

**MARITAL DISPUTES RESOLUTION STRATEGIES AND SPOUSAL ATTACHMENT  
OF COUPLES IN IKOT EKPENE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF AKWA IBOM  
STATE**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study investigated Marital Disputes Resolution Strategies and Spousal Attachment in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. A survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of 210 married persons from which a sample size of 136 married individuals were used for data collection. Multistage sampling procedures was used in selecting sample for the study. A structured questionnaire titled: Marital Disputes Resolution Strategies and Spousal Attachment Questionnaire (MDRSSAQ) was used for data collection. Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out by three experts. The internal consistency of the instrument analysed using Cronbach Alpha yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.89. Data obtained was analysed using mean and t-test. Findings revealed that excessive phone usage ( $x=3.69$ ) amongst others was the major cause of marital disputes among couples in the study area; compromise ( $x=3.27$ ) was the core marital disputes resolution strategy adopted by couples in the area. Findings also revealed that the key mediator used by couples for marital dispute resolution was parents ( $x=3.42$ ); proposing needs respectfully to partner ( $x=3.33$ ) was the predominant negotiation dispute resolution strategy adopted by the respondents. The results of the hypotheses revealed a significant influence ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) of mediation and negotiation dispute resolution strategies and spousal attachment in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Based on the findings of this study, the researchers conclude that couples inevitably face misunderstanding in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State and the marital dispute resolution strategy they adopt has a significant influence on spousal attachment. The researchers therefore recommend amongst others that couples should curtail excessive phone use and create quality time for their spouses to avert marital disputes.*

**KEYWORDS:** Marriage, Couples, Family, Marital Disputes, Strategies and Resolution

**INTRODUCTION**

Marriage is a universal social institution that involves a legally recognized union between men individuals that establishes certain rights and obligations between them, typically providing

a framework for family life and the raising of children. (Ersanlı and Kalkan, 2018). According to Anyama (2015) marriage also involves sexual intercourse for procreation, training of children born out of the marriage for future companionship. As adolescents become young adults, they tend to begin to explore various aspects of life that include dating, forming intimate relationships and thinking of marriage in the future. Purpose of marriage cut across different cultures and personal needs. (Ogunleye, 2014). The purpose of marriage differs from different people and cultures. Traditionally, marriage has been seen as a form of creating a legal and social bond between two individuals, often for the purpose of starting a family, sharing resources, and building a life together. It can also be seen to deepen emotional and spiritual connection between partners. Companionship, procreation and intimacy are one the major purpose of marriage. (Davis and John 2020). Disputes can arise in marriage when the purpose of marriage is not fulfilled. Marital dispute is a common occurrence among couples. It cuts across upper, middle and lower class. Quite a few families have been thrown apart because of spousal disputes (Amadi and Amadi, 2014). Marital disputes can arise from various sources, and understanding these causes is crucial for managing and resolving them effectively. Here are some common causes. Poor communication: This is a significant contributor to marital disputes. This includes misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and ineffective expression of feelings and needs, often, partners misinterpret verbal and non-verbal cues, leading to misunderstandings. For instance, a sigh might be perceived as annoyance rather than tiredness (Delatorre and wagner, 2018). Failure to actively listen can lead to incomplete understanding of partner's feelings and needs. Many couples struggle with active listening, which involves fully concentrating, understanding, responding, and remembering what is said. Without this skill, partners may feel ignored or invalidated, research shows that active listening improves relationship satisfaction by fostering empathy (George 2022).

Extra-marital affairs or emotional infidelity can severely damage trust and intimacy within a marriage, often resulting in intense disputes. Infidelity in marriage is the emotional or sexual involvement with someone outside the primary relationship without the partner's knowledge or consent. It can range from one-time betrayals to ongoing affairs. Unresolved disputes, lack of emotional intimacy, and dissatisfaction with the relationship are common contributing factors, personal traits such as low self-esteem, impulsivity, and narcissism can increase the likelihood of engaging in infidelity (Nnameka 2019).

Disagreements over parenting styles, discipline methods, and child-rearing responsibilities: Understanding parenting differences in marriages involves considering various aspects such as discipline styles, communication strategies, roles and responsibilities, expectations, and parent-child bonding. These differences can impact family dynamics and marital satisfaction. Differences in discipline approaches can lead to disputes between partners particularly if not addressed through effective communication and various disputes resolution strategies (Anyama 2015).

