

# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNICATION AND SEXUAL ADJUSTMENT AMONG COUPLES IN OBUDU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

*The study was designed to investigate the relationship between communication and sexual adjustment among couples in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Three hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study employed correlation design in order to establish the relationship between the two variables. A total of 798 married males and females were used for the study. An instrument “Communication and Sexual Adjustment Inventory (CSAI)” was used to collect data. Random sampling was used to generate the sample. Data obtained were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, correlation and chi-square. The results showed that there is significant relationship between verbal communication and sexual adjustment and also between non verbal communication and sexual adjustment. Age at marriage was, however, discovered not to significantly influence the relationships between communication and sexual adjustment. Consequently, it was*

*recommended that counselors in non-school setting should endeavour to organize seminars and workshops for couples to enhance their communication skills and effectiveness.*

## **Introduction**

Marriage is a God-ordained union designed for love, happiness and permanence between a husband and wife. It is institutionalized in human society with the view to afford couples opportunities to meet their multidimensional needs one of which is legalized sexual union. Marriage is, therefore, the only legal boundary where sexual act is recognized without shame.

Leman (2005) asserts that sex life colours marriage from top to bottom and it is the most powerful 'marital glue' a couple can have. He maintained that experience has shown that in our society today, couples have a difficult time talking about sex issues. When issues surrounding marital sex are ignored, the consequence is that couples pay dearly for it. No wonder, Igbo (2004) observed that most marital squabbles that give room for marital instability and maladjustment have to do with sexual insecurity, dissatisfaction and ineffective communications. Most couples feel that issues bothering on sex are personal and must not be discussed, hence in many African societies, sexual activities are branded 'sacred' which could only be practiced in secrecy without discussions.

Marital conflicts and ineffective communications are common scenarios in most Nigerian homes (Igbo, 2005). One of the major causes identified is centered on sexual matters (Gbenda & Akume, 2002; Igbo, 2005). It has been observed that most Nigerian couples do not have satisfactory sexual lives. Most couples have sex because it is the pertinent means of procreation and not because it is an act of marital happiness, love and unity. It has also been observed that some African women, especially in Nigeria, are still seen as chattels. They are not to talk, complain or make demands about sex. Their interests are never to be provided nor their consents sought in sexual matters

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(Igbo, 2004). Such situations are definitely bedrocks of sexual maladjustment in the homes.

Sex is a powerful instrument, which couples could use to enhance their communication with each other and to communicate affection (Yahaya *et al*, 2008). In order to experience adequate sexual satisfaction and adjustment, couples may need to be free, frank and fair to each other in terms of their feelings, experience and expectations. Haller (2005), however, noted that most couples often find themselves struggling to communicate verbally and more importantly sexually. In order for their marital sex relationship to be blissful, they might need to agree to talk.

Some studies have shown that couples, who do not often talk about sex, do not enjoy sex in their marital relationships (Purnine & Carey, 2003; Igbo, 2004). Those situations that would have been discussed and resolved about sex are often left unattended to, leading to marital conflicts and sexual maladjustments in the homes. Some theoretical models of human sexuality emphasize the importance of interpersonal communication in maintaining sexual adjustment. Wineze and Carey (1991) observed that in many cases, sexual dysfunction problems cannot be addressed until communication improves.

It is vital, therefore, to note that for marital harmony and stability to be maintained among couples, the relationship between communication and sexual adjustment should be a cardinal issue, which cannot be ignored. A good marriage enhances effective communication and also increases sexual interest. Satisfactory sexual relations, therefore, add soul binding emotional strength to the union. Brinley (2000) asserted that it is difficult for any spouse to give sex freely and fully without fear of being hurt when the partner is upset, angry, moody or silent. The sexual expression is, therefore, a barometer of a couple's total marriage experience.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The issue of communication and sexual adjustment is of grave importance to marital harmony. However, Obe (2000) observed that sexual maladjustment was so endemic in Nigerian families that homes are becoming a haven of bitterness and rancor. It has also been observed that ineffective marital communications reduces sexual urge among couples (Igbo, 2005). Despite theorists' claims, evidence of the importance of communication and of the characteristics of adequate sexual communication and adjustment is lacking, especially in Cross River State of Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

It is against this background that this study sought to find out if there is any significant relationship between marital communication and sexual adjustment among couples in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The main purpose of the study was to ascertain the relationship between marital communication and sexual adjustment among couples in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses guided the study at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between verbal communication and sexual adjustment among couples.
2. There is no significant relationship between non – verbal communication and sexual adjustment among couples.
3. Age at marriage does not significantly influence communication and sexual adjustment among couples.

### **Methodology**

The design for the study was a correlation design because co-relational designs are used when a relationship among variables is being sought. The population for the study comprises 89,609 married males and

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females in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State (National Population Commission, 2006). A sample size of 798, using Akpa and Angaher (1999) sample size determination formular was used. Hat and draw method was used to select 3 out of the 5 wards, namely Obudu Urban, Ipong and Ukpe wards. The wards were selected to reflect the ethno-linguistic spread of the Local Government Area.

