

Effect of Communication on Marital Adjustment

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Abstract: *The differences in communication styles between men and women have been a topic of interest in the research world for many years. These differences may lead to miscommunication, conflict and even dissatisfaction between couples. Communication styles among couples may have a key association with marital satisfaction.*

This study analyses the effect of communication on marital adjustment among married couples. Further the present study aims to find out the influence of demographics such as years of marriage, gender and dynamics of effective communication on marital adjustment. Three questionnaires were used to collect data from the sample, 50 married adults (25 couples). Qualitative study in the form of pie chart, bar graphs and tables conclude that couples have higher rate of effective communication among them. Women are less satisfied in comparison to men on the grounds of marital adjustment. Length of years, being the prominent factor in accessing the marital adjustment has no direct relation with compatibility. Marital quality it seemed to point as more impacted by age than marital duration.

Key Words: *Communication style, Couples, Conflict, Marital adjustment.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Communication is seen by Hybles and Weaver (2001) as any process in which people share information, ideas and feelings which involve not only the spoken and written word but also body language, personal mannerisms and style. Communication is an integral feature of human activities. When the couple's communication is of better quality, they feel closer to each other, can share thoughts and feelings and feel more intimate, and by prevention of any possible misunderstanding which is at the bottom of couple's conflicts, the couples can enjoy more being together (Baghipour, 2010). Therefore, communication plays a central role in marriage and the communication skills are the key predictors of relationship satisfaction between couples. Marital satisfaction is the subjective evaluation of one's experiences in his/her marriage. By subjective evaluation, we mean that marital adjustment can only be rated by each person in response to the question, "How satisfied are you". The level of a person's adjustment cannot be determined by anyone else. Marital adjustment or satisfaction is not a property of a relationship, it is a subjective experience and opinion.

Marital scholars generally acknowledge that men and women experience marriage differently. In 1972, prominent family scholar Jesse Bernard famously stated that "There are two marriages in every marital union, his and hers and his is better than hers". Family scholars have assumed that women consistently experience significantly less marital satisfaction than men. National surveys of married adults in U.S. in 1980 and 2000 found that, on average women reported lower levels of marital quality (Amato, Booth, Johnson & Rogers 2007).

1.1 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Communication is the life wire of marriage relationship or any other meaningful relationship. A marriage without effective communication is likely to crumble. For sure, communication is key to successful marriage and without communication, no marriage can survive in this divorce – filled world we live in. It is a pillar, which maintains the structure of peaceful co-existence and mutual understanding.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This research is an attempt to access the effect of communication on marital adjustment. With so many marriages ending tragically in divorce, it is more important now to work on communication between husband and wife. I have observed that when there is marital instability, there is problem in sailing the family smoothly, nurturing the children and it generates lack of peace in the society. When couples find a problem and are unable to fix them, they simply start dissolving the relationship, this is why divorce is becoming a rampant act. I have made a small effort to fill this gap, to find dynamics of effective communication and their effects on spousal adjustment.

1.3. AIMS & OBJECTIVES

- To study the effect of spousal communication on marital stability on the basis of gender.
- To study the effect of spousal communication on marital stability on the basis of length of years in marriage.
- Dynamics contributing to effective communication between Couple.

2. METHODOLOGY:

The research design adopted for this research work is the descriptive survey method, which tries to collect information from a representative group, and based on such sample, inferences were drawn about the behaviour of the entire population. Three questionnaires were used to determine the opinion, preferences and perception of persons of interest to the research. The first questionnaire was based on the spousal communication; the couples filled their responses regarding their interpersonal patterns, styles and ways of communication. In addition, they responded for their expectations, needs and emotions. This Google form helped to achieve the objective of what were the dynamics contributing to effective communication between couples. This questionnaire also served the aim to study the effect of spousal communication on marital adjustment on the basis of length of years in marriage.

After accessing their (couples) communication two forms (Form A and Form B) were provided to husbands and wives separately to access the marital adjustment in between them. By this form the objective of accessing marital adjustment on the basis of gender was assessed. The research was qualitative in nature. The results collected have been compiled in the form of tables, bar and pie charts.

2.1 SAMPLE

This research investigates influence of communication on marital stability among 50 married adults (25 couples) and the sample is generic.

