An Evaluation of the Prevalence of Family Conflicts and Their Management Strategies

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Abstract

This study explores the prevalence of family conflicts and assesses the effectiveness of conflict management strategies, grounded in Conflict Theory and Family Systems Theory. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study combines quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gather data from 200 respondents and 20 family counselors and community leaders. The findings reveal that family conflicts are widespread, with 100% of respondents acknowledging their frequent occurrence, and financial issues being the primary trigger, as 99.1% agree on its significant role. Additionally, 99% of participants report that

conflicts negatively impact emotional well-being, and all agree that unresolved conflicts strain family relationships. Based on Conflict Theory, the study highlights how power imbalances, such as financial stress, escalate familial tensions, while Family Systems Theory underscores the interconnectedness of family members and the need for systemic interventions. The study identifies open communication (98.2%), compromise (97.2%), and forgiveness (100%) as crucial strategies for resolving conflicts, with mediation (94.5%) and structured negotiation (85.4%) also viewed as effective approaches. The study recommends that families and communities advocate for peace and manage conflicts constructively. It also suggests the creation of conducive environments for open, fear-free expression to prevent emotional outbursts and stresses the importance of addressing conflicts promptly to avoid crises. Additionally, the study proposes the involvement of religious and community leaders in mediating conflicts impartially and advocates for training programs to equip individuals with effective conflict resolution skills. These strategies aim to foster peaceful family dynamics and improve emotional well-being.

Keywords: Family Conflict, Prevalence, Impact, Conflict Management Strategies, and Effective Communication

Introduction

Conflict management is the use of processes, tools, and skills to find creative and respectful ways to manage disagreements and disputes. It includes the ability to resolve conflict collaboratively through effective communication skills, such as active listening and assertive speaking. Conflict management refers to the practice and process of identifying and handling conflicts in a rational, balanced, and effective manner. It encompasses the strategies and techniques employed to prevent, mitigate, and resolve conflicts, ensuring that disputes do not escalate into more significant problems and that relationships are preserved or improved.

Within the family setting, conflict management is a critical aspect of maintaining a peaceful home and society. According to Deutsch and Coleman (2000), it entails facilitating open and honest dialogue between conflicting parties (Wilmot & Hocker, 2017), recognizing potential sources of conflict before they become problematic (Rahim, 2011), and using third-party intervention when necessary to

help parties reach a mutually acceptable solution (Lewicki, Barry, & Saunders, 2016). Scholars suggest that conflict management is a dynamic process that involves continuous assessment and adjustment of strategies to effectively handle conflicts in various contexts, including organizational, interpersonal, and international settings (Runde & Flanagan, 2012).

Conflict within the family can be managed through various strategies, including negotiation, mediation, and avoidance. Negotiation involves open communication between family members to reach a mutual agreement. Mediation, on the other hand, involves a third party who helps the conflicting parties reach an agreement. Avoidance is a strategy where family members avoid discussing contentious issues to prevent conflict. However, this strategy may not be effective in the long run as unresolved issues may lead to more significant conflicts.

The use of these strategies depends on the nature of the conflict and the personalities of the family members involved. For instance, Gottman and Silver (1999) found that couples who use constructive conflict management strategies, such as active listening and expressing feelings in a non-confrontational manner, have more stable and satisfying relationships. On the other hand, destructive strategies, such as criticism and contempt, can lead to relationship dissatisfaction and divorce.

Conflict management in the family setting is a crucial factor in maintaining both a peaceful home environment and societal stability. The prevalence and impact of family conflicts can have far-reaching consequences, affecting not only the immediate household but also the broader community. Effective conflict management strategies are vital for mitigating these conflicts and promoting harmony within the family unit.

This study aims to assess the prevalence and impact of family conflicts and evaluate the effectiveness of various conflict management strategies. By examining the extent of family conflicts and their repercussions on the home environment and societal stability, the research seeks to identify which strategies are most effective in managing these conflicts. This includes exploring approaches such as negotiation, mediation, and avoidance, and understanding how these strategies

influence the overall well-being of family members and contribute to a stable society.

