

PARENTS AND CHILDREN'S VIEWS ON SELECTED ISSUES RELATING TO COMMUNICATION AMONG FAMILIES IN ONITSHA NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

The study focused on parents and children views on selected issues relating to communication among families in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State. The study adopted a survey research design. The Population for the study comprised of parents and children among sampled families in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State. Multi stage sampling was used in determining the sample size of three hundred and fifteen (315) parents and children among the different sampled families in Onitsha North Local Government Area. Ten item questionnaires and one null hypothesis were used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test. The findings indicated different issues that are related to communication in the families. It was also found that there were no significant communication differences on parents and their children's' views on the issues of communication in the families. Based on the findings, it was recommended that communication in the family needs to be significantly improved by active listening, response, and problem-solving.

Keywords: Parents, Children, Family, Communication. Issues

Introduction

A family is a household consisting of father, mother, sisters and brothers. It basically consists of married parents and their children. Green Heart Education (2014) states that the basic unit of society is the family, and define it as a household, no matter who the members are, so long as they are living together intentionally. The family as a social unit is the foundation of the society which provides a sense of security and identity for the child and is the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members particularly children. The family bears the primary responsibility for the education and socialization of children as well as instilling values of citizenship and belonging in the society (Egenti, 2014; Asuquo & Ekuri, 2004; High and Scharp, 2015). The family is the basic and essential building blocks of societies through socialization and communication in the families.

According to Alm, Olsen and Honkanen (2015) family communication is defined as the way in which verbal and non-verbal information is exchanged among family members. Egenti (2014) described family communication as the effectiveness and extent of the family's communicative competence. It involves family discussions, transmission of verbal and non-verbal messages, and disclosure of relevant information, polite complaints, messages and responses, and effective use of criticisms in families (Baumrind, 2005; Zhang, & Fuligni, 2006). It includes the ability to pay attention to what others are thinking and feeling. In other words, an important part of family communication is not just talking, but listening to what others have to say. It is more than the exchange of words between family members. It covers what family members listen, respond and what they neglect to say. It also includes facial expressions, gestures, posture, and vocal tones.

Families yearn for strength and security. In helping families reach these goals, appropriate communication will also help family members support each other in making vital environmental friendly changes in the way they live and love each other, earn and spend money together, and

impact the Earth together. Open communication in families provides a good start for children to understand human and societal dynamics (Epstein, Bishop. Ryan. Miller & Keitner, 1993). Without the best start in life for all children, there is no foundation for sustainable societies.

Effective communication is always found in strong, healthy families, poor communication is usually found in unhealthy family relationships. Marriage and family therapists often report that poor communication is a common complaint of families who are having difficulties (Iwokwagh.Onasanya & Onasanya, 2010; Koerner 2010). Poor communication is unclear and indirect. It can lead to numerous family problems, including excessive family conflict, ineffective problem solving, lack of intimacy, and weak emotional bonding (Chinweobo-Onuoha & Onuoha, 2009). Green Heart Education (2014) clearly pointed out that poor communication in families leads to family social dysfunction which in turn leads to barrier to families developing efficient economies; hindrances to families going green, and poor social and economic well-being and values can lead to disrespect for self and disregard among each other.

An ideal family is one where members provide emotional support; problems are solved through conversations and discussions; family cohesion is emphasized; feelings are expressed openly; communication is clear; abuse and conflict between members are minimal (Epstein et al. 1993). Whether such ideal communication exist in families in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State needs to be investigated. This is because; it appears that one of the most difficult challenges facing families today is communication (Egenti, 2014). There were speculations that children and parents in families do not engage in ideal communication. Consequently, family conflicts, adjustment problems, and other forms of family deprivations abound in families, thus limiting families' capacities to contribute. In the face of these speculations, it becomes pertinent to investigate communication related issues among families in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the views of parents and their children on selected issues relating to communication among families in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State. Specifically, the study tried to find out the views.

1. Parents and children on selected issues such as to respect to others view, listening to others, opinion and telling the truth during family communication.

