

**Conflict Management Skills on Marital Satisfaction of Literate Couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria****Undie, Roseline Anyiopi & Ushie, Grace Ikil**

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**Abstract**

*The study investigated the influence of Conflict management skills and marital satisfaction of literate couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria". To carry out this investigation, three research questions were raised to guide the study and three corresponding hypotheses were formulated and tested. Literature was reviewed based on the sub-variables of the independent variable in relation to the dependent variable. Survey research design was adopted for the study, the population of the study comprised of 10,900 literate couples in the five Local Government Areas that made up the Ogoja Education Zone. The study sample consisted of 1,090 couples selected through stratified, simple random and accidental sampling techniques. The instrument used for data collection was a fifteen (15) items questionnaire titled "Perceived Management Skills and Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire (PMSMQ). The instrument was subjected to face and construct validity by experts in Counseling and Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability estimate was determined using Cronbach Alpha reliability method which yielded an overall index of 0.77. The data collected from the sample were subjected to statistical analysis using Linear regression analysis from hypothesis 1 to 5 while hypothesis 6 was tested using Multiple regression analysis at .05 level of significance. The result of the findings revealed that psychological soothing skill, compromise skill, De-escalation skill, Stonewalling/withdrawal skill and Soften start-up skill are significant predictors of marital satisfaction of literate couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that counselors should as a matter of urgency promote the use of psychological soothing skill, compromise skill, de-escalation and stonewalling skill in resolving marital conflict.*

**Key words:** psychological soothing skill, compromise skill, de-escalation and stonewalling skill, resolving marital conflict.

**Introduction**

Marriage institution is as old as man itself. It is the coming together of two persons in love for the purpose of procreation and companionship. It is a relationship that involves heterosexual of adults who maintained some consenting form of socially approved sexual relationship, engaging in economic co-operation, procreation and sharing a common residence, (Mundock, cited in Abang 2016). Marriage affair is expected to be a compromise and intimacy where wife understand each other. The affair supposes to be "for better and for worse" rather present issue in the marriage today is no longer conforming to the assertions above. Marriage has become a thing of convenience for couples. They tend to stay when things are good and leave when problem comes into it. However, some scholars (Hosford, 2005; Batur-Laha, & Gabriel, 2002; Esere, 2002) suggest that conflict is inevitable in human society and may sometimes lead to change, especially when peacefully resolved. These contribute to awareness creation among people with diverse group and society in respect to the boundaries that exist between common interests. By attempting to go beyond the bounds may result to conflict that may dissolving the system entirely. Conflict is both negative and positive. It appears positive when those engaged are

striking for a positive change in their relationship and negative when is due to their own selfish aims and interest. The challenges accrued from these conflicts assist couples move forward in their experiences. Conflicts create problem and strengthen leadership. This helps to unite people with common interest as well as giving back care integrative and loosely structured group. Conflict challenges assist couples to wake up to their role expectation in marriage and work towards improving upon that and which resulted into conflict earlier. Obe, (2007), Awok (2013), and Oyedepo (2015) stated that age result to unreasonable marriage, at which couples enter into it.

The researchers maintained further that when two couples are not yet ready to handle marital conflict with the understanding, perseverance and patience it deserves, conflict and it became eminent. In Modu's view, as cited in Muddock (2015) maintained that young couples seem to sleep over quarrel in order to avoid carrying over of grudges that may cause tension between them and also by treated them immediately. Otuji (2002), Ikwen (2007) suggests that procreation is the aim or intention of marriage contracting in most of the societies in African (inclusive Nigeria). Within a short period When this is not possible, sudden conflict may resulting from outburst becomes the situation will cause unhappy marriage. For this therefore, barrenness, infertility or childlessness may cause marital conflict.

Cause of conflict in marriage may be the interference from couples' relatives, when decisions are not allowed by couples to take concern them and alienation from the family create crack that eminently destroys the marriage union. What happening in the marriage always interested the In-laws to know about their children and sometime attempting to make decisions for couple. Usually prone to this is the male parents' .for instance when the female become reacts to this situation as a result of a frustration, she will become threatened. These threats are ranging from their son to ask to marry another wife to divorce outright. Mundock and Giddens (2000), affirm that creating conflict in the union is as a result of takes decisions or dominates the decision making process in marriage.