Couples adopt various disputes resolution strategies based on their individual dynamics and communication styles. Some common strategies include mediation which is a third-party intervention process that aims at helping couples in dispute to reconcile their difference, reach a compromise and attain settlement of their dispute. In mediation, a neutral third party tries to help disputants resolve disagreements and negotiate settlement. (Nnaemeka, 2019). The mediator creates the enabling environment for couples to carry out dialogue sessions leading to the resolution of disputes, pollinates by working on common themes and drawing attention to neglects points, helps couples to identify and arrive at common grounds with a view to overcoming their fears and satisfying their real need (Best, 2016).

Negotiation is the process by which couples directly discuss their concerns and preferences to reach agreements on specific issues. It often involves compromise and finding middle ground on various aspects such as finances, child rearing, or division of responsibilities. Negotiation is an essential tool in resolving marital disputes. (Makinde, 2017). It provides a structured framework for constructive dialogue, reducing emotional tension and promoting problem solving and allows couples to assert their needs and preferences while working towards solutions that meet both partners' interests (Umubyeyi and Natal 2019).

In marital disputes, couples may choose arbitration for issues where they cannot reach consensus or prefer a final decision without going to court. The foundation of arbitration in marital dispute resolution is based on the voluntary participation of both parties. (Smith, 2020). Arbitration emphasizes the importance of ensuring an equitable process that upholds the rights and interests of both spouses. Recent studies have underscored the need for arbitrators to maintain fairness and balance in their decision-making, creating a more just and sustainable resolution (Jones et al., 2019). Arbitration in marital disputes resolution operates within a legal framework that governs the process, rights, and responsibilities of the parties involved. In a situation whereby arbitration fails to produce a resolution, parties can resort to Conciliation to obtain a final and enforceable decision (Ogunleye 2014).

Conciliation involves the intervention of a neutral third party, often a trained mediator or counselor, to facilitate constructive communication and negotiation between marital partners. Conciliation focuses on preserving relationships by improving understanding and fostering cooperative agreements that meet the interests of both parties it is generally more cost-effective and efficient than traditional legal processes, reducing the time and resources required to resolve disputes Parties are empowered to make their own decisions and agreements, which enhances their commitment to and satisfaction with the outcome. Adjudication in marital dispute resolution refers to the process where a neutral third party, often a judge or mediator with adjudicatory powers, makes decisions to resolve disputes between spouses (lee and Kim, 2021).

This approach is formal and typically involves legal principles and procedures. The adjudicator's role is pivotal in resolving disputes impartially. They listen to both parties, assess evidence, and make decisions or recommendations based on legal principles and fairness adjudicator's act as unbiased decision-makers, ensuring equitable outcomes in marital disputes. Schmidt and Adjudication provides a clear, structured path to resolve disputes where direct negotiations fail and offers a final and enforceable resolution, reducing dispute and uncertainty (Smith, 2020).

Spousal attachment styles significantly influence how couples approach and resolve disputes in their marriages. Secure attachment promotes effective communication, emotional regulation, and supportive interactions, facilitating constructive dispute resolution. Integrating spousal attachment into marital dispute resolution strategies enhances understanding of couples' dynamics and promotes more tailored and effective interventions to strengthen marital relationships. Spousal attachment also extends to dispute resolution strategies within marriages and have demonstrated that spouses with secure attachment styles are more likely to engage in constructive dispute resolution strategies, such as active listening, empathy, and compromise, leading to more positive outcomes (Davis and John 2019). The researchers are familiar with the fact that couples do have disputes; literature also recognizes the inevitability of disputes in all relationships including marriage. In view of the fact that marital disputes are unavoidable, it is pertinent that when they occur, they must be resolved using globally accepted best practices

to forestall family disintegration and enhance spousal attachment. It is against these reasoning that the researchers sought to investigate the causes of marital dispute; resolution strategies and spousal attachment of couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The main purpose of the study was to determine the Marital Disputes Resolution Strategies and Spousal attachment of Couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. Causes of marital disputes of couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.
2. Marital disputes resolution strategies adopted by couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.
3. Mediation dispute resolution strategies adopted by couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.
4. Influence of negotiation dispute resolution strategy and spousal attachment in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the causes of marital disputes among couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?
2. What is the marital disputes resolution strategy adopted by couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?
3. What are the mediation options adopted by couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State for marital dispute resolution?
4. What is the influence of negotiation dispute resolution strategy and spousal attachment in the study area?

