The Influence of Family Protective Communication Pattern on the Attitudes of the Ibibios of Akwa Ibom State on Religious Heterogeneity

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Abstract

There are cases of religious intolerance, discrimination against members of other religions, religious war, intellectual conflict and even conflict between church and state. These conflicts are harmful to the overall credibility of religion and may cause religious apathy or disintegration. The family, believed to be the smallest unit of any society, has a big contribution in the peace and conflict situations in any given society. This study adopts the family communication pattern theory by Mcleod J. M. and Chaffee S. H. (1972, 1973). McLeod and Chaffee developed the original model of family communication patterns to describe families' tendencies to develop fairly stable and predictable ways of communicating with one another. Families low on conversation orientation and high on conformity orientation are labeled protective families. Communication in protective families is characterized by an emphasis on obedience to parental authority and by little concern for conceptual matters or for open communication within the family. There are potential elements of communication and persuasion possible whenever two people interact, whether they are in the presence of each

other or merely virtual or imagined. The mere presence of another person—connoting potential or actual communication—may impact attitudes toward that person, often without either people realizing it is happening. Many aspects of religious heterogeneity can be explained by the sociological concepts of secularization, individualization, or pluralization. Religious diversity may be more important for the formation of a common identity because the choice of a religion reveals certain preferences and generates a set of common values and beliefs. protective communication pattern are often targeted on sheltering family members against undue pressure and external assaults. It is observed that the level of cohesion that exist in protective communication pattern and cohesion between adolescents and parents is enmeshed where adolescents experience closeness, loyalty and almost no individuality.

Keywords: Communication Pattern, Protective Communication, Attitude, Protective Families, Religious Heterogeneity.

Introduction

Family as a social institution is a very important part of an individual's life and is the pillars of a nation's strength in a solid foundation of resilience. The definition of family has a wide and diverse scope, as the smallest social unit, a family is a group of people who have relationships on the basis of marriage, descent, or adoption and live together in ordinary households. As an entity, families always face the threat of family vulnerability from outside the family, which can cause damage (potential damage). Disruptions from various aspects can lead to a fragile family system and the failure of family functions. Strengthening family functions will restore family social security in the face of challenges and crises and create prosperous families. Many studies determine the criteria needed to create a family.

Some of many studies show that religion plays an important role in the lives of most people, and the characteristics of parent interactions influence the development of children's religiosity. The degree of agreement between parents and children about religious beliefs and practices has also been investigated. This, in turn, leads to certain religious conflicts among people of different beliefs and religions. There are cases of religious intolerance, discrimination against members

of other religions, religious war, intellectual conflict and even conflict between church and state. These conflicts are harmful to the overall credibility of religion and may cause religious apathy or disintegration. The family, believed to be the smallest unit of any society, has a big contribution in the peace and conflict situations in any given society.

What the family has been communicating to its members can, in turn, determine the attitudes of its members towards other people, tribe, culture, race or religion who do not believe in, or practice their beliefs or religions. This, of course, can lead to religious crisis in any given situation. The belief system of an authority figure in a protective family is prioritized above all else. In a protective type of communication, there is high conformity and low conversation. The emphasis on the shared social reality is an emphasis on one or two authority figures and their beliefs.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the family communication pattern theory by Mcleod J. M. and Chaffee S. H. (1972, 1973). McLeod and Chaffee developed the original model of family communication patterns to describe families' tendencies to develop fairly stable and predictable ways of communicating with one another. As mass media researchers, McLeod and Chaffee were not interested in family communication as an end in itself. Rather, they wanted to explain how families create and share social reality. Specifically, they were interested in explaining how parents socialize their children to process information stemming from outside the family; in particular, information in the form of mass media messages. At that time, psychology and allied fields experienced a renewed interest in cognitive processes as they turned away from behaviorism and an almost exclusive interest in message properties to explain communication outcomes.

McLeod and Chaffee (1972) proposed that families vary in their preferences for and uses of these two strategies to achieve agreement, and consequently children are socialized differently in regard to the processing of information contained in media messages. Children of families that tend to use socio-orientation rely on others to interpret the meaning of media messages to them, mainly their parents or peers.

Conversely, children of families that tend to use concept-orientation elaborate on the concepts and ideas contained in the messages to determine their meanings. In other words, the two strategies to achieve agreement in families are associated with different communication behaviors.

