



**THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN RESOLVING CONFLICTS
BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN. A CASE STUDY OF KATONDO
COMMUNITY IN KABWE DISTRICT - ZAMBIA**

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband James and my son Jaeste. Their love,encouragement and support in my academic endeavours are inspiring.

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I would like to recognize the following people for their efforts and the unfailing support rendered to me during my research and year of study. I thank the almighty God for his grace has been so abundant and for sustaining me throughout my year of study. To my family, words cannot describe it all, I am forever grateful.

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It is the support of the individuals mentioned as well as many more who have remained unnamed that allowed for the successful research and report. God bless you all!

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DECLARATION

I declare that this is my work and no other persons work. Would also like to acknowledge the originality of the undertaken research and its findings, this is including the final dissemination of the Dissertation.

ESTELLA MWANSA BOWA

Sign ... Estella Mwanse

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This dissertation of **Estella Mwansa** has been approved partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Sciences in Peace, Leadership and Conflict Resolution

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ABSTRACT

Conflicts between parents and children have been in existence from time in memorial. Communication strategies are important in all relationships. However, communication plays an essential role in family functioning during the growth of a child, and a good parent and child relationship cannot be sustained without open and healthy communication (Xia et al. 2004). Research indicates that the main educator and influence in the lives of our children are their parents and guardians (ACE Bulletin June 2004). Communication strategies can be verbal, nonverbal or visual. Integrating all the strategies together usually helps parents and children understand each other and eliminate conflicts in their households. Therefore, the study set out to investigate the actual role communication plays in parent-child conflicts.

The survey was conducted in Katondo community of Kabwe. A total of 102 respondents were selected, from 51 systematically selected households. 10 participants were selected for a Focus Group Discussion. The goal was to investigate the role of communication in resolving conflicts between parents and children. I specifically set out to find out the knowledge on communication strategies and conflict among parents and children, to determine the types of communication strategies between parents and children, to investigate the role of communication on conflicts between parents and children and finally to establish the challenges faced by parents and children on communication for conflicts resolution. The results of the study indicated that the targeted sample comprised of more males than female participants and they were all between 12 to 50 years of age. Educated but the majority was more illiterate. There were a significant number of non-biological families of step children and parents but the majority was from biological families.

The survey discovered that communication played a moderate role in resolving conflicts between parents and their children. Parents had full knowledge on family conflicts and communication strategies whilst children understood conflicts but had partial knowledge on communication strategies. This was revealed from scores obtained from interviews and the focus group. The results of the survey revealed that before, during or after a conflict, the parent's strategy to communicate their standing was by silencing the situation and saying the last word. Children showed or communicated their reactions to conflicts by staying calm or listen to what their parents said.

The study concluded that the majority of respondents came from households practicing conformity. Results from the survey interviews showed that the parents and children felt communication neither solves nor escalate their conflicts. From the focus group the result made it clear that parent and children felt communication played a moderate role in resolving their conflicts. The survey discovered two major challenges "negative communication" and "differences personal interests". Others included hostility, criticism attacks, lack of respect and defensiveness. The study concluded that communication strategies were not intentionally practiced was or non-existent in many scenarios in sample. Conflicts between parents and children were an on-going phenomenon. Communication strategies were only applied to avoid a conversation. Parents were hostile and did not offer their children a chance to express themselves in any way. Children were holding on to grudges and resorted to disrespectful behaviour because they could not air their feeling to parents. Therefore, communication played a moderate role in

many scenarios in sample. Conflicts between parents and children were an ongoing phenomenon. Communication strategies were only applied to avoid a conversation. Parents were hostile and did not offer their children a chance to express themselves in any way. Children were holding on to grudges and resorted to disrespectful behaviour because they could not air their feeling to parents. Therefore, communication played a moderate role in resolving conflicts between parents and their children because it only silenced situations. Therefore, the researcher recommended customary and civil rights training on family communication strategies in resolving conflicts. Generally parents were advised to offer a listening ear to their children and children should apply respectful communication strategies to their parents in resolving conflicts.

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CHAPTER ONE

The first chapter presents the introduction to the concepts of communication, parent-child conflicts and the communication strategies that have been revealed by other scholars. The chapter is also comprised of the background of the main concepts and study area, statement of the problem, aim or Purpose of the study, general and specific objectives can be general and specific, the research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study, operational definitions and the ethical considerations.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Conflicts between parents and children have been in existence from time in memorial. Communication strategies are important in all relationships. However, communication plays an essential role in family functioning during the growth of a child, and a good parent and child relationship cannot be sustained without open and healthy communication (Xia et al. 2004). Research indicates that the main educator and influence in the lives of our children are their parents and guardians (ACE Bulletin June 2004).

Ascan (2005) stated that in the broadest sense, family communication can be defined as all interactive behaviours of family members that establish family roles, maintain family rules, accomplish family functions, and sustain behavioural patterns in families (Vangelisti, 2004). In other words, all verbal and nonverbal behaviours by which family members affect one another and enact their interpersonal relationships with each other. The breadth of this conceptualization of family communication has the advantage that it opens for investigation by communication scholars all interpersonal behaviours.

In addition, this conceptualization makes explicit the fact that interpersonal relationships are complex and that virtually any type of behaviour can be interpersonally meaningful. Finally, this conceptualization highlights some of the underlying assumptions about family communication that researchers are making.

The first and probably most important of these assumptions is that family communication is a function of both psychological and interpersonal processes (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a, 2004). This means that family communication has an unequivocally empirical component in family

members' behaviours that is observable by family members as well as by outsiders, such as researchers or counsellors. In addition, however, family communication also has a psychological component residing within each family member's cognition that is neither observable nor controllable by anybody, except maybe the family member him- or herself. As a consequence, each family member is aware of an interpersonal behaviour partially determines the meaning of that interpersonal behaviour individually and idiosyncratically, regardless of any intentions by the actor or any interpretations of the behaviours by others. That means that every interpersonal behaviour can, and frequently does, have multiple meanings in the family context, without there being a final arbiter determining meaning for all family members.

Communication strategies can be verbal, nonverbal or visual. Integrating all the strategies together usually helps parents and children understand each other and eliminate conflicts in their households. Verbal communication can be broken into two categories of written and oral communication. Written strategies consist of avenues such as e-mail, text, and chat. Examples that fall into the oral category are phone calls, video chats and face to face conversation. Non-verbal consists mostly of visual cues such as body language, facial expressions, physical distance between communicators, or the tone of your voice. These cues are typically not intended. However, it is important to realize the message you are sending. Otherwise you may be saying one thing, yet the receiver is hearing another. Visual strategies can be seen through signs, and illustrations. Therefore, the study intended to ascertain the types of communication strategies that were used by parents and children.

Therefore, it is crucial that parents can effectively communicate with their children, especially with their youth. Communication strategies are imperative to create high quality relationships between parents and teens in order to promote understanding and discussion regarding urgent topics that are vital to this relationship (Jaccard, Dittus, & Gordon 2000).

In the broadest sense, therefore, family communication can be defined as all interactive behaviours of family members that establish family roles, maintain family rules, accomplish family functions, and sustain behavioural patterns in families (Vangelisti, 2004). In other words, all verbal and nonverbal behaviours by which family members affect one another enact their interpersonal relationships with each other. The breadth of this conceptualization of family communication has the advantage that it opens for investigation by communication scholars all

interpersonal behaviours. In addition, this conceptualization makes explicit the fact that interpersonal relationships are complex and that virtually any type of behaviour can be interpersonally meaningful. Finally, this conceptualization highlights some of the underlying assumptions about family communication that researchers are making.

Like family communication, interpersonal conflict, including family conflict, has both psychological and behavioural attributes and can be defined in both terms. One example of a psychologically based definition of conflict is perceived goal incompatibility (Fincham, Bradbury, & Grych, 1990). In this definition, conflict is the perception by at least one person that another person is blocking the first person from achieving a personal, relational, or instrumental goal. That is, for there to be interpersonal conflict in this definition, the other person or persons in the relationship do not even have to be aware that the original person is perceiving an incompatibility of goals or goal blockage. Because in this definition conflict is not necessarily expressed in interpersonal behaviour, most scholars interested in interpersonal communication employ more behavioural-oriented definitions. Examples include Cahn (1992), who identified three types of conflict communication as specific disagreements—problem solving discussions, and unhappy/dissolving relationships, respectively; Donohue and Kolt (1992), who defined conflict “as a situation in which interdependent people express (manifest or latent) differences in satisfying their individual needs and interests, and they experience interference from each other in accomplishing these goals” (p. 4; emphasis added); and Straus (1990), whose Conflict Tactics Scales measures behavioural manifestations of conflict such as problem solving, yelling, and pushing.

Children redefine their roles as decision makers and seek equalitarian relationships. Parents resist their children's newly acquired attitude with a strong stance claiming that it is their domain. Conflicts between parents and their children have continued to rise especially in this era of a mixed society of African tradition and modern cultures (Xia et al 2004). Most parents and children work through turbulent and emotional times; however, some youth choose to run away from home or divorce their parents (Vogl-Bauer, Kalbfleisch, & Beatty 1999). Because many agree that conflict is inevitable in the parent and children relationship, having the skills and strategies to resolve such discord is essential to a successful relationship.

Living with others increases the opportunity for all types of interaction, especially conflict. Struggles between parents and their children are common manifestations of family life. In fact, families may have more conflict than other social groups. Prior theory and research regarding Western, individualist cultures suggest that as such contact and interdependence between people increases, conflict becomes more likely and more frequent (Braiker and Kelley 2009). However, in Eastern collectivist cultures, the increase in conflict may not result in such situations due to a preference for no confrontation (Chua and Gudykunst 2007). However, virtually no research examines how family communication in conflict differs based upon culture. Some reasons for this paucity of research are discussed in the conclusion. This entry focuses on research describing the nature of parent-child conflict from a Western perspective.

As with marital relationships, an average amount of conflict between parents and children is difficult to determine, although there are estimates (Montemayor 1986). The frequency of conflict appears to be linked with child development. For example, the highest number of conflicts—mother-child interactions—occurred with two-year-olds versus children who were eighteen months or three years old (Dunn and Munn 1987). Among adolescents, conflict interactions tend to increase until about the age of fifteen, and then subside in later adolescence. Parent-child conflict is probably related to parental development as well, though research is currently less definitive in this area.

An article by Bob (2006), on managing conflict in parent – teen relationships stated that children and their parents have conflict. How their conflicts are managed was critical. If these conflicts are not managed constructively, families divide. Behaviour and relationships degrade. Criminal conduct may follow.

Because parents and children care about each other, emotions exaggerate their differences. Openly acknowledging and managing these emotions is the key to managing parent - teen conflicts constructively.

Parents and their teens have more things in common than they think. Both share: frustration, stress, time pressures, disappointment, financial stress, and fear of failure. They both want the best for each other. How they deal with these feelings and desires can create disconnects. It can also be a basis for managing conflict constructively.

When communication starts breaking down, emotional tension increases. Communication becomes more difficult and constructive conflict resolution more difficult. Conflict can spin out of control.

Underlying all constructive conflict management understands the feeling that you are understood and understanding the situation from the other perspective. Knowing that you are understood creates respect for you and your position. Understanding a situation from the other perspective creates an environment that fosters formulation of mutually beneficial solutions.

This is much easier said than done. Anything that creates common understanding contributes positively to constructive conflict management. Forcefully stating your case isn't one. Stephen Covey says it best. "Seek first to understand. Then be understood".

Asking open-ended questions that begin with: how, when, where, do, what or is, is a great place to start. Tensions ease and the shift to problem solving come naturally. A great resource describing in more detail how to apply this is the book "I Don't Have to Make Everything All Better" by Gary and Joy Lundberg.

Not all conflicts are resolved this easily. Tougher situations require a mechanism that keeps underlying emotional tension in control. The following is an excerpt from a parent-teen agreement that was co-mediated a few years ago. Both parent and teen had anger management issues. This is how they agreed to handle future conflicts.

A. Communication: Issues from the past will stay in the past. Honesty between parties will be maintained. All parties agree that everyone needs to be informed. When communication does occur, the following rules are to be kept, no:

1. Name calling
2. Swearing
3. Saying Hurtful Things

B. Issues will be discussed in a calm manner. Should conversations become heated, both parties agree to physically separate.

C. After roughly 15 minutes, each will sit down and write out what they are angry about. When both are done writing they will exchange the papers containing what they are angry about. Both will give the other time to read what is angering the other. Each will then ask “What would you like to see happen?” From there both will listen and develop a workable solution.

D. Should an agreement not be reached after this, parties will alternate getting their way. A record of the last person to get their way will be kept.

E. Agreements made regarding bed and curfew times shall be written and displayed in an area accessible to all (Barclay, 1982)

Will this work in every situation? No. Please treat this as an example of constructively restructuring interactions.

A rule of thumb when managing conflicts is that each party takes 75% of the responsibility for a constructive outcome. 75% means putting forth extra effort. The other 25% recognizes that there is only so much you can do.

Some conflict cannot be managed constructively by those involved. Conflicts that keep recurring are highly emotional, or where resolution isn't reachable by the disputants themselves, are candidates for mediation.

Mediation, very simply is a confidential discussion with a neutral third party for the purpose of managing conflict constructively. Confidential means what is said in the mediation doesn't leave the room. As a neutral third party the mediator does not take sides, give advice or offer solutions. Mediators establish and maintain a discussion environment that is safe, balanced, constructive and focused.

Beyond conflict frequency, one of the most rudimentary features of conflict management is whether an issue is engaged or avoided. Engagement involves overt, verbal confrontation. Avoidance can take many forms, including withholding complaints, evading discussion of sensitive issues, and defensively withdrawing from a conflict discussion. Different families establish different norms regarding the frequency with which conflicts are engaged or avoided.

An important feature of parent-child relationships that may affect the negativity of conflicts is that the relationships are not voluntary. In other words, children do not pick their parents. Like marriage partners, parents and their offspring develop considerable intimacy. More so than spouses, however, parents and their children are "bound" in a family relationship, which can serve to intensify serious conflicts between them, and family disputes often represent underlying relational struggles regarding power or intimacy (Emery 1992).

Regardless of the "involuntary" nature of parent-child relationships, family conflict has the potential to positively impact children. Specifically, childhood conflict interactions can contribute positively to personal and social development. Moreover, parents can develop their negotiation skills in conflicts with their children. To garner such positive rewards from conflict interactions, family members need two basic skills for conflict management: flexibility versus rigidity and the ability to manage conflict without escalating the severity of the problem.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The survey was conducted in Kabwe's Katondo compound. Kabwe is the capital of the Zambian Central Province with a population estimated at 202,914 at the 2010 census. Formerly named Broken Hill, it was founded when lead and zinc deposits were discovered in 1902. Kabwe also has a claim to being the birthplace of Zambian politics as it was an important political centre during the colonial period. It is an important transportation and mining centre.

The study had children involved in the sample. The children were a general term making reference to all young people. The 2006 Zambia National Youth Policy defines youth as those between 18–35 years old; while the Census 2010, defines youth as 15–35 years old population. The UN defines a young person, as a person aged 10–24 years (comprising of adolescents 10–19 and youth defined as 15-24 years). Data has been disaggregated by age to capture various dimensions of indicators that may be of interest for programming. There is need to harmonize

and agree upon one national definition of the age-cohort based definitions for children, as this has implications for targeting age-relevant policies and programmes. The current updating of the National Youth Policy (2013) is an opportunity to do so.

A great deal is said about the importance of children's participation and voice. In reality, however, young people, especially girls and young women, rarely have the opportunities or the encouragement to be active advocates or leaders making the very decisions in family or community on conflict resolution in Zambia. They are often absent in these public spaces, whether in school, the work place or community.

Successful passage through adolescence into responsible adulthood requires that children are provided with opportunities to participate in decision making processes, hold leadership positions including school committees and discharge responsibility. Equally important is to ensure that young people have the abilities and feel safe to communicate their views and be able grow their communication and facilitation strategies and capacities to plan, organize and manage conflicts along this path of growing young leaders for the future of community and country.

