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Effects of Assertiveness Training and Marital Communication Skills In Enhancing Marital Satisfaction among Baptist Couples in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract - This study examined the effectiveness of assertiveness training and marital communication skills. The moderating effect of length of marriage and number of children were also investigated. The study adopted pre-test, post-test control quasi-experimental design with 3 x 2 x 2 factorial matrix. Multistage sampling technique was used to select 84 participants; representing 42 married couples who were selected from the three local Baptist Churches of the three Baptist conferences in Lagos. The comprehensive marital satisfaction scale $r = 0.98$ was the research instrument used. One (1) hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) and Duncan post hoc test. The study revealed that there was a significant main effect of treatment on marital satisfaction ($F_{2, 31} = 19.96, p > 0.05$). Marital communication skills group obtained the highest adjusted post-test mean score on marital satisfaction ($X = 396.29$), while the least score was obtained by the control group ($X = 342.91$). Based on these findings therefore, counselling psychologists, marriage counsellors and other professionals working on marriage should make conscious efforts to adopt marital communication skills and assertiveness when managing marital problems and associated challenges. Would be couples should also be expose to the two therapist.

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I. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Marriage is perceived by Waite and Gallagher (2001) as a social institution under which a man and a woman establish their decision to live as husband and wife by legal commitment and or religious ceremonies. One ultimate thing that must be born in mind is that marriage institution is not accidental, but meant to achieve certain purposes. Marriage is also a socially acknowledged and approved sexual union between two adult individuals (Amato & Deboer, 2001). It is a unique institution that affirms and supports a distinct sociology in human culture; bridging of the gender gap, facilitates the generation of life through the fusion of sexes; and promotes the birthright of children

to know, to be connected to, and to be in stable relationship with their natural parents (Papeboes & Whitehead, 2001). Marriage is a legal union between a man and a woman as husband and wife, which further connotes matrimony, wedlock, alliance, association and union (Ariyo, 2005).

Deducing from the definitions given above, certain purposes that constitute marriage are unveiled as follows: companionship; social integration of persons, approved sexual union; mutual commitment; mutual growth, bridging of the gender gap; and promoting the birthright of children. National polls showed that what people consider being very important in marriage (that is, love, sexual fidelity and ability to talk about feelings) have been fairly similar over the past two decades (Roper Organization, 1990). It was also found that a person's beliefs about marriage and how marital satisfaction was achieved might significantly affect one's expectations and readiness for marriage (Larson, 1988a, 1992; Larson & Holman, 1994). Marriage as a matter of fact can be defined as a legal term describing certain relationship concerning individuals in order to fulfill three different types of needs: material, sexual and psychological (Saxton, 1992).

According to Thomas (2002), marriage is more than physical attraction, biological union and social integration. It involves total commitment, self-donation to one another, and taking responsibilities that lead to mutual well-being. Marriage celebration may differ from culture to culture and from religion to religion. However, most people enter into it with the right expectations, joy and happiness with the full sense of accomplishing the purpose for which marriage is established. This is corroborated by Esere (2002) that marriage is usually contracted amidst joy, happiness and merry-making for the couple, family members and friends. Findings suggest that a happy marriage is conducive to a long, healthy life (Waite & Gallagher 2000). The researcher wonders why the joy of marriage could turn soar suddenly. This experience by couple may be because they lack the ability to face the challenge and problems that arise and, or they are yet to understand factors that favour marital joy. The reality of it is that each marriage

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has its own unique challenges and problems. The question is not whether they will arise but how to face them when they do (Powell, 2005). The unfortunate thing, according to Ariyo (2004) is that when these challenges occur, many marriages become disestablished. Many marriages become disestablished when the couples are not able to manage challenges such as challenges of resolving their conflict, sexual fulfillment, good communication, mutual commitment, child bearing and rearing. The phenomenon of marital problem is world wide, not limited to Nigeria alone. The statistics released by National Centre for Health, Marriage and Divorce (2003), revealed that divorce rate in Canada, England and Wales Greece, the Netherlands and United States have more than double since 1970.

