

COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING FOR MINIMIZING ANGER IN MARITAL RELATIONSHIP OF COUPLES IN SABON-GARI LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF KADUNA STATE

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Abstract

This paper focused on facilitating communication skills training in minimizing anger in marital relationship for stability and fulfillment. Married spouses from time to time do experience anger challenges in their relationship which overwhelm them, this result to difficulties in communication. Experimental design of pre-test and post-test was use as the design of the study. 30 volunteers out of a population of 139 married couples who are in subsisting marriage, consisting of males and females (15 each) were randomly selected to take part in the study and were assigned into experiment and control groups. An instrument titled Couples' Communication Skills Training on Non-verbal and Anger identification was used to counsel married couples for seven weeks. A pre-test and post-test was administered to the subjects on the first and last week of the experiment. A four point likert scale was used for rating of responses on the questionnaire. t-test technique was used to analyze the data gather for the study. The result of the study revealed that the two hypotheses were rejected as significant differences were found. These findings showed that participants in the study had learned about non-verbal behaviours and could therefore identify anger symptoms. Recommendations were made.

Keywords: Communication, Anger, Marital and Relationship

Introduction

The marriage institution provides spouses with the avenue to express love and strive to meet the needs of one another. It is a relationship where submitting is a way of expressing love to one another which sets partners on a journey to all that is good, wonderful and fulfilling. When this state is attained, nurtured, and maintained, the relationship grows into intimacy that leads to harmony, unity and understanding which serves as the bases for deep genuine friendship. When the relationship is vibrant, communication is robust (Oke, 2016). In fact, when married couples use excellent communication skills they would enjoy their relationship. Speaking and listening skills are required to facilitate understanding of messages expressed and ability to respond effectively. However, some of the ways couples communicate raise barriers which inhibit discussions or cause partners to feel angry, be hostile, dependent, complaint or be subservient (Kneen, 2011). In every conversation, especially that of marriage, couples should aspire to strike the bargain to love and not aim at hurting each other, no matter how enraged, disturbed, discouraged, or offended. Thus, couples need to be aware of those behaviours that easily provoke anger and guide their choice and use of words, and actions so that they can be meaningful and purposeful in their interaction with one another and even with others. This is important because, they would daily interact and so are faced with choices that will affect their lives, that of their partners and others (Brooks, 2016).

To enhance effective communication, people must develop an awareness of the importance of speaker's and listener's responsibilities and adhere to them. When a relationship breaks down between two people,

communication is the first casualty (Oke, 2016). Couples would not talk freely to one another or will avoid talking completely. Most marital problems stem from the communication choices partners make which tend to ruin or enhance relationships. Some of such choices produce serious and painful experiences in the relationships. For example, when flaws are blown up into major discretions or when partners refuse to overlook faults and offences of their spouse, the spouse would be called to account for every indiscretion (Akinade, 1997). Similarly, when a partner speaks harshly and rashly with an angry tone of voice, it puts a spouse on the defensive. In addition, couples may have difficulty in finding the appropriate words to express their own feelings and interpret mood, facial expression and tone of voice. The end result of such action is building of hostility that burdened the relationship and places weight of guilt on the couple (Link, 2016). This is so because we do not know how to make good choices and use of words when we are angry and we become weighed down with the consequences. Thus, partners say and do things in anger that can damage any relationship, sometimes permanently. In this circumstance, neither of the partners has the self-will to communicate when he or she is displeased with the other.

Furthermore, the manner partners relate with one another determine and indicate the harmony or otherwise of the marriage relationship. When a spouse makes a lot of demand on a partner, especially by being judgmental and fault finding towards him or her, it places a lot of strain on him or her. As a result he or she would become depressed, unhappy, less lively and so does not talk, thereby becoming easily irritated, annoyed and worried (Dagari, 2009). The outcome of these feelings is silence, pre-mature conclusion making, yelling, nagging, criticism, or misinterpretation of the other partner's expression that could interfere with spousal communication leading to marital discord (Akinade, 1997). Therefore, when a spouse is to choose a course of action, he or she should ask himself or herself questions such as, does this reflect my concern for my partner or is it about myself. Such sensitivity could demonstrate the love that seeks the well-being of the other (Fisher, 2016).

