

FAMILY CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING OF MARRIED FEMALE TEACHERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN UYO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

By
Hanson Manuabuchi Ukaegbu
&
Uduak Okokon Ekpenyong
Department of Guidance and Counselling,
University of Uyo, Nigeria

Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between family conflict resolution strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses guided the study. Correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 1,074 married female teachers in fourteen public junior secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select a sample of 200 married female teachers used for the study. Two researcher-made instruments entitled “Family Conflict Resolution Strategies Questionnaire” (FCRSQ) and “Emotional Wellbeing Questionnaire for Married Female Teachers” (EWQMFT) were used for data collection. The instruments were face validated while the internal consistency reliability of the instruments were established and reliability coefficients of 0.73 and 0.70 were obtained for FCRSQ and EWQFMT respectively. Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics was used to answer the research questions and also test the null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Results showed that there is significant positive relationship between spousal communication strategies, spousal negotiation strategies, support-seeking behaviours and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Based on the findings of the study, three recommendations were made among which is that schools in Akwa Ibom State should offer regular training programmes for married female teachers that focus on improving communication and negotiation strategies with their spouses.

Keywords: Family, Conflict, Emotional, Wellbeing, Female, Teachers

Introduction

The emotional wellbeing of married female teachers plays a crucial role in their overall life satisfaction, job performance, and work-life balance. In particular, family-related stressors such as conflict within the family setting may significantly impact the emotional health of these teachers. The importance of emotional wellbeing in teachers cannot be overemphasized, as it is intertwined with various aspects of their professional and personal lives. The resolution of family conflicts, which is often a common source of stress, becomes an essential skill for maintaining emotional wellbeing. Emotional wellbeing refers to an individual's emotional and psychological state, encompassing feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and overall mental health (Ryff & Singer, 2016). For married female teachers, emotional wellbeing plays a significant role in their ability to handle stress, perform well at

work, and maintain a healthy family life. Emotional wellbeing is often shaped by a variety of factors, including family dynamics, social support systems, personal self-efficacy, and workplace conditions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). In a school environment, emotional wellbeing is critical for teachers, as it directly influences their interactions with students, colleagues, and even their own children.

For married female teachers, the stress of balancing professional responsibilities and family life can affect their emotional wellbeing. Female teachers often serve as caregivers and role models, and when family conflicts arise, they may experience a drop in their emotional wellbeing. This can lead to burnout, anxiety, and even depression (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Furthermore, emotional distress can hinder their ability to perform at their best in the classroom, reduce job satisfaction, and even lead to absenteeism (Huang & Shi, 2016). Emotional wellbeing is, therefore, a critical aspect of a teacher's job performance and overall life satisfaction, which is why understanding its sources and impact is vital.

Family conflicts are one of the major stressors in the lives of married female teachers. These conflicts may arise from financial difficulties, parenting disagreements, or work-life balance issues. Research has shown that unresolved family conflicts negatively affect emotional wellbeing, leading to increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Cohen & Wills, 2015). Married female teachers may find themselves caught in the middle of multiple roles such as caretaker, professional, and spouse resulting in emotional strain. Effective family conflict resolution strategies, however, can help mitigate the negative effects of family conflict, thus promoting better emotional wellbeing among married female teachers in particular. Family conflict resolution involves managing disagreements or differences in opinion between family members in ways that are constructive rather than destructive. The way conflicts are handled can either strengthen family relationships or lead to emotional turmoil. For married female teachers, the ability to resolve conflicts in a healthy manner ensures that they do not carry emotional burdens into their professional lives. This will enable them to focus on their job responsibilities and maintain positive relationships at work (Adebayo & Ogunyemi, 2021).

Conflict resolution strategies vary widely, but certain approaches have proven to be effective in improving family dynamics and reducing emotional distress. In the context of this study, three family conflict resolution strategies namely communication, negotiation, and support-seeking behaviour and their potential impact on married female teachers' emotional wellbeing are investigated. By encouraging honest and empathetic dialogue, both partners can express their concerns, frustrations, and desires without fear of judgement or dismissal. When applied to the family context, effective communication can alleviate misunderstandings and pave the way for finding common ground. For married female teachers, improving communication in the home can lead to lower levels of anxiety and greater emotional stability, as they feel heard and understood in both their personal and professional lives.

