

effective in improving conflict resolution in Abia State. It implied that lack of marital counselling is related to family problem in the study area.

Recommendation

Based on the finding of this study, a recommendation is proposed, thus: that spouses should be helped to imbibe the virtue of patience given that conflicts in marriage are inevitable but can be minimized through tolerance and accommodative spirit.

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Abstract

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of family life, as every couple is bound to experience varying degrees of differences, misunderstandings, and incompatibilities due to individual backgrounds, expectations, values, and communication patterns. When such conflicts are poorly managed, they may escalate into emotional distress, communication breakdown, estrangement, and, ultimately, the dissolution of marriages. This study investigated the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts among couples in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State. A descriptive survey design was adopted and data were collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire titled “Marital Conflict and Dialogue Resolution Questionnaire” (MCDRQ) with 15 items. The instrument was subjected to validation. Its reliability was established using the test-retest method, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.84. A total of 364 respondents were sampled for the study. The data collected were analysed using percentages, t-test, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that majority of the respondents affirmed that dialogue plays a significant role in resolving marital conflicts. The study found no significant difference in the role of dialogue based on respondents’ religion, length of marriage, or ethnicity, suggesting that the impact of dialogue in marital conflict resolution is generally consistent across these demographic factors. Based on the findings, it was recommended that professional counsellors and religious institutions should organise periodic workshops and seminars aimed at equipping couples with effective communication and conflict resolution skills. These programmes should include practical activities like role-playing, communication exercises, and emotional regulation training.

Keywords: Dialogue, Marital Conflicts, Marital Conflict Resolution, Couples, Irepodun Local Government Area

Introduction

The institution of marriage in Nigeria is undergoing a significant transformation, shifting from its traditional foundation to a more complex and often unstable structure. What was once considered a sacred and enduring union is now increasingly characterised by persistent domestic tensions. Marital conflicts, previously perceived as occasional or circumstantial, have become widespread and, in some cases, deeply entrenched. This growing instability can be attributed, in part, to a rising tendency among couples to enter marriage based on transient emotional attraction or superficial compatibility, while neglecting critical elements such as shared values, financial readiness, and long-term social compatibility (Gautam, 2023). It was observed that in the early phases of romantic relationships, differences between partners are often downplayed, as the couple focuses more on mutual attraction and perceived similarities but as the relationship matures and the couple face real-life challenges, such as career pressures, economic responsibilities, and parenting, their underlying differences become more pronounced, often leading to increased interpersonal tension and conflict (Adjei, 2023; Gautam, 2023). These developments highlight the pressing need for constructive approaches, such as effective dialogue, in navigating marital challenges and sustaining stable unions.

Effectively addressing marital conflict requires recognising the variety of resolution strategies available, many of which traditionally involve the extended family and wider community networks. In many Nigerian communities, family elders, religious leaders, and kinship structures play central roles in mediating disputes. While these culturally embedded mechanisms have their merits, conflicts that are mishandled or trivialised at this level often escalate into deeper emotional distress, chronic resentment, or even domestic violence. At such critical junctures, the intervention of professional counsellors becomes not just beneficial, but essential (Afolabi, 2024). Counsellor-facilitated dialogue offers a structured, non-adversarial space for both partners to express their concerns, reflect on underlying issues, and work toward practical, emotionally intelligent solutions. This therapeutic process fosters mutual understanding, de-escalates tension, and encourages healthier communication patterns (Ayatallah & Guessous, 2023). Moreover, institutionalising counsellor-led mediation as a routine response to marital disputes could significantly reduce the pressure on Nigeria's judicial system while promoting conflict resolution approaches that are both effective and culturally congruent (Bhuraney & Bhagi, 2024).

Elegbede, Abidogun, Mumuni, and Kuponiyi (2024) underscore the importance of marital counselling in fostering deeper understanding between spouses. They argue that effective counselling enables couples to recognise and navigate both their inherent similarities and differences - factors that are not only natural but also vital to the growth of any marital

relationship. While shared values and interests often contribute to initial compatibility, it is the respectful management of differences that sustains long-term marital stability. Counselling provides couples with practical, context-sensitive tools and communication strategies that are tailored to their personalities, relational styles, and socio-cultural backgrounds. It empowers them to express emotions constructively, manage stress, and resolve disputes in ways that preserve

dignity, empathy, and shared commitment.

