

## **Communication Skills for Enhancing Spousal Relationship within Families in Bauchi State of North East Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

The study identified communication skills for enhancing spousal relationship within families in Bauchi State and ways of imbibing such skills. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 1,779,112 married couples. Multistage sampling was used to select 600 couples. Questionnaire was used. Reliable coefficient of the instrument was 0.817. The data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentages and t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The findings include 39 communication skills and four major ways that could help spouses imbibe the skills. There was no significant differences in the mean ratings of the opinions of male and female on the communication skills. Based on the findings, one of the recommendations was the guidance and counselors, to include the skills identified as the things they need to teach spouses.

**Key words:** Communication, Skills, Spousal, Relationship, Divorce

### **Introduction**

Marriage relationship is lifelong companionship that should bring about fulfilment and joy in the lives of spouses. Spousal relationship can be defined as the state of being married voluntarily for life or until divorced (Haviland, Prins, Walrath & McBride

(2011). The primary objectives of spousal relationship include companionship, affection, intimacy, cooperation, among others (Anyakoha, 2015). Spouses need special skills to live together in peace. Skills are abilities or competencies, dexterities, facilities that are acquired through training,

experiences and practices (Farlex,2015). One of such skills (or abilities) considered in this study is communication skills, cohesion skills and flexibility skills. These skills are most important skills needed for enhancing spousal relationship.

Communication skills in spousal relationships are those set of abilities or dispositions that a spouse exhibits to show openness to the partner. Examples of such skills include: cheerfulness, politeness, pen and direct discussion about the nature of the relationship. Open and direct positive communication is such that allows spouses to learn about themselves and discuss their roles and goals while expressing love and respect for one another (Impett & Peplau, 2003). Bearing in mind that communication is a complex process that involves both skillful sending and receiving of messages with accompanied feedback from the sources (Olson & Defrain, 2006). Communication, according to Gana (2012), is a complex process of sending information, ideas, concepts or messages from a sender to a receiver, via a channel. In this regard, Montana and Charnou (2008) stressed that all forms of communication require a sender, a message, and an intended recipient to make meaning to the message being sent as feedback. The receiver decodes the message and gives a feedback. Olson & Defrain (2006) opined that communication system parallel the relationships system of spouses, since it is through communication that relationships are defined. This includes: speaking,

writing, body language, listening, personal mannerism, and styles (Esere, Yusuf & Omotosho, 2011). Listening is probably even more important than talking because spouses would be able to learn and grow far more in their relationship, if they sit down and listen to their partners, instead of talking and voicing all their opinions at once. One should listen to the other person's opinions as well and take them into consideration.

Communication can come in two major forms: there is the verbal communication and the non-verbal communication. Verbal communication is the relatively straight forward component of communication that must be done with words - written or spoken. It may not necessarily come from the heart of the person communicating with the words. Non-verbal messages, on the other hand, are the accompanying message between the people involved in a communication. It is also the message an individual conveys about the relationship at hand - whether it is a friendly relationship or not (Olson & Defrain, 2006).

Verbal communication is common and easy to identify. For this reason, Mellinger (2012) explained that speaking is one form of communication most recognizable. Yet, non-verbal communication needs to be understood as equally important, or may be, even more important. Non-verbal communication takes a wide variety of forms. In the listing by Olson and Defrain (2006), the various forms of non-verbal communication include: facial expression, eye contact, gestures

and other body movements, spatial behaviour (for example, how far apart two people stand or sit from each other, body contact), non-verbal vocalizations (for example: signs, grunts, and posture). Even spoken messages have non-verbal aspects to them. These non-verbal aspects of spoken messages include: tone of voice, volume, pitch, speed of speech, rhythm of speech, and so on. Even written messages too, have non-verbal aspects to them. These include: style of writing, medium of personal stationery (such as cards, napkin, and so on) (Olson & Defrain, 2006). In the communication between spouses, it is therefore important to pay close attention to non-verbal messages. This is because non-verbal communication conveys 65% of the messages between people; and unfortunately, some spouses select their words (which comprise only 35% of the messages) when they speak to their partners, whereas they pay little attention to the non-verbal messages (Olson & Defrain, 2006). The ability, therefore, to communicate both verbally and non-verbally is one of the essential skills individuals need to master if they are to enjoy close relationships.