It is common in most societies that when a man takes up this role, the wife rebel-creating situation of conflict and separation or eminent break up. These situations create in the couples several dispositions that are capable of destroying the marriage institution. This is as a result of not balance psychologically byparents, and emotionally malnourished homes can cause children to derail in their thoughts Obe as cited in Bot (2016), stressed that stealing prostitution, drug abuse/addiction, and school dropout are social problems that causes marriage conflict. Personalities in the society maladjusted, in the school individual malfunction, this activities manifest in cultic, malpractices in examination and other vices which is the effect of marital conflict fallout. Though several marriage seminars for married and unmarried people have been organized by the churches and mosques to create effective harmony and marital relationship but the issue kept persists.

Experience has shown that divorce drug abuse, separation, and stealing, etc steam from instability marriage. Ugabi (2004) content that, two decades ago marriage seems not to be successful as it was now. Both parties see marriage now as one of those propagate marriage of convenience and public display of wealth and therefore. Nwobi cited in Undiyaundeye (2002). Incongruous and unhappy environment seem to give birth to a good number of socially deviant children and unscrupulous. The larger society becomes deviant because the people in it are deviants. The frequency of instability among couples knows no bounds among Christians and Moslem homes. All these problems lead to the display of maladjusted behaviours among children. Marital conflict is a piece of cracks from couples interpersonal relationship as they share the same roof. These conflicts cause some dysfunction in the couples relationship, which subsequently, if not properly handled, degenerates into some health problems, such as emotional disturbance creating distorted thoughts in the person's lifestyle.



Inspired to seek the actual triggering factors and reduce marriage instability by the researcher. The intelligent management and discovery of these conflicts becomes relevant in our homes as they bring about respect that will make marriage stable and maturity. Administering skills for management couples with issues is relevant at this area, hoping that its effect can offer a variety for couples who did not have ability to management skill programme and the manifestation of cordiality in such trouble home for a peace free family as a whole.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to find out the influence of conflict management skills on marital satisfaction of literate couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State. Specifically, the study sought to find out whether:

1. Psychologically soothing skill of self and partner influence marital satisfaction
2. Compromise skill of both partners influence marital satisfaction
3. De-escalation skill influence marital satisfaction

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study.

1. How does psychological soothing skill of self and partner influence marital satisfaction amongst literate couples?
2. To what extent does compromise skill of both partners in conflict influence marital satisfaction amongst literate couples?
3. In what ways does the skill of De-escalation of issues under conflict influence marital satisfaction amongst literate couples?

### **Null Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study

1. Psychological soothing skill does not influence marital satisfaction among literate couples.
2. Compromise skill does not influence marital conflict on marital satisfaction among literate couples
3. There is no significant influence of De-escalation skill on marital satisfaction among literate couples.

### **Methodology**

The study was descriptive survey research design. It was descriptive because it described a phenomenon that has already taken place. Survey research is often conducted for purpose of achieving the objective explanation. Awotunde and Ogadunwa (2004), the design was used because of samples of small or large population represented, also in order to determine whole population and the character of what the researcher is interested. The population of this study was 10,900 literate couples in the five Local Government Areas that made up the Northern Educational Zone. Out of this number 2,500 literate couples were from the Pentecostal churches while 8,400 were from the Orthodox churches. The population of this study was determined using the marriage register of the various churches consulted.

A multi-stage sampling technique involving stratified, simple random and accidental sampling techniques was used for this study. The instrument adopted for this study was principally a two-part researcher structured questionnaire, titled "Perceived Management Skills and Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire (PMSMQ)". The instrument was subjected to face and construct validity by experts in Counseling and Measurement and Evaluation. Since the respondents can read and

write. Part one is Couples Personal Inventory Form (CPIF) on age, sex, family size, educational qualification, age of marriage and occupation. This part was to determine the status of the couples used as sample in this study.