The contributions young people can make, with new ideas, creative expression, use of multimedia techniques to access information and to communicate, all bring an added value to conflict resolution. The participation of young people, both in Zambia and across Africa and the world, in the Post 2015 dialogues, stand testament to this.

Research conducted by the Population Council notes that youth-centred programmes tend to neglect particular sub-populations. Such a 'missing' cohort are boys and girls aged 10–14 years. They remain outside the official national definition of youth, and are often not captured in the child-focused interventions. These adolescents, particularly from poor and vulnerable households, require specifically targeted efforts through education, health, life skills and social services, that support their communication skills from child to adulthood (UN, 2013).

Targeted communication skills programmes can be based on a full socio-economic analysis of young people's life circumstances and situation analysis at the community level. If not, the target groups tend to be too generalized and the suggested interventions vague. For example, research has shown that the target group for communication skills intervention programmes often includes

married adolescents, working adolescents, young couples, pregnant adolescents, and rural young people, but may not differentiate between them, and hence their different needs.

Knowing exactly where and why young people gather is essential to planning well designed and targeted support them. Through appropriate social mapping, policy makers can take advantage of where young people live and meet; and what they look for and need in their cultural settings, the workplace, recreational settings, and within interest groups. Such must always be disaggregated by male and female, as often times these spaces may only be the domain of one cohort, such as, for example, recreational centers used only by older post-teen-age boys.

With 20.8% of the population between 15-24 years and 36.7 % between 15-35 years, Zambia currently has the largest population of young people in its history. Persons below 15 and 18 years constitute 45.5 % and 52.5 % of the total population respectively. This demographic is critical to the attainment of the nation's development objectives, including those contained in its Vision 2030. For this to happen there is a need for sustained and strategic investment in proper communication skills in young people. Young people in Zambia continue to face multiple challenges, some as faced by young people the world over such as exclusion in settlement of conflicts in the household because of cultural norms. For example, teenagers in Zambia are mostly used as tools for violence especially during times of political campaigns or mob justice. At the same time, they also have a myriad of opportunities that can be availed of and more optimally utilized to realize their full potential. Charity begins at home, children nurtured with effective communication skills tend to provide workable communication strategies when they become parents. 20.8% of the population between 15-24 years and 36.7 % between 15-35 years, Zambia currently has the largest population of young people in its history.

Parent-child relationship problems may be the result of family disruptions such as divorce, illness, unemployment, a move, death or other various social factors that affect the functioning of a family. The disruptions may be of a mild, moderate, or severe level. Their time factor may be acute or chronic. From the Child's side of the conflict the behaviour may be of an oppositional/defiant nature, some form of conduct disorder, ADD and /or Hyperactivity disorder and other neurological or psychiatric problems which should always be ruled out or in before seeing the problems as isolated conflicts. It is typical that there are other issues that underlie and precede the conflict problem. Various forms of abuse or neglect are areas that cause conflict.

Such may relate to the parent's behaviour or others in the home or outside the home. The emotional field for the child is composed of anger, hurt, confusion and mistrust. Alienation is the prominent result of the relationship for the child. Out of this alienation develops rebellion to rules, withdrawal from family activities, and disinterest in family matters, manipulative behaviours, and passive or aggressive anger responses especially when desires are ignored or denied by the parent. The overall efforts of the child are to punish others and protect their interests.

From the parent's side, the relationship forms out of pursuing the child's attention and acceptance of parental authority. Frequently one parent is over involved or enmeshed in trying to control the child. The other parent may be distant or withdrawn from the child and or other parent. Typically, there are marital conflicts underlying the parenting efforts. Parents also tend to be reacting to their own family or origin issues with their parents. In some way, they may be attempting to avoid or compensate for the parenting they received. They may be recreating their own family of origin chaos and conflicts. These present day conflicts maintain a connectedness between family members that otherwise is not known how to achieve. Herein lays some major data and understanding to the parent-child conflict. Many parents are reactive in their relationship with their child. A skill defect exists, plus there is little role modelling of how to nurture a child relationship. Hence, a base for knowing how to nurture is inadequate or non-existent. Other social factors may be so stressful that the parent's attention and energy are not there for the child. Developmental tasks and stages are often distorted or delayed, sometimes as much for the parent as for the child. Parents stuck in a delayed developmental stage are going to parent out of this stage with its version of insight and problem solving ability. The child may be trying to deal with the expectations of society for his age yet the previous developmental tasks are suspended, failed or inadequately achieved.

The parent-child relationship in conflict is a systemic entanglement of competing and confusing social, developmental and cognitive factors, past and present for parent and child. The relationship is one of power struggle, mutual manipulation, poor relationship and problem solving skills. Parental skill in nurturing and disciplining a child is often a deficit as is the child's ability to receive and accept either. Enmeshment characterizes one kind of parent-child dyad.

Enmeshment simultaneously connects the two emotionally while alienating the two behaviourally. Distance characterizes the other parent-child dyad. Distance suspends some form of connection through trying to achieve closeness. Both parent and child attempt to have intimacy but it is shorted out by other relationship problems or the anxiety of such intimacy may surface in both parent and child. Conflict unresolved through power struggles and skill defects becomes the unfortunate connection that maintains some form of relationship between parent and child. When the family member attempts to resolve this conflict, resistance is struck because this is often the primary, most comfortable or known way for family members to relate together. Generally, based on the background information above, Zambia had minimal close to no information specifically on children and parent's issues concerning the role of communication on the conflicts they face in the study area. The above background indicated as to why there is dire need for large scale research into the matter because communication strategies were applied in homes but conflict was on the rise between children and parents.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Conflicts between parents and children had continued to occur in homes that applied communication strategies and had access to family communication skills programmes. Many strategies had been implemented to enhance communication between parents and their children, some had worked but up to date conflicts between them still rose. Scaling up this issue to local communities, the matter had reached alarming levels. Homes have been broken because communication has been taken for granted as the main solution. There are many forms and types of communication strategies that exists for families but even after exposure to them, many homes still break in local communities. This had stimulated the need to know the actual effect and the role of communication between parents and their children. According to Xia et al.'s (2004) study of Chinese adolescence, indicated from their results that good parent and child communication was positively associated with cohesion and negatively associated with conflict. This could be true in Chinese societies but may not be the same and effective elsewhere.

1.3 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

After adequate review of literature, this research was in line with what other scholars have done. The role of communication on conflicts between parents and children was discovered to be both

negative and positive (Wierson, Nousiainen, Forehand, & Thomas, 1992). The researcher is justified to undertake the study because there is insufficient information on the true role and effect of communication on conflicts between parents and children in local communities. A Zambian community was the best area to conduct such a research therefore results obtained had filled in the gaps and provided data to the already existing body of knowledge on the subject matter and also stimulate further investigations concerning the true role of communication on family conflicts between children and parents.

1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study covered the concepts of communication on parents-children conflicts. The study focused on the positives and negative effects on communication on family conflicts. The study was not bounded to a commonly held perception that communication has a positive effect on parent-children conflicts. The study was designed for and conducted in a local Zambian community.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study aimed at being a hopeful solution when children and parents are in conflict. To help them understand the relationship between poor parent and children communication strategies, the inability to resolve conflict, and the children's present and future potential to be involved in family conflicts. The purpose of this study was to examine the role of communication on conflicts between parents and children in order to offer working recommendations and strategies to communities facing high parent and children conflicts. The information has added to the body of knowledge on this topic. The study provided in-depth information on the actual role of children-parent state of communication on their conflicts. The information was significant in that direct views from the community level are going to be obtained and used to offer workable strategies and recommendations on how to improve or maintain parent-child communication skills. The study was also carried out as a prerequisite to the partial completion of the researcher's academics.

1.6 STUDY OBJECTIVES

1.6.1 MAIN OBJECTIVE

To investigate the role of communication in resolving conflicts between parents and children.

1.6.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To find out the knowledge on communication strategies and conflict among parents and children
- ❖ To determine the types of communication strategies between parents and children
- ❖ To investigate the role of communication on conflicts between parents and children
- ❖ To establish the challenges faced by parents and children on communication for conflicts resolution

1.6.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- ❖ How knowledgeable are parents and children on communication strategies and conflicts?
- ❖ What are the types of communication strategies and conflicts between parents and children?
- ❖ How does communication influence conflicts between parents and children?
- ❖ What are the challenges that are faced between parents and children on communication?

1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following definitions were meant to enhance comprehension of the research that was conducted.

Keywords: Teen, Parent, Conflict, Communication, Relationships,

Child- adolescent, youth, young person, juvenile, youngster, a minor, in this cases those between the ages of 13 to 19.

Parent – kinship paternal or maternal father or mother, authority figure, leader, mentor, parent, idol, role model, boss, guide, example, influence, person of influence.

Conflict-difference: a disagreement or clash between ideas, principles, or people.

Resolution- resolving of something: the process of resolving something, the resolution of a difficulty.

Communication - exchange of information: the exchange of information between individuals, for example, by means of speaking, writing, or using a common system of signs or behaviour; to have a sense of rapport: a sense of mutual understanding and sympathy.

Relationships - behaviour or feelings toward somebody else: the connection between two or more people or groups and their involvement with each other especially as regards how they behave and feel toward each other and communicate or cooperate.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 presents the literature review, the text includes the a critiques of the validity of other literature, the section identifies gaps of knowledge on communication as tool for resolving conflicts between parents and children, it also states on how the findings proposed may contribute to the knowledge base of the area of study. Additionally, literature was reviewed in order to avoid duplication of work done by previous scholars. The chapter presents empirical evidence and theories by various scholars.

2.1.0 Empirical review of literature

2.1.1 Family Conflict

“Communication strategies are essential at each developmental stage of life for productive and harmonious relationships. Individuals disagree or have different opinions; conflict resolution skills are necessary to cope with these differences and remain within a positive relationship” (Reese-Weber, 2000:710). A major factor influencing family functioning and cohesion, particularly during adolescence, is the method used by families in dealing with and resolving disputes. Adolescents who are subjected to high levels of conflict in the home and low levels of support are at increased risk for psychological and behavioural problems ranging from low self-esteem to delinquency (Fondacero, Dunkle, & Pathak, 1998).

For years much attention has been given to the structure of the family as a predictor of delinquency; however, researchers argue that instead, it is the interactional patterns within the family that are better predictors. Davalos et al. (2005) reported that adolescent familial factors like parental influence, acceptance, and coherence all provide useful information regarding the effects of relationships regarding susceptibility to depression, anxiety, and substance abuse.

Greenberger and Chen (1996) sighted out depressed mood as the key affective disturbance of normal adolescence and attributed a greater number of stressful life events report to a more depressed mood. Therefore, the way a teenager will communicate the parents highly depends on the mood and is worsened if it is a depressed mood. When considering other variables such as

parenting style, parental warmth and support, control, and depressed mood in adolescence, conflict could prove to be quite volatile. Maternal issues may be more prominent in these situations because conflict with mothers appears to be more common than with fathers (Greenberger & Chen). They attribute these findings primarily due to mothers having greater day-to-day interaction with the teens.

There is also much to be said about the idea of procedural justice in resolving family disputes and family conflict. Procedural justice refers to the extent to which conflict resolution and other decision-making procedures are judged to be fair by those who are subjected to them. In contrast to distributive justice, which is based on people's concerns about the fairness of decision making outcomes, procedural justice is based on concerns about the fairness of the decision making process. (Fondacero et al. 1998: 101)

Research suggests that people care as much or more about how they are treated as they do about the outcome. In a study conducted by Fondacero et al. of over 240 families with specific disputes, the results indicated that overall judgments of procedural fairness were positively associated with family cohesion and psychological well-being. They also reported that the judgments were negatively related to family conflict and deviant behaviour. It appears that being treated in a respectful and trustworthy manner fosters healthy relationships that endorse effective communication.

Keeping in mind that conflict is inherent in the parent and teen relationship, researchers must be mindful not to mistake usual familial conflict with characteristics associated with more serious family matters. Conduct disordered children constitute the largest group of emotionally disturbed youth and are associated with dysfunctional family environments. They too often have conflict in the home that is not easily resolved. Their essential feature is "persistent pattern of conduct in which the basic rights of others and major age-appropriate societal norms or rules are violated. The behaviour pattern is typically present in the homes, at school, with peers, and in the community (Reed & Solille, 1992: 354). These children and families need therapeutic measures to meet their individual and unique requirements. It would, therefore, be immensely important not to overlook teens and their dysfunctional families as the norm in the scheme of adolescence parental growth.

2.1.2 Children's Outcomes

Lamborn and Nguyen (2004), reported that kinship support and paternal warmth are directly associated with teen outcomes such as self-reliance, work orientation, and school function. Other theorists report that the cause of poor relationships among parents and teens originates from the amount of time adolescents spend with parents as well as the type of communication, influence of family relations from factors such as intensity, duration, and frequency of conflict. Laird et al. (2003) linked anti-social behaviour problems in youth to less enjoyable relationships with their parents and the amount and quality of time they spent together. Bowles (1997:2) reported, "Simply spending time in the company of others may not be satisfying the need for assertive care, or provide the knowledge that care is available, if desired".

In his research, Montemayor (1982) used amount of time, as not just being in the same place but "feeling as if you and the other person were together, with parents, peers, and alone as the variable of interest (cited in Fallon & Bowles : 29). Many also report that disconnected teens who are not experiencing truly connected relationships with their parents end up making bad decisions that, in turn, may lead to living unsuccessful lives. A report from the 15th annual KIDS COUNT data book available online from the Anne E. Casey Foundation, provides a state-by-state statistical portrait of the educational health and economic conditions of American children. The 2004 essay focuses on the increasing number of "disconnected" youth, and indicates approximately 15% of youth, ages 18 to 24, are primarily among this group, and nearly 4 million disconnected youth face a greater likelihood of bad outcomes now and in the future (Mallette, 2004). These results indicate severe implication Montemayor (1982).

The concept of differentiation may be deductively inferred to when considering the improvement of the relationship and what may have led to the relationship issues. Avnir and Shor (1998) report that differentiation is a concept of Bowen's family systems theory that asserts that a family with a high level of differentiation, meaning a family that has a balanced relationship between separateness and connectedness will thrive. The key here is allowing teens to experience life along with their individuality, while remaining intimately close with their parents. This allows the teen to have a sense of self-esteem and independency while parents foster guidance and support.

2.1.3 Balanced Relationships

Xia et al.'s (2004) study of Chinese adolescence indicated from their results that good parent and child communication was positively associated with cohesion and negatively associated with conflict. Other researchers, asserting differentiation, reported that a family with a balanced relationship between separateness and connectedness is a family with a high level of differentiation (Avnir & Shor, 1998). The family systems theory contends that adolescent's progress through constant interactions with the family and this theory promotes interactions with larger social systems. Teens who are involved with decision making processes are found to be associated with good outcomes; however, being involved excessively with family decision making can lead to bad outcomes, especially in early adolescence (Xia et al. 2004). How persons communicate during interpersonal conflict is of paramount relevance in determining the quality and stability of their close interpersonal relationships, including family relationships. In the marital context, Gottman (1991, 1994) reported that couples that manage interpersonal conflict well in their relationships report greater relationship satisfaction, more love and respect for their partners, and greater commitment to their partners. Similar findings are reported for family conflict. Families that manage their conflicts well have more satisfied parents and children, and children perform better in school and in peer relationships (Sillars, Canary, & Tafoya, 2004).

The transition to adulthood from adolescence is developmentally challenging. One has to wonder if parenting practices during adolescence have effects on the well-being outcomes in young adulthood. Aquilino and Supple (2001) reported a study regarding parents' behavior toward their adolescent children and how it affects them as they move into young adulthood. Their results indicated that a coercive parenting style, high in conflict, was related to lower levels of self-esteem, life satisfaction, and self-efficacy. The results also indicated higher levels of hostile effect and irritability and poorer life adjustment (Aquilino & Supple, 2001).

