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Determinant Factors for Couple Communication and Marital Stability among Adults in Assela Town, Oromia Region, Ethiopia

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Keywords: *couple communication, marital stability, marriage.*

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Determinant Factors for Couple Communication and Marital Stability among Adults in Assela Town, Oromia Region, Ethiopia

Muna Suleyiman [α] & Atinkut Zewdu [σ]

Abstract- The aim of the present study was to assess the determinant factors of couple communication and marital stability among adults in Assela Town, Oromia Region, Ethiopia. Community-based cross- sectional survey research design was used. Proportionately stratified sampling along with simple random sampling technique was employed to recruit 390 respondents from 8 kebeles in Assela Town. Apart from the interview, Marital Communication Questionnaire (MCQ) and Marital Stability Questionnaire (MSQ) was employed to measure the status of marital communication and marital stability respectively. Descriptive statistics (percentage, mean and standard deviation), independent sample t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson correlation coefficient were used to analyze the data. Findings indicated that the independent sample t-test result shows that sex of respondents had statistically significant mean difference in marital communication ($t(388) = 6.868$, $p < 0.05$) and marital stability ($t(388) = 3.966$, $p < 0.05$) respectively. In this study, ANOVA result revealed that educational status ($F(3,386) = 357.877$, $p < 0.05$), length of stay in marriage ($F(3,386) = 62.437$, $p<0.05$) and age ($F(2,387) = 24.524$, $p < 0.05$) had statistically significant effect on respondents' marital communication. Cognizant of these facts, it was also revealed that there were statistically significant mean differences between respondents' educational status ($F(3,386) = 32.468$, $p < 0.05$), length of stay in marriage ($F(3,386) = 19.569$, $p<0.05$) and age ($F(2,387) = 6.548$, $p < 0.05$) on marital stability. Also, Pearson correlation coefficient result shows that there was a strong positive correlation between couple communication and marital stability scores ($r = 0.842$, $p < 0.05$). To sum up, couple communication influenced marital stability. Therefore, the counselors shall provide the provision of marital counseling to couples before and after marriage. Hence, marriage seminars and symposia shall be persistently

Keywords: couple communication, marital stability, marriage.

I. Introduction

Marriage is the state of being united with a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife; the institution whereby men and women are joined in a particular kind of social and legal dependence for founding and maintaining a family (Gove, 1986). From a societal level of analysis, the institution of marriage represents all the behaviors, norms, roles, expectations, and values that are associated with the legal union of a man and woman. Marriage is considered to represent a lifelong commitment by two people to each other, and it signified by a contract sanctioned by the state. It thus involves legal rights, responsibilities, and duties that are enforced by both secular and sacred laws (Esere, 2008).

Marriage involves emotional and legal commitment that is quite important in any adult life. This relationship usually needs some contract which defines the partners' rights and obligations to each other. The usual roles and responsibilities of the husband and wife include living together, having sexual relations with one another, sharing economic resources, and recognizing as the parents of their children (Encarta, 2007). Intimate relationships constitute an important source of happiness, support, health, and well-being in our lives (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Diener, Gohm, Suh, & Oishi, 2000; Coyne et al., 2001; Robles, Slatcher, Trombello, & McGinn, 2014). On the other hand, relationship strain has been shown to have negative effects on men's and women's health across the life course (Umberson, Williams, Powers, Liu, & Needham, 2006).

When people make choices to marry; they want to live happily ever after. They want a loving, happy, and successful marriage. After they have married for a while, and the novelty has worn off, they tend to discover that marriage does not maintain itself. Marriage takes work from both spouses to stay (Angel, 2008). Marriage depends on many different things to be successful: trust, love, time, friendship, understanding, honesty, loyalty sincerity and above all effective communication (Esere, Yusuf, and Omotosho: 2011). Although marriage has clear implications for individuals' general sense of well-being, the essence of the marital relationship lies in the day-to-day interactions in which married couples engage.

Marital separation, divorce, and remarriage are common phenomena in Ethiopia and elsewhere all over the world. One of the factors responsible for these anomalies is effective communication problem which couples encounter some years after the inception of the union (Maciver, 2004). Communication is any process in which people share information, ideas and feelings which involve not only the spoken and written word but

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also body language, personal mannerisms, and style (Hybels & Weaver, 2001). Ledermann et al (2010) reported that marital communication is as a constant exchange of information of messages between the two spouses by speech, letter writing, talking on the telephone, the exhibition of bodily or facial expression, and other methods as well verbal and non-verbal. Communication processes within couples are considered to be crucial for the positive or negative development of dyadic relationships over time and to be a key determinant of relationship functioning (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Schmitt, Kliegel, & Shapiro, 2007).

