

**COUNSELLING SKILLS FOR HARMONIOUS LIVING AMONG
SEMI-LITERATE COUPLES IN OWERRI WEST LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AREA, IMO STATE:
IMPLICATIONS FOR MARITAL STABILITY**

Christy Ngozi Nwaoba (Ph.D)

&

Sike Queen

Department of Psychology And Counselling,
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture,
Umudike, Umuahia Abia State.

Abstract

This study sought to find out counselling skills for the harmonious living among semi-literate couples in Owerri West Local Government Area of Imo State, using a descriptive survey design. Specifically, the study was interested in couples' perception of communication, social, management and sex-related skills, as being capable of creating harmonious relationships among married couples. Four research questions and one null hypothesis guided the study. 120 couples (240) respondents) selected in the study area, using purposive sampling technique, participated in the study. A 32-item questionnaire titled 'Harmonious Living Questionnaire' developed by the researchers, and duly validated with a reliability value of 0.87, using the test re-test method, was the instrument used to collect data for the study. Mean, Standard Deviation, Grand mean, rank order and t-test statistical tools were used to answer the research questions and test the hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance respectively. The findings were that the skills as ranked-social skills (1st), sex-related skills (2nd), communication skills (3rd) and management skills (4th), help in creating harmonious living relationships among married couples. There was no significant gender difference in the perception of the couples on the skills that create and enhance harmonious living. The conclusion was that counselling skills that enhance marital stability also create harmonious living among married couples. Discussion and recommendations were made. One of the recommendations was that professional counselling Associations should, in their annual conferences, train counsellors more on relationship skills that create harmonious living during skills training sessions, to enhance the counsellors' expertise in this direction.

Keywords: Marriage, couples, harmonious living, counselling skills.

Introduction

Marriage is a legal union of a man and a woman as husband and wife. Marriage is a socially recognised and approved union between two adults who commit to one another with the expectations of a lasting intimate relationship. It usually involves some kind of agreement either

written or specified by tradition that defines the rights and obligations of the partners to each other for harmonious living. Undiyandeye and Ugah (2009) asserted that marriage, even as old as mankind, involves the co-habitation of heterosexual individuals who engage in a socially approved sexual relationship, economic co-operation, having children and sharing a common residence. In other words, marriage at any point in time is a delicate institution in which a man and a woman agree to live together as husband and wife, raising children and sharing love.

Marriage is a union which is intended to make a couple concerned an indivisible entity. Odoemenam, Chima and Igboanusi (2004) likened marriage to a new house that sparkles with fresh smiles, lots of surprises, romance, discoveries and beliefs based on love, which makes each day exciting to both partners. But the authors further related that experiences show that not long after marriage establishment that both partners become major sources of each other's problems. This is just like the theory of social conflict by Simmel (1981) in which the study based states that human beings have a prior fighting instinct, meaning that human beings have a natural tendency for hostility toward one another. The theory views marital problems as means through which couples fulfil their life purposes in marriage. This indicates that marriage, no matter how sweet it appears *ab initio*, is not only delicate but also difficult because of problems that are bound to arise within a few years of its enactment and such problems could lead to sudden separation of the indivisible entity (husband and wife), dissolution or divorce if they are not managed effectively, by the couples themselves.

Marriage seems to be the human institution that young men and women yearn to enter into, while those in it struggle hard to quit. But it also bestows a lot of prestige on people. For instance, in the Igbo culture, until one is married, especially among the male folk, one is not recognised as being a responsible mature adult. Thus, some people rush into marriage to acquire prestige, happiness and satisfaction. Surprisingly, within some years, problems erupt and only those who have the relevant skills can manage to maintain a successful marriage. This underscores the saying that marriage is for men and not for boys. Moreover, it is a union between individuals from different cultures or family backgrounds, thus bringing into marriage different beliefs, ideas and values as a result of different exposure and experiences which individual couple brings into marriage relationship that could turn marriage unsuccessful and dissatisfying to both or either of the marriage partners.

