

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG YOUNG COUPLES IN JOS METROPOLIS, PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between communication strategies (active listening, assertiveness, conflict resolution) and marital satisfaction among 200 young couples (ages 20-35) in Jos metropolis, Plateau State, Nigeria. Despite cultural emphasis on marital harmony, urban stressors and traditional gender roles often strain couple interactions. Employing a cross-sectional survey design, data from 200 young couples (stratified sampling) in Jos metropolis were analyzed via mean and standard deviation. Couples from different wards in Jos were targeted for this study. Structured questionnaire (Likert-scale items on communication strategies and marital satisfaction) was used to elicit information from the couples. The validity of the instrument was ensured alongside the reliability. Communication strategies/patterns commonly used by young couples in Jos metropolis were identified. Also, level of marital satisfaction among the young couples was discovered. The study provided insights for culturally tailored interventions, including skill-building workshops and community-based counseling, to strengthening marital bonds and family cohesion in Nigeria.

Keywords: Communication strategies, marital satisfaction, young couples, Jos metropolis, Plateau State, Nigeria.

Introduction

Marital satisfaction refers to the degree to which an individual feels happy, content, and fulfilled in their marriage. It encompasses various aspects of the relationship, including: emotional connection and intimacy, communication and conflict resolution, shared values and goals, and financial stability and management. Also, parenting and family dynamics, personal growth and development, and social support and companionship (Bradbury & Karney, 2014; Gottman, 2015). Marital satisfaction is important in a marriage because it is a strong predictor of relationship longevity and overall well-being. Couples who are satisfied with their marriage are more likely to have a strong emotional connection, effective communication and a sense of trust and commitment (Karney & Bradley, 2015).

Marital satisfaction is defined as the subjective evaluation of the quality and happiness of a marriage (Spanier, 1976). It is a critical predictor of family stability and overall well-being, particularly in collectivist cultures like Nigeria where family cohesion is paramount (Adeyemi & Olowookere, 2019). Marital satisfaction denotes couples' subjective evaluation of relational quality, including emotional bonds, conflict harmony, and mutual support, which are foundational to enduring partnerships. In Plateau State, where traditional values intersect with urban modernity, marital dynamics among young couples (ages 20-35) in Jos metropolis are

shaped by both ethnic diversity (over 50 ethnic groups) and socio-economic changes (Plateau State Ministry of Culture, 2020). Studies indicate that couples in urban areas like Jos report varying levels of marital satisfaction, often influenced by communication patterns (Oluwatayo & Ogunsola, 2021).

Communication strategies refers to the verbal and non-verbal techniques couples use to express needs, resolve conflicts, and build intimacy (Gottman & Silver, 2015). In Jos metropolis, communication styles are often nuanced: While Hausa-speaking communities may prioritize indirectness to preserve harmony, ethnic groups like the Berom and Mwaghavul emphasize directness in marital discourse (Jang, 2018). Research in western contexts suggests that effective communication (example, active listening, assertiveness, conflict resolution) correlates positively with marital satisfaction. However, limited studies explore this relationship in Nigeria, where cultural norms (example, patriarchal structures, indirect communication) may shape marital dynamics differently (Adeyemo & Adeyemi, 2018). Communication strategies serve as relational mechanisms through which partners negotiate meaning, express needs, and manage disagreements, profoundly influencing satisfaction levels (Oniye, Yahaya, Odebode & Alade, 2016). They encompass verbal, nonverbal and digital methods partners employ to exchange ideas and resolve issues, directly shaping satisfaction trajectories.

Recent surveys in Plateau State highlight that young urban couples face stressors like economic instability, housing shortages, and balancing traditional gender roles, all of which strain communication and marital quality (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Also, cultural norms (example, patriarchal structures, indirect communication) may shape how couples express needs and resolve conflicts. The relationship is not always straightforward. Factors like gender roles, education, and marriage duration can moderate how communication strategies affect satisfaction.