### **RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

Two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant influence of Mediation disputes resolution strategy on spousal attachment in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant influence of Negotiation disputes resolution strategy on spousal attachment in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

A survey research design was adopted for the study. A survey research design is an approach that uses questionnaires to gather opinions from members of a population on one or more variables (Creswell, 2018). The researchers used questionnaire to elicit the opinion of married persons in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area on the causes of marital dispute among couples; resolution strategies and the influence on spousal attachment.

### **Area of Study**

The study was conducted in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Ikot Ekpene is located in the South -South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The study area also known as the raffia city, is a historic town in Akwa Ibom, Nigeria. It is situated on the A342 highway between Calabar and Aba, with coordinates  $5^{\circ}11'N7^{\circ}43'E$ . It is the political and cultural capital of the Annang ethnic group in Nigeria. The estimated population of Ikot Ekpene Local Government is 105,896. The study area shares boundaries with Ikono to the East; Obot Akara to the West; Essien Udim to the South and Abia State to the North. Ikot Ekpene is made up of 2 clans and 35 villages. The inhabitants are members of the Annang ethnic division and the people speak Annang. One of the most notable festivals celebrated by indigens of this area is the Nto Annang Festival. Farming is an integral part of the economic life of the people of Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area. The area is known for the cultivation of crops such as oil palm, raffia palm, corn, yam, and cassava. (Ministry of Local Government and Chieftancy Affair, 2024). Married persons reside in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area just like in other communities of the world and dispute is inevitable in all relationship. Couples in the study area also experience disputes caused by different reasons and these disputes should be resolved using appropriate manners that will not engender the union, these justify the relevance of this study in the area.

### **Population of the Study**

The population for the study comprised of 210 couples drawn from the two clans in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State from 2014 to 2024. (Ministry of Local Government and Chieftancy Affair, 2024).

### **Sample and Sampling Techniques**

A total of 136 married persons constituted the sample size for the study. The sample was determined using ([www.researchadviser.com/sample-size.org](http://www.researchadviser.com/sample-size.org), 2017). Multistage sampling procedures was adopted to select the sample for the study. Stage one involved the stratification of the study area into two stratum on the basis of the clans Ikot Ekpene urban and Amayam clans. Stage two involved the random selection of two villages from each of the clans giving a total of four villages. Stage three involved the use of a non-probability sampling techniques to select 34 couples from each of the four villages in the two clans using purposive sampling to achieve a sample of 136 respondents.

### **Instrumentation**

A structured instrument titled: Marital Disputes Resolution Strategies and Spousal Attachment of Couples Questionnaire (MDRSSACQ) was used for to collect data for the study. The instrument has three section A to C and 38 items. Section A with 21 items sought information on the causes of marital disputes; section B with 7 items sought information on marital disputes resolution strategies while section C with 10 items sought information on Spousal Attachment. The instrument was rated on a 4- point scale of Strongly Agreed (SA),

Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), and Strongly Disagreed (SD) and assigned score of 4,3,2,1 respectively.

### **Validation of the Instrument**

Face and content validations of the instrument was carried out by three experts one from the Faculty of Law, another from the Department of the Sociology and Anthropology and a statistician, all from the University of Uyo. They assessed the items on the instrument to ascertain their relevance to all the variables in the purpose, research questions and hypotheses. They were required to check the ability of the instrument to measure the purpose of the study, grammar content and appropriateness of items, effect corrections and make useful suggestions were necessary. All the necessary corrections and their invaluable comments about the instruments were incorporated into the final version of the instrument.

### **Reliability of the Instrument**

To ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument, it was administered on 20 respondents who did not form part of the study and data obtained was analyzed using Cronbach Alpha statistical tool to determine the reliability index. The analysis resulted in a reliability coefficient of 0.89 which was high enough to guarantee the instrument being used for the study.

