough (2002) found that emotional intelligence can have a significant impact on various elements of everyday living including marital stability, and that higher emotional intelligence was a predictor of life satisfaction. Additionally, Pellitteri (2002) reported that people higher in emotional intelligence were also more likely to use an adaptive defense style and thus exhibited healthier psychological adaptation. Performance measures of emotional intelligence have illustrated that higher levels of E.I. are associated with an increased likelihood of attending to health and appearance, positive interactions with friends and family, and owning objects that are reminders of their loved ones (Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, in press). Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey (1999) found that higher emotional intelligence correlated significantly with higher parental warmth and attachment style, while others found that those scoring high in E.I. also reported increased positive interpersonal

relationships among children, adolescents, and adults (Rice, 1999; Rubin, 1999).

According to Akinboye (2002), emotional intelligence competencies include good character, integrity, empathy, honesty, maturity, impulse control, emotional self-awareness, human dignity, flexibility, reality testing, trust and others. It suffices to say that every marriage partner needs to possess emotional intelligence competencies for sustainable relationship.

To achieve a lasting relationship among couples, the general principles, according to Brent Barlow, as quoted by Harris (2002), are physical touching of affection in a nonsexual nature; shared feelings, closeness without inhibitions; absence of psychological defenses; open communication and honesty; intellectual agreement on major issues; spiritual harmony; values and belief systems; sensitive appreciation of the mate's physical and emotional responses; similar values; imparted secrets; genuine understanding, mutual confidence in each other; a sense of warmth; safety and relaxation when together; sexual pleasures lovingly shared; signs of love freely given and received; mutual responsibility in caring, and I think this last one is the heart of every enduring relationship: abiding trust. These principles carefully explain emotional intelligence.

Harris (2002), quoting Brent Barlow further commented that whenever a relationship breaks down in marriage, it is always over trust issues. Trusts have been broken, and they continue to be broken, and if they cannot be healed, and the trust can't be repaired, then eventually the relationship is doomed. In order to prevent a doomed relationship therefore individual spouse should be emotionally intelligent by learning to trust each other. The researcher believes that no spouse can entrust his or her total life into the hands of the life partner he or she doesn't trust.

Emotional intelligence is described as the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships (Goleman 1998). He suggested four dimensions of application of emotional intelligence namely: Self-awareness - capacity for

understanding one's emotion, one's strengths, and one's weaknesses; Self-management - capacity for understanding one's motives and regulating one's behaviour; Social awareness - capacity for understanding what others are saying and feeling and why they feel and act as they do; Social skills - capacity for acting in such a way that one is able to get desired results from others and reach the desired goals, which is focused on managing emotions and feelings.

Purpose of the study

This research work is about how marital stability can be enhanced among married couples. The main purpose of this study is to investigate whether or not emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills could serve as predictors for marital stability.

The study also assesses through descriptive procedures the correlation of two types of construct (emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills) to predict stable marriage. The study will suggest solution for each spouse and individual connected with the establishing and training of the married couples and the married couples themselves, so as to live a joyful marriage life. Judging from the above enumerated views, this study is significant because it will: create awareness and better understanding of emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills as predictors of marital stability; also create conscious awareness among married couples and will help them to have better understanding of the importance of their marriages and to cope with it; help the married couples to set challenging goals for their marriages; understand the effects of unresolved conflict on themselves, their children and relations; provide empirical basis for the marriage counselors and counseling psychologists in their efforts of counseling the engaged couples and the married couples on their respective roles towards harmonious resolution of conflicts in their marriages; help the married couples to develop the right conflict resolution skills, positive expression of emotions, right perception, competencies, love and affection towards their marital stability; provide a basis for developing a more effective theory and technique of

guiding and counseling married couples in Nigeria with a view of improving marriage stability; and finally, the study will be of immense assistance to the society as a whole and its findings will help the future researchers in their research endeavours.

Statement of hypotheses

The following hypotheses stated in the null form were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and marital stability.
2. There is no significant relationship between conflict resolution skills and marriage stability.
3. There is no significant difference in the conflict resolution skills of married males compared with their female counterparts.
4. There is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence skills of married males compared with their female counterparts.

Methods

Research Design

The research design used in this study is descriptive survey. The researchers did not manipulate anything but studied the manifestation of nature in the life of the participants. This design is used because the researchers are essentially investigating the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills on marital stability with particular reference to the selected married partners in Lagos. In this research, attempt was made to simply describe the present status of the phenomenon, hence the justification for a descriptive design.