Some problems that turn marriages unsuccessful have been identified. Better Health Channel (2013) identified the following problems: identity problem, ignorance, trust, immaturity on the part of the couples, faulty communication and influence of wrong models. Others include couples not being flexible in playing roles that are appropriate for problem-solving, such as a husband playing the role of a wife and a wife playing the role of the husband (Redmond, 2009) when this is the case, couples may find themselves in an impasse. Others include an absence of positive communication, unfulfilled expectations and loyalties in marriage, marrying the wrong persons for the wrong reasons and inability to develop effective relationship skills that help to maintain a harmonious living for stable marriage among married couples (Onwuasanya & Okeke, 2009).

Couples are consenting adults who possibly were brought up in distinctly different backgrounds to come and share the rest of their lives as husbands and wives, living under one roof physically and emotionally. A couple as a husband and his wife are expected to be sharing their goals, aspirations, dreams and desires. Kolucki and Lemish (2011) defined a couple as a man and woman who have consented to live a life of vocation and sharing to promote their mutual growth and welfare as

partners in the journeys through life. This means that a couple is made up of a husband and his wife and are meant to be together for life or until the death of one, irrespective of their level of education, number or sex of children, wealth and others.

In the context of this study, a husband and wife who attended higher institutions before, within or after their marriage are regarded as a literate couple, while those couples who neither of them completed secondary education successfully, but attempted primary and secondary schools, are considered as semi-literate couples. In any case, a marital relationship is meant to be lifelong and husbands and their wives are expected to have harmonious living.

The word harmonious means friendly, peaceful and without any observable disagreement. Harmonious living is a continuous living together of groups of people or individuals in a calm and quiet environment that is free from war, disorder and misrepresentation of ideas. In marriage, harmonious living refers to the living together of a husband and his wife, where children are never exposed to frequent disagreement between parents and where there is peace. Harmonious living is the same thing as a harmonious relationship, where marriage partners arrange their living together in ways that are structured and harmonised.

It is a kind of relationship in which partners seem to have decided to live together for the rest of their lives, producing a successful, satisfying and happy husband, wife and children. Muazu Abbas, Afuguari and Makarfi (2010) called harmonious living successful marriage in which husband, wife and children are happy to be members of a nuclear family without wishing to quit. Jegede (1991) defined harmonious living as a kind of relationship between couples in which the rate of mutual exchange is higher with the rate of mutually exchange punishment being low. A harmonious relationship between a husband and his wife occurs in a marriage that is relatively free from conflict; husband and wife enjoy their leisure together and happily engage in economic co-operation (Orelu, 2015).

The opposite of harmonious living is in a marriage in which there is the presence of nagging, inertia, aggressive joking, open confrontation or angry outburst, jealousy and mistrust leading to frequent fighting that could escalate to separation, dissolution or even divorce. And divorces are significantly distressing events in the life of individuals due to their associated psychological consequences. Again, over the years, divorce has affected the growth and development of many Nigerian homes and children. Several factors could be responsible for the ugly situation of marital conflicts that in turn lead to divorce. There is, therefore the need to identify how to develop skills for harmonious living among married couples, so that they could maintain stable marriages.

Sustainable marriage is one in which one partner provides the other with emotional needs, company, sexual fulfilment, and financial assistance. George (2012) in describing harmonious living among couples asserted that harmonious living is often measured in terms of the couples' happiness and satisfaction, so that in a marriage where there is happiness or reciprocal exchange of positive communication, there is a harmonious relationship between the couple concerned. This is in line with the marital communication theory by Baleson (2009) on which this study is also based. This theory has it that inappropriate communication is essentially the problem of troubled marriages. Communication is a vital factor in marriage. Effective communication is the basis for a good relationship between the couple. Appropriate or positive communication refers to the reciprocal

exchange of information or mutual transfer of thoughts and feelings from one spouse to the other. This includes the use of words, responses, greetings, smiles, handshakes, deep emotional touch, body language, and appreciation of the other partners' weaknesses among others. Other relationship skills that maintain a stable marriage, according to Onwuasanya & Okeke (2009) include management, social and sex-related skills.

Management skills involve expert knowledge to control or deal tactfully with marriage issues that lead to disharmonious co-habitation. Examples are issues about family income, accounts, budget, expenditure etc. Couples are supposed to plan their budget together according to their income, otherwise they misplace their priorities and that could result in quarrels. Some people argue that a husband and his wife should keep one bank account (Owen, in Nwaoba, 2017), while others seem to say that if you must live long with your spouse, keep a separate account. But Mullings (1996) stated in his book that effective money management is a *sine qua non* for happy living.