### **Method of Data Collection/Analysis**

The instruments were administered to married persons in their places of employment, home and business by the researchers and two research assistants. The questionnaires were filled and collected the on the spot. Data obtained were subjected to inferential statistical analyses. Mean was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

## **RESULTS**

**Research Question 1:** What are the causes of marital dispute among couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?

**Table 1: Mean Analysis of the Causes of Marital Disputes among Couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.**

S/N	Causes of Marital Disputes	$\bar{x}$	Rank
1.	Poor communication	3.50	4
2.	Unfaithfulness	3.34	10
3.	Parenting difference	3.11	12
4.	Involvement of parent	3.41	6
5.	Lack of money	3.60	2
6	Unsatisfied sexual desire	3.05	15



7	Unemployment	3.51	3
8	Excessive phone usage	3.69	1
9	Lack of sharing time	3.14	11
10	Excessive use of alcohol	3.40	7
11	My partner is secretive	3.06	14
12	My spouse is selfish	3.03	17
13	Struggle for power	3.46	5
14	Poor household skills	3.08	13
15	Unwillingness to participate in household chores	3.36	8
16		2.80	19
17	Nagging	3.35	9
18	Childlessness	2.71	20
19	Jealous lover	2.53	21
	Spousal unwillingness to participate in raising the children		
20	Lack of concern	2.96	18
21	Excess demand	3.05	15

Table 1, shows the mean analysis of the causes of marital dispute among couples Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Findings showed that excessive phone usage by spouses ranked the highest ( $x=3.69$ ); lack of money ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> ( $x= 3.60$ ); unemployment ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> ( $x = 3.51$ ); poor communication ranked 4<sup>th</sup> ( $x = 3.50$ ); struggle for power ranked 5<sup>th</sup> ( $x= 3.46$ ) while involvement of parent ranked 6<sup>th</sup> ( $x=3.41$ ). The result also revealed that excessive use of alcohol ( $x= 3.40$ ) ranked 7<sup>th</sup>; unwillingness to participate in household chores ( $x=3.35$ ) ranked 8<sup>th</sup>; childlessness ( $x=3.35$ ) ranked 9<sup>th</sup> while unfaithfulness ( $x=3.34$ ) ranked 10<sup>th</sup>. Other results indicated that lack of sharing time with spouse ( $x = 3.4$ ) ranked 11<sup>th</sup>; parenting difference ( $x= 3.11$ ) ranked 12<sup>th</sup>; poor household skills ( $x= 3.08$ ) ranked 13<sup>th</sup> while secretive nature of the spouse ( $x= 3.06$ ) ranked 14<sup>th</sup>. Unsatisfied sexual desire and excess demands by spouse ( $x= 3.05$ ) ranked 15<sup>th</sup> respectively; spouse's selfish ( $x=3.03$ ) ranked 17<sup>th</sup>; lack of concern for partner ( $x=2.96$ ) ranked 18<sup>th</sup>; nagging ( $x= 2.80$ ) ranked 19<sup>th</sup>; jealousy ( $x= 2.71$ ) ranked 20<sup>th</sup>; spousal unwillingness to participate in raising children ( $x= 2.50$ ) ranked 21<sup>st</sup>. The result of the analysis revealed that excessive phone usage by spouses was ranked the highest cause of marital dispute in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

**Research Question 2:** What are the marital dispute resolution strategies adopted by couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?

**Table 2: Mean Analysis of marital dispute resolution strategies of couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.**

S/N	Marital Dispute Resolution Strategies	$\bar{x}$	Rank
1.	Mediation	3.16	2
2.	Negotiation	3.13	4
3.	Arbitration	2.19	5
4	Conciliation	3.24	3
5.	Compromise	3.27	1
6	Reconciliation	1.64	6
7	Litigation	1.64	7

Table 2, shows the mean analysis of the marital dispute resolution strategies adopted by couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Findings shows compromise was ranked the highest ( $x = 3.27$ ); mediation ( $x = 3.16$ ) ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>; conciliation ( $x = 3.24$ ) ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>; negotiation ( $x = 3.13$ ) ranked 4<sup>th</sup>; Arbitration ( $x = 2.19$ ) ranked 5<sup>th</sup>; reconciliation ( $x = 1.64$ ) ranked 6<sup>th</sup> while litigation ( $x = 1.64$ ) ranked 7<sup>th</sup>. This implies that couples in the study area deploy compromise as their strategy for dispute resolution.

