

The Impact of Different Communication Styles in Marriage Satisfaction

Literature Review

Nonverbal Communication

To a lot of people, nonverbal communication may be secondary to verbal communication. Oftentimes, it is overlooked, and may even be viewed as something that is not important. However, this particular aspect of communication can actually speak a lot of things. Nonverbal form of communication may consist of actions such as smiling, looking, touching, frowning, or even expressions of surprise, as seen in the research study of Welner and Shane (2004). Women are found to show these forms of communications more compared to men. Welner and Shane studied different nonverbal actions and behaviors related to the close relationship of a couple, and discovered that women looked at their mates for a considerably longer period of time compared to men. For example, the average length that a wife looks at her husband was 7.5 seconds, while a husband usually looks at his wife for 4.5 seconds. However, even though men express less nonverbal communication and emotion, they may not really mean that they are not paying attention when they are being spoken to by their wives. For example, Waley and Shawn (2005) theorized that men show less emotion maybe because they were taught and learned to dampen emotions, including anger. As such, when a husband and wife ends up having a disagreement, the situation may quickly escalate if the husband expresses fully his emotions by showing violence. Thus, it was therefore suggested that a lot of men fail to show their emotion generally because they have personally trained themselves to be so-called 'emotionless', particularly when facing conflict situations.



Sierra, Base, and Dylan (1984) also suggested that there is truth to this. In their study giving attention on nonverbal communication and its relevance to marital complaints, they have discovered that wives who had husbands with good communication skills had the tendency to have even more complaints regarding their husbands. As such, a hypothesis was formed, that since men are expected to dampen, or tone their emotions down, and having a good nonverbal communication skill may be viewed as socially unacceptable in the perspective of their wives.

It is very important to take into consideration who the better communicator is so that it becomes easier to learn from each other, and find ways on how to communicate even more effectively. Nolton (1982) discovered that there is a relationship between the marital adjustment of a couple and their communication skills. She had each of her participants complete the Marriage Adjustment Test (Losch & Williams, 1961) to identify their overall level of marital satisfaction. Afterwards, the communication styles of the couples were studied, with results showing that those who had low marital adjustment showed fewer good nonverbal communications compared to those with higher marital adjustment. Still, a question should be raised: Do couples end up having higher marital adjustment because of their good communication styles, or do they have good communication simply because they are happy and content with their marriage?

In general, women were discovered to be better at nonverbal communications across different studies. However, being called as an effective communicator also involves both encoding and decoding of messages. By nature, women have the tendency to be more expressive. Thus, men were found to do more errors compared to women, especially when encoding messages (Collier, 1982). However, it was also discovered that women were not the better decoders, or message receivers, compared to men. It may be possible, though, that this is a result of the poor ability of husbands to effectively encode messages. The same thing was also discovered in other studies (Shine et al., 1984).



Additional findings by Salvatierra et al. also suggest the role that familiarity plays in the effectiveness of nonverbal communication. In both studies, the participants have encoded and decoded messages to their mates. The interaction was recorded and then evaluated by judges who tried to decode the interactions. Both of the studies showed that the spouses were better skilled at decoding the messages of their partners, implying that couples may actually become more successful when it comes to interpreting the nonverbal communication of their spouses over time.

Flirting Communication Styles

Flirting is usually associated within the start of the relationship of a couple. It happens when one shows interest in another. As demonstrated in Bell and Horan's study (2012), receiving affection is related directly to relational satisfaction. On the other hand, giving affection is related to commitment within a relationship. However, a lot of people wonder if flirting continues in committed relationships, including marriage. Is there still a reason to flirt within marriage? If so, how do both husbands and wives differ in their styles of flirting? In Era and Booth's (2014) study on the aim of flirtation, they have discovered that a major reason for flirting in a marriage was to establish a private world between the couple, thus motivating sex. They have also discovered that women were more likely to use attentive flirting than men, in which women shows a huge amount of concern for her husband. In a separate study by Lewis (2009), however, men were also discovered to use attentive flirting to make their wives feel confident and beautiful. In accordance to a previous study, Lewis found that men flirt to encourage sex typically, while women flirt to focus on fun attention, and interest in their partners.

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