Social skills as interpersonal relationship skills involve an effective control of emotion, such as the ability to understand emotion, perceive emotion, utilise and evaluate emotion. These culminate into emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify and manage your emotion and the emotion of others to achieve intended goals. Recognising and accepting faults, apologising when one offends the other, showing being pleased with another's actions, unsatisfied expectations, trusting, and dealing with outside interferences in marriage, such as interference by in-laws and neighbours are all related to social skills that play vital roles in harmonious co-habitation of couples.

Sex-related skills involve effective ways of handling sexual issues such as lack of interest in sex, excessive sexual demand, sexual unfaithfulness, unsatisfactory sexual acts, negative responses to sexual approaches, infertility, impotence, sex of babies and others. Edward and Shirley (2011) posited that sexual deprivation increases disharmony in marriage relationships. Bassey (2000) earlier asserted that when a spouse does not get sufficient attention from his/her partner, he/she tends to indulge in extramarital relationships which could bring chaos to a marriage relationship. Thus, sex-related skills play very important roles in bringing marriage to a high satisfaction level for married couples. This study was interested in finding out the perception of semi-literate couples in Owerri-West Local Government Area of Imo State on communication, management, and social and sex-related skills in creating and enhancing harmonious living among them.

Signs of harmonious living can hardly be observed among semi-literate couples in most families in Owerri West. Experiences have shown that no day passes by without a husband or a wife openly complaining of unhappiness and dissatisfaction with spouse. Husbands and wives widely profess a lack of love, inappropriate communication and mistrust between them. While cursing each other and fighting over minor issues, they openly seek consultation from among kinsmen for intervention strategies to be proffered. There is a need, therefore, for these couples to develop relationship skills that could help them co-habit in harmony and security. Harmonious living is a concept in marriage counselling which offers professional help for unhappy marriages. And counselling in this wise is not concerned with giving advice to people but helping couples to develop relevant skills for eliminating sources of unhappiness and loss of efficiency. The goals of such counselling include helping couples to stop the idea of quarrelling over petty issues so that they can cope with more complex interactions and prevent the marriage from shifting to management and later from managing to damage (Dunkoye, Bukoye & Rasaer, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Marriage from the onset is a legal union in which married couples cohabit in harmony and security-enjoying their leisure together, sharing love, happily being a source of emotional and economic support, companionship, sexual gratification and most significantly having agreement on major issues in their marriage. But experiences show that most couples especially semi-literate ones now live under the same roof but are physically and emotionally apart due to problems. A couple's ability to control their marriage problems by themselves depends on their acquisition of marriage relationship skills that enhance marital stability by creating harmonious living among couples; such as management, communication, and social and sex-related skills. And for the effective development of the skills in couples, it is necessary that the couple's perception of how the skills could create or enhance a harmonious relationship be investigated. Hence, the need for this study.

Purpose of the study

The major purpose of this study was to find out couples' perceptions of relationship skills that create and enhance harmonious living. Specifically, the objectives are to:

1. find out the couples' perception of communication skills that create harmonious living among married couples.
2. ascertain the couples' perception of management skills that enhance harmonious living.
3. determine the couples' perception of the social skills that enhance harmonious living.
4. find out the couples' perception of the sex-related skills that create harmonious living among married couples.

Research Questions

1. What is the couples' perception of communication skills that create harmonious livingfi
2. What is the couples' perception of management skills that enhance harmonious livingfi
3. What is the couples' perception of the social skills that enhance harmonious livingfi
4. What is the couples' perception of the sex-related skills that create harmonious living among married couplesfi

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of husbands and wives on their perception of relationship skills that create harmonious living among married couples.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. A descriptive survey method entails the collection of data to test a hypothesis or to answer research questions pertaining to the current status of the subject of the study (Akinduire, 2009).

The study took place in Owerri West L.G.A. of Imo State. Owerri West is made up of three geopolitical wards, namely; Arah, Umunwoha and Ochie Ward autonomous communities. Six towns consisting of two from each of the three geopolitical wards, were involved in the study.

