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INTERACTION OF SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND VARIABLES WITH INTER-SPOUSAL COMMUNICATION AMONG MARRIED COUPLES IN ALIMOSHO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
The paper empirically examines the interaction of socio-demographic background variables with inter-spousal communication among married couples in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. However, the socio-demographic background variables of focus in this study include: the age of respondents, educational levels of the couples and occupation respectively. A total sample size of 250 couples was interviewed through administration of questionnaires in Lagos State, Nigeria. Frequency table, linear regression analysis and Analysis of variance were used to analyze the data collected from the field of survey. Three hypotheses were tested in this study. The key findings of this study are: firstly, the results obtained from linear regression analysis

41

used for testing the three hypotheses showed that the age of respondents, educational levels of the couples and occupation will not interact with spousal communication in Lagos state. Secondly, F-tests derived from analysis of variance (in table 3, 6 and 9) agreed with the outcomes of the three hypotheses tested in this study. Thirdly, the p-values are highly significant throughout this study which indicated that the age of respondents, educational levels of the couples and occupation have strong interactions with spousal communication. Thus, the paper recommends the following: Firstly, that the couples in oil companies should improve on their weekly spousal communication despite their tight and busy working schedules. Secondly, there is a serious and urgent need for couples who acquired primary education to pursue further studies gradually until they attain tertiary educational status. In effect, the age at marriage will increase from 20-24years to 25-29years due to the number of years of couple's educational pursuit in Lagos state of Nigeria.

Key Words: Inter-Spousal Communication, Socio-demographic background variables, Linear regression analysis and Married Couples

INTRODUCTION

In this 21st century, Spousal communication between a husband and wife has been found to be a prime indicator of the extent of knowledge and acceptance of family planning practices that couples will be willing to adopt and use (Sharan & Valente, 2002). It is obvious that spousal communication is a key factor in the adoption and sustained use of family planning because such discussions allow couples to exchange new ideas and clarify information, which might change some wrong beliefs about the use of some family planning devices (Dodoo; 1993). Indeed, one important source of marital distress is poor or absent communication. According to Geiss and O'Leary (1981); and Nadya; (1996), therapists report that difficulty with communication is the most common complaint of couples seeking treatment. Alternatively, marriage therapists rated poor communication as having the most damaging effects on marital relationships and also considered communication as the most desired focus of relationship research (Geiss and O'Leary, 1981). However, poor communication has been found to be cross-sectionally correlated with marital distress, and perhaps also to predict relationship deterioration (Karney and Bradbury; 1995).

A study in Uganda suggests that women's social and economic vulnerability inhibits their ability to express and argue for their own interests with their partners, and recommends an explicit consideration of gender inequality as an

important component of the study of reproductive outcomes (Blanc; Wolff; Gage; Ezeh; Neema; and Ssekamatte-Ssebuliba; 1996).

Most African societies are patriarchal, with family structures in which husbands exert authority over their wives on most issues (Kritz and Gurak, 1991; Isiugo-Abanihe, 1994; Oyediran, 2002). Men and their kinsmen are the decision-makers on issues relating to reproductive health, while their women are expected to remain submissive. In this society, women hardly have a say on matters relating to the timing of the next birth, the number of children and when to stop childbearing except among a relatively small emergent highly educated career women. Because the views of women who bear the burden of pregnancy and child-birth are hardly sought in traditional societies, the number of children a woman bears is perceived to most often reflects the desired fertility of her husband and his relatives (Caldwell and Caldwell, 1987). Yet, traditionally, fertility and family planning research and programmes have focused on women's behaviours.

Gender differences in fertility desires have been attributed to the relative position of men and women in the male dominated cultures (Coombs and Chang, 1981; Koenig, 1984; Mitra, 1985; Mason and Taj, 1987), and might be reduced through effective spousal communication on fertility expectations of married individuals. There has recently been a revival of interest in the relative roles played by men and women in reproductive decisions, particularly those concerning number of children and fertility regulation (Mott and Mott, 1985; Ezeh, 1993; Dodoo, 1993; Bankole, 1995; Bankole and Singh, 1998; Feyisetan, 1998; Odusola, 1998; Zulu, 1998). These studies provide opportunities for examining gender differences in reproductive behaviours and fertility preferences, as well as understanding of the husband's influence in decision-making regarding family size and contraceptive use. In male dominated societies like the Yoruba, women are not supposed to take independent decisions on reproductive issues. However, because of the relative decline in men's resources and women's increasing contribution to family resources in recent times, female participation in decision-making, including reproductive health matters, has changed among Yoruba women (Feyisetan, 2000). Recent literature supports the view that couples' joint decision-making forms the basis of family planning use. Basically, "programs aimed exclusively either at men or at women may fail in their purposes, because most sexual, family planning, and childbearing decisions are made or may potentially (and perhaps ideally) be made by both partners of a couple." In fact, it is instructive to distinguish between

