

The Relationship between Birth Order and Marital Communication Patterns in Conflict Resolution among Women in Nakuru West Constituency, Nakuru County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT:

The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between birth order and marital communication patterns in conflict resolution among women in Nakuru West Constituency, Nakuru County, Kenya. The research adopted an eclectic theoretical approach using attachment and standpoint theories to address the aspects of the study. The research utilized the survey research design. The study targeted a population of 152,257 women from which a sample of 384 respondents was drawn by stratified random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data, while secondary data was obtained from on-line County records. The researcher applied descriptive (finding and tabulating the mean, standard deviation, internal reliability scores and cross-tabulation) and inferential statistic on the quantitative data collected. To test the set parameters the researcher calculated some series of equations like Chi Square and Karl Pearson Correlation to test the assumed prediction of birth order. Statistical Package for Social Sciences - SPSS version 22.0 was used to analyze collected data. The study yielded 85.4 per cent response rate. All posited hypothesis were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study indicated that there was a strong positive relationship between Birth-order and marital communication patterns in conflict resolution among women that is significant at 5 per cent levels of significance. Therefore, the researcher accepted the alternative hypothesis stating that Birth-order has a statistical significant relationship to marital communication patterns in conflict resolution among women in Nakuru West Constituency, Nakuru County, Kenya. The researcher recommends that adequate parenting should be given when raising children so as to raise responsible individuals who can be responsible and considerable partners in the future. Parents should be fair when distributing responsibilities and offering opportunities to their children irrespective of their birth order.

Key Terms: birth order, marital communication patterns, women, conflict resolution

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INTRODUCTION

In their book, Melgosa and Melgosa (2013), indicate that many marital separations and divorces are due to conflicts as well as couple's inability to find a solution. Central and Eastern European transition economies have also seen increasing numbers of female-headed families as a result of increased divorce rates, among other reasons. In today's globalising context, families in these countries often experience conflicts between more traditional cultural norms, vestiges of behavioural patterns from the Communist era, and new customs brought about by the opening of their countries to the flows of people, information, pop culture, as well as new products, companies and business practices. Latest estimates according to World health statistics (2018) indicate that globally almost one-quarter of adults (23%) suffered physical abuse as a children and reveals about one third (35%) of women experienced either physical and sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence at some point in their life.

In the 2014 KDHS, 14% of women and 6% of men aged 15-49 reported having experienced sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. Generally, 39% of women who were ever-married and 9% of men who were ever-married aged 15-49 report having experienced spousal physical or sexual violence. Among women and men who have ever experienced spousal violence (physical or sexual), 39% and 24% respectively, reported experiencing physical injuries. 44% of women and 27 % of men have sought assistance to stop the violence they have experienced. A 2015 survey on informal settlements by UNICEF confirms the high prevalence of gender-based violence, states that this is often triggered by financial arguments, alcohol abuse and men having multiple partners, and highlights that children are often caught in the middle of such confrontations.

FIDA Kenya (2011), gender relationships in marriage instil feelings of superiority and inferiority, creating disharmony and conflict. In Nairobi during the period 2011-2012 figures demonstrate a higher prevalence of violence in the low-income areas of Nairobi County such as Kayole, Kibera, Mwiki and Dandora (44% of all cases); with a lower prevalence in middle-class areas of South B & C, Imara Daima and Kasarani (22%) and upmarket areas of Kilimani, Kileleshwa and Westlands (7%) according to the Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC). Importantly, traditional cultures may permit beating a wife and condone rape within marriage, in the KDHS report (KNBS, 2010), cited previously, 53 % of women and 44% of men believed that there were certain circumstances under which beating a wife was justifiable, a belief which became less prevalent with increased education and economic status of women. Therefore, cultural attitudes play an important part in the continuing domestic problem. The GVRC in Nakuru from January to December 2014, the Centre dealt with 2365 cases (free of charge in accordance with the law), whereas 1823 cases of non-sexual violence were dealt with.