120 semi-literate couples (240 respondents) selected from the six towns, using the purposive sampling technique participated in the study as the sample size. Chairpersons of the development unions of the six towns assisted in determining the subjects of the study (those who had been having problems with their spouses).

A 32-item questionnaire titled 'Harmonious Living Questionnaire' (HLQ) modelled after Onwuasanya and Okeke's Marital stability Questionnaire was the instrument used to collect data for the study. HLQ has 2 sections. Section A contains the demographic data of the respondents such as gender, level of education, socio-economic status etc. Section B has 4 clusters – 1,2,3 and 4. Each cluster has 8 items on communication management, and social and sex-related skills respectively; according to the 4 research questions that guided the study. The items are thus 32 in number, designed on a 4-point rating scale of strongly Agree (SA), Agree(A), Disagree (D) and strongly Disagree (SD). The weights are 4,3,2 and 1 respectively.

The face and content validities of the instrument were established by giving the initial draft copies to 3 research experts in family counselling, psychology and Measurement and the Evaluation, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The experts viewed the items in terms of coverage, suitability, sentence construction etc, bearing in mind the specific objectives, research questions and hypothesis that guided the study. Their corrections were incorporated into the final copy of the instrument.

The reliability of the instrument was obtained using the test re-test method of statistical analysis. An index value of 0.87 at a 0.05 alpha level was obtained using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Procedure.

The researchers administered the instrument to the respondents (semi-literate couples) in their various shops, offices and market shades, at various times of visits. The couples who could read and understand responded to the items on their own, but those who could not understand were helped by the researchers to respond appropriately to the items. The collection was made on the spot. This helped to ensure a hundred per cent collection of instruments. 240 copies were administered and 240 were retrieved.

Mean (\bar{X}), Standard Deviation, cluster Grand Mean and rank order, were used in answering the research questions, while a t-test statistical tool was used to test the null hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance. Any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was regarded as agreement, while items with mean scores below 2.50 were considered as disagreement.

Cluster Grand mean scores were used to rank the clusters – (1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th), t-calculated value less than the t-critical value means H_0 is not rejected, while a t-calculated value greater than the t-critical value means H_0 is rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the couples' perception of communication skills that create harmonious livingfi

Table 1: Analysis of the Respondents' Perception of Communication Skills that Create Harmonious Living

S/N	Item description	Responses No. = 240							
		SA	A	D	SD	X	(SD)	Decision	
	Relating in the following ways with my spouse will create harmonious living among us.								
1.	My spouse talking to me with respect	150 (600)	56 (174)	20 (40)	14 (14)	3.57	0.2	Agree	
2.	Using non-abusive words on me	172 (488)	40 (120)	12 (24)	16 (16)	2.70	0.13	Agree	
3.	My spouse and I joke together	200 (800)	30 (90)	6 (12)	4 (4)	3.77	0.02	Agree	
4.	My spouse and I discuss family issues together	178 (712)	27 (71)	20 (40)	15 (15)	3.49	0.07	Agree	
5.	My spouse thanks me each time I do something good.	89 (356)	54 (162)	50 (100)	37 (37)	2.73	0.26	Agree	
6.	My spouse and I use smiles to appreciate each other's good effort	102 (404)	49 (147)	22 (50)	65 (65)	2.70	0.15	Agree	
7.	My spouse keeps malice to get a demand from me	16 (64)	12 (36)	72 (144)	140 (140)	1.60	0.04	Disagree	
8.	Using body language such as eyes, hands, lips etc to communicate our feelings to each other	99 (352)	47 (131)	24 (48)	70 (70)	2.51	0.11	Agree	
	Cluster Grand mean						2.89	0.19	

Data in Table 1 show that all the items, minus item 7, have their mean scores above the 2.50 cut-off point in a 4-point rating scale. Their x(SD) range between 0.13 and 0.4, indicating closeness in opinion, while item 7 was perceived negatively.

Research Question 2: What is the couples' perception of effective social skills that enhance harmonious living?