Olson and Defrain (2000) have considered communication as the heart of intimate human relationship and the foundation on which all other relationships built; they also assert that it is the key to a successful couple relationship. In fact, the ability and the willingness to communicate have been found to be among the most significant factors in maintaining a relationship (Ekot & Usoro, 2006; Anyakoha & James, 2004). More and more marital failures blamed on the inability of couples to communicate effectively (Orthner, 1981).

In many empirical studies, the effects of socio-demographic variables on marital communication have been studied in developed and developing country intensively. These studies found that sex (Holmstrom, 2009; Wood, 2011; Esere, Yusuf & Omotosho, 2011; Jon Warner, 2013), educational status (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Olson & Fowers, 1993; Heaton , 2002; Usoroh, Ekot, & Inyang, 2010; Goodwin Mosher & Chandra, 2010), length of stay in marriage (Awe, 1996; Esere et al, 2011), age (Levenson, Carstensen, & Gottman, 1993,1994; Carstensen, Gottman, & Levenson, 1995) were the significant predictors of marital communication among couples.

Effective communication is vital in marriage relationship and ineffective communication can lead to numerous family problems, including excessive family conflict, ineffective problem-solving skill, lack of intimacy, weak emotional bonding and so on (Esere, 2002, 2006). Likewise, poor communication style also associated with an increased risk of divorce and marital separation (Esere, 2008). The trend of divorce is getting worse in Ethiopia. For instance, Tilson and Larsen (2000) study in Ethiopia shows that forty-five percent of all first marriage end in divorce or separation within thirty years, 28% of first marriages within the first five years, 34% within ten years and 40% within twenty years.

Lewis and Spanier (1979) in a review of the literature found that communication skills such as self-disclosure, an accuracy of nonverbal communication, the frequency of successful communication, understanding between spouses and empathy were positively related to relationship quality and stability. Conversely, destructive communication such as criticism, defensiveness, contempt and stonewalling were all found to be significantly and negatively correlated with marital firmness and set a couple on a course toward divorce (Gottman & Levenson, 1992).

Marital stability is a function of the comparison between one's best available marital alternative and one's marital outcome (Lenthal, 2009). There is no plan to divorce in stable marriage. In contrast, marital instability is the propensity to divorce, which is determined by the presence of thoughts or actions which may lead to marital separation. A stable marriage, therefore, is that in which spouses enjoy healthy relationship; one in which a spouse is a source of emotional support, companionship, sexual gratification and economic support for the other (Adesanya, 2002). Along with this, Santrock (2006) study in this area reported that individuals who enjoy happy and stable marriage live longer and healthier lives than either divorced individuals or those who have unhappy and unstable marriages.

Several studies have been conducted which examined the effects of socio-demographic variables on marital stability in marriage. These studies reported that sex (Amato, Johnson, &Rogers, 2003; Basat, 2004; Jose & Alfons, 2007), length of stay in marriage (Orden and Bradburn, 1968; Carlson & Stinson, 1982; Ogidan, 1991; Karney & Bradbury 1995; Carstenson, Graff, Levenson & Gottman, 1996), educational status (Johnson and Booth, 1990; Olson & Fowers, 1993; Karney and Bradbury, 1995; Basat, 2004, Guo and Huang, 2005; Usoroh, Ekot, & Inyang, 2010), age (Vakili, Baseri, Abbasi, Bazzaz, 2014; Reyhani & Ajam, 2003; Delkhamoush, 2009, and Kulu, 2014)) had a statistically significant mean effect on marital stability among couples.

Most noticeably, many researchers have attempted to assess the relationship between couple communication and marital stability (Filanli, 1984; Schwartz and Scott, 1994; Allen and Olson, 2001; Edward, 2001; Mirahmadizadeh, Amroodi, Tatabai & Shafieian, 2003 and Imhonde, Aluede & Ifunanyachukwu, 2008).These study finding result confirmed that open and rewarding communication whether verbal or non-verbal was essential for marital stability. Along with this, effective communication is the key to intimacy and family interaction and is the lifeblood of marital stability. Moreover, Karney and Bradbury (1995) study result displayed that better communication is related to better stability, whereas ineffective communication related with poor relationship satisfaction and instability.