**Research Question 3:** What are the mediation options adopted by couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State for marital dispute resolution?

**Table 3: Mean Analysis of the mediation options adopted by couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State for marital dispute resolution**

S/N	Mediators		Rank
1.	Children	2.95	3
2.	Parents	3.42	1
3.	Trusted friends	3.06	2
4.	Elderly	2.80	4
5.	Family head	2.48	7
6	Religious Leader/Pastor	2.59	6
7	Marriage Counselor	2.62	5
8	Alternative Dispute Resolution Specialist	2.29	8
9	Online therapy	2.27	9



Table 3, shows the mean analysis of the Mediation option adopted by couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Findings showed that parents served as mediators during disputes was ranked the highest ( $x= 3.42$ ); use of trusted friends ( $x= 3.06$ ) ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>; using children to mediate dispute ( $x= 2.95$ ) ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>; Using the elderly as mediator ( $x=2.80$ ) ranked 4<sup>th</sup>; use of a marriage counselor ( $x=2.62$ ) ranked 5<sup>th</sup>; using a religious leader/pastor for mediation ( $x=2.59$ ) ranked 6<sup>th</sup>; seeking the help of a family head ranked 7<sup>th</sup> ( $x=2.48$ ); using the service of an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) specialist ranked 8<sup>th</sup> ( $x=2.29$ ) while the use of online therapy ( $x=2.27$ ) ranked 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Research Question 4** what is the influence of negotiation dispute resolution strategy on spousal attachment.

**Table 4: Mean Analysis of the Influence of Negotiation as a dispute resolution strategy on spousal attachment in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.**

S/N	Negotiation dispute resolution strategy	x	Rank
1.	Proposing needs	3.33	1
2.	Constructive criticism	2.36	7
3.	Taking responsibility for actions	2.39	5
4.	Discussing	2.61	4
5.	Suggesting solutions	3.13	2
6.	Bargaining	2.91	3
7.	Analyzing each other opinion	2.37	6

Table 4, shows the mean analysis of negotiation marital dispute resolution strategies adopted by couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Findings showed that proposing needs in a respectfully manner ranked the highest ( $x=3.33$ ); suggesting solution during dispute ( $x= 3.13$ ) ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>; bargaining ( $x=2.91$ ) ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>; discussing ( $x= 2.61$ ) ranked 4<sup>th</sup>; taking responsibility for actions ( $x=2.39$ ) ranked 5<sup>th</sup>; analyzing each other opinion ( $x= 2.37$ ) ranked 6<sup>th</sup> while adopting constructive criticism ( $x= 2.36$ ) ranked 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Ho:** There is no significant influence of mediation dispute resolution strategy and spousal attachment in Ikot Ekpene local government area of Akwa Ibom State

**Table: 5: Summary of t-test analysis for significant influence of mediation dispute resolution strategy and spousal attachment**

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev	t-cal	p-value	Decision
mediation dispute resolution strategy	2.72	0.355	1.96	0.05	Reject Ho
Spousal	2.54	0.310			

attachment

**Significant at  $P \leq 0.05$ .**

Table 5, presents the summary of the t-test for significant influence of mediation dispute resolution strategy and spousal attachment. The result shows that the t-value is 1.96. The probability value (p-value) is 0.05. Since the p-value is equal to the significant level of 0.05 ( $p \leq 0.05$ ), the result is statistically significant. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant influence of mediation dispute resolution strategy and spousal attachment in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

**Ho:** there is no significant influence of negotiation dispute resolution strategy and spousal attachment in Ikot Ekpene local government area of Akwa Ibom State

**Table 6: Summary of t-test analysis for significant influence of negotiation dispute resolution strategy and spousal attachment**

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev	t-cal	p-value	Decision
negotiation dispute resolution	2.71	0.328	1.92	0.02	Reject Ho
Spousal attachment	2.54	0.310			

