

Effect of Using Communication Enrichment Technique on Marital Conflict among Married Persons in Delta State

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Abstract

The study explored the effect of communication enrichment techniques on marital conflict among married persons in Delta State, Nigeria. The research adopted a quasi-experimental design. The study was guided, by two research questions and two null hypotheses. The research population, comprising 6,965 married persons in Delta State, was studied. A multi-stage and simple random sampling technique was employed to select 12- married persons. Data was collected using a questionnaire titled Marital Conflict Questionnaire (MCQ). The supervisors validated these instruments for face, content, and construct validity. A reliability value of 0.87 was established using Cronbach's Alpha and was adjudged adequate for use. The content validity of the scales was estimated using factor analysis and principal component analysis (PCA) with the extraction method, while construct validity was estimated using rotated factor loading matrices. The study employed a descriptive statistical analysis to answer the research question. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) and t-test were computed and used to test hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05. The findings of the study showed that there was a significant difference in the effect of the communication enrichment technique in reducing marital conflict compared to the control group using their mean score. From the findings, it was concluded that the communication enrichment technique was effective in reducing marital conflict among married persons. It was therefore recommended among others that married couples should embrace communication enrichment which can significantly enhance their relationship. Singles should learn effective communication skills that can prepare individuals for future relationships by fostering healthier interactions and reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings. Marriage counselors should integrate communication enrichment strategies into practice because it can greatly benefit clients.

Introduction

Marital conflict also referred to as spousal or marital discord, is a prevalent issue in intimate partnerships and family dynamics (Alva et al., 2008; Yang, 2013). It encompasses the disagreements, disputes, and tensions that arise between married couples, often revolving around communication, finances, child-rearing, intimacy, and personal differences (Allenor & Ojugo, 2017; Ojugo et al., 2013). Obiemeka et al. (2022), these conflicts range from minor disagreements to persistent challenges, reflecting the complexities of human interaction and emotions within marriage (Obiemeka et al., 2022). This multifaceted phenomenon is of significant interest in psychology, sociology, and family studies due to its implications for individual well-being, family stability, and societal cohesion (Jahromi et al., 2015; Russell & Urban, 2010). Understanding its causes and consequences is critical for researchers,

therapists, and policymakers aiming to foster healthier marriages (Ejeh et al., 2024; Ifioko et al., 2024; Kareem et al., 2015).

Various factors significantly influence marital dynamics and stability (Ojugo et al., 2013). Aghware et al. (2024) identify financial issues, parenting differences, infidelity, and personality clashes as central contributors to marital discord (Aghware et al., 2024). For instance, financial stress often leads to arguments and mistrust, particularly when economic resources are poorly managed. Parenting disagreements, such as differing approaches to discipline and education, can strain relationships as couples navigate child-rearing responsibilities. Personality differences also play a role, as highlighted in (Akwaowo et al., 2022), where an extroverted partner may clash with an introverted spouse over preferences for spontaneity versus routine.

External stressors such as job challenges, health issues, and family problems exacerbate marital conflict (Ojugo et al., 2015; Oyemade & Ojugo, 2020). Haryani et al. (2023) emphasize that the absence of robust support systems, whether from friends, family, or therapy, intensifies these conflicts, fostering frustration and hopelessness (Haryani et al., 2023). Additionally, significant life events like the birth of a child or relocation introduce stressors that require adaptation, often leading to disagreements (Chibuzo & Isiaka, 2020). Marriage inherently involves periods of disagreement, often arising from unmet expectations or communication breakdowns. While it demands mutual commitment and shared responsibilities, achieving satisfaction is not guaranteed. Fragulis et al. (2018) argue that young adults today face greater marital instability due to the lack of stable relationship models during their upbringing (Fragulis et al., 2018) and was later extended (Oyemade et al., 2016; Safriandono et al., 2024). Similarly, Danladi and Dodo (2019) reported lower levels of marital happiness in contemporary couples compared to previous generations, underscoring the growing challenges of maintaining satisfaction in modern relationships (Danladi & Dodo, 2019; Ojugo et al., 2023). In Nigeria and globally, rising divorce rates highlight the fragile nature of modern marriages. Udoekanem (2018), common causes of divorce include infidelity, finances, sexual dissatisfaction, and poor communication (Udoekanem, 2018). Obruche et al. (2024) add that many couples find themselves “enduring” rather than enjoying marriage due to these issues (Obruche et al., 2024). Islam et al. (2019) further identify socioeconomic pressures, social media influence, and inadequate assertiveness as significant drivers of marital discord (Islam et al., 2019).

