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Poor Communication and Faulty Cognition on Marital Stability of Married Adults in Nigeria

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of poor communication and faulty cognition on marital stability as expressed by married adults in Owerri metropolis. Six hundred questionnaire forms were randomly distributed among the married adults in Owerri metropolis. Ten null hypotheses were developed and tested by the use of t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The major findings showed that both poor communication and faulty cognition were responsible for marital instability. The findings equally showed that there were significant differences in respondents' reports based on gender, age, religion, occupational status, educational background. Based on these findings, recommendations were made. Sex, marital and family counselling should be made compulsory aspect of counsellor education programme as a way of fortifying would be counsellors adequately for their assignment. Married couples should be encouraged in the art of effective communication at home and at work.

Keywords: Communication; Faulty cognition; Marital stability; Married adults; Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Marriage is an important event in the life of an individual. It has a number of dimensions and functions. Most religions consider marriage as a sacrament and not a social construct. Oriental societies like the Japanese, Chinese and Indian societies have a highly conventional and the traditional conception of marriage, (Friedberg, 1998). In these societies (as in Nigeria), marriage is not only a matter concerning two individuals but is looked upon as an event involving families and communities at large. The question of individual choice of a mate or partner is limited (Rao, 1981). In Nigeria, sometimes the problems couples experience stem from the fact that they got married in spite of the opposition of their relatives who would refuse to accept them after marriage.

Marriage is seen in this study as an institutionalized social relationship of crucial significance. It is almost, always more than a legalized sexual union between a man and woman. It is a union between a man and a woman such that the children born are recognized as legitimate offspring of both parents.

Marriage is beneficial to the society because it is the foundation of a family and the building block of a society. Marriage between a man and a woman is vital to the stability and preservation of the society in which a father and a mother raise and nurture children. Marriage is not just the coming together of the two individuals, there is much more to it. To sustain a marriage, it is important that there is effort from both sides; a successful marriage is like a good recipe whose main ingredients are love, good communication, commitment, understanding, concern, care and togetherness (Esere, 2008).

Most married partners married in love with intention to honour the vow while many issues develop over time such as ineffective communication, extra-marital affairs, jealousy, relationship abuse, sexual issues etc which lead to divorce or marriage dissolution. Fifty percent of marriage relationship ends up in divorce, despite available marital counselling and the promise to stay together till death do them apart.

The family is a social arrangement based on marriage which involved the coming together of two different individuals whose personality traits and background are different. The implication is that they need understanding to live together for a time long enough to say that their marriage is stable. In the opinion of Akinade (1997) post marital counselling is provided to married couples to address marital issues/problems likely to be faced or is being faced during the wedding ceremony and later in their relationship as husband and wife. In essence, post marital counselling

is provided to married couples to enable them acquire information capable of bringing about marital adjustment and stability (Oniye, 2004).

Marital stability is said to exist when a couple is able to live together in their marriage for such a long time in peace, harmony and conjugal bliss for the realization of the goals of marriage. A stable marriage is not one in which there are no conflicts or misunderstanding, rather it is one which the couple has the ability of reducing the frequency of conflict as well as managing the few ones from degenerating into crisis. Thus, marital stability is the existence of relative peace and harmony over a long period of time among married couples.

Marital stability connotes a marriage held together by such things as being good listeners, respecting one another, having a good sense of humour, knowing

how to have fun, being willing to adapt accepting that one cannot change his/her partner and thinking rationally (Sherif and Strit, 2005).

A most important factor for marital stability is the role of effective communication. Agbana and Odewumi (2001), Ayodele (2001), Oniye (2004) and Sherif and Strit (2005) all noted that effective communication is a prerequisite for marital stability. Specifically, Ayodele (2001), noted that for marriage stability, couples must not communicate through their children either written or oral. Instead, they should endeavour to always sit together and talk over their differences.