Effective communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas, or emotions between individuals (or groups) in a way that it is clear, respectful, and leads to mutual understanding. In relationships (like marriage), it involves; active listening, clear expression, nonverbal cues, feedback loops, and conflict management. In Nigerian contexts (example, Jos metropolis): Balance directness with respect for hierarchy/elders. Consider cultural norms (examples, indirect communication to preserve harmony). Adapt to urban dynamics (example, tech-savvy younger couples). Communication is not just about words but about building trust, intimacy, and understanding. Effective communication is like the glue that holds marriages together. It builds trust, intimacy and resilience (Elom, Okorie, Nduka & Otunba, 2018). Importance of effective communication in marital satisfaction includes, resolution of conflicts, builds emotional connection, reduces misunderstandings, strengthens problem-solving, and enhances satisfaction. No marriage is perfect, but couples who communicate effectively tend to navigate rough patches better (Okoro, Newton, Mallo & William, 2023). This study examines the relationship between communication strategies and marital satisfaction among young couples in Jos metropolis, addressing the gap in culturally contextualized research.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study is the lack of empirical understanding of how communication strategies (active listening, assertiveness, conflict resolution) relate to marital satisfaction among young couples (ages 20-35) in Jos metropolis, Plateau State, Nigeria. Despite cultural shifts toward modernity and the critical role of effective communication in marriage, many couples in this urban context report moderate to low marital satisfaction, often exacerbating family stress and mental health challenges. Existing research predominantly focuses on western contexts or broader Nigerian populations, overlooking local nuances (example, ethnic diversity, patriarchal norms, urbanization pressures) that shape couple dynamics. Without context-

specific insights, targeted interventions to improve marital quality and family cohesion in this region remain limited. Traditional gender roles and expectations can influence communication patterns and conflict resolution strategies (Okonkwo, 2017). This study aims to investigate the relationship between communication strategies and marital satisfaction among young couples in Jos metropolis, Plateau State, Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine the influence of communication strategies on marital satisfaction among young couples in Jos metropolis, Plateau State, Nigeria. The specific objectives include to:

1. examine the communication strategies commonly used by young couples in Jos metropolis;
2. identify the level of marital satisfaction among young couples in Jos metropolis;
3. assess the relationship between communication strategies and marital satisfaction among couples;
4. find out the influence of communication strategies on marital satisfaction among couples;
5. determine the gender differences in communication strategies used by young couples in Jos metropolis.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What communication strategies are commonly used by young couples in Jos metropolis?
2. What is the level of marital satisfaction among young couples in Jos metropolis?
3. What is the relationship between communication strategies and marital satisfaction among couples?
4. What is the influence of communication strategies on marital satisfaction among couples?
5. What are the gender differences in communication strategies used by young couples in Jos metropolis?
6. There is no significant gender difference in communication patterns used by young couples in Jos metropolis?

Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The cross-sectional survey research design was considered for the study because it captures data on communication strategies and marital satisfaction at a specific point in time providing a snapshot of young couples in Jos metropolis. According to Creswell (2014), Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018), cross-sectional surveys are useful for describing the current status of a phenomenon and exploring relationships between variables. Population consisted all young couples (aged 20-35) in Jos metropolis, using stratified random sampling (example, targeting couples from different wards in Jos). The accidental or convenience sampling technique was used to select 200 couples for the sample size of the study. The accidental or convenience sampling technique is a non-probability sampling technique that involves the sample being drawn from that part of the population that is close to hand. A structured questionnaire using Likert-scale items on communication strategies and marital satisfaction was used to collect data. Ethical consideration concerning informed consent of the participants was upheld. Both content and face validities were done by experts in Guidance and Counselling, and Research, Measurement and Evaluation Units of Educational Foundations Department, Faculty of Education, University of Jos. Cronbach

Alpha method was used to obtain reliability internal consistency, which gave an index of 0.87. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation was used to answer all the research questions in this study.

Results

Research Question One: What communication strategies are commonly used by young couples in Jos metropolis?