Research Questions

A research questions was stated to guide the study as follows:

1. What are the views of parents and their children on selected issues relating to communication in the family?

Hypothesis

The below null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant different in the mean response of parents and children on selected issues relating to communication in the family.

Methodology

Design of the study:

The study utilized a survey design to collect relevant information for the study on the views of parents and children on selected issues relating to communication among families in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State. It was calculated from the responses elicited from respondents through questionnaires.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State Nigeria.

The inhabitants include business minded individuals, farmers, artisans, traders and workers in the government and public establishments in the State.

Population of the Study:

The population for this study comprised of parents (Father and mother of each child) and their children in households in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State. This consisted of seven thousand four hundred and seventy two (7,472) parents and three thousand, seven hundred and thirty five (3,735) of their children in three thousand, seven hundred and thirty five households. This number is based on data collected from the Anambra State Ministry of Information and Culture in March 2014.

Sample and sampling technique

Multi stage sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. This technique according to Eboh (2009) involves a procedure whereby the selection of units into the sample is organized in stages. Stage one is used purposive sampling to select the villages and households in Onitsha North Local government area to be 105 with 210 parents (father and mother). Stage two purposive sampling is used to select range children in secondary schools. Stage three random sampling is used to select children (students) to be class three in secondary schools which are 105. Each child (student) selected, the parents were selected except where there is only one parent. Therefore the total sample size for the study was three hundred and fifteen (315).

Instrument for Data Collection

One set of researcher-developed questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The structured, questionnaire items for collecting data in accordance with the specifications of research questions and hypothesis was designed or constructed. The questionnaire items were produced based on information collected from related literature. The questionnaire contained nine items of five point likert scale of Strongly agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree and Strongly Disagree and with assigned scores of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

The instrument was subjected to face validation by producing draft copies of the questionnaire. This was given to three experts in the Home Economics Department, Federal College of Education (Technical) Umunze in Anambra state who critically examined the items included with the specific purpose of the study and made useful suggestions that improved the quality of the instrument. Their recommendations, advice, suggestions and observations were used to review the questionnaire items. To determine the reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire item was administered to five households in another different state Rivers state. This was to ensure that the respondents used in the reliability testing were excluded from the study sample. Their responses was subjected to reliability test using Cronbach alpha coefficient which result was 0.73 and was considered reliable for it to be used in collecting data for the study.

Methodology

Method of Data Collection

Three hundred and fifteen (315) questionnaires were administered to all the respondents sampled. The opinion of parents and children (students) in the sampled households was collected with the help of research assistants. However, three hundred and nine (309 copies) were returned. The remaining six (6) copies to what happened were not returned.

Method of Data Analysis

Frequency counts, mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected. Any item with a mean score of 3.50 and above was regarded as agreed. Similarly, any item scored below 3.50 was regarded as disagreed. T-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 significant level. The decision rule was to accept a hypothesis when the calculated t was less than the critical t and reject if the calculated t was greater than the critical t.

Results

The following findings were made:

Table 1: Mean Responses of Parents and Children on their Views Relating to Selected Issues in Family Communication

Issues Relating to Family Communication	Responses			
	X ₁	X ₂	t-cal	Remarks
1. Family members listen attentively and respond warmly to one another despite their busy schedules.	1.51	1.49	0.21	Not Significant
2. Family members clearly express criticisms and complaints without restrictions.	1.76	1.70	0.76	Not Significant
3. Family members discuss family problems and ways of resolving them.	1.94	2.01	1.74	Not Significant
4. Family members shun or yell at one another during conversations.	2.94	2.85	0.98	Not Significant
5. to children in families without much opportunity	3.05	3.18	2.00	Not Significant

6.	Parents pass information for discussion. Family members fondly exchange a lot of loving gestures, jokes, and humours.	3.56	3.67	1.79	Not Significant
7.		1.60	1.57	0.38	Not Significant
8.	Family members find it easy to talk to people within the family whenever they feel bad.	3.01	2.95	0.54	Not Significant
9.	Family members make out time to discuss their hobbies and days' activities.	2.79	2.80	0.84	Not significant

Family members praise one another over achievements.