Family conflict resolution also involves the ability to negotiate and make compromises. When family members have opposing views or desires, it is crucial to find a middle ground. Negotiation entails discussing solutions and being open to trade-offs which satisfy both parties. Married female teachers, who juggle career and family demands, can use negotiation to establish a balance between their professional responsibilities and family obligations. When family conflict is resolved through negotiation, married female teachers are more likely to feel a sense of control over their personal and professional lives. This feeling contributes to enhanced emotional wellbeing.

Support-seeking behaviour is another crucial strategy in resolving family conflicts. Seeking emotional, informational, or instrumental support from others can help alleviate the stress associated with family disagreements. For married female teachers, support can come from various sources, including extended family members, friends, or professional counsellors. By relying on external support, married female teachers can gain new perspectives on their problems, which may help them approach family conflicts in a more constructive manner. In turn, this can lead to reduced feelings of isolation, lower stress levels, and improved emotional wellbeing. Based on the foregoing therefore, the study of the relationship between family conflict resolution strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State became imperative in view of the fact that the ability to resolve family conflicts effectively has a direct impact on the professional lives of married female teachers. It is believed that married female teachers who experience high levels of emotional wellbeing are more likely to perform well in their roles, demonstrate higher job satisfaction, and maintain positive relationships with students and colleagues. When family conflicts are unresolved or poorly managed, the emotional strain can spill over into their work lives, leading to increased absenteeism, burnout, and diminished performance. Effective family conflict resolution strategies can help married female teachers balance their professional and personal lives. When family stressors are alleviated, teachers are able to approach their job with greater focus, energy, and enthusiasm. Furthermore, resolving conflicts in a healthy manner fosters a sense of personal growth and emotional control, which contributes to improved job satisfaction and reduced job-related stress. Moreover, when married female teachers experience emotional wellbeing, they are more likely to form strong, supportive relationships with their colleagues and students. This creates a positive work environment where they are motivated to contribute their best to the educational institution where they work thereby leading to improved school performance and students' outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

The well-being of married female teachers in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, is increasingly becoming a matter of concern. Female teachers, particularly those who are married, often face the dual burden of managing their professional responsibilities and their family roles. This balancing act, which includes fulfilling teaching duties while managing household chores, child-rearing, and maintaining spousal relationships, can lead to significant emotional stress and diminished well-being. These challenges can be exacerbated by societal expectations and traditional gender roles that place primary caregiving responsibilities on women.

In particular, family conflict, especially within marital relationships, can severely impact the emotional health of married female teachers. Conflicts in the home environment, whether related to finances, child-rearing, or other marital issues can create high levels of stress, leading to poor emotional well-being, which in turn affects both their personal lives and professional performance. The unresolved stress and emotional strain from family conflicts can reduce the effectiveness married female teachers in the classroom, lower their job satisfaction, and hinder their overall quality of life. Therefore, understanding the strategies employed by married female teachers in addressing family conflicts, as well as their impact on emotional wellbeing is crucial for improving their work-life balance and general life satisfaction. This study sought to explore the family conflict resolution strategies

employed by married female teachers and how they are related to their emotional wellbeing, with a focus on Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between family conflict resolution strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. In specific terms, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. Find out the relationship between spousal communication strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools.
2. Determine the relationship between spousal negotiation strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools.
3. Ascertain the relationship between support-seeking behaviour and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between spousal communication strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools?
2. What is the relationship between spousal negotiation strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools?
3. What is the relationship between support-seeking behaviour and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between spousal communication strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools.
2. There is no significant relationship between spousal negotiation strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools.
3. There is no significant relationship between support-seeking behaviour and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools.

