

# A Critical Examination of Conflict Resolution Strategies among Married Couples in the Anglican Church

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## **Abstract**

*Marital or couple's conflict is an abrasion in the progress, development, and unity of any nation because a peaceful home creates a peaceful society. Conversely, an unstable home, riddled with conflicts, translates into society to create a crisis-riddled as observed in Anglican churches, in an attempt to resolve marital conflicts, some couples employ different strategies depending on their experiences and personal characteristics. Oftentimes, these strategies do not help in ameliorating the problem as many couples end up getting more maladjusted through the use of inappropriate strategies. Therefore, this paper conducts a critical examination of conflict resolution strategies among Christian couples in Anglican churches. Descriptive and critical approaches were employed. The study is situated in Weak-land's marital communication theory. It shows that the causes of marital conflict in Anglican Churches are communication problems, character differences, educational and intelligence differences, vocational choice, in-law difficulties, and financial and sexual problems. It was shown that the root cause of marital conflict is down to miscommunication and lack of proper communication among couples. It suggests that there is a need to rethink conflict resolution strategies and programs for the Anglican churches.*

*Keywords: Anglican church, conflict resolution, critical, marital, strategies*

## **Introduction**

Conflict is very natural in any human relationship. It is so as a result of humans' unique and different characteristics with different tastes, habits, likes and dislikes values, and standards. It has been discovered that the deeper human relationships grow, the probability that conflict will emerge is high, and opinions, feelings, and wants will clash. Conflict in general is described as the process that begins when one party perceives that the other one has frustrated some concerns about their intentions (Thomas, 1976). An interpersonal conflict exists whenever an action by one person prevents, obstructs, or interferes with the actions of another person (Johnson, 1990). One of the human relationships that is always fraught with conflict is marriage. Marriage is the union between man and woman as husband and wife. It is a social institution that is designed

among other things to ensure the happiness and fulfillment of the men and women who contract into it (Okwun, 2011).

Marriage, according to Makinde (2001), is the relationship that unites a man and a woman. It is a contract requiring an agreement between the two persons involved – a relationship arising from such agreement is such that will make them live together as husband and wife forever. As Kehinde (2002) puts it, marriage is like a house, while new, it sparkles with fresh smells with lots of surprises, romance, and discoveries about those involved, which makes each day exciting to both partners but experiences have shown that not long after a family is established, both partners become major sources of individual's problems. Thus, Conflict is an inevitable process in any marriage. The opposing needs and interests of the couples lie at the core of the marital conflict. In a conflict situation, couples express latent differences in satisfying their individual needs and interests, and they experience interference from their partners in accomplishing these goals. In the contemporary family, there is a great need to negotiate the changing role of husband and wife.

However, disagreements and conflicts are part of the daily lives of many couples because marriage provides a fertile ground in which the seeds of conflict can germinate. Conflicts are also inevitable between the individuals involved in a marriage relationship. Most marriages these days are riddled and afflicted with the problem of maladjustment that often results in divorce. It is difficult to provide accurate statistics on the actual rate of divorce in Nigeria because not all cases of divorce are reported and recorded but literate and media reports indicate a high rate of divorce (Yahaya, 2008). Esere (2000) noted that about forty percent (40%) of the marriages contracted every year in Nigeria end up in divorce or separation. Therefore, the need for peaceful coexistence both in the home and in society at large cannot be over-stressed.

The way the couples handle conflict is usually described in terms of resolution “style” or “strategies” which are interpersonal behaviours used in the context of a relationship to resolve disagreements (Marchland, 2004). The most effective strategies bring advantages to one's self as well as others, ensuring a harmonious relationship and ineffective behavior tries to defeat the other person or avoid the issue. In Anglican Churches, it has been discovered that men and women respond to conflict in different ways. Men are more likely than women to withdraw from conflict. They withdraw more when women try to get them to talk about the problem. Women are more direct than men and want to address the conflict. This may be related to women's tendency to be concerned with the emotional aspect of the relationship. Women are also more critical in addressing conflict (DiNozzi, 2001). However, the churches as usual have adopted biblical-based conflict resolution strategies for resolving marital conflict. De-

