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**EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION ENHANCES
MARITAL RELATIONSHIP COUNSELLING FOR
HEALTHY LIVING AND FAMILY LIFE**

BY

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ABSTRACT

In any relationship, especially that of marriage, effective communication is vital for the well-being of its members. Spouses relate with one another to feel loved, acceptance and to be understood. This study therefore, surveys the pleasantness or unpleasantness of communication process between married couples in ZARIA Educational Zone of Kaduna State. Descriptive method was used to gather information from 375 randomly selected teachers in various secondary schools in Zaria. The data collected was statistically analysed using Mann-Whitney U-test at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the data analyzed showed that married couples experienced pleasantness in their communication. Recommendations are outlined.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a relationship in which two individuals of opposite sex make emotional and legal commitment to live together. It is a social institution that fosters the formation of a family. Marriage enables spouses to care, tolerate, endure, persevere, show kindness and be responsible to their partners. This is communication of affection which enhances marital relationship for healthy living.

Communication is very vital in all facets of human life especially in marital relationship. It is used to persuade, encourage, influence, share, discovered needs and showing of affection to partners. Hybels and Weaver (2001) attest that communication is a process in which people share information, ideas and feelings which involves not only the spoken and written word but also body language, personal mannerisms, style and anything that conveys a message. Thus, spouses need to communicate everyday to maintain and improve their marital relationship so as to experience healthy living and family life.

EFFECTIVE INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

The marriage relationship according to Posse and Melgosa (2006) must be nurtured continually if spouses are to experience daily support that serves as an oasis in the middle of daily activities. This would be possible only when effective interpersonal communication is the basic act. For spouses that communicate at all levels, strengthen the

psychological and emotional ties that bind them. Ability to communicate feelings, states of mind, expectations and hopes does not happen easily. It can be achieved with practice and in the framework of a positive atmosphere.

Deep communication involves emotional and affective effort as well as proper listening and responsiveness in an effort to maintain a positive atmosphere in the relationship and at home. This occurs according to Oyinloye (2007) when you communicate on a one to one basis usually in an informal, unstructured setting like in a marital relationship. This form of communication occurs mostly between a husband and wife and even in dyadic relationships. This offers spouses quality time that is spent together and serves as an investment in the relationship that would produce pleasing family life for healthy living.

For effective interpersonal communication to enhance marital relationship, spouses need engage in sincere dialogue that is frank and friendly at the same time. In this type of communication, according to Posse and Melgosa (2005), the person who speaks expects that the other person will give the appropriate response showing his or her understanding and receptiveness. Communication between spouses should always be persuasive, positive, and good natured. For when interpersonal relationships develops in a friendly atmosphere, it stimulate easy and agreeable communication between members. The

result would be a cordial atmosphere at home, happiness and trust can develop.

Effective interpersonal communication that enhances marital relationship requires that spouses participate in conversation with their partners. A better way to motivate and to stimulate productive communication is to open the doors to participation in order to facilitate and enrich the communication process. In this way conversation becomes interesting and shared. It transmit love, sympathy and understanding. It develops in an atmosphere that is free from fear and anxiety but there is dedication, respect and thoughtfulness. This is the form of conversation most used in an environment of complete trust and freedom. The absolute importance of effective communication in marital relationship can not be overemphasized. Married couples would like to forge healthy relationships so that they experienced positive and pleasing atmosphere at home.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The researcher observed from her interaction with other married couples that the communication that goes on between the couples is not pleasant enough. This unpleasant or ineffective communication has brought much unhappiness to married couples life because many things are left unsaid. For example, while some couples repress their anger, others yell, shriek, nag, shout and criticized each other too often in the

process of communication. The end result of this unpleasant communication may be either bitterness, anger, anxiety, frustration, tension and stress or all on the other couples life. For these attendant effects caused by the problem of ineffective communication among couples, this research study is intended to look at the communication that goes on among married couples and determine how pleasant or otherwise each spouse is with the other in communication process.

HYPOTHESES

The following, hypotheses are made for this study:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean scores on marital communication pleasantness of married couples who are 30 years and those above 31 years.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean scores on marital communication pleasantness of married couples with low educational qualification and those with high educational qualification.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives are made for the study

1. To determine whether age of married couples influences their experience of communication process pleasantness or otherwise.

2. To determine whether educational qualification of married couples influences their experience of communication process pleasantness or otherwise.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The design of this study is a survey method. It was used mainly to find out the communication pleasantness among married couples. The population of the study are married couples with at least a secondary or teacher grade II education and above and are residing in Zaria educational zone of Kaduna State during the period of the study. The Zaria educational zone consists of the following local governments: Zaria, Sabon Gari, Soba and Igabi, all in Kaduna State. The total population for this study were all married couples in Zaria educational zone with an assumed population of 15,000 according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

The sample size for the population was a total of 375 respondents. The sampling procedure was randomness where 9 schools were selected out of 42 schools in Zaria educational zone of Kaduna State.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The research instrument was the communication process section of spouse observational checklist (SOC) developed by Weiss and Perry (1979). It contains a checklist of "pleases" (P^{is}) and displeases (dp^{is}) only it was however modified by the researcher to reflect those aspects of it that

were foreign to that which is local and familiar to the respondents. The researcher added the responses Very Pleased (VP) and very displeased (vdp) to give a four likert scale options to respondents.

VALIDITY OF THE INSTRUMENT

Several research studies lent support to the validity of spouse observational checklist (Soc). For example, Weiss, Hops and Patterson (1973), also Wills, Weiss and Patterson (1974). All attest to its convenience, appropriateness, usability, interpretability and storability for research work. A trial-test (pilot-study) of communication process section of spouse observational checklist was carried out by Dagari and Kolo (1993) which lent support for the appropriateness of the instrument for this study.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE INSTRUMENT

The researcher administered the instrument by herself with the help of some staff in each school to the respondents. 450 copies of the questionnaire were distributed 375 were properly filled and returned.

