

Spousal Communication as Correlate of Intimacy and Home Management among Working Class Couples in Taraba and Adamawa States, Nigeria

Elisha Nehemiah¹, Peter Terfa Ortese², Happiness Ihuoma Igbo³

Abstract— Effective spousal communication is widely regarded as a cornerstone of marital adjustment. For working-class couples managing occupational and domestic demands, communication is particularly critical for maintaining intimacy and coordinating home management. This study investigated the relationship between spousal communication and two key domains of marital adjustment, intimacy and home management, among working-class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States, Nigeria. A correlational design was employed. A sample of 398 couples was selected from six Local Government Areas using a multi-stage sampling technique. Data were collected using two validated instruments: the Spousal Communication Questionnaire (SCQ; $\alpha = 0.94$) and the Marital Adjustment among Couples Questionnaire (MACQ; $\alpha = 0.85$). Data analysis involved Pearson Product-Moment Correlation to examine relationships and linear regression to test hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed significant positive correlations between spousal communication and both intimacy ($r = .515$, $p < .01$) and home management ($r = .749$, $p < .01$). Regression analysis confirmed that spousal communication significantly predicted intimacy ($\beta = .515$, $R^2 = .265$, $p < .05$) and home management ($\beta = .749$, $R^2 = .560$, $p < .05$). The study concludes that effective spousal communication is a vital correlate of enhanced intimacy and efficient home management. It is recommended that couples and marital counsellors prioritize the development of open, empathetic, and collaborative communication skills to foster marital adjustment.

Keywords: Spousal Communication; Intimacy; Home Management; Marital Adjustment; Working Class Couples; Couples.

^{1,2,3}Department of Educational Foundations, Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

Through my work as a pastor, I have interacted with many couples both within and outside my church community. One recurring issue I have noticed is the growing difficulty couples face in adjusting to one another in marriage. Even couples who genuinely care for each other often struggle to communicate about finances, conflict management, intimacy, and other important areas, resulting in frustration and maladjustment. These experiences raised several questions for me: What prevents couples from adjusting effectively? Why do communication difficulties persist even among educated and employed partners? And how does communication influence their ability to handle marital challenges? These concerns inspired my interest in studying the link between spousal communication and marital adjustment.

In recent times, marital problems seem increasingly common. Many couples find it difficult to sustain their relationships despite having stable jobs and educational exposure. Everyday challenges such as financial management, conflict handling, sustaining intimacy, religious differences, home responsibilities, and career support often lead to misunderstandings and emotional distance. This pattern is not limited to one region; it is a global issue. Research from the United States, Europe, Asia, and African countries like Kenya and Nigeria shows rising marital distress, largely driven by communication breakdown, financial tension, shifting gender roles, and external pressures.

Although various factors contribute to marital maladjustment, recent studies point to spousal communication as a key determinant of how well couples adapt to one another. Communication, both verbal and non-verbal is central to building trust, resolving conflicts, sharing emotions, and sustaining intimacy. Floyd (2016) emphasizes that effective communication requires not only expressing one's thoughts but also active listening. For working-class couples, who must balance job demands with family responsibilities, effective communication becomes even more crucial. Esere, Yeyeodu, and Oladun (2014) also highlight communication as essential for fostering love, patience, trust, and conflict management.

Marital adjustment involves the ongoing process of adapting behaviours, expectations, and attitudes to maintain harmony and satisfaction in marriage (Makvana, 2014). This study views marital adjustment through two major domains – intimacy and home management – each of which depends heavily on healthy communication. When communication breaks down, couples often experience maladjustment, emotional disconnect, and reduced marital satisfaction.

Intimacy is an essential aspect of marital adjustment that refers to the emotional closeness and connection between partners. It includes the ability to express love, trust, vulnerability, and affection both physically and emotionally (Nwankwo & Onuoha, 2019). Adjustment in this area involves maintaining emotional bonding over time, even

amid external pressures. Communication plays a critical role in building and sustaining intimacy, as it allows partners to express their needs and respond to each other with empathy. However, many couples experience emotional distancing due to poor communication, especially when work or other responsibilities limit quality time together (Eze, 2018). A breakdown in communication regarding emotional or sexual needs often leads to dissatisfaction and relational decline. This pattern might not be different from what is observed among working-class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States, who often face time-related constraints and physical separation due to work demands.