Mental and emotional health, and consequent happiness, is a result of relationship. A relationship is a complex and mysterious phenomenon that exist between two. Two people create a relationship and the relationship in its turn creates them. Each one is a world unto himself with long past and future possibilities. When the two worlds converge, there is intimacy and the feeling that life is worth living (Omotosho, 1994). A large part of human behaviour is concerned with sending, transmitting or receiving messages, this is referred to as communication. But virtually everywhere (especially in the home), Ipaye (1995) notes that there is evidence of communication gaps, mis-constructed intentions, misinterpreted and misunderstood messages, inappropriately transmitted and poorly received messages (p.61).

Take for instance the story of a couple who had been married for twenty years and who went for a help from a family therapist. In spite of a number of counselling sessions no headway could be made in putting their relationship right, as they were not sufficiently open. Finally, the counsellor convinced the couple to express frankly what each resented in the other. The husband after a lot of coaxing blurted out in a fit of emotion. "I wish you wouldn't always serve me those damned boiled egg". The shocked wife regarded her composure and replied, "I dislike the boiled egg myself. But I was making them thinking it was your favourite" (Avril, 1995).

Sounds funny! Doesn't it? But a clear case of communication gap! If there is a solution for the problems in a marital relationship, it is communication that is sincere, open and sympathetic, conveying ones feelings and needs. Only communication can lead a couple to communion and union. Because of the layers of meaning, the message sent in communication is not always the message received. To pick up the right meaning, ones spouse has to vibrate with him/her on a feeling level (Esere, 2008).

Pearling (1985) found that married people feel tensed, worried, neglected and frustrated if their partner expects more than they are using to give back.

Cognitive restructuring is an approach which was propounded by Ellis (1962). As a psychoanalyst, Ellis argued that the primary cause of human distress are not unconscious impulses, as psychoanalyst would have us believe. On the contrary, he insisted that certain core irrational ideas are at the root of most human misery. As you think so shall you feel and act. This is the underlying assumption. It is an idea rather than reality, which is upsetting (Esere, 2000). Cognitive therapy suggests that the individual's problems are derived largely from certain distortions of reality based on erroneous premises and assumptions.

According to Ellis (1982), spouses' marital instability and maladjustment result from their irrational non-subjective feelings. Ellis (1973), explains and marital relationship could be ended because of spouses' faulty and irrational perceptions which do not encourage marital joy or happiness, satisfaction and emotional stability.

According to Idowu and Esere (2000), good marriage does not just happen. It is deliberately built. Effective communication is one of the elements that force a healthy marital interaction. Spouses achieve marital happiness and satisfaction when they are sufficiently open to each other and work together to resolve issues and problems that emanate between them, working or reaching a consensus together builds intimacy which unpleasant circumstance, and unexpected crises cannot easily destroy. This study is aimed at investigating influence of poor communication and faulty cognition on marital stability as expressed by selected married adults in Owerri metropolis.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Ineffective communication and faulty cognition in marriage are leading to many breakages of houses. Ability to communicate effectively is regarded as central to the establishment of good marital relationship (Esere, 2004). Without good communication, the establishment of facilitative relationship within which changes can take place in values, attitudes, feelings, knowledge, beliefs and ultimately habits and practices, is impossible. This could be so because communication is a part of the development, maintenance, deterioration or termination of relationships especially, the marriage relationship. (Esere, 1999; Ojiah, 2004).

A lot of research works have been done in the area of marriage and marital relationship. Similarly, a number of books or write-ups have been produced on issues relating to marriage and marital interaction. For example, Olayinka (1987), wrote on sex education and marital guidance, while Nwoye (1991) wrote on marriage and family

counselling. Ogunremi (2004), investigated indices and levels of marital satisfaction of university lecturers. Hassan and Sotonade (1993), researched into factors influencing marital satisfaction among married couples as perceived by staff and students of university of Ilorin.

To the best of the researchers knowledge there is no study for now that has concentrated solely on finding out the influence of poor communication and faulty cognition on marital stability based on perception of married adults in Owerri metropolis. Essentially, the focus of this study is to bridge the gap in literature by investigating influence of poor communication and faulty cognition on marital stability as expressed by selecting married adults in Owerri metropolis.

