

# Perceived Influence of Verbal and Non-verbal Communication Skills on Marital Stability among Married Lecturers of Federal University Dutsin-ma, Katsina State Nigeria

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**Abstract:** The paper tries to find out the perceived influence of verbal and non-verbal communication skills on marital stability. The main aim of the study is to investigate the perceived influence of verbal and non-verbal communication skills on marital stability among married Lecturers of Federal University Dutsin-ma. The study was guided by three (3) objectives. Three research questions were answered and one hypothesis was tested. The descriptive research design was adopted for the study to investigate perceived influence of verbal and non-verbal communication Skills on Marital Stability among Lecturers of Federal University Dutsin-ma Katsina State. The target population of the study consisted of all married Lecturers of Federal University Dutsin-ma Katsina State. Thus, purposive sampling techniques was adopted to target only married Lecturers. Sample of sixty four Lecturers were randomly selected. The instrument for data collection 'Working Couples' Utilization of Communication Strategies' (WCUCS) was adapted from Makinde & Adebanyi (2019) A pilot test of the instrument of data collection was done and obtained Cronbach value of 0.67 which makes it adequate for this study. Results show that there is significant influence of verbal and non-verbal Communication Skills on marital stability among married Lecturers of Federal University Dutsin-ma; There is significant influence of burnout experience at work on couple's use of communication skills at home; There is significant influence of couple's length of marriage on their utilization of communication skills; There is no significant gender difference of the influence of working couples communication skills on marital stability among married couples. Recommendations were made thus: Married couples should spare time within their matrimonial home to talk about pleasant and unpleasant issues before sleeping and married couples are strongly encouraged to be open and use verbal and non-verbal communication that can foster marital stability.

## I. INTRODUCTION

One of the ways by which marital stability and healthy relationship can be guaranteed is through effective marital communication. Communication in marriage mostly guarantees conflict resolution among married couples. Communication is seen as the life wire of marriage relationship. This suggests that as long as the couples are talking with each other, there is a high chance that they will resolve conflicting issues between them.

Interpersonal communication according to Esere (2007) in Terzungwe & Movihinze (2013) involves not only spoken words, but also body language, personal mannerism and style. It is a pillar which maintains the structure of personal co-existence and mutual understandings. Both verbal and nonverbal communication create meaning in a given context. Verbal talk, touching or body contact as indices in interpersonal communication remains very effective. Other examples include handshake, a pat at the back, raising of eye-brow, meaningful look, winking, gestures, nodding, shaking of head, frowning, smiling, yawning, hugging, beckoning, gazing and the like a n usually very open in expression of thoughts and feelings nonverbally among couples in interpersonal relationship.

Both verbal and nonverbal communication create meaning in a given context. Verbal talk, touching or body contact as indices in interpersonal communication remains very effective. Other examples include handshake, a pat at the back, raising of eye-brow, meaningful look, winking, gestures, In marriage relationship, one of the ways of ensuring a healthy and stable relationship is through marital communication. Marital communication ensures conflict resolution among married couples.

Akinade (2015) opined that every marriage needs communication to develop plans for their future, establish roles as well as create a climate in which both parties would want to contribute to make the marriage successful. Communication has been described as the key to family interaction and successful relationship. The issue of communication in marriage cannot be overlooked. Esere (2007) described nodding, shaking of head, frowning, smiling, yawning, hugging, beckoning, gazing and the like are usually very open in expression of thoughts and feelings nonverbally among couples in interpersonal relationship.

There are different types of communication in marital relationships; they include face-to-face verbal, non-verbal and written communication. The verbal face-to-face communication as well as the telephone channel brings quick and instant feedback. However, these forms of communication must be properly handled because variables like the tone of

voice of either party, choice of vocabularies, lack of turn-taking, anxiety, personality characteristics, wrong timing of communication and faulty channels. (Akande 2011). The non-verbal communication as described by Makinde (2007) include proxemics, the kinesics and the par-linguistics where each party in marital relationship observe each other's facial expressions, eye contact, body motions, voice pitch, total body posture, lip movements, blinking of the eyes, shaking of legs, spontaneity of responses and the use of hands to gesticulate while speaking.