2.2 METHOD

The tools for data collection were three Google generated questionnaires. First questionnaire was tagged as “Effect of communication on marital adjustment”. It was based on worldwide famous Bienvenu’s (1970) “Marital Communication Inventory (MCI)”. It is used by many researchers in their researches. The inventory is not intended to measure contents of just communication but rather concerns itself more with patterns, characteristics and styles of communication. Among other things, couples’ ability to listen, to understand each other, to express themselves and their ability to manage their interaction is explored. MCI was adapted for the research as it is by the foreign psychologist (Bienvenu) which mostly suits the western culture. So only certain aspects from the Bienvenu’s MCI which suited the Indian married couples and fitted in the Indian scenario were selected and pilot tested before use.

The second tool Harimohan Singh’s “Marital Adjustment Inventory” which is famous by Singh’s test was used to access the marital adjustment between the married couples. In this test there were two forms (Form A and Form B) with 10 items each.

Form A was given to husbands to fill and Form B was given to wives to fill. They were given the forms separately and their responses were kept confidential. This test satisfied the objective of accessing the effect of spousal communication on marital adjustment on the basis of gender.

3. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS:

Analysis and interpretations were made with the help of pie charts, tables and graphs with description generated by the Google after collecting data from target sample. The results have been presented section wise.

3.1 Communication with the spouse

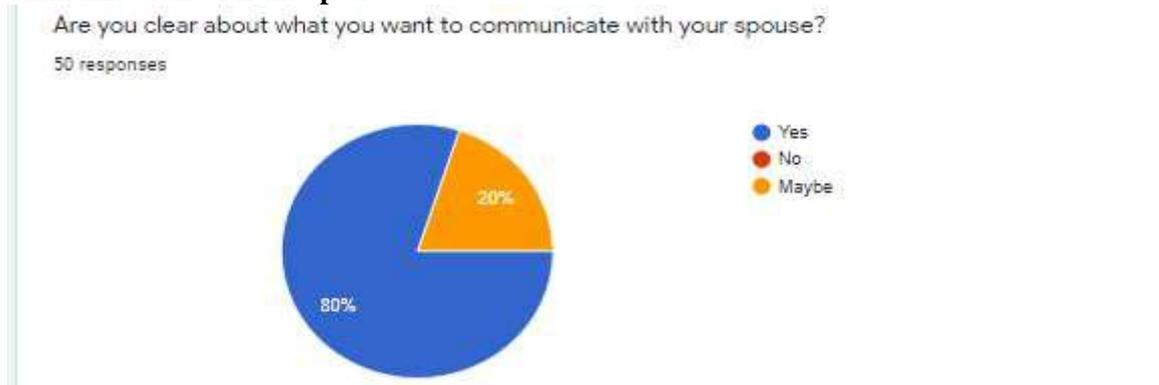


Figure No-1 Communication with Spouse

This pie charts shows not only communication or interaction between the couples but the real intend to convey to the partner means what actually the one partner wants to convey to his/her spouse through communication. The major part of the sample 80% are saying yes which means they are clear with the things which they want to communicate with their partners without any confusion. This shows 80% of the samples have clarity in their mind and it leads to effective marital adjustment. 20% of the people are not clear what they want to speak to their spouses and there is not even a single person who responded that he/she is not clear about what to say. When one partner is speaking the other should listen to understand the matter than listening to reply. Many relationships are destroyed because of lack of understanding what to speak on the part of spouse who is expressing and the others who is understanding & listening.