As indicated in a report by UNICEF (2018), in the 2014 Demographic and Health Survey, 14% of women and 6 per cent of men aged 15-49 reported having experienced sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. While the Government has developed and adopted policies, enacted laws, developed and implemented educational programmes to combat gender-based violence, the response is constrained by the lack of human capacity for prevention and protection, entrenched religious and cultural beliefs that perpetuate negative stereotypes, discrimination and gender inequality, and socio-cultural norms around gender and masculinity.

Notwithstanding many years of academic analysis and practical feminist activities towards women issues, as well as prestigious international resolutions and declarations of

women's issues, progress towards psychosocial factors influencing marital communication is still slow. Besides, in certain circumstances, cultural ideologies provide 'legitimacy' for violence against women. Religiosity creates a base for how women should be submissive to their husband, one that leaves a vacuum in relation to psychosocial factors surrounding the couple. Since the Beijing World Conference in 1995, gender-based violence subject has gained more visibility leaving out marital communication issues. Additionally, communication in line with in-laws phenomenon has not been looked into with scholars other than Prentice (2008) and Limary (2002).

Moreover, little has been done to empirically establish the causative factors of birth order in relation to marital communication patterns in conflict resolution among women in Nakuru West Constituency. The likelihood of continued family conflicts stands higher where men and women would persistently fail to address conflict issues amicably unless knowledge of how selected psychosocial factors influence marital communication patterns is identified. Therefore, the study sought to explore the relationship between birth order and marital communication patterns in conflict resolution among women in Nakuru West Constituency, Nakuru County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Frost and Wilmot (2001), conflict occurs whenever one partner seeks to be autonomous and express individuality when facing enmeshment in a dependence relationship. Kottler (2002) states that conflicts in human relationships are inevitable because people's growth and changes take place at different rates and direction.

Thomas and Kilmann (2017) infer that struggling to meet one's goal regardless of other involved parties brings conflict. Sometimes that struggle succeeds, whereas it fails

at other times. Thomas and Kilmann continue to identify styles of dealing with conflict where individuals possess a preferred style of resolving conflict. They established the Thomas-Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI). These styles are Competitive style: It is also referred as "Win-Lose" method whereby it includes taking a firm stand, and knowing what one wants while pursuing own goals at the expense of another person acting out of power and or position claiming their rights. It is useful when the decision is unpopular, and the decision needs to be made quickly. Accommodative style: It is when one meets other people's needs at the expense of their own needs; it's the opposite of competitive style. Accommodating is suitable the minute peace is more valuable than winning. Nonetheless, it's unlikely to produce the best results (Thomas, & Kilmann, 2017).

Avoidance style: It's comprised of uncooperativeness, unassertiveness and evasion of conflict, avoiding hurting others feelings conquering with default decisions. It can be appropriate when triumph is impossible when the argument is insignificant; it's postponing a problem which makes it a weak and insufficient style.

Collaborating style: It's where all persons involved needs are met, it's acknowledging the importance of everyone while being very assertive, it's useful in getting best outcome by in cooperating various views as well as openly exploring disagreements to find solutions (Thomas, & Kilmann 2017).

Compromising style: Seeking partiality of a solution to ensure all are satisfied, it's useful when it costs less to lose grounds than conflict, as well as when there are time limits for solutions. People using this style usually leave unsatisfied (Thomas, & Kilmann, 2017).

Communication is a combination of non-verbal and listening. Additionally, it's important to listen to others speaking, to avoid and eliminate biases its paramount to focus and listen to what the other party speaks. In 1992 Gray (1992) echoed that in line with communication,

women are relationship-oriented different from goal-oriented men.