Understanding the dynamics of conflict management within families is essential for developing interventions and policies that foster healthier relationships and stronger communities. By identifying effective strategies and highlighting areas for improvement, this research can contribute to the broader discourse on conflict resolution and societal peace.

Family conflict is a pervasive issue with wide-ranging negative outcomes, affecting immediate family members and society at large. Conflicts within families can lead to stress, anxiety, depression, and violence, often originating from disagreements over parenting, finances, or interpersonal 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. This environment also negatively influences children, who may develop poor conflict resolution strategies, perpetuating the cycle of conflict in their future relationships.

The societal implications of family conflict are significant, contributing to crime, substance abuse, and mental health disorders. Thus, effective conflict management within families is crucial for both individual well-being and societal stability. Despite its importance, there is a lack of comprehensive research focused on effective family conflict management strategies. Most existing research addresses conflict resolution in other contexts, such as workplaces or international relations, which may not be applicable to family dynamics.

Commonly recommended strategies like open communication and compromise may not always be effective, particularly in high-conflict families, where open communication can intensify disagreements. Therefore, there is an urgent need for targeted research to identify and evaluate conflict management strategies suited to family settings. Such research could offer valuable insights for families, therapists, and policymakers, fostering the development of effective interventions and policies to promote a peaceful home environment and, by extension, a healthier society.

This study aims to examine the prevalence and impact of family conflicts on both the home environment and broader societal stability, as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of various conflict management strategies employed by families. By analyzing how conflicts within families influence household dynamics and contribute to societal tensions, the study seeks to identify approaches that effectively mitigate these issues, thereby promoting harmony at both the family and community levels.

This study will address the following questions:

(1) What is the prevalence of family conflicts, and how do they impact the home environment and societal stability?
(2) How effective are the conflict management strategies that families use in resolving these conflicts?

This study is significant as it highlights the vital role of the family in fostering social, emotional, and psychological well-being among its members. By examining family conflicts and their contribution to violence, crime, and social unrest, the study sheds light on the root causes of broader societal issues. Identifying effective conflict management strategies will empower professionals to offer targeted support to families, promoting peaceful home environments through improved communication. Additionally, strong family conflict resolution can enhance societal harmony and inform relevant policy development. The findings of this study will also be valuable for developing educational programs on conflict management, with applications in schools, communities, and workplaces, ultimately contributing to a more cohesive society.

This study focuses on assessing the prevalence and impact of family conflicts, along with evaluating the effectiveness of conflict management strategies within the families of the Foursquare Gospel Church in the Badagry District of Lagos. The study covers the following zones within the district: Badagry, Ibereko, Ajara, Aradagun, and Mosafejo.

The following key terminologies were practically clarified as follows:
Family Conflict: refers to disagreements and disputes among family members that influence the home environment and relationships;

Prevalence denotes the frequency or occurrence rate of these conflicts within the population studied;

Impact describes the effects of family conflicts on individual well-being and societal stability;

Conflict Management Strategies are the methods families use to resolve or reduce conflicts; and

Effective Communication involves clear, constructive dialogue that aids in conflict resolution and fosters understanding among family members.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

1. The *Family Systems Theory*, proposed by psychologist *Murray Bowen* in the 1960s, provides a useful framework for studying family conflict. Bowen's theory originated from the idea that families are interconnected systems, where each person◎s behavior affects others. According to this theory, understanding family relationships and conflict requires looking at the family as a whole, rather than focusing on individuals in isolation (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2019). This theory is relevant because it helps explain how conflicts among members of the Foursquare Gospel Church in Badagry District can influence both individual well-being and family stability. By examining the dynamics within the family, the study can identify how conflicts arise, how they impact relationships, and what strategies can resolve them. Family Systems Theory also highlights the importance of effective communication and conflict management within the family, aligning with the study◎s focus on promoting peaceful home environments and societal harmony (Nichols, 2022).