DATA ANALYSIS

Statistical test used in this study include: descriptive statistics of frequency distribution and percentages and also Mann-Whitney u-test for the test of hypotheses.

RESULTS

In this section, the results of the test of the two hypotheses for this study are presented. The first hypothesis states that there is no significant difference between the mean scores on marital communication pleasantness of married couples who are 30 years and those above 31 years. The results of the analysis of data are presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1: Age of Respondents

Variable	Category	Absolute Distribution	Relative Count %
Age	30 years	112	29.87
	31 years and above	263	70.13
Total		375	100%

Table 1 reveals that majority of the respondents 263 representing 70.13% are married couples whose age range falls within 31 years and above; while 112 representing 29.87% are 30 years old.

Table 2: Mann-Whitney U-test on Respondents Marital Communication Scores based on their ages

Age	N	Median	U	P
30 years	112	77	214 93.5	0.6492
31 years & above	263	78		
Total	375			

NS = Not significant, $P > 0.05$

The results of table 2 shows a non-significant difference between the ages of the respondents and their communication pleasantness because U-value was 21493.5 while, P value was 0.4692. Thus, the result is not significant at 0.05, hence the hypothesis is hereby retained.

Hypothesis two states that there is no significant difference between the mean scores on marital communication pleasantness of married couples with low educational qualification and these with high educational qualification. The results of the analysis of data are presented in Table 3 and 4.

Table 3: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Variable	Category	Absolute Distribution	Relative Count %
Educational Qualification	Degree	158	42.13
	NCE/OND	1857	49.87
	WAEC/GCE/TC II	030	08.00
Total		375	100.00

An observation of Table 3 shows that the highest number of respondents are these with NCE/OND certificate holders representing 49.87% of the total number of respondents. 158 respondents representing 42.13% had degree as their educational qualification. While 30 respondents representing 08% had either WAEC/GCE/TC II certificates.

Table 4: Mann-Whitney U-test on Respondents Marital communication scores based on educational qualifications

Variable	N	Median	U	P
Low qualification – TC II/WAEC/GCE	217	77.00	30339.5	0.5401
High qualification degree	158	78.00		
Total	375			

NS = Not significant, $P > 0.05$

A look at Table 4 reveals that there are 217 respondents with low educational qualification and a median of 77.00, while 158 respondents are with high educational qualification and a median of 78.00. The result shows a non-significant difference between the two categories of educational qualification and their communication pleasantness because U-value was 30339.5 while P-value was 0.5401. Thus, the result is not significant at 0.05, hence, the hypothesis is hereby retained.

DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis which tested the difference between married couples who are 30 years and these who are 31 years and above in their communication pleasantness reveals a non-significant difference in communication process pleasantness. A possible explanation for this finding could be that because of the ages of the respondents, they might have learnt from their experiences in life how to communicate pleasantly with each other. In other words, 30 years of age and above should have enable a spouse to evolve ways of communicating with and to others around him/her in a pleasant manner which might have been transferred to the marital communication. This is why Barnlund (1970) describes communication as an evolution or development of meaning from our environment and inside of us.

The second hypothesis tested the difference between married couples who have attained high education and those with low educational qualification in communication pleasantness. The result revealed a non-significant difference in communication pleasantness. This is possibly so due to the fact that all the respondents have attained some basic educational level. Since all the respondents were literate, such an experience might have influenced their perception of the pleasant communication that goes on between them. Camp and Satterwhite (1998) strengthened this finding by saying that in

interpersonal communication, the more courteous a sender of information is, the more valid the response he or she will receive.

It is evident from the findings that the two hypotheses formulated for this study were accepted. A possible explanation for this general trend despite the findings of Akinboye (1982), Filani (1985) and Gottman (1994) that communication is a major problem among married couples may be as a result of the type of respondents used. Also, it may be interpreted that issues in marital life among Nigerians especially in terms of communication may be seen as personal. Hence, the respondents might have been influenced by their unwillingness to expose themselves honestly and so rated themselves as having pleasant communication generally.

IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING

The findings of the study showed a non-significant difference between the variables of interest in the communication process of married couples. It therefore implied that since communication is pleasant among the couples studied, then marital relationship may be cordial. With a cordial relationship, the couples may establish a satisfying and long lasting marital life and experience healthy living and family life at home.

Another implication of the findings is that counselors could work with married couples to enhance further communication skills. This is

because a couple is the nucleus of the society. As a nucleus, when their communication process is effective and pleasant, a cordial relationship exist, there could be limited problems within the society. Thus, a healthy marital life is establish so also would the society be.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made. Married couples should try to have and maintain a cordial relationship through effective communication. This is possible when couples adopt and use the following appropriate participation techniques in the art of communication. That communication:

1. Occurs spontaneously and is never forced.
2. Develops in a friendly and respectful manners.
3. Takes place in an atmosphere of freedom and without stress.
4. Is open to all members of the family.
5. Favours dialogue and increases self-esteem.
6. Implies a positive, loving relationship which is soft and courteous responses and an attitude of active listening.

CONCLUSION

This study, which set out to determine the pleasantness or unpleasantness of communication between married couples is very

important for interpersonal relationship. It discovers the important virtues which married couples stand to benefit when interpersonal communication is effective. Such virtues include: good relationship, openness towards each other, involvement with are another and harmony/cordiality at home. All these will enhance marital relationship and respect for one another.

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