

Emotional Maturity And Patterns Of Marital Conflict Among Married Universities' Workers In Southwest Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study investigated the level of emotional maturity of staff of universities in southwest Nigeria and its influence on their patterns of marital conflict. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The study sample was 1330 married staff members proportionately selected from nine universities using multi-stage sampling technique. Emotional Maturity Questionnaire (EMQ) and Patterns of Marital Interaction Questionnaire (PMIQ) were used to collect data for the study. The results showed that the largest percentage of the participants (54.9%) demonstrated moderate level of emotional maturity. The results also showed that a significant relationship exists between the respondents' level of emotional maturity and the patterns of marital conflict they experienced ($X^2=976, p<0.05$).*

Keywords: *Emotional Maturity, Patterns of Marital Conflict, Workers, Universities*

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of emotional maturity has been defined from different perspectives by various authors and researchers. In defining emotional maturity, Firouzabadi, Hakami and Mansoobifar (2011) viewed it from the cognitive perspective. They adopted the concepts of "knowledge" and "choices" as the defining parameters in their understanding and explanation of emotional maturity. They defined emotional maturity as the ability of having tendency and quite responsible behaviour, being committed towards one's attitudes, feelings and emotions. Emotional maturity means having more knowledge about our choices and their effects, increasing the recognition, accepting and owning of what we do not accept or denying about ourselves and our behaviour.

Engels (as cited in Adeyemi, 2016) also adopted the cognitive view. He argued that growing up means maximizing one's emotional maturity. He therefore listed four critical abilities that emotionally matured persons possess, (a) take responsibility for self, (b) think without reacting, (c) connect without fussing and (d) take responsibility for others.

Lakshmi and Krishnamurthy (as cited in Adeyemi, 2016) using social-cognitive view point defined emotional maturity as the process of impulse control through the agency of self.

Emotional maturity refers to the emotional patterns of an adult who has progressed through the inferior emotional stages characteristic of infancy, childhood and adolescence that is not able to deal with reality and demands of adult life. Emotionally matured persons therefore have full control over the expression of their feelings. They behave according to the accepted social values and ideals. They remain indifferent towards emotional allurements. There is no instability in the expression of emotions, such individuals understand any given situation without recourse to infantile need for help and realise their duties and responsibilities. People with emotional maturity will not act in an irresponsible manner under emotional strain and waste their time and energy over imaginary problems. They undoubtedly cultivate qualities of self-control, politeness, sympathy, cooperation, tolerance and emotional stability.

Furthermore, Mahmoudi (2012) defined emotional maturity in terms of adjustment. According to him, an emotionally matured person has the capacity to make effective adjustment with himself, members of his or her family, colleagues in office, peers in the society and culture. However, maturity transcends the capacity for such attitude and functioning but also entails the ability to enjoy them fully. Emotional maturity encompasses a number of qualities such as

adaptability in the face of setback and obstacle, personal self-management, self-confidence, motivation to work towards goals, group and interpersonal effectiveness, team work, skills in negotiating disagreement and leadership potentials.

In the opinion of Swamy, Ancheril, Vegas and Balasubramanian (2014) emotional maturity is the ability to deal constructively with reality. They stressed that it entails the ability to govern emotions, show steadiness and endurance under pressure and to be tolerant and free from neurotic tendencies. Emotional maturity, as posited by Kapri and Rani (2014), is synonymous with emotional stability and the ability to adapt emotions and feelings to changeable conditions. They listed six stages of emotional maturity which Adeyemi (2016) highlighted as follows:

- ✓ Basic Emotional Responsibility - At this stage people assume responsibility for their emotions and do not seek external factors to explain their emotional feelings and responses.
- ✓ Emotional Honesty - This stage involves the willingness of an individual to know his or her own feelings and accept them, coupled with the ability to deal with the conscious and unconscious fears related to emotional expression.
- ✓ Emotional Openness - At this level emotionally matured people are able to express both positive and negative emotions at the right time, the right proportion and socially acceptable manner without repressing or suppressing their emotions.
- ✓ Emotional Assertiveness - Emotionally matured people at this level have positive self-expression and are able to express their emotions appropriately in any situation. They satisfy personal needs and are able to accommodate the needs of others. Such persons make allowance for their feelings and respect them.
- ✓ Emotional Understanding - Those on this level understand the cause and effect of emotional responsibility and irresponsibility. They possess good self-concept at the same time are aware of their complementary negative self-concept, since self-concepts have corresponding negatives.
- ✓ Emotional Detachment – This is the peak of emotional maturity. Individuals at this point live without the burden of self-concepts, self-images, self-constructs and all group-concepts. Their detachment is the direct consequence of their true understanding of emotions and therefore, letting go of their emotions, either good or bad and taking absolute responsibility for their emotions.

