

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SATIR'S COPING STANCES AND MARITAL CONFLICT:

A CASE OF COUPLES ATTENDING COUNSELLING AT GATUNDU CHILDREN'S
OFFICE, GATUNDU SUB - COUNTY, KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented to any other college or university for academic credit.

Signature

Date

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(MFT/0302/14)

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as the appointed university supervisor.

Signature Date

Margaret Mwenje, PhD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	i
DEDICATION.....	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	vii
ABSTRACT.....	viii
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....	xi
DEFINITION OF TERMS.....	xii
CHAPTER ONE:INTRODUCTION.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Background Information.....	1
Statement of the Problem	4
Objectives of the Study	5
Research Questions	5
Significance of the Study	6
Justification of the Study.....	6
Scope of the Study.....	7
Limitations and Delimitations of the Study.....	7
Assumptions of the Study.....	7
Chapter Summary.....	7

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
Introduction	9
Relationship between Coping Stances and marital Conflict.....	12
Influence of Coping Stances on marital Conflict.....	14
Influence of Coping Stances on Marital Conflict.....	16
Theoretical Framework.....	18
Satir Model.....	19
Example.....	23
Gottman Couple Therapy.....	24
Conceptual Framework.....	25
Example.....	25
Chapter Summary.....	26
CHAPTER THREE: DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	28
Introduction.....	28
Research Design.....	28
Target Population.....	29
Sampling Procedure and Sample Size.....	29
Methods of Data Collection.....	29
Research Instruments.....	30
Data collection Procedure.....	30

Data Analysis.....	30
Ethical Considerations.....	30
Chapter Summary.....	31
CHAPTER FOUR.....	32
Introduction.....	32
Demographic Information.....	32
Experience of Coping Stances on Marital Conflict (Project Maps).....	33
Relationship between Coping Stances and Marital Conflict (Pearson Correlation Coefficients).....	37
Influence of Coping Stances on Marital Conflict: Map/Auto - coding.....	38
Chapter Summary.....	41
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDIES.....	43
Introduction.....	43
Summary.....	43
Conclusion.....	44
Areas of Further Studies.....	45
References.....	47
Appendix I: Consent Form.....	50
Appendix II: Demographic questionnaire.....	51
Appendix III: Interview Schedule.....	52

Appendix IV: (Nagel, 2013)	53
Appendix V: Budget.....	54
Appendix VI: NACOSTI Research Permit	55

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all those who strive to help their inner child to grow to communicate congruently.

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ABSTRACT

Communication both intra - psychic and interpersonal is vital to any relationship and more so to marriage relationships. Lack of proper communication in marriage can bring about ambiguity which can result in marital conflict. The Satir model identifies five intra - psychic communication stances. One of them is balance between external and internal communication. It is called congruent communication. The Satir model of communication states that those who are harmonious are in touch with their emotions. They have high self-esteem. Their communication is clear. The other four communication stances are incongruent. They are as a result of low self - esteem. These incongruent communication stances are: placating, blaming, super - reasonable and being irrelevant. They are used in an effort to protect one's presumed threat of self - worth. Satir's incongruence communication concept is supported by Gottman's four horsemen which are criticism, contempt, defensiveness and stonewalling. This research is a qualitative study. It used phenomenological approach and sought to establish the relationship between the four coping attitudes and marital conflict. The research used purposive sampling to select couples seeking counselling at Gatundu sub - county children's office in Kiambu county. The participants were identified through a convenience sampling technique. A closed ended questionnaire was used to identify the demographic qualities of the participants. Semi - structured interviews and observations were used to collect data, using an interview schedule as the research instrument. The interviews were taped and thereafter transcribed. Major themes from the transcription were identified through content analysis by the researcher and the help of computer generated software - NVIVO. They were related with secondary data. These themes were: project maps which is identification of the experience of coping stances in a marital conflict, relationship nodes which is Pearson correlation coefficient and the auto - coding which is the influence of coping stances on marital conflict. The research results identified three stances which were present in the conflicted marriages, some occurring more than others. The study established that there is no relationship between coping stances and marital conflict. Coping has a negative influence on marital conflict. The research will help marriage therapists to be keen in identifying coping stances during marital conflict in a therapy room to help couples be congruent. More research is required to identify why some coping stances occur more than others, formulation of a coping stance scale and a quantitative research on the same topic.

