

**STYLES OF COMMUNICATION AND MARITAL STABILITY OF MARRIED  
ADULTS IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The study examined the styles of communication and marital stability of married adults in Oyo State Nigeria. Six hundred married adults were randomly selected using the multi-stage sampling technique. The descriptive survey research design and a researcher constructed questionnaire were adopted. The findings revealed that there is positive significant relationship between the styles of communication and marital stability of the married adults. Furthermore, there is a significant difference in the styles of communication of married adults on gender basis. It was recommended that social institutions should endeavour to train young individuals the role of communication in stabilizing marriages.*

**Keywords:** *Communication, Marital Stability, Married adults, Nigeria*

**Introduction**

**Background to the study**

Marriage, as recognised as a social relationship between a man and a woman was ordained legally, traditionally and religiously. Its main goal is for pleasure, partnership and procreation. Little wonder, in human history, a family comes into existence each time a marriage is successfully established. According to Omar (2002), marriage is the coming together of a man and a woman to raise a family and to meet the satisfaction of security and enjoying affection and companionship. Researchers argue that marriage is a legal institution which gives legitimacy to sexual relationship between a man and woman with reproduction for legitimate children in order to populate a society (Sarker, 2007; Bumpass, 2009; Helms, 2013; Dada, Adetutu, Bada and Sanni, 2016). Marriage is one of the roles expected by society from its members during adulthood (Chindo, 2014). Marriage is viewed as social

institution which involves a man and a woman with significant importance to a given society (Esere, Ake and Oladun, 2014). However, most religions consider marriage as a sacred union rather than social institution (Esere, et.al., 2014). In a broader way Nwoye, viewed marriage as a sacred and permanent contract which is assumed to be enacted when two people (usually a man and a woman) decide on their own accord and in the presence of at least two witnesses to exchange the formal consent to live a life of vocation of love and sharing for each other for the purpose of promoting their mutual growth and welfare as partners in their journey together through life (Nwoye, 1991) as cited by Kanu and Nwanyawu, (2006). The marital institution is a channel through which mankind is primarily groomed to adulthood (Maciver and Dimkpa, 2012). Hence, marriage is the building block of a society because it is the foundation for family and society. Marriage and communication are inseparable. Esere, (2008) observed that marriage involves exchange of information, feelings, ideas and beliefs between couples which could either be effective or ineffective through verbal or non-verbal method. This process of exchange of information between couples, she referred to as marital communication and it usually involves a sender and a receiver.

According to Esere, Yusuff and Omotosho, (2011), marriage without effective communication is likely to crumble because communication is the life wire of any relationship, especially marital relationship. Esere and Idowu, (2000) and Mamak, (2013) affirmed that ineffective communication in marriage is the inability of the spouses to efficiently communicate with each other. They further asserted that ineffective communication leads to numerous marital problems such as weak emotional bonding, excessive marital conflicts which causes marital instability. In the view of Ayodele, (2001); Brown and Brown (2002); Oniye, (2004) and Esere, (2008) effective communication is an essential factor for strong and healthy relationship which eventually gives birth to marital stability.

In addition, marital stability according to Adesanya, (2002) and Esere, Ojiah, Iruloh, Bukoye and Chieka, (2015) is the existence of relative peace and harmony for over a long period of time among couples with no intention of breaking up their marriages. Esere et. al. (2011) and Esere, et. al. (2015) stated that stability of marriage is deliberately built by both couples based on their level of openness, honesty, level of reasoning and communication styles. Esere, (2008) and Doohan (2013) affirmed that good communication style reduces the risk of