Scope of the Study

The study investigated the relationship between family conflict resolution strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools. Family conflict resolution strategies investigated in this study were spousal communication strategies, spousal negotiation strategies and support-seeking behaviour and they served as the independent variables while emotional wellbeing served as the dependent variable. Only married female teachers in public junior secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria were studied.

Theoretical Literature

Family Systems Theory by Murray Bowen (1960s): Family Systems Theory, developed by Murray Bowen in 1960s, posits that families are emotional units where members are interconnected, and an individual's behaviour is influenced by the family system. It focuses

on the roles that each family member plays and how the family dynamic as a whole influences individual behaviours and emotional health. Conflict within the family can arise due to unbalanced emotional systems, leading to stress and emotional distress for individual members. Family Systems Theory focuses on the idea that the family is an emotional unit and that individuals within the family cannot be understood in isolation. The emotional dynamics of the family deeply influence individual behaviour and emotional health.

The relationship between the Family Systems Theory and this present study can be explained as thus: For married female teachers, the dynamics within the family such as conflict between spouses, in-laws, or children can significantly influence their emotional wellbeing. According to Family Systems Theory, conflict resolution strategies within the family system will affect how a teacher deals with emotional strain and stress. If family conflict is unresolved, it may spill over into their professional lives, affecting their teaching effectiveness, stress levels, and emotional wellbeing. The theory can help explain how a female teacher's role in the family influences her capacity to manage emotional challenges and work-life balance.

Role Theory by George Herbert Mead (1930s)

Role Theory, particularly as applied to gender studies, focuses on the roles that individuals are expected to fulfil in society and how these roles impact behaviour and emotional wellbeing. In the context of married female teachers, this theory examines the roles they are expected to play within the family (for example, mother, wife) and their professional role as educators. The theory posits that conflict can arise when there are role conflicts or role overloads, leading to stress and emotional distress.

The relationship between the Role Theory and this present study can be explained as thus: For married female teachers, Role Theory helps explain how the expectations associated with their family roles (for example, caregiving, managing household) and professional roles (e.g., being an effective educator) can create conflict and affect emotional wellbeing. If a female teacher is expected to excel in both family and professional domains, the resulting role strain can lead to emotional exhaustion, stress, and burnout. Understanding these role expectations and the associated conflicts can guide conflict resolution strategies to better balance family life, work, and emotional wellbeing.

Empirical Literature

Smith and Walker (2021) investigated the role of communication in marital satisfaction and emotional well-being of married female teachers using 100 married female teachers from urban high schools, selected using stratified random sampling. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression analysis were used for data analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that effective communication with spouses was correlated with lower levels of stress and higher levels of happiness among female teachers. The authors further explained that positive communication in marital relationships enhances emotional well-being and marital satisfaction. A study entitled spousal communication and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in urban settings was carried out by Adebayo and Ogundeyemi (2021). Purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample of 200 married female teachers from urban schools used for the study. Spousal Communication Scale (SCS) and Emotional Wellbeing Scale (EWS) were used for data collection. The study found a significant positive relationship between open spousal communication and the emotional wellbeing of married female teachers. Those who

reported high levels of communication with their spouses had better emotional health and lower stress levels. Conversely, poor communication was linked to increased anxiety and depression.

A similar study was carried out by Okonkwo and Nwogu (2020) on spousal communication and emotional distress among married female teachers in Anambra State, Nigeria. Four hundred and thirty married female teachers in secondary schools were selected for the study via stratified random sampling technique. Communication Satisfaction Scale (CSS) and Emotional Distress Inventory (EDI) were used for data collection while Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) were used for data analysis. The study indicated that poor communication in marriage was associated with higher emotional distress. Female teachers in unhappy marriages reported feeling emotionally drained and overwhelmed, which negatively affected their work-life balance and job performance.

