

COMMUNICATION, AN INGREDIENT FOR MARITAL SATISFACTION IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

Bilhata Kumah Dagari

Abstract

Communication is the life line of any relationship particularly that of married couples. For much of the conversation between married couples is expression feelings, thoughts and experience. Words expressed enable a spouse to enter into inner-most thoughts and feelings of partner. The result of communication is to get a response from a partner. This paper attempts to view verbal communication as an ingredient for marital satisfaction. Three hundred and seventy-five (375) married respondents were randomly selected for this study in Zaria. The data was statistically analysed using frequently count, percentages and Mann -Whitney u-test to determine the pleasantness of married couples communication. The result indicated an overall communication pleasantness are expressed by the respondents, hence, marital satisfaction was achieved. The implications of the finding for marital satisfaction was drawn. Suggestions for improving communication were outlined.

Introduction

Marital satisfaction is sought and expected by most married individuals. The satisfaction of a marital relationship can grow out of communication where two people share each day the meaning of their lives. This, Small (1968:11) affirms that 'the heart of marriage is its communication system. It is something to be continually cultivated through all the experiences of shared married life'. According to Van Pelt (2002) this is possible when married couples effectively spend time on a daily basis in an intimate sharing of feelings. It will enrich and enlarge their relationship as partners feel loved, accepted, appreciated and confident in each others affection.

In addition, a happy marriage according to Aurois quoted in Wright (2001) is a long conversation that always seems too short. This implies that both partners enjoy each others conversation that they never get enough. Marriage is most satisfying according to Rosen- Grandon (1999) when couples express affection to each other and behave thoughtfully in a variety of ways. Hence, married couples should attend to each other as best friends. When such friendship is cultivated and developed through mutual sharing of feelings and thoughts it would result to satisfying marital relationship and enrichment of our lives.

Verbal Communication

Of all human gifts, none is as precious as talking. Talking is the free flow of words in conversation. According to Morley (1994:60) words are the window into the soul. It gives form and expression to our deepest thoughts. Married couples according to Van Pelt (2005:78) should make to talk and create things to talk about. They should encourage each other to tell stories about each other's day-to-day experiences, talk about kids, jobs, neighbours, the boss, what happened to me today, what I did, type of things and about each other's past. This daily talk leads to involvement in one another's life and so strengthens the marital bond. It will eventually enhance intimacy in the marital relationship.

Furthermore, Van Pelt (2005) emphasis that married couples need to 'delivers a verbal bouquet' so as to experience satisfaction in their marriage. A verbal bouquet is any affirmation which shows acceptance, appreciation or respect for your partner. Frequent verbal expression of affection according to Rosen-Grandon (1999) and Wright (2001) demonstrate intimacy, care and high value of a relationship. Similarly, Van Pelt (2002) affirm that verbal expression of appreciation for a particular or specific deed or characteristics of a partner goes a long way to motivate and reinforces the desire to do more to each other.

Thus, verbal expression of affection and appreciation every day is one of the most effective techniques that could help couples to develop and sustain a genuine satisfactory marital relationship. The result according to Tournier (1967:78) is that husband and wife become preoccupied with the need for mutual understanding get lost in it, engrossed to the fullest in learning what makes the other think, what the other likes, dislike, fears, worries about, dreams of, believes in, and why he or she feels that way. Such a conversation would lead a couple directly into the benefits of marriage which is satisfaction where couples can freely express themselves to each other and be understood.

The objective of this study is to determine the level of satisfaction derived from pleasantness of communication process that exist among couples. And in pursuance of this objectives, a research hypothesis was raised.

1. There is no significant difference between the mean score on marital communication pleasantness of married couples with 5 years and the those above 5 years in marriage.

Methodology and Procedure

The Design

A survey study of married couples communication process was conducted to determine the pleasantness or otherwise of their communication satisfaction.

The Sample

A random sample of 375 married respondents were used in this study. Out of the 375 respondents, 119 were 5 years and 256 were 6 years and above in marriage. All respondents had a minimum of secondary or grade 11 teachers education. The entire sample was drawn from Zaria, in Kaduna State. Respondents were randomly selected from secondary schools teachers government schools in Zaria education zone.

The Instrument

The data was collected using a modified version of the communication process section of spouse observational checklist originally developed by Weiss and Perry (1979). The communication process of the spouse observational checklist is a list of statements which require the respondents to indicate whether they considered communication with their spouse categorically pleasing or displeasing. Also the response mode was made more elaborate to indicate very pleased or very displeased in order to cross-validate the instrument. The instrument was personally administered by the researcher.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis started with the coding of all the 375 respondents responses. Then, respondents were categorized into the two main groups of duration in married years. Frequency distribution was counted and percentages were also calculated and then grouped appropriately. Man-Whitney U-test was used to test the differences between two independents sample means. Man-Whitney U-test was selected instead of t-test because the data of the study is continuous and ordinal measurement was used for the variables. It is used to test whether two independent groups have been drawn from the same population.