The second part of the questionnaire designated as section “B” was designed by the researcher on a four point Likert scale for measuring the variables of marital conflicts skills and their satisfaction. The items of the scale were derived from the hypotheses and research questions for the study. The development of the item was based on the researcher’s perception of the issues reviewed in the literature as well as on the researcher’s discussion with some members of the targeted population on marital conflicts and tactics of resolving such conflicts. Part “B” of the instrument elicits information on the extent of satisfaction of married partners when marital conflict arises.

## Results

**Null Hypothesis 1:** Psychological soothing skill does not significantly predict marital satisfaction of literate couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is psychological soothing skill; while the dependent variable is marital satisfaction of literate couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State. Simple regression analysis was the employed to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

**Table1:** Simple regression result of the prediction of psychological soothing skill on marital satisfaction of literate couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
.357(a)	.127	.127	1.42709		
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	320.199	1	320.199	157.224	.000(a)
Residual	2193.395	1077	2.037		
Total	2513.594	1078			

a. Dependent Variable: marital satisfaction of literate couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State

b. Predictors: (Constant), Psychological soothing skill

The simple regression analysis of the prediction of psychological soothing skill on the marital satisfaction of literate couples produced an adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of .127. This indicated that the psychological soothing skill accounted for 12.7% of the determinant marital satisfaction of literate couples in the study area. This finding is a critical indication that psychological soothing skill is relatively high in the area of the study. The F-value of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was F = 157.224 and the sig. value of .003 (or p < .05) at the degree of freedom (df) 1 and 1077. The implication of this result is that the null hypothesis that psychological soothing skill does not significantly predict marital satisfaction of literate couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State is rejected and the finding drawn from the result is that there is significant and high prediction of the psychological soothing skill on the marital satisfaction of literate couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State.

**Null Hypothesis 2:** Compromise skill in marital conflict practices do not significantly predict marital satisfaction of literate couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State.



The independent variable in this hypothesis is compromise skill in marital conflict; while the dependent variable is marital satisfaction of literate couples. Simple regression analysis was the employed to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Simple regression result of the prediction of compromise skill in marital conflict on marital satisfaction of literate couples

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.514(a)	.265	.264	1.31015

  

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	664.931	1	664.931	387.377	.000(a)
Residual	1848.663	1077	1.716		
Total	2513.594	1078			

a. Dependent Variable: marital satisfaction of literate couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State

b. Predictors: (Constant), Compromise skill in marital conflict

The simple regression analysis of the prediction of compromise skill in marital conflict on the marital satisfaction of literate couples produced an adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of .264. This indicated that the compromise skill in marital conflict accounted for 26.4% of the determinant marital satisfaction of literate couples in the study area. This finding is a critical indication that compromise skill in marital conflict is relatively high in the area of the study. The F-value of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was F = 387.377 and the sig. value of .000 (or p < .05) at the degree of freedom (df) 1 and 1077. The implication of this result is that the null hypothesis is rejected and the finding drawn from the result is that there is significant and high prediction of the compromise skill in marital conflict on the marital satisfaction of literate couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State.

**Null Hypothesis 3:** De-escalation skill does not significantly predict marital satisfaction of literate couples.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is De-escalation skill; while the dependent variable is marital satisfaction of literate couples. Simple regression analysis was the employed to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Simple regression result of the prediction of De-escalation skill on marital satisfaction of literate couples

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.769(a)	.591	.591	.97709

  

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1485.372	1	1485.372	1555.837	.000(a)
Residual	1028.222	1077	.955		
Total	2513.594	1078			

a. Dependent Variable: marital satisfaction of literate couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State

b. Predictors: (Constant), De-escalation skill

The simple regression analysis of the prediction of De-escalation skill on the marital satisfaction of literate couples produced an adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of .591. This indicated that the De-escalation

skill accounted for 59.1% of the determinant marital satisfaction of literate couples in the study area. This finding is a critical indication that De-escalation skill is relatively high in the area of the study. The F-value of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was  $F = 1555.837$  and the sig. value of .000 (or  $p < .05$ ) at the degree of freedom (df) 1 and 1077. The implication of this result is that the null hypothesis is rejected and the finding drawn from the result is that there is significant and high prediction of the De-escalation skill on the marital satisfaction of literate couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State.