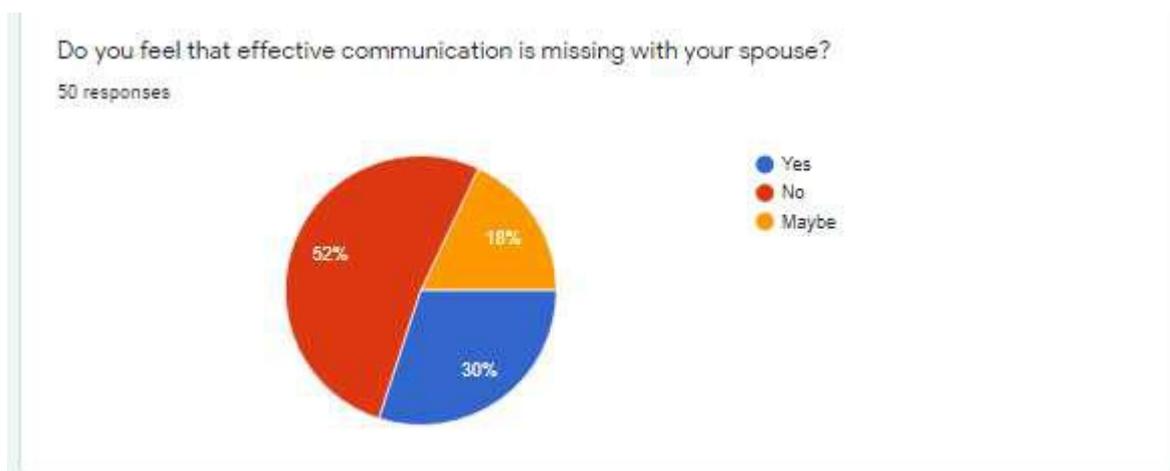


Figure No-2 Effective Communication is Missing

Thirty percent of the sample admits that effective communication is missing with their spouse. They are deprived of the kind of communication they want to do with their married partners. When there is lack of communication in marriage it can cause the relationship to become stagnant. Effective communication allows good thoughts and feeling to flow between couples. With no open communication sooner or later the simple talks will become arguments. The relationship can't be a long lasting relationship. So communication helps strengthen the foundation of marriage or partnership. From the collected responses, I concluded that more than half (52%) of the sample size believes that they have effective communication with their spouse.

3.3 Respect and Admiration between the Couple

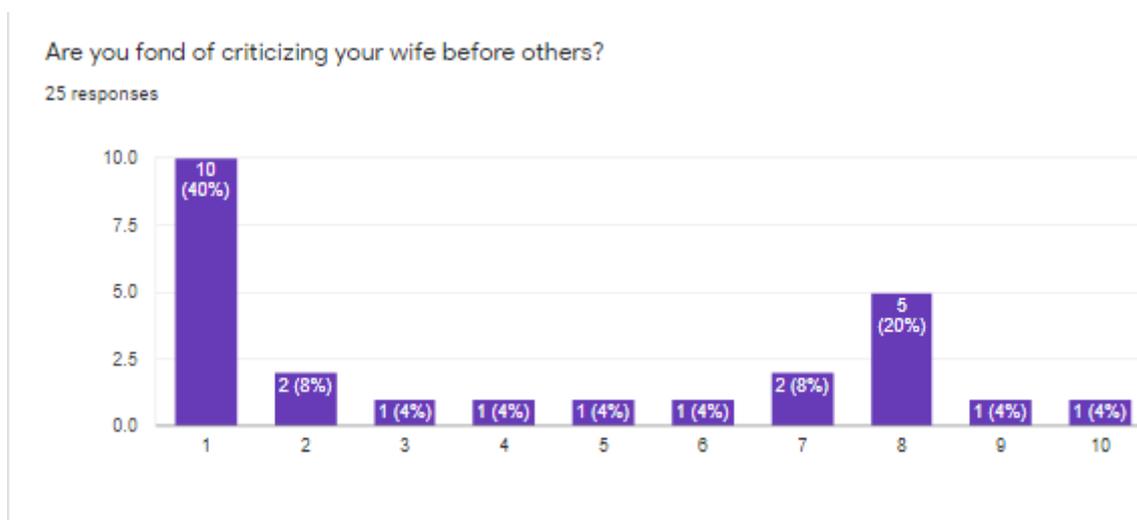


Figure No-3 Criticism of Partner

This bar graphs refers to the respect which the husbands have for their wives. Major (40%) of the sample is saying that they don't criticize their wives and this is the 'least favourable' situation for them. Also (20%) of the sample

responded to ‘more than slightly favourable’. Husbands are more prone to marital adjustment because they know it’s especially painful when your spouse – your soul mate is one being critical and hurtful to you. Criticizing wife before others is like demoralizing the wife and it also widens the emotional distance between the partners. Criticism damages relationships. It chips away the partner’s self-esteem, trust and intimacy. The other spectrum was admiration explored.