According to Cardwell (2019), counselling interventions are particularly effective when they address the emotional climate of the relationship - encouraging openness, emotional validation, and mutual respect. These interventions often focus on equipping couples with the psychological resources needed to build trust, improve communication, and cultivate resilience in the face of life's inevitable challenges. By fostering emotional safety and reinforcing positive behavioural patterns, counselling becomes a powerful preventive and corrective tool in managing marital conflict. One of the most effective and widely taught techniques in marital counselling is dialogue. Dialogue, in this context, goes beyond casual conversation. It is a structured, intentional, and respectful process of communication that enables both partners to articulate their thoughts, feelings, and concerns in a non-confrontational manner. Through dialogue, couples are encouraged to listen actively, validate each other's perspectives, and collaboratively explore solutions. This process creates space for empathy, reduces defensiveness, and opens pathways for reconciliation and mutual growth.

The centrality of dialogue in conflict resolution is widely acknowledged in both Western and African marital therapy models. As a communication tool, dialogue allows for emotional ventilation, clarification of misunderstandings, and the negotiation of differences, all of which are crucial in preventing the escalation of conflict into emotional trauma, hostility, or marital breakdown. Research indicates that when dialogue is facilitated by trained counsellors, it becomes even more impactful, offering a safe environment where power imbalances can be addressed and emotionally charged issues can be explored without fear of judgment or retaliation (Ayatallah & Guessous, 2023; Bhuraney & Bhagi, 2024).

The use of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts is deeply embedded in both formal counselling practices and traditional conflict mediation. However, its application is often influenced by a range of socio-cultural factors, including religious doctrines, patriarchal gender norms, and community-based expectations. For example, in many Yoruba communities, dialogue is traditionally mediated by extended family members, religious leaders, or respected elders who are seen as custodians of marital values. While such interventions have their strengths, they may lack the neutrality or confidentiality offered by professional counsellors. Elegbede et al. (2024) note that integrating traditional support systems with professional counselling approaches, particularly those that emphasise structured dialogue, can yield more sustainable and culturally responsive outcomes in marital conflict resolution. Ultimately, promoting counsellor-led dialogue as a routine component of marital support services can contribute to healthier, more resilient

relationships. Moreover, this approach contributes to normalizing professional intervention in conflict resolution, thereby alleviating pressure on the judicial system by settling disputes prior to their escalation into litigation or irreversible separation and as such, dialogue emerges not only as a technique but as a transformative process that strengthens the emotional fabric of marriages.

Afolabi (2024) and Kofoworola and Rofiu (2024) assert that the involvement of professional

counsellors in mediating marital disputes is not only beneficial but essential. Unlike informal mediators, such as family elders or religious figures professional counsellors are trained to address both individual and relational dynamics with objectivity, empathy, and clinical insight. Their interventions are guided by established psychological theories and evidence-based practices, which allow them to deliver structured and informed approaches to conflict resolution. This professional expertise enables counsellors to dig beneath surface-level disagreements and explore deeper emotional issues that often fuel marital conflict, such as unmet needs, unresolved trauma, communication breakdowns, and mismatched expectations.

One of the most significant contributions of counsellors lies in their use of non-legal and non-adversarial interventions, such as therapeutic dialogue, couple counselling, and psycho education. These interventions help couples reflect on their behavioural patterns, challenge destructive narratives, and develop healthier interaction styles. Through guided dialogue, counsellors facilitate safe and intentional communication that encourages emotional openness, active listening, and mutual validation, tools that are indispensable in preventing the recurrence of conflict and promoting long-term relational harmony (Uzoka & Onah, 2024). Counsellor's role extends beyond resolving disputes to fostering psychological well-being within the marital unit. Counsellors help couples navigate identity shifts, life transitions, and external stressors, such as financial hardship or parenting challenges, that often exacerbate conflict. In doing so, they not only restore relational balance but also empower couples with lifelong skills for managing disagreements in a constructive and respectful manner.

