



IMPACT OF COMMUNICATION ON MARRIAGES IN IKEJA METROPOLIS, LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Marriage is said to be a socially accepted and approved union between two individuals based on the premise of establishing a family – an ultimate unit of the human society. However, Studies have revealed that this fundamental institution has been undergoing severe challenges all over the world in recent times; with devastating effects on societies. This study investigates the impact of communication on marriages in Ikeja metropolis (Lagos State, Nigeria). Using stratified random sampling technique, questionnaire was used to collect needed data from 104 respondents (41 males and 63 females). Descriptive statistics (frequency count, percentage and mean) and inferential statistics (Chi-Square and Pearson Product Moment Correlation - PPMC) were used to analyze the quantitative data. Findings revealed that there was a positive correlation between limitations ($r = 0.59057$, $p > 0.005$) and the emotions couples attached to communication. In addition, the Chi-square statistical analysis showed that there were significant association between age ($\chi^2=54.88$, $p < 0.05$), family background ($\chi^2=12.58$, $p < 0.05$), religion ($\chi^2=4.323$, $p < 0.05$) and couples' communication cum emotional attachment. This implies that the variation in the age of respondents, family background (monogamy or polygamy) and their religious affiliation affected how the couples communicate. Majority of the respondents established some deficiencies that affected the communication process. The study recommended that communication education should be given to couples and intending couples before, during and after marriage,

Key Words: Marriage, impact, communication, family, Ikeja

INTRODUCTION

Family is believed to be a socially approved and accepted institution in human society. It is one of the oldest human institution – older than any government. It is a union between a man and a woman who have agreed to live together for the rest of their lives in peace, harmony and marital bliss. Marriage is essential to the human society. In fact, it is said to be the basis of every society. It is necessary for companionship, procreation, among others. It is observed by all cultures in the world; though in practice, differs from culture to culture. However, it is observed that across the world that this institution is paddling through storms in recent times. What should have been the most nourishing and enduring asset to human relationship is gradually becoming a curse. Studies have shown that the challenges faced in families have increased and that there is a decline in marital quality (Nwadinigwe & Anyama, 2010; Omotosho, 2021). The Rate of conflicts have not only threatened homes, but the spate of domestic violence, separations and divorce are on a geometric proportion. Most of these issues have been attributed to poor spousal communication. Greater percentage of human behaviours, according to Idowu & Esere (2007) is concerned with sending, transmitting or receiving messages; which is what is referred to as communication. However, Ipaye (1995, p.45) noted that "there are discernible evidences of communication gap and misconstrued, or misunderstood messages. To Wolcott & Hughes (1999), communication was ranked topmost followed by the incompatibilities - sexual or otherwise and economic issues. The most common & universal issues in marriage, according to Brown (2008), are problems of misunderstanding, depression and finance. Christensen & Shenk (2001) also noted that there is a high correlation between communication and couples' conflict resolution skills vis-a-s marital adjustment and divorce rates. Lack of effective communication in a marriage could lead to misunderstanding,

disunity and even conflict Omotosho (2021); whereas, communicating effectively according to Esere (2007), enables couple to develop the required capability to manage their emotions, peep into grey areas and iron out their differences, understand their spouse's point of view and cope constructively with marital challenges. Dysfunctional patterns of communication on the other hand, Sanders, Halford and Behrens (1999) observed, could increase relationship problems and before long, a decline in satisfaction. Issues in marriage, Omotosho (2021, p.72) noted, "often begin with verbal humiliation and emotional abuse" which if not curbed, "intensifies ... until it reaches physical abuse." Just as Idowu & Esere (2007) observed, since many marriages now end tragically in divorce, it is now fundamentally expedient to work on the communication between married couples. Therefore, using Ikeja metropolis (Lagos State, Nigeria) as a focus, this study investigates the impact of communication on marriages; with the intent to correct or reduce the anomalies in marriages and constant frictions between husbands and wives.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide this work:

1. Does communication impact on the emotions of married couples in Ikeja metropolis, Lagos State, Nigeria?
2. Are there limitations to couples' communication in Ikeja metropolis, Lagos State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested:

1. There is no significant relationship between socioeconomic characteristics and couples' communication cum emotional attachment as expressed by married couples in the Ikeja metropolis
2. There is no significant relationship between limitations, couples' communication and emotional attachment as expressed by married couples in the Ikeja metropolis

METHODOLOGY:

Research Design

A descriptive research design was adopted for this study. Researcher's choice of design is based on the fact that it allows one to seek information or opinions from respondents without necessarily influencing their choice of response regarding variables under study.

Population

Although the population for this study consist of all married couples in the Ikeja metropolis; however, since Ikeja is a heterogeneous society comprising of different interest groups, there is a need for a sampling scheme that can reduce the heterogeneity. Hence, stratified random sampling technique was used to select 104 participants from private concerns, mosques, market places, public organizations and churches. A stratified random sampling technique is one that involves the division of a population into smaller units. A dinner tagged "Couples' Dinner" was organized for participants at Iyaniwura Hall, Ikeja. Even though provisions were made for 140 participants, only 104 married people participated - few came without husband/wife. In order to avoid intimidation and for valid data collection, couples were made to sit separately when the questionnaire was administered.

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Results in Table 1 show the demographic characteristics of the respondents in the study area. Majority (60.6%) of the respondents were female while 39.4 percent were male. This is an indication that there were more female in the study area than their male counterparts; and also, the issue of couple's communication is of greater importance to female than male. The mean age of the respondents was 47 years; while 57.7 percent were within the age bracket of 40 and 60 years. This connotes that respondents were middle aged, probably still in active services in their respective places of work. Almost all (97.1%) of the respondents were married. This is expected because they were couples and 86.5 percent had tertiary education. Furthermore, finding shows that the mean years spent in marriage was 7, though majority (96.2%) were of the Christian faith (of which 67.3% had church based counseling and 32.7%, Parental counseling); 04 (3.8) professed Islam. Regarding family background, 52.9% of the respondents practiced monogamy; while 47.1% were into polygamy.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Mean/Mode
Gender			
Male	41	39.4	
Female	63	60.6	
Age (Year)			
18-40	35	33.7	47
40-60	60	57.7	
60 years and above	09	8.7	
Marital status			
Married	101	97.1	
Divorced	03	2.9	
Level of Education			
Secondary education	14	13.5	
Higher education	90	86.5	
Years in Marriage			
Less than 5 years	12	11.5	
5-10 years	35	33.7	7.0
11-15 years	22	21.2	
16-25	19	18.3	
More than 25 years	16	15.4	
Family background			
Monogamy	55	52.9	
Polygamy	49	47.1	
Religion			
Christianity	100	96.2	
Islam	04	3.8	
Counsel before marriage			
Church	70	67.3	
Parental counseling	34	32.7	

Source: Field survey, 2020

Couples' Communication and Emotional Attachment

Table 2 reveals the emotion couples attached to communication. Majority (90.4%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed to the fact that they are always eager to communicate with their spouses; 56.8 believed they seldom willing to communicate with their spouses; while 88.4% felt that their spouses pretend to be with them during discussions. This