Table 1: Communication Strategies Commonly Used by Young Couples

S/N	Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1.	We use calm and respectful language during disagreements.	70	96	26	8	0	200	4.14	.790	Agree
2.	We take turns speaking without interrupting each other.	95	35	18	27	25	200	3.74	1.484	Agree
3.	We use non-verbal cues (example, eye-contact, touch) to show understanding.	79	62	9	17	33	200	3.69	1.475	Agree
4.	We use humor to ease tension during conflicts.	51	63	9	60	17	200	3.35	1.363	Agree
5.	We schedule time to talk about important issues.	61	18	60	17	44	200	3.18	1.502	Agree
6.	We use texting or messaging to resolve misunderstandings.	86	70	35	9	0	200	4.16	.873	Agree
7.	We take time to cool off before addressing heating topics.	34	21	10	67	68	200	2.43	1.472	Disagree
8.	We use active listening (example, repeating or paraphrasing what the other says).	51	17	9	42	81	200	2.58	1.664	Disagree
9.	We agree on rules for resolving conflicts (example, no shouting, no name-calling).	35	61	35	36	33	200	3.14	1.354	Agree
10.	We seek advice or counseling when we	86	44	27	8	35	200	3.69	1.488	Agree

	can't resolve issues ourselves.									
11.	We rely on social media to communicate feelings we find hard to express in person.	37	44	26	29	64	200	2.80	.536	Disagree
12.	We affirm each other during conversations.	97	58	9	18	18	20	3.99	1.307	Agree
Grand Mean								3.67		Agree

Table 1 shows the result of analysis on communication strategies commonly used by young couples in Jos metropolis. From the table, items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10 and 12 have mean scores of 4.14, 3.74, 3.69, 3.35, 3.18, 4.16, 3.14, 3.69 and 3.99 above the criterion mean of 3.00, indicating that couples use calm and respectful language during disagreements, take turns speaking without interrupting each other, use non-verbal cues (example, eye contact, touch) to show understanding, use humor to ease tension during conflicts, schedule time to talk about important issues, use texting or messaging to resolve misunderstandings. Also, agree on rules for resolving conflicts (example, no shouting, no name-calling), seek advice or counseling when they can't resolve issues ourselves and affirm each other during conversations. Furthermore, items 7, 8 and 11 have mean scores below the criterion mean, which means that couples do not agree to the statements as "we take time to cool off before addressing heating topics, we use active listening (example, repeating or paraphrasing what the other says, and we rely on social media to communicate feelings we find hard to express in person". Since the grand mean of 3.67 is above the criterion mean, it implies that the aforementioned communication strategies are commonly used by young couples in Jos metropolis.

Research Question Two: What is the level of marital satisfaction among young couples in Jos metropolis?

Table 2: Level of Marital Satisfaction among Young Couples in Jos Metropolis

S/N	Level of Marital Satisfaction	N	%
1.	Low	12	6
2.	Moderate	34	17
3.	High	154	77
	Total	200	100

Table 2 reveals the result on the level of marital satisfaction among young couples in Jos metropolis, Plateau State, Nigeria. Twelve out of the 200 couples representing 6% have low level of marital satisfaction, 34 of them have moderate level, while 154 couples have high level of marital satisfaction. This implies that, majority of the couples have high level of marital satisfaction.

Research Question Three: What is the relationship between communication strategies and marital satisfaction among couples?

Table 3: Relationship between Communication Strategies and Marital Satisfaction among Couples

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	r
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Communication strategies	200	43.98	5.284	.791
Marital Satisfaction	200	70.93	5.927	

In Table 3, the result on relationship between communication strategies and marital satisfaction among these couples is presented. The mean and standard deviation for communication strategies were 43.98 and 5.28, while that of marital satisfaction were 70.93 and 5.93 respectively. The correlation coefficient was .791, which is a positive strong relationship.

Research Question Four: What is the influence of communication strategies on marital satisfaction among couples?