Communication Enrichment programs are designed to strengthen and deepen marital relationships by teaching essential communication skills. Muslikh et al. (2023) highlight that

these programs focus on fostering mutual empathy, developing problem-solving skills, and creating a supportive atmosphere of truth and openness (Muslikh et al., 2023). The program's emphasis on practical strategies, such as active listening and constructive feedback, helps couples navigate challenges effectively. Osei-Afriyie et al. (2021) note communication enrichment techniques often undertake a gender-neutral approach, equipping couples with universally applicable skills to improve relational dynamics (Osei-Afriyie et al., 2021). This aligns with the findings by Carrie and Fatahyah (2019), who demonstrate the effectiveness of such programs across different genders in reducing marital conflict. Similarly, Komolafe et al. (2020) emphasize the role of communication training in fostering conflict resolution among couples from diverse cultural backgrounds (Komolafe et al., 2020).

This program caters to couples at various stages of their relationships, offering a comprehensive series of activities and tools aimed at fostering intimacy and effective communication (Oladele et al., 2024; Omede et al., 2024). These range from light-hearted communication dinner dates to workshops, couple's therapy sessions, and the detailed Couple's Communicative Evaluation Scale. This assessment tool identifies strengths and weaknesses in intimate communication, enabling couples to focus on areas requiring improvement. Obinwa (2022) notes that such structured communication training programs significantly enhance marital satisfaction by equipping couples with the tools to navigate relational challenges (Obinwa, 2022). Moreover, the inclusion of practical exercises and guides (Osasume, 2021), which can be used independently or as part of broader initiatives, ensures participants are well-prepared to address both everyday communication challenges and deeper relational issues (Allenotor et al., 2015; Malasowe et al., 2023, 2024).

Participation in marriage enrichment programs reflects a couple's willingness to confront challenges and invest in their relationship. Yoro and Ojugo (2019), couples who actively engage in communication strategies demonstrate higher levels of marital harmony, emphasizing their proactive approach to conflict resolution (Yoro & Ojugo, 2019b, 2019a). Such couples are often motivated and optimistic, relying on their mutual commitment to work through issues effectively, even without professional intervention. The dynamics of marital relationships are deeply influenced by cultural norms and gender roles. Akaue et al. (2024) explain that gender identity forms a central element of one's self-concept within marriage, shaping individual experiences and expectations (Akazue et al., 2024). In Nigeria, traditional gender norms often dictate the parameters of marital satisfaction and the exchange of social support. Unamba (2010) observes that in Igbo culture, men frequently view marriage as an institution granting them authority over their wives, with expectations of submissiveness and

silence on matters such as beliefs, opinions, and educational pursuits. This patriarchal outlook in Osita-Njoku and Uwaoma (2001) as cited in Eranga (2020), confines many women to domestic roles, limiting their broader contributions to the family and society (Eranga, 2020). Despite their potential, women often accept these constraints to preserve their marital status, sometimes at the cost of personal happiness and fulfillment (Okonta et al., 2013, 2014; Wemembu et al., 2014).

