



Navigating the Role of Conflict Management Strategies in Strengthening Marital Bonds among Nigerian Academic Staff in Post-COVID-19 Era

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Abstract

This study explores strategies for promoting marital bonds among Nigerian academic personnel in the post-COVID-19 era in view of the significant challenges given by the lockdowns and lifestyle changes brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic. Couples frequently face marital issues, and the COVID-19 pandemic has made them more challenging, particularly for academic personnel who experienced previously unheard-of disruptions to their typical work schedules and routines. The study employs Rahim's model of interpersonal conflict management techniques, which comprises integrating, obliging, dominating, compromising, and avoiding styles, to assess their effectiveness in minimizing marital problems in the academic setting. Academic staff from both private and public universities in six different states of Nigeria contributed information, creating a representative and diverse sample for the study. The findings emphasize the value of cooperative and accommodating methods for resolving conflicts and demonstrate how effectively integrating and accommodating conflict resolution strategies have reduced marital conflicts among academic personnel after COVID-19. Although dominating and compromise behaviors did not significantly lessen marital problems, this suggests that these methods might not work well for academic staff members during the epidemic. Additionally, the avoiding strategy had a moderate impact, demonstrating that while putting off difficulties could temporarily reduce tensions, doing so is not enough to ensure marital harmony. This study contributes to the understanding of dispute resolution methods in the specific post-COVID-19 environment of Nigerian academic personnel. The findings offer valuable insights for couples and organizations looking to strengthen marriages among academic staff. Future research should examine the effects of cultural and contextual factors on conflict resolution as well as the long-term effects of these strategies on the quality of relationships and marital satisfaction.

Keywords: Conflict, marital conflict, marital bond, academic staff, COVID 19 Pandemic

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic epidemic impacted many aspects of daily life all around the world and brought forth hitherto unheard-of challenges. In reaction to the epidemic, governments implemented measures such as lockdowns and movement restrictions to stop the virus from spreading. These efforts had a significant social and psychological impact, notably on families and relationships, although being necessary for the public's health. Like many other countries, Nigeria's universities had academic staff members who were affected by the pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns. The academic community faced a unique mix of challenges during this time, including abrupt switches to online learning, stalled research, and increased workloads. Academic staff members had to juggle these professional obligations while also managing the complexity of their personal lives, including their marriages.

Conflict is a natural part of human interactions, including those that take place within the family unit, and marriage is not free from it (Oni-Ojo and Roland-Otaru, 2013). Married academic personnel in Nigerian universities must cope with the reality of marital strife (Delatorre and Wagner, 2018; Tolorunleke, 2014; Ibeh, Obidoa, Uzoachina, 2013). The COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns have introduced new stressors and challenges into daily life, potentially exacerbating marital conflicts.

Extant literature has shown that failure to effectively manage marital conflict can have severe consequences, both for the individuals involved and society as a whole. Numerous studies have highlighted the negative outcomes associated with improperly managed conflict, including domestic violence, divorce, adverse effects on job performance, increased juvenile delinquency rates, and reduced academic performance of children within the family (Dew and Dakin, 2011; Ugochukwu and Amadi, 2014; Isanejad, Ahmad Amani, Azizi, and Azimifar, 2015; Igbinoba, Osibanjo, Adeniji, Salau, and Atolagbe, 2019). Contemporary theories suggest that conflict itself is not inherently destructive; its impact depends on how it is managed (Yetunde, Igbinoba, and Adejumo, 2021). Therefore, understanding and employing effective conflict management strategies is crucial to prevent marital conflicts from escalating into harmful and destructive outcomes.

Marital relationships play a pivotal role in the well-being and productivity of individuals, including academic staff. The stressors brought about by the pandemic and lockdowns may have placed additional strains on these relationships. Understanding how Nigerian academic staff handled marital problems both during and after the COVID-19 lockdowns is critical. There is still a substantial knowledge gap about how the COVID-19 pandemic specifically affected marital relationships among academic personnel in Nigeria both before and after the lockdown, despite the fact that the effects of the epidemic on numerous parts of society have been extensively studied. The epidemic's particular stressors, including as increased work demands, monetary uncertainties, health concerns, and isolation, may have made marital problems worse.

This study aims to close this knowledge gap by looking at the strategies employed by Nigerian academic staff to preserve and strengthen their marriages in the post-COVID-19 period. By identifying practical strategies for conflict management and relationship improvement, this study intends to help academic staff members and their families maintain stability and well-being in the face of ongoing problems caused by the pandemic and its aftermath.