Since communication is the way spouses create and share meanings, feelings, and thoughts - both verbally and non-verbally - this should mean that the relationship component of communication between spouses should have central influence on the accurate transmission and interpretation of verbal and non-verbal messages in order not to give room for one's spouse to make guesses about

(and thus misunderstand) their relationships. Instead, by means of careful communication, spouses should be able to deepen the confidence each other has in their relationship to make their union even more satisfying. Olson & Defrain (2006) enumerated dimensions of communication to include: listening skills: this involves positive listening skills comprising of empathy and feedback; speaking skills: speaking for oneself rather than another person; self-disclosure: this entails sharing personal feelings and ideas openly; clarity in the exchange of clear messages, and mutual regard: this reflects the good intentions each of the spouse for themselves, their family members and their friends.

Two major dimensions of communication skill discussed in this study are: self-disclosure and listening skills. According to Olson & Defrain (2006), self-disclosure means speaking for oneself. It occurs when an individual reveals to one or more people some personal information and feelings that they could not otherwise learn. This means that without moments of self-disclosure, some partners and friends may continue to be together without properly knowing some personal things about each other. On the other hand, listening skills, as the second dimension of communication skills discussed here implies attentive listening that requires suspending judgment and spending more energy trying to understand other people. Thus, to enhance spousal relationships, there is the need for spouses to have the self-disclosure skills to willingly disclose their feelings and

personal information to their spouses without waiting to be requested to do so, while also being ready to patiently listen to their partners with the intent to understand, rather than to judge/condemn them.

Some of the things that facilitate communication between spouses are closeness, flexibility and time spent together. On the other hand, the absence of all these are definitely detrimental to spousal relationship (Keymalaihen & Maniani, 2008). This means that poor communication is linked to diminished marital closeness, togetherness, or the degree to which spouses engage in activities together. Thus, poor communication leads to regressed relationship (Carlson, 2011).

In Bauchi State which is the focus of this study, the predominant type of spousal relationship is the one established between a teenage female spouse and a 'by-far-older' male spouse, which is known as child marriage. Child marriage occurs when one or both spouse is under the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2011). Most times, in child marriages, there is usually huge age difference between the spouses. The age difference is usually so much that most of the male spouses could be grandfathers to the young girls who are supposed to be their spouses. Hence, such female spouses do not have the maturity, experience and skills to engage in spousal relationships. In several of such marriages in Bauchi State, it is common that the female teenage spouse may be married into a polygamous family. This is the type of family where a man may be legally married to more than one

wife. In such situation, communication between husband and wife become problematic. Divorce often results.

Divorce is prevalent in Bauchi State, the area of the study. Available data show this (News Agency of Nigeria (NAN),2015a;News Agency of Nigeria(NAN),2015b). The continued high divorce rate in the area of the study had triggered the Governors of Kano, Kaduna, Zamfara and Sokoto states to assist as many as 3,000 couples by organizing and contracting re-marriages (post- divorce) involving some of the divorcees(News Agency of Nigeria (NAN),2015a).The Governors paid for the marriage rites and contracted them accordingly. The couples were given fifty thousand naira (NGN50,000.00) each in 2012 to 2015 as assistance (NAN, 2015a).In addition. Mohammad (2013) reported that on 18<sup>th</sup> may 2013, for instance, the Sokoto State Government conducted a mass wedding screening. The aim was to contract marriage for those who want to re-marry. Unfortunately, the chairman of Sunnah Marriage Council, Alhaji Aliyu Kofar Rini in NAN (2015), reported that 20 out of the 125mass marriages contracted and sponsored by the state government in January 2014, have collapsed. It is therefore necessary to evolve ways of promoting marital stability. Enhancing communication among spouses is a way of doing this. Communication skills are important for spouses.

#### **Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of the study was to identify the communication skills

needed for enhancing spousal relationships among families in Bauchi State of North East Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined:

1. Verbal communication skills needed for appropriate spousal relationship among spouses in Bauchi State;
2. Non verbal communication skills needed for appropriate spousal relationships;
3. Ways of helping spouses in Bauchi State to imbibe relationship skills.

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the verbal communication skills needed for appropriate spousal relationship among spouses in Bauchi State?
2. What are the non verbal communication skills needed for appropriate spousal relationship?
3. What are the ways by which spouses in Bauchi State could be helped to imbibe skills to enhance their relationships?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study and each was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There will be no significant difference in the mean ratings of the opinions of male and female spouses on the verbal communication skills needed for appropriate spousal relationship among spouses in Bauchi State;
2. There will be no significance difference in the mean ratings of the opinions of male and female spouses on the non verbal communication

skills needed for appropriate spousal relationship;

3. There will be no significant difference in the mean ratings of the opinions of male and female spouses on the ways by which spouses in Bauchi State could be helped to imbibe the skills to enhance their relationships.