1.2. Research Questions

The following research questions are evolved to guide the conduct of the study:

- 1) What do married adults express as influence of poor communication and faulty cognition on marital stability?
- 2) Is there any difference between male and female married adults in their expression of influence of faulty cognition on marital stability?
- 3) Is there any difference between Christian and Muslim married adults in their expression of influence of poor communication on marital stability?
- 4) Is there any difference between Christian and Muslim married adults in their expression of influence of faulty cognition on marital stability?

1.3. Significance of the Study

If poor communication and faulty cognition exist in marriage or family, it is believed by the researchers that not only the couple would suffer the consequence but also the society in which they live because marriage is a source of a family and family is the smallest unit of a community. Therefore, if there are problems in a marriage or family there will also be problems in the society.

According to Emmert and Emmert (1994), a spouse in dialogue must be able to respond with his whole person, at the physical and emotional levels. It is, therefore, necessary to investigate influence of communication and faulty cognition on marital stability.

The finding of this study would help married counsellors, to become more equipped to help clients take up the challenges of marriage more serious and develop coping mechanism in their role.

It would also provide information for counsellors if is judiciously used. It would have facilitative effect on decision making of married adults experiencing separation in their married life. In other words, possible ways of avoiding and eliminating these factors or causes will be derived from the research.

In conclusion, it would be useful to parents, unmarried adults and social workers.

2. Method

2.1. Design

The research design that was adopted for this study is the descriptive survey research method. Descriptive survey method is considered appropriate for this study because of the researchers aim at collecting data and describing the data in a systematic manner. The study is designed to determine and find out influence of poor communication and faulty cognition on marital stability as expressed by selecting married adults in Owerri Metropolis.

2.2. Participants and Setting

The population for this study comprises all the married adults in Owerri metropolis. A sample is a selected group which is a fair representation of the entire population of interest (Daramola, 2006). Although, the population of this study is all the married adults in Owerri metropolis, stratified sampling technique was used to select 630 married adults from different strata of the population.

2.3. Instrumentation

The main purpose of this study is to ascertain the influence of poor communication and faulty cognition on marital stability. The instrument used is a questionnaire titled "Influence of Poor Communication and Faulty Cognition on Marital Stability Questionnaire" (IPCFCMSQ). The items were generated from the idea which were obtained with some of the married adults as well as from the relevant review of related literature. This instrument was made up of two sections: (A and B). Section A was on personal information of the respondents. Section B was on influences of poor communication and faulty cognition on marital stability.

Content validity was used for study used to ascertain the validity of the questionnaire for this study, the draft of the questionnaire was given to the supervisor and three (3) other experts in the department of counsellor education of the university of Ilorin for validation, corrections and to approve the instrument's suitability for the study. The corrections of the experts were incorporated in the final draft of the questionnaire and were later adjudged by them as having content validity.

To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, the researchers adopted the test re-test method. The questionnaire was administered to 20 respondents at interval of four weeks. The two sets of scores were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient formula. The result yielded 0.72 which was significant at 0.05 level of significance. This suggested that there was correlation between the two sets of scores. Hence, the instrument is reliable.

2.4. Method of Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The hypotheses generated in the course of the study was tested using t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

3. Results

This chapter presents the analysis of data, the results of investigation of the study together with the interpretations of findings from the null hypotheses generated in chapter one. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of poor communication and faulty cognition on marital stability as expressed by selecting those who have gotten married should make marital adjustment in their behaviour and attitude where necessary in order to have a stable marriage. In testing the null hypotheses, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics were used. The results of the study were therefore presented as follows:

3.1. Descriptive Data

This section presents the distribution of respondents on the bases of gender, age, religion, occupational status and higher educational qualification.

The findings of this study are presented in tables.

Table-1.Distribution of Respondents on the basis of Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	411	68.5
Female	189	31.5
Total	600	100.0

Table 1 indicates that 600 respondents participated in the study out of which 411 were males while 189 were females with 68.5 and 31.5 percentages respectively.

