

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN FAMILY CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND COUNSELLING

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a foundational element in effective family conflict resolution and counselling practices. This paper explored how key components of emotional intelligence such as; self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills contribute to improved interpersonal dynamics, collaborative problem-solving and therapeutic outcomes in family conflict resolution and counselling. Based on recent findings using secondary data such as books and journal, the paper highlighted the predictive role of EI in adopting constructive family conflict styles and building strong counsellor-client alliances. It also examined the integration of EI into professional training and organizational development, while acknowledging cultural and methodological challenges. The position advanced in this paper supports the intentional development of emotional intelligence competencies in both conflict mediators and counselling professionals as a strategic means to enhance relational effectiveness and emotional well-being. Professional counselors, family mediators, social workers and the likes are therefore advised to be intentional in encouraging and helping married couples and the intending couples to imbibe emotional intelligence.

Keywords: Conflict resolution, Counselling, Emotional intelligence, and Family

Introduction

The inevitability of conflict in relationships, marriages and family life is a well-known fact among the professionals, though other people who are not professionals may not be aware of this. It is therefore not surprising that the conflict level is seriously growing in marriage and family institution without a commensurate growth in the skill for conflict resolution among the people; both the singles and the married. This is a major problem that requires an urgent attention and the solution to the problem is a professional counseling with focus on emotional intelligent.

Emotional intelligence (EI) encases the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively. It is deemed to play a pivotal role in human interactions, especially in conflictual situations and counselling settings. Emotional intelligence as envisaged by the researcher has bearing on communication, empathy, and conflict resolution outcomes. This paper therefore emphasized that cultivating EI can enhance both the process and outcomes of conflict

mediation and counselling interventions. (Ortese. 2025; Iwundu. 2020). The paper also discussed various related ideas such as emotional intelligence in family conflict resolution, emotional intelligence in counseling practice, challenges and considerations of emotional intelligence and it finally raised some suggestions for the stakeholders.

Conceptual Clarification

Family Conflict

Ortese (2025) conceived family as a unit of society comprising of husband, wife, children (biological or adopted) living together. It is a basic unit in society traditionally consisting of two parents rearing their children. Family subsumes a group of individuals of common ancestry, living under one roof usually under one head or household. It is the generic name for a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption constituting a single household. Hence one can adduce that the family is any group of people related by marriage, blood, adoption or any other relationship in which people are committed to one another. In this paper, family is conceived as a bio-social group, a network of person intimately held together by a bond of social and kinship or blood relationships. Despite all these, the family cannot still exist without some level of conflict as far as the interpersonal differences do exist. Conflict is a clash or crash of interest. It is deemed to be an intrinsic and inevitable aspect of family life. Looking at it from the perspective of the family, Ordu (2022) posited that for the fact that the husband and the wife are not coming from the same physical, spiritual, economic, social and several other backgrounds, they are naturally going to experience some levels of conflict in their matrimonial journey. The idea of having different personality make up is another potent reason why they should expect some levels of conflict in their marriages. Now that we are focusing on the family, which now includes the children and other individuals that are part of the family as described earlier, there will definitely be more issues resulting to conflict among them. In this paper, conflict is conceived as any controversy or struggle over values, goals, status, roles, power or resources in which each conflicting party seeks to achieve the larger share, frequently, at the expense of others.

Conflict Resolution

This refers to the strategy or approach used to settle a conflict via the principles of recognition of the existence of a conflict among parties and engaging in open and sincere discussion of how best to address the root of the conflict as to proffer lasting solutions to it. Family conflict resolution is a critical aspect of maintaining healthy relationships within the family system. It involves processes, strategies, and interactions through which family members manage disagreements, restore harmony, and strengthen relational bonds. Ordu (2022). Family conflict on the other hand refers to disagreements, tensions, or struggles among family members arising from differences in values, needs, expectations, roles, or communication patterns. Ortese (2025). With this it is very clear that conflict on its own is inevitable in families because they are systems composed of individuals with diverse personalities and goals but the way in which the

conflicts are addressed is critical to family harmony or disharmony. Constructive conflict resolution can improve intimacy and understanding, while unresolved conflict can lead to disharmony, emotional distress and family dysfunction. Anjana and Mushfirah (20240).