1.1 Statement of Research Problem

The primary concern of the study is the prevalence of marital conflicts among academic staff members from Nigeria, particularly in light of the COVID-19 epidemic and the accompanying lockdowns. Relationship conflicts inside marriage, which typically arise from personality and viewpoint differences, have become a severe issue that can lead to divorce or even separation. These conflicts have intensified as a result of increased verbal and physical violence, extramarital affairs, substance abuse, and their detrimental effects on a couple's psychological well-being. The wellbeing of children, gambling, sicknesses, and societal issues including growing divorce rates, domestic violence, and single parenting are further consequences of a failing marriage. However, constructive conflict management can lead to the development of healthier relationships, increased intimacy, and overall satisfaction, while mismanaged conflicts can result in dissatisfaction and stress within the couple. The COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns have introduced additional stressors, such as increased time spent together and changes in daily routines, which have triggered marital conflicts among academic staff. Therefore, this study aims to explore effective conflict management strategies specifically tailored to address marital conflicts among Nigerian academic staff, particularly in the post-COVID-19 era.

1.2 Research Aim

The aim of this research is to investigate and identify effective strategies for strengthening marital bonds among Nigerian academic staff in the post-COVID-19 era, with a focus on navigating the unique challenges posed by the pandemic and associated lockdowns.

1.3 Research Objectives

- i. To analyse the impact of integrating conflict management strategy on marital conflict among Nigerian academic staff in the post-COVID-19 era;
- ii. To examine the role of obliging conflict management strategy in strengthening marital bond within the context of Nigerian academic staff post-COVID-19;
- iii. To assess the effects of dominating conflict management strategy on marital conflict dynamics among Nigerian academic staff after the COVID-19 pandemic;
- iv. To determine the influence of avoiding conflict management strategy on the occurrence and resolution of marital conflicts among Nigerian academic staff; and
- v. To evaluate the effectiveness of compromising conflict management strategy in fostering marital harmony and resolving conflicts among Nigerian academic staff post-COVID-19.

2. Conceptual Review

2.1 COVID 19 Pandemic

The recent COVID-19 pandemic, originating in Wuhan, China, and subsequently declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (Güner, Hasanoğlu, and Aktaş, 2020), has had profound consequences on various aspects of life worldwide. One of the notable repercussions of the pandemic was the imposition of lockdowns and self-isolation measures in many countries, compelling couples to remain confined together at home. These measures, while crucial for curbing the virus's spread, had significant implications for marital relationships. Marital conflict was exacerbated as couples faced job losses, financial instability, anxiety, unrealistic expectations, and challenges related to communication and personal space during the lockdown (Maiti, Singh, Innamuri, Hasija, 2020; Taylor, 2020). The pandemic necessitated a reevaluation of conflict management strategies within marital bonds, as traditional coping mechanisms, such as temporary distance, were rendered ineffective in the face of enforced togetherness.

2.2 Marital Conflict

Marital conflicts, as defined by Tolorunleke (2014), encompass the pressures that couples experience in fulfilling their respective roles as partners within the marriage. These pressures, when mishandled, can escalate into frictions that ultimately jeopardize the stability of the marital union. Agboola and Oluwatosin (2018) further elaborate on marital conflict as disagreements or dissensions between spouses or within the family, stemming from differing needs, ideas, or goals. Various forms of marital conflict, including spouse battery, abuse, sexual issues, marital irresponsibility, incest, rape, and subtle power struggles between couples, have been identified by Osarenren, Nwadinigwe, and Anyama (2013).

2.3 Marital Bond

Marital bond refers to the emotional, psychological, and social connection or attachment that exists between spouses within a marriage. A happy and successful marriage is defined by the caliber and strength of the tie between the husband and wife as well as their ability to support one another and their overall devotion. The study looks at approaches to create and improve this link among Nigerian academic workers in light of the unique difficulties of the post-COVID-19 era caused by the pandemic and associated lockdowns.

2.4 Conflict Management Styles

Conflict management is essential in married relationships to keep the peace and prevent arguments from escalating to unhealthy levels (Igbinoba, Salau, Falola, Olokundun, and Ogueyungbo, 2019). If you want to successfully handle disputes, you must employ the appropriate conflict management strategies. In this study, we investigate how husbands and wives choose to resolve conflicts using Rahim's model of interpersonal conflict management approaches. In order to achieve a balance between self- and other-concern, Rahim's model is based on five distinct conflict management philosophies (Rahim and Bonoma, 1979).

