

**COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN FAMILY CONFLICT MANAGEMENT OF
THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL CHURCH, BADAGRY AND ITS APPLICATIONS
FOR SOCIETAL PEACE IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study investigates conflict management strategies utilized by the Foursquare Gospel Church, Badagry District, and their impact on fostering peaceful family environments. Employing a descriptive survey design, the research involved a sample of 114 ministers from five zones and utilized questionnaires and personal interactions with four families for data collection. The analysis, based on Social Exchange Theory that explains how members use communication strategies to resolve conflicts, aiming for harmony and peace, and with the Family Systems Theory, it highlights how communication patterns affect conflict resolution and overall family functioning, promoting societal peace through healthier dynamics. The findings reveal that these strategies effectively strengthened family relationships, reduced conflicts, and promoted a sense of community. The study underscores the success of the Dual Concern Model in balancing self and other concerns and emphasizes the critical role of communication and empathy in conflict resolution. The research suggests that these conflict management approaches can be adapted to other settings, potentially enhancing societal peace and cohesion.

Keywords: Communication; Family Conflict; Conflict Management; Societal Peace; Foursquare Gospel Church

Introductory Background

Communication is pivotal in managing family conflicts, significantly impacting relationships and the overall home atmosphere. Effective strategies like active listening and assertive speaking are essential in resolving disputes and fostering a peaceful environment. Managing family conflicts involves not only resolving disputes but also preserving and strengthening relationships through open and honest dialogue. Effective conflict management is crucial for the well-being of family members and societal stability. Scholars emphasize the importance of recognizing potential conflict sources before they escalate and using third-party intervention when necessary (Deutsch & Coleman, 2000; Wilmot & Hocker, 2017; Rahim, 2011; Lewicki, Barry, & Saunders, 2016; Runde & Flanagan, 2012).

This study explores the role of communication in family conflict management and its impact on societal peace. It examines how effective communication strategies, like active listening and assertive speaking, can foster a peaceful home environment and contribute to societal harmony. Understanding communication's importance in conflict management is essential for developing interventions and policies promoting healthier family relationships and stronger communities. Conflict management involves processes, tools, and skills to manage disagreements respectfully and creatively. It includes resolving conflicts collaboratively through effective communication skills. Conflict management is the practice of identifying and handling conflicts rationally, balancing strategies to prevent, mitigate, and resolve disputes while preserving or improving relationships.

Within the family, conflict management is critical for maintaining a peaceful home and society. It involves facilitating open and honest dialogue (Wilmot & Hocker, 2017), recognizing potential conflict sources before they become problematic (Rahim, 2011), and using third-party intervention when necessary (Lewicki, Barry, & Saunders, 2016). Conflict management is a dynamic process requiring continuous strategy assessment and adjustment in various contexts (Runde & Flanagan, 2012).

Family conflicts can be managed through strategies like negotiation, mediation, and avoidance. Negotiation involves open communication for mutual agreement. Mediation involves a third party helping to reach an agreement, while avoidance involves sidestepping contentious issues, which may lead to more significant conflicts if unresolved. Constructive strategies, such as active listening and non-confrontational expression of feelings, lead to stable and satisfying relationships (Gottman & Silver, 1999), whereas destructive strategies, like criticism and contempt, result in dissatisfaction and divorce.

Statement of the Problem

Family conflict is a pervasive issue with negative outcomes for both individuals and society. Conflicts within families can lead to stress, anxiety, depression, and violence, often stemming from disagreements over parenting, finances, or relationships. The absence of effective conflict management strategies exacerbates these issues, creating a hostile home environment detrimental to the mental and physical health of family members. Children in such environments may develop poor conflict resolution skills, perpetuating conflict in future relationships. Effective communication is crucial for managing family conflicts, but common strategies like open communication and compromise may not always be effective, particularly in high-conflict families. Unresolved conflicts can further escalate tensions and impact family well-being. Societal implications of family conflict include increased crime, substance abuse, and mental health disorders. Despite its importance, there is a lack of comprehensive research on communication's role in family conflict management and its impact on societal peace, highlighting the need for targeted studies to develop effective interventions and policies.

Research Questions:

1. What role does communication play in family conflict management and fostering a peaceful home?
2. What is the relationship between effective family conflict management strategies and societal peace?

Significance of the Study

1. Families shape members' social, emotional, and psychological well-being as society's basic unit.
2. Family conflicts contribute to societal issues like violence, crime, and unrest.
3. Identifying conflict management strategies helps professionals provide better support to families.
4. Effective communication is crucial for resolving conflicts and fostering a peaceful home environment.
5. Good conflict management in families promotes societal harmony and influences welfare policies.
6. Findings inform educational programs on conflict management, impacting schools, communities, and workplaces.