### **Methodology**

*Design of the Study:* The study adopted descriptive survey design. The design helps in collecting views, facts and ideas, to analyze and to answer research questions in order to make some conclusions about what exists. A descriptive survey design was preferred for this study because information was gathered from individuals regarding their views on the skills they think can enhance spousal relationship among families.

*Area of the Study:* The study was conducted in Bauchi State, North-Eastern Nigeria. Bauchi State is made-up of three senatorial districts, namely: Northern, Central and Southern districts. The Northern district consists of seven local government areas; the Central has six, while the Southern consists of seven. The choice of Bauchi State as the area for this study was because of high divorce rates in the state which is a pointer to poor skills in spousal relationship.

*Population of the Study:* The target population of the study was made-up of all the married persons in Bauchi State (According to the National Populations Commissions (2010), this number is estimated to be 1,779,112) The spouses that served as the population for this

study varied in their social engagements: a good number were farmers, some others were civil servants, and yet others were traders. With regard to their academic attainments, the percentage of those who were literate (with secondary school education) was a little above those who had no secondary school education at the time of the study.

**Sample and Sampling Technique(s):** The sample for the study was 600 persons made up of 300 men and 300 women. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 10 LGAs from the three senatorial zones in the state, 30 towns from the 10 LGAs, and 10 households from each of the 30 towns

The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the sampling procedure because the area of study (Bauchi State) is grouped into districts, LGAs, towns, and then households. The choice of the purposive sampling technique for this stage was based on the fact that these are the LGAs which the researcher could visit with less risks of challenges from Boko Haram insurgents. The other reason for the choice of this sampling technique for this stage was to make sure that the households visited by the researcher and her assistants were those where both spouses were alive and living together.

**Instrument for Data Collection:** One instrument was used for data collection in this study, questionnaire titled

Questionnaire on Skills Needed for Enhancing Spousal Relationship (QSNE SR) The questionnaire contained both structured and open-ended items. The instrument was divided into two sections (A and B). Section A contained 39 items on communication skills. These 39 items were subdivided into three subsections covering some of the different aspects of communication skills needed in spousal relationships. Section B had the open-ended items, required the respondents to indicate in their own words what they think could be done to improve the acquisition and utilization of spousal relationship skills among spouses in the study area.

**Method of Data Collection:** Six hundred (600) copies of the questionnaire were distributed through personal contact by the researcher. The respondents were given two weeks within which they were expected to complete the questionnaire. At the expiration of the two weeks, the researcher re-visited the places of the respondents to retrieve the copies of the questionnaire.

**Method of Data Analysis:** Responses from the respondents were coded by the analyst into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 16.0. While t-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

## **Null Hypothesis**

**Table 1:** Mean Scores and t-test results of the Opinions of Male and Female Spouses on Verbal Communication Skills needed for Appropriate Spousal Relationship Among spouses in Bauchi State of North East Nigeria