One of the identified conflict management styles is the "Integrating Style," characterized by a high concern for both self and others. This style is particularly suitable for addressing complex issues as it encourages parties to work together towards mutually acceptable solutions. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the "Dominating Style" exhibits high self-concern but low concern for others. In this approach, one party tends to prioritize their own needs and expectations, often leading to a strong and opinionated stance. The "Obliging Style," conversely, demonstrates low self-concern but high concern for others, as individuals in conflict willingly forego their personal concerns to accommodate the needs of the other party. The "Avoiding Style," also known as suppression, is characterized by low self-concern and high concern for others, where individuals withdraw from conflict situations without expressing concern for their own needs. Finally, the "Compromising Style" reflects an intermediate concern for both self and others, fostering a give-and-take approach where both parties make concessions to arrive at acceptable solutions. These conflict management styles offer valuable insights into how couples navigate conflicts within their marital relationships, contributing to a better understanding of their dynamics and preferences (Rahim and Bonoma, 1979). The dimensions are represented with a schematic model presented in Figure 1:

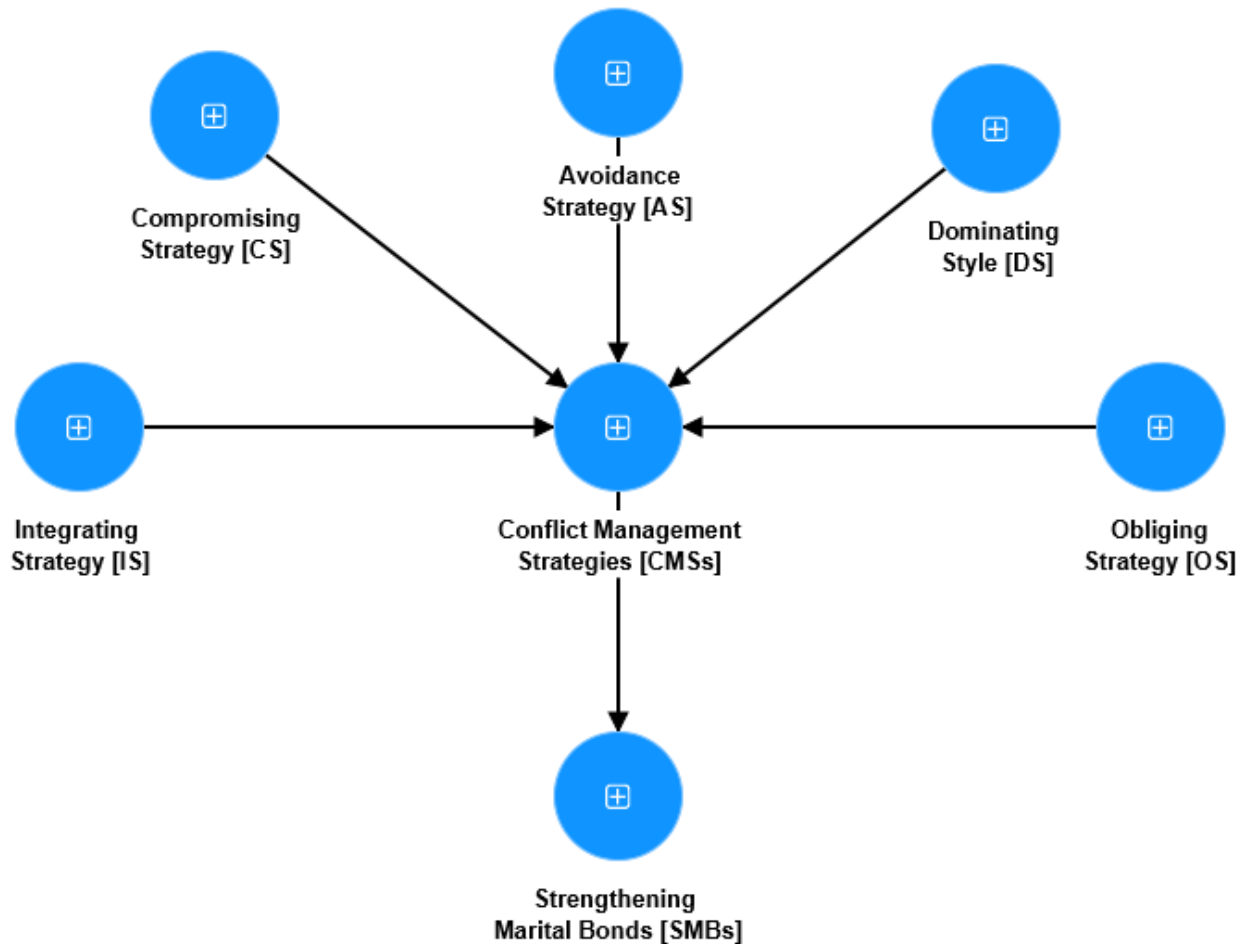


Figure 1: Schematic model developed by the researcher

2.5 Hypotheses Development

Integrating conflict management strategy, which emphasizes high concern for both self and others, may face challenges in effectively promoting marital bonds among Nigerian academic staff in the post-COVID-19 era. Nigeria's cultural and societal dynamics play a significant role in shaping marital conflicts, and in this context, integrating may not align with prevailing cultural norms. Nigerian society often places a strong emphasis on collective values and family harmony, which might necessitate conflict management strategies that prioritize concern for others over self. Additionally, the unique stressors brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as financial strains and job uncertainties, may require a more accommodating and collective approach to conflict resolution (Igbinoba, Salau, Falola, Olokundun, and Ogueyungbo, 2019). Based on this, the first research hypothesis was formulated:

H₁: Integrating conflict management strategy cannot have a significant effect in strengthening marital bond within the context of Nigerian academic staff post-COVID-19

The obliging conflict management strategy, characterized by low concern for self and high concern for others, may face limitations in effectively promoting marital bonds among Nigerian academic staff in the post-COVID-19 era. Nigerian society often values individual assertiveness and self-expression, and in this context, obliging may not align with prevailing cultural norms (Igbinoba, et al, 2019). Marital conflicts during the pandemic may involve issues such as job loss, financial strain, and changes in family dynamics, which require assertiveness and individual advocacy. As a result, the second research hypothesis was formulated:

H₂: Obliging conflict management strategy cannot have a significant role in reducing marital conflicts within the context of Nigerian academic staff post-COVID-19

