

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNICATION, MARITAL STRESS AND MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG COUPLES IN KADUNA NORTH, KADUNA STATE

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### Abstract

*Communication is essential for two persons to feel closeness and to maintain that closeness over time. It is fundamental to human interaction and intimate relationships among married couples. It is on this note that the study investigated the relationship between communication, marital stress and marital satisfaction among couples in Kaduna North. Cross sectional survey research design was adopted using accidental sampling technique to select one hundred participants (100). Three hypotheses were stated and tested using inferential statistics of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, Independent Sample t-test and One-Way Analysis of variance (ANOVA). The first hypothesis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between communication and marital satisfaction  $r(98) = 0.425, P < 0.01$ . In other words, the hypothesis was confirmed significant in this study. Hypothesis second result revealed a no statistically significant  $t(98) = -1.105, P > 0.05$ NS difference between males and females in marital stress in Kaduna State. In other words, this hypothesis was not confirmed significant in this study. The third hypothesis indicates that there is no statistically significant  $F(2, 97) = 0.904, P > 0.05$ NS mean age difference in marital stress among couples in Kaduna. In other words, the hypothesis was not confirmed in this study. We concluded and recommended that Communication is the bedrock of marital satisfaction, for marriages to last and be healthy. Seminars and conferences should be organized for married adults on communication to enlighten them on the challenges of marital relationship.*

**Keywords:** Relationship, Communication, Marital Stress, Marital Satisfaction, Couples.

### Introduction

Marital communication and satisfaction represent two key elements in understanding current marital dynamics. Several researchers and family therapists claim that one of the core elements appreciations of the marital relationship is communication (Bech&Bek-Gernsheim, 2015; Lateef, 2018). Communication is not only instrument for marital satisfaction but one of the crucial factors contributing to it (Karney& Bradley (2015). For instance, Harold (2010) noted that marital communication is the glue that holds relationship among married couples together. This is because responsibilities, needs and other marital obligations cannot be achieved without communication. Communication can be described as a social process that uses signs, symbols, languages and other means to bring about inter-exchange of thought and

meaning between and among individuals and groups for better understanding and relationships (Ogili, 2005). It is a complex process of creating meaning in the context of an interpersonal relationship which can be verbal and non-verbal (Barnlund, 2016). Verbal communication implies language expression, whereas non-verbal communication uses body language such as rolling of one's eyes, sighing, blinking of one's eyes and crying (Gottman, 2004). Communication is essential for two persons to feel closeness and to maintain that closeness over time. It is fundamental to human interaction and intimate relationships among married couples. What many people discovered in marriage is often far from what they imagined it to be before getting into it. With time, everything begins to wear a new shape, the warm and romantic relationship once enjoyed begins to diminish. When couples observe in their marriage is quite at variance with their checklist and they are unable to communicate the effectively, it becomes difficult for the marriage to grow because no room is given to marital adjustment (Asher, 2011).

One major challenge of marital adjustment is concerned with the way couples communicate with each other. Most times, dissatisfaction in marriages could be curtailed through proper communication styles which include behavior, appearance, voice quality and listening. For in communication according to Gaikwad (2011) couples not only use speech but also the tone of their voices and the pitch of the voices and appropriate gestures. For example, if a husband frowns his face but says to the wife 'I love you', the expression on his face will certainly confuse the wife, which may lead her to suspect that the husband may only be pretending to love her. Couples inability to communicate their feelings and thoughts properly to each other can be attributed to lack of proper communication styles like listening, observation, verbal and non-verbal expressions to understand each other (Iyer, 2011). It is no exaggeration these days to describe some couples as couples as married singles, since they can afford to live in the same house, may be in the same room, but there will be no meaningful communication whatsoever. The communication gap appears to keep them apart such that each party faces his or her own direction, holding on to his or her own expectations rendering marital adjustment impossible. Marriage with communication failure breeds unnecessary stress, anxiety, suspicion, quarrels and unhappiness. This is because many things are repressed and left uncommunicated to the partner, which accumulates to give rise to pains, bitterness, tension, frustration and depression. Thus, the marital union becomes maladjusted.

