Covert Indicators of Parental Involvement and Communication in Parent-Adolescent Conflict in Nigerian Families an African Case Study with particular reference to the Yoruba families in Ibadan, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the effect of two variables (parental involvement and communication) on conflicts between parents and adolescents in Yoruba families in Ibadan. Two hundred (200) adolescents (56% females and 44% males) between the age range of 13-16 (66%) and 17-19 (34%) participated through a total enumeration technique. Expert content validation was done on issues checklist of salient issues of conflict between parents and adolescents with Chrobachs' alpha reliability (r=0.71). Findings show that parental involvement in adolescents' issues highly predicts parent and adolescents conflict. Communication also significantly predicts the criterion followed by other salient sources.

Based on these findings, the implications of these on education, parental upbringing and counseling practice were discussed in the body of the study.

Keywords: Parental involvement, Adolescents, Communication, Conflict

INTRODUCTION

Conflict defined is a disturbance in a relationship and can also be regarded as a state of dispute that is significantly related to negative emotions or feelings (Katz, Kramer and Gottman, 1992). Conflict is an inevitable consequence of adolescent culture individuation and maturation and it is evident in a decrease in family cohesion. It is usually ignited when parents start to give boundaries, emphasize adherence to convention, social expectancies and regulations at a period/stage when adolescents are gearing towards redefining himself in areas of autonomy and identify formation. When such state happens, there might be disharmony in the family and the parties would need to negotiate especially at mid-adolescence when conflict is usually at its peak compared to early or late adolescence (Uma D. Krishnan, 2004). These conflicts are of varied intensity and frequency and may be covert/hidden or overt/explicit with varying level of discomforts, readjustment and dysfunction.

Involvement, according to the Wikipedia definition connotes the fact or condition of participation in an activity and it involves emotional or personal association with an individual, in a situation or something. Parental involvement therefore describes a combination of commitment and participation of the parent in the affairs of the child in the social, educational and other areas of the child. Communication however, involves the mode of encoding and decoding messages between the sender and receiver. Most times, the information is subjectively processed, transmitted and translated by either of the two parties to suit a specific purpose. It is discussed by the Wikipedia as the act of conveying intended meaning from one entity or group to another through mutually understood signs, sound, words, behavior or expression. Communication suggests the act of transferring information through verbal messages written or signals and it is also an act of exchange of thoughts or articulating feelings for a specific reason. The process assumes some level of connectedness for a specific reason and interaction. To effectively appreciate a synergy in communication between parents and their adolescence, there is a need to: understand and respond in ways that will not activate, but rather discourage disagreement, contention and offensive relationship; avoid or minimize strong reactions, inflexibility, criticisms, threats, open confrontations, resentment and hostility. Good parental communication rewards parenting skills as well as strengthens the

establishment of mutual respect in the familial relationship.

Parenting is a word that remains a strong and most controversial influencing act that has unquestionably contributed to the development of children in families across the globe from the inception of the world. It connotes the presence of a 'parent' body which holds a firm grip on children's' development through birthing to; cradle, adolescence, adulthood and the trend associated with their reforms. The act has received so much debate and criticisms especially in respect to the contemporary tumultuous stage of adolescence due to the evolving widening gap between youth culture and adult culture. This gap in cultural norms between the two generations have heralded relational crisis and tension on how to foster authentic connection despite differences in values, experiences and identity between them. The hierarchical characteristics in the parent/adolescent relationship often hinder open communication and instigate conflicts as the struggle of the adolescents to be properly understood is often misinterpreted by the parent as challenging the hierarchy. This has led adolescents to higher frequency of lying, presence and misinforming their parents in order to enjoy some level of autonomy.

Whilst some parents regard coping with the youth culture as requiring some heroic human relational efforts with adolescents and their associations; their academics or vocations; extent of control over teens decisions on- drugs, alcohol, suicidal thoughts, legal issues, early pregnancies, premarital relationships and several others development related issues; the adolescence phenomenon is barely acknowledged in some cultures wherein parental anxiety is barely experienced. Different internalized cultural values influence parent adolescent relationships and encourage different interactive outcomes, attitudes, beliefs and norms. Such milieu of existence that allows the child to transcend with minimal complication and expectation from childhood to adulthood including fulfilling adult roles helps the adolescents escape all the stress and turmoil that are usually assumed to accompany the passage. This scenario is different in milieu wherein adolescence as a phenomenal concept is highly applicable and attaining specific practices and engagements culminate into proper transition of such an adolescent.