Participants

The reference population is all the married couples who are three (3) years and above in their marriages, but the largeness

of this population made it inaccessible, hence the use of population sample which comprised of two hundred and fifty (250) married couples (husbands and wives randomly selected from Lagos. The age range of the couples is between 26 – 69. The mean (\bar{x}) of their age is 46.62, while the standard deviation (SD) of their age is 12.47.

The sampling method used for this study is called cluster sampling method, because of the selection of only married couples from Lagos. 250 (123 wives and 127 husbands) couples who are three (3) years and above in their marriages in Lagos participated in this study. The reason for choosing this population is that a good percentage of them must have had experienced conflicts in their homes. Moreover, they were more experienced than those who were one (1) to two (2) years old in marriages.

Research Instrument

The instrument used for this study was a questionnaire tagged: "Marital Stability Among Married Couple (MASAMCO). The instrument has four sections. Section 'A' deals with biodata information. Other sections, which measure emotional intelligence, marital stability and conflict resolution, were explained below:

Section B described emotional intelligence of the participants. Scale on Emotional Intelligence was developed by Schutte et al (1998). The response format was Likert represented on Strongly agree = 5 to strongly disagree = 1. The author reported Cronbach Coefficient of 0.90. The scale was however revalidated to ascertain the reliability of the measuring instrument. The researchers reported Cronbach Coefficient of 0.84, Correlation between forms was 0.50, equal length Spearman Brown was 0.67 while unequal length was 0.67. The Guttman Splitt was 0.67, alpha for part 1 was 0.75 and alpha for part 2 was 0.79.

Section C described conflict resolution skills of the participants. It was developed by Collins and Laursen (1992). The response format was Likert represented on strongly agree = 5 to strongly disagree = 1. The author reported Cronbach Coefficient of 0.86. The scale was however revalidated to

ascertain the reliability of the measuring instrument. The researchers reported Cronbach Coefficient of 0.89, Correlation between forms was 0.57, and Equal length Spearman Brown was 0.73 while unequal length was 0.73. The Guttman Splitt was 0.73, Alpha for part 1 was 0.83 and Alpha for part 2 was 0.84.

Section D was focused on marital stability. This explains the respondents' desire and passion for stable marriage. The psychometric properties of the instrument were established. The face validity was assured. The test-retest reliability was adopted to ensure the reliability of the instrument. The test reliability conducted after a period of two weeks revealed $r = 0.82$. The researchers also reported Cronbach Coefficient of 0.87, Correlation between forms was 0.54, Equal length Spearman Brown was 0.69 while unequal length was 0.71. The Guttman Splitt was 0.69, alpha for part 1 was 0.77 and alpha for part 2 was 0.78.

Procedure

The researchers sought the assistance of research assistance that was specially trained for the purpose since the researcher could not administer the instrument alone.

The instrument was administered to the couples in a well-prepared place meant for the purpose. The essence of the instrument was explained before the administered and chance was given to ask questions should they want classification on any items. No time was given for the completion of the instrument and on the spot assessment techniques was employed as the instrument after completion.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the instrument was subjected to statistical analysis using Pearson Correlation Analysis Methods and the t-test Statistics.

Results

Hypothesis One

The hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and marital stability.

Table 1: Relationship between emotional intelligence and marital stability

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-cal.	Sig	p
Emotional Intelligence	250	36.58	5.00	.537	.000	Sig
Marital stability	250	36.44	4.85			

Table 1 shows that there was a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital stability of the married couples $r = 0.537$, $P < .05$. This implies that an increase in emotional intelligence among the couples led to increase in marital stability. It therefore means that the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis Two

The hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between conflict resolution skills and marital stability.

Table 2: Relationship between conflict resolution skills and marital stability

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-cal.	Sig	p
Conflict Resolution	250	31.46	4.85	.562	.000	Sig
Marital stability	250	36.44	4.60			

It was observed from table 2 that there was a significant positive relationship between conflict resolution

skills and marital stability of the married couples; $r = 0.562$, $P < .05$. This implies that an increase in conflict resolutions skills led to increase marital stability among the couples. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis Three

The hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the conflict resolution skills of married males compared with their females counterparts.

Table 3: t-test summary showing significant difference in the conflict resolution skill of male and female couples

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig.	P
Married Males	41	31.29	3.22	.644	82	0.341	Ns
Married Females	43	36.44	4.60				

Table 3 shows that there was no significant difference in the conflict resolution skills of the married males compared with their female counterparts; $t = 0.644$, $df = 82$, $P > .05$. Therefore the null hypothesis (H_0) was accepted. Although, significant difference did not exist, but the mean observation shows that married females showed higher conflict resolution skills ($X = 36.44$) than their counterpart

Hypothesis Four

The hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence skills of married males and their female counterparts.