The relevance of emotional maturity in interpersonal relationships, such as marital relationships, cannot be over emphasised. Emotional maturity, in the context of this study, is therefore seen as when an individual has developed attitudes in relation to himself/herself and his/her marital partner which have lifted him/her above childish tantrums. Such an individual accepts criticisms gracefully, does not indulge in self-pity, does not expect special consideration from anyone, controls his or her temper, not easily hurt and accepts the responsibility for his or her own actions. Thus, in regard to this study, emotional maturity refers to the emotional self-efficacy level and capacity of couples to have impulse control to deal with issues of affective challenges in the home.

In line with this definition, it may be assumed that emotions likely play a vital role in the marital life of an individual and couples may therefore require adequate emotional maturity to lead an effective and enduring marital life. Couples' behaviour, in other words, may likely be influenced by the emotional maturity level that they possess. Thus, controlling their emotions rather than allowing their emotions to control them, it is assumed, may likely be germane to a successful and beneficial management of marital conflict.

Research has shown that marriage allows partners to interact and share some of their deepest feelings and emotions which may range from love, hate, and anger to fear, sadness, and joy in an intimate relationship. The extent to which spouses can understand, communicate, and manage these and other powerful emotions may play a crucial role in their marital happiness (Tresa & Kishor, 2013). How one communicates with one's partner may be very crucial in determining the overall nature of the relationship. It may also predict patterns of behaviours, especially when attempting to find solutions to everyday issues and challenges that may confront couples.

In this study, a pattern of marital conflict may be described as a distinctive style or form of verbal and non-verbal behaviours that repetitively occur during conflicts between couples, which may either be positive or negative. In literature, three major patterns of marital interactions have been identified. These are the destructive, constructive and demand/withdraw patterns.

DESTRUCTIVE PATTERN

Destructive behaviours include overtly negative reactions to marital problems such as yelling, insults, criticism, belligerence, and contempt (Birditt, Brown, Orbuch, & McIlvane, 2010). As noted by Roloff and Reznik (2008) often individuals are unable to resolve an interpersonal conflict in a single episode and go on to have reoccurring argumentative episodes about that issue. Roloff and Johnson (as cited in Roloff & Reznik, 2008) defined such serial arguing as argumentative episodes focused on a given issue that occur at least twice. This pattern, research has shown often leads to negative evaluation of marriage, which in turns leads to a decline in marital satisfaction and stability. Gottman, Markman and Notarius (1977) observed that distressed couples more than non-distressed often engaged in what they described as cross-complaining. In this pattern of interaction, one spouse's complaint is met with a counter complaint by the partner. In giving a further insight into this pattern of marital interaction, Roloff and Reznik (2008) stated that one spouse might complain that his or her partner never helps around the house and the other counters by noting that the spouse only spends money but does not generate any family income. Research has further found that destructive behaviours (e.g., criticism, defensiveness and contempt) used in observed interactions predicted divorce among newlyweds up to 7 years later and among longer married couples (married an average of 5 years) up to 14 years later (Gottman & Levenson, as cited in Birditt, Brown, Orbuch & McIlvane, 2010).

CONSTRUCTIVE PATTERN

Marital conflict is said to be constructive when partners handle conflicts in positive ways by displaying behaviours, such as verbal and physical affection, problem solving and support (Goeke-Morey, Cummings, Harold, & Shelton, 2003). Birditt et al. (2010) posited that constructive behaviour involved overtly positive reactions such as saying nice things, calmly discussing the problem, and actively listening. In others words, couples who interact in a constructive manner engage in constructive communication that prevents conflict escalation. For example, rather than cross-complaining or problem escalation, non-distressed spouses engage in validation loops in which they acknowledge each other's complaints and are willing to discuss them (Gottman et al., as cited in Roloff & Reznik, 2008). While lending credence to this viewpoint, Sadeghi et al. (2011) opined that in mutually constructive communication, partners discuss the issues affecting them, express their feelings in a positive way and work towards a resolution of the problem. In giving an example of constructive interaction, Roloff and Reznik (2008) explained that when one spouse accuses the other of not helping around the house, the partner responds, "I understand; let's talk about how we can share the load." When doing so, they validate each other while avoiding conflict escalation (Roloff & Reznik, 2008).