Conflict is an inherent aspect of family life, as all couples, regardless of background or compatibility, are bound to encounter disagreements, misunderstandings, and relational tensions over time (Ibitoye, 2024). These conflicts may arise from a range of factors, including breakdowns in communication, diverging personal values, unmet emotional or sexual expectations, financial strain, or the influence of external forces such as in-laws, peer groups, or societal pressures. While some conflicts are minor and situational, others may be more persistent and emotionally charged, threatening the stability of the marital relationship if not addressed constructively (Afolabi, 2024; Baucom, Shoham, Mueser, Daiuto, & Stickle, 2013).

The ability to manage and resolve conflict is therefore crucial to sustaining a healthy marital union. Conflict resolution requires more than mere tolerance, it involves a conscious willingness by both partners to understand each other's perspectives, negotiate differences, and accommodate individual needs in pursuit of relational harmony. This skill is becoming increasingly essential,

especially in contemporary society where traditional marital support systems are weakening and many couples lack access to structured marital counselling (Dalhatu & Muhammad, 2024). Without such support, unresolved conflicts may accumulate, leading to emotional detachment, chronic resentment, and, in some cases, separation or divorce.

Communication, particularly in the form of dialogue, plays a central role in conflict

resolution. Adegboyega (2021) found that open, respectful, and purposeful communication significantly enhance couples' ability to resolve disputes. His study indicated that when partners communicate effectively and demonstrate mutual empathy and respect, they are more likely to navigate conflicts constructively and preserve emotional intimacy. Conversely, when communication is poor, characterised by defensiveness, criticism, or avoidance, conflicts often escalate due to misinterpretations and perceptual biases. This reinforces the need for targeted interventions, such as professional counselling, where couples are taught dialogue-based strategies for managing conflict in healthy and sustainable ways. Dialogue, in this sense, is not merely about verbal exchange, it is a relational process that fosters mutual understanding, emotional regulation, and collaborative problem-solving. When integrated into marital counselling sessions, dialogue serves as both a preventive and therapeutic mechanism that can mitigate the intensity of conflict and promote deeper relational connection. As marital relationships continue to evolve amidst societal change, the capacity to engage in meaningful dialogue will remain a cornerstone of marital stability and well-being.

In Nigeria, although Islam and Christianity constitute the dominant religious frameworks, the institution of marriage remains deeply rooted in indigenous cultural and traditional practices. Consequently, marital conflicts are rarely treated as private affairs confined to the couple alone; rather, they often extend to involve the extended family, community elders, and even religious leaders. In many cases, conflict resolution becomes a communal responsibility, reflecting the collectivist ethos prevalent in Nigerian society. While this communal approach can offer valuable support, it also has the potential to worsen tensions if handled with bias, secrecy, or a lack of psychological insight. When poorly managed, such conflicts can escalate into emotional distress, physical abuse, and ultimately, separation or divorce (Afolabi, 2024). Beyond the formal judicial system, which is often viewed as adversarial and emotionally detached, traditional African societies have long embraced more relational and culturally embedded forms of conflict resolution. These alternative systems emphasize dialogue, reconciliation, and social harmony rather than legal punishment or blame.

According to Okesina (2022), in many Yoruba communities, including those in Kwara State, the formal court system is frequently avoided in marital matters due to its perceived coldness and the stigma it can attach to families. In fact, one of the well-known proverbs within Yoruba marital discourse is: “*A kíl ti k’òòtù dé, ká tún sòrẹ*” translated as “You cannot take me to court and expect us to remain friends afterward.” This reflects a deep cultural belief that judicial intervention often damages the relational fabric of marriage, making reconciliation difficult, if not

impossible. Literature suggests that over-reliance on litigation has contributed to the breakdown of many marriages, especially where alternative, dialogue-oriented approaches were overlooked. As such, community-based and counsellor-led interventions, which emphasize open dialogue and mutual understanding, are increasingly being recommended as more humane, efficient, and culturally appropriate models for resolving marital conflict in Nigeria. These methods not only

save couples from prolonged legal battles but also align with traditional values of peace, forgiveness, and restoration.

In many instances of marital conflict, dialogue, particularly when grounded in effective listening and structured communication, plays a critical role in de-escalating tension and restoring relational balance. Dialogue, in this context, entails more than casual conversation; it involves attentive listening, the honest expression of thoughts and emotions, clarification of misunderstandings, and the pursuit of common ground. When one partner listens attentively, without interrupting, judging, or prematurely responding, it creates an environment where the other feels heard, respected, and emotionally validated. This sense of validation significantly reduces defensiveness and fosters openness, allowing both partners to engage more honestly and empathetically (Afolabi, 2024).

