



# Influence of Communication on Marital Adjustment of Couples in North Senatorial District of Cross River State

**Oko Clement Omu**

Department of Guidance and Counselling  
Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi-Nigeria

**Dr (Mrs). B.N. Kohol**

Department of Guidance and Counselling  
Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi-Nigeria

**Prof. M. Orhungur**

Department of Guidance and Counselling  
Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi-Nigeria

**Abstract:** This study was carried out to determine the influence of communication on marital adjustment of couples in North senatorial district of Cross River State. The study set out specially to determine the influence of positive communication on marital adjustment of couples, the influence of negative communication on marital adjustment of couples, the influence of verbal communication on marital adjustment of couples, and the influence of non-verbal communication on marital adjustment of couples. A self-constructed questionnaire consisted of four section was used for the study, four research question were raised and answered to guide the study and four hypotheses were tested using chi-square. The study used the survey research design; it was carried out in the five local government areas of the zone with population of 12,500 couples. The study sample 370 couples from five selected churches and two high courts in the zone. A descriptive statistic of mean and standard deviation were used to answer question while chi-square was used to test hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Result showed that positive communication, verbal communication and non- verbal communication influence marital adjustment of couple while negative communication does not influence marital adjustment of couples. It was therefore concluded that positive, verbal and non-communication influences marital adjustment and should be practiced, while negative communication should be discourage. It was recommended that couples should practice more of positive communication, discourage the use of negative communication, always used verbal and non-verbal communication during conversation for adjustment in marriage to be achieved.

**Keywords:** Communication, Marital Adjustment, Non-verbal, Couples.

## 1.0

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Communication is defined as the exchange of information between people, by means of speaking, writing, or using a common system of signs or behaviour, Communication is central to human living. Odukoya (2008) argued that there are two broad forms of communication namely verbal and non-verbal communication. It is very important to let body language depict the words one is delivering. Verbal and non-verbal communication should agree. It is necessary for a healthy relationship between husbands and wives. Akinade (2015) sees marital communication among spouses as a verbal and non-verbal passing of information or message from husband to wife or vice versa. Communication in

marriage is exchange of information and messages between couples by spoken word, written words, symbols, body gesture, and facial expressions (Sotonade 2012). According to Akinade (2015) the types of marital communication includes: positive communication, negative communication, verbal communication and non-verbal communication. A positive communication is a person's ability to express his or her feelings and desires to a partner; Negative communication on the other hand is characterized by avoidance and partner dominance; Verbal communication is the ability of couples to use words in speaking to each other to convey what one has in mind to the other person, while Non-verbal communication in marriage involves the use of body and facial gesture to communicate with your spouse other than words.

Communication produces building blocks upon which the marriage relationship is built. Where the communication is ineffective, the blocks result in a wall of separation between the husband and his wife, resulting in pains and misery. Where communication is effective, the bricks build a wall of protection around the couple protecting the relationship from external attacks resulting in unity and harmony (Gyuse and Gyuse 2010). The spouses who can air their differences get hostility out of their system, then kiss and make up, might have an excellent chance of growing old together. Communication in marriage is the way humans create and share meaning, both verbally and non-verbally. The ability to communicate effectively in marriage is one of a handful of essential skills individuals must master if they are to enjoy close relationships. The ability and the willingness to communicate have been found to be among the most important factors in maintaining a satisfying relationship. Communication in marriage is expected to be intimate relationship which involves the continued balancing of competing needs for intimacy and independence. Tannen (2003) points out that intimacy implies that "we are close and the same". Whereas independence implies that "we are separate and different". For communication to be effective in marriage four types of communication may be practiced, these are positive communication, negative communication, verbal and nonverbal communication among others.