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Variations of Incongruent Communication.....	19
Table 2: Pearson Correlation Coefficient.....	37

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Communication Stances.....	11
Figure 2: Ambiguous/Incongruent Communication.....	18
Figure 3: Layer of ‘Personal Iceberg Metaphor’.....	23
Figure 4: Demographic Information for the eight respondents.....	32
Figure 5: Marital Conflict versus Placating Stance.....	33
Figure 6: Marital Conflict versus Blaming Stance.....	34
Figure 7: Marital Conflict versus Being- Irrelevant Stance.....	35
Figure 8: Marital Conflict versus the Three Coping Stances.....	36
Figure 9: Influence of Coping on Marital Conflict.....	38
Figure 10: Influence of Blaming Stance on Marital Conflict.....	39
Figure 11: Influence of Placating Stance on Marital Conflict.....	39
Figure 12: Influence of Being - Irrelevant on Marital Conflict.....	40
Figure 13: Influence of Coping Stances on Marital Conflict.....	41

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

IWM	Internal working model
NACOSTI	National commission for science, Technology and Innovation
PACU	Pan Africa Christian University
USA	United States of America

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Affect: Includes voice characteristics, facial expressions, body gestures, body postures and breathing ((Satir, Banmen, Gerber & Gomori, 1991).

Being - irrelevant stance: Coping stance where one keeps on changing topics to avoid the reality. One disrupts the topic under discussion by becoming amusing (Satir et al., 1991).

Blaming stance: A coping stance where one values self and context disregarding the needs of others (Satir, et al., 1991).

Communication: Involves interaction of the internal and external worlds of the participants during exchange of messages (Lee & Roves, 2008).

Congruent communication: Involves a balance between internal and external world of an individual during communication. It is an equal value for self, other and context (Satir, et al., 1991).

Context: Context includes all those factors that might impinge on an interaction such as political - economic conditions, ethnicity, gender, class and religion and minority status (Benthein, 2013).

Incongruent communication (coping stances): Involves imbalance between the internal and external world of an individual during communication. The non - verbal contradicts the verbal leading to ambiguous messages (Satir et al., 1991).

Intra – psychic: This is the internal world of an individual which affects interpersonal communication. It is expressed through congruent or incongruent behaviour depending on one's level of self - esteem (Lee & Roves, 2008).

Levelling (Congruence) stance: This is communication which is balanced. The inner feelings are expressed while honouring the self, the other and the content (Lee, 2008).

Marital conflict: Any misunderstandings whether perceived or true within a marriage relationship causing dissatisfaction in the marriage (Cordova, 2013).

Personal iceberg metaphor: Metaphor used by Satir coping stance to describe the interaction and the relationship between internal and external worlds of an individual during communication (Lee & Roves, 2008).

Placating stance: A coping stance where one values others and context, disregarding his/her needs expressing the attitude of 'you and your situation are more valuable than me' (Satir et al., 1991).

Sculpting: This is what one communicates through his/her affect. In most instances it is unintentional. By observation one can tell the other which communication stance one is exhibiting (Satir et al., 1991).

Self - esteem: How one views himself/herself in respect to self - image, others and context (Benthein, 2013).

Super - reasonable stance: Coping stance where one uses data and reasoning to escape the reality. The person operating under this stance disregards self and others, only valuing the context (Satir et al., 1991).

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the background information of the study was discussed, the statement of the problem was identified and the existing gap which was filled by this study. In addressing this gap, objectives of the study and research questions were enumerated. The significance of the study was discussed, justifying why the study was important and enumerating the scope of the study. The limitations and delimitations of the study and assumptions of the study were also discussed.

Background Information

Effective communication is an art that requires being in the here and now, paying attention to feelings to partner's non - verbal cues and being empathetic towards him/her. An effective way to interact and communicate is by being congruent. It is believed that individuals who display congruence are higher functioning. They have the capacity to connect with others without any manipulation. These people are able to exhibit a higher understanding of what is going on with their feelings. They are able to assess the situation and determine if their expectations are based on their feelings or on reality (Cordova, 2013).

Communication refers to how people convey information, make meaning with each other and respond both internally and externally. How people communicate defines their internal and external processes, how they handle reality and how they value themselves (Cordova, 2013). Communication can be said to have two levels: the denotative level which is the literal content and the meta - communicative level which is a comment on the content and nature of the relationship between individuals. People who are incongruent use survival stances in their interaction with others (Satir, 1983). This pattern of communication is destructive. The individual is seeking to protect his or her self - esteem and self - worth.