The source also showed that divorce around the world has nearly quadruped since early 1960 in Britain. Divorce affects about a third of marriage in Canada and Japan, couples getting married have not more than 50-50 chance of staying together in United States. Divorce ends about two out of every five marriages in Zimbabwe. The situation could be worse in Nigeria particularly Lagos where marital relationships are being broken on a daily basis. Some divorce cases in 2005 at Grade "A" customary court, Somolu Local Government Area, Lagos also showed that Five (5) of the eight (8) cases i.e. 62.5% ended up in divorce. One (1) of the eight (8) cases i.e. 12.5% did not end up in divorce while two (2) of the eight (8) cases i.e. 25% were yet to be decided. This shows that marital relationship is in a serious mess.

Spouses are expected to know and practice good interpersonal relationships (Akinade, 1997). The principles that can help marriages grow include increasing marital happiness, understanding, love for each other and a sense of fulfillment; to become respectable models to other couples; to keep unwanted people out of the marital life and enjoying more interpersonal quality time together (Akinade, 1997). This may not be so these days when everybody, especially marriage partners, are struggling to get money to the detriment of their relationships. The absent – father syndrome has now been extended to include the absent – mother as both parents struggle to keep jobs as well as maintain marriage and families. They wake up at around 4.00am leave their homes at around 4.30am to return home at around 10.30pm or more when the children with either one or non of the spouses must have slept. No time for the family members. The more they have no time for one another the more the gap in their relationships is widening, creating problems the money they are struggling to get may not solve. Money is good and it is needed in the home but should not be sought for at the expenses of marital relationship.

According to Lee (2008), being assertive is not only about being confident, it is also about

understanding your spouse and other members of the family and the empathy that you give them. Assertiveness Training is a behavioural therapy technique which prepares an individual to stand up for himself or herself, to know and achieve his or her rights, and also take cognizance of the need to strike a balance between assertiveness and aggressiveness (Morse & Watson, 1979). Marital Communication Skills focus on the abilities of the spouses to pass across information or message from one to the other person in such a way that what is meant by the speaker (husband or wife) is also interpreted by the listener (wife or husband).

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, assertiveness training and communication skills have not been frequent application used as packages to enhance marital satisfaction among Nigeria couples. Marital satisfaction referred to an individual's subjective evaluation of the marital relationship (Taylor, Peplau and Sears, 1997). Satisfaction may be used interchangeably with happiness, lack of distress, quality. Perhaps, assertiveness training technique has not been applied as a treatment package either to enhance or to improve marital satisfaction. Akinade, (1987) used assertiveness training to treat shyness among adolescents, Asuzu, (1998) also made use of assertiveness technique to treat promiscuity among adolescents in Ibadan. Similarly, Akponye, (1999) used assertiveness training to increase self esteem of female adolescents from divorced homes. Hammed, (1999) in a similar vain applied Assertiveness Training and Transactional Analysis in fostering interpersonal skill among selected Bank workers. This was why the researcher was motivated to use the two variables (Assertiveness training and Marital Communication Skills) in order to fill the existing gap and see to how the two variables can be used to enhance marital satisfaction among Baptist Couples in Lagos.

On communication and marital satisfaction, it has been found that happy couples with marital stability and satisfaction were more likely to use active listening skills, agree, approve, assent, use laughter and humor (Fisher, Giblin, and Hoops, 1982; Noller and Fitzpatrick, 1991) and possess character virtues of self-restraint, courage and friendship (Fowler & Olson, 1985). Regarding the issue of disagreement, it is not that couples would not disagree but some couples are fond of disagreeing for a very long time which has negative impact on their relationship. Disagreement in marriage should lead to agreement in order to enhance good marital communication.

Furthermore, recent research by Baucom, Espstein, Rankin, and Burnett (1996) also reports that relationship focused standards, that is, standards for marriage that place a major emphasis or priority on the marriage, are related to both marital adjustment and communication patterns. A longitudinal study that

follows the pattern of development of communication and standards in a relationship establishes that having relationship –focused standards early in the relationship may help the couple develop constructive communication skills; however, it is equally possible that good communication may aid partners in creating a positive relationship, which in turn may foster the developments of relationship-focused standards (Gordon; Epstein; Burnett, & Rankin, 1999).