contraceptive use resulting from a joint planning process and use by either spouse alone without consultation (Laura and Menken; 1993).

However, a study in the Philippines failed to show that joint decision-making was more strongly associated with contraceptive use than individual decision-making presumably, as the researchers pointed out, because the index of decision-making used could have been faulty, and husbands' tendency to consider family planning in which women's concern may have muted the differences. The study concluded that couples who have joint decision-making are more strongly associated with family planning use than those who make decisions alone without considering their spouses (Bradbury and Karney et al; 1995).

In a Zambian study, the odds that women used a method covertly, rather than using no method, were about four times as high among those who were not comfortable talking to their spouses about family planning. Furthermore, husbands' disapproval of contraception appeared to work through spousal communication, rather than having a direct influence on covert use. Men and women who do not communicate with their spouse about family planning may not be aware that their spouse views contraceptive use positively. In settings where family planning use is a sensitive issue and overt spousal communication is uncommon, men and women perceive such exchanges differently, and their underlying motivations and these perceptions guide their negotiation strategies with their partners. Other factors that may inhibit spousal communication are household crowding, fatalism and perceived worthlessness of such discussions, dominance of other relatives (such as mothers-in-law) in reproductive decisions and embarrassment about discussing family planning (Smith, Vivian, and O'Leary; 1991). Behaviour change interventions like mass media campaigns intended to promote family planning may influence psychosocial factors associated with spousal communication, which in turn leads to family planning use. For example, Studies in Tanzania and Nepal, those who were exposed to a media program and communicated with their spouses held more accurate perceptions of their spouse's attitude toward family planning than those who were not exposed. Furthermore, partners in couples who communicate may perceive their spouses to be more supportive, feel less fatalistic about childbearing and more in control of their reproductive decisions, and be less embarrassed about discussing these issues with their spouses than partners in couples who do not communicate. By encouraging couples to discuss family planning issues, these perceptions indirectly lead to family planning adoption (Sharan and Valente et al; 2002). Essentially, as family planning

and reproductive health programs increasingly emphasize strategies designed to meet the needs of individual women, information on the circumstances under which women make and implement reproductive decisions is crucial (United Nations, 1995a; United Nations, 1995b).

Knowledge of the realities of women's everyday life and identification of the obstacles that they may face in achieving their reproductive and health goals are necessary if programs are to be formulated that are responsive to women's needs for particular types of information or services (Dixon-Muller, 1993).

At the same time, the role and needs of men are recognized as crucial in understanding the dynamics of reproductive decision-making. Such information is essential for the monitoring and evaluation of programs that seek to provide user-centered family planning and reproductive health services to couples.

Much of the recent literature that endeavours to explain fertility behaviour, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, suggests that an exclusive focus on individual women omits important explanatory factors and may actually be misleading (Entwisle, Mason and Hermalin; 1986).

Obviously, women's social interaction with male partners, family members, friends, health professionals, religious leaders, and other influence their attitudes and behaviour with respect to fertility and related matters, such as sex and contraceptive use. At a minimum then, an explicit examination of the role of male partners in reproductive decisions is essential to a full understanding of fertility behaviour.

Thus, for both programmatic and theoretical reasons, studies are needed of the reproductive decision making process and its outcomes for women and men (Nadya and David; 1996). Women's ability to control their own sexual activity is central to control over reproduction and the transmission of disease (UN, 1995).