Constructive pattern of communication and behaviour have certain benefits for couples who make use of it in their marital relationships. Constructive communication may reduce stress. Although, constructive relational partners are expressing their concerns and feelings, they are also focused on resolving the problem rather than winning the fight or hurting each other. By validating each other's viewpoint and offering to work together to address emotional complaints, they may emotionally soothe each other (Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, as cited in Roloff & Reznik, 2008). In addition, Davidson, MacGregor, Stuhr, Dixon and MacLean (2000) found that normalised blood pressure of sampled couples correlated with constructive disagreements, including problem solving and generating constructive solutions.

DEMAND-WITHDRAW PATTERN

The demand-withdraw interaction pattern is a pattern of conflict in which one-spouse pressures or blames while the other avoids or withdraws (Donato, Parise, Pagani, Bertoni, & Iafate, 2013). Christensen and Heavey (as cited in Kline & Song, 2016) stated that demand- withdraw generally occurs when one partner pressures the other through emotional demands, criticism, and complaints, while the other retreats through withdrawal, defensiveness, and passive inaction. The demand-withdraw interaction pattern is present in diverse types of relationships, including romantic relationships, friendships, parent-child relationships, and married couples (Kline & Song, 2016). The focus of this study however, is the presence of this pattern among married couples.

Research over the years has offered several explanations of this pattern with emphasis on why women are often frequent initiators of the pattern (e.g. Caughlin & Scott 2010; Schrodt, Witt, & Shimkowski, 2014). The sex difference

perspective explains that the frequency of women in the demand role and men in the withdraw role is from socialized gender roles and differences in intimacy needs. Women seek intimacy and closeness by engaging in higher use of DW, while men seek more autonomy through withdrawal behaviours. The individual difference perspective further explains that differences in closeness/autonomy can result from differences in personality and attachment needs. In support of this perspective, the DW pattern is more frequently observed when partners have discrepant intimacy needs that are associated with discrepant attachment styles (Millwood & Waltz, as cited in Kline & Song, 2016).

From the exploration of literature, existing empirical information have revealed that three patterns mentioned above exist among married couples. However, those previous studies are fraught with limitations. One of such is that the studies are foreign-based. Also, to the knowledge of this researcher, no such studies have been conducted within the university system in Nigeria. Many studies have been dedicated to academic activities within the university system but not much empirical studies have been conducted on emotional maturity and its association with patterns of marital conflict among the workers. Neglecting this important aspect of university workers' lives may indirectly affect their productivity level; hence this study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to:

- ✓ determine the level of emotional maturity of the staff and its influence on patterns of marital conflict among the staff.
- ✓ determine the patterns of marital conflict among staff of selected universities in southwest Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- ✓ What is the level of emotional maturity of staff of selected universities in southwest Nigeria?
- ✓ What are the patterns of marital conflict among staff of selected universities in southwest Nigeria?
- ✓ What is the relationship between emotional maturity and patterns of marital conflict among staff of selected universities in southwest Nigeria?

HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant relationship between emotional maturity and patterns of marital conflict among staff of selected universities in southwest Nigeria.

II. METHOD

The study employed the descriptive survey design because the study was basically exploratory and was meant to establish the emotional maturity level of the universities' workers and their patterns of marital conflict. The study sample comprised 1330 staff members proportionally selected from nine universities. Multi-stage sampling technique was

used to select the sample for the study. Three out of the six states in southwest Nigeria were selected using simple random sampling technique. In each of the three states, three universities were selected using stratified sampling technique with ownership as basis for stratification. This gave nine universities altogether for the study. Respondents were proportionally selected based on the staff population of each university. Five faculties were selected in each of the universities using simple random sampling technique. Respondents from each faculty were selected using convenience sampling technique

Two instruments titled “Emotional Maturity Questionnaire (EMQ)” and “Patterns of Marital Interaction Questionnaire (PMIQ)” were used to collect data. The EMQ was adapted from Desrosier (2003) standardised instrument called “Emotional Maturity Questionnaire” (EMQ) and Adeyemi (2016). The original questionnaire contains 39 items covering mood and impulse control, level of confidence, self-worth, absence of worry and anxiety, emotional responses, ability to cope with pressure and emotion regulation abilities. The adapted version contained 20 items which covered appraisal and expression of emotion, emotion regulation abilities and utilization of emotion during marital interaction. The questionnaire was scored on four point rating scale, with the following response format: “Often” with numerical value 3, “Sometimes” 2, “Rarely” 1, “Never” 0. The scores were interpreted as follows: greater than 45 was a sign of high emotional maturity, 31 to 45 was considered moderate while less than 30 was considered as low emotional maturity.