One in four of young adults age 18 to 25 report his or her life satisfaction as low, and over the past 20 years this age group has higher rates of illicit drug use and the highest rate of binge drinking than any other age group (Aquilino & Supple, 2001). Studies indicate that parental behaviours and strategies are critical to both positive and negative development during adolescence (Peterson & Hann, 1999:290). Results suggest that parents' behaviour towards their adolescent has an influence on the well-being of the teens as they progress into adulthood.

Moreover, parents both directly and indirectly, have an effect on the psychological well-being of the young adult. Aquilino and Supple found “Parenting during adolescence influenced young adults’ drinking, smoking, and marijuana use, behaviours that may increase the risk of youth experiencing poorer health and well-being outcomes”.

In a study from Colorado State University regarding the effects of perceived parental school support and family communication on delinquent behaviours in Latinos and white non-Latinos, the researchers found, Focusing on parents’ involvement may be beneficial to all school-age adolescents. By implementing programs that provide parents with information that will aid them in their ability to communicate and emphasize education, we may be able to prevent acts of delinquency in diverse populations. (Davalos et al, 2005). Another study of sixth graders in conflict resolution role plays with peers, parents, and teachers reported, “implementing programs designed to enhance communication competency during the transition into adolescence may benefit youth by building skills useful for navigating challenges and potential pitfalls of new and varied social contexts that are experienced at this time,” (Borbely, Graber, Nichols, Brooks Gunn, & Botvin, 2005).

2.1.4 Family Communication

Studies suggest the greater the family communication the less likely teens are to engage in all types of delinquent behaviour, and this positive effect could be attributed to the teen feeling that someone cares about his or her problems, his or her life, and his or her future (Davalos, Chavez, & Guardiola, 2005). Once communication and family conflicts are identified as an issue, one must infer that there is also an issue with the relationship. Differential theory asserts that there needs to be a balance between separateness and connectedness in the parent and child relationship. In order to have sufficient boundaries and autonomy, yet include support and responsiveness, parents and teens need to have tolerance for both individuality and intimacy. A central quality of a good relationship is one in which there is dialogue. “Dialogue relates to the ability of two people to relate to each other in an open manner and to exchange ideas around subjects that are important to them while respecting the unique self-” Studies suggest the greater the family communication the less likely teens are to engage in all types of delinquent behaviour, and this positive effect could be attributed to the teen feeling that someone cares about his or

Another issue that must be considered in regard to effective communication skills between adolescents and parents is the amount and quality of time spent together. Fallen and Bowles (1997) indicated in their study that teens and parents are not experiencing close relationships and are not able to communicate. They attributed this to their time together as not being quality time and short in duration. One central issue to this theme is that teens naturally want to spend more time with their peers and less time with their families. However, some researchers report that this is due to more and more families simply not spending time together, resulting in teens seeking affection, alliance, and support elsewhere (Vernberg, Berry, Ewell, & Abwender, 1993). Linked to this could be Newman's (1989) study that reported diminished closeness and understanding between teens and their parents between the ages 11 and 17. Newman also reported that harmony combined with a sense of closeness within this age group and with younger adolescents resulted in the adolescents experiencing defiance and independence at a high level.

2.1.5 Monitoring

Monitoring knowledge is a concept that is directly linked to communication among teens and parents. Higher levels of monitoring knowledge would imply that parents would be informed of their children's whereabouts, friends, activities, etc. Also parents' lowered levels of monitoring knowledge would imply that they have been kept out of the loop and have little or no knowledge of their teens' activities. Lower monitoring knowledge has been linked to more anti-social behaviour in children. Higher monitoring knowledge has been linked to less anti-social behaviour. In addition, more time spent with children resulted in reports of more enjoyment between parents and children. Monitoring, not rigid control, has proven to be quite effective during adolescence and generates the vital communication between parents and children allowing parents to stay informed about their children's lives (Laird, Pettit, Dodge, & Bates: 2003).

Families with good communication skills help their youth to have better self-concepts that allow them to better connect with others. They are able to develop the social skills that are positively correlated with self-esteem, coping, well-being, and social support. Better family communication inspires adolescents to express themselves and their feelings more clearly as well as mediate the stress that comes with being a teen (Xia et al., 2004).

2.1.6 Compromise

This is defined as a type of communication where both parties are partially realized by the end of the conflict, submission characterized by having one clear winner and one loser, and the last form of conflict ending is when conflict issues are unresolved (Siddiqui & Ross, 1999). This pattern of conflict endings continues throughout development (e.g. middle childhood through adolescence), as reflected by children's statements that conflict with their siblings is more likely to be destructive than constructive and end without agreeable solutions (Raffaelli, 1992, Rinaldi & Howe, 1998). There is little existing literature on the correlation between children's conflict communication styles and consequent conflict endings. Similarly, Reese-Weber (2000) suggested that if a resolution style is used in one dyadic relationship, then it will most likely be used in other dyadic relationships in the family. The communication styles consist of compromise, which includes apologizing and working collaboratively; This is defined as a type of communication where both parties are partially realized by the end of the conflict, submission characterized by having one clear winner and one loser.

Riesch and her colleagues (2003) conducted a study to examine the thinking of parents and young teens about conflict and conflict resolution in their relationship. In their focus group research they found that the young teens thought parents or siblings initiated most disagreements and that such disagreements were routine, and handled conflict with their parents by trying to prevent it. If a conflict ensued, they used emotion, aggression, cooling off, accepting some of the blame, or submission to resolve it. Parents viewed the disagreements as representing their struggles with their role as a parent or opportunities to instill a sense of intrinsic responsibility in their child. Parents used the strategies of setting clear expectations, parental authority, negotiation, cooling down, and feedback to solve disagreements with their teenage children. Consequently they concluded that those parents and young teens do not use a systematic method of solving disagreements but that with structured guidance, the parents and teens were able to resolve conflicts. Using self-reports from 160 college students, Harp and his colleagues (2007) tested two alternative paths of influence between family communication patterns in young adults' family-of-origin and their communicative behaviour during conflicts with their romantic partners. Regression analysis revealed strong and significant associations between family communication patterns-related variables and reported communication behaviours during parent-

child conflicts as well as between reported conflict behaviours with parents and with romantic partners.

Shearman and Dumlao (2008) conducted a survey on young adults in Japan (n = 173) and the United States (n = 131) including family communication patterns instrument, conflict styles scale for the family setting, and a family communication satisfaction measure. Individual preferences for each conflict strategy were examined in relation to his or her cultural background and family communication patterns.

Results showed that across cultures, high conversation orientation was associated with the young adult's preference for integrating and compromising strategies in conflict with their parents, while high conformity orientation was associated with avoiding and obliging strategies. A strong positive correlation between conversation orientation and communication satisfaction was observed for both countries, while a strong negative correlation between conformity orientation and communication satisfaction was found for Americans. Çiftçi and her colleagues (2008) indicated in their study with 180 high school students from

Ankara, no significant interaction among level of loneliness, conflict resolution strategies, and type of relationship. However, there were significant interactions between conflict resolution strategies and type of relationship, and between conflict resolution strategies and level of loneliness.

Although studies suggested that a comprehensive assessment of parent-adolescent conflict would require a clinician to begin with a description of the topics and process of parent-adolescent conflict have been examined less frequently relative to other characteristics of such conflict. In the studies that have been completed, the majority of conflict between adolescents and their parents is about normal, mundane family matters (Renk et al. 2005; Montemayor 1983). These matters may include household responsibilities, privileges, social life and friends, disobedience, and intrafamilial relationship

Conflicts over matters such as responsibilities, privileges, and relationships are indicative of adolescents' desire for increased autonomy and independence from their parents (Renk et al. 2005; Younnis and Smollar 1985; Montemayor 1983). Conflicts over religious, political, or social issues occur less frequently (Renk et al. 2005; Steinberg et al. 1994), as do conflicts concerning

other potentially sensitive topics (Riesch et al. 2000). In contrast, it was suggested that deviance issues, such as lying and substance abuse, are mentioned almost as often as any other issue (Renk et al. 2005; Eckstein 2004; Lerner et al. 1998).

Furthermore, conflict over chores decrease with adolescent age, whereas reports of autonomy related issues, homework, and academic achievement increase with adolescent age (Smetana and Gaines 2003; Renk et al. 2005). Given these differences based on the gender and age of adolescents, conflicts between adolescents and their parents regarding these matters also may differ with the gender and age of adolescents.

2.7 Literature Review

Conflicts are a regular phenomenon in family life. It can be assumed that family-centred experiences are at the basis of the child's development. Therefore, the analysis of the consequences of parental conflicts on the child is of fundamental importance. The effects of parental conflict behaviours on the child's condition have been widely researched since the 1980's. However, the focus of this research has predominantly been on the negative consequences of these behaviours. This includes particularly the finding that parental conflicts can lead to children's maladjustment, which in turn results in negative effects on social, cognitive, educational and psycho-biological functions (Cummings & Davies, 2002). In this literature review, a more differentiated approach to the topic is adopted, which encompasses both positive and negative effects of parental conflict behaviours on the child's condition and behaviour. A parental conflict is considered a disagreement that leads to a greater or lesser interaction of the parents. This interaction can vary from very positive to very negative (Goeke-Morey, Cummings, & Papp, 2007; Cummings, Goeke-Morey, & Papp, 2003). An extensive analysis of previous research in the field has drawn a distinction between constructive and destructive conflict styles, which shows that parents can adopt different conflict behaviour patterns. At the same time, all children are exposed to familial conflicts, but the majority do not display clinically significant maladjustment (Fincham, 1994). Consequently, two assumptions can be formulated: Firstly, diverse forms of parental conflicts have different effects, some being positive and some being negative (Cummings & Davies, 2002). Hence, the present literature review is based on one research question: Which positive and negative effects do constructive

and destructive parental conflict behaviours have on a child's condition and behaviour? Secondly, moderators and mediators play a major role in this relationship. Therefore, possible moderators as well as mediators will be investigated as the second phase of research of this review.

In the second section of this review, the two theories on the effects of parental conflicts – the cognitive-contextual framework of Grych and Fincham (1990) and the emotional security hypothesis developed by Davies and Cummings (1994) – are explained as they comprise the cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects of the child's response to parental conflicts. Furthermore, the third section is about the empirical findings on this topic. Next, the fourth section comprises of an exhaustive discussion of studies relevant to the present research question, alongside with some contradictory results, in order to to integrate these into a theoretical framework. Possible methodological limitations are also discussed and practical implications are derived. And, lastly, both a conclusion and an outlook is provided on the directions of potential research in the future.

2.8 Key Theories

The Cognitive-Conceptual Framework of Grych and Fincham (1990).

The Cognitive-Conceptual Framework of Grych and Fincham (1990). aims to explain the relation between parental conflicts and children's problematic behaviours. According to the authors, the child perceives a parental conflict as a stressor. Thence, based on this perception, a primary and subsequently secondary processing stage are generated, which in turn influences the child's coping behaviour. These two processing stages are influenced by contextual factors. The primary processing influences the child's affect, which interacts with both secondary processing and coping behaviours. The children's affects are influenced by their observation of the parental conflicts, by their attributional styles as well as by their behaviour, and these in turn influence the cognitive elaboration process and the child's behaviour (Grych & Fincham, 1990). Furthermore, the child's coping behaviour impacts the parental conflict. Delving deeper, the individual components of the model are explained next.

Intensity, content, duration and resolution are among the most important characteristics of parental conflicts. Grych and Fincham (1990) suggest that the effects of these characteristics are cumulative. Intense, prolonged, unsolved conflicts and those affecting the children, the family or the marriage are very stressful for children.

Regarding the context, Grych and Fincham (1990) refer to the psychological aspects of children and make a perspicuous distinction between proximal and distal contextual factors; distal contextual factors are stable (e.g. gender) or relatively stable (e.g. the perceived emotional climate). Contrastingly, proximal contextual factors indicate the child's thoughts and feelings immediately before the conflict. The distal contextual factors include the child's past experiences with conflicts, the perceived emotional climate, the child's temperament and gender. The perceived emotional climate refers to the child's perception of family relationships, especially of the quality of the parent-child relationship. A good climate can act as a buffer against various stressors. Moreover, the child's temperament can have an impact on the relationship between the parental conflict and the child's reaction in three different ways: firstly, some children respond more readily than others to stressors; secondly, their temperament affects their coping behaviour and thirdly, it influences the development of the parent-child relationship. According to Grych and Fincham (1990), gender influences the child's emotions and processing style, due to different socialisation experiences, but not their behaviour. On the other hand, proximal contextual factors include expectations of how the current conflict will develop, as well as the child's current mood. Children have expectations based on their previous experiences and on the characteristics of the current situation. A positive mood can reduce stress. Contrarily, in a negative mood, a stressor is perceived as more negative and previous negative experience is better remembered than in a positive mood (Grych & Fincham, 1990).

The model distinguishes two processes in the child's processing: in the primary processing stage, the child takes notice of the conflict and perceives its characteristics, threats and significance for himself/herself. This leads to an emotional appraisal and reaction. If the child considers the conflict as negative, important or relevant for himself/herself, the secondary processing stage of the conflict is activated, in which the child tries to understand the reasons for the conflict. The child makes a causal attribution, an attribution of responsibility and blame, and develops an efficacy expectation. Secondary processing stage presupposes advanced cognitive skills and is

thus differentiated as a function of the child's developmental level. It is assumed that very young children pass only through the primary processing stage and that depending on the kind of cognitive processing, the child relies on a certain coping strategy.

Concerning various attribution and the efficacy expectation of the children, stable, internal and global casual attributions are particularly stressful for children. Attributions of responsibility and guilt trigger different emotions and change with age. For instance, younger children increasingly tend to blame themselves and therefore feel negative emotions (Grych & Fincham, 1990). According to Bandura (1982), the self-efficacy expectation indicates the subjective assessment of own skills to deal with daily difficulties and obstacles in order to successfully perform desired actions. This expectation is also age-dependent. On the one hand, younger children often exhibit "magical thinking", such as the belief that they could stop their parents' conflicts with an unusual power. Conversely, older children have more realistic estimates and expectations as well as better skills to solve conflicts (Grych & Fincham, 1990).

Concerning the coping behaviour, developed by the child based on the secondary processing stage, it is crucial to denote that Folkman and Lazarus (1980) propound there being two forms of coping behaviour which can reduce emotional arousal: 1) emotion-focused strategies through which people can regulate their feelings and 2) problem-focused strategies which are based on changing the stressful situation. Younger children are assumed to have fewer coping strategies than older ones, who have the ability to cognitively reconstruct a stressful situation and to apply emotion-focused strategies.

The Emotional Security Hypothesis of Davies and Cummings (1994)

Davies and Cummings (1994) developed their emotional security hypothesis to complement the cognitive-contextual framework of Grych and Fincham (1990). While affect plays a rather secondary role in the cognitive-contextual framework, it is of great importance in the emotional security hypothesis. As reported by Bowlby (1973), emotional security is the confidence in the availability of attachment figures if an individual desires it, which influences the susceptibility to fear. This confidence is postulated to be built during the years of immaturity based on the person's experience regarding the accessibility and responsiveness of attachment figures. Thus, the emotional security hypothesis is the child's perception of the relationship between the child's

parents. Emotional security is influenced by past experience with parental conflicts, the emotional bond between parents and children as well as by the quality of the marital relationship, and it is orientated towards future responses to parental conflicts. Depending on how the child perceives and handles the parental conflict, the child's emotional security increases or decreases, which in turn affects the child's well-being. So, in this way, emotional security plays the role of a mediator between the parental conflict and the child's condition. Emotional security affects the child's functional ability in three different ways: by the child's regulation of his/her emotional arousal, by his/her attempt to regulate his/her parents' emotions and by internal representations (Davies & Cummings, 1994).