Written communication is another form of non-verbal communication often utilized in marital communication. They include the e-mail, texting, face-book, telegram, WhatsApp, Instagram and many others.

Chapman (2005) opined that the scars of failure in marriage are reminders of the sins committed by either party; this is due to lack of patience, perseverance and forgiveness and more often than not the women-folk is blamed for this because in practical terms, some of them try to rule over the house, finish the sentences for their spouses and forgetting their marriage vows, threaten for divorce. Therefore, for effective communication to take place according to Chapman (2005) couples should carefully monitor how their emotions and attitude can colour their actions but as a matter of priority give room for buoyant feelings of joy, hope, excitement and happiness. In practical terms both parties irrespective of gender should learn to say 'thank you, please, excuse me and sorry' when occasion demands.

Some of the impediments to effective communication in marriage were identified by Smith (2020) as follows:

#### *Interruptions*

There are a lot of couples that engage in talking on a daily basis, but there are too many interruptions during their conversation. Social media and television are some of the major distractions. No one feels like talking when the other person is scrolling down their Facebook Newsfeed.

#### *Emotional and the physical state*

This is one of the most common barriers to effective communication in marriage. You need to choose the right time to talk. If you are feeling hungry, worried, anxious, sad, exhausted or sick, this is not the right time for effective communication. We tend to pay less attention to the person talking if we are not physically or emotionally in the right state. Poor emotional or physical state is a common barrier to effective communication. So, we listen less, we understand less, and thus we deliver less.

#### *Communication styles*

All the people in the world converse differently. It is important for couples to understand the differences in their communication manner and avoid taking things personally. For instance, there are people who tend to get loud when proving a point. So rather than taking that as anger, their

partner should understand that this is just the way he or she speaks. The difference in speaking styles hampers effective communication and is definitely one of the communication barriers in relationships.

#### *Beliefs*

Another thing that acts as one of the barriers to effective communication in marriage is preconceived ideas and beliefs. There are certain things that you need to change after marriage because they tend to come in the way of you and your partner. Open communication will be impacted if women believe that men are stupid and men regard women as inferior.

#### *Expectations*

They say the expectation is the root of all evil in a relationship and we somewhat agree with this statement. This acts majorly as one of the barriers to effective communication in marriage. Open communication will definitely be hampered if one expect that the partner would dismiss the idea. No one feels like talking, sharing or even conversing when they know that their idea would be dismissed even before it is properly presented. Expectations also direct us towards things we want to hear rather than what our partner is trying to communicate.

#### *Physical safety*

This is one of the real barriers to effective communication in marriage. If your partner is fearful of his or her safety, then this would surely reflect in their conversation. There would be a lack of honesty in sharing information and ideas, and a lot of emotions may even be suppressed.

Domestic violence is an issue prevailing all over the world that has hampered and ended a number of marriages. If you know your partner will become physically violent, then you would only say things that would please him. There is practically no communication in a relationship like this and the partner tends to feel depressed and detached. Domestic violence in marriage is one of the common barriers to effective communication and to marriage, at large.

Also, some of the major obstacles to effective communication about sex include a few of the mentioned factors like interruptions, emotional and physical state, and communication styles of the partners.

It appears quite pleasing when working couples work to earn enough money to maintain the family. However, despite the fact that both couples earn some money to sustain the family, the high rate of inflation and the socio economic climate may not be quite pleasing to the couples. Akande (2011) described the combination of career, parenting and marriage need-full as rather energy sapping to the extent that some wives experience burnout. Burnout may be described according to Akande (2011) as a manifestation of exhaustion both physically and emotionally. It is a mark of diminishing interest showing that the person is no longer enjoying what he/she engages in. It is very clear that working couples may experience burnout because they are apparently employed and

must apply all the tactics to meet up with their responsibilities at work and at home.

It is highly imagined that when a marriage is still young or short in length, the joy and excitement may be at the peak. On the other hand as time goes on some couples easily take for granted the length of marriage and the peak of the joy, excitement may decline. There are also situations where the longer the length of marriage, the higher the maturity level and understanding (Makinde and Adebanyi 2019)

Gender difference in marital communication as revealed by Barbara (1989) indicate that the pattern differs for individuals within couples on the basis of gender. Females and males were found to demonstrate different styles of response to dissatisfaction in marriage; men assume a coercive stance toward their partners while women take an affiliative position. Drawing on systemic and gender-difference theoretical perspectives, these patterns are interpreted as attempts by individuals with different world views to resolve conflict. A view is discussed whereby systems and gender differences can be integrated into a unified conceptual formulation upon which to base future development in research and therapeutic interventions.