Notes: \bar{X}_1 Mean responses of children; $\bar{X}_2 = \bar{M}$ Mean responses of parents; $df=307$; $t\text{-cal}$ = calculated t-test result; $P.O.05$; $t\text{-table}= 1.96$.

Table 1 shows that items 1, 2, 3 and 7 had mean ratings within the ranges of 1.49 and 2.01, thus indicating that in the views of parents and children, there were disagreements on the selected issues in family communication. With mean ratings ranging from 2.80 to 3.67 in the remaining three items, the parents and children were of the view that those issues occur in family communication.

The table also shows that only item 5 was significant because its calculated t result is larger than the table value. The t-calculated values for the remaining eight items were less than the t-table of 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there was no significant difference between the views of parents and children on issues relating to communication in families.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study show that parents and children indicated that there are similar issues relating to communication in families. It was also found that there were no significant differences on parents and their children's extent in views on family communication. This finding is consistent with those of Devall (2004) and High and Scharp (2015) who observed that parents and children in families often share similar views on how their family members communicate with one another.

It should be pointed out that many parents and children in the families in this study reported relatively high levels of communication in terms of: praising one another over abilities, promotions or accomplishments, free exchange of a lot of spontaneous discussions, jokes and humours among family members and discussion of hobbies and day's activities with interest- The three aspects are among the nurturing communication acts which Egenti (2014) have noted, are essential for facilitating strengthened relationships, more family togetherness, less contention, clearer expectations, increased family unity, more family support, and a warmer family atmosphere. These communication acts are consequential not only for the communication within families, but also for the emotional climate of family relationships, how families approach problem solving, coordination of behaviors, and conflict behaviors, among others. However, both parents and children perceived similar low levels of communication with respect to family members listening

and responding nicely to one another no matter how busy they really are; and talking about problems encountered in the family and how to resolve them. Similarly both parents and children indicated a high extent of family members passing information to others without much opportunity for discussion and shunning or yelling at one another during discussions.

This finding is consistent with Peterson (2012) who found that many parents yell, shun and pass information to children in their families without detailed discussion. Chinweobo-Onuoha & Onuoha (2009) also found that many parents only inform their family members of major decision issues without actually involving them in the communication process. Even when children for instance go to them for clarifications, they do not listen to the children nor make clarifications to help them understand what they are expected to do. The reason for this might be that the parents do these to communicate vital information and to ensure strict conformity to any directive contained in such information. Such parents expect the children to accept their parents' regulatory messages, even if they are offered without much opportunity for discussion. Based on this finding, it appears that as perceived by both parents and children, their families lack many nurturing communication acts. This could explain why Uwe, Asuquo and Ekuri. (2004) observe that many Nigerian families with adolescent children have difficulty communicating and solving family problems. This finding is also consistent with Zhang and Fuligni, (2006) finding that Chinese parents perceived their families as lacking in open communication among members. Conclusion based on the findings of this study, one can now reach a number of conclusions about family communication in Onitsha North LGA of Anambra State. First, poor communication exists in many families and this is not likely to support or promote sustainable development. Second, healthy communication with the child is one of the most important and rewarding skills that one can develop as a parent. However, many parents tend to think that they can communicate to their children using shouting, withholding of information or yelling actions. Children on their own part appear not to be free in communicating openly with their parents. Such communication is superfluous or ineffectual not only fail to resolve problems, but will also contribute to a lack of intimacy and emotional bonding between family members. With proper training, life-style modification, guidance and counselling, families may ease these challenges and strengthen their families for sustainable development.

Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Regular counselling and family retreats and therapies of this study should be organized for parents by government
2. Ways of communication of Parents and children in families should be improved among families using this study.
3. This study can be communicated to families through television, radios etc to bridge the geographical, social and economic gaps in family communication.

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