divorce and marital separation. Newton, (2012) supported this by stating that a good understanding of communication styles enables the spouses to communicate efficiently well with each other in their relationship. She identified five communication styles for spouses and people generally. These styles are manipulative, assertive, aggressive, passive-aggressive and submissive styles of communication. Newton stated that of all these styles, assertive communication style is the healthiest and the most effective style of communication because it involves openness, honesty, self-respect and direct communication. Hence, in this study, an attempt will be made to investigate the styles of communication and marital stability of married adults.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Couples are faced with a lot of problems in their marriages. This is due to their level of reasoning, communication styles and how well marital stability is ensured at all times. Marital instability has been argued by many researchers as having negative implications to both the spouses themselves and the children in such marriage psychologically, emotionally and academically which would later reflect on the society because a peaceful home gives birth to a peaceful society (Isaka, 2005; Esere, 2008; Esere, et.al., 2011; Chindo, 2014). In Nigeria today, the rate at which marital couples are experiencing marital instability and divorce is quite terrifying (Dada and Idowu, 2006). Yusuf (2005) focused on indices of marital instability and it was discovered that marital instability is on the increase and it is occurring daily. Hence couples should see the need to resolve issues amicably and promptly in order to avoid escalation and marital instability. Isiaka (2005) investigated the relationship between divorce and spousal communication and found out that lack of effective communication, in marriages, precedes divorce. Theravive (2011) estimated that when awake, people spend approximately 70% of their time communicating, 30% of which is done through talking, while the other 40% is done non-verbally. When communication between couples or married adults becomes strained, the entire foundation of the relationship is affected and leading to divorce or broken home if not looked into in time.

Despite all these, not much has been done on the most appropriate style of communication to be adopted by married couples in order to guarantee marital stability. The gaps left by these researches are the communication styles in marriages and marital stability of married adults. This present research aims to investigate the styles of communication and marital stability of married adults in Oyo state, Nigeria.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. Is there any relationship between the styles of communication and marital stability index of married adults?
2. Is there any difference in the styles of communication of married adults on the basis of gender?

## **Objectives of the study**

The objectives of this research were:

1. To determine if, any relationship exists between styles communication and marital stability of married adults.
2. To investigate the difference in the style of communication of married adults on the basis of gender.

### **1.3. Research Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant relationship between the styles of communication and marital stability index of married adults.
2. There is no significant difference in the styles of communication of married adults based on gender.

## **Significance of the study**

There is a need for everyone concerned with the joy of a healthy marriage, as well as marital stability to be aware of the styles of communication in marriages as well as ways to enhance marital stability. Hence, this study would be of significance to couples/married adults, counsellors (Professionally trained, marital counsellors and psychologists) and government. The couples would be enlightened with useful information that would help to solidify their marriages and encourage healthy interactions between themselves. The knowledge of counsellors especially pastoral counsellors, social workers and psychologists about the communication styles couples or married adults do adopt in their marriages would be increased.

### **Scope of the study**

The study covered the communication styles and marital stability of married adults in Oyo State. The study also covered the three senatorial districts in Oyo State. Further, the study is targeted to Nigerian married adults in Oyo State. A questionnaire designed by the researcher was used to collect relevant data from 600 married adults who formed the sample for the study.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Communication styles and marital stability**

Marriage and communication are essential components of human history (Oniye, 2015). Communication is a process of exchanging information in different forms with other people. It is not limited to language but includes non-verbal and understanding symbols (Esere, 2008). Communication according to Oniye, Yahaya, Odebode and Alade, (2016) is an essential ingredient in marriage. They stated further that people use different styles of communication and if these styles are not recognised and adapted to quickly in marriage, it can hinder marital stability. Communication is a way in which one shared information with others through language (Tannen, 2013). He identified age, culture, gender as factors that influence individual styles of communication. Similarly, according to Wylie and Baugh, (2013) communication style is a way of interacting verbally and non-verbally to signal how literal meaning should be taken, interpreted or understood.

Newton (2012) argued that a good understanding of styles of communication allows individuals to understand how to communicate properly. Based on this, she identified five styles of communication for couples and people generally which are manipulative, assertive, aggressive, passive-aggressive and submissive style of communication. According to her manipulative styles are skilled at influencing or controlling their partner. Aggressive style is about winning often at someone else's expenses. Passive-aggressive is a style in which the individual or couple using it, appears to be two-faced. Pleasant to people to their faces but poisonous behind their back while submissive style is about pleasing other people. Newton further stated that assertive style of communication is a style in which individual or couple clearly state their opinions feelings and firmly fight for their rights without violating the rights of others. It is how couple naturally express themselves when their self-esteem is

intact. To her, the assertive style is the style most people used least. She established that assertive communication style is the most effective and healthiest style because it allows for openness, honesty, self-respect and direct communication which eventually pave way for marital stability.