Afolabi (2024) and Okesina (2022) further assert that when couples focus on understanding what is being said, rather than formulating counterarguments or preparing rebuttals, they are more likely to uncover the root causes of their disputes, rather than merely reacting to surface-level triggers. This shift in focus reduces miscommunication, diffuses emotional intensity, and facilitates more grounded, constructive dialogue. Active and empathetic listening can also preempt the escalation of conflict by neutralising anger and frustration before they become unmanageable. In essence, attentive listening creates a psychologically safe environment in which both partners can express their vulnerabilities without fear of blame or dismissal. This not only strengthens emotional intimacy but also promotes more stable and enduring relationships. Similarly, structured communication has been shown to significantly improve post-conflict satisfaction among couples. Unlike spontaneous or emotionally reactive exchanges, structured communication is intentional and organised, providing a clear framework for dialogue. It encourages both partners to take turns, listen actively, and express themselves using non-confrontational language. Techniques such as using "I" statements (e.g., "I feel hurt when..."), turn-taking, paraphrasing, and setting mutually agreed ground rules are central to this approach (Szczenma, 2024). These tools help keep discussions focused on the issue at hand, rather than descending into blame, personal attacks, or emotional withdrawal.

Structured communication promotes clarity, respect, and emotional safety, which are critical components of successful conflict resolution. Oliveira (2023) highlights that when couples use structured dialogue, they are less likely to engage in destructive behaviours such as yelling, name-calling, stonewalling, or shutting down emotionally, patterns that can severely damage relational trust. Instead, structured dialogue fosters empathy, mutual accountability, and cooperation, ultimately enabling couples to arrive at solutions that are both equitable and emotionally

satisfying. When applied consistently, this method strengthens communication patterns and builds the emotional resilience needed to navigate future conflicts with confidence and maturity.

Structured communication also fosters reflection and emotional regulation, enabling couples to remain calm, respectful, and composed even when navigating disagreements. By slowing down emotionally charged exchanges, it allows partners to process their feelings, consider the impact of

their words, and approach problem-solving more constructively. This method not only diffuses immediate tension but also builds essential interpersonal skills that enhance a couple's capacity to manage future conflicts with greater maturity and empathy (Girma, 2024). When marital disputes are resolved through structured communication, both partners are more likely to feel emotionally validated, respected, and heard, factors that are strongly linked to increased relational satisfaction and long-term stability. Moreover, such dialogue lays a foundation of trust and emotional safety, which helps couples face future challenges with a unified and cooperative spirit (Afolabi, 2024; Okesina, 2022). Building on this foundation, the present study investigates the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts among Nigerian couples, with specific attention to those residing in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Statement of the Problem

Marriage in Nigeria is increasingly undermined by a persistent communication crisis, what often begins as minor misunderstandings escalates into destructive disputes, emotional disconnection, and, in some cases, domestic violence or divorce. Empirical studies confirm that ineffective communication significantly predicts marital conflict. Elom, Ilo, and Ojide (2023) found that among married civil servants in Ebonyi State, couples with poor communication reported significantly higher conflict levels (explaining approximately 7% of variance in marital discord). Similarly, Onyekuru (2022) observed a strong positive correlation between communication strategies and marital stability among couples in Southeast Nigeria. Despite highlighting the centrality of communication, these studies do not explore the *mechanisms* of conflict resolution, such as active listening, structured dialogue, and emotional validation, that can de-escalate conflict and nurture marital resilience. Adegboyega (2021), examining married adults in Ilorin, Kwara State, reported that effective communication significantly reduces misunderstandings and enhances respect, while poor communication leads to perceptual distortions. However, this research did not delve into how specific dialogue techniques could be systematically integrated into counselling interventions. Another study by Ajibola, Tiamiyu, and Abidoeye (2024) revealed that assertive and passive communication styles correlate positively with marital stability in Kwara State, yet it did not examine structured or culturally moderated dialogue strategies. Some gaps revealed from these studies include a lack of empirical insight into how structured dialogue such as turn-taking, emotional validation, and guided listening, resolves conflict. To address these deficiencies, this study investigates the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts among Nigerian couples, with specific attention to those residing in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Research Question

