

Resolution Strategies Adopted in Resolving Marital Disharmony among Couples in Enugu State

IBEH, UKA O.
Email-uka.ibeh@unn.ed.ng

OBIDOA, M.A. (Ph.D) (Corresponding author)
Email-maobidoa@yahoo.com

OKERE ANTHONY U,
okeredinma@yahoo.com
Department of Educational Foundations
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract

This study investigated the resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony among couples to help in empowering families for sustainable healthy lifestyles in Enugu state. Two research questions and one hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. Descriptive survey design was used. The sample for this study comprises 300 (150 literate and 150 non-literate) couples drawn through simple random sampling technique from a population of 643, 311. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The research questions were analyzed using means while the hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test. The findings revealed among others, that avoiding the idle mind by engaging in work, use of family counselors, listening carefully and speaking tactfully to spouse, developing a positive and healthy attitude towards disharmony, communicating feelings of love, admiration, likes and dislikes to each other help in resolving marital disharmony among couples and empowering families for sustainable healthy lifestyles in Enugu state. However, there is no significant difference in the perception of literate and non-literate couples about the resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony. Based on the findings, recommendations were made.

Keywords: marital disharmony, resolution strategies, literacy, couples.

1.1 Introduction

The family scene is becoming increasingly characterized by problems and episodes of stresses, and disharmony in Nigeria, particularly in Enugu state. According to Imobighe (2003), disharmony can occur within and between families, groups, organizations and states. Marital disharmony is defined as a disagreement through which the parties involved perceived a threat to their needs, interests or concern and it also seen as a struggle or contests between couples with opposing needs ideas, beliefs, values, or goals (Katzenbach and Smith, 1992). The increasing rate of family disharmony such as the incidence of divorce in the society today justifies the fact that there are disharmony in matrimonial homes (Olaitan, 2003). Marital disharmony in this study, can be seen as a strain in marriage interaction between a couple who are living together that will not help in empowering such families for sustainable healthy lifestyles and global changes.

Most marriage among the literate and non-literates have been undergoing trying times. Literate is being able to read and write while literacy is ability to read and write (Brookes, 2006). In the context of the study, literate couples are those who are able to read, write and have attended educational institutions with educational certificates. Brookes, (2006), defines non-literate as having little or no education, especially unable to read or write. Both literate and non-literate couples may have discrepancies in their views concerning marital disharmony, especially, as it concerns their values and marriage expectations.

For every marital disharmony, there are strategies employed to tackle it and help in empowering families for sustainable healthy lifestyles. John and Fox (1992) defined strategy as a plan on how to achieve something. In another vein, strategy is plan, method or series of maneuvers for obtaining a specific goal or result (Joseph and Linfield, 1994). Resolution strategies refer to the use of different techniques aimed at helping couples understand each other and overcome disharmony in their relationship (Gilbert, 2005).

Resolution strategies include cultivating the right attitude, learning interpersonal skills, identifying to the root cause of the disharmony, active listening to each other by the couples, couples coming together to find solution to disagreement among others. An attitude of co-operation, valuing partnership, demonstrating trust and general goodwill towards one another aid in the goal of reducing and resolving marital disharmony. Gilbert

(2005) asserts that some of the disharmony resolution strategies used today like teaching couples to listen to each other, communicate better and behave in a more positive way could help couples resolve some of their marital difference.

A number of strategies can be employed in marital disharmony resolutions strategies. Emmert and Emmert (1994), suggest the following methods:

- Developing a positive and healthy attitude towards disharmony,
- Maintaining communication line,
- Working for accuracy in your communication,
- Turning to a counsellor.

Marriage and enrichment programmes where couples will be exposed to training sessions, use of family counselors; elders/friends/neighbours and joint family/in-law, all aimed at helping them resolve disharmony through negotiation and changing how people think, were reported to be effective by Sotonade (1998).

On financial issue, Taiwo, Okon and Eze (2006) recommended funds management technique that would be taught to the couples to help them develop positive trust towards each other in terms of how to manage funds without disharmony. Makinde (2004) had earlier advocated for adequate planning and budgeting of family finance by the couples.

Marriage counselling could be utilized as a strategy for resolving marital disharmony and this will help in empowering families for sustainable healthy lifestyles. Agbe (1998) stated that counselling for marriage and in marriage covering issues such as love, genotype, sex and communication among others should be given to couples to avoid marital problems. Infact, couples have to be helped to maintain the love with which they were married to avoid disharmony. Sanni and Eneh (1998) recommended marriage counselling typifying structural approaches which is treating marital problems based on early childhood experience, the conjoint family therapeutic approach (bringing family's communication network into play) behavioural family therapeutic approach where particular problems are likened and resolved in marriage.

Education and the level of its attainment affect the effectiveness in handling marital disharmony. Undiyaundeye and Ugal (2006) opine that education and the level of its attainment affect the effectiveness in handling marital issues or disharmony.

