

Compromise and Collaborative Conflict Management Styles as Correlates of Marital Stability (A Case Study of Married Students University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria)

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Abstract

This study examined the differences in the use of compromise and collaborative conflict management styles by married students based on gender and age bracket. Four hypotheses were formulated to give direction to the study. The descriptive survey design was employed in carrying out the study. A sample size of 430 married students was randomly selected from a population of 1196 representing 36% of the entire population. A questionnaire designed by the researchers titled "Compromise and Collaborative Conflict Management Styles Questionnaire (CCMSQ) containing 78 items adapted from various studies and literature reviews was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by five experts from University of Uyo, Uyo. Cronbach Alpha Reliability Method was used in ascertaining the reliability of the instrument. A reliability index of 0.75 was obtained. Data collected were analysed using Independent t-test. Findings of the study revealed that married students in University of Uyo, Uyo differ in their use of compromise and collaborative management styles for marital stability based on gender and age bracket. The study therefore recommended that school counsellors should organize workshops, seminars and conferences where married students would be sensitized on resolution strategies for resolving marital disharmony within families for sustainable healthy lifestyles.

KEYWORD: Collaborative, Compromise, Marital-Stability and Gender.

Introduction

Marriage is a basic institution in every society. In every complete society governed by law, marriage exists as a public legal and divine institution, not merely a private romantic declaration of love and cohabitation. Marriage is a social union or legal contract between people that create kinship. It is the recognized social institution, not only for establishing and maintaining the family, but also for creating and sustaining the ties of kinship. According to Gbenda and Akume (2002), marriage is a divine institution with a special relationship for life and harmoniously integrates the husband and wife to become one 'flesh'. Marriage is therefore expected to be honourable, romantic and enjoyable business. Marital stability as stated by Azize (2013) include; happiness and closeness. Other sub-dimensions are

communication with the spouse's family, economic understanding, and understanding of parenting. According to the researchers, marital stability is the ability of couples to live comfortably with little and manageable conflicts that does not result in divorce or separation.

Researchers such as Feeney (2002) and Okwun (2011) have suggested some marital conflict management styles which could be used to bring about marital stability in the family. Okwun (2011) suggested compromise and collaborative conflict management styles, where each partner accepts the other as he or she is, as being functional in achieving marital stability among couples. The Collaborative style as stated by Kieren, Maguire and Hurlbut (2001) is the concern of the husband and wife to satisfy both sides. It is highly assertive and highly cooperative; the goal is to find a "win/win" solution. Appropriate uses for the collaborating style include integrating solutions, learning, merging perspectives, gaining commitment, and improving relationships. Using this style can support open discussion of issues, task proficiency, and equal distribution of work amongst the team members, better brainstorming, and development of creative problem solving. This style is appropriate to use frequently in a team environment. Collaborating skills include the ability to use active or effective listening, confront situations in a non-threatening way, analyze input, and identify underlying concerns.

Compromise Management Style is a style of conflict management whereby one of the partners husband gives up part of what he wants so that their marriage can be stable. As Morrison (2009) pointed out, there is not a clear loser when a compromise is made, but the flip side of that is there is not really a clear winner. Compromise conflict style also known as problem-confronting or problem-solving conflict management style is a style that most couples who want stability in their marriages adopt (Halford, Moore, Wilson, Farrugia, and Dyer, 2004). Compromise conflict management style according to authors, involves an attempt to work with the other person to find a win-win solution to the problem in hand - the one that most satisfies the concerns of both parties. The win-win approach sees conflict management as an opportunity to come to a mutually beneficial result. It includes identifying the underlying concerns of the opponents and finding an alternative which meets each party's concerns.

Marriage is therefore expected to be a romantic and enjoyable business but unfortunately in most cases it is not so due to unforeseen and mishandled issues that breeds conflict. Marital conflict has been classified as one of the most pressing and pervasive social problems of this generation. Marital conflict is defined as a disagreement through which the parties involved perceived a threat to their needs, interests or concern and it is also seen as a struggle or contests between couples with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals (Katzenbach and Smith, 2002). The increasing rate of family conflict such as the incidence of divorce in the society today justifies the fact that there is conflict in matrimonial homes (Olaitan and Akpan, 2003). Marital conflict in this study can be seen as a strain in marriage interaction between couples who are living together without sustainable healthy lifestyles for peaceful harmony.