For effective communication to take place according to Chapman (2005) working couples should carefully monitor how their emotions and attitudes can colour their actions but as a matter of priority give room for buoyant feelings of joy, hope, excitement and happiness. In practical terms, both parties irrespective gender should learn to say 'thank you, please, excuse me and sorry' when occasions demand.

It has been observed not much work has been done on the influence of marital communication skills on marital stability of Lecturers in tertiary institutions and in the study area. There is a missing link on influence of marital communication skills on marital stability of couples, which becomes the researchers' point of concern.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

It has been observed that many married couples who take time to communicate verbally and non-verbally establish better relationship, experience greater marital stability. However, when couples in a marriage refuse to communicate, there is high possibility of marital instability. Marital instability and domestic violence are common in many Nigerian homes. We often hear couples frequently disagree, quarrel, nag and sometimes even convert their matrimonial homes to boxing arena. Domestic violence has become rampant leading to sometimes serious consequences. Marriages that were conducted in the spirit of love, respect, care and understanding suddenly turn to hatred and disrespect due to the absence of marital communication. Lack of communication among couples will not only result in marital instability but may also result to poor parenting. It may be said without any fear of contradiction that children from marriages where there is poor marital communication are also likely to grow up with low self-esteem, poor communication skills and experience marital

instability. Terzungwe & Movihinze (2013) observed that the society's way of resolving such marital conflicts in law courts, social welfare offices, religious centres and traditional settings have often failed to produce desired results. Those who go to law courts go to obtain legal backings for separation and divorce, not for crises resolution. While most Nigerian spouses lack good communication skills, others simply do not see the need for discussing issues with a spouse. There are spouses who do not have time to listen to each other. Others feel that communication is only effective if it is verbal. In many homes careless utterances and negative communication patterns and skills are often in vogue. Thus trivial misunderstandings are allowed to escalate into big problems. Couples ought to know that accumulation and undisclosed grievances, if not talked over lead to resentments, bitterness, frustrations and tensions that give rise to instability at the slightest provocation.

Isiaka (2005) investigated the relationship between divorce and spousal communication and found out that lack of effective communication, in marriages, precedes divorce. Theravive (2011) estimated that when awake, people spend approximately 70% of their time communicating, 30% of which is done through talking, while the other 40% is done non-verbally. When communication between couples or married adults becomes strained, the entire foundation of the relationship is affected and leading to divorce or broken home if not looked into in time. The problem is that most couples in the area under study do not appreciate the potential influence of verbal and non-verbal communication skills could play in marriage instability or during crises periods.

In this study, the researchers are out to find out the influence of verbal and non-verbal communication skills on marital stability of married couples.

#### *Objectives of the Study*

The main aim of the study is to investigate the perceived influence of Verbal and Non-Verbal communication skills on marital stability among married Lecturers of Federal University Dutsin-ma.

#### *Specifically the study is intended to*

1. Determine the perceived influence of Verbal and non-verbal Communication Strategies on marital stability among married Lecturers of Federal University Dutsin-ma.
2. Determine the perceived influence of burnout experience at work on couple's use of communication skills at home.
3. Determine the perceived influence of couples' length of marriage on their utilization of communication skills.

#### *Research Questions*

The study shall attempt to find answers to the following research questions.

1. What is the perceived influence of verbal and non-verbal Communication Strategies on marital stability among married Lecturers of Federal University Dutsin-ma?
2. What is the perceived influence of burnout experience at work on couple’s use of communication skills at home?
3. What is the perceived influence of couple’s length of marriage on their utilization of communication skills?

*Hypothesis*

Ho 1. There is no significant gender difference of the perceived influence of communication skills on marital stability among Lecturers of Federal University Dutsin-ma.