A 1999 meta-analysis of 16 studies of the oldest marriage enhanced programmes, couple communication, observed meaningful programme effects with regard to all types of measures. Couples who took the training experienced moderate to large gains in communication skills, marital satisfaction, and other relationship qualities. For example the average couples, after taking couple communication training, were able to out perform 83 percent of couples who had not participated in the programme in the critical area of marital communication (Butter & Wampter, 1999). In their own investigation of marital communication after interviewing 51 recently married couples analyzed various cues, verbal and non-verbal, that transpired between couples during the interview, Beier and Sternberg (1977) found close communication including body communications as an important factor in marital communications. The use of verbal and non-verbal ways of communication still retains their value in marriage up till now.

Markman's (1981) study to predict the effect of communication deficit on marital happiness used 26 couples planning marriage in an initial stage of the study and later used 9 of 21 couples who remained intact during the study; found out that the more positively premarital couples related in their communication, the more satisfied they were with their relationship. This calls attention to the fact that the more negatively premarital couples related in their communication the more dissatisfied they were with their relationship. Of recent, it has been observed that couples who had negative premarital relationship in their communication end up in constant fight or divorce Markman (1993) in preventing marital distress through communication and conflict management training examined a four and five year follow-up data from evaluation of effects of prevention and relationship enhancement programme marital distress prevention programme which teaches couple effective communication and conflict management skills. At five year follow-up, intervention as compared with control, couple had higher levels of positive and lower levels of negative communication skill and lower levels of marital violence.

The study conducted by Amao-Kehinde (1998) on effectiveness of communication skills training and conflict resolution strategies in the improvement of marital adjustment of married couples in Lagos State

shows that subjects in the treatment group, that is communication skill training and conflict resolution strategies scored significantly higher than the subjects in the control group indicating that the two treatment strategies did improve that marital adjustment of subjects. In the same study, it was revealed that there are significant statistical differences in the improvement of marital adjustment of subjects exposed to communication skills training and those in control group. This implies that communication skills' training was effective.

Amao-Kehinde (1998) found that the younger married subjects exposed to communication skills training and their counterpart in the control group was found to be significantly different. Furthermore, the study also exposes that there are significant difference between subjects exposed to communication and conflict resolution strategies programmes respectively. Subjects exposed to communication skills training scored significantly higher than subjects exposed to conflict resolution skills training. This in effect means that subjects in communication skills training demonstrated superiority over those in the conflict resolution skills training. However, the two strategies were effective, but communication skills training proved better in ameliorating the subjects' problems associate with marital adjustment. According to Awe, (1986) couples usually spend the first few years of their marriage adjusting to their individual differences and other external factors affecting their marriage. The first two to five years are the most critical for couples in marriage since after the first five years of marriage couples begin to tolerate each other and to understand each other better, especially when children start coming.

Karney, Bradbury, Fincham and Sullivan, (1994) found that negative spousal affectivity contributed to the negative attributions one makes about self, spouse and marital relationship. Gottman (1995) and Holman and Li (1997) have found that romance was the most important ingredient in the newlywed relationship and was kept alive by frequent interactions, spending time together, and openly disclosing one's thoughts and feelings. Individuals who admire, support and are proud of each other in their respective endeavours and achievements openly express appreciation and build one another's self-esteem and fulfill emotional needs build a satisfying and enduring relationship. Similarly, a successful marriage, according to (Mace, 1982) requires three things: (a) a high degree of motivation (b) a desire to make the marriage work, and (c) a willingness to expend personal time and effort to make sure it does. Sabatelli and Cecil-Pigo (1985) found that when both partners were participating equally in the relationship and when there was maximum interdependence, the couple was the most committed.