The four survival (coping) stances are placating, blaming, super - reasonable and being irrelevant. These originate from a state of low self - esteem and imbalance in which people give their power to someone or something else. They are meant to protect self - worth against verbal, non - verbal, perceived and presumed threats (Satir et al., 1991).

Placating or always “giving in” to the other person surrenders self respect. It sends the message that one is not valuable or important or that his/her opinion does not count, because one is taking responsibility for others’ wrong doing therefore hiding the feelings of anger. It is a people pleasing attitude that eradicates self worth. Blaming is an individual’s failure to take responsibility for their actions. It places responsibility on someone else. This stance uses domination. It imposes fear on others, hence hiding the feeling of helplessness. Another stance is being super reasonable, where one uses data or statistics to prove a point. This is due to the fear of getting in touch with the reality of their uncomfortable feeling of expressing it to hurt others. The state of being irrelevant can be manifested as always joking or changing the subject. These are considered the clowns hiding despair (Satir et al., 1991).

Although the survival stances are useful in the short term, individual or relationship growth is prevented. The real issues are not dealt with appropriately (Cordova, 2013). Survival stances can keep marriages from working well. Marriage partners need to discover these stances and work to get rid of them in order to improve their communication (Banmen, 2016). Sculpting was used by Satir to show how partners in a marriage relationship relate raising awareness to the partners that coping in any relationship is destructive. It does not make people grow. It makes them remain in the same status quo of problems (Satir, et al., 1991).

A study by Vendema (2013) found that there was a high rate of marital dissatisfaction in USA. Further, submissive wives reported greater marital dissatisfaction. Couples who seemed to be okay in their marriages (non - clinical couples) also reported insecure attachment. They reflected marital dissatisfaction. Separated or divorced couples reported differences in expressiveness, values for attachment and motives for being in marriage. He concluded by stating that partners in distressed marriages tended to inhibit the expression of their real feelings to avoid conflict. They acted differently in their actions with other people (Vendema, 2013). It is not realistic to assume that couples will never fight or argue. Conflict will always arise. It is beneficial for couples to learn how to argue. It is unlikely they can learn not to argue (Cordova, 2013). This calls for partners in marriages to be aware of their coping mechanisms and be able to handle them in order to free their feelings in the right manner.

Lee (2002) in his study on congruence couple therapy for partners involved with gambling, stated that one of the reasons which contributed to one of the partner's involvement was the couple's negative or unproductive communication patterns. He found that communication between the partners was characterized by blaming, sarcasm, dismissal, criticism, verbal attacks, disapproval, avoidance, super - reasonableness and placating. He states that these categories correspond to lack of congruence or connection with, acknowledgement of self and the other. The patterns that emerged from critical observations and the couple's reports correspond to Satir's coping categories of blaming, placating, super-reasonableness and irrelevant and avoidance.

Goris (2008) researched on African immigrant couples in the USA and found that lack of expression of feelings contributed to marital dissatisfaction. Further, as the couples learned to express their feelings, marital conflict intensity started to reduce.

Lum (2008) explored therapists' experience using Satir's personal iceberg metaphor to explore their internal worlds so as to be aware of their communication patterns. The research used a phenomenological approach to interview participants. Among the variables studied were coping stances. The research found that after the intervention, participants who reported primarily using the placating coping stance seemed to increase their feelings of worth and recognition of themselves as being important or deserving. In turn, they seemed to change their behaviour of pleasing others. They focused more internally on satisfying themselves. Participants who reported using a primary super reasonable stance seemed to become newly acquainted with more of their feelings. They seemed to decrease their defensive behaviours when feelings arose and became curious about their emotions. They also seemed to gain information from observing their feelings and not acting on their feelings in more situations.

In Kenya, Odhiambo & Maito (2014) found marital conflict to be high, standing at 93%. Areas of conflict included: socio - economic factors and cultural factors, personal attribute of spouse, domestic family life and structural inequality factors. These factors were found to be secondary. There was a possibility of stemming from the couples' incongruent communication patterns. There was need to study the internal mode of communication between couples.

This research sought to explore the relationship between the inappropriate internal communication styles (survival/coping stances) and marital conflict to address the study gap of the failing to identify the primary problem in marital conflict.

Statement of the Problem

Everyone who enters into a marriage relationship does so with an intention of having a happy and fulfilling marriage (Gottman & Silver 1999).