Home management is another vital area requiring marital adjustment. This includes planning and executing domestic responsibilities such as house chores, child-rearing, and decision-making (Britt, Grable, & Cantrell, 2016). Couples are expected to coordinate household activities in a fair and efficient manner. When communication in this area is lacking, one partner may feel overburdened or unappreciated, leading to tension and resentment. Carlson (2018) found that unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities often results from poor communication about expectations and individual capacity. Effective spousal communication fosters cooperation, task sharing, and joint decision-making. Where this communication is missing, disorder, confusion, and dissatisfaction tend to set in. This challenge is prevalent across diverse settings and might also reflect the realities of working-class households in Taraba and Adamawa States.

To make marriage strong and successful couples are expected to have a stable source of income. This entails working in private or public organizations, this is compounded often times. When someone works distance apart from married partner. Thus, among others factors, spousal communication becomes imperative means to cement the bond between spouses when most of their times away from each other. It is against this background that this study sought to examine spousal communication as correlate of intimacy and home management among working class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States, Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Marital maladjustment has become a growing concern in many communities, as increasing numbers of couples struggle with challenges that undermine harmony and fulfilment in their relationships. Issues such as persistent conflict, emotional detachment, financial disagreements, and declining connectedness are now more visible in households than in the past. When these problems remain unresolved, they often lead to emotional strain, instability within the family, separation, or even divorce. The ripple effects of troubled marriages extend beyond the couple, influencing children's well-being and affecting society at large. Although numerous factors ranging from

economic pressures to lifestyle differences have been linked to marital problems, spousal communication consistently emerges as a central factor shaping how partners adjust to one another. Many couples endure difficulties quietly because they lack the skills or commitment to communicate honestly, respectfully, and regularly. This communication gap becomes even more critical in areas of marriage that demand ongoing adjustment. Misunderstandings about financial obligations can breed suspicion and conflict. Poor conflict-management skills can turn minor issues into long-term hostility. Intimacy suffers when emotional and physical needs are not openly expressed. Family routines are disrupted when roles and duties are not negotiated. Differences in religious practices can fuel tension if not discussed with mutual respect, and decisions related to career advancement may cause friction when they are not properly communicated. These problems cut across social groups and are likely present among working-class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States, where workplace pressure, financial challenges, and cultural differences may intensify marital stress. Yet, to the researcher's knowledge, there remains a noticeable gap in existing literature within these states concerning how communication between spouses influences their adjustment in specific aspects of married life. Many previous studies have addressed marital communication and satisfaction broadly, without examining its role in particular areas such as financial management, conflict resolution, intimacy, household responsibilities, religion, and career decisions. This gap prompted the current study, which set out to investigate the relationship between spousal communication and intimacy, as well as home management, among working-class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine spousal communication as correlate of intimacy and home management among working class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. ascertain the relationship between spousal communication and intimacy among working class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States, Nigeria.
2. determine the relationship between spousal communication and home management among working class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States, Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The following questions were raised to guide the study.

1. In what way does spousal communication correlate intimacy among working class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between spousal communication and home management among working class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States, Nigeria?

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses are formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Spousal communication has no significant relationship with intimacy among working class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States, Nigeria.
2. Spousal communication has no significant relationship with home management among working class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a correlational research design to determine the relationship between spousal communication and marital adjustment without manipulating variables. The study area was Taraba and Adamawa States, with a population of 98,346 working-class couples (42,897 in Taraba and 55,449 in Adamawa). A sample of 398 couples was selected from six Local Government Areas. Data were collected using two researcher-developed instruments: the Spousal Communication Questionnaire (SCQ) and the Marital Adjustment Couples Questionnaire (MACQ). The SCQ assessed communication effectiveness across various marital domains using a four-point scale. Instrument reliability was established through a pilot test with 40 couples in Nasarawa State. The SCQ showed a reliability coefficient of 0.94, while the MACQ recorded 0.85, with cluster reliabilities ranging from 0.76 to 0.94. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to answer the research questions and regression analysis to test the hypotheses and determine the significance and direction of relationships at the 0.05 level.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Research Question 1: In what way does spousal communication correlate intimacy among working class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States, Nigeria?

Table 1: Relationship Between Spousal Communication and Intimacy Among Working-Class Couples

		Spousal Communication	Intimacy
		n	
Spousal Communication	Pearson Correlation	1	.515**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	398	398
Intimacy	Pearson Correlation	.515**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

	N	398	398
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**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 shows that the correlation coefficient between spousal communication and intimacy is .515, which reflects a moderate positive relationship. This indicates that effective communication contributes to deeper emotional and physical closeness between couples.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between spousal communication and home management among working class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States, Nigeria?