National dailies and media houses in Nigeria are replete with news about couples undergoing marital turbulence and conflict, separation, divorce issues and worst still,

husbands killing their wives and vice versa. According to Usman (2015) in the Vanguard of March 30, 2015 a woman stabbed her husband to death during a quarrel over who would emerge winner between the Peoples Democratic Party and All Progressive Congress Party presidential candidates, while voting was on-going at Ejigbo area of the Lagos State. In our neighborhood, several cases of incessant fighting, exchange of destructive blows, “pack your things and leave my house” abounds. Married couples experience many ups and downs in their life. Conflicts are unavoidable and somewhat essential for continuous romance in marriage. When these conflicts are mishandled, this may lead to unfulfilled desires, dissatisfaction and psychological problems like depression, anger, resentment, worry, and so on. The important ingredient is to handle marital conflicts in such a way as to develop smoothness in life. Conflict like change will always occur given the dynamics of human interaction. It can occur between family members, colleagues, workers, supervisors, board of management in our work places or play environments, within organizations and nations. Marital conflict does not respect social or economic class. It can occur among the educated as well as the uneducated. According to Larson and Holman (2004) most marriages have been undergoing trying times even among the educated. Educated couples, despite the educational qualifications and ethnic affiliation have discrepancies in their views concerning marital conflict, especially, as it concerns their values and marriage expectations. It is not out of place to observe that education and level of its attainment could affect positively the effectiveness in handling marital disharmony but in most cases it is not so. Morrison (2009) stated that most educated couples, especially students in tertiary institutions often find it difficult to maintain their marriages while in school, which emanates from unfaithfulness and lack of trust. Some of the students’ marriages according to Morrison end in divorce. This according to the researchers may be as a result of inability to manage conflict effectively.

University of Uyo married students are not left out in marital conflict. The researchers remarked that the most prevalent type of marital conflicts among married students are mostly based on unmet needs, money, power struggle, sexual problems, infidelity and in-law problems. Marital conflict among university students can lead to mental instability and family disorganization resulting to lots of social ills. Crisis and conflicts in marriages among students produce discord and reduces affection among couples leading to divorce and separation and total dissolution of the family system, with has an influence on academic performance. The researchers further remarked that most married students of University of Uyo enter the school as couples but leave it as singles sometimes get remarried to another person. This study is therefore sets to examine the difference in the use of compromise and collaborative management style by married students for marital stability based on gender and age bracket in the University of Uyo, Uyo.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the study was to determine the differences in the use of compromise and collaborative management styles by married students for marital stability in University of Uyo, based on gender and age bracket. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Does married students in the University of Uyo differ in their use of compromise management style for marital stability based on gender?
2. Does married students in the University of Uyo differ in their use of compromise management style for marital stability based on age bracket?
3. Does married students in the University of Uyo differ in their use of collaborative management style for marital stability based on gender?
4. Does married students the University of Uyo differ in their use of collaborative management style for marital stability based on age bracket?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- H₀₁: Married students in the University of Uyo using compromise management style for marital stability do not significantly differ in their mean responses based on gender.
- H₀₂: Married students in the University of Uyo using compromise management style for marital stability do not significantly differ in their mean responses based on age bracket.
- H₀₃: Married students in the University of Uyo using use of collaborative management style for marital stability do not significantly differ in their mean responses based on gender.
- H₀₄: Married students in the University of Uyo using collaborative management style for marital stability do not significantly differ in their mean responses based on age bracket.

Methodology

The design of this study was an ex-post facto design. The study was conducted in University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study comprised all the 1196 (468 male and 728 female) married students in the University of Uyo, Uyo. A sample size of 430 married students (169 male and 261 female) representing 36% of the study population was selected to take part in the study using a stratified random sampling technique. A-53 item questionnaire titled "Compromise and Collaborative Management Style Questionnaire (CCMSQ)" designed by the researchers was used for the study. The questionnaire for data collection was presented to five experts in the Department of Educational Foundations, Guidance and Counselling - three educational evaluator, one educational sociologist and one guidance counsellor all in the Faculty of Education, University of Uyo, Uyo, who independently assessed the various items

to ascertain their relevance to the variables in the hypotheses. To ascertain the reliability index, the researchers trial-tested the instrument on 40 married students from the University of Uyo who did not take part in the main study. Data generated from the administered questionnaire were analysed using Cronbach Alpha reliability method. A reliability coefficient of .75 was obtained, which is a high reliability index for any questionnaire item. The data collected for this study from the questionnaire were analysed independent t-test. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 confidence level.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: H_{01} : There is no significant difference in married students use of compromise management style for marital stability in the University of Uyo based on gender.