There are three hypotheses about the role of the child's regulation of his/her emotional arousal: 1) a high level of emotional arousal depletes the psychological resources needed for an effective emotional regulation (Dodge, 1991; Fabes & Eisenberg, 1992). 2) emotional arousal triggers an energy that affects the child's functional ability. 3) positive and negative emotions have different effects on children's reactions to parental conflicts (Davies & Cummings, 1994). Children with negative emotions suffer more, have a reduced self-regulation capacity and judge the parental conflicts more negatively, whereas children with positive emotions confront future conflicts with a more optimistic attitude. Even if the child's efforts to regulate his parents' emotions lead to a reduction of negative emotions in the short-term, they can have long-term negative consequences for all people involved. Instead of resolving their conflict, the parents' attention is drawn to less important current educational issues and the children adopt a poor coping strategy. The more their emotional security is threatened, the more the children intervene. The internal representations, generated in the mind as internal ideas, are formed from long-term childhood experience with parental conflicts, which have an impact on the child's behaviour. Representations, which have both emotional and cognitive consequences, are activated in parental conflicts. Children can learn to use destructive and constructive approaches, based on their internal representations (Davies & Cummings, 1994).

Different factors moderate the effects of parental conflicts on the children. Firstly, the child's experience of whether his/her parents solved their conflicts in the past or not influences the effect of parental conflicts on the child, the child's emotional reaction to these, and his/her emotional security. The resolution of a conflict (or better the extent of a conflict resolution) should be

considered as a continuum between complete resolution and no resolution (Cummings, Ballard, El-Sheikh, & Lake, 1991). Additionally, it seems that the form of the conflict influences the effect of the frequency. Intensive, violent, unsolved and threatening conflicts, as well as those which revolve around the child, reduce the child's emotional security. Secondly, repeated conflicts reduce the child's emotional security, which in turn decreases his/her ability to regulate his/her emotional arousal and increases the proportion of negative emotions, leading to adjustment problems. Thirdly, the reactions change with age, as the experience with parental conflicts increases, and can vary according to gender due to a different socialisation experience. In addition, a difficult temperament of the children leads to a greater response to negative events on their behalf, coupled with a less positive perception. The parents' behaviour and the child's temperament influence each other reciprocally which adds a further layer of complexity to the overall picture (Davies & Cummings, 1994).

Definition of Constructive and Destructive Conflict Behaviours and Theoretical Considerations

A further focus is conducted here to integrate the two theoretical frameworks together, elucidate the definition of constructive and destructive conflict behaviours and develop certain hypotheses about their effects on children. The nature of the effects of parental conflicts on the child's condition is influenced, among others, by the way in which the conflict is exerted. For this reason, constructive and destructive conflict behaviours can be distinguished based on the effects of the conflict on the child's reaction, which includes behavioural, emotional and cognitive responses. There is a lack of an explicit theory, but the emotional security hypothesis provides a conceptual basis for this distinction from the child's perspective (Cummings & Davies, 2002). In line with Goeke-Morey (1999), different conflict behaviours can be distinguished on the basis of emotional security: if a conflict behaviour provokes more negative than positive emotional reactions, it is classified as destructive, as it weakens emotional security. Contrastingly, a conflict behaviour is classified as constructive if it provokes more positive than negative emotional responses, which, in turn, leads to an increased emotional security. Thus, conflict behaviours can be understood as a continuum which goes from constructive to destructive, depending on how the conflict influences the emotional security of the child (Goeke-Morey, Cummings, Harold & Shelton, 2003). Destructive conflict styles include behaviours such as

verbal or corporal aggression towards the partner or objects; hostility, violence and behaviour patterns which threaten the integrity of the family. In contrast, constructive conflict styles are characterised by progress in finding a resolution and by the parents' explanations to the child (Cummings & Davies, 2002).

It is assumed that constructive conflict styles lead to optimism toward future conflict styles. On the contrary, destructive conflict styles could lead to a reduced self-regulation and to negative judgements. The more the emotional security is threatened, the more children intervene in a parental conflict (Davies & Cummings, 1994). Therefore, the more constructive a conflict is, the less the emotional security of the child should be threatened; therefore, children should intervene less in constructive parental conflicts. In their cognitive-contextual framework, Grych and Fincham (1990) discuss the importance of distal contextual factors and of the child's expectations of how the current conflict will develop (Grych & Fincham, 1990). The child's experience of constructive parental conflicts increases their emotional security and therefore, according to this theory, children expect constructive conflict behaviours of their parents also in the future. Moreover, the child's temperament, gender as well as age have to be considered as moderators. The child's temperament may influence the relationship between the parental conflict and the child's reaction in relation to several factors (Grych & Fincham, 1990): 1) in relation to the different conflict behaviours, it can be assumed that more temperamental children react more negatively than others to destructive conflicts than to constructive ones, since they respond more to negative stressors and have a less positive perception of a parental conflict (Davies & Cummings, 1994; Grych & Fincham, 1990) and 2) as temperamental children respond more to negative inputs and have different coping behaviours, they are expected to show less positive behaviours.

Boys and girls experience different types of socialisation, which might influence their affective and behavioural responses to parental conflicts (Grych & Fincham, 1990). Boys react in a more aggressive way and with more withdrawal to conflict situations than girls, who are more prosocial than boys (Lindeman, Harakka & Keltikangas-Järvinen, 1997). There might also be an interaction between gender and conflict behaviour style, in a way that gender makes the differences between constructive and destructive conflict behaviour more extreme. Only older children are assumed to reach the secondary processing level, as it requires advanced cognitive

skills (Grych & Fincham, 1990). This age difference could make the effects of destructive conflict behaviours even worse: Younger children are expected to react with more negative emotions, as they do not try to understand the reasons of the conflict. Causal attributions, which are variable, external and specific, should not have a negative but instead a positive effect on the reaction of older children.

The cognitive-contextual framework presupposes that the secondary processing of the conflict is activated if the child considers it as negative, important or relevant to himself (Grych & Fincham, 1990). Based on this presupposition, children should not process calm discussions, uninteresting topics and positive interactions. However, it is questionable whether this is the case, as according to the social learning theory of Bandura (1977) children learn from and imitate their parents, which is not limited to negative situations. If children ascribe to themselves a high level of self-efficacy, it should influence their reactions positively. According to the theory of Grych and Fincham (1990), it can be assumed that the child's affect is different depending on the style of conflict, on their expectations of the conflict's outcome and on the nature of the attribution. Moreover, age differences with respect to coping behaviour are to be expected (Grych & Fincham, 1990). Older children are assumed to be able to apply more emotion-focused strategies than younger ones (Compas, Malcarne, & Fondacaro, 1988). In contrast, younger children are expected to intervene more than older ones, which means that they show more problem-focused coping behaviours.

This is further annotated in the modelling theory of Zimet and Jacob (2001), which acclaims that children learn basic behaviour patterns in the family, especially from the parents, as the parent-child relationship is intense and long-lasting. Specifically, parental conflict behaviour can serve as models, which are used to guide the child's development of social behaviour (Zimet & Jacob, 2001). The reason is that their internal representations are activated during parental conflicts, which are the basis for learning destructive as well as constructive conflict behaviour (Davies & Cummings, 1994). Therefore, it must be assumed that constructive parental conflict styles lead to constructive problem-solving approaches, good ability to regulate their emotions, good comprehension of other people's emotions and positive social behaviour of the child. Similarly, destructive conflict styles are expected to lead to destructive problem-solving approaches and to negative social behaviour (Davies & Cummings, 1994). Eisenberg and Fabes (1994), Dunn and

Brown (1994) and Denham (1998) found supportive results: the parents' support and acceptance of the child's emotions were related to the child's ability to regulate his/her own emotions in a constructive way. The parents' willingness to discuss their emotions with their children was related to the child's attention and understanding of others' emotions.

Empirical Findings

Various studies have revealed that destructive and constructive conflict styles have different consequences on the child. Specifically, the more destructive the conflict behaviour is, the more negative its effects on the child's condition and behaviour. In Davies, Myers, Cummings and Heindel's (1999) study, children watched videos of conflicts and were witnesses of real conflicts afterwards. This study showed that the experience of destructive conflict behaviour provokes more negative reactions than exposure to constructive conflict behaviour. Goeke-Morey et al. (2003) showed videos to children (aged between 8 and 16 years old) and asked them how they would react if their parents argued in this manner. The children indicated that they would intervene or avoid a destructive conflict more than a constructive conflict. Correspondingly, they would react in a more negative emotional way and have a more negative expectation of the conflict's end in a destructive than in a constructive conflict situation.

Cummings, Goeke-Morey and Papp (2003; 2004) used the diary method and questionnaires to measure the parental conflict behaviour. In the former study of Cummings et al. (2003), both the mothers and fathers filled out the questionnaires, whereas in the latter, only the mothers filled them out. These authors found destructive conflict behaviour to be related to more negative emotional reactions and to lead to more aggressive behaviour than a constructive conflict style. Additionally, if the conflict was about the child itself or the marriage, the child's behaviour was more aggressive (Cummings et al., 2003; 2004). Goodman, Barfoot, Frye and Belli (1999) let parents fill out questionnaires and interviewed children. They found that the more frequent and the more aggressive the parental conflicts were, the less effective the problem-solving strategies of the children tended to be. Using the diary method and questionnaires administered to the parents, Cummings, Goeke-Morey, Papp and Dukewich (2002) found that parents' negative emotions and destructive conflict behaviours were associated with the child's insecure emotional and behavioural responses.

According to McCoy, Cummings and Davies' (2009) study, in which the authors administered questionnaires to parents and observed the children's reactions to their parents' discussion, destructive conflict behaviours correlate negatively with emotional security. Davies, Martin and Cicchetti (2012) found that a low level of emotional security acted as a mediator between destructive parental conflict and children's psychological problems. The authors used questionnaires to adolescents and their primary caregivers in their first study and questionnaires and observations in their second study. In a study conducted by Du Rocher Schudlich, White, Fleischhauer and Fitzgerald (2011), parents filled out questionnaires and the researchers analysed the parents' and the children's reactions during a parental interaction. In line with other studies on the effects of parental conflicts on children, these authors also investigated children's reactions to depressive parental conflict styles. A depressive conflict behaviour is a behavioural pattern, in which parents do not argue with each other openly, but instead ignore and backstab each other. The child's reactions were negative and children were found to be more involved in the conflicts when the conflict behaviour was either destructive or depressive (Du Rocher Schudlich et al., 2011).

Nonetheless, at the other end of the spectrum there is research which suggests that the more constructive the conflict behaviour is, the more positive its effects on the child's response are. In Lopez Larrosa, Escudero and Cummings' (2009) study, parents had to fill out questionnaires and discuss different situations at home in the presence of the child. In the case of a constructive conflict behaviour, the children's intervention was minimal and they continued their own activities. Additionally, the child's reaction to calm discussions is similar to their reaction to constructive conflict behaviour (Cummings et al., 2003) and there is also a significant relationship between constructive conflict behaviour and better problem-solving skills (Goodman et al., 1999). Parents' constructive conflict behaviour correlates positively with the child's emotional security, which in turn is positively related to the child's prosocial behaviour (McCoy et al., 2009). This finding is in line with the results of Davies et al. (2012), which did not show emotional insecurity as a mediator between constructive parental conflict and children's psychological problems.

Positive emotions and constructive conflict behaviour of the parents have been shown to be related to secure and more positive emotional and behavioural responses of the child (Cummings

et al., 2002; Cummings et al., 2003). Du Rocher Schudlich et al. (2011) found that in a constructive conflict situation, the infants intervened less in the parental conflict, showed fewer negative emotional reactions and played more (Du Rocher Schudlich et al., 2011). However, the results of David's (2009) study are different from the ones of the above-mentioned studies: No relation between positive marital qualities – which included positive emotional observations, constructive conflict behaviours and marital satisfaction of the mother – and positive relationships of children with their peers were found when observing the child's interactions and analysing questionnaires submitted to the mothers and teachers.

With regards to possible moderators and mediators, the child's age, gender, temperament, their past experiences with conflicts (parental conflicts and conflicts between strangers), as well as the extent of a conflict resolution, the gender of the parents, parenting practices and psychological control were investigated. The results showed that all of the above-mentioned factors moderate or mediate the relationship between parental conflicts and children's reactions. Cummings et al. (2003) found the child's gender and age to be moderators, but did not specify the nature of their influence. Easterbrooks, Cummings and Ende (1994), using observation and questionnaires, revealed that the child's reaction changes with age: older children showed more positive behaviours if their parents were in harmony. Furthermore, sadness and the motivation to flee have been found to decline with age (Davies et al., 1999).

If the children were exposed to destructive conflict styles, the older ones showed less fear, sadness and motivation to flee than the younger ones. Additionally, Davies et al. (1999) found that the motivation to intervene increases with age and peaks during adolescence. These findings are in line with those of Cummings, Zahn-Waxler and Radke-Yarrow (1984), who questioned the mothers of toddlers and primary school children, and with those of Cummings, Vogel, Cummings and El-Sheikh (1989), who showed videos of angry or friendly interactions to children. These previous studies show that the nature and the intensity of the feelings experienced by children change with age: toddlers respond to parental conflicts with crying and anger (Cummings et al., 1984), six- to seven-year-old children with anger, and eight- to nine-year-old children with worry (Cummings et al., 1989). There is also a gender difference: girls responded with more fear and anger than boys (Davies et al., 1999).

Howbeit, impeding the case is an interaction between the child's age and gender: six-year-old boys and ten-year-old girls were mostly motivated to go away, whereas ten-year-old boys wanted to intervene more than the others. In contrast to these studies, Goeke-Morey et al. (2007) did not find the child's age and gender to be moderators in this process. In their study, parents used the diary method and filled out questionnaires. Their children received a description of a parental conflict situation, watched videos with various conflicts' endings and were interviewed. David (2009) and Easterbrooks et al. (1994) found that, depending on the child's temperament, the children's reactions differed: more temperamental children were more reactive and showed less positive behaviours, less anger and intervened more, whereas children with a higher level of effortful control benefited more from positive marital qualities (Easterbrooks et al., 1994). According to Du Rocher Schudlich et al.'s (2011) study, past experiences with parental conflicts and a child's temperament moderate the relationship between destructive parental conflict behaviour and the child's reaction. Destructive conflict behaviour and negative emotional reactions of the child are only significantly related if the children have often experienced parental conflicts or have a less reactive temperament. The extent of a resolution diminishes the negative effects of destructive conflict behaviours (Goeke-Morey et al., 2007).

In other words, the more the conflict is resolved, the more positive the emotional reaction of the child was. There are also differences according to an interaction of specific emotions and the parents' gender. Cummings and Davies (2002) found that specific emotions of the father or the mother acted as a moderator in destructive behaviours. More precisely, the child reacted with negative emotions to the father's anger or to the mother's sadness. Goeke-Morey et al. (2003) have revealed that the father's aggression towards the mother and the mother's threats to leave the family were particularly stressful. The reason behind the different influences stemming from the interaction of specific emotions and the parents' gender remains unclear. In the study of Coln, Jordan and Mercer (2013) mothers completed questionnaires. The results showed that parenting practices and psychological control are mediators of the relation between constructive and destructive parental conflict behaviour and child's internalizing and externalizing problems. Specifically, there were direct paths from destructive parental conflict behaviour to negative parenting practices, psychological control, and child's internalizing and externalizing problems (Coln et al., 2013).

On other factors that lead to conflicts between parents and children, In several studies of social mobility among African-American youth, Jarrett found five characteristics common to this path out of poverty, which collectively are described as a “community-bridging family” pattern. They include a supportive adult network structure, restricted family-community relationships, stringent parental monitoring strategies, strategic alliances with mobility-enhancing institutions, and adult-sponsored development (Jarrett 1995).