Table-3.Distribution of Respondents on the basis of Religion

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Christianity	325	54.2
Islam	275	48.8
Total	600	100.0

Table 3 indicates that 600 respondents participated in the study out of which 325 were Christians and 275 were Muslims with 54.2 and 48.8 percentages respectively.

Table-6. Mean score and Rank order of respondents' views on influence of poor communication on marital stability

Item No	In my opinion, marital instability occurs when:	Mean	Rank
4	the husband use his authority as a barricade to communication	3.49	1 st
8	couple refuse to give in to one another's point of view	3.47	2 nd
7	either of the couple feels too superior to discuss issues with his/her partner	3.44	3 rd
6	couples are not psychologically in tune with to one another	3.38	4 th
10	couples do not respect one another's opinion	3.38	4 th
2	there is closed communication link	3.29	6 th
1	spouses are not adequately open to one another	3.20	7 th
3	spouses fail to listen to one another	3.20	7 th
5	couples fail to attend physically to one another	3.19	9 th
9	couples fail to dialogue with one another	2.94	10 th

Table 6 indicates mean score and rank order of respondents' view on influence of poor communication on marital stability. According to their responses, item four (4) has the highest mean score of 3.49 (i.e. the item which states that "The husband use his authority as a barricade to communication"), and was ranked 1st.

Next to this is item eight (8) which has a mean score of 3.47 (i.e. the item which states that “couples refuse to give into one another’s point of view”) and was ranked 2nd.

Next to this is item seven (7) which has a mean score of 3.44 (i.e. the item which states that “Either of the couple feels too superior to discuss issues with his/her partner”) was ranked 3rd.

The least item is item nine (9) with a mean score of 2.94 (i.e. couples fail to dialogue with one another”) and was ranked 10th.

Table-7. Mean scores and Rank order of respondents’ view on influence of faulty cognition on marital stability

Item No	In my opinion, faulty cognition can lead to:	Mean	Rank
6	divorce	3.53	1 st
10	misunderstanding among spouses	3.36	2 nd
9	domestic violence among spouses	3.27	3 rd
3	marital conflict	3.21	4 th
4	unresolved problems in marriage	3.18	5 th
8	unhappiness in marriage	3.17	6 th
2	marital separation	3.16	7 th
7	lack of co-operation among couples	3.14	8 th
5	constant problems in marriage	3.06	9 th
1	disintegration of marriage	2.97	10 th

Table 7 indicates mean score and rank order of respondents’ view on influence of faulty cognition on marital stability.

According to their responses, item six (6) has the highest mean score of 3.53 (i.e. the item which states that faulty cognition can lead to “Divorce”), and was ranked 1st.

The least item is item one (1) with a mean score of 2.97 (i.e. the item which states that faulty cognition can lead to “Disintegration in marriage”), and was ranked 10th.

3.2. Hypotheses Testing

Ten null hypotheses were generated and tested 0.05 alpha level of significance in this study. To test these null hypotheses, the t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical tools were used. The results of the analysis are presented in Tables below.

a) **Hypothesis One:** *There is no significant difference between male and female married adults in their expression of influence of poor communication on marital stability*

Table-8. Means, Standard Deviations and t-value of male and female married adults in their expression of the influence of poor communication on marital stability.

Gender	No	\bar{X}	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Critical t-value
Male	411	78.5353	7.12129	598	3.78*	1.96
Female	189	47.0053	13.22936			

* significant, $p < 0.05$

Table 8 indicates that the calculated t-value is 3.78 while the critical t-value is 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. This indicates a significant difference since the calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value. On the basis of this, the null hypothesis was rejected; $t(598df) = 3.78, p < 0.05$. This means that there is a significant difference between male and female married adults in their expression of the influence of poor communication on marital stability.

b) **Hypothesis two:** *There is no significant difference between male and female married adults in their expression of influence of faulty cognition on marital stability*

Table-9. Means, Standard Deviations and t-value of male and female married adults in their expression of the influence of faulty cognition on marital stability.