Table 3: Influence of Communication Strategies on Marital Satisfaction among Couples

S/N	Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1.	I feel satisfies with the overall communication in my marriage.	33	29	12	33	93	200	2.38	1.568	Disagree
2.	Good communication has helped us resolve major challenges.	93	52	16	23	16	200	3.92	1.314	Agree
3.	Our communication helps build emotional intimacy.	89	67	6	20	18	200	3.95	1.300	Agree
4.	Effective communication has strengthened our trust.	80	54	16	38	12	200	3.75	1.435	Agree
5.	Our communication makes me feel appreciated and respected.	55	35	46	30	34	200	3.23	1.435	Agree
6.	We handle conflicts in a way that brings us closer.	83	65	28	12	12	200	3.98	1.158	Agree
7.	We rarely hold grudges because we talk things through.	53	47	30	32	38	200	3.23	1.475	Agree
8.	Communication in our marriages contributes to my overall happiness.	79	43	24	24	30	200	3.58	1.478	Agree
9.	The use of positive communication strategies helps use	41	74	29	28	28	200	3.36	1.330	Agree

	feel more secure in the marriage.									
10.	Communication has been a key factor in the success of our relationship.	64	68	26	18	24	200	3.65	1.333	Agree
	Grand Mean							3.64		Agree

Table 4 reveals the result on the influence of communication strategies on marital satisfaction among couples. From the table, items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 have mean scores above the criterion mean of 3.00. It means that good communication has helped couples resolve major challenges, build emotional intimacy, strengthened our trust, makes us feel appreciated and respected, help couples handle conflicts in a way that brings them closer, talk things through without holding grudges, it contributes to my overall happiness and helps us feel more secure in the marriage. Item 1 has a mean score below the criterion mean, which then means that couples don't feel satisfied with their overall communication in marriage, although communication has been a key factor in the success of couples' relationship. Since the grand mean of 3.64 is above the criterion mean of 3.00, it implies that communication strategies influence marital satisfaction among couples.

Research Question Five: What are the gender differences in communication strategies used by young couples in Jos metropolis?

Table 5: Gender Differences in Communication Strategies Used by Young Couples

S/N	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean Difference
1.	Male	93	44.01	5.14	0.07
2.	Female	107	43.94	5.43	

Table 5 shows the result on the gender differences in the communication strategies used by couples in Jos metropolis. The mean score of males was 44.01 with a standard deviation of 5.14, while that of female couples was 43.93 and standard deviation of 5.43. This implies that the communication strategies used by male and female couples are the same since the mean difference of 0.07 is negligible.

Research Question Six: There is no significant gender differences in communication patterns used by young couples in Jos metropolis.

Table 6: Gender Differences in Communication Patterns Used by Young Couples

S/N	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean Difference
1.	Male	93	70.33	6.54	1
2.	Female	107	71.33	5.85	

Table 6 shows the result on the gender differences in the communication pattern used by couples in Jos metropolis. The mean score of males was 70.33 with a standard deviation of 6.54, while that of female couples was 71.33 and standard deviation of 5.85.

This implies that the communication pattern used by male and female couples are almost the same since the mean difference of 1 is low.

Discussion

Findings on the communication strategies commonly used by young couples in Jos metropolis revealed that the most commonly used communication strategies were that couples use calm and respectful language during disagreements, take turns speaking without interrupting each other, use non-verbal cues (example, eye contact, touch) to show understanding, use humor to ease tension during conflicts, schedule time to talk about important issues, use texting or messaging to resolve misunderstandings, agree on rules for resolving conflicts (example, no shouting, no name-calling), seek advice or counseling when they can't resolve issues themselves, and affirm each other during conversations. It further revealed that uncommon communication strategies to be used by couples, take time to cool off before addressing heated topics, use active listening (example, repeating or paraphrasing what the other says), and rely on social media to communicate feelings they find hard to express in person. This study is in line with the works of Gattman (2015), Adeyemi and Olowookere (2019), Oluwatayo and Ogunsola (2021) who proposed ways such as active listening, empathy, sharing of perspectives without fear of judgment or retribution, creating a safe space where both partners feel heard, valued, and understood, and mutual respect. Also, honest and open conversations, find common ground, and make joint decisions.

