



# Parental Perceptions of Effectiveness of Family Counselling Interventions in Rivers State

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated parental perceptions of effectiveness of family counselling intervention in Rivers State. Descriptive survey design was used for the study; using comparative analytic method. The population of the study consisted of secondary school teachers, and post graduate school students in Rivers State. Simple random sampling technique was used to draw from 1, 700 parents, makeup 240 respondents. The “Family Counselling Effectiveness Scale” (FCEB) was used for collection of data. Four research questions were stated for the study. The following null hypotheses were formulated: Ho<sub>1</sub>, Male and female parents do not differ significantly in their perceptions of family counselling effectiveness on conflict resolution among family members. Ho<sub>2</sub>, Male and female parents do not differ significantly in their perceptions of family counselling effectiveness of communication. Ho<sub>3</sub>, Male and female parents do not differ significantly in their perceptions of family reconstruction. Ho<sub>4</sub>, Male and female parents do not differ in their perception of family differentiation. The t-test statistic was used to test the four hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results showed no significant difference in the four null hypotheses. It was recommended that family and marriage counsellors should focus in their family intervention process, including communication, conflict and differentiation.

**Keywords:** Family Counselling, Parental Perception, intervention

## INTRODUCTION

Family counselling is a form of group counselling, involving people of the same family, who are concern to solve precipitating issues affecting members of the family. Where two or more people live together in any given setting, there bound to be conflicts, arising from various areas in the family life. Often, family members do experience conflicts due to illness, disability, drug addiction, marital separation, divorce, communication breakdown, inappropriate sexual behaviour, eating disorder, and so on (Counselling Directory, 2017). Family Counselling become necessary answer to the above precipitating problems facing families. The following are few selected family intervention approaches: The Family Systems Counselling (Gladding, 2005); Bowen Family Systems Theory (Gladding, 2005); Experiential Family Counselling (Goldenberg and Goldenberg, 2008); Strategic Family Therapy (Gladding, 2005); Millan Systematic Family Counselling (Goldenberg and Goldenberg, 2008); and Structural Family Counselling. General Systems Theory of Family Counselling is a systematic approach of understanding family pathology (Erford, Hays, Crockett, and Miller, 2011). This approach views the family as one unit, rather than, looking at one symptomatic member within the family. The general systems theory was developed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy, who suggested that it is more therapeutic to examine family relationships and interactions between members than viewing one member of the family, as the “trouble” centre (Bertalanffy, 1968; Winek, 2010).

Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008) asserted that this approach provided rules that members abide by. That is, the aim of the rules is to provide standards for expected behaviours. These rules encourage homeostasis, boundaries, open systems of communication, leading to flexibility.

Another approach to family system counselling is the Bowen Family Systems Therapy, developed by Murray Bowen; who asserted that family of origin (FOO) influences future relationships, and behaviours:- Poor differentiation, anxiety, family projection process, and triangulation (Brown, 2008; and Bowen, 1976). The goals of this approach is to promote differentiation, cognitive functioning, emotional reactivity, modification of relationship, clear communication patterns, individual and family growth, through shared experience (Gladding, 1988).

Similarly, Experiential Family Counselling was introduced by two prominent scholars: Carl Whitaker, focusing to help families maintaining a balance between independence and togetherness, leading to meaningful and peaceful co-existence in the family (Whitaker, 1977). The goal of symbolic – experiential counsellor, as proposed by Whitaker is to encourage family members to relate with one another in solving problems creatively.

The Virginia Satir approach was focused on family members' communication effectiveness with one another. She indicated that Placers, blamers, intellectualizers or super-reasonables, distracters, create unhealthy family development, leading to psychopathology (Goldenberg and Goldenberg, 2008).

In addition, Strategic Family Therapy was developed by Jay Haley, Milton Erickson, Milam team, among others. This approach, attempts to resolving presenting problems only, applying specific behaviourally defined objectives, within the problem content and context, by changing symptom, maintaining sequence to new outcome.

The approach is direct and brief, commonly used for those who want outcome in short period of time. Counsellor prescribes homework to change unhealthy perceptions of members towards healthy and developmental family setting (Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008). Strategic family counsellors utilize the following techniques in assisting their clients in counselling process: Relabeling or reframing, paradoxical intention, directives, and pretend techniques (Gladding, 2005).