spite this, there are still thorny issues regarding resolving marital issues in the church. Hence, this study set to conduct a philosophical appraisal of the effectiveness of conflict resolution strategies in Anglican churches.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Most researches in the field of marital conflict are focused on its resolution. However, in this study, the interest is geared towards examining critically the areas about which the couples mostly fight and cover issues involving people of diverse ages, types of relationships (e.g. dating, married and cohabitant), sex, and sexual orientation. Despite efforts in creating a harmonious living relationship in marriage, the incidence of marital conflict is still prevalent. Scholars, school teachers, and churches are at a loss on the options available for proffering solutions to this situation.

A substantial body of research findings suggests that there is an increased prevalence of marital conflict which affects the homes and the well-being of the family (Filani, 1984). Hence, they emit patterns of behaviour that are markedly different from the accepted standards within the society and they are likely to produce maladjustment that necessitates the application of negotiation skills. Researchers, church leaders, and educators working with families, especially in dysfunctional homes have expressed concern about the difficulties that divorce and separation have created in establishing an egalitarian society (Odoemelam and Justin, 2004). There is crisis definitely when it comes to the frequency of divorce.

It has been observed in the context of Anglican Churches, that in an attempt to resolve marital conflicts, some couples employ different strategies depending on their experiences and personal characteristics. Oftentimes, these strategies do not help in ameliorating the problem as many couples end up getting more maladjusted through the use of inappropriate strategies. In addition, strategies used in resolving conflicts appear to be predicted by some personal factors such as gender, age, length of the marriage, educational level, and experience among others. Hence it becomes expedient that the relationship between couples' factors and conflict resolution strategies be explored to assist couples to adopt useful strategies in the region.

### **Literature Review**

It is imperative to briefly conduct a review of selected pieces of literature on the concept of conflict, marital conflict, and conflict resolution within the context of the Christian church. Deutsch (1973) views conflict as an action, which prevents, obstructs, interferes with, injures, or renders ineffective another action with which it is incompatible. Admittedly, Deutsch's definition seems to en-

capsulate the general view of conflict in other works of literature. It is way too generalized as an issue regarding marital conflict was not brought to the fore by him. This exact lacuna is the burden of this work.

In another way, Osita Agbu sees conflict as an opportunity to change (Osita, 2005). This means that conflict is neither negative nor positive. According to him, what determines the way conflicts go are our attitudes; how we were brought up (our backgrounds), and the information we have. Indeed, Agbu's perspectives corroborate the Chinese long-aged adage that "chaos there is order." This shows also that conflict presents one an opportunity to change in that way we can say war is the road to peace. Other scholars such as Chaplin (1979) define conflict as "the simultaneous occurrence of two or more mutually antagonistic impulses or motives," (p. 109) while Wilson and Hanna (1979) describe the conflict as "a struggle involving ideas, values, and limited resources," (p. 255). Dokun Oyeshola believes that conflict is often rooted in people's beliefs and perceptions about goals as opposed to objective facts.

Buehler et al. (1998) define marital conflict as the existence of high levels of disagreement, stressful and hostile interactions between spouses, disrespect, and verbal abuse, while Cummings (1998) interprets it as "any major or minor interpersonal interaction that involved a difference of opinion, whether it was mostly negative or even mostly positive," (p. 60). Cummings (1998) further elaborates that everyday marital conflict refers to daily interactions, whether major or minor, in which couples have a difference of opinion. Thus, everyday marital conflict includes a range of tactical and emotional expressions, both positive and negative.

Marital conflicts can be about virtually anything. Couples complain about sources of conflict ranging from verbal and physical abusiveness to personal characteristics and behaviour. According to Sholfer and Shoben (1986) marital relationships experience crises and conflicts that sometimes result in divorce, separation, broken homes, violence against women or men, child neglect and several other devastating effects of intra-marital conflicts. Although couples are aware of the intimate contract they are into in marriage and the implication of this contract to their lives, they encounter challenges that they sometimes cannot handle. The survival of such marriages largely depends on how effective the couples are in managing their marital relationship.