Effective communication is the glue that holds the relationship among married couples together. An effective communicator should consider the culture of the recipient and adapt to it. Men and women don't communicate the same way (Deborah, 1985). Studies have shown that there are differences in brain patterns between men and women which affect their ability to communicate and interpret information with each other. The culture in question is not tradition but patterns and approaches for which every sex understands and communicates. According to Nadig (2010), communication is successful between two people when the message is correctly sent and received with no misunderstanding. Communication is a complex process and it is sometimes difficult to achieve effective communication because many things can interfere with the process of communication and causes distortions in the message (Mbazu, 2009). Deborah (2002) maintained that marriage with good communication does not only seem to last longer, but that the couples involved in such relationship are happier than people stuck in unhealthy and non-communicating relationship. This implies

that effective communication has good effects on couples who make use of it properly. For communication to be effective, it must be a two way process in which the receiver of the original message responds or reacts to the message. In the same vein, Appley in Emenike (1997) argued that for effective communication to take place, the mastery of basic communication processes must involve the following \steps: Clarifying the idea of problem, participate in developing a solution to the problem, motivating others to take action agreed upon, measuring the effectiveness of communication. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine the influence of communication on marital satisfaction and coping strategy among couples in Kaduna State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The home is the nucleus of the society and marriage is the major avenue whereby the society is populated by the number of children that are born into such marriages, thus marital dissatisfaction produces a negative multiplier effect on the society. Many marriages have ended in divorce or in a passive relationship.

According to Olayiwola (2009) many marriages breakdown weeks or months after the wedding. Young couples who feel happy and dance from dusk to dawn during their marriage ceremony turn out to call “the sugar in their tea” a “torn in their life”. When there is no marital satisfaction, there is a problem with raising and nurturing children, which may lead to an increase in the rate of juvenile delinquency in the society and a lack of peace. Adeoti (2010) opined that communication is the major source of marital conflict. He observed that communication is often the missing link in an unhappy marriage. This is because of the importance of communication to a marital relationship. It is more important now to work on the communication skills between a husband and wife. So many problems escalate when there is no communication, and many problems are resolved when there is communication.

Marital adjustment is a lifelong process. From the earliest days of marriage, one has to give serious consideration to mate selection. This understanding of the individual traits of the spouse is an ongoing process in marriage because even if two people know each other before or at the time of marriage, there is a possibility that people change during the life cycle. Marital adjustment and a call for maturity that accepts and understands growth and development in the spouse are needed. If this growth is not experienced and realized fully, the death of the marital relationship is inevitable (Shweta, 2013).

Some researchers like Esere (2008); Oniye (2008) discovered that even in homes with children, there might still be constant conflicts between the parents. While each of the stated problems may be a source of conflict, the role communication plays in resolving them is crucial. However various researchers have studied communication styles and other marital adjustment variables. Salifu (2009), for example, studied styles of communication and marital adjustment of educated couples in Ankpa, Kogi State and found that couples who established a good and sound communication style was likely to have pleasant relationship. Also, Oladun (2012) worked on obstacles and suggested solutions for effective communication in marriage as expressed by married adults in Kogi State. The findings revealed that marriage involves honesty and a sincere expression of feelings and this would help to reduce the high rate of divorce cases in society. Filani (1985) researched the effects of communication skill training

on marriage adjustment and styles of communication of educated couples in Ogbomoso. He was able to find out that poor communication leads to a breakdown in marriages.