Also, Structural Family Counselling is commonly used in family behaviour restructuring. Notable of all, was developed by Salvador Minuchin. This approach has boundaries, clear and firm. It has hierarchy with strong parental subsystems. There is flexibility among family members, leading to autonomy and interdependence, individual growth and system maintenance. Symptoms in the structure could be as a result of current family structural imbalance. That is, malfunctioning hierarchical arrangement could trigger symptoms. The goals of the therapy were to shift member's relative positions to disrupt malfunctioning pattern, and strengthen parental hierarchy (Goldenberg and Goldenberg, 2008; Minuchin and Fishman, 1981).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate parental perceptions of effectiveness of Family Counselling interventions in selected families in Rivers State.

### **Statement of Problem**

Families are often destabilized by unclear communication patterns, lack of conflict resolution among members, lack of adaptive behaviours, undefferentiation among family members, personality and power tussle among members. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the above stated problems, invading family cohesiveness. What are the parental perceptions of effectiveness of family counselling?

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the parental perception of conflict resolution of family members, with family counselling intervention?
2. What is the parental perception of family communication with family counselling interventions?
3. What is the parental perception of family reconstruction through family counselling interventions?
4. What is the parental perception of family differentiation through Family Counselling intervention?

### **Hypothesis**

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** Male and female parents do not differ significantly in their perceptions of family counselling effectiveness on conflict resolution among family members.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** Male and female parents do not differ significantly in their perceptions of family counselling effectiveness on family communication.

**Ho<sub>3</sub>:** Male and female parents do not differ significantly in their perceptions of family counselling effectiveness on family reconstruction among family members.

**Ho<sub>4</sub>:** Male and female parents do not differ significantly in their perceptions of family counselling effectiveness on family differentiation.

**METHODOLOGY**

The design of this investigation is descriptive survey, using the comparative analytic method. The t-test statistic was used to test male and female parental perceptions at 0.05 significance level.

**Population and Sample of the Study**

The population of this study consisted of Secondary School teachers and post graduate school students, who are currently living in Rivers State. The population of the study is 1,700, who are all parents. A simple random sampling technique was used to draw 240 respondents; male 100, female 140, respectively. All the 240 respondents have received family counseling in their life time.

**Instrumentation**

The “Family Counselling Effectiveness Scale” (FCES) was used for this study to collect data for analysis. The instrument (FCEs) has 16 statement items, measuring family counselling effectiveness on Likert Scale, strongly Agree (4), Agree (3); Disagree (2); and strongly disagree (1) respectively. A weighted mean of 2.50 was used to accept the research questions.

**Validation of the Instrument**

Three experts in Measurement and Evaluation ascertained the face and content validity of the instrument for the study. Test-retest method was utilized to establish a reliability coefficient of 0.69 for the study.

**Results**

**Research Question 1: *What is the parental perception of conflict resolution of family members, with family counselling interventions?***

**Table 1: Mean analysis of Parental Perceptions of Conflict resolution of family members.**

Instrument/Items	Parents		Remarks
	Male	Female	
• Conuselling helps my family	3.25	3.32	Accepted
• Counelling restore co-existence	3.15	3.20	Accepted
• Power tussle was resolved	3.62	3.67	Accepted
• I enjoy healthy competition	2.70	2.55	Accepted

In table 1, male and female (parental) perceptions responses do not differ in conflict resolution of family members. Both male and female responses were above 2.50.

**Research Question 2: *What is the parental perception of family communication on family counselling interventions?***

**Table 2: Mean analysis of parental perception of family communication.**

Instrument/Items	Parents		Remarks
	Male	Female	
• I enjoy family relationships	3.42	3.47	Accepted
• I enjoy family trust-wordiness	3.76	3.82	Accepted
• I shared my feelings honestly	3.11	3.15	Accepted
• I am sincere to all members	3.10	3.17	Accepted

In table 2, male and female responses do not differ on family communication interventions. Both male and female responses were above 2.50 weighted mean.

**Research Question 3: What are the parental perceptions of family reconstruction through family counselling interventions?**

**Table 3: Mean analysis of parental perceptions of family reconstruction through family counselling interventions.**

Instrument/Items	Parents		Remarks
	Male	Female	
• I realized my faulty actions	3.8	3.75	Accepted
• Feelings of hatred is gone	2.58	3.45	Accepted
• I relate better to other	3.10	3.15	Accepted
• My anger is redirected to happiness	3.65	3.60	Accepted

In table 3, male and female responses do not differ on reconstruction through family counselling interventions. Both male and female responses indicated means above the weighted mean 2.50.