In spite of all these, however, not much has been done on the determinant of spousal communication and marital stability. In this study area, the researchers have observed that marital instability and divorce have been highly prevalent that produce the depressing multiplier effect on the society. Due to this, couples in Asella town have faced severe challenges in

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nurturing their children, which may lead to higher rate of juvenile delinquency in the society. Lack of enough attention to the problem of couples can result in the long-term, far-reaching negative consequences for the community and nation at large. For this reason, the present research analyzes the determinant factors of couple communication and marital stability among adults in Assela Town. Therefore, this study was intended to address the following research questions:

1. Is there any statistically significant difference in couple communication across demographic variables?
2. Is there any statistically significant difference in marital stability across demographic variables?
3. Is there any significant relationship between couple communication and marital stability?

II. Materials and Methods

a) Study Design

The aim of this research was to assess the determinant factors of couple communication and marital stability among adults in Assela Town, Oromia Region, Ethiopia. Therefore, community-based cross-sectional survey research design was employed.

b) Study Area

The researchers conducted this study in Assela Town, Oromia regional state, Ethiopia. Asella is a town and separate woreda in central Ethiopia. Located in the Arsi Zone of the Oromia Region about 175 kilometers from Addis Ababa, this city has a latitude and longitude of 7°57′N 39°7′E, with an elevation of 2,430 meters. Asella was the capital of Arsi province until that province was demoted to a Zone of Oromia with the adoption of the 1995 Constitution. It retains some administrative functions as the seat of the present Arsi Zone. The 2007 Ethiopia national census reported a total population for Asella of 67,269, of whom 33,826 were men and 33,443 was women. The majority of the inhabitants said they practiced Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, with 67.43% of the population reporting they observed this belief, while 22.65% of the population was Muslim, and 8.75% of the population were Protestant. Hence, this study was conducted in eight kebeles of Assela town.

c) Sampling and Sample Size Determination

The target population of this study was all currently married, divorced, separated and widowed adults. According to the Assela city administration office, 3258 couples have registered as married until April 30/2013 among whom 278 couples legally divorced by Assela woreda court. Proportionately stratified sampling technique was employed to determine the number of participants across study sites and age. 384 participants were randomly selected from 8 kebeles in Assela Town. Also, 10% of respondents were also added for non- response rate. However, data collectors could collect 390 correctly filled questionnaires. The researchers discarded 32 questionnaires for incompleteness. Due to this, the study analysis was done based on the response of 390 study participants. Simple random sampling was used to recruit participants from each study sites. Besides, six core government stakeholders in the different level and 12 couples were also selected by using available sampling technique for interview purpose.

d) Variables

Dependent variables of the study were couples' communication and marital stability. The primary independent variables for this study were demographic characteristics of couples including their sex, age, educational status and length of stay in marriage.

e) Data Collection Instruments

Full-scale pre-established questionnaires were used to gather the required data from samples. Ultimately, the questionnaires had three sections where the first part collects data on respondents' demographic characteristics including sex, age, educational status and length of stay in the marriage. The second part was marital communication questionnaire (MCQ) to assess the couples' communication. Finally, Marital Stability Questionnaire (MSQ) was employed to measure the status of couple's marital stability.

f) Marital Communication Questionnaire (MCQ)

The Marital Communication Questionnaire (MCQ) is a 19-item scale (see Bodenmann, 2000) based on the affective communication categories identified by Gottman (1994) that assesses perceptions of positive and negative problem-solving behaviors. Items are administered on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*very often*). Factor analysis revealed two factors, representing 6 positive behaviors (e.g., I am actively interested and curious about what my partner is telling me; I validate my partner's opinion and feelings; I try to understand my partner; I search for constructive solutions with my partner) and 13 negative behaviors (e.g., I insult my partner; I criticize my partner; I deny responsibility or blame my partner; I react with a whining quality in my voice; I withdraw from communication). The validity of the MCQ has been documented. Cronbach's Alpha of the subscale of negative communication was α=.91 for women and α=.92 for men, and for the subscale of positive communication α=.89 and α=.88, respectively. The questionnaire is correlated with the Marital Communication Inventory (MCI) by Bienvenu (1971), with r = .84 (Bodenmann, 2000).

g) Marital Stability Questionnaire (MSQ)

The researchers used the adapted version of Marital Stability Questionnaire (MSQ) which was developed by Booth, Johnson, & Edwards, (1983) and later modified by Vakili, Baseri, Abbasi, and Bazzaz (2014) for assessing the status of the marital instability