Table 2: Analysis of Respondents' Perception of Social Skills that Enhance the Harmonious Living

S/N	Item description	Responses No. = 240							
		SA	A	D	SD	X	X	Decision	Rank
	Relating with my spouse in the following ways will make my spouse and me live in harmony								
9.	Controlling my anger against my spouse in all cases	99 (396)	48 (144)	27 (54)	66 (66)	2.70	0.27	Agree	
10.	Understanding when my spouse is not happy	14 (456)	39 (117)	42 (84)	45 (45)	2.93	0.01	Agree	
11.	Apologising when my spouse picks offence	89 (356)	67 (201)	24 (48)	60 (60)	2.77	0.03	Agree	
12.	My spouse and I have trust in each other	136 (544)	32 (96)	51 (102)	21 (21)	3.18	0.04	Agree	
13.	Kissing my spouse to show appreciation	152 (608)	27 (71)	10 (20)	51 (51)	3.13	0.01	Agree	
14.	Not allowing other people (eg in-laws, neighbours etc) to interfere in our marriage	128 (512)	70 (210)	29 (58)	13 (13)	3.30	0.05	Agree	
15.	Supporting my spouses' efforts in disciplining our children.	190 (760)	30 (90)	20 (40)	1 (-)	3.71	0.17	Agree	
16.	My spouse welcomes my siblings into our house all the time	72 (288)	31 (93)	57 (114)	80 (80)	2.41	0.08	Agree	
	Cluster Grand mean					3.02	0.12		1 st

Data in Table 2 show that items 9 to 15 have their mean scores above the cut-off mean score of 2.50 on a 4-point rating scale with \bar{x} (SD) between 0.01 and 0.17. Item 16 has a mean score of 2.41, which is below the 2.50 cut-off means and a Standard Deviation (\bar{x}) of 0.08. The cluster Grand Mean is 32.13. But item 16 got a negative perception.

Research Question 3: What is the couples' perception of management skills that enhance harmonious livingfi

Table 3: Analysis of respondents' Perception of management Skills that enhance Harmonious living.

S/N	Item description	Responses No. = 240						Rank
	The following ways will improve my relationship with my spouse	SA	A	D	SD	X	x	Decision
17.	Having one bank account with my spouse	68 (272)	49 (147)	32 (96)	100 (100)	2.56	0.31	Agree
18.	My spouse and I kept separate accounts	54 (216)	36 (108)	12 (184)	48 (48)	2.32	0.25	Disagree
19.	Adopting a no-blame approach in difficult situations in our marriage	45 (180)	47 (141)	72 (144)	76 (76)	2.54	0.04	Agree
20.	Having our budget together	172 (688)	40 (120)	3 (6)	18 (18)	3.47	0.09	Agree
21.	My spouse and I are aware of each other's expenditure	109 (436)	52 (156)	24 (48)	55 (55)	2.90	0.07	Agree
22.	Buying quality goods according to our budget	202 (808)	22 (66)	18 (36)	- (-)	3.79	0.01	Agree
23.	Providing for the upkeep of the family equally	41 (164)	39 (117)	59 (118)	101 (101)	2.08	0.18	Disagree
24.	Providing for the education of children according to each other's income	147 (588)	66 (198)	1 (2)	26 (26)	3.39	0.06	Agree
	Cluster Grand mean					2.88	0.012	4th

\bar{x} = Standard Deviation

Data in Table 3 show that all the items, minus items 18 and 23, have mean scores above the 2.50 cut-off point on a 4-point rating scale, and a Standard Deviation (\bar{x}) between 0.04 and 0.31 indicates that the respondents are not far from each other. Items 18 and 23 have mean scores of 2.32 and 2.08 respectively, which are below the cut-off point of 2.50.

Research Question 4: What is the couples' perception of the sex-related skills in creating harmonious livingfi

Table 4: Analysis of the respondents' perception of sex-related skills in creating a Harmonious Living.