Table 4: t-test summary showing significant difference in the emotional intelligence skill of male and female couples

Variables	N	X	SD	t j	Df	Sig	P
Married Males	41	39.41	4.77	1.106	82	0.133	Ns
Married Females	43	38.32	4.25				

The above table reveals that there was no significant difference in the emotional intelligence skills of the married males compared with the female counterparts; $t = 1.106$, $df = 82$, $P > .05$. Therefore the null hypothesis was accepted. This means that there was no variation in the emotional intelligence skill of married male and female in this study.

Discussion

The hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and marital stability. The table indicates that the calculated-r is greater than the table-r ($.537 > .000$), therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and marital stability. This result is supported by Martin (1989) and Levine and Henessy (1990). They found out that stable marriages were more similar in emotional intelligence, potension, radicalism, tender-mindedness, mutual trusts, acceptance, enthusiasm, and genuiness.

Moreover, quoting Brent Barlow, Harris (2002) said that to achieve a lasting relationship among couples, the general principles, such as physical touching of affection in a nonsexual nature, shared feelings, closeness without inhibitions, absence of psychological defenses, open communication and honesty; intellectual agreement on major issues; spiritual harmony, value and belief systems; sensitive appreciation of the mate's physical and emotional responses; similar values; imparted secrets, genuine understanding;

mutual confidence in each other a sense of warmth, safety and relation when together; sexual pleasure lovingly shared; signs of love freely given and received; mutual responsibility in caring; and abiding trust which, I think is the heart of every enduring relationship should be taken into consideration. It implies that emotional intelligence is needed in order to achieve stability in marriage.

A meta-analysis of 16 studies of one of the oldest marriage-enhancement programmes, couple communication observed meaningful programme effects with regard to all types measure: couples who took the training experienced moderate to large gains in communication skills, marital satisfaction and other relationship qualities. For example, the average couple, after taking couple communication training was able to outperform 83% percent of the couples that had not participated in the programme in the critical area of marital communication. All these previous findings are in support of this hypothesis.

The hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between conflict resolution skills and marital stability. The table shows that the calculated-r is greater than the table-r (.562>.000), hence the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between conflict resolution skills and marital stability.

In fact, research on marital communication has found that unhappily married couples were distinguished by their failure to productively manage conflict and initiate communication repair activities (Gottman, 1995; Mace 1989) According to Monces (2002), in the marital context, emotion management involves the frequent expression of positive emotions like love, willingness to empathize and affection. Love, empathy, trust and affection are good conflict resolution skills. Couple who failed to manage their conflicts skillfully ended up in physical force and verbal aggression.

The consequence of the inability of the couples to resolve their conflicts harmoniously is marital instability. However, a good number of married couples who handled their conflicts properly experience success in their marriages. According to Jain (1960), in India, 94% of the marriages are very successful and the divorce rate is only 8%.

The researchers believe that marital stability is unachievable if conflict resolution skills and emotional intelligence are not sensibly applied by the married partners. Supporting this views, Akinboye (2002) defines emotional intelligence as the competencies which include good character, integrity, empathy, honesty, maturity, impulse control, emotional self-awareness, human dimity, flexibility, reality testing, trust and others, Murstein (1986) and Omojola (1989) suggested that good conflict resolution skills and communication skills were necessary in order for couples to be able to cope better with the stress involved in transit to marriage. The escalation and continuation of marital conflict due to a chronic failure to resolve them as they arise may lead to decrement in marital satisfaction. Gottman (1995) opined that if a marriage is to have real staying power to negotiate their differences, couples need to air their differences whether they resolve them in a volatile, validating or a minimizing style. All these affirm that emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills are necessary tools for couples to achieve marital stability.

Hypothesis three states that there is no significant difference in the conflict resolution skills of married males compared with their female counterparts. It was observed that there was no significant difference in the conflict resolution skills of married males and their female counterparts. In order words, gender is not a determinant factor in the way married males and females would handle conflict. Both could resolved conflict constructively or destructively. In line with this, using college students, Straus (1973) found that 16% of them (about one out of every five) accepted that their parents (males and females) used physical force to resolve marital conflicts. Stenimetz (1977), in his own findings revealed that nearly all the respondents reported the use of verbal aggression and physical attack to resolve marital conflicts.