The institution of marriage, which is meant to be enjoyed, is no doubt facing serious crises in our time. In the study area, incidents of marital conflicts such as battering of wives, abandoning of wives and children, and divorce abound in many families. It is now a common scenario to see couples that underwent all the legal and religious processes of marriage ceremonies engaging themselves in some psychological and emotional fights regardless of the duration of their marriage and children produced. The impact of these on the society is obvious in the alarming rate of social vices. When couples are not able to live in harmony, the family suffers maladjustment which breeds divorce; single parenthood and delinquent behaviour among the children, the consequences of these are quite noticeable in our contemporary society: campus cultism, HIV/ AIDS, insurgency, religious and political intolerance and other forms of violence in our society. One peculiar factor in the study area that does not help matter is the image of the husband as "okpani", "aibai" (master) which gives him so much authority over the wife who often is left to grumble in silence when dissatisfied with the husband. This creates a big gap in the couple's communication as there is no opportunity to share their problems, anxieties and concerns with each other and this breed's unhappiness in the marital relationship. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, no study has been carried out on the influence of communication on marital satisfaction and coping strategy among couples in Kaduna State.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main aim of this study is to determine the influence of communication on marital satisfaction and coping strategy among couples in Kaduna State. Specific objectives include:

- i. To examine the significant relationship between communication and marital satisfaction among couples in Kaduna State.
- ii. To ascertain the significant gender difference in marital stress among couples in Kaduna State.
- iii. To determine the significant age difference in marital stress among couples in Kaduna State.

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested in the study

- i. There will be significant relationship between communication and marital satisfaction among couples in Kaduna State.
- ii. There will be significant gender difference in marital stress among couples in Kaduna State.
- iii. There will be significant age difference in marital stress among couples in Kaduna State.

## **METHODS**

### **Design**

This section covers the description and discussion on the various techniques and procedures used in the study to collect and analyze the data as it is deemed appropriate. For this study, the survey research design was adopted. The choice of the design was informed by the

objectives of the study as outlined in chapter one. This research design provides a quickly efficient and accurate means of assessing information about a population of interest. This design is considered most appropriate for this study because the variable have taken effect on the participants.

### **Participants**

The population for this study was residents in Kaduna metropolis, Kaduna State, Nigeria. A total of 134 respondents were selected from the population figure out of which the sample size was determined. The reason for choosing Kaduna metropolis is because of its proximity to the researcher. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of 100 participants where 50 males and 50 females. Age: 18-25 years (N= 28; 28%), 26-35 years (N= 41; 41%), and 36-45 years (N= 31; 31%). Marital status: married (N= 70; 70%), divorced (N= 21; 21%), separated (N= 7; 7%) and widow (N= 2; 2%). Religion: Muslim (N= 34; 34%), Christianity (N= 62; 62%) and traditional (N= 4; 4%). Education: Primary (N= 11; 11), secondary (N= 26; 26%), tertiary (N= 52; 52%) and others (N= 11; 11%). occupation: employed (N= 37; 37%), self-employed (N= 46; 46%) and unemployed (N= 17; 17%). Years of Experience: 0-1 year (N= 13; 13%), 2-4 years (N= 51; 51%) and 5-7 years (N= 36; 36%).

### **Sample Size/ Techniques**

A sample is a portion of the population which is studied with a view to generalizing the findings from it to the entire population. A sample is a portion of the population which is studied with a view to generalizing the findings from it to the entire population. For the purpose of this research work, accidental of convenient sampling technique was used. The accidental or convenience sampling technique is a non-probability sampling technique that involves the sample being drawn from that part of the population that is close to hand. The researcher used Taro Yamane’s formula to determine the sample size from the population. Taro Yamane’s formula is given as;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where N = Population of study (134)

n = Sample size (?)

e = Level of significance at 5% (0.05)

1 = Constant

$$\therefore n = \frac{134}{1 + 134(0.05)^2} = \frac{134}{1 + 134(0.0025)} = \frac{134}{1 + 0.335}$$

$$n = \frac{134}{1.335} = \underline{100}$$

The sample size therefore is 100 respondents.