finding agrees with Idowu and Esere (2007) that more than half of failed relationships and marriages are due to a severe lack of communication between couples. Whereas communicating effectively according to Esere (2007), enables couple to develop the required capability to manage their emotions, cautiously look into grey areas and iron out their differences; understand their spouse's point of view and effectively cope with marital challenges. It also agrees with Ipaye (1995) who posited that marital problems start with grilled and discernible evidence of communication gaps and misconstrued, misunderstood messages; which if not properly managed, as Brown (2008) observed, could graduate to spousal misunderstanding and depression. In actual fact, just a fragment of the respondents (8.7%)/(15.4%) reiterated that their spouses feel relaxed during discussion/conversation. In addition, 75% strongly noted that interacting with their spouses is always very brief, uninteresting (85.6%) but very boring (74%). Even though most discussions (85%) were on family matters - financial matters (84.4%), sex talks (51.9%), among others; spouses act strange during conversation (73.1%). The results of this table help to answer Research Question 1: "Does communication impact on the emotions of married couples in Ikeja metropolis, Lagos State, Nigeria?" Marriage, according to Adegboyega (2021) and Suleyiman (2014) is the most sensitive and emotional commitment that people could possess. It revolves around warm relations of mental peace and acceptance. Semiotically, one could feel the unhealthy relationship woven around the respondents. It portrays the fact that either the 'husband or the wife' in these marriages lack the ability to accommodate his/her partner; and where such exists, a partner will not be eager to communicate; and if there is a window for communication (which is occasional or seldom), 75% of respondents attested to the fact that such communication would be brief, uninteresting and very boring. Greater percentage of human behaviours, according to Idowu & Esere (2007) is concerned with sending, transmitting or receiving messages; and this what is referred to as communication. Effective communication in marital relationship is of crucial significance. It encourages harmony and stability in marriage; lack of which could breed verbal humiliation and emotional abuse, which if not curbed could develop into physical abuse (Omotosho, 2021) which precedes divorce.

Table 2: Couples' Communication and Emotional Attachment

Statements	SA	A	NS	D	SD
Always eager to communicate with my spouse	-	3(2.9)	7(6.7)	32(30.8)	62(59.6)
Seldom willing to communicate with my spouse	22(21.2)	37(35.6)	11(10.6)	19(18.3)	15(14.4)
My spouse pretends to be with me during discussion	38(36.5)	54(51.9)	5(4.8)	-	7(6.7)
My spouse feels relaxed talking with me	3(2.9)	6(5.8)	-	34(32.7)	61(58.7)
Feels bored during conversation with my spouse	37(35.6)	53(51.0)	6(5.8)	3(2.9)	5(4.8)
My spouse feels relaxed during conversation	13(12.5)	3(2.9)	3(2.9)	50(48.1)	35(33.7)
My spouse acts strange during conversation	34(32.7)	42(40.4)	3(2.9)	17(16.3)	8(7.7)
My spouse is always open to ideas	5(4.8)	45(43.3)	7(6.7)	33(31.7)	14(13.5)
Interactions with my spouse is always very brief	32(30.8)	46(44.2)	4(3.8)	6(5.8)	16(15.4)
Interacting with my spouse is always very boring	16(15.4)	8(7.7)	3(2.9)	36(34.6)	41(39.4)
Interacting with my spouse is always very interesting	12(11.5)		3(2.9)	34(32.7)	55(52.9)
Conversation on financial matters always end in deadlock	3(2.9)	3(2.9)	18(17.3)	44(42.3)	36(34.6)
My spouse is always interested in money talks	9(8.7)	38(36.5)	8(7.7)	32(30.8)	17(16.3)
My spouse is always interested in sex talks	21(20.2)	33(31.7)	8(7.7)	34(32.7)	8(7.7)
My spouse is always interested in family matters	57(54.8)	32(30.8)	3(2.9)	9(8.7)	3(2.9)

Source: Field survey, 2020

Couples' Communication and Emotional Attachment Index

Result in Table 3 shows that majority of the respondents had an unfavorably communication in marriage – Couples Feels bored during conversation (86.6%); not eager to communicate with spouse (90.4%) and when interactions exist, couples pretend to be with each other during discussion (88.4%).

