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## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AS DETERMINANTS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF COUNSELORS IN IBADAN METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

**Aim:** *Psychological well-being is essential in the life of counselors to promote happiness, meaning and purpose of life, personal growth and development, and interpersonal relationship with people around them. Many studies on psychological well-being had focused on nurses, students, adolescents among others in Asia, Europe and America but neglected studies of such among counselors in Nigeria. Therefore, this study investigated emotional intelligence and conflict management as determinants of psychological well-being of counselors in Ibadan metropolis.*

**Subject and Methods:** *The study adopted descriptive survey method and purposive sampling was used to select 130 counselors for the study, 70 males and 60 females with age range of 35.7 years. Emotional Intelligence Scale, Conflict Handling Rating Scale and Psychological Well Being Scale were used for data collection. The data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis.*

**Results:** *The findings showed that emotional intelligence and conflicts management jointly contributed to psychological well-being of the counselors (Adjusted R=.180 F<sub>2, 91</sub>= 9.994) and accounted for 18.0% contribution. Emotional intelligence (B=.373 P < 0.05) contributed relatively to psychological well-being while conflict management (B=-.143, P > 0.05) did not contribute to psychological well-being of the counselors.*

**Conclusion:** *It is recommended that emotional intelligence of the counselors should be sustained while training should be organized for counselors on conflict management strategies to improve their psychological well-being.*

**Key words:** Emotional Intelligence, Conflict Management, Psychological Well-Being. Counselors, Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria.

## **Introduction**

Psychological well being of practising counselors is essential for successful counseling practices and every counseling psychologist should pursue it for better professional achievements. Psychological well-being is a concept that deals with contentment and happiness (Seifert, 2005), positive relationship with others, personal mastery, autonomy, a feeling of purpose, meaningful life and personal growth and development (Ryff, 1989). Psychological well-being is not new, it has been investigated by researchers in the past using different but similar terms such as self-concept and self esteem (Rosenber, 1965); mood affect, quality of life, mentality and subjective being (Diener et al, 1985). However, it is a state of self balance between challenges of life and rewarding of life. It is associated with life satisfaction and lack of internal discomfort (Ozers and Rosenthal, 2007). It is certain that psychological well-being can be propelled by some positive factors such as environment of a person, life situations, and relationship with self and others (Dahl and Sanchaz, 1999). The achievement of psychological well-being is possible with mental happiness, profitable and motivating work, meaningful interpersonal relationship with people, forgiveness, positive thinking and emotions ( Diener, 1994).

On the other hand, unfulfilling responsibility, poor motivating environment, wrong social relationship and other life challenges can contribute to psychological unwell-being of any individual. It is submitted that physical illness and stigma relating to physical feature can cause psychological unwell-being (Jackson, Beckeen & Wardle, 2015). The status of psychological well-being is essential to produce job performance, social interaction, harmony in marriage, productivity and cooperation.

Professionally, counseling is a helping profession which involves therapeutic relationship between two or more individuals. Counselors assist individuals with educational, social, health, vocational, economic among other problems to adjust, manage and overcome their life challenges. It is expected of counselors to have high level of psychological well-being to be able to promote positive therapeutic relationships with counselees. It should be noted that contrary emotional dispositions and conflict may arise as result of different views on issues during counseling relationship between a counselor and counselee. However, counselors should demonstrate emotional intelligence skills such as empathy, cooperation, interpersonal relationship and stress tolerance among others to be able to promote their own psychological well-being. Furthermore, conflict management strategies such as problem solving, dialogue, forgiveness, accommodation, collaboration and corroboration should be embraced by counselors to achieve positive psychological state of minds.

Many studies (Miao., Humphrey & Oian, (2014), karimi., Leggat., Bartram., Afshari., Sarkeshik., & Verulava, (2021), Sunday, Terzungwe., Okhakkhume, & Daudu (2017)., Hanif & Raza Naqvi (2014) had investigated the well being of professionals or therapeutic workers such as nurses, university staff, police officers, care givers among others using variables like conflict, emotional intelligence, stress, work attitude but most of them are foreign studies and not done on counselors. Therefore, the present study investigated emotional intelligence and conflict management as determinants of psychological well-being of counselors in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria.

## **Literature Review**

Emotional intelligence, conflict management and psychological well-being are concepts applicable to professional functioning of counselors. Emotional intelligence is a psychological concept that is perceived as multiple intelligence which promotes interpersonal

relationships and essential for sustaining life (Abdul Rauf, Yamidi, Omar, Yasziz and Zubar, 2013). It is a social and emotional skill that is necessary in every areas of life such as teaching, research, student learning and academic performance (Biria and Zafari, 2014).