Gender	No	\bar{X}	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Critical t-value
Male	411	76.4353	8.13120	598	3.18*	1.96
Female	189	49.0154	12.21930			

* significant, $p < 0.05$

Table 9 indicates that the calculated t-value is 3.18 while the critical t-value is 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. This indicates a significant difference since the calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value. On

the basis of this, the null hypothesis was rejected; $t(598df) = 3.18, p < 0.05$. This means that there is a significant difference between male and female married adults in their expression of influence of faulty cognition on marital stability.

c) **Hypothesis three:** *There is no significant difference between Christian and Muslim married adults in their expression of influence of poor communication on marital stability.*

Table-10. Means, Deviations and and t-value of Christian and Muslim married adults in their expression of the influence of poor communication on marital stability.

Religion	No	\bar{X}	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Critical t-value
Christianity	325	81.6369	4.145	598	3.41*	1.96
Islam	275	53.2000	14.344			

* significant, $p < 0.05$

Table 10 indicates that the calculated t-value is 3.41 while the critical t-value is 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. This indicates a significant difference since the calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value. On the basis of this, the null hypotheses were rejected; $t(598df) = 3.41, p < 0.05$. This means that there is a significant difference between Christian and Moslem married adults in their expression of the influence of poor communication on marital stability.

d) **Hypothesis four:** *There is no significant difference between Christian and Muslim married adults in their expression of influence of faulty cognition on marital stability.*

Table-11. Means, Standard Deviations and t-value of Christian and Muslim married adults in their expression of the influence of faulty cognition on marital stability.

Religion	No	\bar{X}	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Critical t-value
Christianity	325	79.6331	4.132	598	3.38*	1.96
Islam	275	50.2000	14.243			

* significant, $p < 0.05$

Table 11 indicates that the calculated t-value is 3.38 while the critical t-value is 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. This indicates a significant difference since the calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value. On the basis of this, the null hypothesis was rejected; $t(598df) = 3.38, p < 0.05$. This means that there is a significant difference between Christian and Moslem married adults in their expression of influence of faulty cognition on marital stability.

4. Discussion

Sections B and C of the questionnaire deal with items on poor communication and faulty cognition on marital stability. Analysis of participants' views in Table 6 revealed the influence of poor communication on marital stability. From the data collected, it was observed that the major influence poor communication on marital stability is item 4 which states marital instability occurs when the husband uses his authority as a barricade to communication with a mean score of 3.49. Table 7 revealed items on influence of faulty cognition on marital stability. According to the respondents, the item with the highest mean score is item 6 which states that faulty cognition can lead to "Divorce" with a mean score of 3.53.

Ten null hypotheses were generated and tested in this study, t-test statistical tool was used for hypotheses 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 and 8 while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used for hypotheses 9 and 10.

The first null hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference between male and female married adults in their expression of influence of poor communication on marital stability. The results showed that there is a significant difference between male and female married adults in their expression of the influence of poor communication on marital stability. The outcome of this finding is in line with the finding of Ellis (1982) in which the outcome of the study revealed that a significant difference existed in the responses of the respondents in their expression of the influence of poor communication on marital stability, and respondents include married male and female adults. However, the outcome of the study negates the finding of Ellis and Harper (1975) in which a significant difference does not occur in the responses of the respondents irrespective of their gender. The plausible reason for the outcome of the finding might be due to the fact that since the gender of the respondents differs, there is the likelihood that their expression might differ for the expression of the male respondents might be different from their female counterpart.

The second null hypothesis stated that there is a significant difference between male and female married adults in their expression of the influence of faulty cognition on marital stability. The results showed that there is a significant difference between male and female married adults in their expression of the influence of faulty cognition on marital stability. The outcome of this finding corroborates the finding of Emmert and Emmert (1994) in which the

outcome of their finding indicated that a significant difference existed among the respondents in their expression of the influence of faulty cognition on marital stability and the respondents consisted of male and female married adults. However, the outcome of this finding negates the finding of [Epstein and Eidelson \(1981\)](#) in which the outcome of their finding does not show any significant difference among the respondents which consisted of male and female married adults. The outcome of this finding might be due to the fact that the respondents differ in gender, and thus, the expression of the male respondents might be different from that of their female counterparts.