**II. METHODOLOGY**

The descriptive research design was adopted for the study to investigate perceived influence of Verbal and Non-Verbal communication Skills on Marital Stability among Lecturers of Federal University Dutsin-ma Katsina State. The target

population of the study consisted of all married Lecturers of Federal University Dutsin-ma Katsina State. A sample of sixty four Lecturers was randomly selected using pieces of papers to determine the faculties and purposive sampling techniques adopted to target only married Lecturers. The instrument for data collection ‘Working Couples’ Utilization of Communication Strategies’ (WCUCS) was adopted from Makinde & Adebanyi (2019) with minor modifications. The inventory adopted a four point Likert Scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree & Strongly Disagree. Makinde & Adebanyi (2019) conducted a pilot test of the instrument of data collection and obtained Cronbach value of 0.67 which makes it adequate for this study.

**III. RESULTS**

*Research Question One*

*What is the perceived influence of Verbal and Non-verbal Communication Strategies on marital stability among married Lecturers of Federal University Dutsin-ma?*

Table 1 Mean responses on the perceived influence of Verbal and Non-verbal Communication Strategies on marital stability among married Lecturers of Federal University Dutsin-ma.

SN	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	Total	X	Decision
1	When couples talk over both pleasant and unpleasant things that happen during the day before sleeping, it can enhance marital stability.	148	75	2	0	225	3.51	Agree
2	Proper deliberation on issues by couples can enhance marital stability.	184	54	0	0	238	3.71	Agree
3	Discussing about sex matter can strengthen intimacy among couples.	108	81	18	1	208	3.25	Agree
4	The use of facial and bodily gestures regularly by couples can enhance marital stability.	88	108	22	2	220	3.43	Agree
5	Being open by keeping no secret can foster marital stability.	136	54	16	4	210	3.28	Agree
6	The use of communication gesture can foster understanding among couples.	104	93	10	2	209	3.26	Agree
	<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>						<b>3.4</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 1 above indicates the influence of communication strategies on marital stability among married lecturers. It indicates high level of positive responses on all the items with individual mean responses of 3.51, 3.71, 3.25, 3.43, 3.28 and 3.26. Similarly, a grand mean of 3.40 shows a high level of acceptance of respondents on all the items.

*Research Question Two*

*What is the perceived influence of burnout experience at work on couple’s use of communication skills at home?*

Table 2: Mean responses on the perceived influence of burnout experience at work on couple’s use of communication skills at home.

SR/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	Total	$\bar{X}$	Decision
1	Personal challenges at work can affect communication among married couples.	80	105	16	1	202	3.15	Agree
2	Having a day that is full of stressful activities can hinder communication among couples.	36	117	30	1	184	2.87	Agree
3	If married couples can imagine the kind of day their partners had at work without asking, it will strengthen understanding among them.	68	84	38	0	190	2.96	Agree



4	Discussing daily at close of work different issues that happen at work place can reduce burnout.	64	78	40	2	184	2.87	Agree
5	Burnout at work widens communication gap among couples.	48	99	36	1	184	2.87	Agree
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>							<b>2.94</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 2 above indicates the influence of burnout experience at work on couples’ use of communication skills at home. The table recorded individual mean responses of 3.15, 2.87, 2.96, 2.87 and 2.87 respectively. The total grand mean of 2.96 indicates the level of acceptance on the items.

*Research Question Three*

*What is the perceived influence of couple’s length of marriage on their utilization of communication skills?*

Table 3: Mean responses on the perceived influence of couple’s length of marriage on their utilization of communication skills

SR/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	Total	$\bar{X}$	Decision
1	Couples tend to avoid discussing issues that can get their partners upset..	115	96	20	1	232	3.62	Agree
2	As length of marriage increase, many couples find it unnecessary to use some love gestures.	52	99	26	3	180	2.81	Agree
3	As the length of marriage increase, many married couples no longer feel secure or trust their partners enough to discuss some issues	4	45	62	17	128	2.00	Disagree
4	Lack of verbal and non-verbal communication makes a marriage boring and monotonous.	160	54	4	4	222	3.46	Agree
5	I feel that our marriage is old and matured enough to overlook simple phrases like excuse me, please, sorry or thanks.	32	42	56	14	145	2.26	Disagree
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>							<b>2.83</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 3 above indicates the mean responses on Perceived influence of couple’s length of marriage on their utilization of communication skills. Individual mean of 3.62, 2.81, 2.0, 3.46 and 2.26 were observed respectively. However, respondents disagree with items 3 and 5. A grand total mean of 2.83 was recorded.