More so, it was reported in Akanni, Kareem & Oduaran, (2021) that emotional intelligence and perceived person- job fit had a strong and positive relationship with employees well being among academic staff. Then, Karimi., Leggat., Bartram., Afshari., Sarkeshik & Verulava (2021) showed in a study that emotional intelligence predicts the employees' psychological well being among 78 staff of aged care organization in Australia. In another finding, positive relationship was discovered between emotional intelligence, empowering leadership, psychological empowerment and work engagement (Miao., Humphrey, & Oian, 2017). In a similar view, high emotional intelligence is linked with higher experience of psychological well-being (Carmeli, Yitzhak-Havey & Weisberg, 2009) and positively association occurred between emotional intelligence and components such as self acceptance, life satisfaction, somatic complaints and self-esteem. In the work of Pestrices & Furnham (2000), emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of psychological adjustment while low emotional intelligence was significantly related to depression, damaging and disturbing behaviors which are psychological unwell-being.

Interpersonal and relational difficulties, suicidal thought, low self-esteem, depression, loneliness, aggressive behavior (poor psychological states) are linked with poor emotional intelligence while high emotional intelligence was related to mental health, positive quality of life and poor emotional intelligence was related to psychopathology (Emotional Intelligence, 1998). It is also presented that emotional intelligence was associated with psychological symptoms, concepts and approaches such as self regards, self confidence, psychological health, physical health and emotional health (Sparrow, 2005). Hollander (2002) recorded association between emotional intelligence and high level of self-esteem and positive mood of people. Then, negative significant relationship of emotional intelligence to depression and anxiety while positive relationship was found between emotional intelligence and social function and social role among university students (Extermier & Berrocal, 2006). In another view, Mehamood & Guizar (2004) presented emotional intelligence as a concept that was positively related with self-esteem and negatively related with depression among adolescents.

However, conflict management is another variable investigated on psychological well-being of counselors in the study. It deals with utilization of human and material resources to resolve conflict between or among persons. Conflict in social and therapeutic relationship is inevitable because of different views and opinion of counselors and counselees on certain issues based on different backgrounds and orientations. The way people resolve conflict affects their psychological well-being (Ton., Barker., Hadden & Lin, 2015) and the more people engage in conflicting issues, the more their psychological well-being is affected (Wickham., Williamson., Beard., Kobayashi & Hirst, 2016). And lower psychological well-being were experienced by people who engaged in conflicting situations (Gray, et al, 2017). Furthermore, Hanif & Raa Naqvi (2014), submitted in a study that work-family conflicts were negatively and significantly related with employees job performance and psychological well being among 143 nurses in public hospital in Parkistan while Sunday, Terungwe., Okhakhume & Daudu (2017), showed that work-family conflict significantly influenced psychological well-being and work-family conflict and work stress had significant negative joint influence on psychological well being of police officers in Makurdi metropolis, Nigeria.

Petersen & Le (2017) showed that anxiety and avoidance were found to be associated with higher psychological distress and maladaptive conflict resolution strategies were found partially to be mediator of the association. In these views, poor conflict handling is highly related to psychological unwell-being. Experience of being bullied during clinical placement, conflict management styles and psychological empowerment had significant effects on psychological well-being with conflict management and psychological empowerment as mediators in the association between bullying and psychological wellness. It is noted that work-family conflict has negative effects on psychological safety and well-being (Obrenovic., Jianguo., Khudaykulov & Khan, 2020). Similarly, unhappiness and mental health were related with lower level of subjective well-being (Dush & Amato, 2005; Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

### **Statement of Problem**

Based on observation, some counselors are exhibiting low psychological wellness as a result of stress derived from work load, irregular payment of salary and work-family conflicting issues in the processes of therapeutic relationship with counselees in Nigeria, coupled with poor emotional dispositions to counselees. Therefore, the present study investigated emotional intelligence and conflict managements as determinants of psychological well-being of counselors in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria.

### **Methods**

#### **Research Design**

The study adopted descriptive research design of correlation type.

#### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were answered in the study. They are:

- i. What is the joint contribution of emotional intelligence and conflict management to psychological well-being of counselors in Ibadan metropolis?
- ii. What is the relative contribution of emotional intelligence and conflict management to psychological well-being of counselors in Ibadan metropolis?

### **Sample**

The study adopted purposive sampling technique to select 130 professional counselors (70 males and 60 females) with average age of 35.7 years. This technique was adopted to select practicing counselors in their counseling centers/clinic or offices in Ibadan Metropolis.

### **Research Instrument**

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents who are counselors. The questionnaire was structured into three sections. The first section contains demographic variables such as age, gender and level of education. The second section contains Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) developed by Wong and Law (2002). It consists of 16 items which are rated in four point Likert format of strongly agree to strongly disagree. The coefficient alpha of the scale as reported in various study of Wong and Law's articles are 0.86-0.92 for SEA; 0.82-0.93 for OEA; 0.84-0.88 for UOE and 0.71-0.91 for ROE the split-half reliability test coefficient of Cronbach alpha of 0.75 and standard item alpha of 0.73.

The Conflict Handling Behaviour Rating Scale (CHBRS) of Hammed (2002) was used for data collection on conflict management abilities of the counselors. It contains 51 items with

five point Likert format of strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scale was re-validated with reliability coefficient of 0.85 was recorded using Cronbach alpha.