Also, it is interesting to note that one of the chaotic areas in conjugal relationship is communication between husband and wife. While there are several literature on issues concerning husband and wife relationship, little has often been said on the degree and level of inter-spousal communication especially in this part of the world. On one hand. the basis of relationship is communication and joint decision within which the family is better enhanced with cordial and regular discussion between the duo (husband and wife). On the other hand, while it is believed that many women are favorably inclined to practice family

planning but often decline to practice it because of not receiving enough encouragement from their husbands (Mitra, Kamal, Carpenter-Yaman and Harbison; 1985). Their husbands may have favor-able attitudes toward family planning but this favorableness is never communicated to their wives (Mitra, Kamal, Carpenter-Yaman and Harbison et al; 1985).

This study is unique in many ways because it will greatly benefit the Nigerian government, private organizations, the academic society, social scientists and policy makers for the following reasons: Firstly, the identification of socio-demographic background variables that are interacting with inter-spousal communication among the married couples is one of the gaps in the aforementioned studies by different scholars both in Africa and other parts of the globe. In fact, none of the studies cited above talked on interaction of socio-demographic background variables with inter-spousal communication. Secondly, there are not many studies recently done by Scholars on the interaction of socio-demographic background variables with inter-spousal communication among the married couples in both Africa and Nigeria. However, many studies were carried out on this subject with diverse focus of the authors on relationship between spousal communication and contraceptive use, family planning method, reproductive health, desired number of children etc.

Despite the aforementioned background, this study tries to answer these bothering issues of concern: Firstly, What are those socio-demographic background variables that really interact with inter-spousal communication in Lagos state? Secondly, are there other hidden variables that interact with inter-spousal communication apart from socio-demographic background variables identified in Lagos state?

Basically, the main focus of this paper was to identify the interaction of socio-demographic background variables with inter-spousal communication among the married couples in Alimosho local government area of Lagos State, Nigeria.

Methodology: This study reflected that a total sample size of 250 married couples was randomly selected from 5- Enumeration Areas (E.As) in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria.

A multi-stage random sampling technique was used to select the married couples. Purposive sampling method was also employed due to the fact that this research was a very sensitive one and in order to carry out the study effectively, married couples were randomly selected from these five enumeration areas. Already, Lagos state has been divided into Local Government Areas (L.G.As) which is

further divided into constituencies. Each constituency is distributed into wards. However, Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos state has been randomly chosen within which 5-Enumeration Areas (E.As) has been picked for this study. From each selected Enumeration Area, a house-listing/street numbering was done by using Primary Health Care/National Bureau of Statistics (PHC/NBS).The systematic random sampling method was employed to select the number of households where the married couples are residing. In short, 50 married couples were randomly picked from each Enumeration Areas which constituted the total sample size of 250 in 5-E.As. Information on background variable of respondents was collected from them with the help of questionnaires instrument. The technique employed in this research was a quantitative approach. The data was collected from a face-to-face interviewed through structured questionnaire that was carefully designed to incorporate all the necessary questions on the subject.

Analysis of this recent study was based on 250 married couples that were interviewed on the influence of socio-economic factors on inter-spousal communication and contraceptive usage among the married couples in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos state, Nigeria. The data were analyzed with the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Scientists (SPSSversion15.0). After checking for incorrect responses, and missing values, descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables. Linear Regression analysis was performed on the influence of socio-economic factors on inter-spousal communication and contraceptive use among the married couples in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos state and the results were interpreted accordingly. The data for the study was analyzed by using the information obtained through questionnaires and personal interviews. The variables of consideration on the frequency tables for this study includes: age, sex, marital status, highest level of educational attainment, ethnicity and occupational categories respectively.

The study was carried out in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State due to the proximity or closeness to the researcher, highly populated, one of the major centres of business, commerce and industry as well as being former capital of Federal Republic of Nigeria. The choice of Lagos State as the area of this study is due to the fact that it is a Yoruba Speaking dominated City just like other western parts of Nigeria (Oyediran et al, 2002).

Tables and Interpretations

Table 1: Background Variable of Married Couples

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age group		
20-24	6	2.4
25-29	34	13.6
30-34	54	21.6
35-39	53	21.2
40 and above	88	35.2
Non-response	15	6.0
Total	**250**	**100.0**
Sex		
Male	105	42.0
Female	145	58.0
Total	**250**	**100.0**
Marital Status		
Married	243	97.2
Separated	7	2.8
Total	**250**	**100.0**
Ethnic group		
Igbo	47	18.8
Yoruba	173	69.2
Hausa	5	2.0
Others	25	10.0
Total	**250**	**100.0**
Level of Education		
Primary	16	6.4
Secondary	82	32.8
B.Sc Degree	101	40.4
Masters Degree	24	9.6
Others	27	10.8
Total	**250**	**100.0**
Occupation		
Civil servant	93	37.2
Self-employed	129	51.6
Others	28	11.2
Total	**250**	**100.0**