Good communication brings understanding that could lead to intimate and deeper emotional closeness, respect that binds couples together. Development of effective communication skills is an important aspect of relationship in marriage. Therefore, couples need to possess well developed communication skills levels to become good communicators. The development of these skills not only will enhance the relationship but also improve the quality of the marriage. However, when spouses refuse to listen or talk to each other, communication road blocks are built in relationships, (Pelt, 2005). In place of quality talking that would enable partners get to know and understand one another better, spouses explode at each other by raising voices, yelling, shouting at each other, using negative words which are hurting and displeasing, thereby destroying the once happy and harmonious relationship. The resultant effect is manifestation of anger in its different form (Meyer, 2011 and Dagari, 2009). Hence, open communication lines will minimize the potential of ill feelings in the relationship of couples. Also, when partners carefully listen before responding to what they hear, defensiveness and anger responses will be avoided in communication of couples.

The ability to appropriately express feelings and emotions of anger rather than just talk about it is very important in marriage relationship. Anger problem does not allow you to process your feelings, rather one engage in reactive talk of hostility that lay deep within you. It leads one to different direction that does not solve the problem such as arguments, retaliation intended to spite a partner, verbal abuse, violent behaviours, and tantrum, (Dagari, 2009). These behaviours are emphasized by people's gestures and tone of voice which betray or give away how one really feel, though you may not like to own up to the feelings that you are angry (Selwyn, 2003). Hence, the display of anger are often cries for attention made by the individual when he fails in meeting an expectation, and we take it out on our partners or those closed to us (Meyer, 2011). Therefore, Counselling as an interacting relationship is hoped will help married couples' to focus on emotional issues which shaped the way they act and react in relationships. It will also assist couples' search for ways to communicate appropriately in order to reduce anger in their relationship. The

Counsellor would help couples' focus on how they interact in order to map out issues and help them become effective communicators in their relationship.

Statement of the Problem

It is evident from research that communication is very important in the lives of married couples'. At the same time, it is also a difficult process. The desire to communicate is there, but the methods and commitment needed to break negative patterns and established new ones is lacking. Many times people react in anger to situations that are consider unpleasant and provocative as a result of their inability to ignore a wrong that is done against them (Oke, 2019). Braverman (2012) reported that if people do not have a healthy way of expressing their thoughts and emotions to each other, of speaking and being heard and then, everything else will ultimately crumble. Similarly, Collingwood (2012) is of the opinion that arguments over little mundane things can result to fights, threats, shouting matches of yelling, screams, etc.

Anger is a natural tendency of every human being but it should not be carried over board and damaged precious relationships, sometimes irreparable which have been built over many years. For example, there are times when small irritations cause mountains to grow over molehills and communication is blocked. At such moments, it is often difficult to put our feelings into words or concentrate fully when a partner speaks. Unhealthy silences or verbal attacks can arise and put more strained on the relationship. Rather, a partner should take a deep reflection on the matter first, then, take quality decision on what measured and calculated response you will make on the situation in question. More so, let the measures be corrective and not destructive, redemptive and not damaging (Oke, 2019). Therefore, as spouses, people need to learn how to deal with their anger and work to prevent it. It is hope that partners would learn to find time to talk together about disturbing and displeasing issues causing strained on the marriage relationship. The focus of this paper is to facilitate communication skills training through counseling to help married couples' reduce anger in their relationships. Also, it is hope that couples could learn how to make choices that will stimulate and enhance quality communication skills usage to improve the proper processing of anger for the benefit of all in the relationship.