In the context of the study, the theory as it is used in the study, is used to show that different families maintain certain patterns of communication. It shows that family communication patterns are the ways that members of a family interact. These patterns develop over time, and sometimes passed on to the next generations. It shows that family communication patterns are important because they translate into how people communicate everywhere. It is important to be aware of one's reactions and impulses when interacting with others.

The theory is suitable for this study as it states that families low on conversation orientation and high on conformity orientation are labeled protective. Communication in protective families is characterized by an emphasis on obedience to parental authority and by little concern for conceptual matters or for open communication within the family. Parents in these families believe that they should be making the decisions for their family and their children, and they see little value in explaining their reasoning to their children. Conflict in protective families is perceived negatively because of the great emphasis placed on conformity (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997). Family members are expected not to have conflicts with one another and to behave according to the interests and norms of the family. Because communication skills are not valued and not practiced much, these families often lack the necessary skills to engage productively in conflict resolution should it come to open disagreements. Children in protective families learn that there is little value in family conversations and to distrust their own decision-making ability.

Concept of Family Protective Communication Pattern

Families low on conversation orientation and high on conformity orientation are labeled protective. Communication in protective families is characterized by an emphasis on obedience to parental authority and by little concern for conceptual matters or for open communication within the family. Parents in these families

believe that they should be making the decisions for their family and their children, and they see little value in explaining their reasoning to their children. Conflict in protective families is perceived negatively because of the great emphasis placed on conformity (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2017).

Family members are expected not to have conflicts with one another and to behave according to the interests and norms of the family. Because communication skills are not valued and not practiced much, these families often lack the necessary skills to engage productively in conflict resolution should it come to open disagreements. Children in protective families learn that there is little value in family conversations and to distrust their own decision-making ability. Protective family communication, also referred to as family shared social reality (FSSR), the belief system of an authority figure in a protective family prioritsed above all else.

In a protective type, there is high conformity and low conversation. The emphasis on the shared social reality is an emphasis on one or two authority figures and their beliefs. In this type, members of the family must conform to the family beliefs to be accepted. The primary conflict style families use in this category is competing otherwise referred to as dominating. By avoiding conflict for the preservation of the FSSR, the protective family increases conflict (Albritton, 2023). Without conversation but with conformity, parents or caregivers expect their children to obey their rules and do not usually trust their children to make their own decisions.

The protective communication shows little concern about conceptual matters. In protective families, children are discouraged from expressing different opinions and encouraged to keep harmonious relationships (Huang, 2010). According to Elwood (1995), protective families emphasize a child's conformity, but do not engage in parent-child interaction. To appear harmonious, these families also discourage conflict. Lertsuwan (2018) is of the opinion that parents in protective families are high on socio-orientation and low on concept-orientation.

That is, they are more concerned about consistency and avoiding disagreement within the family. Protective family communication patterns have been associated with lower levels of religious tolerance and acceptance of diversity (Koenig et al.,

2015). Protective families prioritize stability and conformity and may discourage discussion of controversial topics, which may limit exposure to diverse perspectives and inhibit understanding and acceptance of religious diversity. According to Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002), while parents in pluralistic families encourage children to advance arguments to support their ideas and allow them to participate in family discussions and decision-making as equals, protective parents do not involve children in decision-making and do not think that there are any benefits (for the family or for their children) in explaining their (the parents') decisions to their children

Communication and Attitude

Human life is replete with communications that have persuasive intent and seemingly always has been. Politicians persuade voters to support them. Advertisers target mass-market segments who will buy their products. Spammers send the masses unrelenting barrages of unwanted promotions. In science, scholars craft their manuscripts' arguments to induce acceptance of their reported evidence on the topic. Following some early rich sociological case studies of culture that highlighted attitudes (Johnson and Maio, 2016), initial empirical work on measures of attitudes began in the 1920s. Perhaps because the first empirical studies appeared in sociological or political science outlets, psychologists found it something of a revelation that "attitudes can be measured". Subsequent work proceeded to related topics, such as whether attitudes predict behavior or the means by which they might change. As Ostrom's (1989) review makes clear, researchers' definitions of attitude have varied quite widely across this time, from the schemalike multidimensional view of Johnson and Maio (2016) to the current consensus that an attitude is a mental tendency to evaluate some entity with some degree of favor or disfavor (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993; Zanna and Rempel, 1988).