S/N	Spousal Relationship Communication Skills	Male		Female		$\bar{x}_g$	t-cal	df	Sig.	Dec
		$\bar{x}_m$	SD <sub>m</sub>	$\bar{x}_f$	SD <sub>f</sub>					
<b>Verbal Communication/ Self-Disclosure Skills</b>										
1	Freely express feelings to partner verbally	3.40	0.63	3.55	0.52	3.48	3.14	599	0.00	S
2	Freely express feelings and thoughts exactly as one wants	3.20	0.44	3.45	0.48	3.33	3.12	599	0.00	S
3	Not hide one's exact feelings and thoughts for fear of criticisms	3.58	0.24	3.44	0.55	3.51	3.84	599	0.00	S
4	Not harsh to partner during discussions	3.49	0.65	3.34	0.45	3.42	3.64	599	0.00	S
5	Regularly using the word, 'please' during discussions	3.32	0.66	3.05	0.78	3.19	3.63	598	0.00	S
6	Not defensive during discussions with negative feedbacks	3.10	0.54	3.21	0.65	3.16	3.43	599	0.00	S
7	Share experiences with partner with positive statements	3.33	0.50	3.45	0.39	3.39	3.90	599	0.00	S
8	Not hold back on personal interests	3.26	0.60	3.30	0.55	3.28	0.78	599	0.43	NS
9	Not hold back on personal opinions	3.41	0.51	3.37	0.83	3.39	0.35	599	0.72	NS
10	Express hopes with language of 'wants' instead of 'needs'	3.43	0.58	3.38	0.75	3.42	0.73	599	0.34	NS
11	Not talk-down on partner's relatives	3.26	0.59	3.26	0.85	3.26	0.98	599	0.27	NS
12	Offering useful pieces of advice to partner's relatives	3.29	0.88	3.36	0.68	3.33	2.88	599	0.00	S
13	Not talk-down on partner's friends	3.11	0.68	3.10	0.74	3.11	0.22	599	0.74	NS
14	Respond to partner's request for discussion without too much criticisms	3.60	0.56	3.48	0.68	3.53	2.99	599	0.00	S
15	Use clear language to ask questions	3.61	0.48	3.61	0.67	3.61	0.44	600	0.00	NS
16	Be clear on message	3.44	0.73	3.43	0.85	3.44	0.87	596	0.58	NS
17	Not speak to spouse aggressively with the intent to hurt and blame	3.57	0.65	3.83	0.55	3.70	1.01	599	0.08	NS
18	Ask questions with 'what' or 'how' instead of 'why'	3.55	0.49	3.54	0.67	3.50	0.24s	600	0.65	NS

Key: Key: Sig. = significance level, df = Degree of freedom, S = Significant at 5%, NS = Not Significant at 5%,  $X_m$  = Mean of Males;  $X_f$  = Mean of Females;  $X_g$  = Grand Mean

**Table 2:** Mean Scores and t-test Results of the Opinion of Male and Female Spouse on Non-verbal Communication Skills for Appropriate Spousal Relationship among Spouses in Bauchi State of North East Nigeria

S/ N	Non-verbal Communication/Listening Skills	Male		Female		$\bar{x}_g$	t-cal	df	Sig.	Dec
		$\bar{x}_m$	SD <sub>m</sub>	$\bar{x}_f$	SD <sub>f</sub>					
1	Maintaining eye contact during discussions	3.18	0.67	2.84	0.97	3.01	0.74	598	0.64	NS
2	Observant to know when partner is not in the mood for long discussions	3.30	0.84	3.50	0.64	3.40	0.97	599	0.64	NS
3	Give time to listen & understand each other's complaints	3.18	0.66	3.53	0.26	3.36	3.22	600	0.00	S
4	Observe coded expressions of partner in the form of gesture	3.73	0.58	3.22	0.45	3.48	3.84	596	0.00	S
5	Understand non-verbal messages of spouse	3.02	0.33	3.43	0.24	3.23	3.21	599	0.00	S
6	Observe change of mood of partner through body language	3.72	0.49	3.33	0.86	3.53	2.98	594	0.00	S
7	Listen actively to each other's communication	3.21	0.87	3.62	0.34	3.42	3.22	598	0.00	S
8	Nod during discussions to indicate active listening	3.29	0.88	3.30	0.54	3.30	0.39	596	0.43	NS
9	Freely express feelings to partner using gestures such as smiles, frown, pat on the back, and so on	3.19	0.85	3.62	0.43	3.41	2.98	599	0.00	S
10	Use of ICT (phones, email, and so on) to communicate with partner when and where necessary	2.89	0.66	3.42	0.36	3.16	3.27	598	0.00	S
11	Use of gifts, cards, and so on to communicate with partner	3.74	0.44	3.29	0.65	3.52	3.72	599	0.00	S
12	Avoid sources of divided attention during discussions	3.60	0.33	3.00	0.74	3.30	2.98	597	0.00	S
13	Not listen to partner aggressively with the intent to blame	3.41	0.69	2.87	0.77	3.14	3.65	600	0.00	S
14	Fast to commend partner's good efforts in the family	3.23	0.86	3.20	0.90	3.22	0.35	597	0.72	NS
15	Express admiration for partner	3.38	0.56	3.32	0.74	3.35	0.55	598	0.62	NS
16	Quickly commend partner's efforts at workplace	3.44	0.83	3.34	0.90	3.39	0.65	597	0.51	NS
17	Appreciate partner's assistance without delay	3.43	0.63	3.46	0.82	3.45	0.26	598	0.79	NS
18	Fast to commend partner's creative ideas	3.31	0.57	3.36	0.51	3.34	1.06	598	0.29	NS
19	Quickly commend partner's good dress	3.30	0.55	3.38	0.59	3.34	1.71	598	0.09	NS
20	Appreciate the slightest gift from partner without delay	3.35	0.54	3.31	0.67	3.33	0.93	598	0.35	NS
21	Quickly appreciate efforts of partner's relatives	3.15	0.72	3.44	0.49	3.30	1.94	598	0.05	NS