Scope of the Study

The study examines the role of communication in family conflict management and its impact on societal peace for the Family of Foursquare Gospel Church, Badagry District, Lagos with the following Zones covered: Badagry, Ibereko, Ajara, Aradagun and Mosafejo

Operational Definitions of Terms:

1. *Communication*: The exchange of information between family members through verbal and non-verbal means.
2. *Family Conflict*: Disagreements or disputes occurring between members of a household.
3. *Conflict Management*: Strategies and processes employed to handle and resolve disputes constructively.
4. *Societal Peace*: The state of harmony and absence of conflict within a broader community or society.
5. *Impact*: The effect or influence of family conflict management on the wider community.

Theoretical Framework

1. *Social Exchange Theory*: Proposed by George Homans in the 1950s, Social Exchange Theory suggests that social behavior aims to maximize benefits and minimize costs. In family conflict management, it explains how members use communication strategies to resolve conflicts, aiming for harmony and peace.
2. *Family Systems Theory*: Developed by Murray Bowen, Family Systems Theory views the family as an emotional unit and uses systems thinking to understand its interactions. It highlights how communication patterns affect conflict resolution and overall family functioning, promoting societal peace through healthier dynamics (Bowen, 1966).

Empirical Review

Managing family conflicts effectively is crucial for maintaining both home and societal peace. The Foursquare Gospel Church Badagry District in Lagos identifies communication, negotiation, mediation, and forgiveness as key strategies for resolving conflicts (Foursquare Gospel Church, 2018). Effective communication is vital, as it helps clarify misunderstandings and prevents conflict escalation, fostering mutual understanding and respect (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003). Negotiation involves making concessions to reach mutually beneficial agreements, promoting compromise and cooperation within families (Fisher & Ury, 1981). Mediation, involving neutral third parties, facilitates dialogue and resolution, aiding in reconciliation (Bercovitch & Houston, 2000). Forgiveness, which

entails letting go of resentment, can heal emotional wounds and restore relationships, promoting family harmony (Worthington & Scherer, 2004). The study highlights that while these strategies are essential, their effectiveness can vary depending on family dynamics and circumstances.

Review on the role communication in family conflict management and fostering of Peaceful Home

Communication is pivotal in managing family conflicts and fostering a peaceful home environment. It encompasses various techniques and strategies that facilitate understanding, reduce misunderstandings, and aid in conflict resolution. Key elements include:

1. *Open and Honest Communication*: It encourages family members to express their feelings, thoughts, and concerns openly. Prevents misunderstandings, builds trust, and allows for emotional expression. It is essential for effective conflict resolution, as emphasized by Gottman & Silver (1999).
2. *Active Listening*: It involves paying close attention without interrupting and showing empathy and understanding. It facilitates empathy, reduces defensiveness, and helps identify root causes of conflicts. Active listening is highlighted by Rogers (1951) as crucial for positive communication and conflict resolution.
3. *Emotional Regulation*: It manages and control emotions to prevent escalation and maintain calmness during conflicts. It also enables more rational and constructive ways of addressing of issues. Emotional regulation is discussed by Goleman (1995) as a key aspect of emotional intelligence in conflict resolution.
4. *Problem-Solving Skills*: Encourages working together to identify the root cause of conflicts and develop practical solutions. It is effective in addressing underlying issues and preventing recurring conflicts. Problem solving skills is emphasized by D'Zurilla & Goldfried (1971) as significant in managing interpersonal conflicts.
5. *Empathy and Emotional Validation*: Recognizes and acknowledges the emotions and experiences of other family members. It reduces emotional tension and creates a supportive atmosphere for conflict resolution. Empathy and Emotional Validation, Goleman (1995) argues and recognizes that empathy is a crucial component of emotional intelligence in resolving conflicts.
6. *Clear and Respectful Expression*: Communicating needs, concerns, and boundaries clearly and respectfully without hostility. It prevents misunderstandings and ensures articulation and respect of each person's needs. Satir (1983) advocates for this approach to enhance mutual understanding and reduce conflicts.
7. *Non-verbal Communication*: It Pays attention to body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice. Non-verbal cues play a crucial role in reinforcing or contradicting

verbal communication. Mehrabian (1972) underscores the importance of non-verbal communication in conveying emotions and attitudes.