**Significant at  $P < 0.05$ .**

Table 6, shows the summary of the t-test for significant influence of negotiation dispute resolution strategy and spousal attachment. The result shows that the t-value is 1.92. The probability value (p-value) is 0.02. Since the p-value is less than the significant level of 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ), the result is statistically significant. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant influence of negotiation dispute resolution strategy and spousal attachment in Ikot Ekpene local government area of Akwa Ibom State.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings of the study revealed that excessive phone usage was the major cause of marital disputes among couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government of Akwa Ibom State. This result agrees with (Bodie, 2020) who was of the opinion that many couples struggle with active listening, which involves fully concentrating, understanding, responding, and remembering what is said. Without this skill, partners may feel ignored or invalidated. Excessive phone use can undermine active listening in relationships, contributing to marital disputes. When partners are preoccupied with their devices, they may struggle to fully concentrate and engage in conversations. This distraction can lead to feelings of being ignored or invalidated, as one partner may feel that their thoughts and feelings are not valued. Also investing more time on phone while ignoring partners need may lead to conflicts in marriage due to lack of attendance to partner needs. Couples should therefore create a balance between using phone and paying attention to their partner's needs. Effective communication is crucial for dispute resolution, with studies suggesting that open dialogue and mutual respect are key to marital satisfaction (Ogunjuyigbe, Oyekanmi, & Adeyemi, 2020).

The result on the dispute resolution strategy, revealed that compromise was the major marital dispute resolution strategies adopted by couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government. The findings are in line with the study of Wang ET. al., (2021) who highlighted the role of

negotiation as a marital dispute resolution strategy which involves several key components: preparation; couples should first recognize the issue at hand, understand their own interests and concerns, and identify shared goals for the negotiation process. The findings of this study are also in line with Ololube (2024), who posit that compromise allows parties to address their core interests while maintaining a level of goodwill. This is crucial in ongoing relationships, as it helps to build trust and prevent future dispute. The result further showed that parents served as mediators in dispute resolution among couples in the study area. Also, there is a significant influence of mediation dispute resolution strategy on spousal attachment in the study area. This finding implies that couples in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area repose confidence in their parents probably because they believe that their parents have experience about the marriage institution and so they are used as mediators during marital disputes. The findings also revealed that mediation dispute resolution strategy has significant influence on spousal attachment implying that spouses prefer to adopt a mediation strategy that will enhance cordiality in their relationship and create spousal bond. The findings are in tandem with Wolchik, Sandler & Braver (2020) who opined that when parents act as mediators, they are often able to preserve emotional well-being and reduce conflict in the long term. However, this intervention can also lead to heightened tensions if not approached carefully this is because parents who serve as mediators lack proper training, and the process may be biased or ineffective, potentially favoring one spouse over the other. This can result in unresolved issues and further complications in the marriage. The findings of the study are at variance with the proposition of Mamatha (2022) who stated that if the mediator was unskilled, the mediation may be incomplete or favour one spouse over the other and as a result, the mediators must be well trained and competent. Proposing of needs in a respectful manner to spouse as an act of negotiation marital dispute resolution strategy, aligns with the study (Gottman *et. al.*, 2015) who stated that negotiation is the process by which couples directly discuss their concerns and preferences to reach agreements on specific issues. The findings also aligns with the views of (Lewicki *et. al.*, 2016) who established that negotiation was an essential strategy for preserving the emotional bond and trust between partners. Maintaining a focus on trust-building and respect in the negotiation process can lead to stronger, long-lasting relationships, even after resolving disputes.

## **CONCLUSION**

The aim of the study was to investigate Marital Dispute Resolution Strategies and Spousal Attachment in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area. Based on the findings of this study the researchers concludes that couples inevitably face misunderstanding in Ikot Ekpene Local Government of Akwa Ibom State and the marital dispute resolution strategy they adopt has a significant influence on spousal attachment in the study area.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- Couples should curtail excessive phone use and create quality time for their spouses.
- Comprise as a conflict resolution strategy should be maintained and upheld by couples to enhance marital harmony.
- Couple should assess various mediation options that are healthy and will help resolve disputes in their marriages.
- Couples should learn to communicate respectfully with calm tone when expressing their needs to their partners.

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