Self- Disclosure Patterns of Newly Married Adults in Oyo Metropolis: Counselling Intervention

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Abstract: This research investigated the self-disclosure patterns of newly married adults in Oyo metropolis using descriptive survey method. Three hundred (300) newly married adults were drawn through purposive sampling technique and a questionnaire tagged Self-disclosure Patterns of Newly Married Adults (QSDPNMA) was used to obtain the data. Two null hypotheses were generated for the purpose of this research and tested using t-test and Analysis of variance statistical tools. The result revealed that there was a significant difference in the self-disclosure patterns of newly married adults in Oyo metropolis based on gender. It was also revealed that there was a significant difference in the self-disclosure patterns of newly married adults based on length of years in marriage and spouse age. However, the hypothesis which states that there was no significant difference in the self-disclosure patterns of newly married adults based on religion was accepted which indicates that religion does not play a significant role in the self – disclosure patterns of newly married adults. Therefore, it was recommended that the newly married adults must be taught about self – disclosure patterns that promote healthy relationships. Also, religious organizations should always invite professionals in the field of marriage counseling to sensitize the members of their religious organizations about the importance of self – disclosure in marriage.

Keywords: Self-disclosure, Communication, Marriage, Adult, Counselling

Introduction

The bedrock of a good relationship that exists between the husband and the wife is good communication. Marriage that was not built on an effective communication would definitely break up. Communication is very essential in stabilizing marriage.
Communicating effectively enables the couples to resolve conflict amicably. Communication is a life wire of marriage relationship or any other meaningful relationship (Esere, 2002, 2006). Communication is very vital in all areas of human life especially the marriage relationship because it is the pillar which maintains the structure of peaceful co-existence and mutual understanding. It allows partners to feel love and caring.

Munroe (2003) opined that marriage is a religious duty and is consequently a moral safe guard as well as a social necessity which requires certain level of intimacy and self-disclosure. Self-disclosure as an aspect of communication which involves connecting by sharing information or resources, seeking support or comfort, forming alliances, conveying emotion or effecting some changes in the environment. The connection that is established via self-disclosure does not have to be purposeful as long as one party understands some meaning from the other i.e. “a wife might be very upset with her husband for forgetting to clean up the living room and the husband may read this in her expression (e.g. huffing while she picks up trash) (Driver & Gottman, 2004). A healthy relationship requires much good self-disclosure because it is a royal road to romance and an enduring happy marriage. This skill is very necessary in order to build a good matrimonial home (Gottman & Rushe, 1995).

Self-disclosure in marriage is fundamental to human interaction and intimate couple relations, in part because it is a tool for knowing or emotionally connecting with one another. It was discovered from one study of couples that both men and women agreed that the emotional connection they shared with their partners was what determined the quality of their relationship (Barnett & Rivers, 1996). A positive self-disclosure pattern includes having a partner who really talks, a good listener and a good friend as well as partner who likes and appreciates one as a person and does his or her share to make the relationship work.

Responses in self-disclosure can be characterized as turning toward, turning away from or turning against each other, for instance intimate couple generally expects their needs to be met with understanding and empathy i.e. if the husband responds to his wife by saying thanks for the information, the wife would be greatly disappointed and probably irritated. She expects him to respond to her underlying need for his support and attention. Something like, “Oh, I’m sorry honey”. A partner who turns forward may acknowledge the other’s statement makes contact or touch the other’s hand. A partner who ignores the other’s statement or averts eye contact is turning away. Turning against the other may involve active negative response such as responding contemptuously to a statement (Driver & Gottman, 2004).

Lerner (2002) opined that having an authentic voice is important in intimate relationships. Further argues that a crucial part of having an authentic voice is openly sharing competence as well as problems and vulnerability (Lerner, 2002). Also, long term clinical practice suggested that truly intimate self-disclosure entails partners fully listening to one another and asking clarifying
questions that allows them to know each other more deeply; successfully intimate partners are also able to state their own feelings and thoughts when those differ from their partners. Power dynamics are often played out in communicative interactions. For example, research indicates that couples have happier and more stable marriages when husbands are more accepting of influences from their wives (Coan, Gottman, Babcock & Jacobson, 1997). Good self-disclosure is an important part of keeping a relationship vibrant and strong, when couples experience frequent arguments and the heartache of unresolved conflict, it then leads to divorce or verbal aggressive reaction to each other.

Self-disclosure can be expressed as both the conscious and unconscious acts of revealing more about oneself to others. This may include, but is not limited to thoughts, feelings, aspirations, goals, failures, successes, fears, dreams as well as one’s likes, dislikes and favourites (Burleson & Denton, 1997). Self-disclosure enhances cordial relationship among the newly married adults because it involves the revelation of one’s opinion about each other. It is also seen as the way of sharing information with others. It is likewise a way of gaining information about another person, once each of the couple engages in self – disclosure, it is implied that the other person will also disclose personal information; this is known as the norm of reciprocity. Mutual disclosure deepens trust in the relationship and helps a couple to understand each other more. Meanwhile the following are the patterns of self-disclosure displayed by the couples:

1. Deliberate self-disclosure: According to Barnett (1998), this refers to therapist’s, intentional, verbal or non-verbal disclosure of personal information. It applies to verbal and other deliberate actions, such as placing a certain family photo in the office or an emphatic gesture, such as touch or a certain sound. This can as well happen among the couple because the husband or the wife may intentionally disclose him / herself to the other by expressing his/her feelings or grievances verbally to one another which may enhance mutual understanding between them.