8. *Seeking External Support:* Consulting therapists, counselors, or mediators to help resolve conflicts. It provides impartial guidance and helps develop better conflict management skills. Satir (1983) emphasizes the value of family therapy in resolving conflicts and improving dynamics.
9. *Family Meetings:* It regularly scheduled meetings for discussing issues and planning solutions together. It provides a structured environment for open communication and collective problem-solving. Ackerman (1958) highlighted the benefits of family meetings in improving communication and resolving conflicts.
10. *Mindfulness and Stress Reduction Techniques:* Practicing mindfulness, meditation, or other techniques to stay calm during conflicts. Reduces stress, enabling family members to approach conflicts with clarity and patience. Kabat-Zinn (1990) discusses the benefits of mindfulness in managing stress and improving relationships.

Effective communication is fundamental in maintaining a healthy and harmonious family environment. Techniques such as open dialogue, active listening, emotional regulation, and empathy are crucial in resolving conflicts constructively, leading to stronger relationships and a more peaceful home.

Effective Conflict Management Strategies and Societal Peace in Nigeria

Effective conflict management strategies are pivotal in fostering societal peace and harmony. Deutsch (1973) asserts that these strategies, by fostering understanding, enhancing relationships, and improving problem-solving, can mitigate hostility and promote cooperation among individuals, thus contributing to societal peace and harmony. Bercovitch and Jackson (2009) discovered that employing effective conflict management strategies like negotiation and mediation substantially diminishes the risk of violent conflicts. This underscores the critical role these strategies play in upholding societal peace and harmony, especially when customized to meet the unique needs and situations of conflicting parties. Johnson and Johnson (2005) emphasized the role of education in enhancing conflict management skills. Their study revealed that individuals trained in conflict management were inclined to employ effective strategies and less prone to resorting to violence, highlighting education's pivotal role in fostering societal peace and harmony. However, Pruitt and Carnevale (1993) argue that the effectiveness of conflict management strategies hinges on several factors, including the nature of the conflict, the parties involved, and the social and cultural context. This underscores the need to tailor strategies to specific circumstances rather than adopting a universal approach to conflict resolution. Despite the potential benefits of effective conflict management strategies, Fisher (2001) discovered that conflicting parties often hold divergent perceptions of the conflict. This disparity can

complicate efforts to reach a mutually acceptable solution, emphasizing the importance of understanding all parties' perspectives in effective conflict management.

Effective conflict management strategies are pivotal in fostering societal peace and harmony. However, their efficacy hinges on various factors, and implementing them poses challenges. Further research is essential to refine strategies and surmount these obstacles for enhanced effectiveness.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey design to examine the role of communication in family conflict management and its impact on societal peace. The targeted population comprised Ministers of Foursquare Gospel Church in Badagry District, Lagos, covering zones such as Badagry, Ibereko, Ajara, Aradagun, and Mosafejo. A sample of 114 Ministers was selected for detailed study. Data was collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire, divided into two sections: Section A for personal data and Section B for research-related questions with response options: Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), and Strongly Disagreed (SD). The questionnaire's face and content validity were ensured through supervisor scrutiny and necessary adjustments. The finalized questionnaires were administered by the researcher and an assistant. Responses were analyzed using frequency tables and simple percentage methods to provide meaningful insights into the research questions.

Analysis of Data

The Demographic Data of the Respondents

1. Gender

Sex	No. of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Male	75	66.1%
Female	39	33.9%
Total	114	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

2. Respondent's Age:

Age (Years)	No. of Respondents	Percentages (%)
30 - 40 Years	22	19.3%
40 - 50 Years	20	17.4%
50 - 60 Years	49	43.1%
60 and above	23	20.2%
Total	114	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

3. Status:

Status	No. of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Ordained	52	46.2%
Licensed	26	22.6%
Exhorters	24	20.8%
Coordinators	12	10.4%
Total	114	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The bio-data from the questionnaire reveals the following demographic details: 66.1% of respondents were male, and 33.9% were female, ensuring gender balance. Age distribution was diverse: 19.3% were 20-30 years old, 17.4% were 40-50 years old, 43.1% were 50-60 years old, and 20.2% were over 60 years old. Regarding church status, 46.2% were Ordained, 22.6% were Licensed, 20.8% were Exhorters, and 10.4% were Coordinators. The predominance of ordained respondents suggests a significant level of authority and experience in the study's context.