In addition, Oniye, et.al. (2016) studied communication styles and sexual behaviours as predictors of marital satisfaction among secondary teachers in Kwara State, Nigeria. Correlational research design and questionnaire were adopted. A total sample of 670 married teachers was selected using the multi-stage sampling technique. The findings showed that married teachers adopted assertive communication style. It was also revealed that sexual behaviours exhibited by married teachers include hugging, pecking, romancing, kissing, etc. In a study by Esere, et.al., (2014) in which the authors investigated obstacles and suggested solutions to effective communication in marriage as expressed by married adults in Kogi State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey was the research design employed. The questionnaire was the instrument utilized. A total sample of 660 married adults was selected using the multi-stage sampling technique. The results showed that obstacles to effective communication include getting home late on regular basis, harsh tone of voice during conversation and bringing up memories of the past. Suggested solutions to the obstacles to effective communication were: considering one's spouse's contribution, opinion and trust during discussing issues. It is equally important to understand how one's communication style can affect stability of marriage.

Furthermore, Esere, et.al. (2011) argues that stability of marriage depends on many things to be successful, such as, trust, love, spending time together by the couples, friendship, understanding, honesty, loyalty, sincerity and above all, effective communication which helps in building up marital stability. Marital stability exists when couples can live together in their marriages in peace and harmony for so long a time without the intention of breaking up their marriages (Adesanya, 2002; Esere, et.al. 2015; Mustapha, Odebode and Adegboyega, 2017). A stable marriage is not free from conflicts or misunderstanding, rather the couples are able to reduce the occurrence of conflict as well as managing the existing conflict properly. According to Sheri and Stritof, (2005) marital stability is a product of good listening, self-respect, a good sense of humour, willingness to adapt and hold the view that one cannot change one's partner. Esere, et.al. (2011) studied the influence of spousal communication on

marital stability of married adults in Ilorin metropolis. The questionnaire was administered to a total sample size of 600 married adults. The sample size was selected using stratified random sampling technique. The authors found that lack of effective communication is the bane of marital stability.

Another study by Maciver and Dimkpa, (2012) investigated factors influencing marital stability as perceived by literate spouses in Yenagoa Metropolis of Bayelsa State. The questionnaire was adopted. A total sample size of 600 respondents was selected using the simple random sampling technique. The findings revealed that in order of ranking, social behavioural, domestic, sexual, religious and financial factors influence marital stability. Esere et.al.(2015) studied poor communication and faculty cognition on marital stability of married adults in Owerri metropolis. The study found that poor communication and faculty cognition were responsible for marital stability.

Mustapha et. al. (2017) examined the influence that premarital cohabitation has on subsequent marital stability as expressed by literate married adults in Ilorin metropolis. Descriptive survey design and questionnaire were adopted. A total sample size of 300 literate married adults was purposively sample. The result showed negative impacts of premarital cohabitation on marital stability.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Shannon Weaver, (1948) model of communication was adopted. The rationale for adopting this model was because it was specially designed to develop effective communication between the sender and the receiver (Shannon C, 1949). It is also more effective in person-to-person communication than group or mass audience.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The quantitative approach was adopted in this study in order to generalised the data obtained from the sample of the population.

### **Research Design**

The research design adopted for this study was the descriptive survey design. This design focuses on people, opinion, practices, perceptions, attitudes and behaviour (Oke, Olosunde

and Jekayinfa, 2005). It enables the researchers to use the data generated from a sample of the population for generalisation (Chindo, 2014). Hence, survey research is considered appropriate for the study.

### **Population**

The population for this study comprised of all adults in Oyo State. The study population for this study consisted of selected married adults in Oyo State.

### **Sample and Sampling Procedures**

These selected adults were sampled using the multi-stage sampling technique. According to Alvi, (2016) multi-stage sampling technique allows for the use of two or more probability sampling techniques and it is useful when the element of the population are spread all over a wide geographical region. Oyo state comprises of three senatorial districts which are Oyo North, Oyo South and Oyo Central with numerous Local Governments under each districts. Therefore, multi-stage sampling techniques was considered appropriate. At the first stage, proportional sampling on a 2:1 was used to select two Local Government Areas from each of the three senatorial districts in Oyo State.