### **Method of Data Collection**

Data for this study were collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary source of data collected was mainly the use of a structured questionnaire which was designed to elicit information on the relationship between communication, marital stress and marital satisfaction among couples in Kaduna. The secondary source of data collections were textbooks, journals and scholarly materials. The questionnaire was arranged based on the objectives. The three questionnaires that were employed to collect data from the respondents

will be the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed in two (2) sections; i.e. section A and B. Section A contained the demographic characteristics of the respondents. This includes their gender, age, educational qualification, religion, marital status, etc. while Section B was Marital Stress Inventory: (MSI), section C was Index of Marital Satisfaction (IMS) while section D was Primary Communication Inventory (PCI).

**Section B: Marital Stress Inventory: (MSI).** This was developed by Omoluabi (1994) to assess stress among couples. It is a 50 item inventory adding together the values of the numbers shaded in all the terms. The psychometric property was conducted with the reliability of Cronbach alpha coefficient .9219 and validity of concurrent validity coefficient of .32 was obtained by correlating MSI with Marital Satisfaction index.

**Index of Marital Satisfaction (IMS):** the scale was developed by Hudson (1982) to assess problem associated with marital satisfaction. It is a 25 item inventory with direct and reverse scoring. Anene (1994) reported the Nigerian Psychometric properties of reliability coefficient of Cronbach alpha internal consistency of .96 and test re-test of .96. The validity was concurrent validity coefficient of .48 by correlating IMS with Marital Stress inventory.

**Primary Communication Inventory (PCI):** the instrument was developed by Locke, Sabaght and Thomes (1967) to assess degree and pattern of communication in marriage between husband and wife or spouses. It is a 25 item inventory with direct and reverse scoring of items. It has reliability coefficients obtained by Omoluabi (1999) of Cronbach alpha of .72, test re- test of .84 and the validity obtained of concurrent validity coefficient of .69 by correlating PCI with Marital Stress Inventory.

### **Techniques of Data Analysis**

The data collected from the survey study was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The descriptive statistics used were Frequency, percentages, means and standard deviations while the inferential statistics used to test the hypotheses were Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, Independent Sample t-test and One-Way Analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results were presented in tables and interpreted respectively.

### **Ethical Considerations**

- i. Participants were not subjected to harm in any ways or whatsoever.
- ii. The respect for the dignity of research participants was prioritized.
- iii. Inform consent was obtained from the participants prior to the study.
- iv. The privacy of research participants was protected.
- v. Adequate level of confidentiality of the research data was ensured.
- vi. They participants were briefed of the objectives of the research

## **RESULTS**

### **Test of Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis 1:** There will be a significant relationship between communication and marital satisfaction among couples in Kaduna. This hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation in table 1.

**Table 1: Relationship between Communication and Marital Satisfaction among Couples in Kaduna**

Variables	M	SD	df	R	Sig.	
Communication	62.82	12.036				
Marital Satisfaction	53.07	15.878	98	.425	.000	<b>r(98) = 0.425, P &lt; 0.05</b>

Table 1 presents the summary results of Pearson Correlation between communication and marital satisfaction among couples where the results revealed the mean and standard deviation scores for communication (M= 62.82; SD= 12.036) and marital satisfaction (M= 53.07; SD= 15.878). Furthermore, the Pearson Correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship  $r(98) = 0.425, P < 0.01$  between communication and marital satisfaction. In other words, the hypothesis was confirmed significant in this study. Therefore, implies that increased in communication will leads to a significant increase marital satisfaction among couples in Kaduna.

**Hypothesis 2:** There will be a significant gender difference in marital stress among couples in Kaduna State. This hypothesis was tested using Independent Sample t-test in table 2.

