



Age Differences on Communication Styles among Married Adults in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract—The study examined the impact of age differences in married adults' communication styles in Oyo state, Nigeria. It adopted a quantitative approach and a descriptive survey research design. The multi-stage sampling technique randomly selected six hundred (N=600) married adults. The questionnaires were used for data collection in this study, and the respondents were required to use four points Likert rating scale. The experts in Counsellor Education Department at the University of Ilorin validated the instrument. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Analysis of Variance were employed as data analysis techniques. The findings revealed that married adults mostly adopted the marital communication styles, which tended more towards the supportive style. The results further indicated that age has an insignificant impact on the communication styles of married adults. It is recommended that married adults adopt a supportive communication style to promote understanding, openness, empathy, adaptability, and cooperation between them and their spouses.

Keywords: Communication Style, Age, Married adults, Nigeria

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I. INTRODUCTION

OVER the years, ineffective communication has been identified as one of the major causes of marital dissolution (Esere, Ake-Yeyeodu, & Oladun, 2014). In marriage, couples consciously or unconsciously adopt different communication styles to express their feelings on issues (Oniye, Yahaya, Odebo, & Alade, 2016). Conflicts arise, and communication falls apart quickly if these styles are not recognised and accommodated. Tannen (2013) stated that communication style is a conservative way to share information with others through language. He further maintained that age, culture, gender, and many more influence individual's communication styles. Besides, Ntoimo and Akokuwebe (2014) asserted that younger males aged 10-34 had a higher marital dissolution rate than older men. These authors further affirm that marital dissolution was highest in Nigeria's south-south and northeast regions.

Similarly, Subrammiam, Mutyara, and Syam's (2015) study stated that age difference between couples significantly affects marital satisfaction. A successful marriage depends on various ingredients, such as trust, love, time, friendship, understanding, honesty, loyalty, sincerity, and effective communication (Esere, Yusuff, & Omotosho, 2011). Any marriage lacking one or more of the above elements, especially effective communication, will likely fail.

Marriage fosters the growth of any given society. It is the foundation for family and society (Adesokan et al., 2019). Marriage and communication are inseparable. Marriage involves exchanging information, feelings, ideas, and beliefs between couples, which could either be effective or ineffective through verbal or non-verbal methods

(Esere et al., 2011). Communication is essential in marriage, and communication styles are the critical guide to connecting married adults (Lavner et al., 2016; Oniye et al., 2016). Communication is a life wire of any meaningful relationship, in which marriage is not exempted (Esere, 2006).

Nevertheless, it is essential to consider that various people have different communication styles (Oniye et al., 2016). The authors affirmed that how an individual talks to others depicts his or her communication style. To achieve effective communication, it is essential to understand how others understand one's communication styles (Idowu & Esere, 2007). Effective communication promotes healthy marriage, while ineffective communication causes conflict in marriages and leads to separation or divorce (Esere et al., 2014). Furthermore, without effective communication, it will be challenging to resolve conflicts in marriages. Hence, effective communication among couples demands proper knowledge of the communication styles used by each partner. Communication style is a method of interacting verbally or non-verbally to indicate exactly how information should be interpreted or understood (Wylie & Baugh, 2013).

Research has been conducted globally and nationally on the effect of communication in marriage. Harris and Kumar (2018) examined marital satisfaction and communication skills among married couples in India. Their findings showed that gender and other demographic factors influence marital satisfaction (Harris & Kumar, 2018). Similarly, Salifu (2001) examined the relationship between communication styles and marital adjustment of educated couples in Anka, Kogi State. Salifu's (2001) findings indicated that couples who established good and sound communication styles are likely to have pleasant relationships. Oniye et al. (2016) investigated how communication styles and sexual behaviours

could predict marital satisfaction among married teachers at secondary schools in Kwara State, Nigeria. Their findings revealed that married teachers in Kwara State use assertive and passive communication styles for several romantic sexual behaviours, including hugging, romancing, pecking, kissing their spouses, and being satisfied with their marriages (Oniye et al., 2016).

Some research on age and marriage success and satisfaction asserted that age significantly affects marital satisfaction, which increases the divorce rate (Lehrer, 2008; Lampard, 2013; Subramniam et al., 2015). Lehrer (2008) examined whether the effect that age at marriage has on the success of the marriage diminishes as one gets held with a 6850 sample size and found that increased age at marriage has a strong effect on the marriage's success. Lampard (2013) focused on the relationship between the age of marriage and the risk of divorce for couples in England and Wales and found that age at marriage affects the divorce rate. Thus, there are a lot of studies on marital communication. However, little is known about the impact of age differences on married adults' communication styles. This inspired the researchers to embark on this study. These motivated the researchers to investigate the effect of age differences on married adults' communication styles in Oyo state since Oyo state is part of Nigeria's South-west region.