The PMIQ was adapted from three standardised instruments titled: “Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979), “Gottman Sound Relationship House Questionnaires-Constructive versus Destructive Conflict Measure” (Gottman, 1999) and “Gottman Sound Relationship House Questionnaires-The Three Relationship Processes” (Gottman, 1999). The original versions of the instruments contained 19, 103 and 55 items respectively, covering harsh startup, the four horsemen, gridlock on perpetual issues, accepting influence, compromise, flooding, negative sentiments override and effective repair attempts. The adapted version, which also contained information, gathered from relevant literature, has two sub-sections: B (i) and B (ii). Sub-section B (i) described three major patterns of marital conflict namely: destructive, constructive and demand/withdraw. Sub-section B (ii) contained 20 items meant to elicit information on couples’ patterns/frequency of marital conflict. The questionnaire was scored using a four-point Likert rating scale with 3 being “Always”, 2 “Sometimes”, 1 “Rarely” and 0 being “Never”.

Data were collected by the researcher and field assistants who have been trained on how to administer the questionnaires. A total of 1330 married staff members were given the questionnaire to answer but 1100 staff returned the administered questionnaire, while 15 copies returned were improperly filled or blank, hence they became void. Data collection was adjudged highly successful because of the percentage (83%) of the respondents that returned the questionnaire.

Data collected were analysed descriptively using percentages, Relative Significance Index (RSI) and k-means

analysis to answer the three research questions. Chi-Square analysis was used to test the only hypothesis.

III. RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the level of emotional maturity of staff of selected universities in southwest Nigeria?

To answer this research question, the items in the questionnaire (see appendix) were scored in such a way that an “often” response was scored 3 while a “sometimes” response was scored 2 and a “rarely” response was scored 1 while a “never” response was scored zero. The scoring was transposed for negative items like 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19. The resulting scores were cumulated to constitute a measure of emotional maturity. On the measure, the minimum score was 15 while the maximum score was 59. The mean score of the measure was 38.69 with a standard deviation of 8.35. The measure was categorized into three classes. Respondents who score 30 or less (as stipulated by the original author of the scale) are regarded as low level of emotional maturity while those who score 31 to 45 are said to possess moderate level of emotional maturity and those who scored above 45 were said to possess high level of emotional maturity. The categories were also analysed descriptively and the result is presented in Table 1

	Frequency	Per cent
Low	213	19.6
Moderate	596	54.9
High	276	25.4
Total	1085	100.0

Table 1: Level of emotional maturity of staff of selected universities in southwest Nigeria?

Table 1 presents the level of emotional maturity demonstrated by staff of selected universities in southwest Nigeria. It can be seen from the table that the largest percentage of the participants (54.9%) demonstrated moderate level of emotional maturity while 25.4% demonstrated high level. Also 19.6% of the participants demonstrated low level of emotional maturity.

Research Question 2. What are the patterns of marital conflict among staff of selected universities in southwest Nigeria?

To answer this research question, three approaches were adopted. In the first approach the responses of the selected staff to the section B of the questionnaire was analysed descriptively using percentages and Relative Significance Index (RSI) and the result is presented in Table