The dominating conflict management strategy, characterized by high concern for self and low concern for others, may not be an effective approach to promoting marital bonds among Nigerian academic staff in the post-COVID-19 era. Nigerian society places a strong emphasis on communal values, mutual respect, and collaboration (Igbinoba, et al, 2019), making dominating strategies potentially counterproductive. Marital conflicts exacerbated by the pandemic often involve shared challenges such as financial stress and health concerns, where prioritizing one's needs over others can exacerbate tensions. Based on this, the third research hypothesis was formulated:

H₃: Dominating conflict management strategy cannot have a significant effect in strengthening marital bond within the context of Nigerian academic staff post-COVID-19

The avoiding conflict management strategy, characterized by low concern for self and high concern for others, may not be highly effective in strengthening marital bonds among Nigerian academic staff in the post-COVID-19 era. Nigerian society values open communication and addressing issues directly (Igbinoba, et al, 2019), making avoidance potentially counterproductive. Marital conflicts triggered or intensified by the pandemic often involve crucial issues like financial stress and health concerns, which require active engagement and resolution. Consequently, this formed the fourth research hypothesis which was formulated as:

H4: Avoiding conflict management strategy cannot have a significant influence in reducing marital conflicts within the context of Nigerian academic staff post-COVID-19

The compromising conflict management strategy, characterized by intermediate concern for self and others, may face limitations in significantly promoting marital bonds among Nigerian academic staff in the post-COVID-19 era. Nigerian society places great importance on addressing pressing issues directly and finding effective solutions (Igbinoba, et al., 2019), making the compromising approach potentially less effective in the face of complex challenges triggered or intensified by the pandemic. As a result, the fifth research hypothesis was formulated:

H5: Compromising conflict management strategy cannot have a significant effect in strengthening marital bond within the context of Nigerian academic staff post-COVID-19

3. Methodology

This research employed an explanatory research design, which was chosen for its ability to comprehensively assess the relationships between variables. The quantitative approach was specifically utilized to address the research questions and objectives related to "Strategies for Strengthening Marital Bonds Among Nigerian Academic Staff Post-COVID-19." The study population included academic staff from various private and public universities in Nigeria. Data collection was carried out using Google survey forms, allowing for a diverse cross-section of academic staff in Nigeria to participate. Inclusion criteria involved academic staff from selected universities, while exclusion criteria excluded participants who did not meet the defined criteria for academic staff status. Structural and measurement models played a pivotal role in this study, with a particular focus on Structural Equation Modeling - Partial Least Square, version 3. This method was chosen for its suitability in analyzing the relationships between variables. The study also upheld ethical principles, ensuring that all research activities adhered to ethical standards and guidelines.