*Hypothesis*

Ho 1. There is no significant gender difference of the influence of verbal and non-verbal communication skills on marital stability among Lecturers of Federal University Dutsin-ma

t-test Analysis of Male and Female on influence of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies on marital Stability

Gender	N	SD	$\bar{X}$	t-value	p-value
Male	54	20.19	2.47	-.799	0.696
Female	09	20.89	2.26		

The result showed that the significance (2-tailed) was 0.696 which was obtained from the analysis is greater than the Alpha Value (p-value) of 0.05, hence the null hypothesis was retained. Therefore, there is no gender difference of the influence of verbal and non-verbal communication skills on marital stability among Lecturers in Federal University Dutsin-ma

*Summary of Major Findings*

1. There is significant influence of verbal and non-verbal Communication Strategies on marital stability among married Lecturers of Federal University Dutsin-ma.
2. There is significant influence of burnout experience at work on couple’s use of communication skills at home.
3. There is significant influence of couple’s length of marriage on their utilization of communication skills?

4. There is no significant gender difference of the influence of verbal and non-verbal communication skills on marital stability among married couples.

**IV. DISCUSSION**

The study found significant influence of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies on marital stability among married Lecturers. It appears quite clearly from the findings as indicated on Table 1 with a total mean of 3.4 that when couples talk over both pleasant and unpleasant things that

happen during the day before sleeping, it can enhance marital stability. Similarly proper deliberation on issues by couples can enhance marital stability. Discussing about sex matter can strengthen intimacy among couples. The use of facial and bodily gestures regularly by couples can enhance marital stability. Being open by keeping no secret can foster marital stability. The use of communication gesture can foster understanding among couples. The finding agrees with the observation by Akinade (2015) that every marriage needs communication to develop plans for their future, establish roles as well as create a climate in which both parties would want to contribute to make the marriage successful. Communication has been described as the key to family interaction and successful relationship.

Significant influence of burnout experience at work on couple's use of communication skills at home was discovered to affect marital stability as recorded on Table 2 with a total mean of 2.9. Personal challenges at work can affect communication among married couples. Having a day full of stressful activities. If married couples can imagine the kind of day their partners had at work without asking, it will strengthen understanding among them and reduce the burn out experience. Burn out experience at work widens communication gap among married couples. In agreement with this, Esere (2007) in Terzungwe & Movihinze (2013) observed that interpersonal communication which involves not only spoken words, but also body language, personal mannerism and style are pillars which maintains the structure of personal co-existence and mutual understandings. Both verbal and nonverbal communication create meaning in a given context. That once verbal talk, touching or body contact as indices in interpersonal communication remains very effective, there is high chance that the gap created by burn out experience of work can be reduced.

There is significant influence of couple's length of marriage on their utilization of communication skills. Couples tend to avoid discussing issues that can get their partners upset. As length of marriage increase, many couples find it unnecessary to use some love gestures. Lack of verbal and non-verbal communication makes a marriage boring and monotonous. In agreement Esere (2007) observed that nodding, shaking of head, frowning, smiling, yawning, hugging, beckoning, gazing and the like are usually very open in expression of thoughts and feelings nonverbally among couples in interpersonal relationship.

There is no significant gender difference of the influence of verbal and non-verbal communication skills on marital stability among

Lecturers of Federal University Dutsin-ma. The t-test Analysis of Male and Female on influence of Verbal and non-verbal communication strategies on marital Stability shows

that the influence of communication skill on marital stability affects both male and female couples.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Married couples should spare time within their matrimonial home to talk about pleasant and unpleasant issues before sleeping.
2. Married couples are strongly encouraged to be open and use verbal and non-verbal communication that can foster marital stability.
3. Married couples are strongly encouraged to reduce the communication gap caused by burnout experience at work through the effective use of communication skills.
4. Married couples are encouraged to remember and use wisely communication skills that can increase marital stability despite their length of marriage.
5. Consult a marital counsellor if couples are unable to maintain healthy marriages.

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