	Items on pattern of marital conflict. How frequently does my spouse...?	Always		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		No response		RSI	Rank
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	Yells at me	79	7.3	255	23.5	318	29.3	388	35.8	45	4.1	0.506	11
2	Gives up quickly to end an argument	333	30.7	379	34.9	270	24.9	80	7.4	23	2.1	0.727	6
3	Hurts me with some objects	42	3.9	136	12.5	131	12.1	752	69.3	24	2.2	0.375	17
4	Withdraws from arguments	333	30.7	424	39.1	187	17.2	109	10.0	32	2.9	0.733	5
5	Pushes me down	50	4.6	105	9.7	156	14.4	762	70.2	32	2.9	0.368	18
6	Is good at resolving our differences	527	48.6	383	36.3	100	9.2	45	4.1	30	2.8	0.830	2
7	Criticises my personality	79	7.3	217	20.0	335	30.9	424	39.1	30	2.8	0.488	12
8	Keeps quiet during disagreements	265	24.4	458	42.2	216	19.9	124	11.4	22	2.0	0.703	8
9	Slaps my face	47	4.3	71	6.5	129	11.9	812	74.8	26	2.4	0.347	19
10	Openly shares my feelings	438	40.4	375	34.6	138	12.7	106	9.8	28	2.6	0.771	4
11	Sexually denies me	52	4.8	201	18.5	263	24.2	534	49.2	35	3.2	0.445	15
12	Does everything to avoid conflict with me	527	48.6	348	32.1	127	11.7	62	5.7	21	1.9	0.815	3
13	Decides how to	33	3.0	411	37.9	418	38.5	152	14.0	33	3.0	0.580	10

	resolve our differences												
14	Insults me	40	3.7	134	12.4	241	22.2	649	59.8	21	1.9	0.398	16
15	Does not communicate with me	67	6.2	204	18.8	312	28.8	468	43.1	34	3.1	0.469	13
16	Believes in give and take in our discussions	328	30.2	292	26.2	206	19.0	134	12.4	24	2.2	0.712	7
17	Ignores my feelings	59	5.4	213	19.6	277	25.5	513	47.3	23	2.1	0.457	14
18	Listens respectfully to my opinions	591	54.5	291	26.8	122	11.2	60	5.5	21	1.9	0.832	1
19	Beats me	21	1.9	78	7.2	99	9.1	865	79.7	22	2.0	0.325	20
20	Leaves scene of our arguments	202	18.6	417	38.4	289	26.6	147	13.5	30	2.8	0.660	9

Table 2: Patterns of marital interaction during conflicts

Table 2 presents the research participants' responses in terms of the interactions they undertake during marital crises. It can be seen from the table that the prevalent kind of interaction identified by the participants is that the spouse "listens respectfully to my opinions" which possess the highest RSI value of 0.832 and was said to occur always by 54.5% of the respondents, sometimes by 26.8% and rarely by 11.2% while only 5.5% of the respondents claimed it never occurred. The next popular view of the respondents was that the spouse "is good at resolving our differences" and "does everything to avoid conflict with me" with other very high values of the RSI (0.830 and 0.815 respectively). The least popular interactions the staff members reported experienced during crises was that the spouse "beats me" with the least RSI value of 0.325.

In the second approach, the participants' responses to each item were scored in such a way that an "always" response was coded 3 while a "sometimes" response was coded 2 and a "rarely" response was coded 1. Also a "Never" response was coded zero. The individuals' scores on each of the crisis interaction was obtained by adding up the individual scores on each corresponding items as presented in table 2 in line with Gottman (1999).

Pattern	Items	Description
A	1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 14, 19	Destructive pattern
B	6, 10, 12, 13, 16, 18	Constructive Pattern
C	2, 4, 8, 11, 15, 17 & 20	Withdrawal Pattern

Table 3: Items representing different patterns during marital conflicts

Table 2 presents items describing occurrences during different patterns of marital conflict. In order to determine the prevalent pattern of marital conflict the respondents experience, the scores of the participants on all the different patterns were subjected to a k-means cluster analysis, saving the cluster membership and final cluster centres. The results are presented in

	Cluster		
	1	2	3
PatAa	2.11	9.71	2.05
PatBb	5.64	10.06	14.32
PatCc	4.15	11.75	9.84

Table 4: Final Cluster Centres

Table 4 shows the final cluster centres of the three clusters obtained from the cluster analysis. In k-mean cluster analysis, a cluster is identified by its nearness to a cluster centre while other clusters are located with their closeness to other cluster centres. It can be seen that Pattern A is the closest to cluster 1 other patterns in cluster 2 Pattern A is still closer but it has been identified as cluster one. However, pattern B is closer than Pattern C and therefore identified as cluster 2 while Pattern C is closer to cluster 3 and is so identified. The cluster membership which represents the prevalent marital

conflict pattern reportedly experienced by each of the participants was saved and was analysed descriptively to obtain the prevalent marital conflict pattern among the research participants under study. The result is presented in Table 4

Marital Conflict pattern	Frequency	Percent
Pattern A: Destructive	66	6.1
Pattern B: Constructive	291	26.8
Pattern C: Withdrawal	728	67.1
Total	1085	100.0

Table 5: Prevalent Marital conflict patterns experienced by staff of Universities in Southwest Nigeria

Table 5 shows the patterns of marital conflicts experienced by staff of selected universities in southwest Nigeria. It can be seen from the table that most of the respondents (67.1%) indicated that they experienced withdrawal marital conflict pattern while only 26.8% experienced constructive pattern. In fact, 6.1% indicated that they experience destructive marital conflict.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between emotional maturity and patterns of marital conflict among staff of selected universities in Southwest Nigeria?

