EFFECTIVENESS OF MARITAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS ON MARITAL CONFLICT AMONG MARRIED COUPLES IN ZARIA METROPOLIS

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Abstract
This study examined the effect of marital conflict resolution skills on marital conflicts among married couples in Zaria metropolis. A total of 98 respondents were used for the study. Their responses on marital conflict were scored before and after the exposure to marital conflict resolution skills training to ascertain the effect of the training on marital conflicts among married couples. Their responses form the basis for this data analysis. The quasi experimental design was used for this study. Inferential statistics was used for the analysis of the data collected from the sampled distressed married couples. It was observed that Marital Conflict resolution Skills had reduced marital conflict among married couples and irrespective of gender when their pre-test mean marital scores were compared with their post-test mean marital conflicts. Marital conflict resolution skills has no effect on marital conflict among married couples with different educational qualification and on the basis of duration in marriage with p-values of (0.80) and (0.227) respectively. It was recommended that the state government in collaboration with Zaria local government should organize marital conflict resolution skills training to reduce marital conflicts among married couples, counsellors should always consider gender difference in solving marital issues.

Key words: Effectiveness, marital conflict resolution skills, marital conflict

Introduction
Conflict among humans is unavoidable, marriage and other intimate relationships are no exception. The diverse and frequent interactions among groups and individuals provide a limitless platform for conflict. The term connotes an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, or interference from the other party in achieving their goals (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). One of the major reasons that draw the attention of researchers and social organizations to conflict in recent times is its adverse consequences on health, family life, and the stability of communities. An important area of conflict in human settings is marriage. Marriage is a stage of transition in one’s life, it is usually perceived that marriage in a healthy way may promote satisfaction and couples in this regard are into an institution with a thought to start affection (Amato & Deboer, 2001).

The philosophy of marriage varies according to different people and culture, but it is principally an institution in which interpersonal relationships, usually intimate and sexual, are acknowledged. In this
context, Nwoye (1991) opined that marriage is something deeper than the mere union of a man and a woman under the same roof. But he perceives marriage as a sacred and a permanent contract which is assumed to be enacted when two people decide on their own accord and in the presence of at least two witnesses, to exchange the formal consent to live a life of vocation of love and sharing for the purpose of promoting their mutual growth and welfare as persons in their journey together through life.

However, people marry for different reasons including legal, social, libidinal, emotional, financial, spiritual, and religious. It is known to involve male and female (different sex) but since 2000, some countries like Brazil, Denmark, Argentina, and Canada have legalized same-sex marriage within their jurisdictions. Marriage is a process by which man and woman who initially love each other make their relationship public, official and permanent (Gottman, 1993). It begins with a ceremony known as wedding during which the couple are formally united. It is the joining of the two people in bond that putatively last till death for both religious and socio-cultural belief, but in practice is increasingly cut short by divorce and separation. In essence, lack of the initial affection among couples result in marital conflict, although no marriage is free of conflict. According to Gottman (1982), minor conflict is a normal and even healthy part of a relationship; since relationship conflict are inevitable learning to deal with them in a respectful and positive way provides opportunity for growth and ultimately strengthens the bond between the couples if they are ready to work for it. This invites for marital conflict resolution skills training among the couples.

All healthy marriage experience change and transition, changes in terms of personalities, body’s age and romantic love waxes and wanes. When adults are in love, the focus is on the positive, noticing and emphasizing the assets, good qualities and talents of the object ours has, while minimizing the shortcomings -areas. This moment when all elements are fit in perfectly with each other, it is only temporary, not sustainable for a long period of time. Something can interferes with this process, lovers may hurt and insensitive to feelings, or show an aspect of their personality that jars and conflict with the earlier view , then the sense of unity and deep connection that existed before get threatened (Animasahun & Oladeni, 2012). Stability in marriage according to Nwobi (1995) signifies that husband and wife are in agreement on the major issues concerning marriage such as family income and dealing with extended family. As two people are engaged into a relationship they are two different personalities which create conflict of interest.

Unstable marriage is featured with lack of love, dishonesty, lack of positive communication, lack of care and management. There are a lot of chaos, pride and irrational things. This has been sources of emotional problem especially for the wives who are seen to be fault despite their innocence. To compound the issue of men; which faith permits multiple marriages, use it as a license to cajole, intimidate and threatened their wives. Those whose faith does not permit polygamy keep mistresses outside their matrimonial homes.