A positive communication is a person's ability to express his or her feelings and desires to a partner. Akinade (2015) reiterates that a positive communication cycle involves assertiveness and self-confidence. Assertiveness is the couple's ability to express their feelings and desires to themselves. Self-confidence is a measure of how a person feels about himself or herself and the ability to control things in his or her life. A positive communication involves the expression of thoughts, feelings, and desires as one's right. A positive Communicator is able to ask for what he or she wants without demanding it or infringing on rights of others. Assertive people tend to feel better about them-self because they are able to express themselves. One goal in helping a couple improve their relationship is to try to help both people become more assertive with each other. Increasing assertiveness may tend to increase each person's self-confident and decrease avoidance and perceived partner dominance. assertiveness generally seems to have a positive impact on the person and on a couple's relationship. This according to Akinade [2015] will help in marital communication as their relationship in marriage is improved. No wonder Amao-Kehinde (2005) revealed that couples who avoided themselves ended up in broken marriage.

Negative communication on the other hand, is a cycle characterized by avoidance and partner dominance. In a negative communication cycle, according to goldsmith [2014] as one person avoid making decision, the other partner will take over and become more dominant, and as

one partner seems more dominant, the other partner may withdraw [i.e. become avoidant]. The combination of avoidance and partner dominance create the negative communication cycle. This kind of behaviour is typical among these people who believe a woman should not be heard, and that a man is always right and never wrongs, this makes the partner who is avoidant to battle emotions. Avoidance, or a person's unwillingness or inability to deal with problematic issues, tend to be higher in people who are passive or non-assertive, this according to Goldsmith [2014] will not help in marital communication which will in turn affect marital adjustment. This is why Amao-Kehinde (2005) advocate that couples should engage in positive communication. In a related development, verbal communication in marriage if effectively used seems to enhance marital adjustment in couples. Verbal communication in marriage is the ability of couples to use language through words in speaking to other person in order to convey what one has in mind to the other person [Kolo 2016], in other words verbal communication involves speaking, putting words together to make use of language as a medium to send messages. The use of words in verbal communication differs not only in content but also vary in their emotional and psychological impact on the receiver of the message. Effective use of verbal communication in marriage seems to bring harmonious relationship amongst spouse which might in turn leads to marital adjustment.

Similarly, Non-verbal communication in marriage involves the use of body and facial gesture to communicate with your spouse other than words. It might be essential that spouse express their affection in a physical, non-sexual way to keep a marriage healthy non-verbal communication, or body language includes facial expressions, body movement and gestures, eye contact, posture, the tone of voice, and even your muscle tension and breathing. The way you look, listen, move, and react to another person seems to tell them more about how you're feeling than words alone ever can [Sternberg 2007]. The husband and wife out of their differences bring about a shift in their patterns of behaviour through effective and positive marital communication and adapt to each other, accommodating social and psychological deviations in personal experiences through marital adjustment. Adjustment generally refers to behavioral process of balancing conflicting needs in the environment or home (Mangal 2002). Marital adjustment denotes a process of social equilibrium a state of congruence or harmony between husband and wife (Denga 2011). According to Denga (2004), it helps couples to reach for their own self-actualization. This agreement between husband and wife which has been achieved despite differences within their unique characteristics as distinct individual as well as challenges within the physical and social environment in which the couple lives and operates. Marital adjustment is a major social habit humans (spouses in this case) have to cultivate. Adjustment between spouses is a gradual and systematic process, it does not happen automatically. Both partners have to work assiduously to achieve it (Akinade 2015). This is why the communication is very important in this aspect.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

It is universally accepted that marriage being a union of man and woman, involves two persons of opposite sex. The marriage relationship is expected to be joyful, peaceful, good and growing well. It is supposed to provide one of life's greatest satisfactions but when it is poor, it can become a source of great frustration and misery. The researcher observed that some married couples particularly in the study area often put up strange and destructive attitude to express the state of their marriage through feeling of helplessness, frustration, sadness, anger, anxiety, avoiding one another, abusing and blaming one another,