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of couples. The adapted items for the Marital Stability Questionnaire (MSQ) were also derived from a review of the literature. The original tool has 19 items with Likert scale (from five (never) to one (always) scores). The higher score this scale indicated the highest level of stable marriage and the lower score suggested the lowest level of marital stability. Face validity was established through sociologists, social workers, and psychologists agreeing that the items were relevant to measure couples' marital instability. The reliability of the tool was found to be 0.819 (Sanai, Alaghband, Falahati, and Hooman, 2007).

h) Pilot Test

The pilot study was conducted in Bekoji town, Arisi Zone, Oromia Region, Ethiopia, by taking 65 couples randomly. Before collecting the final data, the tools were translated into Amharic and Afan Oromo language. The translation consistencies of the instruments were also examined by three language experts from Addis Ababa University. Content validity of the English, Amharic and Afan Oromo language version was assessed by two developmental psychologists from Addis Ababa University. The content validity of the measuring instrument was determined by giving the questionnaires to experts in the department of psychology. The experts made corrections and suggestions which were taken into consideration while producing the final draft of the questionnaires. Based on the comments of the experts, changes were made in the wording of three couple communication and one marital stability items. In the pilot study, the reliabilities of the tools were found to be 0.891 and 0.874 for couples communication and marital stability respectively. The consensus of the experts was that the instruments measure what it purports to measure and was therefore adjudged adequate for the study. These tools were adjudged high enough for the instrument usability.

i) Data Collection Procedures

Eight supervisors were dispatched in which one supervisor for each study site was assigned to collect data for the study. The role of supervisors was to train data collectors, oversee participant recruitment and data collection and checking and controlling data quality. A total of 16 data collectors with at least a diploma level training mainly in the social sciences were recruited. Half- day training was provided for the data collectors on the purpose of the study, the contents of the data collection instruments, ethical matters, and on how to recruit and approach participants. Data collectors went door to door in areas where couples were available via the guidance of key informants in each locality. The data collection process was directly followed-up by the supervisors.

j) Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics including percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to describe the determinants of couple communication and marital stability. Also, ANOVA and independent sample t-test were used to examine if there was any statistically significant difference in couple communication and marital stability across their sex, age, educational status and length of stay in the marriage. Pearson correlation coefficient was also employed to assess the relationship between couples' communication and marital stability. All data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for window version 20.

k) Ethical Consideration

Oral as well as written informed consent was secured from the respondents. In addition, written permission was obtained from the respective officials of the institutions and organizations where the respondents were recruited based on an official request letter issued by Addis AbabaUniversity.

III. Result

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	216	55.4
	Female	174	44.6
Age	18-39 years old	188	48.2
	40-59 years old	130	33.3
	60 years old and Above	72	18.5
Marital status	Married	342	87.7
	Separated	34	8.7
	Divorced	14	3.6
Length of stay in	1-5 years	131	33.6
marriage	6-10 years	52	13.3
	11-15 years	128	32.8
	More than 15 years	79	20.3
Educational status	Illiterates	80	20.5
	Grade 1-8	81	20.8
	Grade 9-12	76	19.5
	Diploma and above	153	39.2

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As can be seen from table 1, out of 390 respondents, 216 (55.4%) were males, and 174 (44.6%) were female respondents. Most of the respondent's age 188 (48.2%) ranges between 18-39 years old, followed by 130 (33.3%) respondents whose age ranges from 40-59 years old and 72 (18.5%) were late adults whose ages ranged 60 years old and above. The mean age of the respondents was 38.87 (SD =15.876) where the minimum and maximum ages are 21 and 78 respectively. Regarding length of stay in marriage, out of 390 respondents, most 131 (33.6%) of respondents had lived in the marriage from 1-5 years, followed by 128 (32.8%) respondents whose length of stay in marriage ranges from 11- 15 years. The rest 79 (20.3%) and 52 (13.3%) of respondents whose length of stay in marriage were more than15 years and respondents whose length of stay in marriage ranges from 6-10 years had lived together respectively. Finally, about educational status, out of all respondents, 153 (39.2%), 81 (20.8%), 80 (20.5%) and 76 (19.5%) had found to be diploma and above, grade 1- 8, illiterates and grade 9-12respondents respectively.

a) Comparison of Marital Communication across Demographic Variable of Respondents

Table 2: Mean Difference between sex of respondent on marital communication

Variable	Category	N	M	SD	t-value	p-value
Sex	Male	216	79.95	29.655	6.868	.000
	Female	174	98.02	20.079		

M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, alpha level= 0.05

As can be designated in table 2, the independent sample t-test result shows that there was statistically significant mean difference in marital communication between male and female respondents (t (388) = 6.868, p < 0.05). Here, the mean score of marital communication for female respondents (M=98.02, SD=20.079) was higher than male respondents (M=79.95, SD=29.655). This result implies that female respondents were better in marital communication than males.