Table 1: Independent t-test Analysis of Male and Female married Students Use of Compromise Management Style and Marital Stability

Students' Gender	n	\bar{x}	SD	df	t-cal	t-cri	Decision
Male Students and Compromise Style	169	54.63	10.06	428	20.11	1.96	*
Female Students and Compromise Style	261	60.55	8.71				

*Significant at $P < .05$, $df = 428$; $n = 430$

The result on Table 1 shows a calculated t-value of 20.11, which is greater than the critical value of 1.96 at .05 alpha level and 428 degree of freedom. Based on this result, the null hypothesis, which earlier predicted that students do not differ in their use of compromise management style based on gender, is rejected. This implies that married students' use of compromise management style for marital stability differs based on their gender.

Hypothesis Two: H_{02} : There is no significant difference in married students use of compromise management style for marital stability in the University of Uyo based on age bracket.

Table 2: Independent t-test Analysis of married Students use of Compromise Management Style and Marital Stability based on age bracket

Students' Age	n	x	SD	df	t-cal	t-cri	Decision
18-21 years	56	56.07	6.01	428	10.65	1.96	*
22-25 years	172	62.26	5.92		16.11		
26 years & above	202	54.18	5.80		6.54		

*Significant at $P < .05$, $df = 428$; $n = 430$.

The result on Table 2 indicates a calculated t-value of 10.65 for age bracket of 18-21 years, 16.11 for ages 22-25 and 6.54 for ages 26 and above years with a critical t-value of

1.96 at 138 degree of freedom when compared at .05 level of significance. Since the calculated t-values are greater than the critical t-value, then the null hypothesis, which earlier stated that married students do not differ in their use of compromise management style for marital conflict in University of Uyo, Uyo stands rejected. This infers that married students significantly differ in their use of compromise style based on age. From the result it is seen that the t-value for married students between the ages of 22 and 25 years was greater than those in other age brackets. This shows that married students between 22 and 25 years used compromise management styles than their counterparts in other age ranges. To show the direction of significance, Fishers' Protected t-test Analysis was carried out as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Fishers Protected t-test Analysis on Age and Compromise Management Style for Marital Stability

Students' Age	(1) 18-21 Yrs (n=56)	(2) 22-25 Yrs (n=172)	(3) 26 Yrs and above (n=202)
18-21 years	56.07 ^a	-6.19 ^b	1.89
22-25 years	2.85* ^c	62.26	8.08
26 years & above	6.19*	10.65*	54.18
MSw = 12.71			

a = Group means are on the diagonals

b= Difference between group means are above the diagonals

c= Fishers' Protected t-values are below the diagonals

*Significant at .05; df = 2 with 428; critical t= 1.96

In Table 3, significant protected t-values were obtained when the responses of married students with 18-21 years were compared with that of 26 years and above (10.11). Fishers' Protected t-test was also significant when the responses of married students with 21-25 years were compared with that of married students with 26 years and above (6.19). The comparison was done at .05 level of significance with 428 degrees of freedom. The mean score on the responses of married teachers with age bracket of 22-25 years was significantly different from those of married students with 18-21 years and 26 years and above.

Hypothesis Three: H₀₃: There is no significant difference in married students use of collaborative management style for marital stability in the University of Uyo based on gender.

Table 4: Independent t-test Analysis of Male and Female married Students Use of Collaborative Management Style and Marital Stability

Variables	n	\bar{x}	SD	df	t _{-cal}	t _{-cri}	Decision
Male Students and Collaborative Style	169	71.32	9.13	428	10.98	1.96	*
Female Students and							

Collaborative Style 261 68.14 11.09

*Significant at $P < .05$, $df = 428$; $n = 430$

The result of the analysis as presented on Table 4 indicates a calculated t-value of 10.98 and a critical value of 1.96 at .05 significance level and 428 degrees of freedom. Hence, the null hypothesis, which stated that married students do not differ in their use of collaborative management style for marital stability based on gender stands rejected. This implies that male and female students significantly differ in their use of collaborative management style for marital stability.

Hypothesis Three: H_{04} : There is no significant difference in married students use of collaborative management style for marital stability in the University of Uyo based on age.

Table 5: Independent t-test Analysis of married Students Use of Collaborative Management Style and Marital Stability based on Age.