passing critical judgment to pull down one another and feeling of low self-esteem, some of which often lead to broken homes, divorce or untimely death of either party. Marriage institutions in North senatorial district of Cross River State today seem to be suffering some neglect from the hands of those connected with it, thereby putting marriage in a difficult condition; and one seems to wonder what could be the cause; could it be as a result of lack of communication and marital adjustment by couples in the study area? It is indeed worrisome, that some of the factors like positive, negative, verbal and non- verbal communication that are known to influence communication are often perceived differently by some couples. The researcher during the course of this work visited court and listen to court proceedings and observed that many cases of marital maladjustment that came up for hearing emanate from differences in the way couples perceive various factors that influence marital communication. From the experience and the observation of the researcher, the researcher's siblings, Aunties, and female relatives most of which are in their father's house after two, three or four years of marriage, can no longer marry. When spouses perceive any of these factors like show of interest, show of affection, being empathetic, be appreciative, joke around and be accepting as not being important, they tend to ignore them and this has often jeopardized their relationship resulting to separation and divorce. It is in the light of the problem situation so far identified, that the researcher sets out to examine the "influence of communication on marital adjustment of couples in North Senatorial district of Cross River State".

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The study investigated the influence' of communication on marital adjustment of couples in North senatorial district of Cross River State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the influence of positive communication on marital adjustment of couples.
2. Determine the influence of negative communication on marital adjustment of couples.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

This section presents the methods and procedures that will be employed for conducting the research. This was carried out under the sub-headings of research design, area of study, population of study, sample and sampling technique, instrument for data collection, validation of instrument, reliability of instrument, method of data collection, and method of data analysis.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

##### **3.1**

The research design for this study is survey research design. This design is suitable for the study because it gather data from a large number of subjects which is a sample and make generalization on the population in order to get information about variables and allows the respondents express their opinion by filling the questionnaire on Influence of Communication on Marital Adjustment of Couples in North Senatorial District of Cross River State.

#### **3.2 Area of study**

The area of study is Cross River North Senatorial district. It consists of five (5) local government areas namely: Ogoja, Obudu, Yala, Bekwara, and Obanlikwu Local Government Areas of Cross River State. The area is bounded to the North by Vandikya and Konshisha in

Benue State, to the South by Ikom Local Government, to the East by Boki Local Government Area, and to the West by Izee Local Government Area in Ebonyi State.

### **3.3 Population of the Study**

The population of this study is 12,500 married couples in Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State (Church and High Court registers 2017). The population is the combination of all married couples from Catholic Church with the populations of 2500, Assemblies of God church 2200, Anglican Church 1700, Deeper life church 2000 and Cherubim 1600 and High Court in Ogoja with population of 1500 and Obudu with 1000 in the study area.

### **3.4 Sample and Sampling Techniques**

The sample for this study was 370, which was determined using Krejcie and Morgan sample size table, (1970), Multi stage sample process was used to select the sample, the reason was that the sampling procedure was done at stages using different sampling procedure. First, purposive sample was used to sample five Churches and two High courts in the area; one church from each Local Government and the two High courts in the zone.

### **3.5 Instrument for Data Collection**

The instrument used for data collection is a self-constructed questionnaire named "Influence of Communication on Marital Adjustment of Couples" (ICOMAC). The instrument has four sections titled section A, B, C & D. This brought the total number of items in Section 1-4 to 21 items. However, Sections 1-4 (items 1-21) were rated on a four point rating scale of High Influence (HI=4), Moderate Influence (MI=3), Low Influence (LI=2), No Influence (NI=1)

### **3.6 Validation of Instrument**

The instrument for data collection was validated by three experts, all from the Department of Educational Foundations and General Studies, Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi, one Measurement and Evaluation expert and two experts from Guidance and Counseling. Face and Content validity were established for the purpose of adequacy of the instrument, clarity of instrument, relevance of items, and proper wordings.

### **3.7 Reliability of Instrument**

In order to establish the reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire was administered to 30 respondents of Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State, which was not part of the study but had characteristics that are similar to that of the study sample. Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine internal consistency of items. Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of internal consistency that shows how closely related a set of items are as a group. The reliability coefficient obtained from the respondents was .769 and its positive sign reveals that the instrument is reliable for the study (Appendix C).