Communication enrichment programs are instrumental in mitigating marital conflict and fostering harmony. Studies have posited that structured communication enrichment techniques significantly reduced marital conflict among Iranian couples by providing them with practical tools to address relational tensions (Setiadi et al., 2024). Similarly, Muhamada et al. (2024) stressed that the role of communication skills in improving marital satisfaction vis-à-vis reduces conflict, while underscoring the universal applicability of these interventions across diverse cultural contexts (Muhamada et al., 2024).

Statement of the Problem

Strains in marriage between married persons living together are becoming common in Nigeria, particularly in Delta state. Marital conflict is on the rise and is often manifested in the form of resentment, dissatisfaction, frustration, and anger. These manifestations of marital conflicts take control of relationships and at times break down the marriage irretrievably. These have threatened societal values, children, and the community where this trend dominates despite attempts made to find lasting solutions.

There are incessant cases of disharmony, deceit, violence, and breaking of marital vows, arising from unresolved conflicts in marriages. Society has witnessed an alarming rate of separation, divorce, and loss of affection between couples. Marital conflicts that lead to marriage instability are great concerns to society. Most devastating is the effect of this social cancer on couples, children, and by extension, the larger society. Some children who are denied love and full parental care often seek affection outside the home and are usually lured into unwholesome relationships and attitudes. Those who are fortunate to occupy certain positions in society thrive only in an atmosphere of conflict and instability. This problem has been blamed for various reasons. Therefore, this study intends to investigate the effect of communication enrichment training on the reduction of marital conflict among married persons in Delta State. The problem of this study is the effect of communication enrichment training on the reduction of marital conflict among married persons in Delta State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. Is there any difference in the effect of the communication enrichment technique in reducing marital conflict compared to the control group using their mean score
2. Is there any difference in the pre-test and post-test marital conflict mean scores of male and female married persons treated with communication enrichment technique on marital conflict among married persons in Delta State?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the effect of the communication enrichment technique in reducing marital conflict compared to the control group using their mean score
2. There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test marital conflict mean scores of male and female married persons treated with communication enrichment technique on marital conflict among married persons in Delta State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the effect of communication enrichment training in the reduction of marital conflict among married persons in Delta State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study intends to examine the,

1. The difference in the pretest-posttest mean scores of effective communications on married persons with marital conflict.
2. Differences in the interaction of male and female mean scores of married couples with marital conflict exposed to communication enrichment on marital conflict among married persons in Delta State.

Design of the Study

The study is a 2 x 2 Quasi-experimental research design in the pretest and posttest Quasi-experimental research design that sought to identify the mean difference in the treatment and control groups. The three (2) stands for the treatment group and the control group, the first two are for sex, male and female. The experimental group will receive treatment for marital conflict using communication enrichment techniques while the control group will receive conventional counseling on occupation as shown below.

TREATMENT GROUPS	PRE-TEST	TREATMENT	POST-TEST
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E1	T1	X1	T2
NTC	T1	XC	T2

KEYS:

E1	=	Experimental group 1 (CE)
NTC	=	Non-specific treatment control group
T1	=	Pre-test Group
T2	=	post-test group
X1	=	Treatment for experimental group 1
XC	=	Non-specific treatment Group

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprises 60,965 married persons in Delta State

Sample and Sampling Techniques: The sample size for the study was one hundred and twenty (120) married persons from four catholic churches in Delta North Senatorial District. The married Catholics were sampled from across the Delta North Senatorial District through a multistage sampling method.

Research instruments: The instrument for this study was a questionnaire on the marital conflict rating scale (MCRS). The instrument had 53 items and it was constructed by the researcher with the help of the supervisor.

Validity of Research Instrument: The validity of the instruments was established by three (3) experts in the Guidance and Counselling Department, among whom are the research supervisors. The content and construct validation of the instrument was done using factor analysis. The instrument will be administered to 50 married persons in the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Abraka, and the data obtained was subject to factor analysis. The factors (components) will be extracted using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to determine the content validity.