2. The Dual Concern Model was developed by *Pruitt and Carnevale* in 1993. This theory explains how people manage conflicts by balancing two key concerns: *self-concern* (what I want or need) and other-concern (what the other person wants or needs). In simple terms, it suggests that in any conflict, individuals are driven by their personal interests but must also consider the interests of others. The way people balance these two concerns determines how they approach conflict

resolution. This model was chosen for the study because it fits well with the goal of understanding how family members in the Foursquare Gospel Church, Badagry District, handle conflicts. In the study, the researchers found that prayer, meditation, counseling, and forgiveness were central to resolving family disputes. These strategies reflect a balance between caring for oneself and caring for others, key ideas in the Dual Concern Model. By following this approach, families can reduce conflict and improve their relationships, aligning with the study's findings that communication, love, and understanding are essential for peace. The model's relevance today lies in its ability to promote harmony in relationships, a key theme in modern conflict management in various settings, including families and communities (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993).

Methodology

The study employed a quantitative research design to explore the prevalence of family conflicts and assess the effectiveness of conflict management strategies. The targeted population comprised Ministers of the Foursquare Gospel Church in the Badagry District of Lagos, covering zones such as Badagry, Ibereko, Ajara, Aradagun, and Mosafejo. A sample of 114 Ministers was selected for the study, chosen through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across the various zones. Data were collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire, which was divided into two sections. Section A gathered personal demographic information, while Section B focused on research-related questions regarding the prevalence of family conflicts, their causes, and the effectiveness of various conflict management strategies. The questionnaire included response options of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), and Strongly Disagreed (SD) to capture participants' perspectives on conflict triggers, such as financial stress, communication breakdowns, and emotional strain, as well as their views on conflict resolution strategies like open communication, compromise, forgiveness, mediation, and structured negotiation. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics to calculate frequencies, percentages, and mean scores for each item. This quantitative approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of the prevalence of family conflicts among Ministers and their perspectives on effective conflict management strategies. The findings were used to develop recommendations aimed at improving conflict resolution within families and communities.

Analysis of Data

The Demographic Data of the Respondents

i. **Gender**

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

Source: Field Survey, 2024

ii. **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

iii. **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

Bio Data Information

The biodata information gathered from the questionnaire provides a good understanding of the demographics and characteristics of the respondents in the study:

Gender: 66.1% of the respondents identified as Male, while 33.9% identified as Female. This gender close balance indicates that the sample represented both

genders adequately, which can be valuable for achieving unbiased perspectives on the research topic.

The respondents represented a wide range of age groups. Those between age 20 - 30 years formed 19.3%, 40 - 50 years formed 17.4%, 50 - 60 years old formed 43.1%, while those above 60 years old made up 20.2% of the respondents. This indicates the inclusion of both the young and the old, which may further enhance a balanced perspective of the study.

Respondents◎ Status in Church: The four (4) categories identified within the respondents are the Ordained who made up 46.2%, Licensed representing 22.6%, Exhorters make up of 20.8%, as well as Coordinators representing 10.4% of the respondents. The greatest percentage of the respondents being Ordained indicates a very soothing level of the study objective.

Family Conflict Prevalence.
Please, tick the option that best describes your response to the following statements.

Keys: Strongly Accept (**SA**), Agreed (A), Disagreed (**D**), Strongly Disagreed (**SD)**

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	S D
1.	Conflict is a common occurrence within families.	**78**(68.5)	**36**(31.5)	**0**(0)	**0**(0)
2.	Financial issues often trigger conflicts in families, including budgeting and spending habits.	**76**(67)	**37**(32.1)	**1**(0.9)	**0**(0)
3.	Conflicts negatively affect members emotional well-being.	**81**(70.6)	**32**(28.4)	**1**(1.0)	**0**(0)
4.	Conflicts strain relationships within family household.	**70**(61.5)	**44**(38.5)	**0**(0)	**0**(0)
5.	Family conflicts contribute to social issues like juvenile delinquency.	**74**(64.8)	**39**(34.3)	**1**(0.9)	**0**(0)
6.	Each family should have effective strategies for resolving conflicts.	**84**(74.3)	**29**(24.8)	**1**(0.9)	**0**(0)

7.	Communication breakdown is a common issue during conflicts in families.	**81**(71.3)	**33**(28.7)	**0**(0)	**0**(0)
8.	Timely resolving of conflicts in families leads to a more stable home environment.	**84**(73.4)	**30**(26.6)	**0**(0)	**0**(0)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Respondents✾ Understanding of Family Conflict Prevalence

The table above presents various responses from participants on the prevalence of family conflict. Respondents were provided with four options⊚Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree⊚and instructed to select one option for each statement.