Despite this intention, marital conflict has continued to rise despite many efforts by counsellors and other intermediaries to address interpersonal relationships (Odhiambo & Maito, 2014). Many studies have addressed the interpersonal communication problems without considering the intra - psychic factors of the individuals in a marriage hence giving recommendations based only on interpersonal communication. This has not been able to solve communication issues in a marriage relationship. Self awareness of self is connected to self – esteem. It deepens mutual understanding and improved communication (Lee & Roves, 2008). This is an indication that issues caused by lack of proper communication cannot be dealt with conclusively until the participants in communication and more so in a marriage relationship deal with the issues in their internal worlds. At the time of this study, there were limited studies in Kenya which specifically focused on intra - psychic communication which links the internal and the external worlds of the communicator. This presented a knowledge gap. This research aimed at filling this gap by looking at the connection between the suppression of feelings in a marriage relationship and marital conflict.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to investigate the relationship between Satir communication coping stances and marital conflict among the couples seeking counselling at Gatundu Sub – county Children’s office.

Specific objectives

- i. To identify the experience of coping stances during marital conflict.
- ii. To explore the relationship between coping stances and marital conflict.
- iii. To determine the influence of coping stances on marital conflict.

Research Questions

- i. Are coping stances experienced during a marital conflict?
- ii. What is the relationship between coping stances and marital conflict?

iii. How do coping stances influence marital conflict?

Significance of the Study

Marriage is an institution faced with many challenges. It is the contention of this study that no one enters a marriage relationship with the intention of having persistent conflict or divorcing later, yet there are many marriages in conflict and others are divorcing. This study has enriched the field of marriage counselling by identifying some of the reasons that may enhance conflicts in marriage relationships that may lead to separation, divorce or marital dissatisfaction for those who choose to remain married.

The study will also benefit the marriage and family therapy discipline that is becoming established in the Kenyan context as a distinct arm in helping professions by providing therapists additional relevant knowledge to work with their clients more effectively in diverse ways. Other human relationships can also benefit. Marital satisfaction and self - esteem, coming as a result of effective counselling are related to a healthy lifestyle, harmony in and among individuals, social cohesion and high production in work place among other positive transformative aspects of humanity (Otto & Adersen, 2000).

Justification of the Study

This study is important because it aimed at filling the gap of lack of adequate study in Kenya which has shown the relationship between internal and external worlds of partners in a marriage relationship which is strained. Many of the studies on communication between couples have only dwelt on the interpersonal part which is external. It is very important to note that the way a partner relates with his/her spouse mostly depends on the underlying issues of the past which were not dealt with and hence a justification to study Satir's coping stances which are part and parcel of the internal world of partners in a marriage relationship.

Scope of the Study

This research investigated couples who sought counselling at the Department of children's Services at Gatundu Sub - County, Kiambu County. The participants were an accessible population to the researcher. They were chosen purposively. Most of the people in this area primarily speak the Kikuyu language, which made them unsuitable candidates for inclusion because the primary investigator was not conversant in the Kikuyu language. Participants chosen were those that could speak English or Kiswahili. It took three weeks to reach to all the eight participants.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The research focused on the four coping stances and marital conflict. There could be other influences on marital conflict. Other studies can focus on other factors which could have a relationship with marital conflict. The study was done in children's office within Gatundu Sub - County for the sole purpose of studying the four coping stances phenomenon. The study cannot be generalized for the whole population of people with marital conflict for the whole country.

Assumptions of the Study

The study had some assumptions that there is a relationship between coping stances and marital conflict. The study also assumed that relationship is negative influence of coping stances on marriages thus causing marital conflict. Since Satir's coping stances have a negative effect on marriage, then the problem is not the problem but coping.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, effective communication was found to be very vital in any form of interaction and more so in a marital relationship. Effectiveness of communication depends on the agreement of non - verbal and verbal communication which is termed as congruence.

Lack of coherence is referred to as incongruent communication. It is presented by four coping stances which are: blaming, placating, super - reasonable and being irrelevant. All the four coping stances are a sign of low self- esteem acquired through unresolved impactful painful experience or childhood experiences. If such a person comes into a marriage relationship, then the marriage issues resolving capacity will be negatively affected by those unresolved past issues hence the problem becoming not the problem but coping. In Kenya, Marital conflict was found to be high despite efforts by many stakeholders to reduce it.