Table 3: ANOVA of the effect of respondents' age, length of stay in marriage and educational status on marital communication

Variable	Category	N	M	SD	F	p-value
Educational Status	Illiterate	80	43.30	14.267	375.877	.000
	Grade 1-8	81	90.20	15.497		
	Grade 9-12	76	95.93	16.647		
	Diploma and above	153	106.30	10.867		
Length of stay in marriage	1-5 years	131	66.38	31.452	62.437	.000
	6-10 years	52	96.94	13.013		
	11-15 years	128	96.86	15.492		
	>16 years	79	103.67	18.854		
Age	18-39 years old	188	79.34	32.101	24.524	.000
	40-59 years old	130	92.24	19.429		
	60 years and above	72	103.01	15.127		

As can be seen from table 3, educational status of respondents had the statistically significant effect (F (3,386) = 357.877, p < 0.05) on marital communication. Along with this, the mean marital communication score of respondents with a diploma and above (M= 106.3, SD=10.867) was higher than illiterate respondents (M= 43.30, SD=14.267), 1-8 graders (M=90.20, SD=15.497) and 9-12 graders (M=95.93, SD=16.647). This result indicates that the higher the educational status of the respondent, the better the marital communication will be. In the same fashion, the Bonferroni post hoc result demonstrated that highly significant marital communication score mean differences were reported among respondents with a diploma and above (p < 0.05) and illiterate respondents (p <0.05) than 1-8 graders (p < 0.05) and 9-12 graders (p < 0.05). However, insignificant marital communication differences were obtained between 1-8 graders as compared to 9-12 graders (p > 0.05).

Moreover, table 3 also tell us that length of stay in marriage had the significant mean effect on marital communication (F (3,386) = 62.437, p<0.05). Likewise, the mean marital communication score of respondents who had lived together in marriage for more than 16 years and above (M= 103.67, SD=18.854) was higher than respondents who had lived together in marriage from 1-5 years (M= 66.38, SD=31.45), respondents whose length of stay in marriage ranges from 6-10 years (M=96.94, SD=13.01) and respondents whose length of stay in marriage ranges from 11- 15 years (M=95.93, SD=16.647). This result shows that the more couples lived together in marriage for extended period, the more

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couples communicate effectively. Concurrently, the Bonferroni post hoc result demonstrated that highly significant marital communication score mean differences were reported among respondents whose length of stay in marriage ranges 1-5 years ($p < 0.05$) than respondents whose length of stay in marriage ranges from 6- 10 years ($p < 0.05$) and respondents whose length of stay in marriage ranges from 11- 15 years ($p < 0.05$). However, insignificant marital communication differences were obtained between respondents whose length of stay in marriage ranges from 6-10 years as compared to respondents whose length of stay in marriage ranges from 11- 15 years ($p > 0.05$).

In addition, table 3 also shows that the mean score of marital communication for respondents whose age were 60 years old and above (M= 103.01, SD=15.27) were higher than respondents whose age ranges from 18-39 years old (M= 79.34, SD= 32.101) and respondents whose age ranges from 40- 59 years old (M= 92.24, SD= 19.429) and the difference was statistically significant ($F(2,387) = 24.524$, $p < 0.05$). Correspondingly, the Bonferroni post hoc result revealed that there was significant marital communication score mean differences among respondents whose age were 60 years old and above ($p < 0.05$), respondents whose age ranges from 18-39 years old ($p < 0.05$) and respondents whose age ranges from 40-59 years old ($p < 0.05$).

b) Comparison of Marital Stability across Demographic Variable of Respondents

Table 4: Mean Difference between sex of respondent on marital stability

Variable	Category	N	M	SD	t-value	p-value
Sex	Male	216	34.23	10.281	3.966	.000
	Female	174	38.02	8.106		

As can be designated in table 4, the independent sample t-test result shows that there was statistically significant mean difference in marital stability between male and female respondents ($t(388) = 3.966$, $p < 0.05$). Hence, the mean score of marital stability for female respondents (M=38.02, SD=8.106) was higher than male respondents (M=34.23, SD=10.281). This result implies that female respondents confirmed their marriage as stable than males.