The period of adolescence is usually identified subjectively but undoubtedly by the emergence of some traits, characteristics and mostly visible maturity inclined changes and a decline in the desire for parental companionship. It also comes with a strong-willed personality which makes strict compliance to parental directive more difficult with possibilities of, at least, minimal conflict until a certain degree of individualism is achieved (White et al., 1983). While struggling to attain these individual personal characteristics behaviorally and emotionally, the adolescent emerges with caution on accepting parental involvement on their personal jurisdiction and their unilateral authority over the adolescent. This unrelenting control by parents becomes usually evident when communication is not rightly encoded and, or, decoded; as well as poor or non-readiness to adopt mutual authority more often than not, lead to parent-adolescent conflicts and the inability of the adolescents to express psychological control of his thoughts and feelings most times introduce the emergence of a low level of connectedness and estranged relationship between him and his parents.

In the conceptualization of 'family', which unequivocally is the greatest agent of a child's socialization, the notion of parents and children are primal. The word introduces a sense of belonging as the child progresses in age which makes it imperative for parents to assist him in consolidating positive values and avoid misinformation through other means of information. Due to parental involvement at early years, most parents are yet to appreciate the reality than with an increase in the age of a child comes a rising need for individualism which in a way suffers a decline in parental control but an increase in granting an appropriate degree of independence to the child.

In the Yoruba Culture, emphasis is highly on frugality (Babatunde, 2013), obedience, piety, communality obedience and interdependence, hence existence is highly based on external locus as casualty. However, a certain degree of expectation and relevance to one's milieu of existence and interdependence is expected at certain stages especially as soon as the individual is regarded as matured enough to take responsibility for his action and inactions. This is usually evident in situations where the traditional farming Yoruba family would make a clear role differentiation amongst his children and give a certain portion of land to the male child for cultivation (most times independently); fisherman would encourage participatory roles of his male child on the river; a hunter father would also encourage participating roles of his male child just as other skills men encourage vocational participation from their children.

In this culture, independence is rarely allowed to replace group harmony because the mode of living tends more towards collectivism than individualistic and it gives room for filial piety and strong familiar bond which are salient outcomes in an ideal parent-child living. The communication style in the traditional Yoruba culture is usually one way directional, authoritative and rule-bound with the father as the dominant and superior figure while other members of the family including the mother are subordinates and subjected to his control and dictate. As the child grows and sees himself/herself as capable to make decisions, he develops a strong tendency to challenge this unilateral authority and undiluted conformity to directives. This decision is usually the start-off moment for

adolescents to notice parents' fallibility and establish a crave for independence to fulfill social expectations of making his own living, getting married, rearing children and taking care of his immediate family needs. This behavior is well substantiated in the sociological theory of Steinberg (2010), which affirmed that at this stage, young people will experience the need to separate from their original family, establish a relationship and mate outside their natal group.

Adolescence was not initially characterized by diligence, unruly behavior, anxieties and other negative behaviors as it is in the contemporary time wherein the child needs to go through seasons of formal education informal training before he eventually is seen as fit/capable enough to face life's demands. Basically, the central determinant of "fitness" to meet life's demand in the traditional days was not age but readiness and the extent of preparedness of such a child to take responsibility which can happen even before he attains two decades of age. This is not the same in the present context as the formal and informal training towards "readiness" is not time bound and it is responsible for children to still look up to parents for support (especially financial) in order to make progress.

In pursuing the charted life's course, the child grows into an adolescent, develops strong peer bond and engages in diverse interests different from the parents. He may also begin to express differing opinions based on his new experiences in life which may predict conflicting concepts from parents. This inability to adjust or harmonies the two contextual lifestyles may lead to him internalizing or externalizing behaviors (Shehata & Ramadan, 2010) Likewise, the parents' ability to communicate appropriately the desired expectations will assist in maintaining harmony, cohesion and forestall/limit domains of conflict issues. If the parents are unsupportive and communicate non acceptability behaviors, wrong signals are sent to adolescent and his self-esteem is challenged and regression into negativities may commence.