**Table 2: Difference in Marital Stress between Male and Female Couples in Kaduna State**

Gender	N	M	SD	df	t	Sig.	
Male	50	131.00	31.500				
Female	50	137.68	28.883	98	-1.105	.272	<b>t(98) = -1.105, P &gt; 0.05NS</b>

Table 2 presents the summary result of the Independent Sample t-test on marital stress among couples where it results shown the mean and standard deviation scores for male (M= 131.00; SD= 31.500) and female (M= 137.68; SD= 28.883). Further analysis of the results revealed a no statistically significant  $t(98) = -1.105, P > 0.05NS$  difference between males and females in marital stress in Kaduna State. In other words, this hypothesis was not confirmed significant in this study. Therefore, implies that neither male nor female couples indicate a significant mean difference on marital stress in Kaduna State.

**Hypothesis 3:** There will be a significant age difference in marital stress among couples in Kaduna. This hypothesis was tested using One-Way Analysis of Variance in table 3 and

**Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on Marital Stress According to Age Brackets of Couples in Kaduna**

Age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
18-25 years	28	128.00	30.968
26-35 years	41	137.80	31.108
36-45 years	31	135.48	28.491
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>134.34</b>	<b>30.254</b>

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation scores of couple’s marital stress according to age brackets. The analysis revealed that couples between age 18-25 years (M= 128; SD= 30.968), 26-35 years (M= 137.80; SD= 31.108) and 36-45 years (M= 135.48; SD= 28.491). Thus, this analysis revealed that there is no significant mean difference on couple’s marital stress.

**Table 4: Summary Result of One-Way ANOVA on Marital Stress among Couples in NDA Kaduna**

Marital Stress	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1658.259	2	829.130	.904	.408
Within Groups	88954.181	97	917.053		
<b>Total</b>	<b>90612.440</b>	<b>99</b>			

**F(2, 97) = 0.904, P> 0.05NS**

Table 4: shows the results of the One-Way ANOVA analysis which indicates that there is no statistically significant  $F(2, 97) = 0.904, P > 0.05NS$  mean age difference in marital stress among couples in Kaduna.. In other words, the hypothesis was not confirmed in this study. In other words, the hypothesis was not confirmed in this study. This implies that marital stress do not significantly differs based on couple’s age in this study.

## **Discussion**

The study examined the relationship between communication, marital stress and marital satisfaction among couples in Kaduna. Survey research design was adopted using accidental of convenient sampling technique to select one hundred participants (100). Three hypotheses were stated and tested using inferential statistics of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, Independent Sample t-test and One-Way Analysis of variance (ANOVA). Hypothesis one revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between communication and marital satisfaction. In other words, the hypothesis was confirmed significant in this study. We concluded that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between communication and marital satisfaction among couples in Kaduna. Supporting the finding of this study, Some studies have supported the idea of increased direct communication (straightforwardness) about issues that may cause discomfort for either spouse in the ingredient for a quality marriage. Theiss and Solomon (2006) in their study conducted a communication research study, the effect of relational uncertainty, intimacy and the interference of direct communication regarding marital irritations was thoroughly examined. Both Theiss and Solomon conducted a 6 week longitudinal wed – based survey in which couples involved in



intimate relationships reported on the qualities of their marriage once a week for a total of 6 weeks. After the six week period, results from the study supported Theiss and Solomon's hypothesis that direct communication (Strait forwardness) has a negative association with relationship uncertainty (Theiss& Solomon, 2006).

Hypothesis two showed a no statistically significant difference between males and females in marital stress in Kaduna State. In other words, this hypothesis was not confirmed significant in this study. In accordance with the finding of this study, Burleson and Denton (1997) focused on analyzing the relationship between communication skill and marital satisfaction among distressed as well as non-distressed couples. Couples were enrolled in the study by self as well as therapist referrals. The authors also investigated possible gender differences, in both areas. Four aspects of communication skills in this analysis were defined as: Communication effectiveness (producing messages that have their intended effect). Perceptual accuracy (comprehending correctly the intentions underlying another's message). Predictive accuracy (correctly anticipating how one's message will affect another). Interpersonal cognitive complexity (structural assessment of the capacity to process social information) (Burleson & Denton, 1997, p. 889). Thirty non-distressed couples completed the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS, Spanier, 1976), the Positive Feeling Questionnaire (PFQ; O'Leary, Fincham, & Turkewitz, 1983), which assessed how much an individual like his/her spouse, and the two role version of the role category questionnaire (RCQ; Crocket, 1963, which assessed the interpersonal cognitive complexity). The communication box techniques (Gottman, Notarius, Markman, Bank & Toppi, 1996) were also used. This technique required participants to discuss how of their marital problems for about 15 minutes each and to record their feelings about their partners' statements as well as their own.