An instrument “Communication and Sexual Adjustment Inventory” (CSAI) was used to collect the data for the study. The instrument consisted of four sections. Section A solicited information on the biodata of the respondents. Section B dealt on verbal communication. Section C worked on the non-verbal communication of respondents while Section D sought information on sexual adjustment of the respondents.

CSAI was a four-point modified likert type scale using Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and Strongly Disagree (1 point). The reverse was the case for negatively stated items. The decision point was 2.5 for each item. CSAI was pilot tested on 40 respondents to ascertain its reliability. Split half method was used and the result correlated using Pearson product moment correlation giving a correlation coefficient of 0.88 which was considered adequate. Correlation and chi-square statistics were used to analyze the data.

## **Results**

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between verbal communication and sexual adjustment.

Table 11.1 show that there is a significant positive correlation between verbal communication and sexual adjustment among couples. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected which indicates that as verbal communication increase sexual adjustment also increase.

**Table 11.1: Relationship between Verbal Communication and Sexual Adjustment Among Couples**

	N	Verbal Communication	Sexual Adjustment	Decision
Verbal Communication	797	1.000	.617**	Rejected
Sexual Adjustment		.617**	1.000	

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level 2 (tailed)

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between non-verbal communication and sexual adjustment among couples.

**Table 2: Correlation between Non – Verbal Communication and Sexual Adjustment**

		Non – Verbal Communication	Sexual Adjustment	Decision
Verbal Communication	Pearson Correlation	1	.528**	Rejected
	Sig. (2 tailed) N	797	797	
Sexual Adjustment	Pearson Correlation	.528**	1	
	Sig. (2 tailed) N	797	797	

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level 2 (tailed)

Table 11.2 shows that there is a significant positive correlation between non-verbal communication and sexual adjustment among couples, thus the null hypothesis was rejected.

**Hypothesis 3:** Age at marriage does not significantly influence communication and sexual adjustment among couples.

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**Table 11.3: Chi-square Statistics on Influence of Age at Marriage on Communication and Sexual Adjustment**

	<i>Value</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Asymp. Sig (2 sided)</i>	<b>Decision</b>
Pearson chi – square	.081a			
Likelihood lineat	.081	2	.960	
Likear – by – linear	.004	2	.960	Accepted
Association		1	.948	
N of valid cases	798			

a. 0 cells (0%) have expected count less than 5. the minimum expected count in 86.72.

Table 11.3 indicates chi-square values of .081, df 2 and P = 0.960. Since P is > 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted, which means that age at marriage does not significantly influence relationship between marital communication and sexual adjustment.

## **Discussion**

Hypotheses 1 and 2 indicated that there is significant relationship between both verbal and non-verbal communication and sexual adjustment. The findings are in line with those of Peters (1983), which found that there is a direct relationship between marital communication and adjustment with 70% married couples, showing high adjustment levels. In the same vein, the study agreed with Osamuyimen (1992), that there is a significant relationship between marital communication and marital disaffection among couples in Edo State, Nigeria. Also the work of Obe (2000) observed that lack of communication reduces sexual urge among couples.

The findings could be explained with the fact that when couples are not happy and not communicating, they cannot relate properly. This reduces the urge to have sexual intercourse. In most cases, sexual dysfunction problems cannot be addressed until communication improves (Purnine & Carely, 2003). Contrary to the finding of this

study, Perlman and Abramson (1982) reported no relationship between sexual satisfaction, adjustment and sexual communication.

Hypothesis 3 investigated the influence of age at marriage on marital communication and sexual adjustment among couples. The result indicated that age at marriage does not significantly influence relationship between marital communication and sexual adjustment. This finding disagrees with the finding of Brinley (2000), which indicated that younger couples yield more to effective communication than the older couples. This study, therefore, maintains that the most crucial issue that determines the sexual adjustment in marriage is not necessarily the age at marriage, but the effectiveness in the communication between the spouses. When there is a free flow of comments anchored on self-disclosure; issues that would have degenerated to squabbles would be settled at the round table of communication.

### **Counselling Implications**

Having established the relationship between marital communication and sexual adjustment among couples, counselors in non-school settings should endeavor to organize seminars and workshops for couples. This could be group or community based. Such programmes should emphasize communication skills and techniques and roles of communication in marital adjustment.

Counsellors in the school settings should emphasize pre-marital counseling, since the study found that there is no influence of age at marriage on the relationship between marital communication and sexual adjustment. Sexuality education should be taken seriously and sexual communication introduced at all the levels. This will help to build people up at a later age.

### **Conclusion**

Marriage is a relationship of love, peace and unity. Sexual relationship is paramount to the mutual existence of any marital relationship.

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Communicating verbally or non-verbally among couples enhances sexual union, which sustains and enhances the relationship. Since age at marriage has no significant role to play in sexual adjustment and marital communication, couples of all ages are advised to communicate freely at all times.

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