Marriage is a relationship where trust is build overtime and where committed couple set aside their own interest for the good of their partners and develop skills for keeping the relationship positive and
open. Amato (1990) sees marriage, not as a private contract but as an alliance between two extended families that become bridge during trouble period. Conceptual development of guidance and counselling evolved as a result of the need to provide solutions to the multifarious personal social problems which result from personality maladjustment and may manifest in form of anger, anxiety, loneliness, sadness, psychosis, neurosis, and inferiority complex. There is therefore the need for marital conflict resolution skills training for married couples. The matrimonial home as sacred, hence, ultimate satisfaction is expected to be found in marriage.

Statement of the Problem
Marriage as the closest form of relationships among humans is the focal point around which other components revolve. If marriages are functioning well and harmonious, then the rest of the marital system are also likely to be in good condition. On the other hand, if there is disruption or discord in the marriage (marital conflicts), there will be complete dysfunctional. And, this could affect family stability, children and the entire social climate of the communities. A solid marriage should be developed based on mutual agreement, love, care, commitment, responsibility and concern which in turn provide a stable foundation for a stable society.

A visit to shari’a court will revealed that almost all the cases are marital issues after which the judges did not succeed in treating them out of court. In all cases related to marital disputes/conflicts the judges use Alternatives Dispute resolution (ADR) which gave the married couples room to resolve their cases out of court but very few of such succeeded. That is what is happening in maternities and vocational centres most of the conversations between colleagues and patients are of marriage concern which at the end they learned nothing at the centre. Some of the causes of the marital conflicts includes: entering marriage with cosy expectations, strains in marriage, absence of romantic love, sexual maladjustment and so on.

As soon as marriages are contracted, they head to divorce and separation due to lack of proper management of marital conflict. In Nigeria, the issue is not how effective marriage counselling is; but its total absence even in official quarters. Hence, this prompted a research questions of how effective marital conflict resolution training skills is in reducing marital conflict among marital couples. Although there are studies on marriage and marital conflict in Nigeria, but very few focused on the effectiveness of the marital conflict resolution skills training on marital conflict. This study is therefore an attempt to find out the effectiveness of marital conflict resolution skills in reducing marital conflict in Zaria Metropolis.

Objectives of the Study
The objectives of the study were:

i. To find the effect of marital conflicts resolution skills (MCRS) on marital conflicts among married couples in Zaria metropolis.

ii. To examine differential effect of marital conflicts resolution skills (MCRS) on marital conflicts between male and female married couples in Zaria metropolis.
Research Hypotheses
The following hypotheses guided the study:

\( H_{01} \): There is no significant effect of marital conflict resolution skills on marital conflicts among married couples in Zaria metropolis.

\( H_{02} \): There is no significant differential effect of marital conflict resolution skills on marital conflicts between male and female married couples in Zaria metropolis.

Methodology
This study employed Quasi-Experimental design involving (Pre-test Post-test). The design is appropriate and consistent with the objective of the study, and efficient in providing relevant data and framework for achieving the research objectives. In the pre-test, post-test design participants are studied before and after the treatment. In a pre-test post-test there is only one group and all of them are in the experimental condition.

This design is represented as:

\[ O_1 \times O_2 \]

Where: \( O_1 \) is the pre-test

\( X \) is the treatment

\( O_2 \) is the post-test

Therefore, the treatment in this study was the marital conflict resolution skills given to the experimental group. In essence, the use of the quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design is informed by its suitability since everyone is begin manipulated in the same way, any changes seen across the group of participant is likely from the manipulation.

Population
The population of this study comprised of all couples experiencing marital conflict in Zaria Local Government Area. Realizing the fact that it is very difficult to determine the exact number and accessibility, this study restricted the determination process to the following criteria/sources:

i. Shari’ah courts.

ii. Schools and Training/skills acquisition centres within Zaria Local Government Area.

iii. Hospital and Maternities within Zaria Local Government Area.

iv. Social welfare centers in Zaria Local Government councils.
Table 1: Details on the Population of the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Population Source</th>
<th>Number within Zaria</th>
<th>Marital couples identified with conflict</th>
<th>% on the population of 139</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shari’ah Court</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>45.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Schools and Training/skills acquisition centres</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hospitals and Maternities</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Social welfare centres</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>139</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher’s Data Collection & Computation, 2014

Sample and Sampling Techniques

In determining the sample size used in the study, the following filters or criteria are used:

i. The marital couples experiencing conflict to be selected for the study must be literate in either Hausa or English language.

ii. The couples must be accessible in terms of reach and cooperation.

iii. The couples must be willing to undergo the marital conflicts resolution skills training and apply same in resolving their marital conflicts.