Conflict management is another way of controlling conflict before or during and after it has occurred. According to Otite and Albert (1999), "It is more elaborate and wider in conception and application when necessitated; it involves conflict resolution and transformation. It is more of a long-term arrangement involving institutionalized provisions and regulative procedures for dealing with conflicts wherever they occur," (p. 11).

This view of the comprehensiveness and institutionalization involved in conflict management is further stressed by Zartman, when he wrote, “Conflict management refers to the elimination, neutralization of conflict from erupting into crises or to cool a crisis in eruption.” Over the years the literature on conflict has reflected tensions between conflict management and conflict resolution. Now, however, the two issues seem to have been joined by the general acknowledgment that the process of conflict management can be an effective route toward conflict resolution. In a related context, it has been suggested that different phases of conflict, e.g. Precrisis, conflict, and postconflict stages, may require different governance structures and systems.

Conflict Management patterns are often according to Desivilya et al. (2005) related to a dual concern model divided into concern for self and concern for others. Further different conflict management approaches are based on these two motives, some focusing more on concern for self or concern for others. From these motives, they bring forward five main conflict management patterns:

- i. Dominating: High concern for self and low concern for the other.
- ii. Obliging: Low concern for self and high concern for the other.
- iii. Avoiding: Low concern for self and low concern for the other.
- iv. Integrating: High concern for self and high concern for the other.
- v. Compromising: Moderate concern for self and moderate concern for the other (Desivilya et al., 2005).

Moreover, they stress that project team members more often choose to use a passive approach. Passive strategies count obliging and avoiding while integrating, compromising, and dominating belongs is seen as active strategy. In comparison with Desivilya et al., Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy (2009) have chosen to look at conflict management approaches from a slightly different perspective. They claim that conflict resolution can be divided into two independent dimensions, cooperativeness/uncooperativeness, and assertiveness/unassertiveness.

According to Oluwaseun Bamidele (2012), the disciplines of philosophy and conflict resolution offer important practices and holistic perspectives on conflict resolution. It is important to place conflict resolution practices in the world today from a philosophical perspective. The concepts of philosophy as well as conflict resolution practices are susceptible to diverse interpretations and perspectives. He writes that the philosophy of conflict resolution must be absorbed to enable conflict resolution professionals to critically evaluate the right methodology, which they should adopt in their resolution and mediation

processes. Professionals in the field of conflict resolution with a critical attitude and rational temper of mind are not afraid, to tell the truth, because they are seekers of the truth; they are ready to expose falsehood and help those parties involved. If we are aiming for a real peace transformation, philosophy must be applied to conflict resolution practices to make our prospective conflict resolution professionals become good philosophers. It will be very beneficial if all our conflict resolution professionals can become philosophers.

He concludes that philosophy and conflict resolution practice in Africa cannot be seriously addressed in the absence of knowledge of what the field is all about; what are its premises, its principles and philosophy; its forms and modes, the professionals in the field, and how they relate with one another, and their relationship with the African community. He suggested the formation of an association; call the professional association for conflict resolution in Africa or where all those problems are to be tackled. For him, the practice of conflict resolution in the African community will continue to fail to perform up to expectation until such an association takes the development of the profession firmly in hand.

It can be seen from above that most researches in the field of marital conflict are focused on its resolution. However, in this study, the interest is geared towards examining philosophically the areas about which the couples mostly fight and cover issues involving people of diverse ages, types of relationships (e.g. dating, married and cohabitant), sex, and sexual orientation in Anglican churches.