The Role of Communication in Family Conflict Management and Fostering a Peaceful Home

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD
1	Effective communication among family members helps prevent conflicts from escalating.	73(63.9)	40(35.2)	1(0.9)	0(0)
2	Open and honest communication allows family members to express their feelings and concerns, reducing misunderstandings.	80(70.6)	32(28.0)	0(0)	2(1.4)
3	Active listening by family members during conflicts leads to more effective conflict resolution.	74(65.1)	39(33.9)	0(0)	1(1.0)
4	Regular family meetings to discuss issues and concerns help maintain a peaceful home environment.	74(65.1)	36(31.2)	4(3.7)	0(0)
5	Using empathetic responses during disagreements helps to manage and resolve family conflicts.	58(50.9)	48(41.7)	8(7.4)	0(0)
6	Clear and respectful communication reduces the frequency and intensity of conflicts in our family.	70(61.1)	44(38.9)	0(0)	0(0)
7	Encouraging every family member to voice their opinions and feelings contributes to a more harmonious household.	77(67.9)	36(31.2)	0(0)	1(0.9)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The respondents' feedback underscores the pivotal role of communication in managing family conflicts and fostering a peaceful home. A significant majority, 63.9%, strongly agreed that effective communication helps prevent conflicts from escalating, aligning with Gottman & Silver's (1999) assertion about its importance in maintaining healthy relationships. Similarly, 70.6% strongly agreed that open and honest communication reduces misunderstandings, supporting Gottman & Silver's view on the value of transparency in expressing emotions.

Active listening, endorsed by 65.1% of respondents who strongly agreed, is recognized as a crucial tool for conflict resolution, echoing Lerner's (2001) advocacy. Additionally, 50.9% strongly agreed that empathetic responses during disagreements aid conflict management, a view supported by Lerner (2004) and Brown (2012) who highlight empathy's role in resolving conflicts and building strong relationships. Clear and respectful communication, supported by 61.1% of respondents, is seen as essential for reducing conflict frequency and intensity, consistent with Markman & Stanley's (2001) findings. Encouraging family members to voice their opinions, with 67.9% strongly agreeing, contributes to a harmonious household, reflecting Gottman et al.'s (1999) emphasis on the importance of respectful communication.

The study confirms that effective communication is integral to resolving family conflicts, as supported by Schrodtt, Witt, & Messersmith (2008) and Koerner & Fitzpatrick (2002), who emphasize its role in strengthening relationships. Conversely, avoidance and withdrawal, noted by Caughlin & Vangelisti (2000), can escalate conflicts and create a hostile environment.

Assessing the Relationship between Effective Family Conflict Management Strategies and Societal Peace

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD
1	Effective conflict management within families contributes to a more peaceful and stable society.	82 (71.6)	31 (27.5)	1 (0.9)	0 (0)
2	Families that practice effective conflict resolution techniques are less likely to contribute to societal violence and unrest	70 (61.1)	41 (36.1)	3 (2.8)	0 (0)
3	Promoting conflict management education within families can lead to broader societal harmony.	72 (63.3)	42 (36.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)
4	Families that handle conflicts constructively serve as positive role models within their communities.	80 (70.6)	34 (29.4)	0 (0)	0 (0)
5	A society where families manage conflicts effectively is more likely to experience reduced crime rates and social disturbances.	75 (66.1)	35 (30.3)	3 (2.6)	(11.0)
6	Programs aimed at improving family conflict management skills can significantly impact societal peace.	70 (61.5)	43 (37.6)	1 (0.9)	0 (0)
7	There is a direct correlation between the peaceful resolution of family disputes and the overall peace within a community.	79 (69.2)	34 (29.9)	1 (0.9)	0 (0)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The analysis of the relationship between effective family conflict management and societal peace reveals several key perspectives supported by respondents. The majority, 71.4%, strongly agreed that effective conflict management within families contributes to a more peaceful and stable society. This aligns with Lerner (2021), who argues that managing conflicts well enhances societal well-being and stability.

Another view, supported by 61.1% of respondents, is that families practicing effective conflict resolution techniques are less likely to contribute to societal violence and unrest. This is consistent with Gottman & Silver (1999), who highlight that healthy family dynamics reduce the likelihood of contributing to societal violence. Promoting conflict

management education within families is also seen as beneficial, with 63.3% of respondents agreeing that it leads to broader societal harmony. This perspective is supported by Bronfenbrenner (1979), whose ecological systems theory suggests that family education in conflict management positively influences societal harmony by impacting various social systems.

Respondents, 70.6% of whom strongly agreed, also believe that families handling conflicts constructively serve as positive role models in their communities. This view is echoed by Munichin (1974) and Bowen (1978), who argue that well-managed family conflicts can promote community stability and harmony. Additionally, 66.1% of respondents agree that a society where families manage conflicts effectively is more likely to experience reduced crime rates and social disturbances, supporting Popenoe (1996), who posits that a stable family environment contributes to societal well-being by decreasing crime and social issues.