Gottman and others have given considerable attention to the ways that communication influences marital satisfaction (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000; Driver & Gottman, 2004; Gottman & Silver, 1994; Karney & Bradbury, 2005). Embedded within their consideration of communication are affectivity, conflict resolution, and interactional patterns. Regarding affectivity, the overall review of marital satisfaction has shown that nondistressed couples have lower levels of negative reciprocity and reactivity (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000). Additionally, Gottman and Silver (1994) have found that ways in which couples resolve conflict and their overall patterns of interaction are other potential determinants of marital satisfaction. Mirahmadizadeh Amroodi, Tatabai & Shafieian, (2003) argued that marital satisfaction was greater amongst those who were older and had higher level communication skills and understanding. Effective communication was found to have a main effect on marital satisfaction of newly wedded couples (Imhonde, Aluede & Ifunanyachukwu, 2008). Communication is a vital tool in couples interaction and conflict resolution. Integral factors involved in marital satisfaction include communication and spousal support (Hess, 2008). Perren, Von Wyl, Burgin, Simoni, and Von Klitzing (2005) supported this idea by finding that decreases in communication and sensitivity were a major source of declining satisfaction in a marriage. The quality of communication associated with marital outcomes is continuing to gain evidence over time. When spouses experience strain, it can be assumed that their marital interaction and communication might be primed for more critical comments and blaming (Rogers & White, 1998).

However, Wehr & Kaufman (1987) identified in their study that assertiveness training increases assertiveness and decreases state anxiety among highly anxious adolescents. Akinade (1987) applied assertiveness training in the management of shyness among secondary school students successfully. Kling (1990) had used assertiveness training effectively in changing antisocial behaviour among adolescents. According to Wise (1991) assertiveness training is effectively adopted in educating the adolescent on personal transaction and social responsibility. Oladele (1986) stated that assertive training had been applied successfully in the treatment of conditions such as obsessive compulsive disorder, sexual communication, smoking, chronic urinary retention and labour management disputes. Assertiveness training is a cognitive behavioural therapy that concerns the skills of relating to people. (Asuzu, 1998). Asuzu (1998) applied covert self-control and assertiveness technique in the treatment of promiscuity among adolescent in Ibadan successfully. In her study she found that subject in covert self-control group and assertiveness training group had reductions in promiscuous behaviour more than the control group. It was also revealed that there is

significant difference in the reduction of promiscuous behaviour of adolescents exposed to assertiveness training and the control group.

Hammed (1999) conducted a research among selected Bank Workers using Assertiveness Training and Transactional Analysis to foster interpersonal skills among the subjects. He reported that both assertiveness training and transactional analysis proved to be effective in the improvement interpersonal skills of subjects considerably when compared with the control group. Assertiveness training seems to be an effective behavioural therapy which can be used to modify behaviour. Studies have also justified that the use of Assertiveness Training as an effective behavioural management techniques (Lazarus (1971), Phillips (1977), Alberti & Emmons (1977), Kazdin (1925), Lorr (1980), Kutara (1995), Agali & Idowu, 2007). So assertiveness training will be used in this study as part of intervention to enhance marital satisfaction.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Nigeria where marital stability is generally, culturally and religiously supported, research cannot be overflogged on marital satisfaction. This is because a little few of research shows a high prevalence of marital dissatisfaction among couples. The issue of marital happiness and joy which suddenly turn soar often constitute the subject of discussion all over the world. This is due to the fact that more than ever before marriage institution is being confronted with all kind of problems such as infidelity, poverty, spousal battering, and unwillingness to take responsibilities.

Evidences have shown some cases of infidelity, separation, unresolved conflicts, threat of divorce and eventual divorce among Baptist pastors (Book of Reports 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011). If these are happening among the Baptist pastors who are leaders then that of their members, the followers could be worse. This dangerous trend is noticed as marital relationships continue to break down at an alarming rate among married Baptist couples. Veroff, Kulka, and Douvan (1981) buttressed that married couples experience an erosion of positive qualities such as life long companionship, romance, sexual fulfillment and commitment, over time and, for some, marital relationship satisfaction erodes to the point where relationship is terminated. For others, the barriers to separation, or perceived absence of alternative, may result in remaining married despite being unhappy with the relationship.

Due to the researcher's experience and observation among Baptist couples in Lagos on how some newly wedded couples and those who have married long ago lack enough reasons why they should remain in the union, engaging in unresolved conflicts, abandoning their matrimonial homes, threat of divorce

abandoning their matrimonial homes, threat of divorce and eventual divorce, the resultant effects on the children rear in such home atmosphere and the negative impacts on the society and the entire world. The researcher therefore examined Assertiveness Training and Communication Skills in Enhancing Marital Satisfaction among Baptist Couples in Lagos.