### **3.8 Method of Data Collection**

The researcher personally administered the instrument to the respondent with the help of some research assistants. In this case some of the respondents who were not literate enough; the researcher and his assistant interpreted the questions to enable them to give appropriate responses. Some respondents requested for more time to complete the questionnaire, and to such the researcher gave them an interval of three days and then went back and collected the completed questionnaires.

### **3.9 Method of Data Analysis**

The descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviations were used to answer research questions while chi-square was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The choice of Mean to answer research questions was because data collected was on rating scale.

Bench mark of 2.50 was established to have influence while any item with a mean rating of less than 2.50 was regarded as having low or No influence for the research questions. The decision rule for the rejection or acceptance of hypotheses was based on the set value of 0.05, where the P-value was greater than the set value of 0.05( $P > 0.05$ ), the hypothesis was accepted but rejected when the P-value was less than the set value of 0.05( $P < 0.05$ ).

#### 4.0 RESULTS

##### 4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

**Table one: Mean and standard Deviation on influence of Positive Communication on Marital Adjustment of couples.**

| S/NO              | Items   | Mean        | SD          | Decision       |
|-------------------|---|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1                 | I express myself properly when I Talk With my spouse. | 3.87        | .36         | High Influence |
| 2                 | I ask for whatever I want from my Spouse              | 3.72        | 0.4         | High Influence |
| 3                 | I speak with confidence to my spouse                  | 3.82        | 0.44        | High Influence |
| 4                 | My spouse understand when I speak With him/her        | 3.75        | 0.43        | High Influence |
| 5                 | Our communication is always a dialogue                | 3.73        | 0.56        | High Influence |
| 6                 | I listen to my spouse closely when talking.           | 3.82        | 0.50        | High Influence |
| <b>Grand mean</b> |   | <b>3.19</b> | <b>0.95</b> | High Influence |

**Table 1** Reveals that all the 6 items have mean ranges between 3.87-3.82 and SD 0.36 0.50 with a grand mean of 3.19 and SD of 0.95 .This result indicate that positive communication influences Marital Adjustment of couples.

**Research Questions Two** How does negative communication influences marital Adjustment of Couples

The result to this research questions is presented in table two.

**Table Two. Mean and Standard Deviation on influence of negative Communication on Marital Adjustment of Couples**

| S /No Items  | Mean        | SD          | Decision            |
|--|-------------|-------------|---------------------|
| 1. I raised my voice when Talking to my spouse             | 2.17        | 1.45        | No Influence        |
| 2. My tune is unfriendly During conversation               | 1.68        | 0.91        | No Influence        |
| 3. I Dominate the conversation When talking with my spouse | 2.30        | 0.76        | No Influence        |
| 4. I avoid Dialogue while Talking to my spouse             | 2.06        | 0.98        | No Influence        |
| 5. I avoid discussing problems With my spouse              | 1.18        | 1.17        | No Influence        |
| <b>Grand Mean</b>  | <b>1.76</b> | <b>0.64</b> | <b>No Influence</b> |

**Table 2** Reveals that all the five items have mean ranges from 2.17- 1.18 and SD 1.45- 0.17 with a grand Mean of 1.76 and SD of 0.64. Result shows that the Negative communication has no Influence on Marital Adjustments

**Table Chi- square analysis on influence of positive communication on Marital Adjustment of couples**

|                | DF  | P    | Sig level | Decision |
|----------------|-----|------|-----------|----------|
| Chi-square     | 12  |      |           |          |
|                |     | 0.00 | 0.05      | Rejected |
| No valid cases | 370 |      |           |          |

P < 0.05

Table 5 shows that P-(sig) of 0.00 is less than p-value of 0.05 (p<0.05) at df 12. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that positive communication dose not significantly influence marital adjustment is rejected.