Programs aimed at improving family conflict management skills are also considered impactful, with 61.5% strongly agreeing that such programs can significantly benefit societal peace. This perspective aligns with Lerner (1985), who discusses the positive effects of conflict resolution education on community well-being.

Finally, 69.2% of respondents believe there is a direct correlation between the peaceful resolution of family disputes and overall community peace, supporting Satir (1983), who emphasizes that effective family conflict resolution, contributes to greater community harmony.

These findings corroborate Deutsch (1973), who asserts that effective conflict management strategies are crucial for fostering societal peace and harmony. They also align with Bercovitch and Jackson (2009), who found that negotiation and mediation significantly reduce violent conflicts, and Johnson and Johnson (2005), who emphasized the importance of education in enhancing conflict management skills.

Findings from the study are as follows:

1. Conflict is inherent within family settings due to human nature and interactions, but solutions exist for effective management.
2. Emphasizing concern for oneself and others (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993) helps in decision-making that includes all family members, thereby reducing conflicts.
3. Minor disagreements, if not managed promptly, can escalate into severe disputes impacting both family and society (Cummings & Davies, 2002).
4. Strategies like problem-solving and negotiation foster a peaceful home environment by addressing conflicts constructively.

5. Effective conflict management requires open and honest communication, preventing secret grievances and promoting transparency.
6. Church leaders use prayers, counseling, and biblical teachings to amicably resolve family disputes.
7. These methods significantly reduce the risk of violent conflicts by promoting mutual understanding and cooperation.
8. Educating family members about conflict management strategies through counseling is vital for reducing disputes.
9. Discovering and addressing the root causes of conflicts helps in preventing them.
10. Successfully managing conflicts results in healthier family dynamics and sets a positive example within the community.

These findings underscore the crucial role of communication in managing family conflicts, ultimately contributing to societal peace.

Summary and Conclusion

This study assessed conflict management strategies for fostering a peaceful home and society, focusing on the Badagry District of Foursquare Gospel Church, Lagos State, Nigeria. The findings highlighted various strategies for preventing or managing conflicts amicably within family and community settings to promote peace. Timely conflict resolution was emphasized, as delays can negatively impact both the family and the broader community. Common sources of conflict, such as communication breakdown, financial issues, and cultural differences, were identified. The Church's approach to conflict resolution includes open communication, active listening, empathy, understanding, forgiveness, reconciliation, mediation, counseling, and leadership involvement. The study also underscored the roles of family and community members in preventing conflicts, the importance of socio-religious groups in conflict management, and the need for training in conflict resolution strategies.

The research concluded that while conflict is inevitable in human interactions, it can be managed effectively through various strategies. Each family and community must discover and employ strategies that work best for them, ensuring timely resolution and understanding others' perspectives. Effective conflict management contributes to a peaceful home environment and, subsequently, a harmonious society.

Conclusion

The study on "Strategies for Conflict Management in the Family for Peaceful Home and Society" has provided valuable insights into family conflict dynamics and the role of effective communication in managing these conflicts. Strategies such as active listening,

empathy, and open dialogue reduce tension and foster a peaceful home environment. Understanding and respecting individual family members' perspectives create a harmonious and supportive environment, benefiting both the family and society.

Education in conflict management equips family members with skills to navigate and resolve conflicts constructively, highlighting the need for continuous learning and growth within the family unit. However, conflict management strategies are not one-size-fits-all, and families must explore and adapt strategies that work best for them. Future research could explore the impact of cultural and societal norms on family conflict and the role of external support systems like counseling and mediation services.

In summary, effective communication and understanding are crucial for managing family conflicts, contributing to a more peaceful home and society.

Relevant Recommendations

1. The paper advocates that every family and society member should view themselves as advocates for peace, recognizing that conflict is inevitable. They must be prepared to manage conflicts positively and constructively, intentionally controlling their emotions.
2. The study advocates that Family and societal members should be intentional about showing empathy and understanding towards others. This can be achieved through active listening, taking time to see things from others' perspectives before responding.
3. It recommends that conflicts need to be handled promptly to prevent them from escalating into crises that can cause harm within the family and community.
5. The paper advocates that each family should define the best method of solving conflicts before they become societal issues. Setting boundaries within the family and community can help minimize conflicts.
6. The paper advises that families and societies should create an atmosphere that encourages members to express themselves freely without fear or favor. This will prevent emotional outbursts from built-up, unexpressed feelings.

These recommendations emphasize the crucial role of communication in managing family conflicts and fostering societal peace by promoting empathy, timely conflict resolution, clear conflict resolution methods, and free expression within families and communities.

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