III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study was to experimentally investigate the relative effectiveness of two psychological strategies (Assertiveness training and marital communication skills) in enhancing marital satisfaction among Baptist couples in Lagos Nigeria. The study however specifically examined the moderating effects of number of children and length of marriage in enhancing marital satisfaction using the two therapies.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The outcome of the findings of this study would be of immense significant to marriage partners, male and female, old and young, as it would sensitize them to see themselves as responsible individuals who could live together amicably and satisfactorily in their marriages.

The expected findings of this study would also increase the volume of therapies that can be used by counselling psychologists in enhancing marital satisfaction. This will therefore further establish the veracity of MACOS in the treatment of marital dissatisfaction or instability. It would also add to the empirical supports already available in favour of MACOS. The same thing is applicable to AST. It would also prove a basis for the development of a more effective theory and technique which will be useful for guiding and counselling married couples in Nigeria and other parts of the World with a view to enhancing marital satisfaction.

The anticipated findings would at the same time be of great benefit to Marriage Counselors, Ministry of Social Welfares, Community Development and Women Affairs, who are frequently confronted with marital issues such as divorce, separation, unresolved conflicts among couples. It is believed that an enhancement of marital satisfaction of the target population may increase readiness of married couples thereby making counselling enterprise uncomplicated and establish the success of counsellor at work.

V. METHODOLOGY

a) Research Design

The study employed a pre-test, post-test, control quasi experimental design using a 3 x 2 x 2 factorial design. The participants of the study were divided into three groups A_1 , A_2 , and A_3 . Two of the

groups (A_1 and A_2) were treated while the third group (A_3) served as control. While the young and old participants were constituted into columns – B_1 and B_2 . Number of children (0-3) and (4 and above) were superimposed under young and old participants in the column C_1 and C_2 . The first and second experimental groups were pre-tested and subjected to the behavioural treatments (Assertiveness Training and Marital Communication Skills). The control group was equally pre-tested before they were exposed to a counseling talk on 'parenting Styles'. This served as placebo for the members of the group so as not to feel redundant in the programme.

b) Population

The target population of the study consisted of all married Baptist couples in Lagos State, Nigeria.

c) Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample of the study comprised forty two (42) married couples randomly chosen from three Baptist Churches in Lagos State. Multistage random sampling technique was used to choose the sample.

At stage I, simple random sampling was used to select 1 Association each from the three Baptist Conferences in Lagos State.

At stage II, simple random sampling technique was used to select 1 church each from each of the three Associations.

At stage III, purposive sampling technique was used to select young and old married couples. 13 couples were selected from First Baptist Church, Ipaja; 15 couples were selected from Winners Baptist Church, Bariga while 14 couples were selected from First Baptist Church, Afromedia-Ajangbadi. This was done in order to ensure that couples who are qualified give their consent to suit the purpose of the study were selected. The use of intact participants is suggestive of one man, one wife relationships who are and still remained within the institution of marriage.

d) Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The participants in the programme satisfied the following qualifications.

1. They were couples selected from Baptist churches
2. They were still intact in their marital relationships
3. They had never experienced divorce
4. They had both agreed to attend the programme throughout.
5. Those who have divorce cases in court were excluded
6. Couples who lived separately were excluded
7. Polygamists were also excluded.

e) Research Instrument

The researcher used Comprehensive Marital Satisfaction Scale for the study.

The Comprehensive Marital Satisfaction Scale developed by Blum and Mehrabian (1999) was adapted for this study. Blum and Mehrabian (1999) reported a large scale study bearing on the comprehensive marital satisfaction scale (CMSS) and its reliability and validity. The comprehensive marital satisfaction scale (CMSS) has a highly satisfaction internal consistency (reliability) coefficient of .94 and a satisfactory test-retest reliability coefficient of .83 over a six week interval (Blum & Mehrabian, 1999). However, re-validation of Comprehensive Marital Satisfaction Scale on twenty (20)

couples from intact homes in Ibadan (not part of the proposed population) yielded a reliability co-efficient of $r=0.982$, and a Cronbach alpha of reliability, indicating that the instrument is reliable and can be used on Nigerian populace. Therefore, the instrument (CMSS) is good for use in this study.