To test the hypothesis a cross tabulation of the levels of emotional stability demonstrated by the respondent and the attendant pattern of marital conflict they reportedly experiences was carried out.

Level of Emotional Maturity	Patterns of Marital Conflict			Total
	Destructive	Withdrawal	Constructive	
Low	11 (1.0%)	73 (6.7%)	129 (11.9%)	213 (19.6%)
Moderate	40 (3.7%)	407 (37.5%)	149 (13.7%)	596 (54.9%)
High	15 (1.4%)	248 (22.9%)	13 (1.2%)	276 (25.4%)
Total	66 (6.1%)	728 (67.1%)	291 (26.8%)	1085 (100.0%)

Table 6: Relationship between emotional maturity and patterns of marital conflict among staff of selected universities in Southwest Nigeria

Table 6 shows the relationship between the respondents' level of emotional maturity and the pattern of the marital conflict they experience. It can be seen from the table that for destructive and withdrawal patterns of marital conflict, the percentage of respondents' in the high level of emotional stability categories (1.4% and 22.9% respectively) is larger than the percentage of those in the lower categories (1.0% and 6.7% respectively). However, for constructive patterns, the percentage of the participants in the low level of emotional maturity (11.9%) was found to be larger than those with high level of emotional stability (1.2%).

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between emotional maturity and patterns of marital conflict among staff of selected universities in southwest Nigeria.

To test the hypothesis a Chi-Square test of relationship was conducted between levels of emotional maturity and patterns of marital conflict among the selected staff and the result is presented in Table 7

Level of Emotional Maturity	Patterns of Marital Conflict			Total	Chi-square	df	Sig.
	Destructive	Withdrawal	Constructive				
Low	11 (1.0%)	73 (6.7%)	129 (11.9%)	213 (19.6%)	197.976	4	0.000
Moderate	40 (3.7%)	407 (37.5%)	149 (13.7%)	596 (54.9%)			

High	15 (1.4%)	248 (22.9%)	13 (1.2%)	276 (25.4%)			
Total	66 (6.1%)	728 (67.1%)	291 (26.8%)	1085 (100.0%)			

Table 7: Relationship between levels of emotional maturity and patterns of marital conflict among staff of selected universities in southwest Nigeria

Table 7 shows the relationship between the respondents' level of emotional maturity and the pattern of the marital conflict they experience. It can be seen from the table that the Chi-square value obtained in the test was 197.976 at $p = 0.000$. Since the p -value fails to attain the 0.05 threshold, the hypothesis cannot be accepted. It can therefore be concluded that a significant relationship exists between the respondents' level of emotional maturity and the patterns of the marital conflict they experience.

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result showed that more than a half of the participants demonstrated moderate level of emotional maturity, a quarter demonstrated high level while only a handful demonstrated low level of emotional maturity.

The result also revealed that all the three patterns are being experienced though, at varying degree, by the staff. However, when ranked in terms of preponderance, the demand-withdraw pattern was the most prominent, followed by the constructive pattern while the destructive pattern was the least popular. The result established two facts. On one hand, the result showed that married members of staff of universities in southwest Nigeria, regardless of their academic attainment, levels of exposure, enlightenment and socio-economic status, are not insulated from marital conflict. This was a further confirmation of findings reported by Siffert and Schwarz (2010); Pash and Bradbury (1998); Croban (1996); Kuder (1995) and Veroff & Leber (1993) that disagreement is a natural part of every marital relationship. On the other hand, majority of the staff members, as stated above, engaged in the demand-withdraw pattern. This finding is consistent with findings of Baucom, Mcfarland and Christensen (2010); Andrea and Beate (2010); Caughlin and Ramey (2005); Fincham (2003); Gottman and Levenson (2000) that the demand-withdraw interaction pattern is not only the typical pattern of marital conflict but is also present in diverse types of relationships including romantic relationships, friendships, parent-child relationships and married couples.