2. Unavoidable self-disclosure: This might include an extremely wide range of possibilities, such as therapist’s gender age and physique. It also covers disclosure through place of practice, tone of voice, pregnancy, foreign or any accent, stuttering, visible tattoos. Self-disclosure brings to mind earnest conversations about each other’s deepest hopes and fears, These can play an equally important role in forming relationships as those deep and meaningful conversations: changing circumstances reveals different patterns of self-disclosure (Gibbs & Heino, 2006). The couple may reveal themselves to one another through their manner of dressing, hairstyle, use of make – up, jewelry, perfume or after shave, facial hair, wedding rings; or the wearing of cross among others.
(3). Accidental self-disclosure: This is the type of self-disclosure which occurs or happened in an unplanned manner, this type of disclosure will just happen unconsciously without the husband preparing his wife for verbal or non-verbal interactions. It may even appear as hidden events to both parties. And if care is not taken, it may make or mar their matrimonial home (Knox, Hess, Petersen & Hill, 1997).

(4). Clients deliberate actions: These are also potential sources that can reveal personal information about the therapist. Clients can initiate inquiries about their therapist by conducting a simple web search (Zur & Donnor, 2009). Such searches can reveal a wide range of professional and personal information, such as family history, criminal records, family tree, volunteer activity, community and recreational involvement political affiliation among others. Meanwhile, this can as well serve as a pattern of self-disclosure to the spouse because the husband or the wife may deliberately discloses their feelings to one another and this may embrace mutual communication and understanding among the couples.

This then, explains the reasons why the spouse must self-disclose to each other because the husband or the wife may not have an adequate knowledge about each other unless they express their feelings to each other. Hence, this study is aimed at investigating self-disclosure patterns of newly married adults in Oyo metropolis.

Statement of the Problem
The disparities in self-disclosure of spouses can have a significant negative impact on their relationship. For instance, it was found out in a study that couples experience problems in marital adjustment when there was an inequality in the amount of disclosure expressed compared to the amount of disclosure received (Davidson, Balswick & Halverson, 1983). The home is the nucleus of the society and marriage is the major avenue whereby the society is populated by the number of children that are born in such marriages, thus negative self-disclosure produces negative multiplier effect on the marriage. When there is self-disclosure problem, it will be difficult to raise and nurture the children, which may lead to an increase in the rate to juvenile delinquency in the society, Self-disclosure is an aspect of communication which is the key to a successful marriage and without it no marriage can survive.

This research therefore seeks to look into the self-disclosure patterns of newly married adults in Oyo metropolis. This is because the divorce of young couples who got married in just about one to five years is very rampant (Isiaka, 2005). Although several propositions have been presented in the past which expressed the sporadic rate at which marriages break up as a result of communication style, for instance Isiaka (2005) empirically investigated the relationship between divorce and spousal communication and found that lack of effective communication leads to divorce, Adeyemi (1991) worked on causes of divorce and separation. In spite all these propositions, not much
has been done on the self-disclosure patterns of newly married adults. Therefore, this gap which has been left open is what this research intends to fill.

Research Hypotheses
The following null hypotheses were formulated to serve as mainframe for this research:
1. There is no significant difference in the self-disclosure patterns of newly married adults on the basis of religion.
2. There is no significant difference in the self-disclosure patterns of newly married adults on the basis of length of years in marriage.

Purpose of the Study
The main purpose of this study was to examine the self-disclosure patterns of newly married adults in Oyo Metropolis. The variables of interest are age, gender, religion and length of years in marriage.

Significance of the Study
The outcome of this study will be of immense benefits to married couples both old and new to know the proper ways that they can use to self disclose to themselves. This study will assist counsellors, most especially, marriage counsellors to know how they can counsel the newly married couples in order to understand the effective ways of communicating with themselves. The outcome of the findings will assist religious leaders to know how they can counsel their married couples both old and new.

Methodology
The descriptive survey method was adopted for the study. Araoeye (2004) opined that the descriptive design is concerned with person, place and time which focuses on people and their beliefs, opinions, attitude, motivation and behaviour. The survey research design is considered appropriate for this study because the self-disclosure pattern of newly married adults could be ascertained through the use of questionnaire.

Sample and Sampling Procedures
The target population for this study comprised of newly married adults between one to six years of marriage within Oyo metropolis. Since it is not possible to get the whole target population, purposive sampling technique was employed to select the respondents for the study. However, respondents that fall between 1 – 6 years in marriage were purposively selected from the mosques, churches and government agencies. The total number of the respondents was three hundred (300).