S/N	Item description	Responses No. = 240						Rank order
	The following measures will create harmony between my spouse and I	SA	A	D	SD	X	X	Decision
25.	My spouse has an interest in sex.	91 (364)	70 (210)	44 (88)	35 (35)	2.90	0.24	Agree
26.	My spouse being sexually faithful to me	203 (812)	20 (60)	10 (20)	7 (14)	3.78	0.05	Agree
27.	Experiencing satisfying sexual act with my spouse	200 (800)	32 (96)	8 (16)	- (-)	3.8	0.01	Agree

28.	My spouse responds to my sexual approaches all the time	78 (312)	57 (161)	40 (80)	55 (55)	2.53	0.29	Agree
29.	My spouse is not over jealous when I am with the opposite sex.	95 (380)	41 (23)	51 (102)	53 (53)	2.74	0.12	Agree
30.	My spouse has patience with my sexual weaknesses	100 (400)	39 (117)	78 (156)	23 (23)	2.73	0.41	Agree
31.	My spouse shows an understanding of the mechanism of our babies.	98 (392)	61 (168)	56 (112)	45 (45)	2.98	0.09	Agree
32.	My spouse showing committed interest in the treatment of our sexual problems	121 (484)	18 (54)	70 (140)	31 (31)	2.95	0.01	Agree
Cluster Grand mean						3.00	0.2	2 nd

Data in Table 4 indicate that all the items (25-32) have mean scores above the cut-off point of 2.50 on a 4-point rating scale. Their standard Deviation (χ) ranges from 0.01 to 0.41 showing closeness in the respondents' responses.

Hypothesis Testing

H_0 : There is no significant difference in the mean scores of the perception of husbands and wives on skills that create harmonious living among married couples.

Table 5: T-test Analysis of the Difference in the Mean Scores of the Husbands and Wives

Group	No	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Remark
Husbands	120	39.7	2.7	238	1.82	1.96	H ₀₁ not rejected
Wives	120	40.2	2.58				

Not significant at 0.05

Data in Table 5 has shown that the t-cal. value of 1.82 is less than the t-crit value of 1.96 at a 0.05 level of significance and 238 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

Discussion

The study found out that social skills were perceived as being capable of creating harmonious living among couples. This collaborates the assertion by Zamir, Hins and Zamir (2011) that the effective application of social skills enhances a healthy interpersonal relationship. It also agrees with Onwuasanya and Okeke (2009) who saw social skills as veritable instruments to marital stability hence social skills ranked 1st. However, the finding of the study that spouses allowing siblings into their house all the time are not being an effective social skill for a harmonious living, could be a way of disallowing interference in their marriages.

The study also found that sex-related skills enhance harmonious living among married couples. This is in line with Scholars such as Edward and Shiwley (2011) who posited that sexual deprivation increases disharmony in a marriage relationship. When a spouse does not get sufficient attention from his/her partner, he/she tends to indulge in extra-marital relationships which causes chaos in marriage. Therefore, effective display of good sex-related skills play an important role in bringing harmony between married couples. Hence, sex-related skills ranked 2nd among the relationship skills for harmonious living.

The finding of the study that positive communication skills create harmonious living among married couples supports Owen in Nwaoba (2017), who pointed out that positive interpersonal communication facilitates healthy interpersonal relationships. This finding of the study also authenticates the assumption of the marital communication theory (Basely in Per Tabitha, 2009) on which the study is based, because the theory has it that inappropriate communication is essentially the problem in troubled marriages; that effective communication is the basis for a good relationship. This could explain why, in this study, the respondents perceived keeping malice (Table 1, item 7) as not good for a harmonious relationship between married couples. Communication ranked 3rd among the relevant relationship skills in the perception of the respondents.

The finding of the study that effective use of management skills enhances harmonious living, agrees with Mullins (1996) who stated that effective management of money, (resources) is a *sine qua non* for happy living. It was also found that the respondents perceived husband and wife keeping separate accounts negatively. This could be because most of the respondents (semi-literate couples) seem to be jobless. The wives are almost full-time housewives who eat from hand to mouth on daily basis. It is, therefore, not impossible that they have little or no savings to keep together in the bank.

Again, the findings of the study under the management skills that the respondents negatively perceived spouses providing for their children's education equally is in line with Redmond (2009) who identified one of the causes of disharmony among couples as couples not being flexible in playing roles that are appropriate for problem-solving, such as the husband playing the role of a wife and the wife playing the role of a husband; and that when this happens, couples may find themselves in an impasse. Hence management skills ranked 4th among the relevant relationship skills positively perceived by respondents for the harmonious living among married couples.