Some studies have noted that stricter, authoritarian parenting is both more common in low-income and minority families and neighborhoods and that this style of parenting may be adaptive in various ways. For example, parents who work in low-income occupations may instinctively socialize their children to adapt to environments where conformity is valued and conflict is not freely expressed (Hill 1987). In other cases, parents are adapting to dangerous neighbourhoods or peers within them. In her national tri-ethnic study of variations in adolescent pregnancy status, McBride Murry notes that Hispanic girls who had never been pregnant were much more likely than their pregnant or parenting counterparts to describe their parents as “very strict” (McBride Murry 1998). Some have suggested that this heightened control and restriction, while well-intentioned, inadvertently undermines a growing need for autonomy, especially among adolescents (Collins et al. 2000).

As Jarrett notes, the achievement of social mobility out of dangerous neighbourhoods, while admirable, often comes at great cost to both parents and their children: “Social mobility requires adults to single-mindedly, and in the absence of sustained institutional support, single-handedly concentrate on the welfare of their children, often at the expense of personal needs and goals. Children whose safety, if not survival, depends on the constriction of their social worlds may forego a broader range of developmental experiences (Jarrett 1997).

Conflict between parents and children is inevitable at all stages of development. It can arise from mundane disagreements about household tasks to power negotiations of family rules (Grieshaber, 2004). Although parent-child conflict has been associated with children’s behaviour problems, school difficulties, and peer rejection (Smetana, 1996), positive effects of conflict have also been reported. Constructive parent-child conflict that is expressed appropriately and resolved collaboratively has been linked to children’s higher self-esteem, greater independence, and identity development (Cooper & Cooper, 1992; Dunn, 2004; Grotevant & Cooper, 1985).

2.2.0 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 Equity Theory

The parent-child relationship continually changes over the family life cycle and as this change occurs and children grow older, there may be a greater need for current programs and treatment that work to balance family relationships. Therefore, the importance of a fair, balanced, reciprocated exchange lays the foundation for the equity theory. This theory asserts that each party should be relatively equal in terms of what is given and what is received. This theory also asserts that there is tension when one party feels under-benefited in the relationship and the other is over-benefited. Equity theory has been applauded because it has much causal power in relationships, because most relationships last as long as both parties feel benefited from the relationship (Vogl-Bauer et al., 1999). The theory was chosen because it provided a base to start asserting the source of conflicts between parents and children.

2.2.2 Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory is one of the more prominent theories and states that new behaviours can be acquired, or learned, through direct experience or through observation of others. Social learning theory is often called observational learning or modelling. Social learning emphasizes that reinforcement of behaviours can lead to successful or adaptive modes of behaviour and can motivate and regulate behaviour (Barclay, 1982). It also emphasizes antecedent learning as well as learning by consequences. Aker's social learning theory asserts that peer associations are predictors of delinquency (cited in Chappell & Piquero, 2004). Wren (1982) explains social learning theory as not a single theory but a family of theories that attempt to explain behaviour primarily in terms of learning and learning in terms of the behaviourist credo, the Law and Effect. Consequently, its discussions of morality are distinguished from their cognitive-developmental and psychoanalytic counterparts by the motivational role it assigns to rewards. The theory was selected in relation to communication strategies. Parents and children portrayed behaviours learned from society, especially the authoritarian attitude parents had towards the children. The ability for children to be submissive to parents' authority.

2.2.3 Relational Maintenance Theory

In this case the theory applies to the end result of proper communication between parents and teenagers in conflict. Relational maintenance theory focuses on the actions and activities that sustain the desired relational activities and on sustaining or continuing relationships. Although relational maintenance theory has not been studied in regard to parent and teen relationships and only primarily with couples and friends, Vogl-Bauer et al. (1999) reported that there are those who believe that this theory could apply to this relationship as well. In other words, relational strategies may offer positive undertones and insight into how couples, the parent and teen couple in particular, can communicate together toward a successful relationship.

2.2.4 Summary

The literature suggested that families are prone to conflicts especially between parents and children. Factors like acceptance of a child's behaviour or way of communication by parents was discovered to reduce conflicts. It was also discovered that there was high level prejudice in what was regarded as fair treatment of children by parents because teenagers did not agree with it. The literature reviewed affirms that parent-child conflicts are inevitable in families, teenage behaviour or manner of communication is influenced by parents, communication is positively related to peace in homes, monitoring of children must be controlled, finally parents and children should learn to compromise in the way they communicate with each other. The information provided in the literature had justified the relevance of the study because the literature suggested that parent-children conflicts have not been eliminated by some proper communication strategies. Therefore, it left unanswered as to what the main role of communication on plays in such conflicts.

3.0. Conceptual Framework

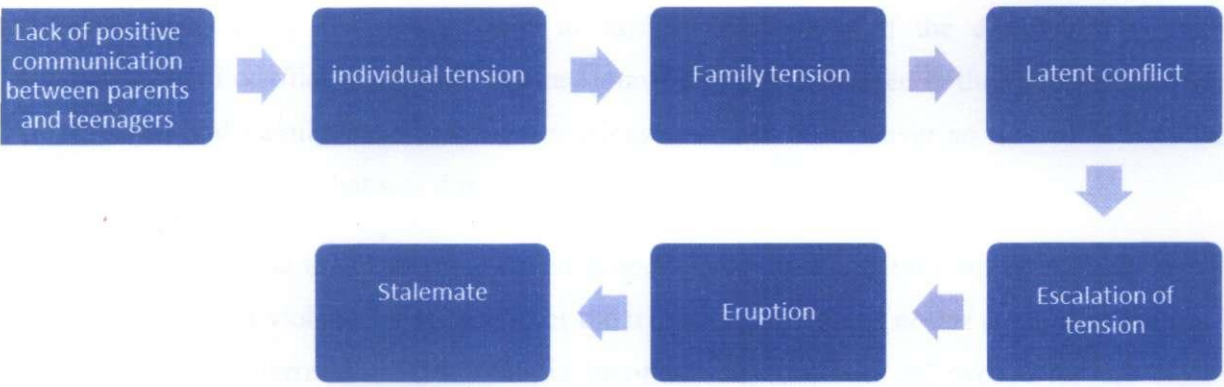


Figure 1: Stages of conflict without proper communication: Source of design from Davalos, Chavez, &Guardiola, 2005).

The concepts have been designed by the researcher from the critical study of literature provided above. The potential for conflict will always exist in a family between children and parents with different interests, and socio-economic conditions and needs. If such conflicts are not attended to in the primary stages or dealt with in a manner which aggravates the already prevailing feelings, a major conflict situation may arise within the family. Thus, different stages of a conflict situation can be envisaged, each caused by interventions not being taken in time or through inept handling of the situation and each crying out for its own mix of appropriate measures. These are presented in the Figure 1. The framework illustrates the stages conflict may escalate in the family depending on the type of communication that is practiced.

The representation of conflict as given in Figure 1 may be briefly described in the following manner: 1. Individual and Family Tensions: Such tensions are created whenever an individual has been wronged or has not got what was due. Such tensions may also arise due to historical socio-inequalities. The study will therefore investigate the role of communication on tension amongst individuals in a family. 2. Latent Conflict: Tensions lead to a feeling of injustice and give rise to simmering discontent. However, at this stage, these tensions may manifest themselves in the form of requests to authorities, etc. From the point of view of the parent, this is

the most opportune time for managing a conflict or rather preventing a conflict. However, as the parent is pre-occupied with 'fire-fighting' measures, the early symptoms of latent conflict are often overlooked. 3. Escalation of Tensions: grievances not communicated, overlooked concerns, neglected tensions by the parents lead to further aggravation of the discontentment. The representation of conflict as given in Figure 1 may be briefly described in the following manner:

1. Individual and Family Tensions: Such tensions are created whenever an individual has been wronged or has not got what was due.

4. Eruption: Tensions if not communicated properly lead to a situation where a small 'spark' leads to eruption of violence. The 'spark' or the trigger may by itself not be a major event, but it leads to further polarization of the people involved, and becomes an excuse for the violent eruption. Normally the parents swings into action at this stage and tries to control the violence. It has been observed that even after the violence has been contained, adequate efforts are often not made to address the root causes of the conflict in the family.

5. Stalemate: This is a situation similar to the 'latent tension' and has the potential to erupt at regular intervals. It needs to be emphasized that at each stage, there would be communication issues involved. While lack of proper communication or inept handling of the situation would tend to push the emergent situation to the next stage of conflict, appropriate and positive communication skills measures would in most cases lead to resolution of the conflict situation.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Research Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology employed in this study which includes the research design, target population, sample size, sampling procedure and research instruments. It further explains the data collection procedure, data analysis and considerations.

3.1 Research Design

This study was non-intervention, explorative and descriptive. This survey type of the study was selected because of the fact that the research had occurred in a natural phenomenon. This involved the systematic collection and presentation of both qualitative and quantitative data in order to have a very clear picture of the importance of the role of communication on conflict between parents and children in the selected area.

3.2 Target Population

The target population consisted of residents of Kabwe's Katondo community in the central province of Zambia.

3.3 Sampling Design

Probability sampling techniques were used. Probability sampling was used to select residents of Katondo compound to provide the sample for the study. Therefore, residents in the selected community were offered an equal opportunity to participate in the study.

3.4 Sample size

102 respondents were selected from 51 households.

3.5 Sample unit

The unit of measure was one individual

3.6.0 Sampling Procedure

Sampling procedure outlines the process of how subjects to be studied are chosen from a large population. It helps the researcher to focus on a smaller population; more manageable than the whole population. (Orodho 2009)

3.6.1 Systematic Sampling:

Systematic sampling was applied when selecting 51 households from a total of 100 households that were mapped and given household numbers. A random starting household was selected from which every 2nd Household was placed in the sample. Households with at least one parent either father/mother or legal/customary guardian male or female responded as parent and one child was eligible in that household. One household provided two respondents the parent and the child. Parents and children were interviewed separately because during the pilot of the questionnaire, it was discovered that children gave more honest answers and parents were free to make responses when separated.

3.7.0 Data collection Procedure

With permission from the University of Zambia, the researcher further south for permission from Kabwe municipal councils office to collect data from target respondents (see Refer to appendix 4). The researcher booked appointments with various respondents and agreed on the dates when to meet for interview and these include: Parents and their children and consent for them to be met in focus group discussion was also sought.

3.7.1 Secondary Data

During the research, secondary information was obtained from demographic records such as birth records, National registration cards and police reports. This also involved the collection and review of information from previous studies that were relevant to the research topic for literature review. This also involved the collection and use of data that had already been written and collected by others during the data collection process. Such information constituted works such as journals, magazines books and many other unpublished materials such as proposals and internet based scripts and thesis.

3.7.2 Primary Data

This was collected first hand from respondents. Data was collected from Katondo residents. Structured interview guides with open ended segments and a focus group discussion were apparatus for data collection.

3.7.3 Target Group One (Structured interviews)

Group one consisted of 51 household's representatives, data was collected using structured interview guides, questionnaires with some open ended segments included.

3.7.4 Target Group Two (Focus Group Discussion)

Group two consisted of 5 selected households of 10 individuals, 5 parents and 5 children that participated in the focus group discussion, data was collected through transcription sheets where each response was recorded. This group was selected from already sampled households that showed full willingness and participation during round one for interview questionnaires.

3.8 Data Analysis

The answered interview guides, questionnaires, transcribed responses were then subjected to checking for uniformity, accuracy and consistency.

Qualitative responses was coded and data were manually analysed by the use of tally tables, thematic analysis or content analysis. Some data was presented descriptively through the use of diagrams generated through MS Excel. Open ended questions with similar responses were grouped together to get the general view of the respondents and those with different views will be grouped accordingly. Quantitative data was entered and analysed using MS Excel. Then presentation of descriptive statistical data such as numbers, graphs, charts and percentages were shown in data findings. Microsoft word was used for text presentation of the report.

3.9 Research Ethics

It was vital to put into consideration the conduct of one's research and give attention to the ethical issues associated with undertaking a research. Thus this study ensured that the confidentiality is respected and consent of all the respondents was obtained to participate in the

research. The researcher ensured that the reasonable measures are taken in designing final data collection instruments and techniques to protect subjects physically and psychologically because the responses will be sensitive. During mapping of households consent letters was distributed to all selected households a day before sample selection. The letters informed respondents about problems or issues that they will experiencing or experienced in their relationships that prompted emotional or uncomfortable thoughts, feelings, memories are required for the study. The parents and teens were fully informed of all risks on the sensitivity of matters to be discussed and the risks was written and oral.

3.10 Reciprocity

The researcher – participate relationship in which each contribute something the other needs or desires. Participates devotes their time, effort, experiences, and wisdom to inform and Shape the research study. The researches scope, depth and nature of inquiry introduce vulnerability to participate. In turn susceptible to variable involvement and apathy from participate because participants were kept for a longer period of time, soft drinks and snacks were given to them at the very end of data collection exercises at any venues and time so that data is not compromised.

3.11 Pretesting

The data collection tool was piloted to 10 individuals. 5 households were randomly selected and asked to help test the questionnaire. The exercise was used for timing the questions, checking the relevance and errors. Interviewed took an average of 6 minutes per individual.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

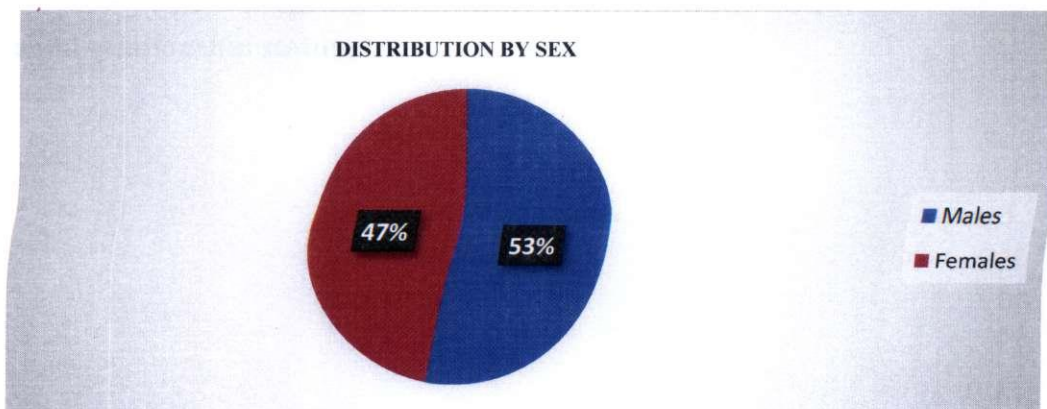
This segment illustrates the information obtained from the research. Data analysis was done using excel, thematic analysis and content analysis which ensured accuracy in the presented information. Results are presented in two sections. In the first section, I present background descriptive statistics and the second section, I present the results corresponding to the four study aims and related research questions.

4.1 Description of the Sample

Background characteristics of the sample were vital and affected the research findings to a certain degree. For example, the researcher discovered that in homes where the level of education or literacy was low or none, conflicts were high and communication strategies they applied were less effective. An individual's sex mattered in the views they offered on gender equity, in this case what was being sought were views just influenced by age, sex, parent-child relationship status and level of education. Microsoft excel was used to analyze and present the allied findings below.