Results

Hypothesis 1 was drawn to find out if there is no significant differences between the mean score on marital communication pleasantness of married couples who are 5 years and those above 5 years in marriage. The tables below are the answers to the hypothesis.

Tables 1: Number of Years in Married Life

Variation	Category	Absolute Distribution	Relative Count %
Years in marriage	5 years	119	31.73
	6 years and above	256	68.27
	Total	375	100.00

A look at table 1 reveals that 256 respondents representing 68.27% had attained more than 5 years marital experience while 119 representing 31.73% of the respondents had 5 years experience in marriage. These two groups with their accumulated experiences in married life were used for this study.

Table 2: Testing of Hypothesis

To test the hypothesis, Mann-Whitney U-test analysis of the difference between mean scores was done. The result of analysis is shown below:-

Variable	N	Medium	U	P
Up to 5 years in marriage	119	77.00	21484.0	0.3637
Above 5 years In marriage	256	78.00		
Total	375			

NS = Not significant, $P < 0.05$

An examination of table 2 indicates a non-significant difference between those with 5 years and those above 5 years in marriage experience and their communication pleasantness because U value is 21484.0, while p value was 0.3637; thus, the result is not significant at 0.05, hence the hypothesis is retained.

Discussion and Implications

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the mean score on marital communication pleasantness of married couple with up to years and those above 5 years of marriage. The results showed non-significant difference between the two categories of respondents ($P = 0.3637, 0.05$). This is an indicated that both married couples with up to 5 years and those above 5 years in marriage communicate with and to their spouses in similar manner as such experience marital satisfaction. This result implies that differences in years of marriage does not significantly influence communication satisfaction pleasantness in marriage. This finding agrees with that of Rosen-Grandon (1999) who opined that communication is an ingredient for marital satisfaction because it involves trust, a desire to confide and an ability to express oneself without fear of harsh judgment. It could further be explained that the longer two people live together, the more they become sensitive to their communication with each other (Wright 2001). This possibly might have influence both to have similar satisfaction level with their marital communication. In addition, according to Van Pelt (2005) it might also be a result of the fact that couples have got adequate knowledge of each other that they have learnt to accept each others communication as they are. This in-depth knowledge is essential for happy marital satisfaction in relationship (Kolo 1989).

Suggestion for Improving Verbal Expression

Since marriage requires members to interact with each other on a daily basis communication satisfaction should be the goal. The basic function of talking is the establishment of a relationship. As such married couples should spend time talking because it brings two people together. Through talking couples can express feelings, convey emotions, clarify thinking; reinforce ideas and make contact with a partner. Talking is a pleasant way to pass time, get to know each other, release tension, express opinions and deepen intimacy. Thus, the quality of the relationship between couples depends a great deal on the ability of partners to express themselves verbally. This would greatly enrich their

lives and so experience marital satisfaction.

Furthermore, married couples need to do a lot to improve their talk time at home. Learning to establish simple, smooth talk patterns with each partner making the best contribution can enhance the well-being of any stage of a marriage. Talk about the weather, news, work, the children or any topic of interest. Through this talk, couples learn to share themselves and understand each other. It helps to build intimacy with a partner as you share little things that are important to one another. The result would be establishment of emotional and affective ties with each other and so enhance marital satisfaction.

In addition, since married couples live together, this requires involvement with each other because marriage itself implies involvement. As a result every married partner does have a responsibility to become involved with his or her partner. This can be attained through talking together to nurture each other by words of approval and support, praise of what one is and does, and demonstration of respect and acceptance. This talking can lead to involvement in one another's life and so strengthen the marriage bond and satisfaction in marital relationship would be derived.

Lastly, as married couples we all need to satisfy our needs to be accepted, loved and understood. We all need to confide our most intimate secrets, our doubts, our insecurities and our inclinations. This unveiling of oneself only occurs in the most intimate of circumstances such as the home. The children, neighbours and the community at large can observe the verbal expression of couples and so learn to set aside some time to foster communication. And when there is mutual sharing of this kind, friendship and commitment deepen and the relationships within the home prospers. Thus, a satisfactory verbal expression is sustained.

Conclusion

In this paper, attempt has been made to look at verbal communication process among married couples as the centre of interpersonal relationship that could be satisfactory. The findings have been presented in descriptive manner and some implications drawn from it. It can be concluded that duration of married life contributes to high rate of pleasant communication satisfaction are reported among the respondents. Married couples should continued to cultivate and sustain verbal expression through repeated practice so as to enrich their lives and nurture their relationship to satisfaction. Counselors and religious leaders need to work more closely with married couples so as to improve their verbal communication process for better marital lives and satisfaction of relationship in general.

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