**Key:** Key: Sig. = significance level, df = Degree of freedom, S = Significant at 5%, NS = Not Significant at 5%,  $X_m$  = Mean of Males;  $X_f$  = Mean of Females;  $X_g$  = Grand Mean

Table 1 and 2 shows the t-test analysis of the significant difference in the mean rating of the opinions of male and female spouses on the verbal communication and non verbal skills needed for appropriate spousal relationship among spouses in Bauchi State. Based on the result, there were no significant differences between male and female couples in items 6, 7, 10, 13 to 18 and 20 to 29. This was because of their respective significant values were greater than the maximum value 0.05. However, there were significant differences between the male and female couples in items 1 to 5, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 19 since the significant value in these items were less than 0.05. The cluster t-value of 0.84 with degree of

freedom of 598 and significant value of 0.41, it therefore showed that the result is insignificant. This means that the null hypothesis which stated that there will be no significant difference in the mean rating of the opinions of male and female spouses on the communication skills needed for appropriate spousal relationship among spouses in Bauchi State was accepted. The deduction deduced from this is that male and female spouses did not significantly differ in their opinion on the difference in the mean scores of the opinions of male and female spouses on the communication skills needed for appropriate spousal relationship among spouses in Bauchi State.

**Table 3:** Mean score & t-test results of the Opinions of Male and Female Spouses on the ways by which Spouses in Bauchi State could be Helped to imbibe the Skills to Enhance their Relationships

Ways suggested by the respondents	Male		Female		t-cal	df	Sig.	Dec.
	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD				
Counselling	1.63	0.49	1.47	0.50	3.81	498	0.00	S
Age gap should be reduced	1.65	0.48	1.48	0.50	4.08	498	0.00	S
Mutual respect should be encouraged	1.65	0.48	1.51	0.50	3.50	498	0.00	S
Faithfulness and tolerance	1.65	0.48	1.49	0.50	4.09	498	0.00	S
<b>Cluster t</b>	<b>1.65</b>	<b>0.01</b>	<b>1.49</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>S</b>

**Key:** Sig. = significance level, df = Degree of freedom, S = Significant at 5%, NS = Not Significant at 5%

Table 3 above showed the t-test analysis of the significant difference in the mean rating of the opinions of male and female spouses on the ways by which spouses in Bauchi State could be helped to imbibe the skills to enhance their relationships. As the result depicted,

there were significant differences between male and female couples in all the items. This was based on their individual significant values which were less than the maximum value of 0.05. in the same way, the cluster t value of 15.9 with degree of freedom of 498

and significant value of 0.00, it therefore showed that the overall difference in the mean score is significant. This means that the null hypothesis which stated that there would be no significant difference in the mean scores of the opinions of male and female spouses on the ways by which spouses in Bauchi State could be helped to imbibe the skills to enhance their relationships is rejected. The deduction deduced from this is that male and female spouses significantly differ in their opinion on the ways by which spouses in Bauchi State could be helped to imbibe the skills to enhance their relationships.

#### **Discussion of Findings**

Table 1 revealed that male and female spouses did not significantly differ in their opinions on verbal and non-verbal communication skills needed for appropriate spousal relationship. The cluster t-value of 0.84 with degree of freedom of 598 and significant value of 0.41, showed that the result is insignificant which holds the null hypothesis that the opinions of spouses did not significantly differ. These findings confirm the view that appropriate speaking skills are very important to enhance spousal relationships (Olson & Defrain, 2006). The findings also confirm that speaking skills include, among other things: expressing admiration and listening attentively without getting defensive in order to avoid interruption since being too defensive signals that the person has things to hide from his/her partner. Speaking directly and honestly without blaming enhances positive

communication and therefore yield good spousal relationship. This implies that the use of both verbal and non-verbal communication skills can enhance spousal relationship. In addition, the findings revealed that appropriate communication skills require that as one spouse is expressing his or her feelings, the other spouse should listen attentively. It also requires suspending judgment and spending more energy trying to understand the other partner by making eye contacts, nodding frequently, focusing attention on what the speaker is saying, and asking relevant questions in order to make the relationship persist over time.