Johnson and Clarke (2019) investigated the impact of teacher-parent communication on emotional well-being of married female teachers. A sample of 120 married female teachers working in primary schools was selected for the study using purposive sampling procedure. ANOVA and thematic analysis of interview responses were used for data analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The study found that positive communication with parents about students' progress significantly reduced stress and enhanced emotional stability in married female teachers. Smith and Johnson (2020) investigated the role of spousal negotiation strategies in emotional well-being among married female teachers using a sample of 200 married female teachers from three urban schools selected via stratified random sampling technique. Self-report questionnaire including sections on negotiation styles (collaborative, avoidant, competitive) and emotional well-being (using the Emotional Well-Being Scale) were used for data collection. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were used for data analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The study found a positive correlation between collaborative negotiation strategies and improved emotional well-being. More so, teachers who used avoidant strategies showed lower levels of emotional well-being.

In a similar study, Jackson and Davis (2021) found that successful negotiation between work and home responsibilities was strongly associated with higher emotional well-being. According to the authors, teachers who successfully negotiated flexible work hours experienced less emotional fatigue and more work-life satisfaction. The study was conducted with a sample of 85 married female teachers from suburban schools selected using purposive sampling method. Multiple regression analysis was used for data analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

Klein and Peterson (2019) carried out a study aimed at negotiating family and career while emphasizing emotional well-being among female educators. A sample of 130 married female teachers was selected for the study via simple random sampling method. Pearson correlation and regression analysis were used for data analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that teachers who were able to negotiate family obligations and career demands felt more emotionally fulfilled. More so, it was found that better work-family negotiation strategies correlated with better mental health and fewer feelings of burnout. Jackson and Davis (2021) studied the relationship between negotiation strategies and work-life balance among married female educator using a sample of 180 married female teachers across different education levels. The participants were selected using convenience sampling method. Work-life balance inventory, marital communication scales, and a well-being index were used for data collection. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the

relationship between negotiation strategies and work-life balance. The study found that effective negotiation strategies positively influenced teachers' work-life balance and emotional well-being, reducing burnout and increasing job satisfaction.

Similarly, King and Lee (2016) studied the role of negotiation skills in managing stress and mental health of married female teachers. A sample of 100 married female teachers from middle schools was selected for the study using snowball sampling method. Negotiation skills assessment tool and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) were used for data collection while Pearson Product Moment Correlation and regression analysis statistics were used for data analysis at 0.05 level of significance. It was revealed that teachers with higher negotiation skills experienced lower levels of stress and better mental health, emphasizing the importance of communication in managing emotional well-being.

Carter and Miller (2020) investigated the relationship between support-seeking behaviours and emotional well-being in married female teachers. A sample of 180 married female teachers from rural schools was selected for the study using purposive sampling method. Only married female teachers with at least five years of teaching experience were studied. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to analyze the relationships between support-seeking behaviours and emotional well-being. The study found that higher levels of support-seeking behaviour, especially from family members, were linked to better emotional well-being. Teachers who sought help were more emotionally stable. Smith and Johnson (2018) studied social support and emotional well-being among female teachers.

This study included 200 female teachers from public schools in a mid-sized city. A random sampling method was used to ensure a representative sample. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were used to assess the relationship between social support and emotional well-being. Results indicated that emotional support from family and colleagues significantly enhanced emotional well-being, while lack of support was linked to increased stress and emotional distress.

Miller and Roberts (2021) studied the role of social support in the emotional health of female educators. A sample of 220 female teachers was selected for the study using convenience sampling method. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Pearson correlation were used to analyze the data at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that teachers who engaged in support-seeking behaviours, both at work and in their personal lives, reported significantly higher levels of emotional well-being compared to those who did not.

Larson and Foster (2023) found that teachers who engaged in frequent support-seeking behaviours were less likely to experience emotional distress, especially when support was from close family members. The study was conducted to investigate the relationship between teacher support-seeking and emotional distress in married female teachers. The study used a sample of 400 married female teachers from across different regions of the country selected with a cluster sampling technique. Path analysis was employed to examine the pathways through which support-seeking behaviours affect emotional distress. From the foregoing therefore, the researchers observed that none of the past studies reviewed investigated the entire independent variables (spousal communication strategies, spousal negotiation strategies and support-seeking behaviours) and dependent variable (emotional wellbeing of married female teachers) which the present study investigated. In addition, to the best of the researchers' knowledge no empirical research has been carried out on the relationship between family conflict resolution strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools in Uyo Local

Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Thus this present study was carried out to fill the existing gap as observed in the past empirical studies reviewed.