Table 2: Relationship Between Spousal Communication and Home Management Among Working-Class Couples

		Spousal Communication	Home Management
Spousal Communication	Pearson Correlation	1	.749**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	398	398
Home Management	Pearson Correlation	.749**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	398	398

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 shows that the Pearson correlation between spousal communication and home management is .749, signifying a strong positive relationship. This implies that couples who maintain good communication are more likely to manage domestic responsibilities effectively.

TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: Spousal communication has no significant relationship with intimacy among working class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States, Nigeria.

Table 3: Linear Regression Showing Relationship between Spousal Communication and Intimacy Among Working Class Couples

Variables	R	R ²	df	F	β	T	Sig.	Decision
Constant	.551	.265	396	142.729		11.997	.000	Significant
Intimacy					.515	11.947	.000	

Table 3 shows that spousal communication has a moderate but significant relationship with intimacy, with an $R = .551$ and $R^2 = .265$. This indicates that 26.5% of the variance in intimacy can be explained by communication. The F -value of 142.729 is significant at $p = .000$. The beta ($\beta = .515$) and t -value (11.947) further validate the significant prediction. Since $p < .05$, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that spousal communication has significant relationship with intimacy among working class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: Spousal communication has no significant relationship with home management among working class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States, Nigeria.

Table 4: Linear Regression Showing Relationship between Spousal Communication and Home Management Among Working Class Couples

Variables	R	R ²	df	F	β	T	Sig.	Decision
Constant	.749	.560	396	504.788		7.151	.000	Significant
Home management					.749	22.467	.000	

Table 4 shows an $R = .749$ and $R^2 = .560$, indicating that 56% of the variance in home management is explained by spousal communication. The F -value (504.788) and the t -statistic (22.467) are both significant at $p = .000$. With a beta of .749, the result confirms a strong positive predictive relationship. Since the significance value is below .05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that spousal communication has significant relationship with home management among working class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on the analyzed data the following findings are discussed.

The first hypothesis revealed that spousal communication has a significant relationship with intimacy among working-class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States. This means that intimate connections both emotional and physical are largely nurtured through consistent and sincere communication. When couples share their thoughts, fears, desires, and daily experiences, they deepen their emotional bond and reinforce their sense of closeness and security. This communication builds trust, which is foundational for intimacy. The finding agrees with Nwankwo and Onuoha (2019), who found that partners who communicate openly tend to feel more emotionally connected and satisfied in their relationships. Similarly, Eze (2018) found that communication encourages vulnerability, which is essential in fostering deep emotional

intimacy. This finding is justified because intimacy goes beyond physical contact; it includes being emotionally attuned to one another, understanding unspoken needs, and feeling valued. Without communication, couples may drift apart emotionally, even while physically present. Frequent and meaningful conversations help sustain the emotional glue that binds couples together, enhancing satisfaction, empathy, and mutual appreciation.

The second hypothesis revealed that spousal communication has a significant relationship with home management among working-class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States. This means that the way couples talk about and divide household responsibilities such as cleaning, parenting, shopping, and budgeting affects how well the home is managed. Effective communication enables partners to plan, negotiate, and carry out tasks collaboratively, reducing tension and promoting fairness. The finding agrees with Carlson (2018), who found that couples who openly discuss domestic roles report higher satisfaction with home life and feel more supported. Likewise, Blair and Johnson (2019) observed that clarity in communication enhances cooperation and prevents misunderstandings related to domestic duties. This finding is justified because home management is often a source of conflict, especially when expectations are unspoken or imbalanced. When couples communicate openly about their schedules, preferences, and capabilities, tasks are more likely to be distributed fairly. This reduces feelings of being overwhelmed or unappreciated, particularly in dual-career households. Effective communication ensures a more harmonious home environment and contributes to overall marital satisfaction.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results, the study concluded that spousal communication is a major and influential factor in determining key aspects of marital adjustment among working-class couples in Taraba and Adamawa States. The findings showed that good communication between partners is positively associated with emotional closeness and effective home management. These insights emphasize that open, sincere, and respectful interaction strengthens understanding between spouses, reduces marital tension, and improves overall relationship satisfaction. Consequently, the study identifies spousal communication as an essential interpersonal skill that supports individual well-being and enhances the stability and quality of marriage across different areas of life. Based on the conclusions drawn from the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to enhance marital adjustment through effective spousal communication among working-class couples:

1. Couples should prioritize open emotional dialogue, sharing their feelings, needs, and expectations regularly, as a way to deepen intimacy and maintain relational closeness.

2. Spouses should be guided on how to communicate clearly and respectfully about home responsibilities, ensuring shared participation in household tasks, parenting, and domestic planning to reduce role strain and promote harmony at home.

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