Even though definitions have varied, researchers who have examined communication and persuasion uniformly have examined variables such as favorability toward the message position or evaluative ratings of the message entity, which map neatly on to the attitude concept. As we have implied, the domain of communication and persuasion can be quite broad, as witnessed by its frequent appearance across the entries in this Handbook. There are potential

elements of communication and persuasion possible whenever two people interact, whether they are in the presence of each other or merely virtual or imagined. The mere presence of another person—connoting potential or actual communication—may impact attitudes toward that person, often without either people realizing it is happening.

To take an extreme example, a classic social psychological finding is that multiple exposures to another person often create more positive attitudes toward that person (Saegert, Swap, and Zajonc, 1973). Similarly, people may use tactics of authority or coercion to change others' behavior. Although a persuader may use such tactics to convince another person to like them or to adopt their advocacies, communication and persuasion research typically focuses around the more-or-less deliberate attempts of one source to convince an audience of the value in a message position or positions. Although this chapter will generally focus on the more-or-less deliberate persuasion contexts, we also provide some coverage of nonverbal and no conscious sources of persuasion.

In studies of communication and persuasion, results may take two basic empirical forms. The first form is a simple comparison of attitude levels before and after message presentation, which gauges the direction and amount of any change that occurs. Yet, because this comparison may reflect the influence of other factors such as maturation or testing (Cook and Campbell, 1979), researchers usually elaborate their experiments to include controls, such as a no-message group. Hence, actual persuasion can be gauged comparing post-message attitudes either to attitudes measured at baseline or against a no-message control group. Although such designs were relatively frequent in early persuasion studies, they have become less frequent in contemporary designs.

The second and most common form of persuasion experiment in the last 25 years involves after-only designs in which participants typically do not provide baseline attitudes for comparison. In such studies, persuasion is assessed by comparing attitude levels in one group relative to another group or groups in the design. Such designs eliminate problems such as maturation and testing and permit a determination of whether a manipulated factor affected attitudes, but—unless

baseline attitudes have been assessed—it is ambiguous as to which group has actually changed (Johnson and Maio, 2016; Johnson, Smith-McLallen, Killeya and Levin, 2004).

The remainder of the review can be structured in three general clusters. First, we discuss major theoretical perspectives on the processes by which communication-induced attitude change occurs and affects other variables. These theories illuminate when messages should be successful and when they should fail. Second, in keeping with the emphasis of this Handbook on the interrelations of key attitudinally-relevant variables, we examine causes of communication-induced attitude change, including factors that relate to change at message exposure and following it. Finally, we review the effects of communication-induced attitude change on such other potential outcomes as behavior, affects, beliefs, and awareness of change. We conclude with some thoughts about the future of research on communication and attitude change (Johnson and Maio, 2016).

Religious Heterogeneity

Many aspects of religious heterogeneity can be explained by the sociological concepts of secularization, individualization, or pluralization (Pickel 2010; Taylor 2007). All these concepts, for example, lead to the same conclusion, which is that the bond between religious institutions and the individual is loosening. On a macro level, various worldviews have emerged alongside Christianity, and there is no evidence as to which worldview would serve best to cope with life. Apparently, homogeneity plays an important role for the smooth working of a society. An important question that arises is if simple differences in ethnicity or religious beliefs cause social trouble or, as might as well be the case, feelings of commonness reduce rivalry between different groups (Tajfel, 1970). If people feel close to their neighbors due to shared values or beliefs there might be no reason for social cleavages even if the neighbors are ethnically different. Georgiadis and Manning (2009) call this "nation-building", other authors speak of a national identity.

Religious diversity may be more important for the formation of a common identity because the choice of a religion reveals certain preferences and generates a set of common values and beliefs. However, these values can differ substantially between

different religious denominations. Furthermore, every human can choose his religion whereas race and ethnicity are determined by the genes. Consequently, we suggest that the active choice of common values is more important for a shared identity than coincidental ethnic differences. Our aim is to analyze the relationship between national identity and religious diversity, where we expect to find a negative relationship. If this is true we will try to explain this relationship taking into account that the relationship with ethnic diversity is not statistically significant (Harttgen and Opfinger, 2012).