**Research Question 4: What is the parental perception of family differentiation through family counselling intervention?**

**Table 4: Mean analysis of parental perceptions of family reconstruction through family counselling interventions.**

Instrument/Items	Parents		Remarks
	Male	Female	
• I enjoy family of origin	3.85	3.82	Accepted
• I care for others	3.90	3.92	Accepted
• I understand myself and others	3.00	3.12	Accepted
• I think sensibly with others	2.75	2.73	Accepted

In table 4, male and female responses do not differ on differentiation through family counselling intervention. Both male and female responses showed means higher than the weighted mean for the study. Ho<sub>1</sub>: Male and female parents do not differ significantly in their perceptions of family counselling effectiveness on conflict resolution among family members.

**Table 5: T-test analysis of mean of male and female perceptions of effectiveness of family counselling conflict resolution among family members.**

Variable	Respondent	Mean	N	DF	P	t-cal	t-crit	Dec
Conflict	Parent (Male)	12.72	100	238	0.05	1.30	1.960	Non Sig
Resolution	Parent (Female)	13.74	140					

The data based on parental responses on t-test at 0.05 significance level, showed that the calculated t-test value 1.30 is less than the critical t-test value 1.960 at 238 df, therefore, Ho<sub>1</sub> is accepted.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: Male and female parents do not differ significantly in their perceptions of family counselling effectiveness on family communication.

**Table 6: The T-test analysis of mean male and female perceptions of effectiveness on family communication.**

Variable	Respondent	Mean	N	DF	P	t-cal	t-crit	Dec
Family Communication	Male	13.39	100	238	0.05	1.37	1.960	Non Sig.
	Female		140					

The data above on parental responses on t-test at 0.05 significance level, revealed that the calculated t-test value 1.37 is less than the critical t-test value 1.960 at 238 df, therefore, Ho<sub>2</sub> is accepted.

Ho<sub>3</sub>: Male and female parents do not differ significantly in their perceptions of family counselling effectiveness on family reconstruction among family members.

**Table 7: The t-test analysis of mean male and female parents perceptions of effectiveness on family reconstruction among family members.**

Variable	Respondent	Mean	N	DF	P	t-cal	t-crit	Dec
Reconstruction	Male	13.13	100	238	0.05	1.33	1.960	Non Sig.
	Female	13.50	140					

The data in table 7, above revealed that the calculated t-test value of 1.33 is less than the critical value at 0.05 significance level, df 238. Therefore, Ho<sub>3</sub> is accepted.

Ho<sub>4</sub>: Male and female parents do not differ significantly in their perceptions of family counselling effectiveness on family differentiation.

**Table 8: The t-test analysis of mean male and female parents perceptions of effectiveness on family differentiation**

Variable	Respondent	Mean	N	DF	P	t-cal	t-crit	Dec
Differentiation	Male	13.50	100	238	0.05	1.44	1.960	No sig.
	Female	13.59	140					

The data in table 8, above revealed that the calculated t-test value of 1.44 is less than the critical value at 0.05 significance level, df 238. Therefore Ho<sub>4</sub> is accepted.

## DISCUSSION

Parental perceptions of effectiveness of family counselling interventions in this study demonstrated the usefulness of family counselling in the areas of conflict resolution. Respondents views indicated that family members have duly benefited from family interventions in conflict resolution; encouraging clear communication, leading to individual and family growth and development (Whitaker 1977). In addition, family counselling promotes flexible boundaries, open communication systems and healthy interactions patterns among family members. Respondents, who have participated in family counselling in the past, sustain their normal functioning and patterns of healthy interactions, as viewed by Goldenberg and Goldenberg, 2008).

Similarly, respondents indicated that family members who maintain good and healthy relationship with family of origin were able to resolve issues, upholding the views of Bowen (1976). Also, respondents perceived that structural family counselling has restructured their dysfunctional relationship with other family members. These views were similarly upheld by Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008). The study confirmed the essential benefits of family counselling in maintaining differentiation of self among family of origin (FOO).

## CONCLUSION

Conclusion on this investigation were based on the findings. These are as follows:

1. Male and female parents do not differ significantly in their perceptions of family counselling effectiveness on conflict resolution among family members.
2. Male and female parents do not differ significantly in their perceptions of family counselling effectiveness on family communication.
3. Male and female parents do not differs significantly in their perceptions of family counselling effectiveness on family reconstruction among family members.
4. Male and female parents do not differ significantly in their perceptions of family counselling effectiveness on family differentiation among family members.

## RECOMMENDATION

Family and Marriage Counsellors should focus in their family intervention processes, including: Healthy communication, family reconstruction issues, conflict resolution approaches, and family differentiation.

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