Based on the above criteria and pilot testing conducted by the researcher, a total number of 98 couples were identified representing 70.05% of the population and was used as the sample size of the study.

With accessibility and willingness to undergo the training programme as key considerations, the couples that formed the sample size for the study were selected scientifically. First, the attribute of the population in terms of the source are reflected and thereafter the selection was done randomly. Table 3.3 shows the details of the sample size.

Table 2: Details on the Sample Size Selection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Population Source</th>
<th>Marital couples identified with conflict</th>
<th>% on the population of 139</th>
<th>Sample size (column d x 63)</th>
<th>% on the Sample of 98</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shari’ah Court</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>45.32</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Schools and Training/skills acquisition centres</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22.30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hospitals and Maternities</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19.43</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Social welfare centres</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12.95</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instrumentation

In this study, Marital Conflict resolution Questionnaire (MCRQ) was developed by the researcher. The questionnaire is divided into four Sections; section A covers the demographic or couples personal inventory form. This section has nine (9) variables used to collect information about the respondents. The second section (section B) of the questionnaire measures the possible issues, nature and causes of marital conflict among married couples using the Likert scale (5 scales). The section has nine (9) variables. Section C, will deal with the participants view on the effect of marital conflict resolution skills, socio economic status and gender differences marital conflict resolutions, the section has eights (8) variables. The last section (section D) deals with the Locke Wallace Marital Adjustment Test for Marital satisfaction among couples. The section has 14 variables. However, in line with pre-test/post-test design the questionnaires were administered before the treatment (marital conflict resolution training/counselling) and after the treatment in order to assess the effect of the training skills on the married couples.

Validity of the Instrument

Face and content validity was established for the instrument. One of the major steps used is that the researcher ensures that relevant items are selected for the study, by review of relevant literature on marital conflict resolution. This literature revealed that for any marital skill program to be meaningful, the components in it must be relevant to the needs of a particular marriage relationship. Consistently, the study employs relevant variables, which are conflict-prone in a marriage. On the other hand, the questionnaire was given to lecturers in the Department of Educational Psychology and counselling to ascertain the sufficiency of the content, and the appropriateness of the instruments, that is, to guarantee that the instruments could facilitate the achievement of the research objectives.

Reliability of the Instrument

Test re-test method was used in establishing the reliability of the instrument. The data collected from the pilot testing were statistically analyzed using Cronbach Alpha which can range from 0 to 1, with 0 representing an instrument with full of error and 1 representing total absence of error. The pilot testing provided 0.672 as the Cronbach alpha which means that the instrument used is reliable. A Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.65 or higher is considered acceptable reliability (Rama, 2007).

Procedure for Data Collection

The procedure for data collection involved administration of questionnaire and conduct of interview with the assistance of appropriate research assistant. The researcher and the research assistant coordinated the organization, distribution and collection of the data for this study.

Procedure for Data Analysis

The hypothesis formulated was tested at 5% level of significant using inferential statistics from the Paired sample t-test statistics, and the analysis of variance. On the other hand, the paired sample t-test
uses the significant mean difference before and after a particular intervention to establish the effectiveness of the intervention. This is also appropriate in testing the effect of marital conflict resolution skills on marital conflict among married couples.

Results

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant effect of marital conflict resolution skills on marital conflicts among married couples in Zaria Metropolis

Justification for statistical technique: The paired sample t test is used by comparing their level of marital conflict before and after exposure to Marital Conflict resolutions skills, using their pre test and post test conflict mean level scores.

**Table 3: Paired sample t test statistics on the pre-test mean conflict and post test mean conflict**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Tests groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>Std. Err</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>t- Calculated</th>
<th>Sig (p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Conflict scores</td>
<td>Pre test</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>56.2653</td>
<td>5.63412</td>
<td>.56913</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>7.318</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post test</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>52.1939</td>
<td>7.41503</td>
<td>.74903</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Calculated p < 0.05, calculated t > 1.96 at df 97

The calculated p value paired t-test statistics showed that the p value of 0.0000 was found to be lower than the 0.05 alpha while the calculated t-value of 7.318 is higher than the t-critical value of 1.96 at df 97. This shows that their marital conflict has been significantly reduced as a result of the Marital Conflict resolutions skills.