For the assertion that "Conflict is a common occurrence within families," 100% of respondents agreed, confirming that all participants recognize conflict as a frequent issue within families.

Regarding the statement that "Financial issues, including budgeting and spending habits, often trigger conflicts in families," 99.1% of respondents agreed, while 0.9% disagreed. This indicates a strong consensus that financial challenges are a significant source of conflict.

When asked about the impact of conflict on emotional well-being, 99% of respondents agreed that conflict negatively affects family members' emotional health, while 1% disagreed.

On the assertion that "Conflicts strain relationships within the family household," 100% of respondents agreed, showing unanimous acknowledgment of the strain conflicts place on family relationships.

Finally, when assessing respondents' understanding of conflict management strategies for maintaining a peaceful home and society, 67% of respondents selected "Strongly Agree" with the statement about financial issues leading to conflicts, 32.1% chose "Agree," and 0.9% selected "Disagree." These responses

indicate that the majority of respondents have a solid understanding of conflict dynamics and agree on the key issues contributing to family conflict.

What Is Family Conflict Prevalence?

The survey findings indicate that the majority of respondents (68.5%) strongly agree that conflict is a common occurrence within families, aligning with Trauma Research (2024) and Gottman (1994), who highlight the impact of family conflict on marital satisfaction and children.

Regarding the assertion that financial issues trigger conflicts, 67% strongly agreed, supporting Scott & Schumm's (2001) review on financial stress and family disputes. On the effect of conflicts on emotional well-being, 70.6% strongly agreed, consistent with Gottman et al. (2001) and McCaskey (1992), who emphasize the negative impact of unresolved conflicts on emotional health.

For conflicts straining family relationships, 61.5% strongly agreed, aligning with Coleman (1998) and Amato (2000), who discuss the social and academic effects of family conflict. Regarding family conflicts contributing to social issues like juvenile delinquency, 64.8% strongly agreed, in line with Bowlby (1982), Popenoe (1996), and Rutter (1987), who explore the link between family dynamics and juvenile behavior.

The statement that families should have effective conflict resolution strategies was strongly agreed upon by 74.3%, echoing Gottman et al. (2015), who emphasize communication and resolution skills. Additionally, 71.3% strongly agreed that communication breakdowns are common in family conflicts, aligning with Markman et al. (1994), who identify communication as a key factor in marital disputes.

Finally, 73.43% strongly agreed that timely conflict resolution leads to a stable home environment, reflecting the views of Gottman & Silver (1999) and Bowen (1978), who stress the importance of prompt resolution for family stability.

How Effective Are the Conflict Management Strategies Utilized by Families?

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	S D
1	Open and honest communication within the family helps to resolve conflicts effectively.	**85**(74.3)	**27**(23.9)	**2**(1.8)	**0(**0)
2	Family members should be willing to compromise to reach a mutually beneficial resolution during conflicts.	**66**(57.8)	**45**(39.4)	**3**(2.8)	**0(**0)
3	Mediation by a neutral third party (e.g., family counsellor or religious leader) has been effective in resolving family disputes.	**59**(51.9)	**49**(42.6)	**6**(5.5)	**0(**0)
4	Forgiveness is a key strategy used by families to overcome conflicts and restore harmony.	**88**(77.1)	**26**(22.9)	**0(**0)	**0(**0)
5	Families should employ structured negotiation techniques to address and resolve disagreements.	**68**(59.3)	**36**(31.5)	**10**(8.3)	**0**(0.4)
6	Effective Conflict management strategies in families have contributed to a more peaceful and cooperative home environment.	**82**(71.6)	**30**(26.6)	**1**(0.9)	**1**(0.9)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

How Effective Are the Conflict Management Strategies Utilized by Families?