Objectives of the study

The following are the objectives of the study

1. To counsel married couples on how to improve their communicate skills in order to reduce anger in their marital relationship
2. To counsel Male and Female married couples on how to use effective communication skills to reduced anger and improve their marital relationship

Hypotheses

The following are the hypotheses of the study

1. There is no significant difference between experimental and control groups on communication skills improvement in reducing anger of married couples in their relationship
2. There is no significant difference between males and females in experimental group on communication skills improvement in reducing anger of married couples in their relationship

Methodology

The design of the study is a pre-test post-test experimental design. The participants in this research study were couples who are in subsistent marriage and reside in Jushi suburb of Sabon-Gari Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria. The respondents were married males and females who volunteered to take

part in the research study through responding to an advert. The respondents were randomly assigned into experimental and control groups. Out of a population of 139 spouses who showed interest to the advert, 60 married respondents were selected to serve as the sample size for the study after going through their responses to the pre-test items. Those with the lowest and highest scores were selected. They consist of 15 males and 15 females each in the two groups. 30 participants each were assigned into experimental and control groups. The experimental group received treatment on Couples Communication Skills Training on Non-verbal and Anger Identification Questionnaire. The Control group was a placebo group who received no treat on communication skills.

The Procedure for Data Collection

The procedure for data collection involved two stages. The first stage was the experimental treatment of subjects on Communication Skills Improvement section of Couples Communication Skills Questionnaire (CCSQ) developed by Dagari (2009), for six (6) weeks. Each meeting time lasted for two (2) hours. The Control group for this period of time received no treatment. The second stage of the study was the administration of the questionnaire to both experimental and control groups respectively in the seventh (7) weeks. The data obtained from the administration of the instrument was analyzed using t-test technique. The outlined of the treatment packaged is as follows;

WK1. Discussion on: the meaning and types of communication. Members were welcome and introduction of selves took place. The purpose of the program was made known to the participants. A pre-test was administered. Participants brain storm on the meaning of communication. Their responses were jotted on a cardboard paper pasted on the board. The researcher made clarification and define communication. The types of communication were brain storm upon by participants and clarification were made. Opportunity for questions and answers were given.

WK2. Discuss on Verbal communication, speaking methods and speaking rules. A recap of Wk1. discussion was done. The participants brain storm on the meaning of verbal communication, the various synonyms of the word were listed e.g talk, speak, oral conversation, interaction etc., Speaking methods and rules were explained. Assignment was given to observe and identify speaking methods and use speaking rules in conversation at home. Questions and answers sessions were done.

WK3. Discuss Non-verbal communication like facial expression, gestures, use of distance, tone of voice, vocal sounds, body language and posture. Participants brain storm on the meaning and types of non-verbal communication. The researcher made clarification and explanation. Their responses were jotted. Assignment was given to observe and use the non-verbal cues with people around them and write them down. Questions and answers session were given.

WK4. Discuss meaning of Listening and listening methods, rules, and negative listening. Participants brain storm on the meaning of Listening, types, methods of listening, rules for listening, bad listening habits and how to improve listening habits. Clarification and explanation were made. Assignment was given to practice and observe negative listening. Questions and answers were responded to.

WK5. Discuss meaning of anger, types, effects and use of I-Message to listen for feelings. Participants' brain storm on meaning of anger, signs, types, effects and use of i-message to express or explain how one feels. Clarification and explanation were made. Assignment was given for members to observe, and practice on how to report negative feelings. Questions and answers sessions were done.

WK6. Discuss how to recognize and identify anger feelings, reflect feelings and improve communication. Participants brain storm on how to recognize or identify anger and anger feelings e.g tone of voice, eyes colour, body cues, words usage silence and etc. Clarification and explanations were

made. Assignment was to watch out for these signs and record them down. Questions and answers were carried out.

WK7. This is the second phase of the research study where a **recap** on communication skills, signs of anger and how to appropriately express self in interaction was discussed. **Administration** of the questionnaire to participants **who received treatment** was done. The control group was treated to a placebo and was administered a post-test.