At stage two, five occupational institutions were selected using purposive sampling techniques from each of the Local Government Areas selected. These include 2 government establishments, 2 private establishments and 1 self-employed establishment. All characteristics expected were found in the sample, thus making thirty occupational establishments from the three senatorial districts. At stage three, twenty married adults were selected *from* each of the five selected occupational institutions using random sampling technique. Thus, 40 respondents from government establishments, 40 from private establishments, and 20 from self-employed establishments; making a total of one hundred (100) married adults per Local Government selected at stage 1.

Following this, two hundred married adults were selected from each of the three senatorial districts in Oyo State using stratified random sampling. These strata being gender, age, educational level, religion. Thus, a total sample size of six hundred (600) married adults were randomly selected for this study,

### **Research Instruments**

The research instrument that was employed by the researcher to collect data for this study was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A elicited



information on biographical data of the respondents. Section B consisted of question items to acquire information on communication styles while section C contained items to obtain information on marital stability. In responding to these items on the questionnaire, the respondents were required to use four Likert rating scale. **Section 'B'** (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). **Section 'C'** (Always True, Sometimes True, Rarely True, and Never True).

### **Validity of the Research Instruments**

In order to ensure that the instrument has content and face validity, the researcher gave the instrument to the experts in the Department of Counsellor Education, the University of Ilorin for correction and modification of the draft so as to meet the objectives and purpose of the study. Their suggestions and corrections were taken into consideration, it was adjudged to have content and face validity. Hence, appropriate for use for the study.

### **Reliability**

The test re-test reliability approach was adopted to determine the reliability of the instrument. The instrument was administered twice with an interval of three weeks to the same group of respondents. The scores from the two administrations were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient method. Coefficient of 0.83 was derived. The instrument was therefore considered adequate and reliable.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

Frequency count and simple percentage were used for the demographic data. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, t-test statistical tools were used to test the research hypotheses. According to Hassan (1995), Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient is used to find the relationship between two variables. Adana (1996) stated that the t-test is a parametric test often used by a researcher to compare the means of two groups.

### **Results and Discussions**

**Hypothesis 1** There is no significant relationship between the *styles of communication and marital stability index of married adults*

**Table 1 Pearson Product Moment Correlation of Communication style and marital stability**

Variables	N	X	Std. Dev	R	Df	Sig.
Comm.	527	3.09	1.02	0.71	526	.000*
Marital Stab.	527	3.13	1.15			

\* Significant at  $p < .05$

This table shows that the relationship between communication styles and marital stability of married adults is positive, very strong and significant ( $x = 0.71$ ;  $df = 526$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This hypothesis was therefore rejected since p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of significant

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in the *styles of communication of married adults based on gender*

**Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value on the styles of communication of married adults based on gender**

Gender	N	Mean	SD	DF	Calculated t-value	Sig.
Male	251	2.89	1.23	526	12.115	0.002*
Female	276	3.16	1.31			

Significant,  $p < 0.05$

Table 2 indicates that the male respondents obtained a means scores of ( $x = 2.89$ ) in styles of communication while the female had ( $x = 3.16$ ). This show that female respondents had higher means score than their counterparts. This difference is significant ( $t = 12.115$ ;  $df = 525$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). On this basis, this hypothesis was rejected.

The study revealed that there is a positive relationship between communication styles and marital stability. This goes to prove that effective communication is an essential ingredient in marriage and determines the extent of stability of such marriage. Findings also showed that there is a significant difference in the styles of communication as well as in the marital stability of married adults on the basis of gender. In both cases, the females were better than their male counterparts. This implies that women probably value their marital unions more than men and would be more ready to contribute their quota to its stability more than men.

### **ConclusionAnd Recommendations**

This research conclusively revealed that:

1. It shows that the relationship between communication styles and marital stability of married adults is positive, very strong and significant.
2. The females had a higher mean score than their male counterparts. Therefore, assertive communication styles according to Newton, (2012) needs to be adopted by married adults in order to guarantee marital stability.

Based on the findings of this research work, the following recommendations were made:

1. The social institutions such as schools, colleges, universities, the social media, religious institutions and the family should all endeavour to train adolescents and young individuals the basis for marriage, code of ethics for successful married life and the role of communication in stabilizing marriages.
2. That married adults may adopt the assertive style of communication in their marriages so that it can promote understanding, openness, empathy, adaptability and cooperation between them and their spouses.

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