Sex

FIGURE 2: Pie chart distribution of the sample by the sex of respondents N=102

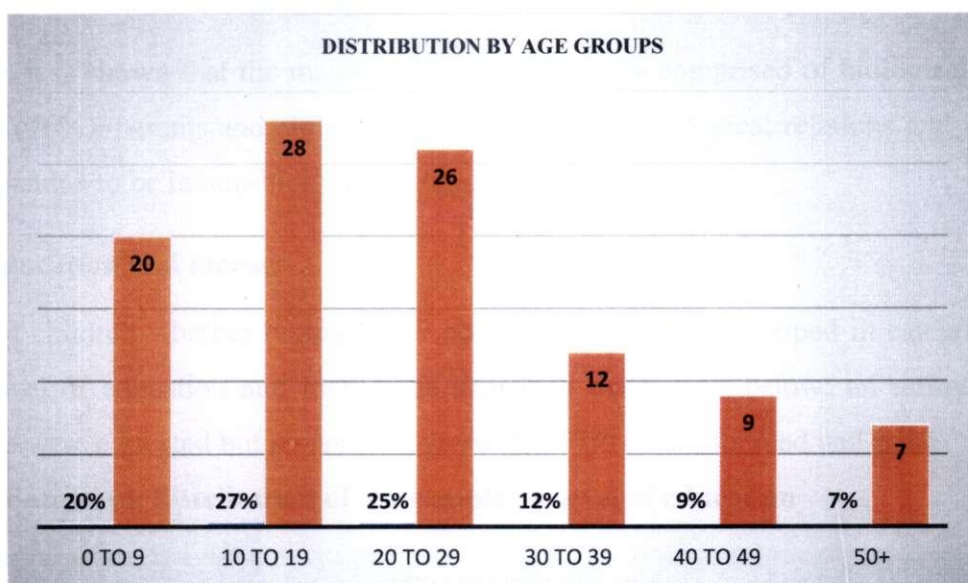


In figure 2, it is illustrated that the sample had more male than female respondents. This was an overall count of both parents and children. The males represented 53% and females represented 47% of the sample of 102. There were 54 males and 48 female respondents.

Age

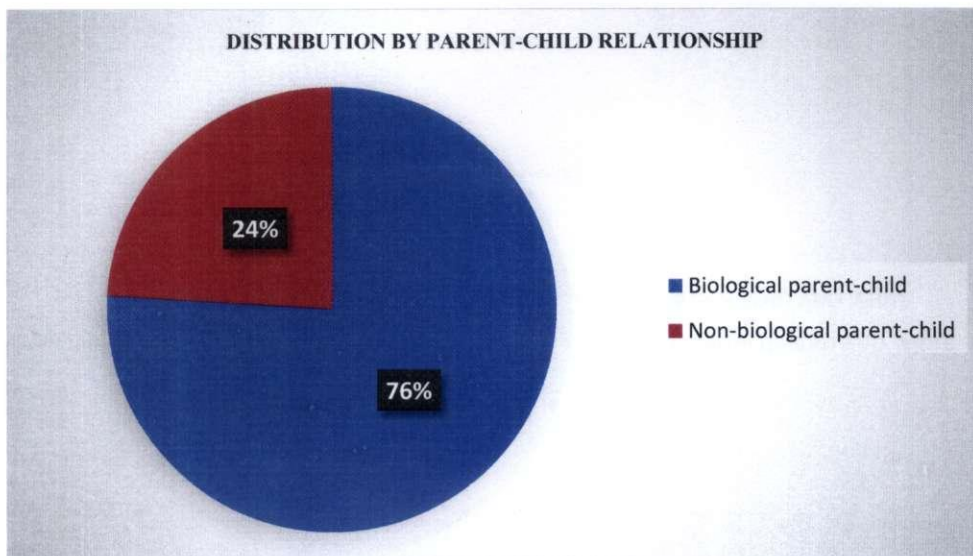
Figure 3 below shows how the sample was distributed when categorized into age groups. The majority of respondents (27%), were aged between 10 to 19, 28 in total. These were followed by the 25% aged between 20 to 29 (26), 20% (20) aged between 0 to 9, 12% (12) were between the ages of 30 to 39, 9% (9) were between the ages of 40 to 49 and 7% (7) were above the age of 50.

FIGURE 3: Bar graph distribution of the sample by age groups



Parent-child relationship status

FIGURE 4: Pie chart distribution of the sample by parent-child relationships



In figure 4, it is shown that the majority of the sample was comprised of biological families. A total of 78 (76%), parents and children each responded as biological relations and a total of 24 (24%) responded to be in non-biological relations.

Level of education and literacy

Parents and children whether biological or non-biological were grouped in categories defined by their level of education and literacy as shown in the figures below: an estimated 80% of participants were educated but it was discovered that 67% could not read and write.

Figure 5: Bar graph distribution of the sample by level of education

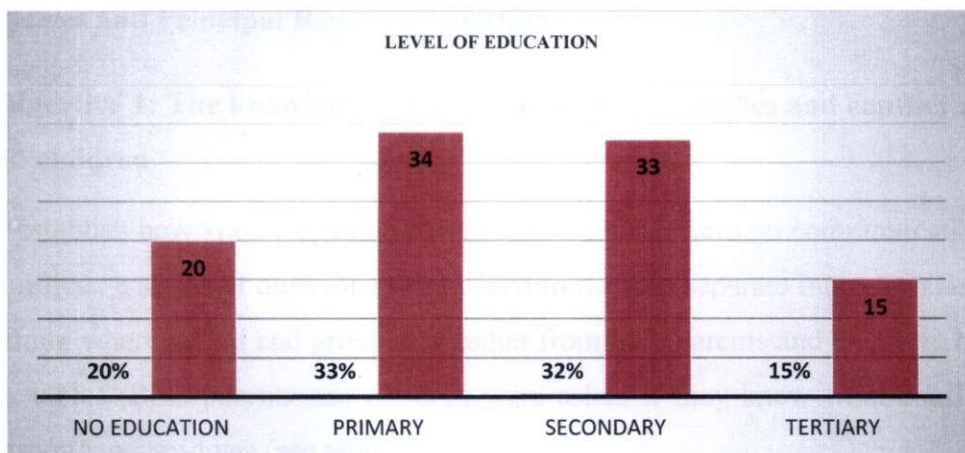


FIGURE 5.1: Pie chart distribution of participant's level of literacy

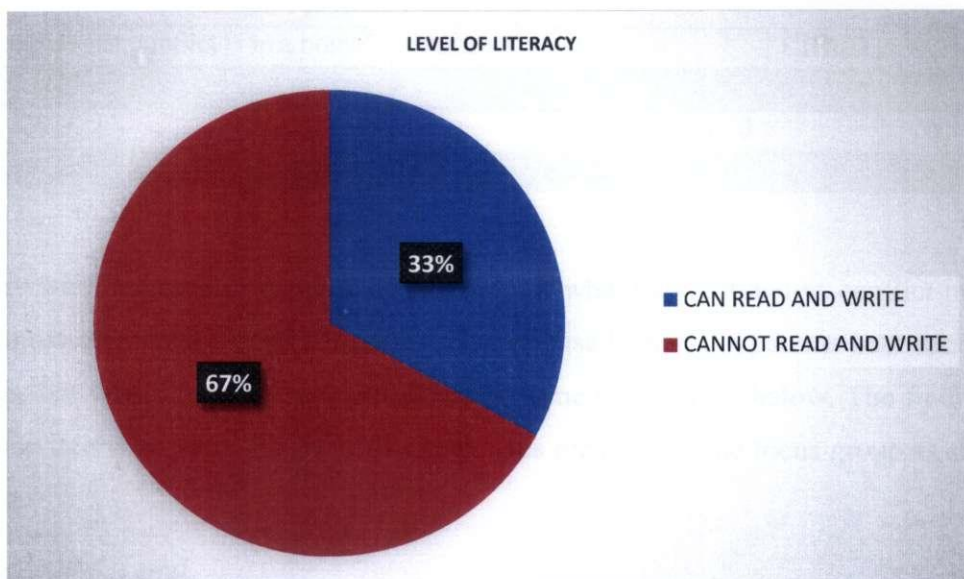


Figure 5 indicates that more of the participants 33% (34) only attained primary education, followed by those who attained secondary school level 32% (33). It was also discovered that 20% (20) did not have any education, more than those who reached tertiary level at 15% (15). Figure 5.1 additionally describes the sample to be illiterate because 67% said they could not read and write and 33% said they could, though most had attained their education. As previously noted, much research has been done regarding the impact of family on children's interpersonal, social and academic adjustment. Children in families with high levels of conflict are at greater risk for internalizing, externalizing, academic, and social competency problems (O'Keefe, 1994).

Study objectives and Principal Research Questions

4.2 Study objective 1: The knowledge on communication strategies and conflict among parents and children

In order to establish how knowledgeable parents and children were on communication strategies and their conflicts, a series of questions were asked to them in separate interviews; answers with similar meaning were tallied and grouped together from both parents and children, by the use of contingency tables. Both parents and children were asked if they knew what conflict was in a home, all respondents said yes (see table 1).

Table 1: knowledge on conflict between parents and children N=102

Do you know what conflict is in a home?	PARENT	%	CHILD	%
Yes	51	100	51	100
No	0	0	0	0
Total	51	100	51	100

Then they were required to mention an example of what they defined as conflict in their homes and the most consistent replies fell under the response “when the parents hate each other”. The responses that were provided all fell under the same meaning as below. The findings from the one on one interview were similar to the responses recorded in the focus group as shown later in the report.

Examples of Conflict;

The love of violence

When children fight each other

no peace between family members

when family members are not agreeing

when parents beat children

when your mother and your father fight”

89 of those participating indicated that conflict between them is merely the absence of love and understanding in homes, additionally when an outsider can sense the absence of peace in that home. “It is when any simple issue escalates to a big argument because you clearly do not understand each other and your neighbors can tell you always fight as a family”.

Further, respondents were given a series of communication strategies to pick from and rate themselves on how much they felt it described what they possessed. This was done in order to establish their knowledge on communication and strategies for conflict resolution in their homes. Parents and children were asked to show their palm if they knew the strategy mentioned to them. For parents the majority ticked the statement “Silence the situation by saying the last word” and children strongly agreed to knowing “staying calm” and “Listening” as communication strategies. (See table 2).

Table 2: knowledge on communication strategies by both parents and children N=102

Which response best describes communication strategies you know?	PARENT	%	CHILD	%
Manage Stress	3	6	2	4
Staying Calm	8	16	17	33
Emotion Control	7	14	5	10
Behaviour Control	1	2	6	12
Attention To Feelings	5	10	3	6
Silence Situation	22	43	2	4
Listening	5	10	16	31
Total	51	100	51	100

In order to establish parents and children's knowledge on conflict resolution in homes, parents and children were asked to identify "who was in the best position to resolve conflicts in the household.

Table 3: who is responsible to resolve conflicts between parents and children N=102

Who is in the best position to solve conflicts in the household?	PARENT	%	CHILD	%
Parents only	29	57	39	76
Children only	2	4	0	0
Both parents and children	20	39	12	24
Total	51	100	51	100

Parents and children were asked to rate their knowledge on communication strategies (see table 4). The majority response was "weak" and "adequate" by both parents and children.

Table 4: personal ratings on effectiveness of communication strategies N= 102

Ratings on effective communication strategies?	PARENTS	%	CHILDS	%
Weak	33	65	28	55
Adequate	12	24	21	41
Good	6	12	2	4
Very Good	0	0	0	0
Exceptional	0	0	0	0
Total	51	100	51	100

Objective 2: To determine the types of communication strategies between parents and children

After, learning the parents and children's knowledge on communication strategies and conflicts, the second aim was to show the specific types of strategies they used as they communicated for the sole purpose of resolving conflicts between them. Firstly, both parents and children were asked to mention "the biggest threat to peace that they faced between them". The answers gave a series of root causes of conflicts in their homes. The causes and type of conflicts that had the most tallies was "money" from children and "discipline" from parents. Then they were later asked to indicate from standard responses the types of disagreements they may face during such conflicts. It was shown that regardless of the conflict either caused by money or indiscipline parents and children disagreed on all the responses given. "Independence of the child during conversations", "disapproval of choices", "communicating curfew time frames", "choice of friends", "chores" and "school performance".

Then I directly asked the participants on the communication strategies they practiced in their particular disagreements and conflicts, different from the initial question on the types they knew. Participants were required to answer yes or no. From the responses, the majority of parents still stated that "saying the last word and silencing the situation" is their communication strategy. The majority of the children said yes to "staying calm" and "listening to what the parents say" as the strategy they practiced before, during and after arguments/conflicts to avoid and solve conflicts at home.

Objective 3: To investigate the role of communication on conflicts between parents and children

This was done to establish how communication influence conflicts between parents and children in their homes. After establishing the types of strategies practiced by participants, it was then eminent to further investigate their main role if they are applied. The following discoveries were made asking participants to rate their rate opinions using 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Not sure, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree. Parents and children's responses were grouped and tallied as follows; the majority of the two parties disagreed (57%) with the statement which stated that "communication solves conflicts between them". (See table 5).

Table 5: communication as the solution to conflicts between parents and children N=102

Communication solves conflicts between parents and children?	parent-child	%
strongly agree	8	8
Agree	16	16
not sure	0	0
Disagree	58	57
strongly disagree	20	20
Total	102	100

Secondly, participants gave their opinions on the statement “communication escalates conflicts between them” and the majority (87%) disagreed whilst 5% agreed (see table 6). Only 25% agreed to the statement “all communication strategies work to resolve conflicts between them” whilst 70% disagreed with the statement (see table 7).

Table 6: Communication as an escalator of conflicts between parents and children N=102

Communication escalates conflicts between parents and children?	parent-child	%
strongly agree	2	2
Agree	5	5
not sure	0	0
Disagree	89	87
strongly disagree	6	6
Total	102	100

Table 7: All communication strategies are solutions to conflicts between parents and children N=102

All communication strategies work to resolve conflicts between parents and children?	parent-child	%
strongly agree	2	2
Agree	5	5
not sure	0	0
Disagree	89	87
strongly disagree	6	6
Total	102	100

Objective 4: To establish the challenges faced in communication conflict resolution between parents and children

After establishing the role communication played in the families of participants which was rather moderate, I went on to find out the challenges. There were various challenges to peace in homes that were mentioned by participants. The most common being, money, parents drinking habits, indiscipline of children, marital status of parents. The major challenge towards effective communication strategies to resolve such conflicts was discovered to be “hostility”. Additionally parents felt they did not owe their children any audience to resolve conflicts. Children were discovered to holding back, by keeping quiet and moving away than communicate their feelings or opinions.

Further, participants were asked to state from the given responses what best described challenges they may have faced in resolving conflicts through communication. Criticism attacks, lack of respect, Defensiveness, withdrawing from communication and refusing to engage. The majority of children responded “yes” that the main challenge to effective communication in their homes was criticism attacks (75%) with a trace of defensiveness (18%) from their parents. The majority of parents responded “yes” to their children being disrespectful (47%), defensive (45%) and a trace of withdrawal (6%) (See table 7 and 8).

Table 7: Challenges faced by parents communicating with their children N=51

Challenges faced by parents communicating with children, in conflicts resolution	Number	%
Criticism attacks	1	2
lack of respect	24	47
Defensiveness	23	45
withdrawing from communication and refusing to engage	3	6
Total	51	100

Table 8: Challenges faced by children communicating with parents N=51

Challenges faced by children communicating with parents, in conflicts resolution	Number	%
Criticism attacks	38	75
lack of respect	0	0
Defensiveness	9	18
withdrawing from communication and refusing to engage	4	8
Total	51	100

Sample Focus Group Report

Introduction

I held a focus group discussion with [10] individuals [18th June, 2016]. Participants provided information through verbal group discussion. I recorded the whole discussion using a mobile audio recorder that was passed to each individual making a contribution at any particular instance. The recording was used for coding and categorization of responses. The discussion was designed to gather information from the parents and children in regard to the following outcomes:

- To find out the knowledge on communication strategies and conflict among parents and children
- To determine the types of communication strategies between parents and children
- To investigate the role of communication on conflicts between parents and children
- To establish the challenges faced on communication and conflict resolution between parents and children

Participant Demographics

Ten participants took part in the focus group:

- Five children and five parents (3 female children, 2 male children) and (4 female parents, 1 male parent)
- All the 5 children were between 10-19 years old; all the parents were between 40 -49 years old;
- All of the 10 participants reached secondary education, 2 of the five parents were employed

Participant's Perspectives [discussion started: 10:46hrs] [discussion stopped: 11:40hrs]

Outcome 1: To find out the knowledge on communication strategies and conflict between parents and children

What do you understand by conflict?