Hypothesis four states that there is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence skills of married males and their female counterparts. It was observed that there was no significant difference in the emotional intelligence skills of married males and their females counterparts. It was revealed that male couples that reported the display of emotional

intelligence with their wives have mean score (39.4146), which is greater than the mean score (38.3256) of females in their own emotional intelligence. It shows that males are better in their emotional intelligence skills than females. The little difference in the mean scores of the males (39.4146) and that of the females (38.3256) may be as a result of the responsibilities of married females in their matrimonial homes. The fact that they take care of their husbands, children, father and mother in-laws and other members of the family, coupled with the tasks and demands of their daily jobs can provoke or aggravate their emotions. Hence, the ability to control their emotion properly must have been tampered with. In line with this, Madden and Janoff-Bulman (1981) interviewed married women in an investigation of attribution of control and blame for marital conflict and satisfaction with one's marriage. Each respondent was asked to discuss two standard conflict situations and two conflicts from her own marriage. Of the 32 respondents, 15 assigned the major part of the blame to themselves across the four situations.

Implications

Owing to the result of the findings, it is evident that conflict resolution and emotional intelligence skills have relationship with marital stability. This implies that married partners should be trained on emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills. Also, no stone should be left unturned. Everybody should be involved as every segment of the society has contributions to ameliorate the stage marital conflict as reached.

Emotional intelligent skills and conflict resolution skills are "must-acquired" for married couples and other members of the family. Most importantly, husband and wife in their matrimonial hone should show love affection, commitment, empathy, honesty, understanding, trust, among others. It is also necessary for married couples to be delighted in problem solving approach. Instead of destructive approach in resolving conflicts, constructive approach should be embraced. All these are parts of the contributing factors to marital stability.

Recommendations

The present waves of improperly managed conflicts in our society calls for a serious attention. The very reason is that such improperly managed conflicts most of the time result into physical and verbal aggression, sustenance of injuries, killings, destructive of properties to mention just a few. In most cases, of course, it eventually results into total separation to divorce. The following recommendations are therefore given to ameliorate some of these problems.

Government should spear head the course by organizing seminars for married couples just as seminars are being organized for politicians and the likes. Trainings should be organized for singles who are tomorrow's husbands and wives. This will drastically reduce destructive conflict and divorce. Father and mother-in-laws need to understand the nature of modern day marriage and the dimensions of the changes in feminine and masculine roles coupled with the implication of their actions. Married couples should make themselves available for training. Another studies also revealed substantial improvements in communication among couples taking the training when compared to behaviour prior to the training. Mean effects of sizes in communication were 1.06 immediately after the training and 0.71 at follow-up evaluations up to one year late. Training will go a long way to reduce instability in marriage.

Marriage counselors should take both premarital and marital counseling more seriously. During counseling potential couples and married partners should be exposed to emotional intelligence, conflict resolution skills, etc. In line with this, a 1993 meta-analysis of marriage and family counseling found that, among 71 studies that compared counseling were better of than 70. percent of couples that did not take counseling (Giblin, 1985).

Religion leaders should uphold the religion sanctions against marital dissolution. The Holy Bible says "what God has joined together let no man put asunder". Lastly, let all groups that are involved in marital matters-the in-laws, the couples, the children, friends, medical doctors, pastors, marriage counselors and the society at large give marriage

enrichment training interventions that have the possibility of reducing marital instability and not aggravating or encouraging it.

Conclusion

This study is on emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills as correlates of marital stability among married couples. The study was limited to Somolu in Lagos State. It was discovered that marriage dissolution either by court or by the couple involved is more rampant in the contemporary society unlike days of old when marriage union was cherished.

It was discovered that many factors were responsible for this dissolution among couples. Such factors include abusive tongue, uncontrollable anger, iron-fisted partner, uncompromising partner, sullen silence, retreat or withdrawal, battered ego, flowing of accusation, unfaithfulness, lack of the knowledge of emotional intelligence, poor conflict handling skills, in-laws intervention and inability to realize that the cost of conflict resolution is better than the cost of marriage dissolution, little did they realize that marriage dissolution or divorce has its attendant results such as juvenile delinquency, emotional instability, financial problem, child abuse to mention a few.

It has been observed that marriage breeds more conflicts than most social institutions, and that conflict is inevitable in marriage. Thus, if marital conflict is to be managed or at least minimized, if marital stability will ensue, then educational and psychotherapeutic interventions should be mounted on at many levels. This call for the training of more counseling psychologists or counselors to enable them provide services to all sectors, especially marriage and family life of the Nigerian populace.

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