On the level of marital satisfaction among young couples in Jos metropolis, the results showed that majority of the couples have high level of marital satisfaction, followed by moderate to low marital satisfaction. This is in agreement with Adeyemo and Adeyemi (2018), Oniye et al. (2016) who opined that communication strategies serve as relational mechanisms through which partners negotiate meanings, express needs, and manage disagreements, which profoundly influence satisfaction levels. According to Oniye et al. (2016), communication is an essential ingredient in marriage, and that everyone has a unique communication style and when not recognized and implemented early in the marital relationship, it can cause damage and lead to instability.

The result on the relationship between communication strategies and marital satisfaction among couples indicated that there is a positive strong relationship between communication strategies and marital satisfaction. This is supported by a study by Adeyemi and Olowookere (2019) who asserted that marital satisfaction is a critical predictor of family stability and overall well-being, particularly in collectivist cultures like Nigeria where family cohesion is paramount. Also, studies like that of Oluwatayo and Ogunsola (2021) indicate that urban areas like Jos report varying levels of marital satisfaction, often influenced by communication patterns.

The findings on the influence of communication strategies on marital satisfaction revealed that good communication has helped couples resolve major challenges, build emotional intimacy, strengthened their trust, makes them feel appreciated and respected, help couples handle conflicts in a way that brings them closer, talk things through without holding grudges, it contributes to their overall happiness and helps them feel more secure in the marriage. This implies that communication strategies influence marital satisfaction among couples. Karney and Bradley (2015) in their supportive view said that communication is not only instrument for marital satisfaction but one of the crucial factors contributing to it. It is also affirmed that marital communication is the glue that holds relationship among

married couples together. That, this is because responsibilities, needs and other marital obligations cannot be achieved without communication (Elom et al., 2018; Karney & Bradley, 2015; Gottman & Silver, 2015).

On the gender differences in communication strategies and patterns used by young couples in Jos metropolis, it was discovered that the communication strategies and patterns used by male and female couples are the same as shown in the result that there is no significant gender difference in communication strategies and patterns used by young couples in Jos metropolis, Plateau State, Nigeria. This finding is in line with the findings of Oniye et al. (2016) who affirmed that through marital communication both men and women agreed that the emotional communication they shared with their partner determined their quality of marital satisfaction. It is further asserted that communication is successful between two people when the message is correctly sent and received with no misunderstanding (Oluwatayo & Ogunsola, 2021).

Conclusion

Effective communication is the foundation of a healthy and fulfilling marital relationship. Communication strategies play a crucial role in determining the quality of relationships between spouses. In Nigeria, where cultural and societal expectations can impact marital satisfaction is essential. Young couples in Jos metropolis, Plateau State, Nigeria, face unique challenges that can impact their marital relationships. These challenges may include cultural differences, financial stress, and societal expectations. Effective communication strategies can help couples navigate these challenges and build a strong, satisfying relationship. Despite the importance of communication in marital relationships, many young couples in Jos metropolis struggle with effective communication, leading to marital dissatisfaction and conflict.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following were thus recommended:

1. Couples should consider seeking therapy or counseling to improve their communication skills and relationship quality.
2. Couples can benefit from communication skills training, such as active listening and assertive communication.
3. Couples should learn healthy conflict resolution strategies to manage disagreements and strengthen their relationship.
4. Developing emotional intelligence can help individuals better understand themselves and their partner, leading to more effective communication and a stronger relationship.
5. Counsellors can focus on teaching couples effective communication skills, such as active listening and assertive communication through community-based counseling.
6. Counsellors can help individuals develop emotional intelligence, which can improve their ability to understand themselves and their partner.

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