Field Survey, 2010

The background variables of respondents stated in table one is expedient because it is the bedrock for identifying the interaction of socio-demographic background variables with inter-spousal communication in this study. The proportion of respondents by their age distribution indicated that 2.4% of the respondents belong to age group 20-24years. 13.6% fall within age group 25-29 age while 21.6% are between age 30 and 34years. Also, about 21.2% are

in the age group 35-39, 35.2% are 40 years and above. About 6.0% declined on their age. The sex of the respondents reveals that 42% were males whereas 58% of respondents were females. The marital status shows that 97.2% of the respondents are married and 2.8% are separated. The ethnicity group of this study clarified that 18.8% of the respondents are Igbo, 69.2% are Yoruba, and 2.0% are Hausas, while 10.0% are from other ethnic groups in Nigeria such as Edo, Kogi and Delta respectively. The level of education of respondents as evidenced from this study are: 6.4% of the respondents acquired primary school qualification as their highest degree, 32.8% acquired secondary school qualification as their highest level of degree, 40.4% of respondents bagged B. Sc degree as their highest level of qualification, 9.6% of respondents baggedM.sc as their highest level of qualification while 10.8% had other qualifications like H.N.D and O.N.D. In addition, the frequency distribution also depicts that 37.2% of the respondents are Civil servant, 51.6% are Self-employed, and 11.2% are into other occupation like working with Oil Company or lecturing in Universities or other higher institutions of learning.

Hypothesis One: The age of respondents will not likely interact with their inter-spousal communication.

Table 2: Linear Regression Analysis
Model Summary

(a) Predictors: (Constant), number of times the respondent communicate intimately with spouse in a week

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.095(a)	.009	.005	22.39283

(a) Predictors: (Constant), number of times the respondent communicate intimately with spouse in a week

Table 3:   **ANOVA (b)**

(a) *Predictors: (Constant), number of times the respondent communicate intimately with spouse in a week*

(b) Dependent Variable: the age of respondent

Model		Sum of Squares	D f	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1138.547	1	1138.547	2.271	.133(a)
	Residual	124356.797	248	501.439		
	Total	125495.344	249			

Table 4:   **Co-efficients (a)**

(a) *Dependent Variable: the age of respondent*

Model		Un-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	B	Std. Error
1	(Constant)	9.664	1.505		6.421	.000
	number of times the respondent communicate intimately with spouse in a week	.100	.066	.095	1.507	.133

Hypothesis Two: Educational levels of the couples will not probably interact with their spousal communication.

Table 5:   **Model Summary**

(a) Predictors: (Constant), number of times the respondent communicate intimately with spouse in a week

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.032(a)	.001	-.003	6.17840

Table 6:   **ANOVA (b)**

(a)   Predictors: (Constant), number of times the respondent communicate intimately with spouse in a week

ᵡ(b)   Dependent Variable: the highest level of education of respondent

Model		Sum of Squares	D f	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.740	1	9.740	.255	.614(a)
	Residual	9466.804	248	38.173		
	Total	9476.544	249			

Table 7:   **Co-efficients (a)**

(a)   Dependent Variable: the highest level of education of respondent

Model		Un-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	B	Std. Error
1	(Constant)	3.303	.415		7.954	.000
	number of times the respondent communicate intimately with spouse in a week	-.009	.018	-.032	-.505	.614

Hypothesis Three: Occupation of respondent does not have any interaction with inter-spousal communication.