Reliability of the Research Instrument: A pilot test of the instrument was carried out on 50 married persons in a different Church, a church outside the selected churches for the study. The result of the test was used to compute the reliability of the instrument. The Cronbach Alpha was applied for the computation of the reliability coefficient of the subscales of the instrument and a general reliability coefficient of 0.93 was obtained for the scale. The reliability was carried out to establish the internal consistency of the instrument.

Procedure for Treatment

This study was carried out in three phases:

Phase one: The researcher visited St Jude Catholic Church Oduke and St Benedict Catholic Church, Akwuebolo.

Phase two: Treatment

Phase three: Evaluation of the treatment

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected from the study was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics used of mean and standard deviation. The inferential statistics that will be used in this study will be the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). The hypotheses will be tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question 1: Is there any difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of married persons treated with the communication enrichment Technique and those in the control group?

Table 4.2: Mean and Standard Deviation showing the results of Pre-test and post-test mean scores of married persons treated with the communication enrichment Technique and those in the control group.

Groups	n	Pre-test		Post-test		Mean difference	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Decision	
Communication enrichment group	6	93.00	35.29	59.17	15.09	-33.8	There is a difference.
Control Group	6	110.1	35.84	110.1	35.84	-0	No difference
Total	12						

The above table shows the changes in mean scores of married persons in the communication enrichment group is 93.00 as against 59.17 with a difference of -33.8 and married persons in the control group 110.13 as against 110.13 with no difference. This indicates that, on average, communication enrichment groups experienced a decrease in marital conflict from the pretest to the posttest. This suggests that the communication enrichment technique has a more significant impact on reducing marital conflict than the control group. The result indicates that communication enrichment training has a substantial impact on reducing marital conflict

when compared to the control group, as evidenced by the significant difference in mean scores between the pretest and posttest.

Research question 2: Is there any difference in the marital conflict mean scores of male and female married persons treated with communication enrichment technique on marital conflict among married persons in Delta State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation showing the results of marital conflict mean scores of male and female married persons treated with communication enrichment technique

Group	Sex	n	Mean	SD	Mean difference
Communication enrichment	Males	24	56.58	11.95	8.53
	Female	38	65.11	18.44	

Table 2 explores whether the marital conflict mean scores differed between male and female married individuals who underwent treatment using the communication enrichment technique. Among the participants, 24 were males, while 38 were females. The mean score for males was 56.58, with a standard deviation of 11.95, reflecting relatively low variability in their responses. Conversely, females reported a higher mean score of 65.11, coupled with a greater standard deviation of 18.44, suggesting not only a higher perceived level of marital conflict but also more diverse experiences within the group. The mean difference between the two groups was 8.53, highlighting a potential disparity in how males and females perceive or respond to marital conflict following the intervention.

Hypotheses 1 There is no significant difference in the effect of the communication enrichment technique in reducing marital conflict compared to the control group using their mean score.

Table 4.12: ANCOVA Summary on the effect between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of the communication enrichment technique and the control group on marital conflict

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Corrected Model	58206.734 ^a	2	2530.728	5.965	.000	
Intercept	38911.519	1	38911.519	91.717	.000	
Pretest	7979.234	1	7979.234	18.808	.000	Hypothesis rejected

Treatment	55716.63	2	2532.574	5.969	.000
Group	0	2			
Error	15273.26	3	424.257		
	6	6			
Total	592420.0	6			
	00	0			
Corrected	73480.00	5			
Total	0	9			

a. R Squared = .792 (Adjusted R Squared = .659)

The Table presented above displays the analysis for hypothesis 1, which investigates whether there is a significant difference in the effect of the communication enrichment Technique in reducing marital conflicts when compared to those in the control group. This is measured by their mean scores. The statistical analysis yielded the following results: $F(1, 22) = 5.969$, with a p-value less than 0.001. When assessing Hypothesis 1 at an alpha level of 0.05, it is evident that the calculated p-value falls below the predetermined level of significance, which is 0.00. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the outcome of the post-test was indeed statistically significant, given that the p-value is less than 0.05, indicating a substantial difference in effectiveness. As a result, the null hypothesis, which suggests that there is no significant difference in the effect of the communication enrichment Technique in reducing marital conflict when compared to those in the control group using their mean scores, is rejected.