Many studies have focused on interpersonal communication as the major cause of marital conflict. This study focused on the area which is not usually focused on. It is the area of non-verbal communication which is termed as intra-psychic form of communication. To conduct this study, objectives were formulated. They entailed investigating the relationship between Satir communication coping stances and marital conflict among couples seeking counselling at Gatundu Sub – County Children’s office. Couples within larger Gatundu were coming to seek help for their troubled marriages.

The main significance of the study was to help in understanding areas in peoples’ lives which could contribute to negative interactions and especially in marriage relationships. This in turn could contribute in enriching marriage relationships when partners in marriage work out their individual incongruent behaviours from within resulting to more fulfilling marriages. This study was done for the sole purpose of studying the coping stances phenomenon. It cannot be generalised for the whole country.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter, both theoretical and empirical literatures were reviewed. Theories on incongruent communication were discussed. The research explored what others have found in reference to the coping stances with respect to marital conflict. It identified their strengths, weaknesses and gaps. A conceptual framework was formulated based on the literature concepts.

Experience of Coping Stances during Marital Conflict

Satir et al. (1991) identified four survival stances that people use under stress. These are: placating, blaming, super - reasonable and being irrelevant. The coping stances originate from a state of low self - esteem and imbalance in which people give their power to someone or something else. Depending on the family of origin, people adopt survival stances to protect their self - worth against verbal and non - verbal, perceived and presumed threats (Satir et al., 1991). People cry when they feel pain. They withdraw from things they dislike. Infants experiment with various behaviours to get their basic needs met. For example, smiling might get one attention and affection. Crying may make one get food. Before long they learn what gains approval and disapproval (Moore & Kramer, 2000).

To demonstrate people's internal feelings of self - worth, Satir developed the concept of congruent and incongruent communication stances. Peoples' growth should be whole, that is integration between body, spirit and mind in a balanced manner. The survival stances can be conceptualized in a non - verbal use of self in a space. This is known as sculpting (Innes, 2002). Sculpting is a way of informing oneself and others about internal processes in relation to others and an individual.

The Placating Stance

The placating stance represents a person who is under stress, views others and their context to hold more value than their own true feelings. They adopt “I am not important, everything is my fault” attitude. In a typical placating stance, using physical space to depict Satir’s sculpting, one would kneel, extend one hand upward in supplication and clamp the other hand firmly over the heart. Clients who use placating can be better reached through their feelings. They are often depressed. They see themselves as victims. They feel helpless and hopeless (Satir, et al., 1991). People who use this coping stance have a resource of caring and nurturing. They are sensitive to the needs of others (Nagel, 2013).

The Blaming Stance

In the blaming stance, individuals discount the importance of others. They count only the self and context of their situation. They presume that they are in a problem because of others. In the blaming physical sculpt, they stand with their back straight and point a fully outstretched finger at someone. To help scare people, they put one foot out; to balance. They put the other hand on the hip. They raise or furrow their brow and tighten their facial muscles. Clients who use blaming stance as their way of coping can be better reached through their expectations. Their frustration comes from failing to get what they want (Satir, et al., 1991). People who are dominant in this coping stance have a resource of leadership, being assertive and energy to keep going (Nagel, 2013).

Being Super - Reasonable Stance

Being super - reasonable stance is a state where a person discounts self and others and respects context only. Everything is just a matter of logic. Emotions are a waste of time. In the super - reasonable stance, the individual adopts a body posture that is stiffly erect and immobile, with both arms at his/her sides or folded symmetrically in front of his body . His/her face appears expressionless.

Clients who use this stance can be reached through their perceptions. They seem to be in their heads rational, logical and poorly connected with their feelings (Satir et al., 1991). Super - reasonable people are very logical and problem solvers (Nagel, 2013).

Being- Irrelevant Stance

A person that has an irrelevant stance discounts self, others and context. An irrelevant person is often seen as amusing or a clown. The irrelevant stance depictees will hold their bodies askew, in a hunched yet standing posture, both knees face in; both arms and hands facing up and out. Their head cocked severely to one side, both eyes bulging. The mouths gaped and twisted. Many parts of their faces twitch. Those who use this stance are difficult to reach. Body sensations, touch and physical activity like going for a walk with them are three ways to start making contact with them (Banmen, 2002). They can be resourceful in the area of making fun and creativity (Nagel, 2013).