The fourth section deals with Psychological Well-Being Scale constructed by Ryff (1989) and re presented by Tricia (1995). It contains five sub-scales (autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose of life and self-acceptance). Each of the sub scales consists 7 items making 42 items. The items were used to collect information on psychological well-being of the counselors. Some of the items are: ‘I am not afraid to voice my opinion even when they are in opposition to the opinion of most people’; in general, I feel I am in charge of situation in which I live’ and I am not interested in activities that will expand my horizon’. It was a six-point Likert format of strongly disagree to strongly agree. The internal consistency of .93 for self-acceptance, 0.91 for positive relations with others, .86 for autonomy, .90 for environmental mastery, .90 for purpose of life and .87 for personal growth. Then the test-retest reliability of .85 for self-acceptance, .83 for positive relations with others, .88 for autonomy, .81 for environmental mastery, .82 for purpose of life and .81 for personal growth.

### Procedure for Data Collection

The data were collected by the researcher with the help of three research assistants. The administration of questionnaires took a period of two weeks. Out of 130 questionnaires administered, 123 were recovered but only 100 were found to be appropriate for analysis.

### Method of Data Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was adopted to analyse the two research questions.

### Results

**Research question one:** What is the joint contribution of emotional intelligence and conflict management on psychological wellbeing among counselors in Ibadan metropolis?

**Table 1: Summary of Regression analysis showing the joint contribution of emotional intelligence and conflict management on psychological well-being among counselors in Ibadan metropolis**

R	R Square			Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
.424	.180			.162	8.87447	
A N O V A						
Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	1574.117	2	787.058	9.994	.000	Sig.
Residual	7166.819	91	78.756			
Total	8740.936	93				

Table 1 shows the joint contribution of emotional intelligence and conflict management on psychological well-being among counselors in Ibadan metropolis. The table also shows a coefficient of multiple correlation  $R = .424$  and a multiple  $R^2$  of .180. This means that 18.0% of the variance was accounted for by the two predictors variables when taken together. The significance of the composite contribution was tested at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The table also shows that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded F-ratio of 9.994 (significant at 0.05 level). This implies that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

**Research question two:** What is the relative significant contribution of emotional intelligence and conflict management on psychological wellbeing among counselors in Ibadan metropolis?

**Table 2: Summary of regression analysis showing the relative contributions of emotional intelligence and conflict management on psychological wellbeing among counselors in Ibadan metropolis?**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta Contribution		
(Constant)	64.051	5.990		10.693	.000
Emotional intelligence	-.404	.105	-.373	-3.850	.000
Conflict management	-.134	.090	-.143	-1.481	.142

Table 2 shows that the relative contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable, expressed as beta weights, viz: emotional intelligence ( $\beta = -.373$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and conflict management ( $\beta = -.143$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Hence, it could be deduced that emotional intelligence was significant i.e. could independently and significantly predict psychological well-being in the study while conflict management could not predict psychological wellbeing of counselors used in the study.

### Discussion

It is seen from the findings of the study that emotional intelligence and conflict management jointly contributed significantly to psychological well-being of the counselors in Ibadan metropolis. It is explained that the demonstration of emotional intelligence and conflict handling behavior of the counselors contributed to psychological well-being. It is presented that the counselors are emotionally sensitive and use emotional knowledge or information to bring positive outcomes from their activities despite emotional and conflicting issues that arise when engaging in daily professional activities. Both emotional intelligence and conflict management skills however, help the counselors in promoting their well-being psychologically.

However, individually, emotional intelligence is the only variable that contributed to psychological well-being of counselors. The relative contributions present emotional intelligence as the only potent variable that contributed to psychological well-being of the counselors (Carmeli, et al, 2009; Gardner, 2006; Petrides & Furnham, 2000; Sparrow, 2005 & Mehamood & Gulzar, 2014). Previous studies agree with the present finding in the sense that emotional intelligence contributed to psychological well-being and otherwise lack of emotional intelligence may not contribute to psychological unwell-being. Still on the findings, conflict management did not contribute to psychological well-being of the counselors. According to Tou et al, (2015)., Wickham, et al (2016)., Gray et al, (2017) conflict related issues lower psychological well-being of people and work-family conflict has negative impacts on psychological well-being (Obrenovic et al, 2020). Conflict management abilities of the counselors did not contribute to their psychological well-being. Their engagement in conflict resolution could not guarantee their potency of having psychological wellness. The outcomes of the study have implication for further studies.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

It is concluded that emotional intelligence and conflict management jointly contributed to psychological well-being of the counselors. But out of conflict management and emotional intelligence, emotional intelligence was the only variable that contributed relatively to psychological well-being of the counselors. It is important to support the study that emotional intelligent counselors are psychologically well. The results were discussed in agreement or disagreement with previous studies. Based on the findings, it is recommended that emotional intelligence of the counselor should be promoted more to increase their level of psychological well-being by their employers. Then, the counselors should be exposed to conflict handling behavior or styles that will be less stressful and promote their relationship with others to increasing their psychological well-being.

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### **Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

This research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could lead to conflict of interest.

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