1. What is the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts among couples in Irepodun L.G.A, Kwara State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts among couples in Irepodun L.G.A, Kwara State, Nigeria based on religion.
2. There is no significant difference in the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts among couples in Irepodun L.G.A, Kwara State, Nigeria based on length of years in marriage.
3. There is no significant difference in the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts among couples in Irepodun L.G.A, Kwara State, Nigeria based on ethnicity.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. The administrative headquarters is located in Omu-Aran, and the area spans approximately 3,435 square kilometers. The inhabitants are predominantly Yoruba, specifically speakers of the Igbomina dialect. This research focused on examining the role of dialogue as a social factor influencing varying levels of marital conflict resolution among couples in the region. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, as it is well-suited for perception-based studies. The study also adopted a quantitative approach to effectively capture and analyze data related to the research questions. The target population comprised individuals who are currently married or have been previously married and reside in one of the five major towns: Omu-Aran, Oko-Irese, Oro, Oke-Oningbin, and Ajase-Ipo. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling based on predetermined criteria: (1) the individual must be married or formerly married, and (2) they must reside in one of the specified towns. Data collection was carried out using a structured questionnaire titled “Marital Conflict and Dialogue Resolution Questionnaire” (MCDRQ) with 15 items. The instrument was subjected to validation. Its reliability was established using the test-retest method, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.84. A total sampling size of 400 respondents was selected using a structured questionnaire. 80 respondents were drawn from each of the 5 town. A total of 377 questionnaire forms were returned, but 364 were completed and deemed valid for analysis. Descriptive statistics, such as percentages, mean scores, rank order were used to address the research question, while the hypotheses were tested using t-test and ANOVA. All at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: *Respondents Demographic Data*

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Religion		
African Traditional Religion	18	4.9

Christianity	131	36.0
Islam	215	59.1
Total	364	100.0
Length of Years in Marriage		
20 years and below	211	58.0%
21 years and above	153	42.0%
Total	364	100.0
Ethnicity		
Hausa	42	11.6
Igbo	69	18.9
Yoruba	253	69.5
Total	364	100.0

As presented in Table 1, based on religion, 18 (4.9%) of the respondents are of the African Traditional Religion, 131 (36%) of the respondents are Christians, while 215 (59.1%) of the respondents are Muslims. Based on length of years in marriage, 211 (58%) of the respondents have spent between 20 years and below in their marriages, while 153 (42%) of the respondents have spent between 21 years and above in their marriages. Based on ethnicity, 42 (11.6%) of the respondents are from the Hausa ethnic group, 69 (18.9%) of the respondents are from the Igbo ethnic group, while 253 (69.5%) of the respondents are from the Yoruba ethnic group. This thus indicates that majority of the respondents are Muslims, have spent between 20 years and below in their marriages and are from the Yoruba ethnic group.

Research Question One: What is the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts among couples in Irepodun L.G.A, Kwara State, Nigeria?

Table 2: *Response on the Role of Dialogue in Resolving Marital Conflicts among Couples in Irepodun L.G.A, Kwara State, Nigeria*

Item No	Statement of Items	Mean	SD	Rank
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4	Dialogue helps couples express their concerns clearly during conflict.	3.32	0.89	1 st
6	Through dialogue, couples are able to avoid misunderstandings when resolving issues.	3.30	0.91	2 nd
9	Engaging in dialogue helps couples communicate without anger or aggression.	3.29	0.93	3 rd
11	Dialogue allows couples to feel heard and respected.	3.26	0.95	4 th
14	Structured dialogue helps couples prevent escalation of minor disagreements.	3.21	0.97	5 th
3	When couples use dialogue, they resolve differences more quickly.	3.20	0.99	6 th
1	Dialogue helps couples focus on solutions instead of blaming each other.	3.19	1.01	7 th
5	Constructive dialogue enables couples to compromise more easily.	3.18	1.02	8 th
12	When couples talk through issues, the likelihood of repeating the same conflict is reduced.	3.13	1.04	9 th
15	Dialogue contributes to lasting resolutions to marital disputes.	3.10	1.06	10 th
2	Dialogue taught by the counsellor improves how couples resolve conflicts.	3.07	1.08	11 th
7	Seeking professional help for dialogue has helped couples avoid separation.	2.84	1.12	12 th
10	Dialogue has strengthened the trust in my marital relationship.	2.61	1.15	13 th
13	Consistent use of dialogue has improved couples' marital satisfaction.	2.54	1.17	14 th
8	I believe dialogue is essential to sustaining a stable marriage	2.48	1.19	15 th