The participants offered a number of explanations on how they defined and understood conflicts between them in their homes:

“The love of violence; fighting; no peace between family members; when family members are not agreeing; when parents beat children; when your mother and your father fight”

10 of those participating indicated that conflict between them is merely the absence of love and understanding in homes, additionally when an outsider can sense the absence of peace in that home. “It is when any simple issue escalates to a big argument because you clearly do not understand each other and your neighbors can tell you always fight as a family”.

The meaning of communication was standardized as “exchange of verbal information from one person to the other” When participants were asked how they could define or understand communication strategies they provided responses all similar to “these are ways you show or tell people what was on your mind”.

On a scale of 1 to 4, 1 = highly knowledgeable, 2= knowledgeable, 3= partial knowledge, 4= had no knowledge. When an individual mentioned in their explanation issues to do with the following was coded as below;

- 1= (the absence of peace, violence,)
- 2= (disagreements, arguments),
- 3= (disobedience, deviance)
- 4= (no answer)

Table 9: Score on parent-child knowledge on family conflicts

Knowledge on family conflicts	Parent’s score	Children’s score
Average score	2	3

Table 9 above shows the average parents and children scored on their level of knowledge on the meaning and definition of family conflicts. It was discovered parents were “knowledgeable” and had a better understanding on the topic. The children’s average score was 3 that meant partial knowledge on the definition and meaning of family conflicts. The results for children was *observed to be affected by the presence of parents. At the beginning of the discussion the children were not free to express themselves.*

What do you understand by communication strategies?

On a scale of 1 to 4, 1 = highly knowledgeable, 2= knowledgeable, 3= partial knowledge, 4= had no knowledge. When an individual mentioned in their explanation issues to do with the following was coded as below;

1= (listening, table issues together), 2= (expression of feelings, the use of action or gestures), 3= (any form of talking but not effective) 4= (no answer)

Table 10: Score on parent-child knowledge on communication strategies

Knowledge on communication strategies	Parent's score	Children's score
Average score		

Table 10 shows the average score of the children and their parents on communication strategies. Parents and children understood the concepts of communication, communication strategies and they were able to provide examples. "Talking is communicating" and "actions such as frowning, sighing, clenched teeth, rolls eyes" can be used to communicate an opinion or feeling.

Outcome 2: To determine the types of communication strategies between parents and children

What type of communication strategies to do you know and apply to resolve conflicts between yourselves?

In general, parents and children had no idea they had to apply communication strategies to resolve conflicts between them. The strategies they applied were done subconsciously. They were given two scenarios and later asked how they would communicate their opinions and feelings in that situation: scenario 1 (parents): "the child has come home late around 22:00hrs obviously had taken alcohol, then during an argument your child says "you are a failure as a parent" verbally how would you react". Scenario 2 (children): "you are in the living room as a family your mother says you are useless as compared to your other siblings, how would you react, knowing your siblings smoke marijuana and you don't". The parent gave responses such as "I would beat the child", "I wait and talk to the child the following morning", "I may tell the child off on the dangers of drinking alcohol and coming home late right away", "I may chase the child to go back where he/she came from", "if the child is spoiled what can you say, you just let he/she be". On scenario 2, children gave responses such as "I may just keep my cool", "I will

definitely walk out”, and “I may just keep quiet”. The responses from both parents and children were listed and coded then scored as shown in table below;

The scores below represent the number of people that gave a response meaning the same as the categories listed in the table;

Table 11: Communication strategies applied on conflicts by parents and children N=10

Type of communication strategy applied	Parent’s count	Children’s count
“I silence the situation by saying the last word”	5	0
“I control my emotions”	5	5
“I control my behavior”	5	5
“I pay attention to the feelings of the other person”	0	3
“listening and keep calm”	0	5

Table 11 shows that all the parents agreed to applying “I silence the situation by saying the last word”, “I control my emotions” and “I control my behavior”. All the children said they applied strategies such as “I listening and keep calm”, “I control my emotions” and “I control my behavior” and “I pay attention to the feelings of the other person” as communication strategies to resolve conflicts in their homes.

Outcome 3: The role of communication on conflicts between parents and children

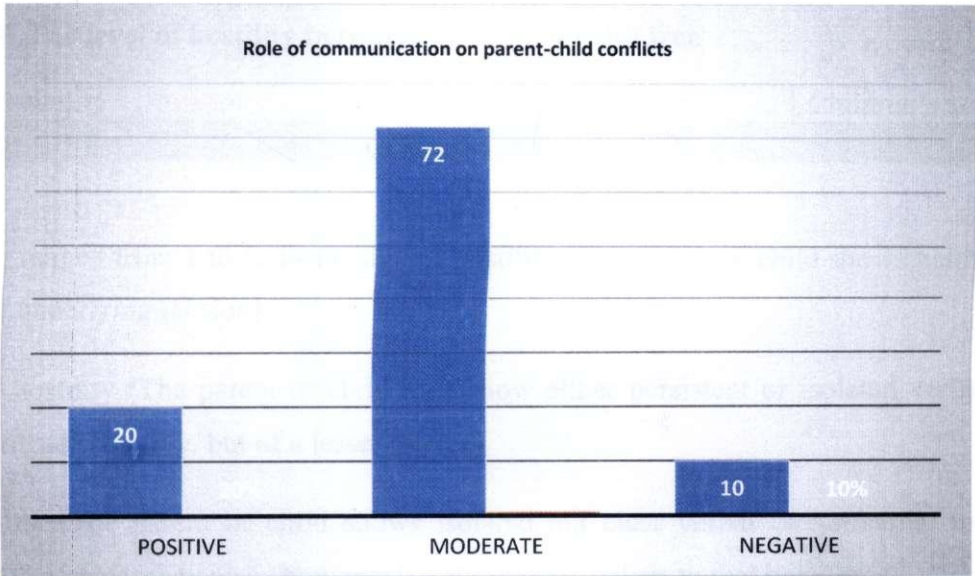
Children were extremely positive when talking about the role communication plays in resolving conflicts between them and their parents. They used various words to describe their experiences, “you feel like a load has been lifted off your mind.” They cited a number of strengths communication had on their conflicts, including “communication creates trust between me and my parents”, “I no longer hold grudges” and “fights, arguments or misunderstandings end fast”. All the participants agreed that the communication had two significant weaknesses, including “criticism and words intended to harm”. Parents collectively agreed that children require discipline not an audience to air their views during family conflicts. “I would not take lightly if my child was to utter a word whilst am upset with him/her”, “I prefer my child silent when I talk”, “I know what my child requires therefore, I see no need him/her airing his/her views whilst

am talking”. All responses were listed and categorized to indicate whether the respondent regarded communication as either playing a “positive”, “moderate” or “negative” role on conflicts between parents and children. The results indicated that (70%) of parents and children felt communication played a moderate role in resolving conflicts in their homes whilst 20% felt the role was positive (see table 12).

Table 12: The role of communication of parent-child conflicts N=102

The role communication plays on conflicts for Parents and Children	Number	%
Positive	20	20
Moderate	72	70
Negative	10	10
Total	102	100

Figure 6: Bar chart illustration indicating role of communication on parent-child conflicts N=102



Objective 4: To establish the challenges faced on communication and conflict resolution between parents and children.

The parents had unanimously agreed that allowing children to air their views, opinions, and grievances was an imposition from the modern or rather western culture. It was also discovered that the other challenge on communication to resolve conflicts between parents and children was

“hostility”. Both parents and children scored an average of 3, indicating hostility in the way they communicate with each other during the focus group. Communication strategies were said to escalate conflicts when the level of hostility was high. A scale was designed to assess the extent to which a parent or child responded in a hostile/rejecting manner. To receive a high score, the parent or child would typically display persistent and intense hostile affect, anger, or frustration (e.g., lack of eye contact paired with frowns, irritated or belligerent tone of voice). Body posture was tense and oriented away from one another. The parent or child exhibited negative facial expressions (e.g., frowning, sighing, clenched teeth, rolls eyes). The parent or child’s frequent criticism, demonstration of frustration (e.g., tunes child out, interrupts frequently, refuses to listen to Childs’s perspective). The parent or child may made sarcastic remarks, displayed sarcastic smiles, became obstinate and/or showed annoyance with each other. The parent or child tried to make the other feel shame for his/her opinions/position. If the parent or child displayed the above behaviors in considerable amount throughout the discussion, he/she received a high score.

Table 13: The level of hostility between parents and children

Level of hostility	Parent’s score	Children’s score
Average score	4	3

The scale ranged from 1 to 5. 1= no sign of hostility (The parent or child shows neither negative affect nor underlying tension)

2= slight hostility (The parent or child may show either persistent or isolated verbal and non-verbal forms of hostility, but of a lesser degree)

3= hostility (The parent or child shows isolated but clear verbal or nonverbal indicators of hostility. The parent may also show persistent low-key, covert verbal hostility.

4= intense hostility (The parent or child displays verbal and/or non-verbal behaviors with no regard to other participants reactions)

5= very intense hostility (The parent or child shows a persistent and high level of hostility toward the other throughout the discussion of topic. The parent or child frequently displays verbal and/or non-verbal behaviors from mostly the intense list above).

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDING

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The main objective of the study was to investigate the role of communication in resolving conflicts between parents and children. The research specifically set out to find out the knowledge on communication strategies and conflict, determine the types of communication strategies used, investigate the role communication plays on conflicts and finally to establish the challenges faced by parents and children on communication for conflicts resolution in their homes. To help achieve the stated objectives the study applied non-intervention, explorative and descriptive survey type. Data was systematically collected and both qualitative and quantitative results were presented. The targeted population was individuals from a local community mostly living in a shanty set up. Probability sampling techniques were used to select 102 respondents from 51 households. Systematic sampling was applied and one household provided two respondents the parent and the child. Parents and children were interviewed separately because during the pilot of the questionnaire, it was discovered that children gave more honest answers and parents were free to make responses when separated. Data was collected using structured interview guides with some open ended segments included and a mobile recording machine during a focus group. Qualitative responses were quantified and data was analyzed by the use of tally tables, thematic analysis or content analysis. Some data was presented descriptively through the use of diagrams generated through Microsoft Excel.

The sample was young, the majority came from biological families. There were more male respondents compared to female participants. The majority were discovered to have attained primary level education, compared to those who attained secondary and tertiary education. It was no surprise to discover that 67% stated they were illiterate. I believe the following outcomes of the survey were highly influenced by the elements stated above.

5.2 To find out the knowledge on communication strategies and conflict among parents and children

The survey discovered that parents had full knowledge on family conflicts and communication strategies whilst children understood conflicts but had partial knowledge on communication strategies. This was revealed from scores obtained from interviews and the focus group. The main reason to the variation in knowledge was experience. Parents had more experience in communication and family conflicts than their children. This was in line with Family Communication Schemata elaboration by Koerner & Fitzpatrick article (2002). They stated, Communication schemata are developed over a lifetime and reflect knowledge based on different relationship experiences. Knowledge gained from experiences typical for all social relationships are stored in the general social schema, knowledge based on experiences representative of relationships of specific types is stored in relationship type schemata, and knowledge from experiences unique to specific relationships with particular persons is stored in relationship specific schemata.

5.3 To determine the types of communication strategies between parents and children

The results of the survey revealed that before, during or after a conflict, the parent's strategy to communicate their standing was by silencing the situation and saying the last word. Children showed or communicated their reactions to conflicts by staying calm or listen to what their parents said. The study concluded that the majority of respondents came from households practicing conformity. Conformity orientation in families is correlated positively with conflict avoidance (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997) and correlated negatively with use of positive (integrative) conflict strategies (Wrench & Socha-McGee, 1999). Families high in conformity orientation avoid conflict because they interpret it as a threat to the family system. Conformity orientation in families is also associated with a greater frequency of verbal hostility during conflict (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997). The reasons are twofold. First, in conformity-oriented families, initiating or having conflict with family members is generally regarded as a violation of family rules and norms that demand harmony and conformity, and thus leads to negative reactions by other family members. Second, because conflicts are usually avoided, family problems frequently remain unresolved and individual family members might perceive their

families as unresponsive to their needs, which leads to frustration and hostility on the side of the complaining party (Segrin & Fitzpatrick, 1991).

Because conflict usually highlights differences between family members, it is perceived as undermining the harmony and conformity that these families value so much. conformous Parents and children did not have laid down strategies on how to communicate in conflict situations but reacted to situations as they came. But one constant source of conflict between parents and children is diverse interests.

From the focus group, isolated comments were made that made parents compelled to intolerance. The type of music is a consistent source of conflict. Children loved circular music such as punk, rock, and reggae while parents think they are evil and sources of bad influence. Clubbing and parties are a rage with children. However, parents feared that their children would be subjected to bad influences and sexual temptations in these places. These results were similar to what Jones (1972), that time separates children and parents because it offers children new fashion in all social arenas and parents disagree with their children's new found interests.

5.4 To investigate the role of communication on conflicts between parents and children

Results from the survey interviews showed that the parents and children felt communication neither solves nor escalate their conflicts. From the focus group the result made it clear that parent and children felt communication played a moderate role in resolving their conflicts. This can be traced from the types of communication strategies they stated earlier. Their strategies focused on conformity because parents and children did not agree most of the time. Parents did not give audience to children and children did not react to their parents for the sake of keeping family values and face.

This was in line with Steinberg, 2001, "A difficulty in assessing parent-child conflict is that parents and children often do not agree but children hold back in fear (Steinberg, 2001; Pelton & Forehand, 2001; Gonzales, Cauce, & Mason, 1996). Strong words and aggressive actions can infuriate both parents and children. Unable to control their emotions, some parents end up humiliating their children in public, therefore, parents and children resort to avoidance. Imagine their embarrassment if this is done in front of their friends. When children speak rudely to their

parents, the communication between them become a shouting match and the result is always bad for the child (Kramer et al., 2004; Repinski & Shonk, 2002)

Gonzales, 1996, yet, despite identifying children's ratings as more objective, there are data that contradict this. In a study comparing families that were referred to a clinic for relationship problems and families who were not referred, Noller and Callan (1990) found that parents in non-clinic families rated their families more positively if children held back and listened during conflict than parents in clinic families, but adolescent ratings in both groups did not show a similar pattern. Both groups of adolescents rated their families in a similar negative fashion because they preferred to be given an audience to air their feelings but was not the case at home.

5.5 To establish the challenges faced by parents and children on communication for conflicts resolution

The survey discovered two major challenges. One, negative communication and that conflicts between parents and children will always exist due to differences of interests. Others included hostility, criticism attacks, lack of respect and defensiveness. Most people know that in order to resolve conflicts, we need to communicate about the issue; but negative patterns of communication can often lead to greater frustration and escalation of conflict (Naomi, 2012). Communication roadblocks occur when two people talk in such a way that neither one feels understood. Research has found four particularly negative styles of communication, often referred to as the "four horsemen of the apocalypse," (Gottman, 1999, p.27) because if left unchecked, these styles of interaction can eventually become lethal to relationships. These styles are criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling (Gottman, 1999). The following were isolated comments given by participants during interviews.

- Criticism attacks the character or personality of another. While it was normal to have complaints about another's specific actions, it was very different to put them down as a person because of those actions. For example, a complaint might be, "I felt worried when you did not call to tell me that you were going to be home late." A criticism in the same situation was expressed as "You are so inconsiderate, you never call me when you are going to be late." *Critiques focused on certain behaviors; criticism negatively focused on the person's intentions and character.*
- Contempt portrayed disgust and a lack of respect for the other person through

body language, such as eye rolling or sneering, or by name calling, sarcasm and cutting remarks.

- Defensiveness was a seemingly understandable reaction that individuals took to criticism and contempt; however, it often escalates the conflict. When they were defensive, they tend to stop listening to the other's viewpoint and communication was shut down.
- Stonewalling was withdrawing from communication and refusing to engage in discussion, this was mainly portrayed by parents. In other words, it was the adult version of the "silent treatment" that young children utilized when they were upset. Conflict resolution was impossible without communication.