4. Analysis and Discussions

The scope of this study is specifically tailored to encompass academic staff members hailing from selected private and public universities situated within Nigeria. To achieve a comprehensive and purpose-driven selection process, the research strategically employed both cluster and purposive sampling techniques. This methodical approach led to the systematic identification and inclusion of academic staff from six strategically chosen Nigerian states: Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Oyo, and Ondo. These states were thoughtfully selected based on their reported adoption of recommended technological advancements in the realms of teaching, learning, and community engagement. Subsequently, rigorous follow-up procedures yielded a noteworthy response rate, with 288 fully completed questionnaires successfully retrieved. This response rate, standing at an impressive 82%, underscores the robustness of the dataset and substantiates its appropriateness for establishing a solid research foundation. Furthermore, it reinforces the validity and reliability of this research investigation, which is dedicated to examining the intricate relationships among the variables pertinent to "Strategies for Strengthening Marital Bonds Among Nigerian Academic Staff Post-COVID-19." The remaining 18% of non-responses, incomplete questionnaires, or

participants declining to participate after initially expressing interest were duly documented and factored into the study's overall framework. The breakdown of analysis of academic staff in private and public universities is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Breakdown of Returned Questionnaire [n=288]

S/N	Universities	Universities' Code(s)	% of Copies Retrieved
1	Private Universities	Uni 'A'	42%
2	Public Universities	Uni 'B'	40%

Table 1 provides a comprehensive breakdown of the returned questionnaires from academic staff within private and public universities. The table segregates the universities into two categories: Private Universities represented by 'Uni A' and Public Universities represented by 'Uni B'. The table also shows the proportion of questionnaire copies that were successfully retrieved from each category. Notably, 42% of the questionnaire copies from private universities (referred to as "Uni A") and 40% from public universities (referred to as "Uni B") were returned. It is critical to comprehend the distribution and participation of academic personnel from both private and public universities in order to correctly examine and interpret the research findings. Such comprehension is provided by this breakdown.

The demographic characteristics of the academic staff that teach at the several universities in Southwest Nigeria are thoroughly broken out in Table 2. Numerous important factors, such as gender, age distribution, marital status, educational background, and number of years of experience in the teaching profession are included in this group of demographic features. The diversity and personalities of the people (faculty) who are crucial to Southwest Nigeria's educational system can be seen in this in-depth analysis of demographic traits (See Table 2).

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Academic staff [n=288]

SN	Variables	Sub variables	Percentage [%]
1.	Gender	Male	51%
		Female	49%
		Total	100%
2.	Age	Below 30 years	7%
		31-40 years	33%
		41-50 years	49%
		51yrs & Above	11%
		Total	100%
3.	Marital Status	Single	10%
		Married	88%
		Others	2%
		Total	100%
4	Educational Qualification	Assistant Lecturer	11%
		Lecturer II	26%

		Lecturer I	39%
		Senior Lecturer	15%
		Professorial Cadre	9%
		Total	100%
5	Years of experience in the Universities	1-5years	9%
		6-10years	38%
		11-15years	35%
		Over 16yrs	18%
		Total	100%

Table 2 gives a comprehensive account of the demographic profile of the academic staff participants in this study, serving as an important resource for understanding the composition of the sample and assessing the research findings. The gender distribution of the participants reveals a nearly equal split, indicating a well-balanced representation of both genders in the study (51% men, 49% women). Ages 41 to 50 make up the majority of the group (49%), followed by those between 31 and 40 (33%), indicating that this is an older and more seasoned cohort. Eighty eight percent of people are married, while 10 percent are single, and 2 percent fall into other categories. Educational qualifications are diverse, with the highest proportion holding the rank of Lecturer I (39%), followed by Lecturer II (26%). Senior Lecturers make up 15%, Professorial Cadre 9%, and Assistant Lecturers 11%. In terms of experience within universities, the largest contingent possesses 6-10 years of experience (38%), followed by 11-15 years (35%). Those with over 16 years of experience constitute 18%, while the 1-5 years category comprises 9%. These demographic insights provide essential context for the study, aiding in the comprehension and interpretation of the academic staff's characteristics involved in the research.

4.1 Analysis of Research Hypotheses

The hypothesis examined the relationship between conflict management strategies and marital bonds among Nigerian academic staff in post-covid-19 era. To analyze the data, path coefficients, t-statistics, R-squared values, and p-values were employed. Figure 2 illustrates how the path coefficient elucidates the direction and strength of the relationship between the variables under investigation. Additionally, the R-squared value offers insights into the degree to which conflict management strategies explain variance in strengthening the marital bonds among Nigerian academic staff in post-covid-19 era (See Figure 2).