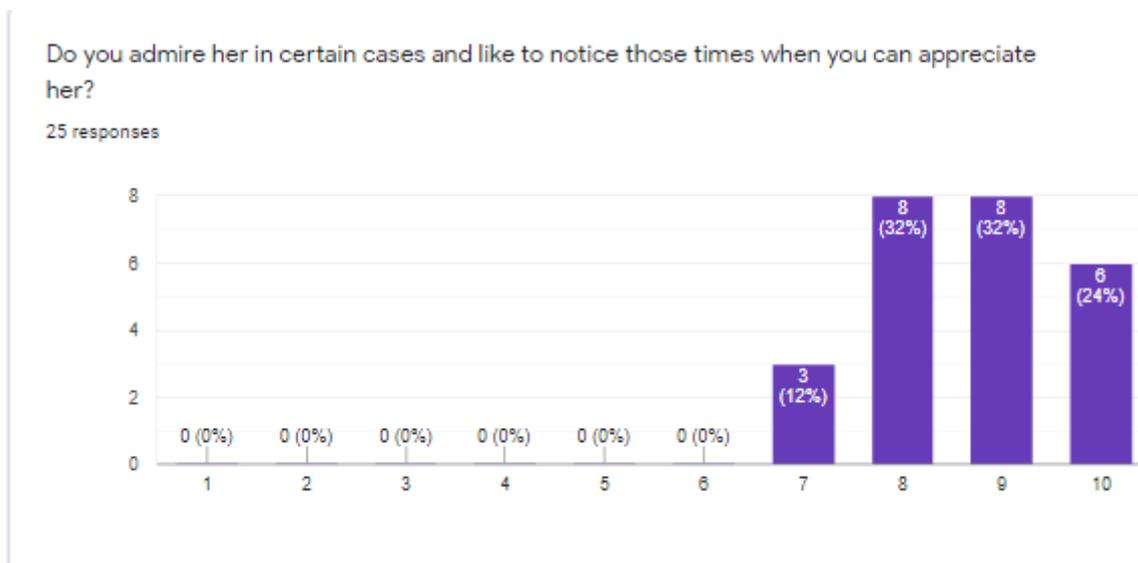


Figure No-4 Admiration for Partner

In this bar graph it is obvious that appreciation in marriage helps more that you might think to keep lives of communication open and leave you feeling good about your spouse showing admiration to one other is one of the secrets to happy marriage. In this research, it was noticed that 32% of the sample is more than significantly favourable and 32% is saying significantly favourable and good amount of sample that is 24% is saying most favourable means the males find the situations when they can admire or appreciate their wives because males know that appreciation is the recognition and the enjoyment of good qualities of someone. Words of affirmation are the primary words of love languages. When one or both spouses exhibit primary love language in words of affirmation, appreciation in marriage goes a long way towards making them feel loved and valued.

3.4 Voicing of Opinion

It is a known fact that successful marriages are all about healthy communication and listening to each other. Considering one another’s opinion but listening is absent, then relation becomes a challenge, and if lack of listening continues, it could be a sign that your marriage is at dead end.

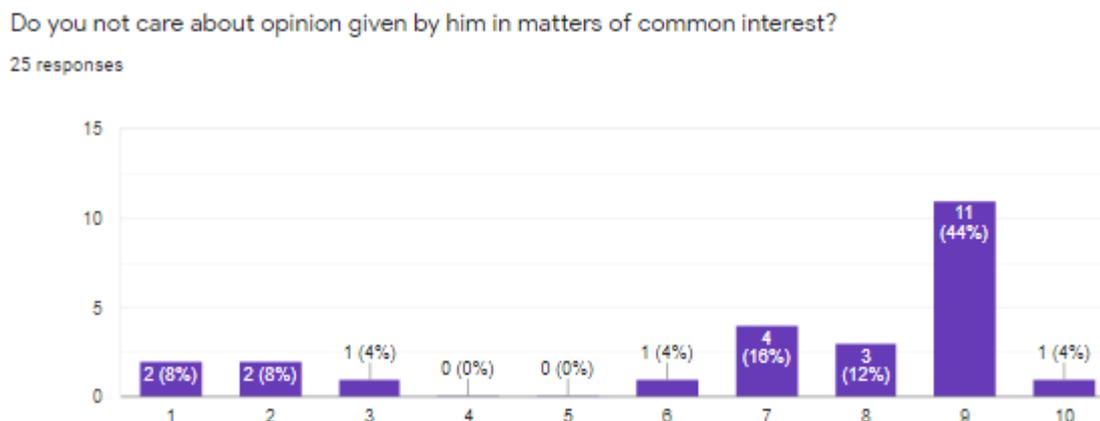


Figure No-5 Opinion in matters of common interest

From the above data it can be interpreted that nearly (44%) half of the sample does not care for their husbands opinion they (wives) don’t want to listen their husband’s advice in common matters of life. 16% and 12% of the sample is also responding towards ‘no’ to husband’s opinion. Means wives want to more liberal in life; they don’t want their partners to give them opinions in their day to day life matters.