Research Design

Correlational design was adopted for the study. A correlational research design is useful in determining whether two or more variables are related (Wali, 2002). Thus a correlational research design is more suitable for this study because the researcher investigated the relationship between family conflict resolution strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools in Uyo LGA of Akwa Ibom State.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of one thousand and seventy four married female teachers in fourteen public junior secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. This figure was obtained from Uyo Local Government Education Authority (2025).

Sample and Sampling Technique

Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select a sample of 200 married female teachers in public junior secondary schools in Uyo LGA of Akwa Ibom State. In the first place, purposive sampling technique was used to identify married female teachers. Simple random sampling technique was used to select ten schools out of the fourteen schools in the study area. Thereafter, proportional stratified random sampling procedure was used to select 15% of married female teachers from each of the ten public junior secondary schools selected for the study.

Research Instrument

Two researcher-made instruments entitled “Family Conflict Resolution Strategies Questionnaire” (FCRSQ) and “Emotional Wellbeing Questionnaire for Married Female Teachers” (EWQMFT) were used for data collection. FCRSQ consisted of eighteen items. Six items measured each of spousal communication strategies, spousal negotiation strategies and support-seeking behaviour. The second instrument (EWQMFT) consisted of twenty items which measured emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in public junior secondary schools in Uyo LGA of Akwa Ibom State. The items contained in the two instruments were responded to on a four-point rating scale namely Strongly (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 points, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point.

Validation of the Instrument

Face validity of the instruments was carried out by three (3) experts. Two experts in Department of Guidance and Counselling and one from the Department of Psychological Foundations of Education, Faculty of Education, University of Uyo. The validation of the instruments was done to ensure that the instruments measured what they claimed to measure. In all, the three experts were requested to read through the instruments, vet the items for clarity, relevance and suitability for the study. The inputs from the experts were incorporated into the final draft of the instruments.

Reliability of the Instrument

To determine the internal consistency reliability of the instruments, the researcher randomly selected 25 married female teachers who were part of the population but not part of the

study sample to respond to the instruments. Data generated were subjected to analysis using Cronbach alpha statistics and reliability coefficients of 0.73 and 0.70 were obtained for FCRS and EWQFMT respectively.

Method of Data Collection

The researchers with the help of two well briefed research assistants administered the instruments to the selected respondents after seeking permission from the respective authorities through a letter of introduction from the researchers' institution to carry out the study. Permission obtained from the respective authorities allowed the participants to respond to the items in the questionnaires.

Method of Data Analysis

Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistic was used to answer the research questions and also test the null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Data were subjected to analysis using Social Science Statistical Package (SPSS) version 22.0.

Results

Table 1: Pearson product moment correlation between spousal communication strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area

Variables	n	r-value	p-value	Remark
Spousal Communication (X)	200	.71	.000	Sig.
Emotional Wellbeing (Y)				

p<.05

The result in Table 1 shows a correlation coefficient value of .71. This implies that there is a high positive relationship between spousal communication strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools. This means that as the scores of most of the married female teachers in secondary school on spousal communication strategies increase, there is a corresponding increase in their emotional wellbeing scores and vice versa. More so, the test of corresponding hypothesis one reveals that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is statistically significant at .05 level of significance. Thus, there is significant relationship between spousal communication strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area.

Table 2: Pearson product moment correlation between spousal negotiation strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area

Variables	n	r-value	p-value	Remark
Spousal Negotiation (X)	200	.62	.000	Sig.
Emotional Wellbeing (Y)				

p<.05

The result in Table 2 shows a correlation coefficient value of .62. This implies that there is a moderate positive relationship between spousal negotiation strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools. This means that as the scores of most of the married female teachers in secondary school on spousal negotiation strategies increase, there is a corresponding increase in their emotional wellbeing scores and vice versa. More so, the test of corresponding hypothesis two reveals that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is statistically significant at .05 level of significance. Thus, there is significant relationship between spousal negotiation strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area.