H<sub>02</sub> .Negative communication has no significant influence on marital adjustment of couples

The result to this hypothesis is presented in table six

**Table 6: Chi-Square Analysis on influence of Negative communications on Marital Adjustment of couples**

|               | DF  | P    | Sign level | Decision |
|---------------|-----|------|------------|----------|
| Chi-square    | 12  | 0.34 | 0.05       | Accepted |
| No valid Case | 370 |      |            |          |

P > 0.05

#### **4.2 Findings**

Based on the analysis of data collected for this study, the following findings were revealed;

- i. Positive communication has high significant influence on marital adjustment of couples in North Senatorial District of Cross River state.
- ii. Negative communication has low or no significant influence on marital adjustment of couples in North Senatorial District of Cross River State.

#### **5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **5.1 Conclusion**

Based on the result obtained from this study, it was concluded that positive communication is an important tool in marriage for effective adjustment of couple; couples should practice positive communication amongst them and learn how to stay together always. The onus lies on the couples to play its role in attending marriage counselling time to time to shape their marriage in a good condition always.

##### **5.2 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendation are made

1. Couples should use more positives communication, this can be achieved through expression of thoughts, feelings and desires; the use of 'I' statements rather than 'you' statements, taking a trip together, show of interest, empathy, try to set aside judgement amongst others.
2. Couples should discourage the use of negative communication that brings disagreement which in turn may affect marital adjustment. Negative communication such as avoidance of partner or trying to dominate in a conversation, dictations, emotional or physical abuse, all these and many other forms of negative communication should be avoided by couples.

#### **REFERENCES**

- Adikwu, O., Aduloju, M., Emaikwu, S. (2013): *research methods and statistics in education*. Eboforn Crown Poblisher.
- Akinade, E (2015): *comprehensive marriage guidance for all, a psychological and down-to-earth approach*, ibadan. brightway publishers.
- Akinboye, j. (2011): *how to be happy in marriage. Psychology for everyday living- Nigerian journal of applied psychology*, vol 1, 1, pp 65-73.



- Akingbade, e. (2014): *lifestyle of sexually connected couples (2) for adult only*. Lagos, Sunday punch.
- Amao-Kehinde, O. (2005): *effect of positive and negative communication cycle on sustainable marriage in Ekiti state*. An unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Benue state university Makurdi.
- Ayorinde, A. (2015): *effective communication as a tool to maladjustment in couples in Ondo state*. An unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Benue state university Makurdi.
- Bateson, M., Jackson, C., Haley, B. & Weak, L. (1956): *the family crucible*. New York: harper and row.
- Denga, I. & Effiong, M. (2011): *marriage counselling in Nigeria*. Calabar, clear lines publications.
- Egwuonwu, E. (2015): *survey of factors that influences marital adjustment amongst couples in Abakalike southern part of Ebonyi state*. an unpublished M.ED thesis, Benue state university, Makurdi.
- Ekman, P. (2016): *Communication through Nonverbal Behavior amongst People in Relationship in Rivers State*. An unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Calabar, Cross River State.
- Eric, B. (1957): *Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy*. New York. Crove press.
- Essien, E. (2004): *The Secret of becoming a Virtuous Woman Revealed*; Uyo, Annison Printing & Publisher.
- Gbenda, B. & Akume, G. (2002): *Understanding the nature and resolving marital conflict through Counselling*. Makurdi: Selfers publishers.
- Glenn, P & Pierre, W. (2008): *Listening for Wellness: An introduction to the Tomtits Method*. The Mozart center press.
- Gbuji, A. (2006): *The Pastoral Care of Marriage and Family Life in Nigeria*; Ibadan. St. Pauls.
- Goldsmith, B. (2014): *The Happy Couple: How to make Happiness a Habit, One little Loving thing at a Time*.
- Gottman, J (2006): *Emotional Responsiveness in Marital Conversation. A Journal of Communication*; Vol. 1.P. 47, 49, 51, 63, 64, 65&66.
- Hurlock, E. (2013): *Adolescent Development 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*, Kogakusha, MC Grow Hill.
- Kolo, F., Adamu, H., & Momoh, G. (2016): *Communication in Counselling*; Zaria, P.A. Ndahi Printing.