Congruent Communication Stance

Levelling is congruent communication whereby words match the body position, the voice tone and the inner feelings. One is depicted standing while in a state of equilibrium (Satir et al., 1991). One who is congruent has a high self - esteem, appreciates his/her uniqueness and respects others, appreciating the life (Nagel, 2013). Figure 1 below shows the body postures of the five communication stances.

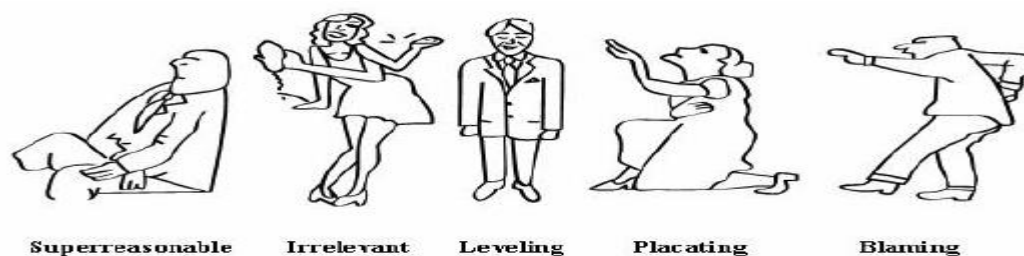


Figure 1: Communication Stances. Adapted from " *Using the Satir tools to reduce burnout in family caregivers*", by C. Caston, 2009, *The Satir Journal*, p.53.

Being congruent is the ultimate goal of the Satir growth model. Satir held that high self - worth and congruence are the main indicators of more fully functioning human beings. The congruent person holds equal balance in the circle of self, others and context. Choosing congruence means choosing to be ourselves, relating, contacting others and connecting with people directly (Lee, 2001). Sculpting was Satir's way of showing clients on what they communicated unintentionally when they used these stances. Its main aim was to act as a wakeup call to the clients to start communicating congruently.

Relationship between Coping Stances and Marital Conflict

In relation to survival stances, relationships exist in only one variety. One person on top and the other at the bottom. It is a dominant/submissive arrangement, sometimes called the treat – and – reward model, like father – child and boss – worker amongst many others. The person who is in the submissive position is vulnerable and can be called poor, little, minority and the like. Feelings that arise within hierarchical relationships include emptiness, anger, fear and helplessness. The accompanying body language includes postures of placating, blaming, being super – reasonable and coping irrelevantly. Such stances tell us about the psychic wounds hidden below the surface. It is important to distinguish between a person's role in a relationship and the definition of that person (Tam, 2006).

Lee (2001) defined an event as the relationship between a set of essential variables contributing to a joint outcome. A is the outcome of events B, C, D and E. Various things happen and are somehow related in an interactive way. They are not caused linearly (B alone does not cause A). Events occur in relation to their history, location and point in time. To explain an occurrence requires understanding of what goes on inside of people and their internal processes. Events do not happen without being connected to something else; either external or internal, and usually both. One can look at behaviour as an outcome of inter - relationships among our internal and external worlds (Tam, 2006).

Lee (2002), in his study on congruence couple therapy for partners involved with gambling, stated that one of the reasons which contributed to one of the partner's involvement in gambling was the couple's negative or unproductive communication patterns. He found that communication between the partners was characterized by blaming, sarcasm, dismissal, criticism, verbal attacks, disapproval, avoidance, super - reasonableness and placating. He states that these categories correspond to lack of congruence or connection with, acknowledgement of self and the other. The patterns that emerged from critical observations and the couples' reports correspond to Satir's categories of blaming, placating, super - reasonableness and irrelevant and avoidance. Couples reported either having avoided conflict for years in their marriage until the gambling brought out issues into the open or recurring cycles of coping stances (Lee, 2002). This author also discovered that the couples had a limited range and depth of communication. The couples were not able to share with each other their deeper thoughts, feelings, hopes, yearning, wishes and expectations thus terminating communication prematurely before issues could be resolved (Lee, 2002).

Innes (2002) notes that in a family, the adult male and female have the labels husband and wife. Once they have children, they add father and mother to their roles. These definitions tend to obscure personhood of the said role holders. Role becomes identity and individuality gets lost. People then manifest themselves through their roles, sometimes negating their own thoughts and interests. Hence they have a possibility of dissatisfaction causing conflict within the family.

When a family member perceives that he/she is not accepted, he/she demands to be accepted in a threatening manner, referred to as incongruent communication, one of the four survival stances. The four coping stances are formed at the person's intra - psychic level. They are expressed externally at the interpersonal level. This leads to stalemating, retardation and pathology, causing war and competition in a relationship (Benthein, 2013).