Table 8:   **Model Summary**

(a)   Predictors: (Constant), number of times the respondent communicate intimately with spouse in a week

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.033(a)	.001	-.003	12.26449

Table 9:   **ANOVA (b)**

(a)   Predictors: (Constant), number of times the respondent communicate intimately with spouse in a week

(b)   Dependent Variable: the occupation of respondent

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	40.812	1	40.812	.271	.603(a)
	Residual	37303.588	248	150.418		
	Total	37344.400	249			

Table 10:   **Co-efficients (a)**

(a)   Dependent Variable: the occupation of respondent

Model		Un-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	B	Std. Error
1	(Constant)	3.425	.824		4.155	.000
	number of times the respondent communicate intimately with spouse in a week	-.019	.036	-.033	-.521	.603

Discussion of Results

The discussion of results obtained from table 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 respectively are clearly interpreted below. In table 2, the R-square is 9 % which shows that there is weak relationship between socio-economic factor (that is, the age of respondents) and inter-spousal communication. The Multiple R (95%) indicated high degree of closeness between ages of respondents and inter-spousal communication. At this point, it is important to note that linear regression analysis was employed to test the three hypotheses in this study. It was evidently clear from table 3 that linear regression analysis was used to test hypothesis one. However, hypothesis one in this study states that the age of respondents will not likely interact with their inter-spousal communication.

It was observed that F-test calculated (2.271) is less than F-test tabulated (6.76). Hence, we accept the statement of hypothesis one. This implies that the statement of hypothesis one is true in this study. Also, at p= 0.133(a), there is no significant relationship between socio-economic factor (the age of respondents) and inter-spousal communication. This further confirmed that the age of respondents has no interaction with inter-spousal communication. Table 4 showed that p=0.000, there is high significant relationship between the dependent variable (the age of respondents) and independent variable (inter-spousal communication). This simply means that there is a strong relationship between the age of respondents and inter-spousal communication. In this study, hypothesis two was tested by using linear regression analysis. However, the statement of hypothesis two is that educational levels of the couples will not probably interact with their spousal communication. Table 5 reflected that R-square (1%) which clarified a very weak relationship between educational levels of the couples and their spousal communication. The Multiple R (32%) showed a very low degree of closeness between the dependent variable (educational levels of the couples) and independent variable (spousal communication).It was observed that in table 6, the overall F-test calculated (0.255) is less than F-test tabulated (6.76). Hence, we accept the statement of hypothesis two. This implies that the hypothesis that the educational levels of the couples will not probably interact with their spousal communication holds as far as this study is concerned. Although, the relationship between educational levels of the couples and inter-spousal communication is not significant at p= 0.614(a). This also buttressed the outcome of hypothesis two.

At p=0.000 in table 7 of this study, the interaction between educational levels of the couples and their spousal communication is highly significant. Here, we simply mean that the educational levels of the couples have very strong interaction with their spousal communication. Obviously, table 8 depicted that R-square (1%) was an indication of very weak relationship between dependent variable (occupation of respondent) and independent variable (inter-spousal communication). The Multiple R (33%) showed that there is a low degree of closeness between the dependent variable (occupation of respondent) and independent variable (inter-spousal communication). Table 9 indicated that the overall F-test calculated (0.271) is less than F-test tabulated (6.76). Hence, we accept the hypothesis three which states that the occupation of respondent does not have any interaction with inter-spousal communication interact with their spousal communication holds in this study. Although, the relationship between occupation of respondent and inter-spousal communication is not

significant at p= 0.603(a). This also confirmed the outcome of hypothesis three.

Furthermore, table 10 made it clear that there was a very high significant relationship between occupation of respondent (dependent variable) and inter-spousal communication (independent variable) at p=0.000. This result implied that there was a strong interaction between occupation of respondent and inter-spousal communication.

Conclusions

On the basis of the above findings, the following inferences are vital: firstly, the linear regression analysis used for testing the three hypotheses showed that the age of respondents, educational levels of the couples and occupation will not interact with spousal communication in Lagos state. Secondly, F-tests derived from analysis of variance (in table 3, 6 and 9) agreed with the outcomes of the three hypotheses tested in this study. It can be inferred from the results of linear regression analysis and analysis of variance that there are other hidden socio-demographic background variables that probably interact with spousal communication apart from the age of respondents, educational levels of the couples and occupation. Thirdly, the p-values are highly significant throughout this study. At this juncture, it can be safely concluded on the basis of p-values results that the age of respondents, educational levels of the couples and occupation have strong interactions with spousal communication in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos state, Nigeria.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this study are as follows: Firstly, that the couples in oil companies should improve on their weekly spousal communication despite their tight and busy working schedules. Secondly, there is a serious and urgent need for couples who acquired primary education to pursue further studies gradually until they attain tertiary educational status. In effect, the age at marriage will increase from 20-24years to 25-29years due to the number of years of couple's educational pursuit in Lagos state of Nigeria.

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