VI. RESULTS

a) Hypothesis One

There is no significant main effect of treatments on marital satisfaction of the participants.

Table 4.1: Table 4.1 is presented showing the Summary of post-test marital satisfaction of couples by Treatment, Number of children and length of marriage.

Source	Type III sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	P	Remark
Prescore	9657.483	1	9657.483	12.814	0.001	S
Treatment	30087.124	2	15043.562	19.960	0.00	S
Marriage Length	3693.543	1	3693.543	4.901	0.034	S
Number of Children	4702.482	1	4702.482	6.239	0.018	S
Length of marriage X Treatment	1544.940	2	772.470	1.025	0.371	NS
Length of Marriage X Number of Children	2945.925	1	2945.925	3.909	0.057	NS
Treatment X Marriage Length	1086.352	2	543.176	0.721	0.494	NS
Treatment X Marriage Length X Number of Children	0.000	0	0.00	0.00	0.07	NS
Error	23364.208	31	753.684			
Total	104278.119	41				

R Square = 0.776 (adjusted R Square = 0.704)

Table 1 above shows a significant main effect of treatment on marital satisfaction ($F_{2,31} = 19.960$; $P < 0.05$). This means that there is difference in the mean of marital satisfaction score of participants in the assertiveness training; marital communication skills and the control. Hence hypothesis one was not confirmed statistically.

To find the degree of significance among the treatment groups table 2 is presented. **Table 4: 2.** Table 4.2 is presented showing the Multiple Classification Analysis of Post-test Marital Satisfaction by Treatment, Length of Marriage and Number of Children.

Grand Mean = 370.769

Variable + Category	N	Unadjusted Deviation	ETA	Adjusted Deviation	Beta
Assertiveness Training	15	11.623		10.523	
Marital Communication Skill	13	25.517		23.715	
Control	14	-27.856	0.60	-27.568	0.51
Length of Marriage					
Young Couple	21	6.038		5.308	
Old Couple	21	-4.025	0.01	-3.521	0.07
Number of Children					
0 – 3 Children	33	+6.361		5.124	
4 and above	9	-4.242	0.01	-4.216	0.02
Multiple R Square					0.704
Multiple R					0.839

Table 4. 2 above reveals that the marital communication skill group obtained the highest adjusted post – test mean score in marital satisfaction ($X = 396.28$, $SD = 8.56$). This is followed by the assertiveness training ($X = 382.39$; $SD = 8.24$) while the lowest score was obtained by the control group ($X = 342.91$, $SD = 9.44$). To this end, marital communication skill was more effective in enhancing marital satisfaction among couples than the assertiveness training skill and the control group respectively.

VII. DISCUSSION

The effectiveness of two therapeutic techniques (Assertiveness Training and Marital Communication Skills) in enhancing marital satisfaction among married couples in Lagos State, Nigeria was examined in this study. The results of the study were discussed hypothesis by hypothesis, based on the scores of the participants on the measure of marital satisfaction as stated here under.

The first hypothesis which states that there is no significant main effect of treatment on marital satisfaction of participants was rejected. Going by the outcome of results resented in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, it could be deduced that there was a significant scores of participants exposed to treatment and the control group. The participants in the marital communication skills group obtained the highest adjusted post-test mean score in marital satisfaction. This is followed by the assertiveness training while the lowest score was obtained by the control group. To this end MACOS was more effective in enhancing MS among couples than the AST and the Control group respectively.

The outcome of this finding should not be surprising as marital satisfaction is one of the spousal relationship energizer MACOS is primarily designed for. The finding is therefore in consonance with the earlier empirical supports for MACOS which indicates that the therapy is an effective treatment. For example, Fisher et al (1982), Noller et al (1991) and Fowler et al (1985) found that happy couples with marital stability and satisfaction were more likely to use active listening skills, agree, approve, assent, use laughter and humor, and possess character virtues of self-restraints, courage and friendship. Also, Baucon et al (1996) found that relationship focused standards, that is, standards for marriage that place a major emphasis or priority on the marriage, are related to communication patterns in a similar study, Gordon et al (1999) who compared the pattern of development of communication and standards in a relationship focused standards early in the relationship may help the couple develop constructive communication skills, and that good communication may aid partners in creating a positive relationship, which in turn may foster the development of

relationship-focused standards. In a related finding Butter et al (1999) in a meta-analysis of 16 studies of the oldest marriage enhanced programmes, couple communication, observed meaningful programme effects with regard to all types measures, found out that couples who participated in couple communication training experienced moderate to large gains in communication skills, marital satisfaction and other relationship qualities. The average couples, after taking communication training were able to out perform 83 percent of couples who had not participated in the programme in the critical area of marital communication.