Coping stances are modes of surviving under emotional stress. They are not personality categories. They come up in the family of origin as a way of surviving to overcome a tough or difficult experience. By observation, one can be able to identify the coping stance in the client, which will help identify the need of that client at that point of contact (Benthein 2013).

Delvecchio et al. (2016) report that each person has an internal working model (IWM). This is a transformation from childhood attachment issues . It represents one's beliefs about the self and others . It affects future behaviour. This sounds similar to Satir's personal iceberg metaphor which posits that one forms self worth as a result of childhood experiences which affect the individual's future beliefs about self and others. They also identified three distinct forms of defensive exclusion which are deactivation, cognitive disconnection and segregated systems . These are a kind of mental representation of the IWM. Deactivation is said to work to dismiss, distance and neutralize attachment distress. The cognitive disconnection process disconnects the elements of attachment from their source, understanding consistency and to hold in mind a unitary view of events, emotions and people associated with them. Segregated systems lock away from working memory the painful memories and effects associated with a particular threatening attachment relationship (George & West, 2012). The three distinct forms of defensive exclusion : deactivation, cognitive disconnection and segregated systems sound like coping strategies to avoid distress . They are similar to Satir coping stances.

Influence of Coping Stances on Marital Conflict

Yang & Lou (2013) studied the application of the Satir Model of counselling in mainland China. Their objective was to analyse several possible negative influences in the Chinese culture such as invalidation of self, high expectation towards self and incongruence when expressing feelings.

The study involved an analysis of 20 counselling sessions in Beijing, China. The counselling discussion was based on Chinese concepts which have some influence on child and adolescence development among the Chinese people. One of these is conceit. Conceit was found to make one lag behind, because of implicit communication and indirect expression of emotions. This is similar to incongruent communication. Both share implicit communication and indirect expression of emotions (George & West, 2012).

It was also found that the impact of the concept of conceit on meta - goals of the clients were low self - esteem, incongruent coping , lack of choice and responsibility for feelings. These resulted in clients' disrespect or even giving up on themselves, criticising others or being perfectionist. Love and care was expressed in a demanding way. Hurt and fear were expressed in a blaming way. The behaviour emanating from the conceit is similar to the behaviour expressed through coping stances (Lee & Rovers, 2008).

Yang & Lou (2013) used therapeutic technique to explore one's coping stances in order to enhance congruence. Through exploring their personal iceberg metaphor (which is a relationship between the interpersonal and intra - psychic world of an individual during communication), the author helped clients to know what they really wanted and felt when exhibiting different kinds of behaviour. Clients experienced their power of congruence with help from the author/therapist. They saw the possibility of choosing a new way of communicating with people around them. This new way of being congruent can reduce conflicts and misunderstandings among people and make them experience more love and sincerity (Vendema, 2013).

Through these techniques, all clients became more responsible and congruent. They became better choice makers. Each had higher self - esteem to differing degrees. This brought about inner peace, harmony, joy and power to them. From these experiences, the authors found that the basis of the effectiveness of the Satir Model is its deep understanding of human beings and a lot to the transforming process of the people's self - concepts. This study showed the impact of Chinese concepts on individual's personal iceberg metaphor. The Chinese concepts lead to individual's incongruent communication leading to low self - esteem and negative behaviour which could affect interpersonal communication. The study has also established some of the causes of incongruent communication and low self - esteem among the mainland Chinese people. The study also showed the impact of counselling using the Satir model. The current study extended the findings by exploring how these incongruent communication patterns affected marital conflict (Yang & Lou, 2013).

Nearly all couples who present themselves for therapy report communication difficulties. The presence of criticism, contempt, defensiveness and stonewalling during conflicts is a strong predictor of divorce. These are collectively referred to as the Gottman's four horsemen (Lee, Jo Ellen & Larry, 2011). Two of these; criticism and contempt are relevant to the speaker's role. Criticism occurs when an individual attacks a person's character or motive. Contempt arises out of feelings of superiority over one's partner. It may be manifested in put downs, sarcasm or non - verbal behaviour such as rolling one's eyes. The listener may respond by demonstrating defensiveness or stonewalling. The authors continue to state that when couples communicate, the question is whether the non - verbal and verbal messages are congruent. If not, the issue may be that each is reluctant to express their true thoughts and feelings to protect themselves or the feelings of someone else. Targeting the thoughts or emotions that drive the couple to conflict is core to intervening effectively (Lee et al., 2011).