### **Causes of Marital Conflicts in Anglican Churches**

This study identified several marital conflicts which lead to a weakened marriage tying bond and or divorce. The following are the identified root causes of marital conflicts in Christian churches:

#### **Character differences**

All Christian church members indicated that explanations frequently given as causes of marital conflicts and divorce are alcoholism, domestic violence, and unfaithfulness. One of the informants expressed this by saying, “When words such as we didn’t get along, or we no longer love each other and we are facing money problems, the major causes if you closely look into it are alcoholism, domestic violence, and unfaithfulness” (oral interview). A minority of the informants indicated that character differences do not count when the union of couples in marriage was designed in heaven by God (oral interview). The popular

view of Christian church leaders indicated “blame game” is the major symptom of character differences.

### **Educational and intellectual differences**

Popular views by church members indicated that unlike in the past, modern marriages are based on intellectual ability (oral interview). All church members indicated that couples who attain the same educational level starting from the Ordinary Level value their marriages more than those couples who do not have attained the Ordinary Level. All church members indicated that intellectual abilities are a solution to some socioeconomic problems, at the same time, sticking to the intellectual deficiencies of one of the couples in the marriage cause socioeconomic problems. Few of the church members indicated that intellectual differences as a result of the wide educational gap between couples were a serious problem among couples, particularly young couples. Some church members indicated that if intellectual differences favour the husbands, it’s difficult for them to accept advice from other church mates, normally their wives are compelled not to invite “foreigners” into their marriage (oral interview).

### **Vocational choice**

The majority of church members indicated that vocation creates marital conflicts if one of the couples works in an environment susceptible to having an extramarital affair and or in an environment that church doctrine forbids (Oral Interview). The working environment mentioned by all church members were beer breweries, selling points, and distributors, tobacco growing selling, and exporting companies. A minority of church members indicated that it was not the vocation issue but it depends on one respect for their marriage. Some church members indicated that jobs that separate couples for a long time are an enemy to modern-day marriages than in the past. Church leaders indicated that most couples consider how to earn money through working irrespective of what vocational choice to pursue. Due to harsh economic conditions in Nigeria, church leaders indicated that couples do have limited options to choose what is good for cohabitation or how to feed and clothe the new family. A case study revealed that distance between couples due to vocational choices poses a great risk for marital conflicts. In addition to this, differences in earnings between couples, especially when a wife earns more than the husband as well as the working environment associated with liquor and or working in fields dominated by singles pose a threat to modern-day Christian marriages (oral interview).

### **Age of marriage**

All church members indicated that young age below the age of 20 posed a great risk of marital conflicts and divorce (oral interview). Most of the church members indicated that the majority of such marriages hardly exist for five years. Church members also indicate that the 21–30-year age range seems to have few marital problems than those below the age of 20. Some church members indicated that the longer couples stay in a marriage, the fewer chances of getting a divorce, and such couples have established ways of dealing with marital disputes. Case study data indicate that Christian churches consider a stable relationship if couples are above the age of 20. Early marriage below the age of 20 increases the likelihood of divorce, especially in the early years of marriage. Couples who marry in their teens have high divorce cases. Couples, who delay marriage until their 20s, are most likely more mature and able to make enhanced marriage decisions and handle the challenges of married life better than those who get married in their teens. A too wide age difference of more than 15 years is also a threat to couples in such marriages (Oral Interview).

### **Role conflicts**

All church members indicated that role conflicts were more common among new couples of this generation than in the past (oral interview). The misconception of gender roles between couples was the major trigger of marital conflicts and divorce. A husband and wife each have a unique position and role in the body of Christ as both individuals and as a couple. The way God created each of us helps to define our roles. We are each called to live out our lives in a way that glorifies God. All church members indicated that role conflicts normally occur when the husband is unemployed while the wife is. Couples may have very different role prospects such as who does the cooking, make a decision, yard cleaning, and farm work among other issues. Make these decisions jointly, sincerely, and frankly, African husbands cannot do half the cooking, and the wife will stay home with the kids (oral interview).

### **Family crises**

Case study data indicated that poor communication was the prime cause of marital conflicts. Informants indicated that poor communication affects new marriages and old marriages equally. In addition to this, the ways of raising children, their vocational choices, and their choice of marriage partners were some of the issues surrounding family crises (oral interview). The majority of informants indicated these family crises normally are amplified by third-party supporters, among them relatives and friends. Data presented indicated that in-



dividual differences if not monitored and regulated, can cause detrimental effects which may weaken family ties and render high chances of divorce.