Table 5: ANOVA of the effect of respondents' age, length of stay in marriage and educational status on marital stability

Variable	Category	N	M	SD	F	p-value
Educational Status	Illiterate	80	27.53	11.659	32.468	.000
	Grade 1- 8	81	38.13	8.468		
	Grade 9- 12	76	38.84	8.468		
	Diploma and above	153	37.69	6.568		
Length of stay in marriage	1-5 years	131	31.25	10.956	19.569	.000
	6-10 years	52	40.25	8.642		
	11-15 years	128	37.18	7.136		
	>16 years	79	38.78	7.936		
Age	18-39 years old	188	34.21	11.140	6.548	.002
	40-59 years old	130	38.04	7.562		
	60 years and above	72	36.55	7.249		

As can be seen from table 5, educational status of respondents had a statistically significant effect ($F(3,386) = 32.468$, $p < 0.05$) on marital stability. Along with this, the mean marital stability score of respondents whose educational level ranges from grade 9-12 (M= 38.84, SD=8.468) was higher than respondents whose educational level ranges from grade 1-8 (M=38.13, SD=8.468), diploma and above (M=37.69, SD=6.568) and illiterate respondents (M= 27.53, SD=11.659). This result indicates that illiterate respondents were highly vulnerable to marital instability than literate respondents. Correspondingly, the Bonferroni post hoc result demonstrated that highly significant marital stability score mean differences were reported among illiterate respondents ($p < 0.05$) than 1-8 graders ($p <0.05$), 9-12 graders ($p < 0.05$) counter parts. However, there was insignificant marital stability differences between 1-8 graders compared to 9-12 graders ($p > 0.05$) and diploma and above ($p > 0.05$) counterparts.

Moreover, table 5 also informed that length of stay in marriage had significant mean effect for marital stability ($F(3,386) = 19.569$, $p<0.05$). Likewise, the mean marital stability score of respondents whose length of stay in marriage ranges from 6 - 10 years

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above (M= 38.78 SD=7.936), respondents whose length of stay in marriage ranges from 11-15 years (M=37.18, SD=7.136) and respondents whose length of stay in marriage ranges from 1-5 years (M= 31.25, SD=10.956). This result implies that those respondents whose length of stay in marriage was less than five years were highly vulnerable to marital instability. Concurrently, the Bonferroni post hoc result demonstrated that highly significant marital stability score mean differences were reported among respondents whose length of stay in marriage ranges 1-5 years ($p < 0.05$) than respondents whose length of stay in marriage ranges from 6- 10 years ($p < 0.05$) and respondents whose length of stay in marriage ranges from 11-15 years ($p < 0.05$). However, insignificant marital stability differences were obtained between respondents whose length of stay in marriage ranges from 6-10 years as compared to respondents whose length of stay in marriage ranges from 11- 15 years and respondents whose length of stay in marriage were 16 years and above ($p > 0.05$).

In addition, table 5 also illustrated that the mean score of marital stability for respondents whose age ranges from 40-59 years old (M= 38.04, SD= 7.562) were higher than respondents whose age were 60 years old and above (M= 36.55, SD=7.249) and respondents whose age ranges from 18-39 years old (M= 34.21, SD= 11.14) and the difference was statistically significant ($F(2,387) = 6.548$, $p < 0.05$). Hence, respondents in early adulthood period were significantly vulnerable for marital instability. Correspondingly, the Bonferroni post hoc result revealed that there was highly significant marital stability score mean differences among respondents whose age ranges from 18- 39 years old as compared to respondents whose age ranges from 40-59 years old ($p < 0.05$). However, least significant marital stability mean differences were obtained among respondents whose age were 60 years old and above ($p > 0.05$) as compared to respondents whose age ranges from 18-39 years old ($p < 0.05$).

c) *Correlation between Couple Communication and Marital Stability*

Table 6: The relationship between couple communication and marital stability (N=390)

		Marital Stability
Couple Communication	Pearson Correlation	0.842
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

As can be shown from table 6, the result of Pearson correlation coefficient shows that there was strong positive correlation between couple communication and marital stability scores ($r = 0.842$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that as marital communications between couples improve, their marriage is more likely stable in which those couples who communicate openly and freely can resolve their problems. Due to this, effective communication is essential in stabilizing a marriage.