The possible explanation for the effectiveness of MACOS in enhancing marital satisfaction could be in that it lays much emphasis on various cues, verbal and non-verbal. Going by Beier et al (1977) in their own investigation of marital communication after interviewing 51 recently married couples analyzed various cues, verbal and non-verbal that transpired between couple during the interviews, found that close communication including body communication as an important factor in marital communication. In the same vein, Markman (1981) who predicated the effect of communication deficit on marital happiness used 26 couples planning for marriage in an initial stage of the study and later 9 of 21 couples remained intact during the study, found out that the more positively premarital couples related in their communication, the more satisfied they were with their relationship. Furthermore, Markman (1993) who examined prevention of marital distress through communication and conflict management training investigated a four and five year follow-up data from evaluation of effect of prevention and relationship enhancement programme marital distress prevention programme which teaches couple effective communication and conflict management skills at five year follow-up intervention as compared with control found that couple had higher levels of positive and lower levels of negative communication skills and lower levels of marital violence. The effectiveness of MACOS has equally been established by other finding. The study conducted by Amao-Kehinde (1998) on effectiveness of communication skills training in the improvement of marital adjustment of married couple found that there was significantly statistical difference in the improvement of marital adjustment of subjects exposed to communication skills training and those in control group indicating that communication skill training was effective.

Similarly, the effectiveness of assertiveness training over the control group in the enhancement of marital satisfaction among the participants in this study is not strange as it has proven its suitability for use in behaviour modification. King (1990) opined that it is effective in changing anti-social behaviour among adolescent. The study therefore concurred with the

findings of Wise (1991) who found that assertiveness training is effective in educating the adolescent on personal transaction and social responsibility. Also with Asuzu (1998) who found out that assertiveness is effective in reduction of promiscuous behaviour of adolescents. These confirms the outcome of Hammed (1999) who investigated the effectiveness training and transactional analysis in fostering interpersonal skills among bank workers, found that assertiveness training proved to be effective in the improvement of participants interpersonal skills considerably when compared with the control group. The finding therefore take side with Lazarus (1971), Phillips (1977), Alberti et al (1977), Kazdin (1925), Lorr (1980), Kutara (1995), Agali and Idowu (2007) who found and justified the use of assertiveness training as an effective behavioural management technique.

Comparing the effectiveness of the two therapies, one over the other, it could be deduced from table 4.2 above that the mean score of participants in MACOS ($X = 396.286$, $SD = 8.568$) is higher than the mean score of participants in AST ($X = 382.394$; $SD = 8.243$) indicating a significant difference in the marital satisfaction scores of the participants in the two therapies. MACOS is therefore found to be more effective than assertiveness training (AST) in enhancing marital satisfaction. The finding seems to be in conformity with similar studies of Pernen et al (2005) who found that decrease in communication and sensitivity was a major source of declaring satisfaction in marriage. In the same vain, Imhode et al (2008) found that effective communication as a main effect on marital satisfaction of newly wedded couples. However, the reason for the effectiveness of MACOS over AST is not hidden. This is because communication is an integral part of human life. Good communication is a vital tool for couple to maintain satisfying relationship. Hess (2008) corroborated that communication is a vital tool in couples interaction and conflict resolution and that integral factor involve in marital satisfaction include communication.

a) Implications of the Study

This study has grim implication for married couples, potential married couples, marriage counsellors, counselling psychologists, social welfares, government and the society in general. From all indications it is glaring that marriage counselors in Nigeria and other African countries have been so hidden in their operations dissimilar to what obtains in other countries of the world where marriage counseling is valued and recognized by the government and the masses. There is a provision of online and marriage counseling clinics services. The issue of attending to marriage matters is not absolutely reticent for religious leaders alone, yet large numbers of pastors are exposed to skills of counseling psychology.