Results of the Study

The result of the study is presented as follows. The first hypothesis states that; there is no significant difference between the experimental and control groups in communication skills improvement in minimizing anger in marital relationship of couples. The analyzed result of the experimental and control groups are:

Table 1. t-test result of experimental and control groups in communication skills improvement

Variable	No	Mean	SD	SE	t	df	p
Experimental	30	1.8556	.25960	.04740	3.44	58	.001
Control group	30	2.1889	.46242	.08443			

Critical t value at 58 df degree of freedom=2.00

A look at table 1 showed the mean scores of experimental group to be 1.8556 and that of control group to be 2.1889. The observed calculated t- value of 3.44 is higher than critical t-value of 2.00 at 58 degree of freedom. The observed level of P value at .001 is lower than the value of 0.05 significant level. The result revealed that there is a statistical difference between the experimental and control groups in their mean scores. The hypothesis that states, there is no significant difference between the experimental and control groups in communication improvement to minimize anger in marital relationship of couples is rejected. Thus, the hypothesis is not accepted because there is a significant difference.

The analyzed result of gender in experimental group is presented as follows:

Table 2. t-test result of Gender (males and females) in communication improvement (Experimental Group).

Variable	No	Mean	SD	SE	t	df	p
Male	30	2.0963	.30245	.07809	2.40	28	.023
Female		1.8148	.33771	.08720			

Critical t value at 28 df degree of freedom=2.048

Looking at table 2 above revealed the mean scores of gender where the males had 2.0963, while the mean scores of the females is 1.8148. The observed calculated t-value of 2.405 is higher than critical t-value of 2.048 at 28 degree of freedom. The observed level of P (.023) is lower than 0.05 significant level. The result therefore showed that there is a statistical difference between male and female respondents in the experimental group. The hypothesis that states there is no significant difference between males and females in experimental group is therefore rejected. The null hypothesis is not accepted.

Discussion of Results

The result of the first hypothesis indicated a possible improvement in communication skills usage to reduce anger in marital relationship where spouses may have learnt how to identify anger feelings in their partners. This could be possibly because the respondents in the experimental group might have acquired new communication skills aspects that reveal signs of anger such as tone of voice change in pitch, loudness, and inflections. Others are body language like body lean, postures, frown face, gestures with hands, head movement in different directions, facial expression such as eye contact, red eyes, etc (Dagari, 2009 and Kneen, 2011). This is affirmed by Burstein (2010) and Meyer (2011) who reported that couples need recognize that a speaker's message contains both verbal and nonverbal content as well as a feeling component. Communicators should be aware of both components in order to understand the total message. They further stated that couples must try to identify how the other partner feels in terms of the message content and respond to feelings by letting a spouse know that his or her feelings as well as the content are recognized. Pelt, (2005) also opined that partners may seek for clarification or reinstate or paraphrase the verbal or nonverbal messages as feedback to their spouses. This could provide opportunity to the partner to respond with further information that would help in understanding what the problem is really about.

The result of the second hypothesis revealed a significant difference between males and females who took part in the study. This finding is in agreement with research works of Wright, 2001; Pelt, 2005, & Humpries 2006) who reported that males communicate differently from females. They reported that when you pay less attention to what a partner is saying, then, problems will occur as you would respond inappropriately and thereby provoke negative emotions. A possible explanation for the difference in gender communication could be the affirmed finding by researchers that females communicate to make you talk while males communicate to give information. Holmes, (2004) reported that communication is a difficult process for individuals. Therefore, married couples would need to be committed in learning how to preserve and enhance their positive interaction in order to experience a fulfilling relationship.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the facilitating communication skills training in reducing anger in marital relationship for stability and fulfillment of spouses. Communicating effectively often means using a variety of modes such as spoken word, gestures, facial expression and body cues in sending messages. We also need to be aware of how messages are sent by us because we may send unintentional messages, if we are unaware of things such as our body language which could create problem of misunderstanding that may lead to anger. Real communication occurs when we avoid the tendency of negative evaluation or over reacting and we listen to understand our partners including others for fulfillment in relationships.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research study, the following recommendations are made:

1. That couples are required to observe or watch out for their partner's non-verbal behavior of anger building up signs such as raised tone of voice, red or watering eyes, clench fist, quietness etc. during conversation and choose their words of response appropriately.
2. That couples should consciously work towards learning how to improve their communication skills by identifying feeling words and using such appropriate words to express their thoughts or feelings when talking to each other.

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