Students' Age	n	x	SD	df	t-cal	t-cri	Decision
18-21 years	56	43.21	11.56		18.61		
22-25 years	172	51.07	10.41	428	21.37	1.96	*
26 years & above	202	88.75	6.10		28.16		

*Significant at $P < .05$, $df = 428$; $n = 430$.

The result in Table 5 shows calculated t-test values of 18.61 for married students between 18 and 21 years, 21.37 for married students between 22 – 25 years and 28.16 for married students of 26 years and above with a critical t-value of 1.96 at .05 alpha level and 428 degree of freedom. Since the calculated t-values are greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis, which stated that students do not differ in their use of collaborative management style based on age is rejected. This implies that married students differ in their use of collaborative management style for marital stability based on age. Married students between the ages of 26 years and above are found to use collaborative management styles for marital stability than others. To show the direction of their differences, Fishers' Protected t-test was conducted. This is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Fishers Protected t-test Analysis on Age and Collaborative Management Style for Marital Stability

Students' Age	(1)	(2)	(3)
	18-21 Yrs (n=56)	22-25 Yrs (n=172)	26 Yrs and above (n=202)
18-21 years	43.21 ^a	-7.86 ^b	-45.54
22-25 years	4.00 ^{*c}	51.07	-37.68
26 years & above	4.12 [*]	7.26 [*]	88.75
MSw = 17.65			

a = Group means are on the diagonals

b= Difference between group means are above the diagonals

c= Fishers' Protected t-values are below the diagonals

*Significant at .05; df = 2 with 428; critical t= 1.96

From Table 6, significant protected t-values were obtained when the responses of married students of 18-21 years was compared with those of 26 years and above (4.12). When 22-25 years was compared with that of 26 years and above (7.26). It was also significant when 18 – 21 years was compared with 22-25 years (4.00). The comparison was done at .05 level of significance with 428 degrees of freedom. This result showed that the responses of married students of 26 years and above was significantly different from those 18-21 years and 22-25 years of age.

Discussion of Findings

In hypothesis one, the researchers found out that married students differ significantly in their use of compromise management style based on gender in the University of Uyo, Uyo. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected, while the alternative was retained since the calculated t-value was greater than the critical t-value. The researchers believes that the significance of the relationship could be as a result of the fact that most couples often pretend and endure their marriages to appear blameless in the sight of the public, whereas it is not alright with them. This to a great extent may give the domineering partner to be proud, while the other partner feels bad inside. In such a home, it is believed that there is bound to be “false marital stability”. This finding is in line with the finding of Yahaya, (2008) who pointed out that there is not a clear loser when a negotiation is made, but the flip side of it is that there is no clear winner.

Findings on hypothesis two on Table 2 showed that married students differ in their use of compromise management style based on age bracket. The finding also showed that married students of below 26 years of age used compromise management style than those above 26 years of age. This may be as a result of the fact that they are not mature enough to make categorical decisions.

Similarly, finding on hypothesis three on Table 3 revealed that male and female students differ in their use of collaborative management style. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. The male students were found to use collaborative management style than their female counterparts. This may be as a result of the fact that most researchers see this style of conflict management as the best since it allows for win-win approach, which is essential for any stable marriage. The finding is in corroboration with the finding of Kieren, Maguire and Hurlbut (2001) suggested more positive and more productive strategies among which are agreement, assertion, reasoning and collaborating. Active listening, rational argument and supporting the opponent/partner are pertinent to conflict resolution.

The findings of hypothesis four, on Table 4, revealed that married students differ in their use of collaborative management style based on age bracket; hence the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings also showed that married students who are 26 years and above use collaborative management style more than their counterparts who are below that age bracket.

The researchers believe that age has influence on marriage because the more an individual advances in age; the more he/she understands what marriage is all about.

Conclusion

This study concluded that male and female married students differ in their use of compromise management style for marital stability. Female students were found to use compromise management style than their male counterparts. The study also concluded that married students differ in their use of collaborative management style with male students using the style more than their female counterparts

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. School counsellors should organize workshops, seminars and conferences whereby married students would be sensitized on resolution strategies for resolving marital disharmony and help in empowering families for sustainable healthy lifestyles.
2. Married students should adopt collaborative management style in resolving their marital disharmony and help in empowering families for sustainable lifestyles.
3. Couples, especially students should visit family counsellors when they need help.
4. Counsellors who specialize in family life and marriage speak beyond the classroom environment and speak to the public; taking advantage of the media houses.
5. Marriage counsellors should organize marriage seminars both at schools and at religious houses so as to sensitize couples on how marriage instability subtly creeps into families.

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