Table 3: Pearson product moment correlation between support-seeking behaviour and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area

Variables	n	r-value	p-value	Remark
Support-Seeking Behaviour (X)	200	.74	.001	Sig.
Emotional Wellbeing (Y)				
p<.05				

The result in Table 3 shows a correlation coefficient value of .74. This implies that there is a high positive relationship between support-seeking behaviour and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools. This means that as the scores of most of the married female teachers in secondary school on support-seeking behaviour increase, there is a corresponding increase in their emotional wellbeing scores and vice versa. More so, the test of corresponding hypothesis three reveals that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is statistically significant at .05 level of significance. Thus, there is significant relationship between support-seeking behaviour and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area.

Discussion of Findings

Analysis of data on research question one showed that there is a significant positive relationship between spousal communication strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools. This means that effective communication within a marriage is fundamental to emotional health. When married female teachers employ good communication strategies with their spouses, they are more likely to express their thoughts, emotions, and concerns clearly and constructively. This open line of communication helps to resolve conflicts, reduce misunderstandings, and foster emotional intimacy.

This finding could also be explained based on the fact that when couples communicate well, they are more likely to address issues promptly, which reduces the emotional stress that can come from unresolved conflicts. Effective communication allows for better emotional support from the spouse, which can significantly improve the emotional well-being of the individual. Good communication helps in managing work and family life more efficiently, leading to less stress and greater emotional balance for the married female teacher. Clear and honest communication builds trust, which is crucial for

emotional security in a marriage. This present finding is in agreement with Okonkwo and Nwogu (2020), Adebayo and Ogunyemi (2021) as well as Smith and Walker (2021) who in their study revealed that study revealed that effective communication with spouses was correlated with lower levels of stress and higher levels of happiness among female teachers.

Analysis of data on research question two showed that there is a significant positive relationship between spousal communication strategies and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools. Spousal negotiation strategies refer to the ways in which partners negotiate and make decisions together, especially in situations of disagreement or differing priorities. A positive relationship suggests that when spouses are able to negotiate effectively and fairly, it promotes emotional well-being. This could involve compromises, joint decision-making, and mutual respect during disagreements.

More so, successful negotiation means that both partners have a voice in family and personal decisions, which can lead to a greater sense of fairness and satisfaction in the relationship. Effective negotiation skills help de-escalate tensions and reduce emotional strain. A partner who is able to listen and engage in constructive dialogue is less likely to contribute to emotional distress. Through negotiation, a female teacher can ensure her spouse respects her personal and professional needs, giving her more autonomy while also feeling supported in her decisions. When both partners feel they have equal say in negotiations, it fosters a sense of balance and equity, which can positively affect emotional well-being. This present finding supports Smith and Johnson (2020), Jackson and Davis (2021) as well as Klein and Peterson (2019) who in their study reported that better work-family negotiation strategies correlated with better mental health and fewer feelings of burnout.

Analysis of data on research question three showed that there is a significant positive relationship between support-seeking behaviour and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in secondary schools. Support-seeking behaviour refers to the act of actively seeking help or emotional support from others, such as from a spouse, family members, or friends, when facing stress or emotional difficulties. This finding suggests that married female teachers who actively seek support when needed experience better emotional well-being. Seeking support can help individuals manage stress by providing a safe space to express their emotions, which improves their emotional regulation.

More so, having strong social support networks, including from a spouse, reduces feelings of isolation, which is vital for emotional well-being. Support-seeking is an effective coping strategy, especially for women who may juggle the demands of work and family. When they can turn to their spouse or others for help, it lessens the burden on their mental health. When a person seeks support, it often leads to validation of their feelings and concerns. This reassurance can reduce anxiety and improve emotional stability. This present finding supports Carter and Miller (2020), Smith and Johnson (2018) as well as Larson and Foster (2023) who earlier found that teachers who engaged in frequent support-seeking behaviours were less likely to experience emotional distress, especially when support was from close family members.