Table 3: Couples' Communication and Emotional Attachment Index

Variables	Categorization	Frequency	Percentages
Good communication	15-45	51	49.0
Bad communication	46-75	53	51.0

Source: Computation from field survey, 2020

Limitations to Communication between Couples

Limitations to couple's communication are presented in Table 4. Findings show that majority (61.5%) of the respondents agreed to the fact that their spouses do not listening to their opinion on matters; 58.7% observed that their spouses lash out with harsh tone (voice) during conversation; 68.3% felt that their ideas are not respected – their spouses do not see anything good in them, but always complaining (84.6%); and keep on comparing them with other people (82.7%); shouting and yelling (74.1 %). Other limitations noted include an overbearing and dominating attitude of a spouse (87.9%), withholding vital information during conversation (77.9 %), bringing up memories of past events (80.8%) and sex denial (not giving room for sex.62.5%). The results in Table 4 assist in answering Research Question 2: Are there limitations to couples' communication in Ikeja metropolis, Lagos State, Nigeria?

Table 4: Limitations to Communication between Couples

Statements	SA	A	NS	D	SD
Not listening to my own opinion on matters	28(26.9)	36(34.6)	14(13.5)	12(11.6)	14(13.5)
Lashing out with harsh tone (voice) during conversation	32(30.8)	29(27.9)	8(7.7)	13(12.5)	22(21.2)
Shouting and cutting in during conversation	26(25.0)	51(49.1)	10(9.9)	8(7.7)	9(8.7)
My Ideas are not respected	27(26.0)	44(42.3)	14(13.5)	12(10..6)	7(6.7)
Comparing me with other people	31(29.8)	55(52.9)	4(3.8)	6(5.8)	8(7.7)
Never see anything good in me – always complaining	20(19.2)	68(65.4)	2(1.9)	12(10.6)	2(1.9)
My spouse has an overbearing and dominating attitude	21(20.2)	60(57.7)	2(1.9)	14(13.5)	7(6.7)
My spouse withholds vital information during conversation	32(30.8)	49(47.1)	11(10.6)	3(2.9)	9(8.7)
My spouse always brings up memories of past events	34(32.7)	50(48.1)	3(2.9)	5(4.8)	12(11.5)
Comes home late on regular basis	6(5.8)	44(42.3)	8(7.7)	38(36.5)	8(7.7)
My spouse is very obstinate	3(2.9)	32(30.8)	6(5.8)	2(1.9)	61(58.7)
Does not give room for sex	5(4.8)	60(57.7)	6(5.8)	25(24.0)	8(7.7)
Over-demanding for sex	5(4.8)	12(11.5)	8(7.7)	11(10.6)	65(62.5)
Sex – no romance and sweet talks before sex	5(4.8)	51(49.0)	6(5.8)	23(22.1)	19(18.3)

Source: field survey, 2020

Test of Hypothesis One: Relationship between socioeconomics and Couples' Communication and Emotional Attachment

The result of this hypothesis “there is no significant relationship between respondents’ socioeconomic characteristics and couples’ communication and emotional attachment” was tested using chi-square test (χ^2) the results presented in Table 5. For the result, the socio-economic characteristics considered were age of the respondent, gender, marital status, and years in marriage, educational status, family background, religion and counsel. The significance of the relationship was determined at 0.05 levels. The Chi-square statistical analysis shows that there were significant association between age ($\chi^2=54.88$, $p<0.05$), family background ($\chi^2=12.58$, $p<0.05$), religion ($\chi^2=4.323$, $p<0.05$) and couples’ communication cum emotional attachment. This implies that the variation in the age of the respondents, family background which is the state of monogamy or polygamy and the religion affiliation of the respondents affect how they communicate as couples. Mode and rate of communication of couples during courtship differ after wedding. Before wedding there were much to talk about – “sweet talks”, mostly lies. However, the moment they are wedded, reality comes in. This agrees with Olson and Defrain’s, (2000) observation that couples spend more time preparing for the marriage ceremony, instead of building skills for a sustainable marriage. The pre-wedding “sweet talks” suddenly disappear; couples discover truth about each other; and this could lead to gradual withdrawal. Whereas, interaction between couples, according to Gottman and Driver (2004), determines marital outcomes. Communication is a vital component to a strong and healthy marriage. It makes partners feel filial of love and care; and as Adegboyega (2021) enthused, effective communication requires practice of the skills of listening and expressing thoughts and feelings

In addition, the family background and religion go hand-in-hand. Couples with polygamous background are used to communal lives; they communicate freely with other people vis-à-vis those from monogamous homes. Research has also shown that young men love to “hang out” and gist with their pairs leaving their wives at home; whereas, wives love they stay at home and convers with them; and as Berger (2005) observed, it could lead to perceptive errors and dysfunctional families and spousal abuse. There is the need for both to adjust. Husband and the wife need to relate emotionally to each other, showing affection by communicating in love.