Therefore the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect Marital Conflict resolutions Skills effect on marital conflicts among married couples in Zaria metropolis, is hereby rejected.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant differential effect of Marital Conflict resolution Skills on Marital Conflicts between male and female married couples in Zaria Metropolis.

To test this hypothesis the Pre-test mean conflict level and the post test mean conflict level were compared for both male and female to see if significant reduction has taken place or not.

**Table 4: ANOVA Summary Table of effect of Marital Conflict resolution Skills on marital Conflicts among male and female married couples in Zaria Metropolis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict score</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1960.718</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>653.573</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>8533.583</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>44.446</td>
<td>14.705</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10494.301</td>
<td>195</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Analysis of variance Calculated p value of 0.000 was found to be lower than the 0.05 alpha level, just as the calculated t-value of 14.705 was found to be higher than the t-critical value of 2.60. The mean conflicts level of Males was 57.8462 and 52.4615 before and after the skills respectively. The mean conflicts level of Females was 56.6949 and 50.1695 before and after the skills respectively. This shows that reduction has taken place in the marital conflict for both male and female as a result of the Skills.

The Post Hoc Test using the scheffe Homogenous sub set confirm this as the means conflicts for both male and female before treatment was placed in higher subset and their mean conflicts after treatment were placed in lower subset showing a reduction has taken place. Therefore the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant differential effect of Marital Conflict resolution Skills on marital Conflicts among male and female married couples in Zaria Metropolis is hereby rejected.

Discussions of Findings
One of the objectives of this study is to find the effect of Marital Conflicts resolution Skills on Marital Conflicts among married couples in Zaria Metropolis. The results indicated that marital conflict skills had significant effect on marital conflicts among couples in Zaria metropolis. The findings are inline with Gottman (1994), Markman and Hehlweg (1993), Clements, Stanley and Markman (1997); Cowan and Cowan (1992); and Grych and Fincham (1990) in Betiang and Iheagham (2000) when they observed thus: Lack of proper management skills in handling marital discord disrupts the future of the family prospects. Be that as it may, the final arbiter of a successful marriage is assumed to occupy a management skill that would bring everlasting succour to distressed couples which should bring home smiles once again to couples and their immediate family and society in general.

The Marital Conflict resolutions skills had significant effect on marital conflicts among males and females married couples in Zaria Metropolis. This shows that reduction has taken place in the marital conflict of both male and female as a result of the Skills. These findings are in line with the conflict resolution theory as the product of the psychotherapy integration (Gottman, 1994). The theory predicts that conflict resolution treatment and rests on a familiar premise that conflicts lie at the core of emotional distress; effective conflict resolution brings resumption of emotional well-being. Conflict resolution theory offers an information flow model for understanding emotional health, distress, and treatment.

The finding is in congruence with the study of Notorious and Markman (1993) in Canfield (2008), which found that a management skill for couples diminishes marital discord, interpersonal conflicts and the focus of counsellors should lay more emphasis on stress management techniques and much more that helps to relieve stress and build positive mental health as well as encourage effective communication among couples to remove areas of doubt in their relationship to guarantee self esteem for harmonious living (Hahlweg & Markman (1993).

Conclusion
Emanating from the data collected, the test of the hypotheses and the findings obtained from the study concludes that a marital conflict resolution skill has effect in reducing marital conflict among married couples in Zaria metropolis. Reduction has taken place in the marital conflict for both male and female as a result of the Skills from the training. A marital conflict resolution skills has no effect on marital conflict among married couples with different educational qualification in Zaria metropolis. There is no effect of marital conflict resolution skills on marital conflicts among married couples on the basis of length in marriage.

**Recommendations**

Based on the outcome of this study, the following recommendations are hereby put forward. The state government in collaboration with Zaria local government should be organizing Marital Conflict resolution Skills training to married couples in the metropolis. That Counsellors and educators should consider gender differences when trying to resolve marital conflicts. That is counselling on marital issues should be on the basis of gender differences as this will give both parties sense of belonging in the process of resolving marital conflict.

**References**