UK Violence Intervention and Prevention Centre (2014), outlines four communication styles; passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive and assertive. In passive communication, people avoid sharing how they feel. Aggressive communication is practiced by those who demand their rights; they are dominant, they do not listen, and they also interrupt frequently. Those who practice passive-aggressive communication look passive from outside but constantly undermine whatever causes them resentment. Assertive communication is used by people who can state how they feel and what they think, and who can do what is right for them without infringing on other people's rights. According to Phillips et al. (2012), lack of proper communication can cause marital problems. The way families of origin communicate during conflicts influences the learning of children's communication during interpersonal conflict. They will employ similar communication styles within their families, as well as outside the family and in their successive social interactions.

The study seeks to investigate various communication patterns and outlines four indicators of communication pattern, namely; Passive, Aggressive, Passive-aggressive and Assertive.

Passive Communication Pattern: To the researcher's view, "silenced or silence" passivity may arise as a result of the man's psychosocial state, cultural dictation and or religiosity influences hence the woman is involuntarily passive, i.e. silenced. While those who are passive with no attachment of man psychosocial state or other influences rather their state may be termed as voluntary passivity, i.e. silence, while other women may experience both or none at all hence the focus of the study based on the data collection.

Aggressive Communication Pattern: Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986) suggests that people learn communication behaviour's from observing others'

interactions and from their own experiences. Aggressiveness is physical, verbally or non-verbally communicated, contrary to assertiveness.

According to UK Violence Intervention and Prevention Centre (2014), Aggressive communication is practiced by those who demand their rights regardless of how it violates other people's freedom. They are dominant, impulsive, they do not listen and they also interrupt frequently. They tend to criticize others for what transpires to them.

Passive-Aggressive Communication Pattern: It is where one appears silent or passive outward though angered and acts angrily indirectly, they are resentful and powerless. Eagly and Steffen (1986) states, there is an indication that men are faster to aggressivity and additional possible than women in showing their aggressiveness physically. Passive-Aggressive communicators will frequently murmur to themselves rather than provoke the person, struggling to acknowledge their anger, use non-verbal languages that do not equal how they feel for an instant, smiling when angry, use irony, refute there is a problem, seem complaisant while intentionally doing things to irritate and upset, use elusive sabotage to get even.

Assertive Communication Pattern: Through straight communication, you exhibit respect for your rights and the rights of others. The benefit of assertiveness is that you can be concessions so that you can get what you need and want. In 2005, Akpan supported that barriers like lack of love, fear of incongruity, poor listening pattern, unhealthy ways of initiating talk, seclusion, personal preconceptions and lack of trust must be avoided.

Kluger (2011), recognises the first person to study birth order Sir Francis Galton who posits that one thing that may influence the way persons behave and the reason is birth order. Later, Alfred Adler studied birth order in relation to personality, believing that personality is influenced by one's position of birth. The system in which a child is born might have an effect on different variables, such as

personality (Bleske-Rechek, & Kelley, 2014), intelligence (Barclay, 2015), income (Bertoni, & Brunello, 2016) and after-school activities (Price, et al., 2017): the birth order effect. Wong (Michele, et al., 2017) stated that other personality characteristics that are influenced by birth order are sociability, dominance, and assertiveness. Birth order has been found to impact identity formation in emerging adults. As people enter into adulthood, they must decide what they want their role in life to be, and how they intend to fulfil that role.

Leman (2009) noted that if two partners are too comparable in numerous extent they may have more trouble handling variances with each other whereas, less or non-comparable ones get along appreciating each other and working well hence a higher sense of satisfaction. Summative, through observations and participation children tend to learn a lot as they grow in their respective

birth position including the way they are communicated to, the way their parents communicate to each other and other significant others while transferring learnt behaviours and or mannerism into adulthood according to Whitton et al. (2008). Hence the researcher seeks to explore how birth order as a psychosocial factor relates to marital communication patterns in conflict resolution among women in Nakuru West Constituency.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Birth Order: Respondents' Birth Position

The researcher sought to establish the birth position in the nuclear family for the women who participated in the study. The response was categorized into four firstborn, middle, last born and only child. The results are presented in Figure 1



Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents' by Birth Position

The study revealed that majority (62.1%) of the women's birth position was in the middle, followed by 25% who were firstborn with 12.1% being the last born. According to Figure 4.7, only 0.7% of the women were the only child in their nuclear family set up.