Hypotheses2: there is no significant difference in the effect of male and female married persons in the communication enrichment technique group using their mean scores

Table 4. Summary of an independent t-test comparing marital conflict score of male and female students treated with communication enrichment Technique.

	Sex	n	Mean	Std. D	d f	t-cal.	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remark
Posttest	Males	2	57.58	11.9	5	0.707	0.482	Null hypothesis accepted
		4		5				
	female	3	60.2	16.9	8			
	s	6	2	6				

Table 4 is a summary of the t-test comparing the marital conflict scores of male and female married persons treated with the communication enrichment technique. The table reveals that the p-value (0.482) of the calculated t-value (-0.71) is greater than 0.05. With this result, H_{06} was accepted. Thus, there is no significant difference in the marital conflict scores of male and female married persons treated with the communication enrichment technique.

Discussion of findings

Difference in the Effect of the Communication Enrichment Technique in Reducing Marital Conflict Compared to the Control Group

The first hypothesis and research question suggest that the Communication Enrichment Technique is significantly more effective in reducing marital conflict compared to a control group, as shown by mean score comparisons. The Communication Enrichment Technique is a structured intervention aimed at improving couples' interactions. This finding is because the communication enrichment includes strategies such as Active Listening, Empathy, Timing, Respectful Dialogue, Avoiding Assumptions, and Taking Responsibility and Apologizing. These techniques improve understanding, reduce misunderstandings, and create a more supportive and positive communication environment between partners. The technique may equip couples with practical tools and strategies to directly address communication issues, enabling them to express their thoughts and emotions more effectively and reduce misunderstandings and conflicts. This finding is consistent with the work of Adeniyi et al. (2018), Lateef (2021), Alireza et al. (2021), and Mohammadi & Mohammadian (2018), who also found a positive relationship between marital conflict and communication enrichment.

Differences in marital conflict mean scores of male and female married persons treated with communication enrichment techniques on marital conflict

The result indicates that there is no significant difference in the reduction of marital conflict between male and female married individuals who underwent communication enrichment, as measured by their mean scores before and after the interventions. The reason for this outcome is that Communication Enrichment involves a variety of strategies aimed at improving overall communication within a marriage. These strategies include active listening, empathetic engagement, constructive feedback, and the expression of appreciation which to enhance the quality of interactions between partners, fostering a more supportive and understanding communication environment. This agrees with the work of Amelia et al. 2020 (Amelia et al., 2020) and Ugochukwu and Ibekwe (2021).

Communication enrichment techniques are designed to address fundamental aspects of communication that are relevant for both men and women. These skills are beneficial for everyone and lead to similar improvements in conflict management and reduction. As a result, both male and female participants experienced comparable benefits from the intervention, which is reflected in similar mean scores for marital conflict. The techniques used in communication enrichment are generally applicable to all individuals, regardless of gender, as both face similar challenges in communication. Therefore, the effectiveness of the

intervention in reducing conflict is consistent for both men and women. This finding aligns with the research of Amelia et al. (2020), and (Ugochukwu-Ibe & Ibeke, 2021).

Conclusion

The study's findings conclude that the communication enrichment technique is effective in reducing marital conflict among married persons in Delta State. Wrong communication leads to many conflicts in marriage. The study recommends as thus:

1. Married couples should embrace communication enrichment training to significantly enhance their relationship.
2. Singles should Learn effective communication skills that can prepare individuals for future relationships by fostering healthier interactions and reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings.

The study affirmed the effectiveness of communication enrichment training on marital conflict among married persons in Delta State, Nigeria

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