Furthermore, the length of marriage seems not to have had an impact on the patterns of interaction. Even though only a few of the respondents indicated that they engaged in destructive pattern, yet when the length of marriage is taken into cognisance, this researcher wonders while a preponderant number still engaged in demand-withdraw. Majority of the staff have been married for as long as between 5 and 30 years. It is assumed that couples in marriage relationship will become mature in their patterns of interaction with the passage of time. However, the length of marriage appeared not to have reflected this. When compared with the number of respondents experiencing constructive pattern, it may be concluded that majority of the staff are maritally distressed. This finding may be a further confirmation of finding reported by Fincham

(2003) that behaviour sequence in which the husband withdraws and the wife responds with hostility (and vice versa) are more common in distressed than satisfied couples.

When juxtaposed with the three patterns of marital conflict identified, the result showed that all the three levels of emotional maturity have varying degrees of association with the three patterns of marital conflict. However, the demand-withdraw pattern featured more prominently than the other two patterns in terms of degree of association with the three levels of emotional maturity. The result further showed that of the three levels of emotional maturity associated with this pattern, the respondents in the moderate level were in the majority, followed by those in the high and low levels, respectively. The participants who demonstrated high level of emotional maturity were found to be more in the category of demand-withdraw pattern than the remaining two patterns. One would have expected that they would have tilted towards the constructive pattern given their high level of emotional maturity. Constructive behaviours include overtly positive reactions such as saying nice things, calmly discussing the problem actively listening. These are marks or features of high level of emotional maturity. Future research may want to find out the reason for the association between high level of emotional maturity and demand-withdraw pattern of marital conflict.

Going by the research findings of Gottman (1994) which categorised couples into four distinct groups based on their mode of emotional regulation during conflict situations, majority of the respondents for this study may be classified as what he tagged as conflict-avoiding couples. Conflict-avoiding partners as found by Gottman (1994) rarely argue because they want to avoid confrontation at all cost as they reasoned that their problems will work themselves out. This explains the urge to withdraw by either of the couples. This behaviour pattern, from the viewpoint of the findings of this study, may be regarded as a mark of moderate level of emotional maturity.

The finding of the only hypothesis which investigated the relationship between emotional maturity and patterns of marital conflict among staff of selected universities in southwest revealed that a significant relationship exist between respondents' level of emotional maturity and the patterns of marital conflict they experience, hence the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between emotional maturity and patterns of marital conflict among staff of selected universities in southwest Nigeria was rejected. This finding is in agreement with that of Jaisri and Joseph (2013); Bano et al. (2013); Saffarpour and Sharifi (2013); Robins, Caspi and Moffit (2000) which confirmed the existence of significant relationship between emotional maturity or stability and patterns of marital conflict.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, it could be concluded that staff in universities in southwest Nigeria have one form of marital conflict or the other. Furthermore, the study concluded that all the three patterns of marital conflict are being experienced by the staff. The demand-withdraw pattern

appeared to be the typical pattern among the staff. Finally, the study concluded that emotional maturity plays an important role in fostering a happy, healthy and enduring marital relationship.

APPENDIX

Emotional Maturity Questionnaire (EMQ)

Select any one of Rarely, Sometimes, Often and Never as each of the following items applies to you.

	Statements:	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Never
1.	I keep my emotions under control.				
2.	I take responsibility for my actions in the home.				
3.	I make necessary emotional adjustment when interacting with my spouse.				
4.	I tend to make impulsive decisions.				
5.	I get angry or frustrated easily in the home.				
6.	My confidence level is low in the home.				
7.	My mood is easily affected by what is taking place around me.				
8.	I tend to get angry or frustrated easily.				
9.	My relationship with my spouse is turbulent.				
10.	I have trouble opening up to my spouse.				
11.	I blame my spouse for every mistake.				
12.	I look to my spouse to validate my decisions before I act on them.				
13.	I integrate my needs and desires with that of my spouse.				
14.	I tend to tell my spouse what I think he/she wants to hear and not what I feel.				
15.	I need my spouse to approve of me for me to feel good about myself.				
16.	I'm afraid of disapproval by my spouse.				
17.	I tend to turn to alcohol to take away my emotional pain.				
18.	I get offended by my spouse's attitude.				
19.	I have trouble feeling relaxed with my spouse.				
20.	I communicate well with my spouse.				

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