3.5 Length of years in marriage

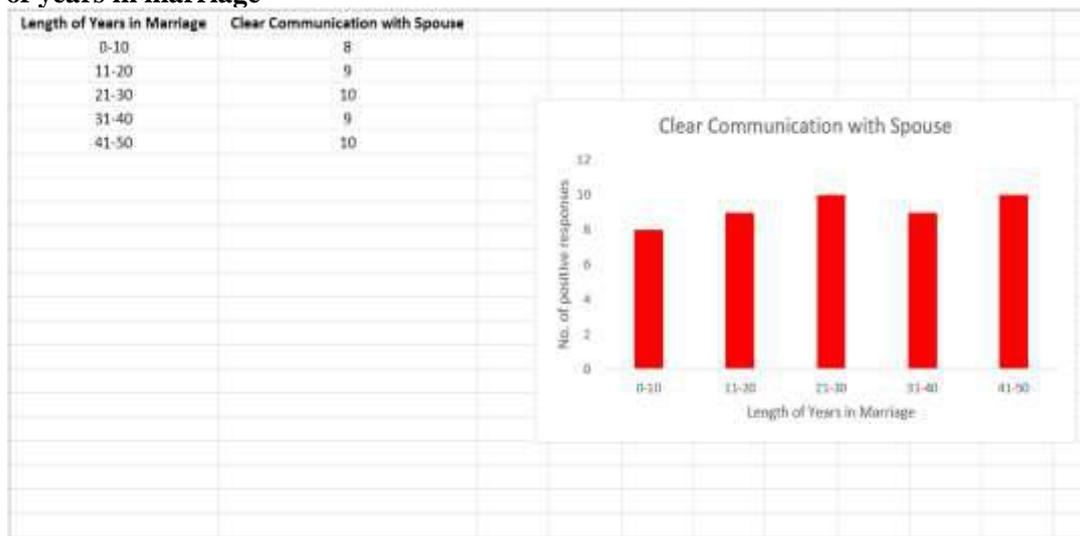


Figure No -6 Role of length of years in marriage

In the graph 46 married adults out of 50 responded "YES" to the clear communication with their spouse. The length of years of marriage varied for all which clearly shows no correlation between length of years in marriage and communication effectiveness with spouse.

4. CONCLUSION:

The main objective of the present research was to test the effect of spousal communication on marital stability on the basis of gender. A total of 50 married adults (25 couples) were included in the research for data collection.

Overall research indicated graphically a small gender difference in marital satisfaction between wives and husbands, with wives less satisfied than husbands. Harimohan Singh's 'Marital Adjustment Inventory' scale to access the marital satisfaction among the married couples showed in the form A (for husbands) that husbands were more cooperative, sensible and understood the needs and wants of their wives. They could feel the inner feelings what wives did not say or could not say. When there was hour of need husbands according to the data were more caring and affectionate as they found occasions to gift their wives. According to the collected data husbands were liberal in financial matters towards their wives. Also they (husbands) wanted special time to be spent with their wives to strengthen marital bond. In form B, according to the scoring key of data collected from 25 wives, it can be interpreted that wives were less satisfied in comparison to husbands in the field of marital adjustment. The result indicated that 78% of wives denied that they (wives) did not avoid clashes with their husbands on financial matters. It means wives wanted participation in financial matters and they (wives) wanted to be acknowledged and informed as well. Wives completely participated in the family financial budget. The data showed that 76% of the wives participated in husband business matters and wanted to be updated as well. Forty four percent responded that they (wives) do whatever they like. Twenty percent of the samples said that they (wives) listen to husbands' opinion and it mattered to them. According to the data collected by filling the forms there was mixed reaction regarding welcoming the in-laws. 76% of the sample said that they did not want interference of in-laws and 24% said that they wanted to welcome their in-laws because they (wives) wanted to inculcate the values of family in their children. Interestingly length of years of marriage neither co-relates nor is a predictor of marital adjustment.

5. RECOMMENDATION:

For the purpose of this study, the following counselling intervention measures are here by recommended:-

- Setting up of marital counselling clinics in all areas of India.
- Courses in marriage communication and sex should be made compulsory for counsellors in training.
- Couples should communicate effectively and try as much as possible to know the likes and dislikes of each other.
- Provision of marital counselling to couples before and after marriage is advisable. Marriage seminars and symposia should be constantly mounted.

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