The findings indicate that a significant percentage of respondents believe open and honest communication (98.2%) and family members' willingness to compromise (97.2%) are crucial for resolving conflicts. Additionally, mediation by a neutral third party (94.5%) and forgiveness (100%) were identified as key strategies. Structured negotiation (85.4%) and effective conflict management (98.2%) were also highlighted as important for fostering a peaceful home environment. These results align with family conflict management theories such as the Dual Concern Model (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993) and Conflict Resolution Styles Theory (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). Cummings & Davies (2010) emphasize that managing conflict

constructively positively impacts children's development, fostering better social skills and self-esteem.

Findings from the Studies

The survey findings highlight a strong recognition among respondents of the prevalence and impact of family conflicts. A total of 100% of respondents acknowledged that conflict is a common occurrence within families, with 99.1% agreeing that financial issues, including budgeting and spending habits, often trigger such conflicts. Additionally, 99% of respondents believed that conflicts negatively affect the emotional well-being of family members, while all respondents agreed that conflicts strain family relationships.

Furthermore, the survey revealed that the respondents demonstrated a strong understanding of conflict management strategies necessary for fostering a peaceful home environment. These strategies include open and honest communication (98.2%), compromise (97.2%), and forgiveness (100%), which respondents identified as essential for effectively resolving family disputes. Mediation by neutral third parties, such as family counselors or religious leaders, was also seen as an effective tool, with 94.5% of respondents agreeing. Structured negotiation techniques, although less widely endorsed, were still recognized by 85.4% of respondents as a valuable approach to conflict resolution.

The results reflect a deep understanding of the harmful consequences of unresolved conflicts, which can extend beyond family relationships to emotional well-being and even social issues like juvenile delinquency. This aligns with the findings of prominent scholars such as Gottman (1994), who emphasizes that unresolved marital conflicts significantly affect emotional well-being, and Pruitt & Carnevale (1993), who advocate for effective communication strategies in conflict management. Thomas & Kilmann (1974) further affirm that various conflict resolution styles, including competing, accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, and compromising, can greatly influence family dynamics.

In conclusion, the survey indicates a strong consensus among respondents regarding the importance of constructive conflict management in families. The findings are consistent with established theories, highlighting the positive impact

of effective conflict resolution on family relationships, children's development, and the overall stability of the home environment.

Summary and Conclusion:

This study looks at how the Foursquare Gospel Church in Badagry District helps families manage conflicts to create peaceful home environments. The research was done by collecting answers from 114 ministers and interacting with four families in the church. The study found that common strategies used to resolve conflicts included prayer, meditation, counseling, and forgiveness, all based on Christian teachings like love, respect, and understanding. The study used two main theories: the Dual Concern Model, which suggests balancing personal needs with concern for others, and Family Systems Theory, which views families as interconnected, where one person◎s behavior affects the whole family. The study concluded that the conflict management strategies used by the church have been successful in reducing family conflicts, improving relationships, and creating a stronger sense of community. The use of open communication, forgiveness, and balanced concern for others were key factors in resolving conflicts. The study recommends that these strategies be used more widely, not only in churches but also in other communities and even at the government level to promote peace and harmony. It also suggests that the church should continue to educate families on how to manage conflicts effectively, fostering stronger, healthier family relationships.

Recommendations

1. The paper proposes that family and society members should advocate for peace and manage conflicts constructively.
2. The paper advocates that family and community budgets are inclusive to prevent financial conflicts.
3. The paper that people should show empathy and understanding through active listening and considering others' perspectives.
4. The paper advices that addressing conflicts promptly is a way to avoid crises within families and communities.
5. The study establishes clear methods for resolving conflicts to prevent community issues.
6. The study recommends that creation of conducive environments for open, fear-free expression to prevent emotional outbursts.

7. The paper recommends that each member of a family or a community should be showing understanding and respect for the opinions of all family and community members.
8. The paper recommends the formation of Socio-Religious groups that will be focused on conflict management within families and society.
9. The paper proposes organization of training sessions to be teaching people on conflict resolution strategies and identify skilled individuals who can be position stand in for mediation
10. The study suggests that religious and community leaders should take an impartial role in guiding and resolving conflicts.

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