Although conflict was still considered to be a normal part of parents-child relationships, higher levels of intensity are associated with hostility and the limited potential for future positive interactions (Patterson, 1986; Montemayor, 1986; Laursen, 1995). Children embraced values that are different from their parents. Children value freedom, friendship, and fun. On the other hand, most parents valued hard work, honesty and honor. Children enjoyed humor and sarcasm but parents saw that as being disrespectful. It was not a surprise that children brand their parents as too traditional and old-fashioned. The continuous clash between children and their parents over values resulted in each being a perennial 'them' in the other's flesh.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This study presents a summary, conclusion, the recommendations as well as suggestion of the future study. The purpose of this study was to explore the role of communication in resolving conflicts between parents and children. The summary of the four objectives were also represented in this chapter.

6.1 To find out Knowledge on communication strategies and conflict among parents and children

The researcher had the following conclusions on the objective; parents had more knowledge on communication strategies than their children. Both parent and children had full knowledge on family conflicts. From the focus group discussion, the researcher realized that both parents and children were negligent to resolve conflicts for they accepted it as part of their everyday lifestyle. The implication was discovered to lead to escalated cases of conflicts in their homes. Communication was not applied as a tool to resolve matters but a strategy to express anger, disagreement and resentment on the part of children and a silencer on the part of parents. As earlier stated, parents had more experience in communication and family conflicts than their children.

6.2 To determine the types of communication strategies between parents and children

The following conclusions were made on the types of communication strategies that were used by both parents and their children. The researcher concluded that all the families interviewed and on individual basis, participants did not intentionally apply communication strategies to resolve conflicts. Participants did not realise the effect of their communication on the existing conflicts in their homes. The researcher also concluded that participants subconsciously applied communication strategies because the ones they used where not objectively learned for the purpose of resolving conflicts. But, these were as a result of attitudes and perceptions they were exposed to in their families and community. Based on research findings, the researcher concluded that

parents were authoritarian in the way they communicated to their children before, during and after conflicts and children's strategy was avoidance.

6.3 To investigate the role of communication on conflicts between parents and children

In relation to the above objective, the researcher concluded that communication strategies played a moderate role in resolving conflicts between parents and their children. This was based upon the results from the survey interviews and the focus group discussion. The results made it clear that parents and children felt communication played a moderate role in resolving their conflicts. This can be traced from the types of communication strategies they stated earlier. Their strategies focused on conformity because parents and children did not agree most of the time. Parents did not give audience to children and children did not react to their parents for the sake of keeping family values and face. To sum up, the researcher noted that when parents communicated issues to their children, it was all for the purpose of showing authority and shutting down the situation but not table it with their children to resolve it. Parents in the focus group discussion, in isolated incidences would be seen gesturing to their child, stopping them from talking. For the children, the researcher noticed that they were clearly intimidated by their parents during conflicts such that they had no say. This lead to a situation of accumulated issues unresolved between parents and their children, the most notable impact was the children's unruly behavior in protest to how they are treated by their parent. Such behavior included intake of alcohol and returning home late at night to avoid house chores.

6.4 To establish challenges faced by Parents and children on communication for conflicts resolution

The researcher concluded that the major challenge parents and children faced was lack of exposure to objective training and mentorship on using communication strategies in family conflict resolution in study area. These trainings could either be customary or in relation to civil rights. During the focus group discussion one parent pointed out that before a couple was wedded traditionally most lessons were focused on how a husband looks after the wife and vice versa, there was practically no lessons relating to how parents should leave in harmony with their children nowadays". The researcher noted that the above lead to the results discovered from the research. The research results indicated that the major challenges to conflict resolution through

could be eliminated by training parents and teenagers in both traditional and modern communication strategies in family conflict resolution. Personal interests were a challenge because it meant conflicts will always exist between parents and teenagers who did not agree on whose interest will be looked into and satisfied. Other challenges included hostility, criticism attacks, lack of respect and defensiveness. Most people know that in order to resolve conflicts, they needed to communicate about the issue; but negative patterns of communication often led to greater frustration and escalation of conflicts.

6.5 Conclusion

Generally, the study concluded that communication strategies were moderately practiced in the sample. Conflicts between parents and children were an ongoing phenomenon. Communication strategies were only applied to avoid a conversation. Parents were hostile and did not offer their children a chance to express themselves in any way. Children were holding on to grudges and resorted to disrespectful behavior because they could not air their feelings to their parents. Therefore, communication played a moderate role in resolving conflicts between parents and their children because it only silenced situations. Additionally, children did not consider knowing communication strategies because their parents had no time to listen to them, therefore children only had partial knowledge on what those strategies were. Finally, the overall challenge was traditional culture, parents were regarded as authoritarian and children had to obey without question whatever the parents decided. This blocked open communication and room for applying strategies. The impact on conflict was that, issues were not resolved but escalated, children resorted to retaliation through disrespectful and defensive behavior and parents resorted to shutting down conflicts through intense hostile reactions and the circle continued just like that (stalemate).

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study had revealed a number of issues regarding the role of communication in resolving conflicts between parents and children in Katondo community of Kabwe district in Zambia. In view of the above, the following recommendations were made:

- Children and parents should formally or customary learn communication strategies and skills for family conflict resolution

- Parents should be giving their children audience and freedom of expression when the child needs it.
- Courts, police and churches should spearhead awareness programmes on the negative effects of escalating parent-child conflicts in their local communities
- Parent should include their children in resolving family conflicts
- Children must learn and apply communication strategies that portray respect not resentment towards their parents during conflicts.

6.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

This study explored the Role of communication in resolving conflicts between parents and children in Katondo Community of Kabwe district in Zambia.

- Future research should involve full participation from stakeholders such as the Police and the Courts use people living in peri-urban areas and focus more on conflicts related to parents and their teenagers.
- Current study shed new light on the role communication played on parent-teen conflicts, therefore future research should examine the moderating roles of more specific forms of communication strategies to be applied in specific forms of parent teen conflicts such as physical conflict or verbal conflicts.
- The present study has opened the door to a host of research ideas and directions for the future. Future research in this area needs to examine diversity and take a more multicultural approach.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Children Questionnaire

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA/ZIMBABWE OPEN UNIVERSITY

(CHILDREN QUESTIONNAIRE)

DATE.....

Dear respondent,

I will be very grateful if you could honestly respond to the following questions, which are designed mainly for academic study. You will be required to answer questions on your (parents/teenager child) that may defy your cultural norms. I take this opportunity to inform you that the information you give will go towards a study trying to recommend proper communication for parents and teenagers on conflict resolution.

The information that you will supply will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will **NOT** be used anywhere else apart from the purpose for which data is destined.

The researcher is a Master of Science in Peace, Leadership and Conflict Resolution student at Zimbabwe Open University in collaboration with the University of Zambia.

The information collected through this process shall not in any way reflect the identity of the respondent.

Thank you for accepting to contribute to this research process.

INSTRUCTIONS

You may respond to the questions either by ticking in the box, or by filling in the blank spaces where explanations are required. Please ask for clarity where you feel you do not understand the question. Some questions will require you to choose a series of options.

NO.:

Q.N	QUESTION	RESPONSE	OFFICIAL CODE
1	State your Gender?	1. <input type="checkbox"/> Male 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Female	
2	Indicate your age?	(0 – 9); (10 – 19); (20 – 29); (30 – 39); (40-49); (50+)	
3	What is your relationship to the parent?	1. <input type="checkbox"/> Biological parent 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Non-biological parent	
4	What is the level of your education? Can you read and write?	1. No education 2. Primary 3. Secondary 4. Tertiary B1. Yes B2. No	
OBJECTIVE ONE: KNOWLEDGE ON COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND CONFLICTS			
5	Do you know what conflict is in a home? Mention on conflict you face with your parent?	1. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 2. No <input type="checkbox"/>	
6	Which response best describes communication strategies you know?	Lift your palm if you know the strategy I will mention, then I will tick all your responses accordingly	
a	Manage stress quickly		
b	staying calm		
c	Control your emotions		
d	Control your behaviour		
e	Pay attention to the feelings of others		
f	Silence the situation by saying the last word		
g	Listening		
7	Who is in the best position to solve conflicts in the household?	1. Parents <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Children <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Both parents and children <input type="checkbox"/>	
8	How would you rate your knowledge of effective communication strategies for parents?	1. Weak <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Adequate <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Good <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Very Good <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Exceptional <input type="checkbox"/>	
OBJECTIVE TWO: TYPES OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN			
9	What is the biggest threat to peace you face with your parent?		
10	What types of disagreements do you face with your parent as you communicate?		
Do you agree on the following issues with your parent children?			

1.	Independence of the child during your conversations with them	Yes	No
2.	Disapproval of choices	Yes	No
3.	Communicating curfew time frames	Yes	No
4.	Communicating the choice of friends by your parent	Yes	No
5.	Chores	Yes	No
6.	school performance	Yes	No
10b	Which of the following strategies do you practice?	Yes	No
a	Manage stress quickly	Yes	No
b	staying calm	Yes	No
c	Control your emotions	Yes	No
d	Control your behavior	Yes	No
e	Pay attention to the feelings of others	Yes	No
f	Silence the situation by saying the last word	Yes	No
g	Listening	Yes	No

OBJECTIVE THREE: THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION ON CONFLICTS BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Can you rate your opinion on the following statements by 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Not sure, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree

11.	Communication solves conflicts between me and my parent?	[]	
a			
B	Communication escalates conflicts between me and my parent?	[]	
C	All communication strategies work to resolve conflicts between me and my parent?	[]	

1	How would you rate your ability to effectively communicate and resolve issues with your parent?	1. Weak 2. Adequate 3. Good 4. Very Good 5. Exceptional
---	---	---

OBJECTIVE FOUR: CHALLENGES FACED ON COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

2 Which of the following best describes challenges faced by parents and children communicating, in conflicts resolution

a	Criticism attacks	Yes	No
b	lack of respect	Yes	No
c	Defensiveness	Yes	No
d	withdrawing from communication and refusing to engage	Yes	No

14 Please briefly indicate the challenges you face in communicating with your parent (s)?

Thank you for your time!!!

Appendix ii: PARENTS/GUARDIANS QUESTIONNAIRE

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA/ZIMBABWE OPEN UNIVERSITY

(PARENTS/GUARDIANS QUESTIONNAIRE)

DATE.....

Dear respondent,

I will be very grateful if you could honestly respond to the following questions, which are designed mainly for academic study. You will be required to answer questions on your (parents/teenager child) that may defy your cultural norms. I take this opportunity to inform you that the information you give will go towards a study trying to recommend proper communication for parents and teenagers on conflict resolution.

The information that you will supply will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will NOT be used anywhere else apart from the purpose for which data is destined.

The researcher is a Master of Science in Peace, Leadership and Conflict Resolution student at Zimbabwe Open University in collaboration with the University of Zambia.

The information collected through this process shall not in any way reflect the identity of the respondent.

Thank you for accepting to contribute to this research process.

INSTRUCTIONS

You may respond to the questions either by ticking in the box, or by filling in the blank spaces where explanations are required. Please ask for clarity where you feel you do not understand the question. Some questions will require you to choose a series of options.

NO.:

Q. N	QUESTION	RESPONSE	OFFICIAL CODE
1	State your Gender?	7. <input type="checkbox"/> Male 8. <input type="checkbox"/> Female	
2	Indicate your age?	(0 – 9); (10 – 19); (20 – 29); (30 – 39); (40-49); (50+)	
3	What is your relationship to the child?	3. <input type="checkbox"/> Biological parent 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Non-biological parent	
4	What is the level of your education? Can you read and write?	1. No education 2. Primary 3. Secondary 4. Tertiary B1. Yes B2. No	
OBJECTIVE ONE: KNOWLEDGE ON COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND CONFLICTS			
5	Do you know what conflict is in a home? Mention on conflict you face with your child?	1. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 2. No <input type="checkbox"/>	
6	Which response best describes communication strategies you know?	Lift your palm if you know the strategy I will mention, then I will tick all your responses accordingly	
	a	Manage stress quickly	
	b	staying calm	
	c	Control your emotions	
	d	Control your behaviour	
	e	Pay attention to the feelings of others	
	f	Silence the situation by saying the last word	
	g	Listening	
7	Who is in the best position to solve conflicts in the household?	1. Parents <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Children <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Both parents and children <input type="checkbox"/>	
8	How would you rate your knowledge of effective communication strategies for parents?	6. Weak <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Adequate <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Good <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Very Good <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Exceptional <input type="checkbox"/>	
OBJECTIVE TWO: TYPES OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN			
9	What is the biggest threat to peace you face with your children?		
10	What types of disagreements do you face with your children as you communicate?		
Do you agree on the following issues with your children?			
1.	Independence of the child during your conversations with them	Yes	No
2.	Disapproval of choices made by the child	Yes	No
9.	Communicating curfew time frames	Yes	No
10.	Communicating the choice of friends by your children	Yes	No
11.	Chores	Yes	No
12.	school performance	Yes	No

10b	Which of the following strategies do you practice?	Yes	No
a	Manage stress quickly	Yes	No
b	staying calm	Yes	No
c	Control your emotions	Yes	No
d	Control your behavior	Yes	No
e	Pay attention to the feelings of others	Yes	No
f	Silence the situation by saying the last word	Yes	No
g	Listening	Yes	No

OBJECTIVE THREE: THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION ON CONFLICTS BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Can you rate your opinion on the following statements by 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Not sure, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree

11.	Communication solves conflicts between me and my children?	[]
a		
B	Communication escalates conflicts between me and my children?	[]
C	All communication strategies work to resolve conflicts between me and my children?	[]

3	How would you rate your ability to effectively communicate and resolve issues with your child?	6. Weak 7. Adequate 8. Good 9. Very Good 10. Exceptional
---	--	--

OBJECTIVE FOUR: CHALLENGES FACED ON COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

4	Which of the following best describes challenges faced by parents and children communicating, in conflicts resolution	
a	Criticism attacks	Yes No
b	lack of respect	Yes No
c	Defensiveness	Yes No
d	Withdrawing from communication and refusing to engage	Yes No

14	Please briefly indicate the challenges you face in communicating with your child(s)?
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Thank you for your time!!!

Appendix iii: Focus group discussion

**FGD WITH PARENTS AND CHILDREN:
UNZA / ZOU**

TOPIC: THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN RESOLVING CONFLICTS BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

I am a Masters student of Conflict Resolution at the University of Zambia in collaboration with the University of Zimbabwe, carrying out a research on the above mentioned topic and you have been selected to participate in this research. We are going to have a discussion on the topic, please only participate when you are offered the chance by the moderator and try to be honest. This is a platform to freely express yourself but mind the feelings of others.

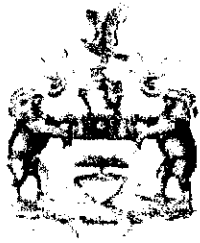
Date of Interview.....

Thank you in advance for your assistance

SPECIFIC POINTS TO DISCUSS

1. Knowledge of communication strategies in family conflict resolution
2. The types of conflicts between parents and children
3. Communication strategies between parents and children
4. The challenges faced by parents and children in conflict resolution

Appendix iv: Ethical Clearance



Kabwe Municipal Council

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Kabwe, Zambia

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OUR REF : KMC/PERS

20th April, 2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This minute serves to confirm that Authority has been granted to Mrs **Estella Mwansa Bowa** holder of NRC 165644/16/1 to conduct a research under Kabwe District, Katondo Township

The above named person is a bonafide student of the University of Zambia in collaboration with Zimbabwe Open University. She is pursuing A Master Of Science, Peace, Leadership and Conflict Resolution and that she will be carrying out a research on The Role of Communication in Resolving Conflicts between Parents and Children- A Case of Katondo Compound in Kabwe.

Any assistance that may be rendered to her will be appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Ronald M. Daka
TOWN CLERK

KABWE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL.

cc: Director of Human Resource and Administration

cc: File

ds