Communication styles

Communication is an important issue that marriages cannot take for granted (Adesokan et al., 2019). Thus, communication style is more important for a healthy marriage (Oniye et al. 2016). Idowu & Esere (2007) argued that a good understanding of communication styles allows individuals to identify how to communicate properly to avoid misunderstanding. Understanding the different communication styles in any marriage is essential to prevent wreckage from marriage. (Oniye et al., 2016). Newton (2012) and Steven (2013) have identified different communication styles among married couples. Newton (2012) suggested any one of the following five communication styles: assertive, aggressive, passive, passive-aggressive, and submissive styles. Newton (2012) argued further that manipulative styles are skilled at influencing or controlling their partner. Aggressive style is about often winning at someone else's expense. Passive-aggressive is a style in which the individual or couple using it appears to be two-faced. Pleasant to people to their faces but poisonous behind their backs, while the submissive style is about pleasing other people. She affirms that the assertive communication style is when individuals or couples clearly state their opinions and firmly fight for their rights without violating others' rights. It is how couples naturally express themselves when their self-esteem is intact. To her, the assertive style is what most people use the least. She established that the assertive communication style is the most effective and healthiest because it allows for openness, honesty, self-respect, and direct communication, which eventually pave the way for marital stability.

According to Steven (2013), communication styles generally fall into four categories: emotive, supportive, directive, and reflective. He arguably stated that emotive communicators are interested in dominance and sociability; supportive communicators are more interested in sociability than dominance. People who use the directive style are exactly the opposite, more interested in dominance than sociability. Finally, reflective communicators are not interested in sociability or dominance. Communication styles determine how partners talk to each other. For example, a dynamic person wants to be the centre of attention and spends most of his/her time talking.

On the other hand, a reflective person is quieter and spends his/her time in thought rather than conversation. Either could be immensely annoying to the other person. Conversely, they might consider themselves perfectly matched because the passionate person can talk without interruption, and the reflective person can think his/her thoughts. At the same time, the talker does not care if he/she gets a response.

A study from India by Harris and Kumar (2018) titled marital satisfaction and communication among couples with a total sample of

100 respondents (50 wives and 50 husbands) was conducted. A questionnaire was used to obtain data from the respondents. The study revealed that interpersonal communication skills are necessary for forming a good relationship between partners. There was no statistically significant difference in gender, age, and years of marriage on couples' study variables. Another study from Kenya by Kinyua and Mberia (2016) examined the impact of gender differences in communication styles among teachers on conflict management in public secondary schools. Two hundred seventy-one teaching staff were the sample size, and data were collected through a questionnaire. The findings showed significant differences in communication styles used by male and female administrators, especially when handling workplace conflict.

In Nigeria, Ntoimo and Akokuwebe (2014) investigated the prevalence and patterns of marital dissolution in Nigeria. Secondary data obtained from the 2006 Nigeria population census were used to depict prevalence and marital dissolution patterns, while age and sex were used as variables. The results showed that the crude marital dissolution rate among the ever-married population in Nigeria was about 30 per 1000. However, age-specific marital dissolution rates ranged from 24 to 132 per 1000 ever-married females and 15 to 24 males; the higher rates were among younger persons aged 10-24 years.

Similarly, Esere et al. (2014) conducted a study on obstacles and suggested solutions to effective communication in marriage as expressed by married adults in Kogi State. The questionnaire was used to obtain data from a sample size of 660 respondents. The study reported that obstacles to effective communication include getting home late regularly, using a harsh tone of voice during the conversation, and bringing up memories. They suggested that effective communication obstacles could be contained by considering one's spouse's contribution, opinion, and trust while discussing issues.

Similarly, Esere et al. (2015) indicated that poor communication and faulty cognition were accountable for marital instability. There were significant differences in respondents' reports based on gender, age, religion, occupational status, and educational background. In another study in Nigeria, Oniye et al. (2016) indicated that married teachers adopted an assertive communication style (discussing the plan with partners and revealing sexual feelings to partners). It is important to note that previous research on marital communication in Nigeria have been focused more on influences of effective communication (Idowu & Esere, 2007; Salifu, 2001; Esere et al., 2011; Esere et al., 2014; Esere et al., 2015; Oniye et al., 2016; Adesokan et al., 2019), while little is known about the impact of age differences on styles of communication of married adults. This inspired the researchers to embark on this study. These motivated the researchers to investigate the impact of age differences on married adults' communication styles in Oyo state since Oyo state is part of Nigeria's South-west region.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to determine the impact of age differences in communication styles among married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria.

III. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

The null hypothesis was stated as follows:

There is no significant difference in married adults' communication styles based on age.

IV. METHODS

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative approach to generalise the data gathered from the population sample. It aimed to determine the impact of age differences in married adults' communication styles in Oyo State. Therefore, a descriptive survey research design was adopted to collect and summarize numerical data (Oniye, 2004; Dada & Idowu, 2006). It also focuses on the people, their beliefs, opinions, perceptions,

motivations, attitudes, and behaviours (Adesokan et al., 2019). The descriptive approach was used in this research to obtain data from the existing situation. Hence, the descriptive survey design is appropriate for the study.

Participants and setting

This study comprises all married adults in Oyo State, while the study population comprises selected married adults in Oyo State. The selected married adults were sampled using the multi-stage sampling technique. Multi-stage sampling allows for the use of two or more probability sampling techniques. It is useful when the population's element is spread over a wide geographical region (Alvi, 2016). Oyo state consists of three senatorial districts: Oyo North, Oyo South, and Oyo Central, with numerous Local Governments under each district. Hence, multi-stage sampling techniques were considered appropriate.

In the first stage, proportional sampling on a 2:1 was used to select two local government areas from each of the three senatorial districts in Oyo State.

Five occupational institutions were chosen from each local government area at stage two through purposive sampling techniques. These include two government, two private, and one self-employed establishment. All characteristics expected were found in the sample; therefore, thirty occupational establishments from the three senatorial districts were selected. At stage three, twenty married adults were selected from each of the five selected occupational institutions using a random sampling technique. Hence, 40 respondents came from government establishments, 40 from private establishments, and 20 from self-employed establishments, making a total of one hundred married adults per local government selected at stage 1.

Consequently, two hundred married adults were selected from each of the three senatorial districts in Oyo State using stratified random sampling. These strata are age. Thus, a total sample size of six hundred married adults was randomly selected for this study.

Research instruments

In this study, the researchers employed a questionnaire as the research instrument to collect the data. The questionnaire was split up into two segments. The first segment elicited information on the biographical data of the respondents, such as age and gender. The second segment entailed question items to acquire information on communication styles. It consists of items to measure the kind of communication married adults use. For example, in responding to these items on the questionnaire, the respondents were required to use a four-point Likert rating scale. Section 'B' (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree).

The content and face validity were assessed by experts in the Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin, to modify and adjust the draft to align with the study's objectives and purpose. Their suggestions and corrections have been consented to; it was adjudged to have content and face validity. Thus, it is suitable for use in the study.

The test re-test reliability approach was used to ascertain the instrument's reliability. The questionnaire forms were administered to twenty married adults in Ibadan Metropolis; after three weeks, the same respondents were given the same instrument to respond to. The two sets of scores derived were then correlated using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, and the coefficient of 0.83 was derived. The instrument was, therefore, considered adequate and reliable.

Procedure for data collection

Ethical clearance was approved by the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, to conduct the research. Permission from the Department of counsellor education was obtained. Respondents signed individual consent forms to participate in this study. The respondents were assured of their voluntary participation and the confidentiality of their responses. The questionnaire forms were personally administered to the respondents with the help of two trained research assistants on how to administer the instrument. The respondents were encouraged to respond accurately and promptly to the questionnaires, and the

completed forms were retrieved from the respondents on the spot.

Data analysis techniques

The researchers used descriptive and inferential statistical methods to analyze the data via SPSS 25 that were collected for the study. The frequency and simple percentages were used for the demographic data, while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical tools were used to test the research hypotheses. Sow (2014) stated that the ANOVA procedure is an inferential statistic for comparing the means of more than two groups. The ANOVA was done through SPSS 25.

V. RESULTS

This section depicts the complete analysis of the data gathered from the respondents.

Descriptive data

The frequency count, percentages, means, and standard deviations are presented in Tables 1

Communication styles of married adults in Oyo State

The results displayed in Table 1 of the married adults' communication styles revealed that married adults freely discussed all family matters (item 1: mean 3.59), my spouse resolves family problems and I without an external or third party (item 2: mean 3.12), strive to be logical whenever I am communicating with my spouse (item 3: mean 3.06), always shed artificial tears to manipulate my spouse (item 4: mean 2.95), My spouse and I resolve our disagreements without raising voice at each other (item 5: 3.20), avoid provocative issues during a conversation with my spouse (item 6: mean 3.09). My spouse and I do not communicate in the chorus (item 8: mean 3.02). This seven-item survey yielded a mean score higher than 3.00 out of a maximum score of 4.00. All these tend toward the positive aspect of marital communication. Meanwhile, the remaining four yielded a lower score, less than 3.00.