Table 5: Test of Relationship between Socioeconomics, Couples’ Communication and Emotional Attachment

Variables	Chi-square	Df	p-value	Decision
Age	6.545	2	0.038	S
Gender	1.554	1	0.213	NS
Marital status	3.210	1	0.073	NS
Years in marriage	5.060	4	0.281	NS
Educational status	1.149	1	0.284	NS
Family background	12.58	1	0.001	S
Religion	4.323	1	0.038	S
counsel	1.249	1	0.264	NS

Source: Computation from field survey, 2020

Test of relationship between limitations, Couples’ Communication and Emotional Attachment

The result of the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between limitations, couples’ communication and emotional attachment is presented in Table 6. Findings show that there is a positive correlation between limitations ($r = 0.59057$, $p>0.005$) and the emotions couples attached to communication. This implies that the limitations to communication such as not listening to spouse’s opinion on matters, lashing out with harsh tone (voice) during conversation, withholding vital information during conversation, constant complains instead of seeing anything good in one’s spouse, bringing up memories of past events and comparing

spouse with others affected the communication process of the couples. Effective communication could not have taken place where one spouse fails to listen to spouse's opinion on matters but always stick to his/her opinion most especially on family issues. In fact, lashing out with harsh tone (voice) during conversation is a sign of rejection. Bringing up memories of past events and comparing spouse with others during conversation could be semiotically interpreted to mean "keep quiet, your opinions are not needed". This could lead to either a withdrawal or generate into family feud. This agrees with Esere (2002 and 2006) who posited that Communication is germane to a marriage relationship and according to Olagunju and Eweniyi (2002), it is the remedy for a sick and unhealthy marital relationship. Corroborating this, Suleyiman (2014) opined that good communication encompasses effective listening, ability to understand the person you are listening to, and give a constructive feedback in a way that will not hurt the partner's thoughts and feelings – neither critical nor accusatory. Communicating effectively enables the couple to resolve conflict amicably (Esere, 2007). Though effectual communication requires rigorous practice and a great deal of effort, but without it, it is almost impossible to resolve conflicts or enhance a healthy relationship.

Table 6: Test of relationship between limitations, Couples' Communication and Emotional Attachment

Variable	Correlation (r) value	P –value	Decision
Limitation and couple communication	0.590**	0.001	Significant

Source: Computation from field survey, 2020

Conclusion and Recommendation

Marriage is an honourable institution. The importance of marriage to human society rest in the fact that it is believed to be the foundation of every society. It is established in this study that marriage is bedeviled by storms as a result of ineffective communication. The study investigated the impact of communication on marriages in Ikeja metropolis (Lagos State, Nigeria). Majority confessed that they seldom communicate. 75% of the respondents attested to the fact that even whenever there is a window for such, it is characterised by brevity and boredom. Is also established that the cracks in communication were as a result of the overbearing and dominating attitude of a spouse, sex denial, lashing out on spouse with harsh tone during conversation, lack of respect for spouse's ideas, unappreciative attitude of a spouse, among others. Communication is the cement that binds relationship together; it is the life-wire that connects husbands to wives or vice-versa. A harmonious and meaningful relationship is one held together by effective communication; where both husband and wife are endowed with good listening skills – listening to one another; respecting one another; tolerate each other; persevere; and each partner is free to express thoughts and feelings. Therefore, for effective communication to take place, it is recommended that spouse put the above into practice. They should cultivate the attitude of see tolerance; see the positive side of a spouse and not comparing spouse with others; and above all, not denying a spouse of sex.



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