Respondents' Husbands' Birth Position

The researcher sought to establish the birth position in the nuclear family for the husbands. The response was categorised into four firstborn, middle, last born and only child. The results are presented in Figure 2.

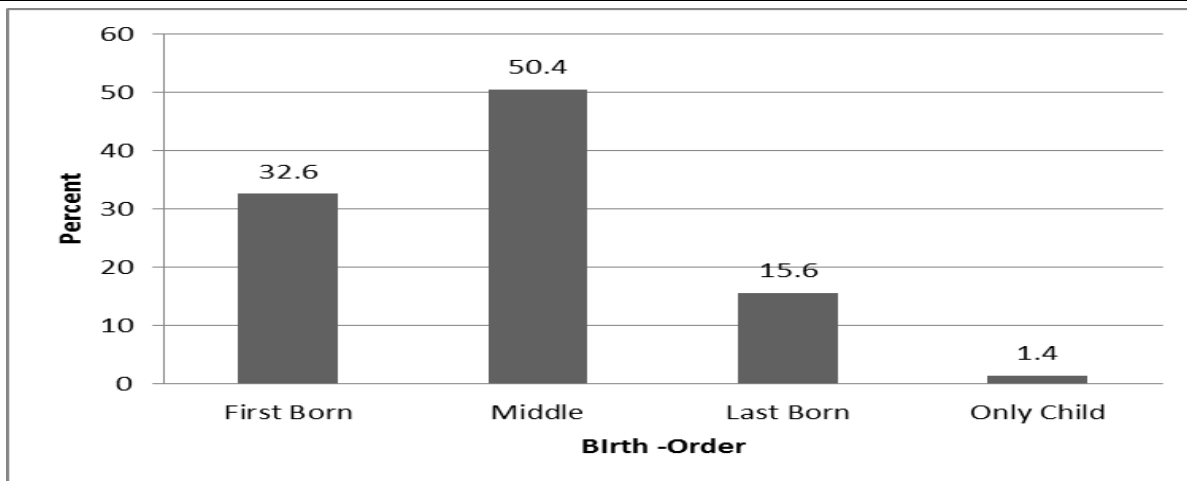


Figure 2: Distribution of Respondents' Husbands' by Birth Position

According to Figure 4.8, majority of the husbands (50.4%) were found to be born at the middle in their nuclear families followed by 32.6% who were firstborn and 15.6% being last-born while only 1.4% of the husbands were the only children in their families.

Number of Respondents' Siblings

The researcher sought to establish the number of brothers and sisters that the respondents had. The results are presented in Table 1 and 2 respectively.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Brothers

Statistics	Brothers
Mean	3
Median	3
Mode	1
Standard Deviation	1.6
Minimum	0
Maximum	7

As documented in Table 1, the average number of brothers that the respondents had was 3. Most of the women reported having one brother, as indicated by the mode.

The Median number of brothers was 3, with a standard deviation of 1.6. The maximum number of brothers reported was 7, with the minimum being 0.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Sisters

Statistics	Sisters
Mean	4
Median	4
Mode	3
Standard Deviation	2
Minimum	0
Maximum	9

The study revealed that the mean number of sisters to the respondents was 4 while the median was 4 and standard deviation 2. Majority of the women (mode) stated that they had 3 sisters. The maximum number of sisters reported was 9 with some respondents stating that they had no sisters.