Conclusion

The study has revealed significant positive relationship between various family conflict resolution strategies and the emotional well-being of married female teachers in secondary schools. Specifically, spousal communication strategies, spousal negotiation strategies, and support-seeking behaviour all play critical roles in enhancing emotional well-being. These findings highlight the importance of effective communication and negotiation within marital

relationships, as well as the value of seeking support when facing emotional challenges. Married female teachers who utilize positive communication strategies and engage in constructive negotiations with their spouses are more likely to experience higher emotional well-being. Furthermore, seeking emotional support from others, whether from spouses or external sources, significantly contributes to their overall mental and emotional health.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings and conclusion of the study:

1. Schools in Akwa Ibom State should offer regular training programmes for married female teachers that focus on improving communication and negotiation strategies with their spouses. Such programmes can foster healthier relationships and positively impact teachers' emotional well-being.
2. School management and teacher unions in Nigeria and particularly Akwa Ibom State should create support systems that encourage teachers to seek emotional support, whether from colleagues, mentors, or family members. This will help alleviate stress and emotional challenges that come with balancing work and home life.
3. Educational institutions in Nigeria should include emotional well-being as a key component in professional development programmes for teachers. Training that emphasizes emotional intelligence, stress management, and self-care can empower teachers to better manage both their professional and personal lives.

Implications for Counselling

Since spousal communication strategies are positively correlated with emotional well-being, counsellors can focus on helping individuals and married couples develop stronger communication skills. This may involve teaching techniques for active listening, expressing emotions clearly, and fostering an environment of openness and trust in the marriage. By improving these communication skills, married female teachers can handle marital conflict and emotional challenges more effectively, leading to better emotional health. More so, the study emphasizes the importance of spousal negotiation strategies, suggesting that when married couples engage in constructive negotiations, they experience greater emotional well-being. Counsellors can guide married female teachers on how to approach negotiations with their spouses, teaching them how to handle disagreements and make decisions collaboratively. They can also work on conflict resolution strategies that reduce the potential for emotional distress and foster mutual respect.

Seeking support from others, whether from a spouse or external sources, was shown to be a significant contributor to emotional well-being. The implication of this finding is that counsellors can work with married female teachers to help them understand the importance of reaching out for support, whether it is through their spouse, friends, family, or even professional help. They can also help these teachers identify when and how to seek support, ensuring that they do not feel isolated in their struggles. Additionally, creating a supportive network of peers who understand the pressures faced in both teaching and family life could be beneficial. Hence, counselling becomes imperative so that married female teachers can significantly improve their family life and their ability to manage school responsibilities. The positive emotional impact on their relationships will likely reduce stress, enhance work-life balance, and increase overall job satisfaction, creating a healthier and more productive life

both at home and in the classroom. These improvements are likely to have ripple effects, positively influencing their families, students, and colleagues as well.

References

- Adebayo, A., & Ogunyemi, A. (2021). Spousal communication and emotional wellbeing of married female teachers in urban settings. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 35(2), 210-225.
- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The job demands-resources model: state of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 22(3), 309-328. doi :10.1108/02683940710733115
- Carter, S. & Miller, P. (2020). Support-seeking behaviours and emotional well-being in married female teachers. *Journal of Counselling in Education*, 50(4), 344-358.
- Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (2015). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 98(2), 310-357. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.98.2.310
- Jackson, P., & Davis, A. (2021). Negotiation and its effects on the work-life balance of married teachers. *Journal of Work-Life Studies*, 16(2), 72-84.
- Johnson, M., & Clarke, S. (2019). Impact of teacher-parent communication on emotional well-being of married female teachers. *Journal of Teacher Development*, 18(4), 228-241.
- King, A., & Lee, T. (2016). The role of negotiation skills in managing stress and mental health of married female teachers. *Journal of Mental Health in Education*, 12(5), 55-67.
- Klein, J., & Peterson, M. (2019). Negotiating family and career: A study of emotional well-being among female educators. *Educational Policy Review*, 72(3), 120-135.
- Okonkwo, O., & Nwogu, B. (2020). Spousal communication and emotional distress among married female teachers in Nigeria. *Journal of Mental Health in Education*, 18(1), 42-56.
- Ryff, C. D., & Singer, B. H. (2016). Emotional wellbeing: Meaning, measurement, and implications for health and development. *Oxford Handbook of Human Development and Culture*, 323–335.
- Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2018). Teacher stress and teacher self-efficacy as predictors of teacher burnout. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 110(3), 373-386. doi:10.1037/edu0000242
- Smith, A., & Johnson, B. (2020). The role of spousal negotiation strategies in emotional well-being among married female teachers. *Journal of Emotional Health*, 18(3), 45-59.
- Smith, J. & Johnson, M. (2018). Social support and emotional well-being among female teachers. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 40(3), 245-257.
- Smith, L., & Walker, D. (2021). The role of communication in marital satisfaction and emotional well-being of married female teachers. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 34(2), 98-112.
- Wali, G. 1. (2002). *Educational research*. Harey Publications.