Age as a predictor of styles of communication of married adults

Table 2: ANOVA results: Age as a predictor of styles of communication of married adults based on age

Age	N	mean	Std. Dev.	Calculated f-value	Sig.
18-25	101	2.71	1.01		
26-33	142	2.96	1.32	2.512	0.112
34 +	284	3.21	1.28		

*Significant, $p < 0.05$

The results in Table 2 show that married adults 34 years and above had the highest mean score, 3.21, followed by those aged 26- 30 ($\bar{x} = 2.96$), while those aged 18-25 had the lowest mean score ($\bar{x} = 2.71$). To this end, the older married adults had better communication styles than the younger ones. However, the difference is not significant ($F = 2.512; p > 0.05$) hypothesis is not rejected.

VI. DISCUSSION

This research aimed to determine the impact of age differences in communication styles among married adults in Oyo State, Nigeria. This study found that the married adults who adopted the marital communication styles tended more towards the supportive style. In this study, the married adults recognized the need for dialogue; they engaged in a free discussion on family issues and were rational. This corroborates with the classification by Steven (2013). He listed the supportive style as one of the four communication styles and described the supportive style as interested in sociability rather than dominance. An analysis of the findings on style adopted by married adults also reflects the four levels of interaction proposed by Steven (2013): dialogue, discussion, debate, and argument. Despite all these in the marital communication of the married adults, as found in this study, they were still able to prevent conversations from deteriorating into serious arguments and stress but focused on survival through calm logic. Indeed, the individuals in this study tend to have effective

marriage communication.

Furthermore, age has no significant impact on the communication styles of married adults. The study found that older married adults demonstrated more effective communication styles than younger peers. The above finding contradicts previous studies (Lehrer, 2008; Lampard, 2013; Subranmiam et al., 2015). Lampard (2013) examined the relationship between marriage age and the risk of divorce for couples in England and Wales, and the study found that age at marriage affects the divorce rate. Subranmiam et al. (2015) found that age difference between couples significantly affects marital satisfaction. It is important to note that married adults with communication challenges should adopt a supportive communication style to overcome them.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study revealed that married adults 34 years and above had the highest mean score, followed by those in the 26-33 age bracket, while those between 18-25 years had the lowest mean score. Based on this finding, it can be concluded that age has no significant impact on the communication styles of married adults. This study's findings led to the following recommendations: married adults should adopt a supportive communication style to promote understanding, openness, empathy, adaptability, and cooperation between them and their spouses. Marriage counsellors should emphasize a supportive communication style.

This study has successfully investigated the impact of age differences on married adults' communication in Oyo State, Nigeria. Therefore, further studies must focus on replicating this study in other parts of the country to determine its generalizability in Nigeria. This study can be replicated in any part of the world since the family is society's building block. Novel therapies for improving communication styles and marital stability should be developed and experimented with to determine their efficacies.

It must be noted that the respondents in this study consisted of married adults in Oyo state who voluntarily participated. The results of the current study should only be generalised to a similarly motivated population. Thus, generalising this result outside the assigned sample would be incorrect.

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Table 1: Respondents' Communication Styles in married adults

1. My spouse and I freely discuss all family matters	383(68.0)	136(24.2)	39(6.9)	5(0.9)	3.59	0.66
2. My spouse and I resolve family problems without an external or third party.	148(26.3)	341(60.6)	68(12.1)	6(1.1)	3.12	0.64
3. I strive to be logical whenever I am communicating with my spouse	168(29.8)	283(50.3)	90(16.0)	22(3.9)	3.06	0.78
4. I always shed artificial tears to manipulate my spouse.	159(28.2)	264(46.9)	95(16.9)	45(8.0)	2.95	0.88
5. My spouse and I resolve our disagreements without raising voice at each other.	216(38.4)	260(46.2)	70(12.4)	17(3.0)	3.09	0.77
6. I attempt to avoid provocative issues during a conversation with my spouse.	182(32.3)	265(47.1)	103(18.3)	13(2.3)	3.09	0.77
7. My spouse does not regard my opinion during the conversation.	145(27.51)	280(53.13)	99(18.79)	39(10.97)	2.89	0.91
8. My spouse and I do not communicate in the chorus.	110(20.87)	380(72.11)	58(11.01)	15(4.93)	3.02	0.83
9. My spouse and I discuss issues that affect the family in a relaxed mood.	200(20.87)	250(47.44)	75(14.23)	38(7.21)	3.11	0.82
10. I always turn my back at my spouse whenever I am angry	160(30.36)	265(50.28)	96(18.22)	44(11.81)	2.95	0.89
11. My spouse and I seldom talk in public places.	154(29.22)	280(58.68)	90(17.08)	39(7.40)	2.96	0.91