Individuals from religious minorities often take their religious belonging as the backbone of their identity (Pickel, 2020; Timol 2020). Sharing the same religious background creates a space of conformity in a culturally antagonistic social surrounding—often even when the way in which this background is practiced in everyday life varies remarkably. In this regard, religious belonging is a suitable identity marker for religious minorities, even in a Christian surrounding as indicated by the case of Northern Ireland (Mitchell 2005). All in all, religious belonging may moderate the relationship between the institution and the individual in the religious realm, but it is very likely that this belonging is constitutive only in the case of religious minorities. As a general approach to the relationship between the religious institution and the individual in modern Western society, religious belonging has lost much of its exploratory power.

Effect of Family Protective Communication Pattern on the Attitudes of The Ibibio of Akwa Ibom State on Religious Heterogeneity

The findings of Effiong and Usoroh (2020) revealed that families that adopt protective family communication pattern experience low level of cohesion which is separated between adolescents and parents. The findings may be attributed to the fact that adolescents raised with protective communication pattern are typically not well adjusted because controversies and conflicts have been excluded from the adolescents' growing up experience. More so, protective communication pattern functions to maintain obedience and enforce family norms; little value is placed on the exchange of ideas or the development of communication skills. Adolescents and parents encourage conversation and dialogue about family problems to help members of the family maintain higher levels of emotional well-being and

autonomy. The finding is in conformity with the assertion of McLeod, Atkin and Chaffee (2002) who noted that protective communication pattern are often targeted on sheltering family members against undue pressure and external assaults. It is observed that the level of cohesion that exist in protective communication pattern and cohesion between adolescents and parents is enmeshed where adolescents experience closeness, loyalty and almost no individuality. This is in-line with the level of cohesion as presented in Circumplex Model of Marital and Family System by Olson (2000).

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that family communication patterns have significant relationship on cohesion between adolescents and parents. Therefore, cohesion between adolescents and parents for a balanced family system could be maintained if the appropriate communication pattern is appropriated among the members concerned. Communication patterns like the, protective communication pattern determine the level of cohesion between adolescents and parents.

From the information obtained, it can be said that, in one way or the other, the protective communication pattern make people see other people outside their Faith as being dishonest, and being different from the rest of the world. This is in line with Albritton (2023) and okptacultivate (2020) who reported that in this type, members of the family must conform to the family beliefs to be accepted. The primary conflict style families used in this category is competing, otherwise referred to as dominating. By avoiding conflict for the preservation of the family shared social reality (FSSR), the protective family increases conflict. Without conversation but with conformity, parents or caregivers expect their children to obey their rules and do not usually trust their children to make their own decisions.

Conclusion

Some criteria usually discussed are about family functions and family interactions. Family functions are about the orientation of tasks performed and expected family accomplishments, while the problem of interaction is related to the communication process that connects individuals as family members. Besides that, the family has a duty in the maintenance and outreach for their children, which is seen as the most

important in strengthening of family functions. Through family interactions, parents can convey to their children about various knowledge on the challenges the family is facing at the moment, or even the setbacks that have been there before the children were born. This process includes maintenance and socialization in a particular system of values and beliefs. One place where family communication can have a strong influence is one about religion and religious beliefs.

It can be said that cultural differences can bring about differences in communication patterns and approaches to handling conflict. Cultural variability in areas such as individualism-collectivism, self-construal, power distance, and face concerns help to explain individual similarities and differences. Differences in culture also have an effect on communication styles. For example, members of a collectivistic culture tend to avoid hurting others' feelings and avoid direct requests. Among other things, family communication patterns influence adult children's perceptions of certain issues. As observed, according to previous studies, even once a child has left the family, as a young adult the communication patterns that existed within that family still influences that young adult's behavior.

For this reason, it is pertinent that parents allow their children to be exposed to all the communication patters there are; and if possible, make them see the need to respect the choices and decisions of others, especially with regards to religious heterogeneity. Families should try to respect one another's decisions and opinions with regards to orientation and conformity. As this would help to check certain religious conflict that may want to arise from different communication process like discussions and interactions. This study has been able to show that having respect for others and the choices they make with respect to religious heterogeneity can help check the menace of religious conflict.

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