Table 2 indicates the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts among couples in Irepodun L.G.A, Kwara State, Nigeria. Ranked 1st, 2nd, and 3rd with mean scores of 3.32, 3.30 and 3.29 are Items 4, 6 and 9. These Items states that “Dialogue helps couples express their concerns clearly during conflict; Through dialogue, couples are able to avoid misunderstandings when resolving issues; and Engaging in dialogue helps couples communicate without anger or aggression”. Ranked 15th with a mean score of 2.48 is Item 8 which states that “I believe dialogue is essential to sustaining a stable marriage”. Since fourteen out of the fifteen items have mean scores that is above the mid mean score of 2.50, then it can be said that the

respondents attested to the generated items and that the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts among couples in Irepodun L.G.A, Kwara State, Nigeria is high.

Hypotheses Testing

Three null hypotheses were generated and as well tested for this study. The hypotheses were tested using t-test and ANOVA statistical methods at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts among couples in Irepodun L.G.A, Kwara State, Nigeria based on religion

Table 3: *Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Showing the Role of Dialogue in Resolving Marital Conflicts among Couples in Irepodun L.G.A, Kwara State, Nigeria Based on Religion*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	p-value
Between Groups	577.891	2	288.94	1.92	3.00	0.10
Within Groups	54069.550	361	149.77			
Total	54647.441	363				

Table 3 shows that the calculated f-ratio of 1.92, a critical f- ratio of 3.00 and a p-value of 0.10. Since the calculated p-value of 0.10 is greater than the alpha p-value at 0.05, the hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts among couples in Irepodun L.G.A, Kwara State, Nigeria based on religion based on religion.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts among couples in Irepodun L.G.A, Kwara State, Nigeria based on length of years in marriage

Table 4: *The t-test showing the Role of Dialogue in Resolving Marital Conflicts among Couples in Irepodun L.G.A, Kwara State, Nigeria Based on Length of Years in Marriage*

Length of Years in Marriage	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
20 years and below	211	38.12	8.65	362	1.02	1.96	0.08
21 years and above	153	37.46	6.43				

Table 4 shows a calculated t-value of 1.02, a critical t-value of 1.96 and a p-value of 0.08. The p-value calculated is higher than the alpha level at 0.05 then the hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference in the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts among

couples in Irepodun L.G.A, Kwara State, Nigeria based on religion based on length of years in marriage.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the role of dialogue in resolving marital

conflicts among couples in Irepodun L.G.A, Kwara State, Nigeria based on ethnicity

Table 5: *Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Showing Role of Dialogue in Resolving Marital Conflicts among Couples in Irepodun L.G.A, Kwara State, Nigeria Based on Ethnicity*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	p-value
Between Groups	603.442	2	301.72	2.01	3.00	0.07
Within Groups	54043.999	361	149.70			
Total	54647.441	363				

Table 5 shows that the calculated f-ratio of 2.01, a critical f- ratio of 3.00 and a p-value of 0.07. Since the calculated p-value of 0.07 is greater than the alpha p-value at 0.05, the hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts among couples in Irepodun L.G.A, Kwara State, Nigeria based on religion based on ethnicity.

Discussion of the Findings

The finding that the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts among couples in Irepodun L.G.A is high aligns with a growing body of empirical evidence. Adegboyega (2021) found that effective spousal communication reduces misunderstandings and promotes conflict resolution among couples in Ilorin, Kwara State. Onyekuru (2022) also reported that communication strategies are positively associated with marital satisfaction among couples in Southeast Nigeria. Similarly, Awosan, Iroye, and Okolo (2023) concluded that dialogue fosters cooperation and emotional bonding in Nigerian marriages. These findings suggest that dialogue serves not only as a method for managing conflict but also as a foundation for nurturing mutual respect and understanding between partners. The consistency of these findings across different contexts underscores dialogue as a universally effective tool in marital conflict resolution, and validates its significance in the cultural setting of Irepodun L.G.A, where traditional values often emphasize reconciliation and communal harmony.