Instrumentation
The result entails the analysis of the data gathered with the use of an instrument titled “Questionnaire on Self-disclosure Patterns of Newly Married Adults (QSDPNMA)”. It consists of two sections: section A contains demographic data of the respondents while section B contains twenty items on self-disclosure patterns of the respondents.

Validity of the instrument
The instrument used in this study was given to experts in the Department of measurement and evaluation who scrutinized the questionnaire independently so as to establish its content validity. Their corrections formed the basis for revisiting the instrument for adjustment and modification.
Reliability of the instrument
To determine the reliability of the instrument, a test re-test procedure was carried out. The researcher administered twenty questionnaire forms to twenty (20) newly married adults in Ibadan. After an interval of four weeks, the instruments was re-administered to the same set of respondents. The two sets of scores were then correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC). A correlation coefficient of 0.76 was derived which shows that the instrument is reliable.

Method of Data Analysis
The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. For the demographic data, frequency counts and percentages were employed while t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical tools were employed to analyze the hypotheses generated at 0.05 level of significance.

Results
Demographic Data
This section presents the results of data obtained from the respondents in frequency counts and percentages.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents Based on Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 indicates that 300 respondents participated in the study out of which 107 (35.7%) were males, while 193 (64.3%) of the respondents were females.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents Based on Religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African Traditional Religion</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>85.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 indicates that 5 (1.7%) respondents were of the African Traditional Religion, 255 (85%) were Christians, while 40 (13.3%) were Muslims.

Hypothesis one: There is no significant difference in the self-disclosure patterns of newly married adults in Oyo Metropolis based on religion.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Showing the Self-Disclosure Patterns of Newly Married Adults in Oyo Metropolis Based on Religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>Cal. F-value</th>
<th>Crit. F-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35.688</td>
<td>17.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>1877.282</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>1912.970</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 shows the calculated $F$-value of 2.82 and a critical $F$-value of 3.00. The calculated $F$-value is less than the critical $F$-value. The hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference in the self-disclosure patterns of newly married adults in Oyo metropolis based on religion.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant difference in the self-disclosure patterns of newly married adults in Oyo Metropolis based on length of years in marriage

Table 4 shows the calculated $t$-value of 2.32 and a critical $t$-value of 1.96. The calculated $t$-value is greater than the critical $t$-value. The hypothesis was not accepted. Hence, there was a significant difference in the self-disclosure patterns of newly married adults in Oyo Metropolis based on length of years in marriage.

**Discussion of Findings**

The result from hypothesis 1, table 3 which states that there was no significant difference in the self-disclosure patterns of newly married adults in Oyo metropolis based on religion was accepted because the calculated $F$-ratio of 2.82 was less than the critical $F$-ratio of 3.00. This result indicates that religion does not have an effect on the self-disclosure patterns of the newly married adults in Oyo Metropolis. This result corroborates the work of Geyer (1994) who found no significant difference in the religon of the couples on the basis of their communication styles.

Hypothesis two which states that there was no significant difference in the self-disclosure patterns of newly married adults in Oyo metropolis based on the length of years in marriage was not accepted because the calculated $t$-value of 2.32 was greater than the critical $t$-value of 1.96. This shows that the length of years in marriage plays a significant role in the self-disclosure patterns of newly married adults. This result may be unconnected with the fact that as couples grows older in marriage, their maturity level increases. This corroborate the findings of Block, Adair, Plumb, Rhatigan, and Orsillo (2007) which showed that as couple grow in their years of marriage, their emphatic nature keeps increasing for each other i.e. they increase in swallowing rifts to save their marriage.

**Recommendations/Counselling Interventions**

Based on the outcome of this research, the following recommendations/Counselling interventions are made:

- The Newly married should counselled about self-disclosure strategies that promote healthy relationship.
- The Newly married adults should ignore high intensity negativity and abuse, also behaviours such as nasty criticism, contempt, or aggressive defensiveness should be ignored.
- Religious organizations should invite professionals in the field of marriage counselling to sensitize the members of their religious organizations about the importance of self-disclosure in marriage.
- Professionals in counselling psychology, most especially marriage counsellors should organize couples education where self-disclosure patterns will be discussed.
- The spouse must be counselled to imbibe the spirit of forgiveness by making them to realize that forgiveness takes on a larger role, not only must they forgive friends, lovers, and partners for what they may have done in the past but each must forgive themselves in advance for the fact that they will probably do similar things again in the future.
- Couples should be counselled to refrain from unnecessary involvement of external bodies/parties in the management of their conflict.
- Newly married adults should be encouraged to pay attention to the non-verbal communication aspects of their relationships, i.e body languages, eye contact and that physical touch goes a long way to self-disclose thoughts and feelings etc.
- Each (husband or wife) must refuse to play the blame game, which means they must be able to tolerate and accept each other as they are.

References


Esere, M. O. (2006). Communication management skills training as marriage enrichment programme in the improvement of marital adjustment. The Counsellor, 23 (1), 69-77