The result of the study showed that there was no significant difference in the communication skill of distressed couples when compared to that of non-distressed couples. In other words, the study found that distressed couples showed significantly more negative intentions towards each other than the non-distressed couples. The authors suggested that as the difference in marital distress was not corrected with the difference in communication skill, the negative communication of distressed couple towards each other can be explained as more a "result of ill will than poor skill" (Burleson & Denton, 1997). Thus, if a couple had a positive motivation (which they had in non-distressed relationship) they used their communication skills to further enhance their relationship. This explained why, when the association of communication skills and marital satisfaction were compared for both the distressed and non-distressed couples. The positive correlation was found only for the non-distressed couples. There was no significant correlation found among four of the communication skills and marital satisfaction among distressed couples. The analysis of gender differences revealed that a wife's communication skills played an important role in her husband's marital satisfaction but the husband's communication skills were not a predictor of his wife's marital satisfaction. The third hypothesis indicates that there is no statistically significant age difference in marital stress among couples in Kaduna. In other words, the hypothesis was not confirmed in this study. In contrast to the finding of this study, Age is another variable that is considered in this work. The issue is whether younger married people have more conflict than older married persons. Nwobi (1995) found that younger marriages are more likely to be conflict prone than older marriages. This is supported by Andah (1990). Levenson& Robert (2009) found that in

terms of age difference, older couples used more we-ness words than did middle aged couples. Further, the associations between separateness and marital satisfaction were strongest for older wives. Baby (2010) also found that women who are younger and similar in age with their counterparts were well relaxed in their marriages. The researcher hypothesized that this may be due to "Romeo and Juliet" effect (i.e. love), which leads them to total commitment in marriage. Where there is no presence of "Romeo and Juliet" effect, there is bound to be conflict.

Timothy, Berg, & Cynthia (2009) examined affect, cognitive appraisals, and overt behaviour during disagreement in 300 middle-aged and older married couples. Older couples reported less negative affect during disagreement and rated spouse as warmer while middle aged couples reported high negative affect during disagreement. However, these effects were eliminated when older couple's greater marital satisfaction was controlled. For observed behaviour, older couples displayed little evidence of greater positivity and reduced negativity, especially, women while middle-aged couples displayed higher evidence of greater positivity and increased negativity, during collaboration, older couples displayed a unique blend of warmth and control suggesting a greater focus on emotional and social concerns during problem solving while reverse was the case for middle aged couples.

According to Dunson & Baird (2004), he noted that older people tend to have lower sex drives than younger people. Women's age of menopause could lead to conflict due to infertility, while men do not necessarily become sterile with age, infertility does not go up with age, one the side of men. Using males self-reports from a representative national probability sample of ever married or cohabiting population aged 18 or older, they examine the relationship between socio economic status and wife abuse in the Canadian home. On the basis of the conflict tactile scales, they identify three different types of violence, trace them across the life course, and subject the data to bivariate and multivariate analyses. Their logistic regression analyses reveal that age and marital conflict are more predictors of wife abuse than income and education, or occupation.

### **Conclusion**

We concluded that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between communication and marital satisfaction among couples in Kaduna. Also that there is no statistically significant gender difference in marital stress among couples in Kaduna State and finally, there is no statistically significant age difference in marital stress among couples in Kaduna.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the discussion, the paper recommends that Communication is the bedrock of marital satisfaction, for marriages to last and be healthy. Seminars and conferences should be organized for married adults on communication to enlighten them on the challenges of marital relationship.

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