1.1.1 Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, particularly in Enugu state, in most families now, there are strains in marriage interaction between couples living together. Marital disharmony which lead to marriage instability are great concerns to the society. The society has witnessed an alarming rate of divorce, separation and loss of affection between couples. All these among couples could threaten societal values, children, their communities and sustainable healthy lifestyles. It is, therefore, necessary that resolution strategies among couples be investigated. Hence, the problem of this study is: what are the resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony among couples.

1.1.2 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony among couples and help in empowering families for sustainable healthy lifestyles in Enugu state. Specifically, the study is designed to:

1. Find out resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony among couples and help in empowering for sustainable lifestyles in Enugu state.
2. Determine the resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony among literate and non-literate couples and help in empowering families for sustainable healthy lifestyles in Enugu state.

1.1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony among couples in Enugu state?
2. What are the resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony among literate and non-literate couples in Enugu state?

1.1.4 Hypothesis

One null hypothesis was formulated to guide this study and was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H_0 : There is no significant mean difference in the perception of literate and non-literate couples about the resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony.

2. Methodology

The design of this study is descriptive survey. According to Nworgu (2006), descriptive survey research design is the plan of study which aims at collecting data on the topic and describing in a systematic way, the

characteristics and features of facts about a given population. The choice of this design was informed by the fact that the study's purpose is to determine the resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony among couples. The study was carried out in Nsukka Education zone of Enugu state. Nsukka Education zone is made up of three Local Government Areas (L.G.As) namely Nsukka L.G.A., Igbo-Etiti L.G.A and Uzo-Uwani L.G.A.

The population of the study comprises 300 respondents both literate and non-literate couples in Nsukka Education zone in Enugu state. 100 respondents were selected from each of the three Local Government Areas in the zone.

The sample size for the study is 300 respondents (150 literate and 150 non-literate). Simple random sampling method was used in drawing the sample. This was used to give each element in the population equal and independent chance of being included in the sample.

The three (3) Local Government Areas (L.G.As) in Nsukka Education zone were divided into wards. Three (3) wards were randomly selected from each of the LGAs. The researcher proceeded thereafter to pick five (5) Enumeration areas (EAs) from each of the selected wards. Data on EAs were obtained from the National Population commission (NPC) offices in the three (3) LGAs, based on revised and up-dated map of the all the EAs in the area preparatory to the 2006 National population headcount.

On the basis of household identification and house-numbering allotted to individual households in the selected EAs, ten couples were selected from each EA. This gave a total of hundred (100) respondents from each of the three (3) LGAs.

A 10-itemed structured questionnaire was developed and used for the study. The items were derived principally from literature. It had a four point response scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (A) and strongly Disagree (SD). The questionnaire was face validated. This was done by presenting the instrument to two lecturers in guidance and counseling, one in measurement and evaluation all in Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. It yielded an alpha value of 0.970 which was judged fair enough to give the confidence about the reliability of the instrument.

Data Collection was done with the help of trained research assistants. 300 copies of the questionnaire were distributed by hand to the respondents. 300 copies were completely responded to and retrieved. Explanation was offered to non-literate couples.

The data collected were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation for the research questions. A mean of 2.50 and above was accepted while any mean less than 2.50 was rejected. The research hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistics.

3. Results

3.1 Research Question I

What are the resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony among couples in Enugu state?

Table 1: Resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony among couples in Enugu state: Mean ratings, standard deviation and rankings.

S/N	Items	\bar{x}	SD	Rank	Decision
4	Avoiding idle mind by engaging in hard work.	3.80	0.40	1 st	Strongly Agree
5	Use of family counsellors	3.77	0.41	2 nd	Strongly Agree
9	Listening carefully and speaking tactfully.	3.73	0.45	3 rd	Strongly Agree
6	Developing a positive attitude and healthy attitude towards disharmony.	3.71	0.45	4 th	Strongly Agree
10	Communicating their feelings of love, admiration, likes and dislikes to each other.	3.58	0.50	5 th	Strongly Agree
1	Funds management techniques taught to the couples.	2.77	0.41	6 th	Agree
3	Joint family and in-law intervention	2.73	0.42	7 th	Agree
7	Use of elders, friends and neighbours to mediate on the matter.	2.72	0.45	8 th	Agree
8	Learning communication skills.	2.62	0.46	9 th	Agree
2	Maintaining open communication lines	2.61	0.41	10 th	Agree

In table I, there is no item scored below the cut-off point of 2.50. All the items scored above 2.50 showing agreement that the items are the resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony among couples in Enugu state.

Items 4,5,9,6 and 10 are more popularly adopted as the resolution strategies in resolving marital disharmony among couples than other items.

3.1.1 Research Question 2

What are the resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony among literate and non-literate couples in Enugu state?