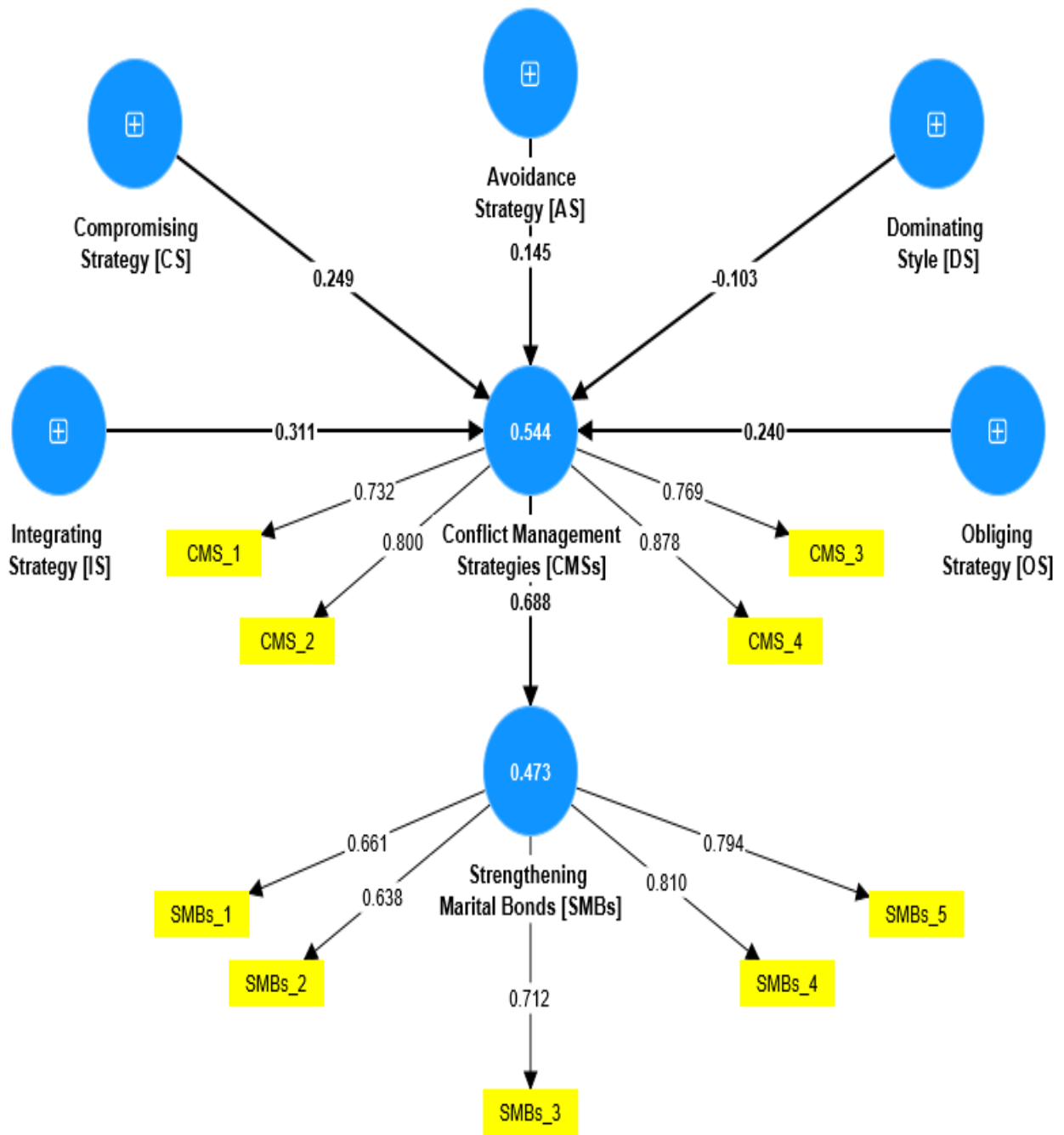


Figure 2: Path co-efficient of conflict management strategies and marital bonds among Nigerian academic staff in post-covid-19 era

Figure 2 illustrates the structural model employing the Partial Least Squares (PLS) algorithm, portraying the relationship between conflict management strategies (specifically, integrating, obliging, dominating, compromising, and avoiding) and their impact on the marital bonds among academic staff in both public and private universities in Nigeria. Additionally, the SEM provides the loading values for each measurement item associated with these constructs. To assess the significance of these relationships, β coefficients and p-values are estimated using the PLS Bootstrapping Model, offering valuable insights into the statistical importance of the connections

between conflict management strategies and the promotion of marital bonds among academic staff in Nigerian universities. Notably, all measurement values linked to conflict management strategies and their influence on strengthening the marital bonds among academic staff in Nigerian universities, as derived from the research instrument, exhibit statistical significance at a p-value of 0.05, adopting this threshold as the determinant of statistical significance (See Table 3).