The finding that there is no significant difference in the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts among couples in Irepodun L.G.A based on religion suggests that dialogue is a universally applicable tool for marital conflict resolution, regardless of religious affiliation. This aligns with the findings of Elom, Ilo, and Ojide (2023) who noted that the effectiveness of spousal communication in reducing marital conflict was not influenced by religious background but rather

by the quality of interaction and willingness to engage in open dialogue. In addition, Elegbede et al. (2024) emphasized that religious values often support the use of peaceful dialogue and reconciliation in marriage, but the specific religion practiced did not significantly alter how

dialogue contributed to resolving disputes. This finding reinforces the idea that effective communication, rather than religious identity, is the critical factor in addressing marital tensions. Therefore, dialogue remains a culturally and religiously neutral strategy that can be adopted by counsellors and religious leaders across all faiths to promote marital harmony and reduce the risk of conflict escalation.

The finding that there is no significant difference in the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts based on length of years in marriage suggests that dialogue remains a consistently effective conflict resolution tool across all stages of marital life, whether newly married or long-term couples. This supports the study by Adeoye and Okonkwo (2020), who found that couples of varying marital durations benefited equally from structured communication practices in resolving conflicts. Similarly, Olorunfemi and Ajayi (2021) reported that the effectiveness of dialogue in marital relationships is not dependent on how long the couple has been together, but rather on their willingness to engage in open and respectful communication. Eze and Nwankwo (2019) observed that long-married couples who practice dialogue continue to report higher satisfaction and fewer recurring conflicts, much like newlyweds who apply similar communication strategies. The uniform effectiveness of dialogue across different marriage durations suggests that counselling interventions should not be limited to early marriage phases. Rather, dialogue-based approaches should be continuously reinforced throughout the marital journey, as the need for mutual understanding and conflict resolution persists regardless of the number of years spent in the union.

The finding that there is no significant difference in the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts based on ethnicity indicates that dialogue is a universally effective strategy for conflict resolution across ethnic groups in Irepodun L.G.A. This suggests that the principles of respectful listening, mutual understanding, and open communication transcend cultural and ethnic boundaries when it comes to addressing marital disputes. This aligns with the findings of Ibrahim and Lawal (2020), who noted that despite cultural variations, the effectiveness of dialogue in marital conflict resolution remained constant among Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo couples in a cross-regional study. Similarly, Okafor and Obasi (2018) found that dialogue was positively correlated with marital harmony among ethnically diverse couples in southeastern Nigeria. Therefore, this finding underscores the importance of promoting dialogue-focused interventions in multicultural communities like Irepodun L.G.A, where diverse ethnic groups coexist, and shared values of communication can foster stronger marital bonds.

Conclusion

This study examined the role of dialogue in resolving marital conflicts among couples in

Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that dialogue plays a crucial and highly effective role in promoting mutual understanding, de-escalating tension, and fostering emotional reconciliation among married partners. Dialogue, especially when

practiced through active listening, structured expression, and mutual respect, enables couples to address not only the surface-level issues of conflict but also the deeper emotional and psychological needs that often underlie disagreements. The study also found no significant difference in the perceived effectiveness of dialogue in conflict resolution based on religion, length of years in marriage, or ethnicity. This suggests that dialogue as a conflict resolution strategy is universally valuable and culturally adaptable across diverse marital contexts in Irepodun L.G.A. Regardless of background or belief system, couples who embrace dialogue are better equipped to manage conflict in a constructive and emotionally safe manner.

Recommendations

1. Marriage counsellors, religious leaders, and family life educators should intensify efforts to integrate structured dialogue techniques, such as active listening, emotional validation, and constructive expression, into marital counselling programs and community workshops.
2. Given that dialogue transcends religious differences, all the religious organizations in the area should collaborate to promote inter-faith marital counselling approaches that will incorporate dialogue as a central conflict resolution tool.
3. Marriage enrichment programs should be made accessible to both newlyweds and long-married couples alike, as all marital stages can benefit from dialogue-based conflict resolution.
4. Since dialogue is effective across different ethnic groups, the Government and non-governmental organisations should design multilingual and culturally sensitive counselling materials that promote dialogue and are easily accessible to the diverse ethnic populations.

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