### **In-Law difficulties**

Case study data gathered indicated that, for a long time, the Nigerian people do not consider family as just the immediate, but also the extended. Because of this, the Western concept of dividing the family into immediate and extended poses challenges to modern marriages than in the past. Informants indicated that whether a son is married or not, he is an important member of the family and community at large. The roles of the son were to look after the parents and other siblings as well (oral interview). Once married, these roles would infer with the new marriage life causing problems. Some informants indicated that on the other hand, in-laws' demand and expect too much from their sons and daughters, forgetting that they have also needed to fulfill in their lives. Demands of in-laws would be used to attack and diminish the son or daughter concerned. In-law demands come from both the husband and wife's sides. Being married to a poor family was one of the serious challenges that in-laws find it difficult to accept. Almost all informants indicated that in most cases, in-laws from either side infer because of barrenness. A few of the informants attribute in-law difficulties as a result of an in-law who wants to get rich through satanic means, thereby casting an evil spell on their sons and daughters. Such evil acts affect the married life of such a couple a lot (oral interview).

### **Sexual challenges**

All church members indicated that sexual problems were a challenge to a large number of Christian marriages and non-Christians as well, across all age groups. Sexual challenges emanate as a result of early ejaculation, less intimacy, stress, the "uncleanliness" of sex in Christian life, infidelity, and low erection. Some church members attributed sexual challenges to the failure of couples to make sexual adjustments, especially young couples. The majority of church members also indicated that several couples find it difficult to discuss and express openly to their partners how they feel about their sex life (oral interview).

Church leaders concurred with church members that sexual challenges were one of the challenges affecting modern-day marriages than before. When probed on why it is like that, church leaders indicated that medical causes such as stress and some foodstuff consumed today affect sexual arousal. Also, infidelity, lack of romantic play time as well as sex without the consent of the other partner was major reasons behind sexual challenges. A few of the church leaders indicated that some churches consider sexual intimacy dirty, which is total-

ly against marriage life and the will of God himself. Also, few church leaders indicated that for most couples, frequency, quality, and infidelity are all common sources of sexual challenges (Oral Interview).

### **Premarital cohabitation**

The majority of church members indicated that premarital cohabitation in Christian churches was and is increasing. Even knowing that the members involved are Christians, they are not prohibited from being members of a church. Mostly, such so-called “married couples” won’t marry or marry and divorce early because such “a couple” would not yet settle permanently. Some church members indicated that marital cohabitation was and is increasing because of people fleeing from their actual marriages because of varied reasons, settling temporarily in an extramarital affair, without denouncing the Christian status (oral interview).

All church leaders indicated that premarital cohabitation poses a great challenge to their work as they do not have a mandate not to unwelcome them, yet such relationships have challenges that are difficult to resolve formally. Church leaders also indicated that such relationships were found in almost every church although churches encourage formal marriages. The risk is frequently for those who live together with more than one partner or settle temporarily in an extramarital affair. Some only live together with one partner whom they later marry and such couples do not seem to be at a lot greater risk for divorce. Premarital cohabitation increases the risks of divorce and goes against a lot of Christian values that it is a good way to get to know each other better and arrange for the marriage (Oral Interview).

### **The use of money**

The case study indicated that several couples were facing conflicts over the use of money. The majority of informants indicated that in most cases, husbands more than wives use money without the consent of the wife. In retaliation, wives would spend and or squander every coin they get. All informants indicated that most couples quarrel over water and electricity bills, school fees arrears, debts, and spending, among other financial issues (oral interview).