IV. Discussion

The objective of this research was to assess the determinant factors for couple communication and marital stability among adults in Assela Town, Oromia Region, Ethiopia. In the present study, the finding revealed that female respondents were better in marital communication than males. This result was consistent with the finding of Esere, Yusuf & Omotosho (2011) who found that there was the significant difference in the perception of respondents in the influence of spousal communication in marriage by gender. Also, this result was supported by the study of Jon Warner (2013) who found that women were better communicators than men in marriage. Warner also suggests that women's capacity to listen with empathy was superior to men's capacity on average, with females being more prone to wait and let men finish their sentences, not interrupt so often in general and better paraphrase and summarize what has been said, as appropriate. A similar study finding was also recorded by Wood (2011) and Holmstrom's (2009). Wood (2011) finding also claimed that females are always worrying about how the other person will feel during their interaction, while males typically care only about their social status. Also, similar to the present finding, Thune et al. (1980) affirms male communicate to be geared toward instrumental ends, while females communicate for emotional connections with others.On the other hand, the finding of the present study contradicts with the finding of Usoroh, Ekot, & Inyang (2010) who found that sex of respondents do not significantly influence the respondents' communication styles.

In this study, educational status of respondents had a statistically significant effect on marital communication. The result of this study was pertinent with the finding of Olson & Fowers (1993) and Usoroh, Ekot, & Inyang (2010) who identified higher education as a factor contributing to effective communication that facilitated marital stability. Congruently, this study yields a consistent result with previous research findings of Blood and Wolfe(1960), Heaton (2002) and Goodwin Mosher & Chandra, (2010). These previous study confirmed that the more years of schooling, the lower the divorce rate found.

In this study, length of stay in marriage had a significant effect on marital communication. This result was consistent with the finding of Esere, Yusuf & Omotosho, (2011) who found that there was significant difference in the perception of respondents on the influence of spousal communication on marriage by length of years in marriage. Similarly, Awe (1996) found

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that there was a significant difference in the marital communication between spouses who were long married and recently married. Awe claimed that the first two to five years are the most critical period in which couples begin to learn about their differences. However, this result was inconsistent with the finding of Usoroh, Ekot, &Inyang (2010) who found that length of stay in marriage does not significantly influence marital communication of respondents.

The present study found that the mean score of marital communication for those whose age was 60 years old & above was higher than those whose age ranged from 18-39 years old. The differences were also statistically significant. Some studies have shown that communication behavior differs across age groups. For instance, findings indicate that older couples, compared to middle-aged couples, express less negative emotions, are more affectionate, and are less physiologically aroused during discussions (Levenson, Carstensen, & Gottman, 1994; Carstensen, Gottman, & Levenson, 1995). Furthermore, there seems less potential for conflict and more potential for pleasure in older couples than in middle-aged couples (Levenson, Carstensen, & Gottman,1993).

Regarding to marital stability, the result of this study designated that sex had a significant effect in which the mean score of marital stability for female respondents was higher than male respondents. This finding was consistent with the finding of Amato, Johnson, & Rogers, (2003), Basat (2004) and Jose and Alfons (2007) who found that sex of respondent had a significant effect on marital stability. Contrary to the present finding, Renaud et al. (1997) and Hamamci (2005), Christensen et al. (2006) study finding disclosed that sex was not a significant predictor for marital satisfaction and stability.

In our study, it was found that length of stay in marriage had a significant effect on marital stability. Respondents whose length of stay in marriage was less than five years were highly vulnerable to marital instability. This result was consistent with the study of Orden and Bradburn, (1968); Carlson & Stinson, (1982); Ogidan (1991); Karney & Bradbury (1995); Carstenson, Graff, Levenson & Gottman (1996). However, this study result yields contradicting with the previous research findings conducted by Fried & Stern (1948); Bossard & Boll (1955); Lipman (1961); Rollins & Feldman (1970); Stinnett et al. (1970, 1972); Rollins & Cannon (1974);Spanier, Lewis & Cole (1975) and Jose &Alfons (2007).These research results typically stated that there was no a significant difference between marital stability and length of stay in the marriage. Besides, Guo and Huang (2005) study result claimed that length of stay in marriage was unrelated withmarital satisfaction and stability.