Conclusion

Couples need to develop relevant relationship skills for harmonious living and the skills as perceived by the couples in this study include social skills, sex-related skills, positive communication skills and management skills. Effective application of these skills would lead them to have stable marriages as well.

Recommendations

From the study, these are recommended:

1. Married couples should avail themselves of the services of marriage counselling, so that they will learn how to cope with complex interactions in marriage.
2. Government should establish Marriage Counselling Units in all the 774 communities in Nigeria manned by professional family counsellors, so that couples who need to develop relevant relationship skills for harmonious living, will go there to obtain the services.
3. Professional counsellors are encouraged to proactively carry out advocacy on the importance of couples acquiring relevant relationship skills for harmonious living, leading to having marital stability in rural communities.
4. Professional counsellors' Associations, in their annual conferences, should train counsellors more on interpersonal relationship skills for the harmonious living among couples to enhance their expertise during their skills training sessions.

References

- Akinduire, I. D. (2009). *Research Method in Education*. Publication of University of Ado Ekiti. Better Health Channel (2013). Family conflict. How to cope. Retrieved 3/5/019 from www.betherhealth.vic.org.
- Bassey, O. M. (2000). *Conflict Resolution in Marriage: Marriage Counselling*, Calabar, Pyramid.
- Cherlin, E. G. (2011). *Public and Private families* (3rd Ed). New York; McGraw Hill.
- Dunkoye, J. A. Bukoye, R. O. & Rasaq A. S. (2008). *Introduction to Guidance and Counselling: Organization and practices*: Ilorin, integrity publishers.
- Edward, I. P & Shirley, N. (2015): Counselling strategies for successful marriage among young Nigerian couples. *Journal of Food and Fibre* 3(4), 401-406
- George, J. M. (2012). Marital Adjustment, Satisfaction and Harmonious Living Among Couples in Nigeria. *Unpublished PhD*, Unical.
- Jegede, R.O. (1991), Marriage and Family Living in the Nineties Job-great Commission Movement.
- Koluck, B & Lemish, D. (2011). Communication in marriage, Principles and Practice to Educate and Learn. From www.unicef.org, 20/5/2018.
- Mayer, J.D. & Salovey, P. (2008). Emotional Intelligence and Construction and Regulation of Feelings. *Applied and preventive psychology*, 4 (3), 197-208.
- Miller-Day (2017). Interpersonal Communication. Retrieved 25/2/018, [Http/www.communication.oxforde.com](http://www.communication.oxforde.com). DOI.10.1093/aerefore/9780190-2286.
- Mullins, V. (1996). *Management and Organizational behaviour*, London Pitman Publishers.
- Muazu, S.D., Abbas, H. Afugugi, E & Makarifi, A. (2010). Family Crises: Its Implication on Family Members and Society at Large. *Nigerian Journal of Home-Economics*, 5 (5), 148- 155.
- Nwaoba, C. N. (2017). Evaluation of Husbands' Awareness Towards Reproductive Health Needs and Challenges of Young Women, *CASSON* 36 (2).
- Odoemenam, A, Chima I., & Igboanusi, V. (2004). *Renewing the joy of Marriage. Handbook for Couples*. Owerri. Joe Mankpa Publishers.
- Onwuasanya, P. N. & Okeke, N.U. (2009). Family Counselling and Management Skills for Marital Stability Among Literate Couples. *CASSON proceedings*, 42-48.
- Orelu, J. N. (2015). Family counselling for management skills, *CASSON*.
- Per Tabitha (2009). Marital Communication Theory Model in Family Counselling and Problem Marriages, *CASSON* 146-150.
- Redmond, M. N. (2009). *Communication Theory and Application*., N. A. Houghton: Miffling. Co.
- Shirley, G. (2012). *Family Harmony: Towards a Successful Marriage*. New York, Willey.
- Simmel (1981). *Theory of Social Conflict*, Illinois, the Dorsey press.
- Udiayaundeya, F. A. & Ugah, R. (2009). Effects of Marital Conflicts And Management Skills Onmarital Stability Among Literate Couples in Northern Cross River state. *Unpublished PhD Thesis*, Unijos.
- Umaru, F. I. (2010). Interpersonal communication. Retrieved 2/2/18, <https://www.communication.-Doi.10>.