### **Premarital pregnancy and childbearing**

All church members indicated that premarital pregnancy and childbearing pose a great risk of marital challenges and the risk of divorce was high. Again, a few church members indicated that premarital pregnancy and childbearing

were only acceptable if one married partner fails to bear a child in the rightful marriage and then try chances outside the marriage (oral interview). Closely related to this was an issue of looking for a child of the opposite sex than what is in the formal marriage. Church leaders indicated that cases of premarital pregnancy and childbearing were increasing drastically despite all the teachings which were done by Christian youths and young adults. In agreement with data gathered from church members, premarital pregnancy and childbearing were closely linked to marital problems and divorce (oral interview).

### **Lack of teaching**

Case study data indicated that teachings about marriage to newly wedded couples normally focus on the importance of unison before God but there was less done on pre and postmarriage counseling except if the concerned couples requested. Also, case study data indicated that a lack of teaching on marriage life could be seen in couples failing to resolve minor issues. The majority of marriages lack the proper knowledge to use during difficulties they experience in their marriage life (oral interview).

### **Social media misuse**

All church leaders and church members indicated misuse of social media particularly Whatsapp and Facebook has become a major enemy of Christian marriages. Social media misuse is worsened by not only sending erotic messages but also pornographic pictures and videos. Also, informants indicated that young couples and to some extent, middle adulthood were the major victims. The danger comes from pornographic images and videos coming from a member of the opposite sex, be it a friend, church-mate, workmate, or stray message (oral interview).

### **Remarriages**

All informants indicated remarry, although not always but frequently results in marital conflicts, and chances for divorce are high. In addition, if one spouse is having a kid[s] outside the marriage when the other does not, such a situation is worse compared to a situation where the involved couples had kids (Oral Interview).

### **Strategies for Conflict Resolution among Couples**

There are essential strategies for conflict prevention among couples that are being taught among congregants of Anglican churches. These strategies for conflict prevention are significant steps for conflict resolution among couples. In

the context of Anglican churches, a marriage enrichment program as a strategy for marital conflict resolution was designed specifically as an instructional group counseling package. The program was not only designed to improve marital adjustment, but also other marriage-related skills including interpersonal skills, decision making, and planning skills as different techniques employed in marital negotiation skills could also be improved by the program. The findings show that divorcees make use of social, religious, financial, and family interaction and support services. Personal understanding strategies in adjustment and that they are all effective in helping them to resolve their adjustment problem. These also utilize different sources of counseling.

Gurin, Joseph, and Sheila (1980) have advocated that personal involvement in one's problem is positively related to marital happiness. This is in line with Bandura and Jacobson and Anderson Who opined that performance-based treatments are superior to those which rely primarily on passive or observational learning procedures. Also, the church has made use of different marital conferences where sermons are targeted at correcting the problems faced in marital relationships. In these conferences, biblically-based teachings on various marital issues are being taught. Finally, priests operate as marriage counselors. They often give useful advice to couples.

### **Critical Appraisal of Conflict Strategies among Couples in Anglican Churches**

From a philosophical perspective, conflict resolution programs in Anglican churches are logical and biblical based. The home-level strategies among couples as revealed in the analysis are also been effective to a certain extent. However, in recent times, attempts have been made to identify the roots of marital conflicts and proffer veritable solutions through counseling, preaching, and teachings in various church meetings. Despite these efforts, it is still observed that conflict between couples is on the rise. It has been discovered that partners enter into the relationship with different family backgrounds, communication styles, cultural values, and expectations. When they are unable to reconcile these differences, conflicts may be created.

During the fieldwork, major areas of conflict in intimate relationships are communication difficulties, sexual values and relationships, personality, division of domestic chores, relations with relatives and friends, and substance abuse (oral interview). In the context of this paper, the root cause of marital conflict is down to miscommunication and lack of proper communication among couples. For the researcher, communication is at the root of couples' conflict. The concept of communication here connotes honesty, transparency,

openness, ability to move along with each other despite differences, usage of biblical speech, and models in marital life. From a rational point of view, it is plausible to say that there is a need for proper communication as conflict prevention, mediation and management cannot be solved without it. Thus, with the issue of communication remaining the major issue among couples; there is, therefore, a need to rethink Conflict Resolution Strategies and Programmes for Anglican Churches.