## Discussion of Findings

This section is concerned with the discussion of findings that emerged from the results of the analysis. The discussion is presented in accordance to the variables of the study.

### Psychological soothing skill and marital satisfaction of literate couples.

The simple regression analysis of the prediction of psychological soothing skill on the marital satisfaction of literate couples produced an adjusted  $R^2$  of .127. This indicated that the psychological soothing skill accounted for 12.7% of the determinant marital satisfaction of literate couples in the study area. This finding is a critical indication that psychological soothing skill is relatively high in the area of the study. The F-value of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was  $F = 157.224$  and the sig. value of .003 (or  $p < .05$ ) at the degree of freedom (df) 1 and 1077. The implication of this result is that the null hypothesis that psychological soothing skill does not significantly predict marital satisfaction of literate couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State is rejected and the finding drawn from the result is that there is significant and high prediction of the psychological soothing skill on the marital satisfaction of literate couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State.

The result of the first hypothesis study indicated that, psychological soothing skill significantly influenced marital satisfaction of literate couples. The finding is in line with the view of Nwoye (2011) who perceived marriage as a sacred and permanent contract which is assumed to be enacted when two people decided 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 caring for each other for the purpose of promoting their mutual growth and welfare as persons in their journey together, through life. He further identified permanence and sanctity in the institution of marriage.

### Compromise skill in marital conflict and marital satisfaction of literate couples.

The simple regression analysis of the prediction of compromise skill in marital conflict on the marital satisfaction of literate couples produced an adjusted  $R^2$  of .264. This indicated that the compromise skill in marital conflict accounted for 26.4% of the determinant marital satisfaction of literate couples in the study area. This finding is a critical indication that compromise skill in marital conflict is relatively high in the area of the study. The F-value of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was  $F = 387.377$  and the sig. value of .000 (or  $p < .05$ ) at the degree of freedom (df) 1 and 1077. The implication of this result is that the null hypothesis is rejected and the finding drawn from the result is that there is significant and high prediction of the compromise skill in marital conflict on the marital satisfaction of literate couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State.

The result of the second hypothesis indicated that, compromise skill in marital conflict significantly influenced marital satisfaction of literate couples. The finding of this study agrees with that of Mbiti (2003) who sees marriage as the uniting link in the rhythm of life. All generations are bound together in the act of marriage. Past, present and future generation begin to come on the stage through child bearing.

**De-escalation skill and marital satisfaction of literate couples.**

The simple regression analysis of the prediction of De-escalation skill on the marital satisfaction of literate couples produced an adjusted  $R^2$  of .591. This indicated that the De-escalation skill accounted for 59.1% of the determinant marital satisfaction of literate couples in the study area. This finding is a critical indication that De-escalation skill is relatively high in the area of the study. The F-value of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was  $F = 1555.837$  and the sig. value of .000 (or  $p < .05$ ) at the degree of freedom (df) 1 and 1077. The implication of this result is that the null hypothesis is rejected and the finding drawn from the result is that there is significant and high prediction of the De-escalation skill on the marital satisfaction of literate couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State.

The result of the third hypothesis indicated that, De-escalation skill significantly influenced marital satisfaction of literate couples. The findings are in line with the view of Bagarozzi and Reuben (2007) who pointed out that some couples are motivated by romantic and Erotic notions and not critical examination of the proposed opposite sex they intend to marry. The researcher observed in the study area that some boys and girls are triggered to enter into marriage because of the material wealth of either side and when these material things are not forth coming, marriage problems come up which may lead to divorce.

**Conclusion**

Based on the results of the study the following conclusions were reached; psychological soothing skill, compromise skill, and De-escalation skill are significantly predictors of marital satisfaction of literate couples in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria.

**Recommendations**

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

4. Married couples on their own can also practice the use of psychological soothing in marital conflict resolution.
5. Married couples on their own can also practice the use of compromise skills in marital conflict resolution
6. Married couples on their own can also practice the use of de-escalation skill in marital conflict resolution

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