These findings corroborate the findings of Olson and Defrain (2006), Labban (2006), Mellinger (2012), and Gottman and Gottman (2012). These researchers had held that for spousal relationships to last, the partners need to share fondness and admiration by focusing attention on the amount of affection and respect within the relationship so that it can be sustained (Gottman & Gottman, 2012). According to Olson and Defrain (2006), listening attentively without interruption is the most effective type of listening because it lets the speaker get to the real point, avoiding misunderstanding and confusion, and improving rapport and trust. These findings also corroborate the findings of researchers like Millinger (2012) who were of the opinion that when spouses are speaking to one another, they should keep to facts, and should not focus on pronouncements, but on expressions of thoughts, feelings and desires, exactly

as one want it as an individual. Good listening requires suspending judgment and spending more energy trying to understand the other person. The attentive listening builds rapport and trust in spousal relationship (Olson & Defrain, 2006; Mellinger, 2012).

Information on table 3 revealed that there was significant difference in the opinions of male and female spouses on how spouses could be helped to imbibe skills to enhance their relationships. The table showed that the individual values of their responses were 0.00 which is less than the set maximum value of 0.05. Besides, the cluster t-value of their responses is 15.9, with degree of freedom of 498. The results indicated above imply that the suggested ways of helping spouses to imbibe and practice appropriate spousal relationship can be applied to enhance or improve spousal relationships. The suggestions of spouses on reducing age-gap differences between spouses implies that in the views of the respondents, huge age-gap differences influence the way and manner by which spouses relate to each other. When the age-gap is too wide, it can result to non-performance of marital roles. The respondents' suggestions on encouraging faithfulness and mutual tolerance among spouses implies that faithfulness and mutual tolerance can promote sharing, love and companionship. The above findings are in line with the views of such researchers as Erisman (2004), Larson and Olson (2004), Olson and Defrain (2006), and Allendorf (2013). The views of these experts, in various ways, are

that any positive action or change of action which can promote mutual sharing, love and companionship among spouses can also serve as a way of enhancing spousal relationships. For instance, there are certain feelings which help spouses to transcend themselves and positively improve/adjust their beliefs about life generally.

According to Olson and Defrain (2006), encouraging changes such as mutual respect and tolerance among spouses improve common beliefs and spiritual well-being. And, spouses with some degree of common belief and spiritual well-being are generally more happily married. The findings indicated above are also consistent with the views of Eldridge and Christenson (2002), Impett and Peplau (2003), Le and Agnew (2003), Okonkwo and Oha (2004), Okafor (2010), Glenn, Uecker and Love (2010), Oshadumo (2011), Gottman and Gottman (2012), and Allendorf (2013), who, in varied degrees of emphasis, indicated that counseling training for spouses can expose them to develop appropriate physical and mental capacities because good education is tool for upliftment and development of individuals. (Okafor, 2010). Okonkwo and Oha (2004) had noted, in line with the findings of this study, that good education of spouses helps them to acquire appropriate knowledge, it also helps spouses to understand their different emotional temperaments and be aware on the need to allow each other some amount of autonomy (Oshadumo, 2011).

## Conclusions

The communication skills needed for enhancing spousal relationship within families in Bauchi State are Verbal Communication/Self-Disclosure Skills and Non-verbal Communication/Listening Skills. The verbal communication encompass abilities to express feelings and thoughts to partner freely and exactly what message the partner want to convey. The non verbal are the competencies of maintaining eye contact bu partners during discussion to show level of commitment and to observe the mood of the partner to be able to interpret the real meaning of the message passed across. However, there are some measures to be adopted to help spouses imbibe skills to enhance their relationships such as counseling, training, reduction of age-gap between spouses, mutual respect be encouraged, faithfulness and tolerance as strategies.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is imperative that for spouses in Bauchi State, North-East Nigeria, and indeed spouses in any other part of Nigeria, to build up better homes, and more stable and peaceful Nigerian society, the following recourse should seriously be considered:

1. Individual spouses need to realize that spousal relationships require communication skills; and they should work hard to acquire such skills through reading relevant and well-written texts, and visiting marriage counsellors.
2. Individual guidance and counselling professionals need to include the

skills identified by means of this study as some of the things they teach spouses who visit them for guide.

3. Guidance counseling units need to design training programmes for spouses to train them on these identified skills and the need to use them for the betterment of their societies.

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