The results achieved in this work have established the uniqueness and certainty of factors affecting marital satisfaction and how a good number of couples' incongruence to these factors help termination of marital relationship. As mentioned above, the findings have huge multi-dimensional implications for marriage counselors, married couples, and singles, counselling psychologists, social welfare, government and all the stake holders. This is due to the fact that the predicament facing marriages are direct worry of the entire society. It has been established by literatures that the arrival of first child leads to decline in marital satisfaction, as disruption is caused in couples' interaction, conflict and negativity within the family relationship are elevated. As the family members increase in number, the larger family is prone to violence because they experience greater stress associated with the necessity to provide for several children. Hence, less satisfaction is expressed. It is consequently mean that to ensure marital satisfaction, proper parenting, morally sound children and a peaceful society, married couples should be encouraged to make a purposeful decision of meeting a marriage counsellor for their marriage appraisal.

The key implication of this study for the whole world is that, if marital satisfaction is enhanced at all levels and areas it would be easy for the government to accomplish her goal, control the numerous emergence of various antisocial, moral decadence and successfully tame the whip of bribery and corruption without much sweat because every child is a product of a marriage.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The results from this study call for immediate attention by all stake holders, including marriage counselors, religious leaders, counseling psychologists, married couples, would-be couples, government and entire society. The reason for this is apparent as it has discovered and established the certainty of factors against marital satisfaction. Hence, the findings of this work should be of significant concern to the Nigerian populace that counselling therapy should be for both academic exercise and everyday experience of Nigerians, particularly marriage counsellor.

It is evident from increasing rate of marital dissatisfaction leading to separation and divorce, issues of single parents and consequent outcome on children and members of the society that the special needs of this category of subjects have been unduly abandoned. Therefore, this unpalatable situation should be quickly corrected through the provision of such programmes as Assertiveness Training (AST) and Marital Communication Skills (MACOS).

It is obvious from this study that the use of Assertiveness Training in most marriage and family

enrichment programmes has been lacking. It is therefore recommended that Assertiveness Training is taught to married couples in particular, in order to reduce marital dissatisfaction which is unavoidable.

The role of effective communication among married couples cannot be overemphasized. This is because Marital Communication Skills enable couples perform proficiently when engaged the symbolic transfer of messages. What is said, how it is said and the way it is interpreted are very important factors in effective communication. It is therefore recommended that couples are taught in order to enhance self disclosure, identify feelings of the other partner and to find out the actual sources of dissatisfaction through the application of the treatments.

It has been observed that most pastors are not skillful enough in handling some marital problems. What they do is spiritualizing everything as if all marital issues should only be handled spiritually. The researcher is of the opinion that religious leaders should be encouraged to make themselves available for training on counselling psychology. The acquired skills would assist them to put in place the right interventions tackling such marital crises upsurge.

Similarly, in order to attain marital satisfaction among married couples, it is therefore recommended that more marriage therapists are trained in the use and application of psychological intervention techniques to help reduce the evils confronting married couples. It high time for counseling psychologists to wake up in their slumbering to make their impacts felt in the society by organizing marriage seminar, couples' retreat at all levels of educational institutions, at churches and mosques so as to sensitise would-be couples and married couples before these factors rear it ugly heads into their marriages. Finally, a manageable number of children, like 1-3 children is recommended for married couples who have not given birth to more than three children and potential couples. This may reduce stress associated with parenting and as a result enhance marital satisfaction.

a) Contributions to Knowledge

It is believed that this study has contributed to knowledge in the following ways:

- It has demonstrated the effectiveness of assertiveness training and marital communication skills in enhancing marital satisfaction among Baptist couples
- It demonstrated the superiority of marital communication skills on assertiveness training in enhancing marital satisfaction among Baptist couples
- It has proved that marital satisfaction is pragmatically manageable and could be enhanced among couples

- It has brought to awareness that with the use of appropriate counseling skills and interventions married couples could be helped to overcome their marital related issues and attain marital satisfaction
- It has displayed the relevance of psychological skills in counseling enterprise and the enhancement of marital satisfaction among couples and the need for the full integration of psychological counseling service into the pastoral ministry for modification of married partners' related problems

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