Relationships between Birth-Order and Marital Communication Patterns in Conflict Resolution

The researcher sought to establish the relationship between birth-order and marital communication patterns in conflict resolution among women. A combination of Chi-Square tests and Karl Pearson Correlation tests were used to establish whether variables were independent of each other and if relationship existed what the nature and strength of the relationship at 5% levels of significance. The tests facilitated in testing the following set of research hypotheses;

H₀₁: Birth-order has no statistical significant relationship to marital communication patterns in conflict resolution among women in Nakuru West Constituency, Nakuru County, Kenya

H₁₁: Birth-order has a statistical significant relationship to marital communication patterns in conflict resolution among women in Nakuru West Constituency, Nakuru County, Kenya

Table 3: Chi-Square Tests on Relationship between Birth-Order and Marital Communication patterns

Variables	Pearson Square	Chi-Square	df	p-Value
Birth-Order	39.466		30	0.016

The Chi-Square test on the relationship between the birth-order and marital communication patterns in conflict resolution among women yielded a $\chi^2(30, n=384) = 39.466$, $p\text{-value} = 0.016 < 0.05$. This implies that there is a significant relationship between birth-order and marital communication patterns in conflict resolution among women at 5% levels of significance. Meaning that birth-order is not independent of marital communication patterns.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix on Relationship between Birth-Order and Marital Communication patterns

		Communication Patterns	Birth-Order
Pearson Correlation (r)	Communication Patterns	1	0.789
	Birth-Order	0.789	1
p-Value	Communication Patterns	.	0.003
	Birth-Order	0.003	.
n=384, $\alpha=0.05$			

The Karl Pearson correlation test was used to explain nature and strength of relationship. Pearson correlation between the birth-order and marital communication patterns in conflict resolution among women yielded a coefficient $r(384) = 0.789$, $p\text{-value} = 0.003 < 0.05$. This suggests that there is a strong positive correlation between birth-order and marital communication patterns in conflict resolution among women that is significant at 5% levels of significance. Meaning for one unit increase of birth-order there is increase of 0.789 in marital communication patterns.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion: The rejection of the null hypothesis **H₀₁:** Birth-order has no statistical significant relationship to marital communication patterns in conflict resolution among women in Nakuru West Constituency, Nakuru County, Kenya. This implies there is a strong positive relationship between Birth-order and marital communication patterns in conflict resolution among women that is significant at 5% levels of significance. Therefore, the researcher accepted the alternative hypothesis stating that Birth-order has a statistical significant relationship to marital communication

patterns in conflict resolution among women in Nakuru West Constituency, Nakuru County, Kenya.

In connection with the research theory of attachment informing the study; it centers on parent-child association on other children's social affairs where one's future way of communication and handling conflict is influenced by his or her family of origin. Equally, based on Stand point theory one's communication is influenced by the social stand point one occupies in the social hierarchy, it is thus evident that respondents of the study might have been influenced accordingly, hence forming part of researchers recommendation.

From descriptive statistics, it was noted that study participants were heterogeneous as standard deviation was more than one. The findings that there is significant relationship between birth-order and marital communication patterns imply different children of different birth-orders differ significantly in development of communication skills as order provides different family environments. First born and only children because they lack interactions with older siblings are likely to possess less interactive interpersonal relationship unlike middle born and last born. Middle born and last born, they have high interactive skills because of having to get along with older siblings and compete with them in for parental attentions.

Recommendation: Since the birth-order of an individual has a significant relationship with marital communication patterns in conflict resolution, the researcher recommends that adequate parenting should be given when raising children so as to raise responsible individuals who can be responsible and considerable partners in the future. Parents should be fair when distributing responsibilities and offering opportunities to their children irrespective of their birth order.

The fact that there are variations in birth-order as indicated by standard deviation and marital communication patterns are not independent of it as indicated by Chi-square and Pearson, there is need to consider this variable in marital conflict resolution.

For future studies closer attention can be taken into examining the attachment styles of parent-child association in relationship to their birth-order and communication patterns used in conflict resolution. Studies can as well be conducted to examine one's social stand and social position in their social hierarchy relationship to their birth-order and communication patterns in conflict resolution.

However, the study design was correlational hence the findings may not suggest cause effect hence need for longitudinal study to follow up on children of different birth-orders and their communication patterns in adulthood in resolving conflicts in marital context.

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