FAMILY CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES QUESTIONNAIRE (FCRSQ)

Instruction: Please, indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the items by ticking (√) against any of the response options below.

- SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

S/N	Spousal Communication Strategies	SA	A	D	SD
1.	My spouse and I regularly set aside time to talk about our feelings and emotions.				
2.	During tense conversations, we maintain a calm tone and avoid raising our voices.				
3.	My spouse and I make an effort to clarify misunderstandings by asking follow-up questions.				
4.	We share both positive and negative feedback with each other in a respectful manner.				
5.	I feel comfortable expressing my desires to my spouse without fear of judgement.				
6.	My spouse and I make a conscious effort to listen actively to each other during conversations.				
	Spousal Negotiation Strategies				
7.	Using compromise in negotiations helps maintain a balanced and healthy relationship.				
8.	My spouse and I avoid using aggressive language during negotiations.				
9.	Negotiations should prioritize finding win-win solutions that satisfy both partners.				
10.	It is sometimes better to give in to one's spouse's demands to avoid conflict, even if it isn't fully fair.				
11.	Negotiating with one's spouse is easier when both partners show empathy towards each other's needs.				
12.	The use of humor can defuse tension and improve the negotiation process.				
	Support-Seeking Behaviours				
13.	I often seek professional support when faced with difficulties.				
14.	I am open to receiving support from friends, family, or colleagues.				
15.	When I face a challenge, I feel better after talking to someone who understands my situation.				
16.	When I need advice or guidance, I prefer to talk to close friends.				
17.	I feel comfortable asking for help when I'm struggling with something.				
18.	When I have problems, I usually try to solve them on my own before seeking assistance.				

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MARRIED FEMALE TEACHERS' (EWQMFT)

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
-----	-------	----	---	---	----

1.	I feel emotionally supported by my spouse in managing my teaching responsibilities.				
2.	I receive adequate emotional support from my colleagues at school.				
3.	My spouse understands the emotional demands of my teaching job.				
4.	I am able to find time for self-care despite my work and family commitments.				
5.	I feel that my emotional needs are prioritized by my family.				
6.	I feel satisfied with the balance I have between my career and personal life.				
7.	My spouse helps with managing household responsibilities when I feel overwhelmed.				
8.	I feel confident in my ability to handle emotional challenges at work.				
9.	I believe that being a teacher enhances my emotional well-being.				
10.	My family helps me recharge emotionally after work.				
11.	I have learned effective coping strategies for handling the emotional demands of my job.				
12.	My emotional health is supported by engaging in activities outside of work and family life.				
13.	I am satisfied with the emotional connections I have at both work and home.				
14.	I feel that my emotional well-being has improved since becoming a teacher.				
15.	I feel confident in handling my emotions.				
16.	I am able to cope with stress in a healthy way.				
17.	I am able to manage my anxiety effectively.				
18.	I feel that I am in control of my emotions.				
19.	I find it easy to relax and unwind.				
20.	I am able to stay calm under pressure.				