Conflict with parents have been found to correlate positively with delinquency (Rushman, 2004), and affect adolescents functioning in varied ways. Authoritarian parental involvement is usually perceived as conflictual to adolescents whereas it is normative in the parent perspective.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Conflict even when it is over and issues have been resolved, has significance in the lives of adolescents and parents. It therefore becomes imperative to examine different ways that parental involvement and communication can contribute towards conflicts amongst parents and their adolescent and the checklist that culminate into these variables.

Significance of the study

The study provided information on check listed conflictual issues that are prone to be major sources of disagreement leading to parent-adolescent with a view to integrating improved support and information needed for a functional family relationship bearing in mind the need for flexibility in parenting practices.

Research question

In what ways do parental involvement and communication influence conflict in parent adolescent relationships

Methodology

Participants in this study were senior secondary students between Junior Secondary Schools 3 (JSS 3) and Senior Secondary School 3(SSS 3) in public schools in Ibadan metropolis. Three schools were randomly selected and total enumeration technique was used to select 200 adolescents. The adapted clear and simple worded validated checklist was administered. The sampled population indicated that the study cut across early, middle and senior adolescents.

RESULTS

Table I. Participants' biodata

Gender	N	%
Female	112	56
Male	88	44
Total	200	100

56% of the 200 respondents were females while 44% were males

Table 2. Participants' Age Range

Age Range	N	%
13-16	132	66
17-19	68	34

Age range of both genders showed 66% of participants as early and middle adolescents while 34% were nearing late adolescence.

Table 3. Checklist of Conflicting Issues

Issues	Never (1)	Sometimes	Most times	Always
Involvement in Academic Issues	10.5	25.5	24.5	39.5
Conversational style	11.1	22.0	30.1	36.8
Autonomy	19.1	25	25	30.2
Finances	31	29	22	18
Time Management	19	28	25	28
Dressing	34.2	28.2	19	18
Dating/Relationship	20	33	28	25
Daily Chores	19	25	28	28

Table 3 showed the extent to which involvement of parents in adolescent's issues create sources of conflict between them in this order: 39.5% conversational style 36.8 academic issues, 30.2 autonomy, 28%-time management/daily chores, 25% dating/relationship, 18%, finances/dressing. This means that communication style of parents is the most prominent conflict inducing domain in parent adolescent relationship. It further showed that the participants frequently enter into conflict with their parents due to their involvement in the sources analyzed and this explains the covert roles of parental involvement and communication on parent adolescent conflicts which most times are not taken into consideration by parents in their quest to supervise, monitor or remain relevant in their adolescent life transitions.

DISCUSSION

Conversational style was the top cause of parent adolescent conflict. This may be due to the fact that the parents in questions are yet to adopt considerate or build rapport with their adolescents.

Academic behaviors of adolescents are significant factors contributory to positive academic achievement which is supported by Nebel-Schwalem (2006), as the common demand of most adolescents, hence a strong source of conflict with parents especially when the adolescent is not favorably disposed to pursuing positive learning outcomes.

Autonomy was the third most potent source of conflict between parents and their adolescents which supported Papalia, Olds and Feldman (2004), submission that parents want their children to be independent, yet they find it hard to let go.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

(i) Responses were based on different orientations of the participants and therefore cannot represent a collective representation of other variations in Ibadan families.

(ii) Responses were adolescents self reports which gives the possibility of different results were parents reports to be included in the analysis

CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

Paper significantly contributed to research on families with special reference to Oyo State, Nigeria, It has also examined the roles of parental involvement and communication on both internalized and externalized conflicting situations between parents and their adolescents.

CONCLUSION

Supportive but firm parenting facilitates adolescent functioning. Likewise, constructive communication encourages adolescents to make more optimistic positive evaluations of themselves. Similarly, adaptive involvement in adolescent issues by parents strengthens the quality of their relationship. Parent who find more positive ways of relating in the minds of heated conflicts with adolescents and who resolve arguments rather than engage in them, are less vulnerable to relationship dissociation and their adolescents enjoy higher self-worth and less internalized or externalized behaviors.

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