Table 3: Construct Validity and Reliability

	Error Variance	Composite Reliability	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Indicators
Indicators	< 0.5	≥ 0.8	≥ 0.5	≥ 0.7	
Marital bond		0.853	0.527	0.811	5
Integrating	0.289	0.803	0.522	711	5
Obliging	0.274	0.815	0.600	726	5
Dominating	0.267	0.829	0.573	733	5
Compromising	0.296	0.815	0.611	704	5
Avoiding	0.291	0.800	0.513	709	5

Fornell and Larcker (1981) established recommended thresholds for assessing the reliability and validity of measurement scales. These guidelines involve multiple criteria. The study also assessed construct validity by examining both convergent and discriminant validity, providing evidence of the relationships between conflict management strategies [integrating, obliging, dominating, compromising and avoiding] and the marital bonds among academic staff in public and private universities in Nigeria. Table 4 Shows the path co-efficient, T value and P value of conflict management strategies and marital bonds among Nigerian academic staff in post-covid-19 era

Table 4: Path Co-efficient value for conflict management strategies and marital bonds among Nigerian academic staff in post-covid-19 era

Variables and Cross Loading	Path Co-efficient (O)	F-square	Std. Dev. (STDEV)	T-Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Integrating style → Promotion of Marital Bonds	0.311	0.535	0.060	5.402	0.000
Obliging style → Promotion of Marital Bonds	0.240	0.549	0.055	4.816	0.005
Dominating style → Promotion of Marital Bonds	-0.103	0.210	0.058	0.584	0.560
Compromising style → Promotion of Marital Bonds	0.249	0.789	0.081	4.359	0.019
Avoiding style → Promotion of Marital Bonds	0.145	0.529	0.054	2.403	0.006
Conflict Mgt Strategy → Promotion of Marital Bonds	0.688	0.811	0.046	9.887	0.000
Promotion of Marital Bonds	R Square (R²)		R Square (R²) Adjusted		
Conflict Management Strategies	0.544		0.540		
Marital Bonds	0.473		0.469		

Table 4 provides valuable insights into the relationship between various conflict management strategies and the marital bonds among Nigerian academic staff in the post-COVID-19 era. The path coefficients indicate the strength and direction of these relationships.

Notably, the integrating style of conflict management demonstrates a positive and statistically significant influence on the marital bond ($\beta = 0.311$, $p < 0.000$). The path coefficient value of 0.311 suggests that using an integrating conflict management style has a significant positive impact on the promotion of marital bonds among academic staff. This finding suggests that academic staff who adopt integrating strategies in managing conflicts within their marital relationships are more likely to experience effective conflict resolution and reduced marital conflict during the post-COVID-19 era.

Based on the analysis, the path coefficient value of 0.240 suggests that employing an obliging conflict management style also positively influences the promotion of marital bonds ($\beta = 0.240$, $p = 0.005$). While the coefficient is lower than the integrating style, it still has a meaningful impact. The p-value (0.005) indicates statistical significance. A favorable and substantial link between the marital bond and the compromising style of conflict management may be seen ($\beta = 0.249$, $p = 0.005$). The path coefficient value of 0.249 suggests that using a compromising conflict management style positively affects the promotion of marital bonds among academic staff. This means that after the epidemic, marital conflict will definitely reduce for those who put their spouse's interests and concerns before their own.

The dominating approach of conflict management, however, does not seem to have a significant effect on the reduction of marital conflict ($= -0.103$, $p = 0.560$). The path coefficient value of -0.103 suggests a negative relationship between the dominating conflict management style and the promotion of marital bonds. However, this relationship is not statistically significant, as indicated by the high p-value (0.560). This suggests that, in the post-COVID-19 era, attempting to assert control or enforce one's opinions may not be a good strategy for relieving marital conflict among academic staff.

The overall relationship between conflict management strategies and the promotion of marital bonds is strongly positive, with a path coefficient value of 0.688 and a highly significant p-value (0.000). This indicates that, collectively, conflict management strategies have a substantial impact on strengthening marital bonds among academic staff. These values indicate the proportion of variance in marital bonds explained by conflict management strategies. Approximately 54% of the variance is explained, and when adjusted for the number of predictors, it remains at 54%. This suggests that conflict management strategies account for a significant portion of the variation in marital bonds among academic staff.