Table 2: Resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony among literate and non-literate couples in Enugu state: Mean ratings and standard deviation.

S/N	Items	Literate			Non-Literate		
		\bar{x}	SD	Decision	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
1	Funds management taught to the couples adopted.	2.87	0.34	Agree	2.67	0.47	Agree
2	Maintaining open communication lines.	2.62	0.49	Agree	2.59	0.38	Agree
3	Joint family and in-law intervention	2.88	0.33	Agree	2.57	0.50	Agree
4	Avoiding idle mind by engaging in hard work.	3.81	0.38	Strongly agree	3.78	0.41	Strongly agree
5	Use of family counsellors.	3.80	0.42	Strongly agree	3.74	0.40	Strongly agree
6	Developing a positive and healthy attitude towards disharmony.	3.73	0.44	Agree	3.64	0.46	Agree
7	Use of elders, friends and neighbours to mediate on the matter.	2.75	0.43	Agree	2.69	0.46	Agree
8	Learning communication skills.	2.64	0.47	Agree	2.59	0.44	Agree
9	Listening carefully and speaking tactfully.	3.72	0.45	Strongly Agree	3.74	0.44	Strongly Agree
10	Communicating their feelings of love, admiration, like and dislikes to each other.	3.61	0.49	Strongly Agree	3.54	0.50	Strongly Agree

In table 2 above, items 4,5,6,9 and 10 means range from 3.54 to 3.81 for both literate and non-literate couples. This shows that both groups strongly agree that these five listed items are the strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony among literate and non-literate couples. In addition items 1,2,3,7 and 8 means range from 2.57 to 2.88 on both sides of literate and non-literate couples. This also indicates that both agree that these five listed items are among resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony among literate and non-literate couples and help in empowering families for sustainable healthy lifestyles.

3.1.2 Hypothesis

There is no significant mean difference in the perception of literate and non-literate couples about the resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony.

Table 3: t-test analysis of mean responses of literate and non-literate respondents about the resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony.

Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Literate	150	3.19	0.43	298	1.37	1.96	not significant
Non-literate	150	3.12	0.45				

In table 3, the t-calculated is 1.37 while the t-critical is 1.96 at 298 degrees of freedom with 0.05 level of significance. The t-calculated is less than the t-critical indicating that t-test is not significant. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted that there are no significant mean differences in the perception of literate and non-literate couples about the resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony.

4. Discussion

The identified resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony among couples, literate and non-literate include avoiding idle mind by engaging in hard work, use of family counsellors, developing a positive and healthy attitude towards disharmony among others. This is in conformity with assertion of Emmert and Emmert (1994) who suggested that developing a positive and healthy attitude towards harmony, maintaining open communication lines and turning to counsellor be employed as resolution strategies in resolving marital disharmony. This is in line with Agbe (1998) and Sani and Eneh (1998) findings. Agbe stated that counselling for marriage and in marriage be given to couples to avoid marital problems such as love, genotype, sex, communication and so on while Sani and Ench recommended marriage counseling typifying structured approaches and behavioural family therapeutic approach where particular problems are likened and resolved in marriage. This is also, in line with Taiwo, Okon and Ezeh (2006) who recommended funds management technique that would be taught to the couples to help them develop positive trust towards each other in terms of how to manage funds without disharmony.

The test of hypothesis showed that there was no significant mean difference in the perception of literate and non-literate couples about resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony. In essence, the resolution strategies adopted were perceived by literate and non literate couples in similar ways.

However, the mean of literate and non-literate couples differ, in that the mean of literate couples is higher than that of non-literate couples. This is in line with Undiyaundeye and Ugal (2006) who opine that education and the level of its attainment affect the effectiveness in handling marital issues or disharmony.

5. Conclusion

Resolution strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony among couples and help in empowering families for sustainable healthy lifestyles were identified. Couples and marriage counsellors are encouraged to use these resolution strategies aimed at helping them understand each other overcome disharmony in their relationship. The perception of literate and non-literate couples about the strategies adopted in resolving marital disharmony are similar. However, the views of literate couples are more popular in some areas. In conclusion disharmony and other issues can easily be handled in families using the identified resolution strategies to empower them for sustainable healthy lifestyles amid global challenges.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Family counsellors should organize workshops, seminars and conferences whereby couples would be sensitized on resolution strategies for resolving marital disharmony and help in empowering families for sustainable healthy lifestyles.
2. Couples should adopt resolution strategies in resolving their marital disharmony and help in empowering families for sustainable lifestyles.
3. Couples should visit family counsellors when they need help.
4. Couples should endeavour to accentuate attitudes of co-operative, valuing partnership, demonstrating trust, general good will towards one another and positive values on their marriage.
5. The communication of forgiveness when one couple wrongs the other is important. Family counsellors and social workers to inculcate this in couples.

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