The result of the current study illustrated that educational status had a statistically significant effect on marital stability by which illiterate respondents were highly vulnerable to marital instability than literate respondents. This study finding was similar with Johnson and Booth, (1990); Olson & Fowers (1993); Karney and Bradbury, (1995); Basat(2004); Guo and Huang (2005); Usoroh, Ekot, & Inyang (2010) who found that the higher level of education predicts greater marital stability. However, the finding was inconsistent with the previous study conducted by Cherlin, (1979); Janssen et al., (1998); Kalmijn, (1999) and Jose & Alfons, (2007) who found that higher education levels positively correlated with marital instability.

The result of this research clarified that age of respondents had a statistically significant effect on marital stability. The mean score of marital stability was lower for respondents whose age ranges from 18-39 years old. This result indicated the importance of supporting and strengthening the modalities for the marital relationship in this sensitive period. This outcome was similar to the study of Vakili, Baseri, Abbasi & Bazzaz, (2014) who admitted that age of respondents was identified as predictors of marital instability. Hence, the previous studies showed the marriage age as an affecting factor in the marital stability, which the age groups of 20-40 years were more susceptible to marital instability (Reyhani & Ajam, 2003; Delkhamoush, 2009 and Kulu, 2014). However, this result was not consistent with the previous research outcome of Gilford (1986) and Hill (2008) who argued that there was no relationship between age and marital stability.

The finding of the present study revealed that strong positive relationship between couple communication and marital stability was observed. The finding of the present study yields pertinent with the previous study conducted by Filanli (1984); Schwartz and Scott (1994); Allen & Olson (2001); Edward (2001); Mirahmadizadeh, Amroodi, Tatabai & Shafieian (2003) and Imhonde, Aluede & Ifunanyachukwu, (2008).These previous study result confirmed that open and rewarding communication whether verbal or non-verbal was essential for marital stability. Along with this, effective communication is the key to intimacy and family interaction. Moreover, Karney and Bradbury (1995) study result displayed that better communication is related to better stability, whereas ineffective communication is associated with marital instability. Besides, this study result was similar with various previous findings including Holman & Brock (1986); Metts & Cupach (1986); Gottman & Krokoff (1989); Fowers (1990); Burleson & Denton, (1997); Ledermann, Bodenmann, Rudaz, and Bradbury (2010). These studies suggested that effective communication contribute to happy, satisfying and stable marriage. Moreover, according to Idowu and Esere (2007), more than half of the failed relationships were because of communication problem between couples. Ineffective communication style also associated with an increased

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risk of divorce and marital separation (Esere, 2008). To conclude, the way couples handle their conflicts has a direct impact on distinct relationship outcomes.

V. Conclusion

High quality and supportive relationships are essential to develop healthy individuals in all aspects of life. Effective marital communication is a vital for marriage relationship or any other meaningful relationship. However, the determinations of various principal factors hinder couples' stable relationship. In this study, sex, age, educational status and length of stay in marriage had a significant effect on couples' communication. Consistently, the study showed that respondents' sex, age, educational qualification and length of stay in marriage had a significant influence on marital stability. Moreover, this study designated that there was a strong positive relationship between couple communication and marital stability.

VI. Recommendation

Based on the result and conclusion of the study, all concerned bodies, including counseling psychologists, marriage counselors, religious leaders and married couples shall provide the provision of marital counseling to couples before and after marriage in order to have a more stable marital relationship. All concerned governmental, non-governmental and civil society stakeholders shall work hand in hand to improve marriage counseling service for couples. Besides, Asella City administrators in collaboration with government and non- government organizations shall prepare marriage seminar, symposia and panel discussions for couples to raise awareness regarding the factors contributing to couple communication problems and marital instability. Additionally, the regional government in collaboration with researchers, experts, and counselors shall develop the structured system that enables them sustainably carry out critical goals relation to couple communication problems and marital instability. Hence, society particularly the family at large should cooperate to encourage the children to communicate openly and freely at family level.

VII. Limitation and Future Implication

In conducting this study, the usage of a structured instrument, trained data collectors, and supervised field workers to collect data from randomly selected couples decreases the likelihood of the occurrence of bias in the study. However, although the Amharic and Afan Oromo version of the instrument had revealed good reliability and feasibility, it was too hard to be quite sure that the translated tool retained their original psychometric properties in different cultural backgrounds of the study sites. Likewise, the researchers could not discuss this study finding with similar locally available study results. Due to this, it is difficult to generalize to other contexts. In line with this, further investigation would be recommended on the effect of marital support, sexual intimacy, attitude to marriage, love, gender roles and commitment on couple communication and marital stability.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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