In summary, this table suggests that certain conflict management styles, such as integrating, obliging, compromising, and avoiding, have a positive impact on promoting marital bonds among Nigerian academic staff. However, the dominating style does not appear to have a significant effect. Overall, conflict management strategies collectively play a substantial role in enhancing marital bonds among this group, with more than half of the variance in marital bonds being explained by these strategies.

5. Conclusion

This study sheds light on the intricate relationship between conflict management strategies and the decline in marital conflict among Nigerian academic staff in the post-COVID-19 era. The findings emphasize the value of cooperative and constructive approaches to marriage conflict resolution, particularly during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. The study discovered that both integrating and obliging conflict management techniques had a positive and significant impact on the reduction of marital conflict. This demonstrates that academic staff members who prioritize collaboration, honest communication, and attending to their spouse's needs are more likely to experience less marital conflict in the wake of the pandemic.

The dominating conflict management technique did not, however, have a substantial influence on the reduction of marital conflict. This shows that trying to regulate or enforce one's preferences in conflict situations may not be the best strategy for promoting marital harmony among academic personnel during hard times. The importance of promoting effective conflict-management strategies that prioritize collaboration and accommodation is highlighted by these findings, which have substantial implications for programs for marital counseling and support. By doing so, academic staff and their spouses can navigate the complexities of marital life during and after the pandemic with greater resilience and harmony.

6. Recommendations and Policy Implications

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to enhance marital relationships among Nigerian academic staff in the post-COVID-19 era:

Promotion of Integrative Conflict Resolution: Given that the integrating style of conflict management was found to have a significant positive impact on mitigating marital conflict, it is recommended that couples, particularly academic staff, be encouraged to adopt this approach. Integrative conflict resolution emphasizes open communication, cooperation, and finding mutually acceptable solutions. Marital counseling programs and workshops can be organized by universities and relevant institutions to teach couples effective integrative conflict resolution skills.

Training in Conflict Management Skills: Academic institutions may provide workshops and training on conflict resolution methods to their staff, especially in the setting of married partnerships. These programs can equip academic staff with the skills necessary to settle disputes amicably and prevent disputes from developing into physical altercations. The primary goal of training should be the development of negotiation, active listening, empathy, and compromise skills.

Psychological Support Services: Given the psychological repercussions of the COVID-19 epidemic and its propensity to stress marriages, universities should consider offering psychological support services to their teaching staff. These services include things like mental health resources, stress management methods, and counseling. By addressing the emotional well-being of academic staff and their families, institutions can contribute to healthier and more resilient marital bonds.

Specifically, the COVID-19 pandemic has posed unique challenges to marital relationships, including those among academic staff in Nigeria. However, with the adoption of effective conflict management strategies, training in conflict resolution skills, and access to psychological support services, academic staff can strengthen their marital bonds and navigate the post-pandemic era with greater harmony and resilience.

7. Contributions to knowledge

This study makes significant contributions to the existing body of knowledge in several ways. Firstly, it adds to the understanding of how conflict management strategies can influence the marital bonds in the specific context of Nigerian academic staff during the post-COVID-19 era. The research identifies the effectiveness of integrating and obliging conflict management styles in reducing marital conflicts, offering valuable insights into tailored approaches for couples in this professional setting. Secondly, by investigating the impact of various conflict management strategies within the academic environment, this study contributes to the broader literature on conflict resolution and interpersonal dynamics in workplace relationships. Lastly, the research underscores the importance of addressing the psychological well-being of academic staff and their families, particularly in times of crisis, shedding light on the need for support services within educational institutions. Overall, this study enriches our knowledge of conflict management, marital dynamics, and the specific challenges faced by academic staff in Nigeria in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

8. Limitations and suggestions for further studies

This study has some limitations that warrant acknowledgment. Firstly, the research focused solely on academic staff in Nigeria, and while it provides valuable insights into this specific context, the findings may not be directly applicable to other professions or regions. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data, which may introduce response bias and subjectivity. Furthermore, the research predominantly utilized a quantitative approach, and future studies could benefit from incorporating qualitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of the nuances of marital conflicts and conflict management strategies. Moreover, the study did not consider the influence of cultural and contextual factors on conflict management within academic staff, which could be explored in future research. Finally, the study assessed the impact of conflict management strategies on the marital bonds, but it did not delve into the long-term effects on marital satisfaction and overall relationship quality. Future studies could investigate these aspects to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play.

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