The third null hypothesis showed that there is a significant difference between Christian and Muslims married adults in their expression of the influence of poor communication on marital stability. The outcome of the finding is in line with the findings of [Gurman \(1977\)](#) in which the outcome of the finding showed that a significant difference existed in the responses of the participants including Christians and Muslims in their expression of poor communication on marital stability.

However, the outcome of the finding contradicts the findings of [Hassan and Sotonade \(1993\)](#) in which the outcome of their findings does not show that a significant difference existed among the respondents. The plausible reason for the outcome of the finding might be due to the fact that the respondents belong to different religion and thus, they are likely to respond differently.

The fourth null hypothesis showed that there is a significant difference between Christian and Muslim married adults in their expression of the influence of faulty cognition on marital stability. The outcome of this finding supports the finding of [Nwoye \(1991\)](#) in which the outcome of the study showed that a significant difference existed among the respondents. However, the outcome of this finding contradicts the finding of [Omari \(1989\)](#) in which the outcome of the study does not show that a significant difference existed among the respondents. The outcome of this finding might be as a result of the fact that since the respondents are of different religion, the likelihood is there for them to express their view from different perspectives.

4.1. Implications of findings for Guidance and Counselling

From the foregoing, it is clear that poor communication and faulty cognition do have influence on marital stability. The challenges posed to the practice and the training of the guidance counsellor by this study are: Guidance counsellors should be well equipped with counselling techniques, so that they will be able to investigate how stable most marriages are and would be able to counsel married couples.

There is need to counsel couples by guidance counsellor since good communication is necessary or important to maintain a loving atmosphere and also the society will be devoid of social ills as this will lead to progress in the society.

Another challenge posed to counsellors by this study is that guidance counsellor should help married couple to develop high or positive self-concept toward themselves. Since people with positive self-concept act positively, they will be able to influence their environment, assume responsible and be tolerant.

Finally, counsellors should update their counselling techniques, this way they will be able to tackle most marital problems as well as appreciate and render necessary support to married couples.

4.2. Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study, the interpretation given and the conclusion drawn, it is hereby recommended that:

- 1) Sex, marital and family counselling should be made compulsory aspect of counsellor education programme as a way of fortifying would be counsellors adequately for their assignment.
- 2) The government should encourage lecturers to attend conferences/workshop on marital and family life development in other cultures as a way of equipping them with necessary fact for their role as information disseminators.
- 3) Government, parents, teachers and the general youths should join hands in creating awareness in our youths as well as the married couples regarding the importance of considering a lot of factors which will enable or facilitate stability and happiness in marriage.
- 4) The profession of marriage counselling should be recognized and appreciated.
- 5) Married couples should be encouraged in the art of effective communication at home and at work.
- 6) Parents should be advised not to interfere in the marital affairs of their children.
- 7) Youths should be advised to be involved in courtship for a reasonable length of time before making a choice.
- 8) Those who want to marry should recognize that marriage is an institution ordained by God and must be respected.
- 9) Those who have gotten married should make marital adjustment in their behaviour and attitude were necessary in order to have a stable marriage.

4.3. Suggestions for Further Studies

The researcher suggested that there should be research on the causes of failure or instability of many marriages. This would go a long way in helping to appreciate the importance of factors for consideration in the stability of marriage.

Finally, this study should be extended to other local governments in Imo State for better coverage.

From the research carried out and the interpretation of the data recorded, there is no doubt that various factors of marital stability have to be considered if one desires a stable and happy married life (Akinade, 1997) "A successful marriage can make a person (spouse) while an unsuccessful one can mar the person".

A more elaborate study comparing perception of counsellors across tertiary institutions in the state about influence of poor communication and faulty cognition on marital stability to be carried out.

Another study should be carried out to find out the perception of women and men in the larger society about influence of poor communication and faulty cognition on marital stability as a way of providing opportunity for meaningful comparison.

A study using another set of variables like sex of children, academic background of the wife, ethnic background be conducted among others.

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