### **Rethinking Conflict Resolution Strategies and Programmes for Anglican Churches**

It is essential to state at this point that this thesis is rooted in the context of the marital communication theory model that was propounded by Weakland (1956). According to him, conflict in marriage is due to inappropriate communication. The theory stipulates that conflict ensues in a marriage relationship in a situation where there is confusion and lack of clarity in the communication pattern of husband and wife. This is a situation when the partner who is receiving the message of the communication finds it very difficult to make meaning out of the communication. According to this theory, when there is such confusion and lack of understanding in the communication between couples, the tendency is for the confused partner to reject the communication thereby creating a vacuum, which leads to conflict. Also, the presence of noise in the communication network leads to conflict in marriage.

To rethinking conflict resolution strategies and programs for Anglican churches, this paper suggests that attention must be given to improving communication which entails openness, honesty, and transparency among couples. It has been discovered during the fieldwork that unhappy couples often have miscommunication. As such, it is suggested focus must be on communication; the essential because communication is all-encompassing.

In line with Weakland, it must be noted that, “communication is fundamental to a Christ-centered home because it is how a husband–wife relationship and parent-child relationship is established, grows and is maintained” (Adams, 1972). Communication is crucial if there is going to be intimacy and cooperation in the marriage relationship. Marriage was created for procreation, dominion, and helpful companionship. Christian marriage should be an edifying and pleasurable experience. The Christian husband and wife should be working together as one toward the same goals. Communication is important because it is the biblical means whereby the husband and wife apply the Word of God to the marriage relationship, and thus help each other become better servants of Christ.

The husband and wife have a day-by-day, objective; behind-closed-doors look at the speech and behavior of each other. “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend” (Pro. 27: 17). “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” (Am. 3: 3). Thus, if communication is functioning properly and biblical principles are being applied to the problems that arise, Christian marriage will lead to mutual growth and sanctification. Many problems in the home are a direct result of poor communication. While both husband and wife are responsible to communicate truthfully, effectively, and biblically with each other, the husband is the head of the household and thus carries the primary responsibility of ensuring that biblical communication is taking place in the home. The husband must take charge. He is the one that is ultimately responsible for what occurs in the home; thus, he must be the one who takes the initiative in the relationship.

### **Concluding Remarks and Recommendations**

From the study, it was obvious that conflicts in marriage are inevitable. However, marital conflicts can be managed when they occur or are prevented resulting in the partial or total collapse of homes. This will depend largely on the couple’s mutual understanding and handling. Marital success results from a lot of endurance, tolerance, patience, and effective management of individual differences. Successful marriages as opined by Nadir are not those in which there has never been conflicting but those in which conflicts have served useful purposes.

Hence to foster marital stability and satisfaction, it is recommended that couples should learn to be fair, objective, and realistic when dealing with their partner’s behaviours. They should learn to see their partner’s shortcomings as a natural byproduct of every human interrelationship where nobody can be perfect at all times and in all things. Couples need to create a nurturing relationship in their marriage. This can be done by communicating their feelings of love, admiration, likes, and dislikes to each other. Good communication brings understanding that leads to unity and harmony in marriage. Melgosa (2000) argued that communication is the center of interpersonal relationships and also how messages are exchanged, resulting in satisfaction and happiness or causing hurt and resentment.

Without effective communication between couples, there will be tension, mistrust, less sharing, less intimacy, holding strongly to one’s opinions, and a sense of isolation. There is the need for right and decodable signals to be sent and well received by both partners involved in the marital relationship. This is how we can prevent or manage marital conflicts in our homes. The communication of forgiveness when one couple wrongs the other is important. Family

counselors and social workers should inculcate this in couples. Couples and marriage counselors are encouraged to use these resolution strategies aimed at helping them understand each other and overcome disharmony in their relationship. In conclusion, disharmony and other issues can easily be handled in families using the identified resolution strategies to empower them for sustainable healthy lifestyles amid global challenges.

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