Several conflict resolution styles have been identified by researchers at various times, some of which are:

- **Constructive style:** which involves open communication and problem-solving
- **Avoidant style:** which has to do with ignoring or withdrawing from conflict
- **Aggressive style:** this is characterized by dominance, hostility of an individual in the family system over another
- **Compromising style:** which has to do with mutual concessions.

Among these styles, constructive styles are positively associated with marital satisfaction and adjustment, while avoidance and aggression predict poorer outcomes Ortese. (2025)

Counselling

Counselling represents the application of mental health, psychological or human development principles through cognitive, affective, behavioral or systematic intervention strategies, that address wellness, personal growth, or career development as well as pathology. Iwundu (2020) advanced that counselling focuses on helping persons resolve problems or role issues related to work or school or family matters. To be concise, counselling is a healthy relationship between a counsellor and his counselee, using biblical and relevant psychological resources in solving spiritual psychological and social problems and meeting other ethical needs of the counselee. In this paper, counselling is conceived as a process which takes place in a one – to – one relationship between an individual troubled by problems with which he cannot cope alone, and a professional worker whose training and experience have qualified him to help others reach solutions to various types of personal difficulties.

Emotional Intelligence in Family Conflict Resolution

Numerous studies have demonstrated that individuals with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to employ positive conflict resolution styles, such as collaboration and compromise (Anjum et al., 2025; Abdelrahman et al., 2023). In contrast, those with low EI tend to resort to avoidance or competition.

Among nursing professionals, higher levels of EI have been linked to more effective conflict resolution strategies (Aseery, 2023). However, cultural and organizational contexts may influence how EI manifests in these interactions.

It is worthy of note that most emotionally intelligent individuals are better able to regulate their emotions during conflict, de-escalating tension and promoting mutual understanding. It is believed that empathy helps such persons to grasp others' perspectives, while strong communication skills foster clearer expression and better negotiation (Dem Legal Eagle, 2024).

In workplace settings, emotionally intelligent leaders and mediators are more likely to reduce relational conflict and improve team dynamics (Bhusan & Jain, 2024). For instance, a case study by the International Institute for Conflict Resolution (2024) found that mediators trained in EI achieved a 75% resolution rate, compared to 50% among those without EI training (Psico-Smart, 2024).

Emotional Intelligence in Counselling Practice

Iwundu (2020) opined that counsellor with high EI are more attuned to their clients' emotional states and better equipped to manage the emotional demands of therapy. This can enhance therapeutic alliances, increase client trust, and lead to more effective outcomes (Ordu, 2022). Empathy, a core component of EI, is particularly instrumental to understanding client experiences and emotions. Liang et al. (2025) found that university students with high EI reported stronger conflict resolution abilities and life satisfaction. These effects were mediated by their sense of belonging; an emotional state nurtured by emotionally intelligent counsellors and peer support systems.

Counsellor education programs are therefore encouraged to integrate EI training through role-play, reflective supervision, and emotional self-assessments (e.g., EQ-i, MSCEIT). These tools can help develop emotional self-awareness, regulation, and empathy in counsellors-in-training (Ordu, 2022).

Conflict resolution professionals and mediators can benefit from EI training that focuses on empathy-building exercises, self-regulation strategies, and active listening (Pollack Peacebuilding Systems, 2024). EI competencies foster de-escalation and collaborative problem-solving in emotionally charged situations. Challenges and Considerations of Emotional Intelligence

It is worthy to note here that despite its benefits of Emotional Intelligence, its role in conflict and counselling is not universally supported. For example, Aseery (2023) reported no significant correlation between EI and conflict strategies in certain contexts, suggesting the influence of cultural, gender, or professional differences. Moreover, many existing studies rely on self-reported measures, which may be subject to bias. Future research should adopt mixed methods, longitudinal designs, and cross-cultural validation to establish stronger causal links and generalizability (Anjum et al., 2025; Abdelrahman et al., 2023).

Conclusion

Emotional intelligence is a powerful facilitator of interpersonal harmony, particularly in conflict resolution and counselling contexts. The development and application of EI skills enable professionals to navigate emotionally intense situations with composure, empathy, and strategic insight. By integrating EI training into educational, counselling, and organizational settings, practitioners can promote healthier relationships, reduce conflict, and improve well-being.

Stakeholders in educational institutions should be proactive enough by infusing emotional intelligence into their programs with the aim of building better individuals and better society.

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