According to Gottman & Silver (1999), there are two types of marital conflicts; solvable and perpetual conflicts. People cope depending on how one has customized the problems. It is not the problem which causes marital conflict but how the problem is handled. There are couples who have perpetual problems but are satisfied in their marriage because of the way they handle their issues. This statement is similar to the Satir model belief that, 'problem is not the problem but coping is the problem' (Lum, 2002).

Theoretical Framework

Two theories were used to study the internal and external worlds of partners in a marriage relationship which is in conflict. The major theory is Satir model. The minor theory is Gottman couple therapy. Conceptual framework was based on the major theory.

Satir Model

Satir developed her family therapy model from many hours of observing clients, testing her hypotheses and creating interventions. Her approach reflected her observations that people have internal resources and choices that they can change (Satir et al., 1991). Satir model of therapy deals with enabling dysfunctional families become functional by transforming patterns of behaviour into patterns of choice. The model is based on various theoretical concepts which mainly focus from the inner yearnings of an individual to his/her behaviour which can be seen by others. The behaviour is as a result of various interacting variables which Satir called 'personal iceberg metaphor'. By this a change is expected from inside out (Banmen, 2014). This study focused on part of the 'personal iceberg metaphor' called coping stances and behaviour in a marital conflict situation. Coping stances do not exist as unit but rather are as a result of interaction of every player in the Satir personal metaphor. The four survival stances: placating, blaming, being super - reasonable and irrelevant are a sign of incongruent communication.

They are manifested either by the use of incongruent words and congruent affect or having incongruent affect and congruent words, thus sending mixed messages. These mixed messages leave the other partner in a marriage relationship in a confusing state thus an opportunity of conflict (Satir et al., 1991). Figure 2 below shows the differences between words and affect during incongruent communication.

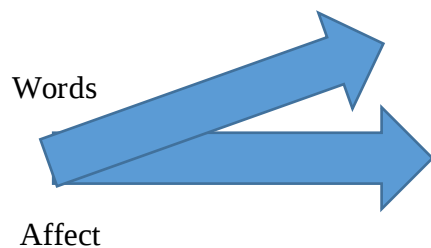


Figure 2: Ambiguous / incongruent communication; adapted from *“The Satir Model”* By V. Satir, J. Banmen, J. Gerber & M. Gomori, 1991, Science & Behaviour Books, Inc., P.33.

The accompanying body language includes postures of placating, blaming, being super - reasonable and coping irrelevantly. Such stances tell us about the psychic wounds hidden below the surface thus affecting the current state of marital communication. It is important to distinguish between a person’s role in a marital relationship and the past definition of that person (Satir et al., 1991). When healed, the balanced communication will lead to congruence or levelling hence bringing an understanding in the relationship (Lee, 2001).

The four incongruent communication stances are developed in childhood as ways of meeting existential survival needs. These are a child’s needs to gain love, acceptance and belonging. Hence, they are also known as “survival stances.” Satir notes differences in breathing patterns, body tensions and postures that accompany these different stances (Satir et al., 1991). These communication stances have effects on the person and others at physical, physiological and emotional levels (Lee, 2008) as shown in Table 1 below.

These survival stances are carried over into adulthood. They are exhibited in marriage and other relationships (Otto & Bent, 2000).

Table1: Variations of incongruent communication

Fuelling Factor	No attention to	Underlying belief	Possible result	Stance
Marital conflict	Self	I am nothing. My partner and the context are everything.	You are not likely to be heard or even seen.	Placating
Marital conflict	Others	I am right but you are wrong. The task at hand is important!	You are likely to blame partner for his/her incompetence.	Blaming
Marital conflict	Self and others	I am nothing. You are nothing. But the project is everything.	The underlying assumption may lead the couple to believe that people are not important.	Super reasonable –
Marital conflict	All three (Self, others and Context)	Nothing matters really!	You never know- if nothing matters, we may as well do whatever we like.	Irrelevant

Note: Variations of incongruent communication adapted from ‘*Improving your influence in the organization*’ by V. Otto & B. Anderson, 2000, 1-11, p.6. Copyright 2000 by Otto V. & Bent Anderson.

Communication is the largest single factor determining what kind of relationship one makes with others and what happens to one in the world. Peoples’ ways of perceiving the world are either the hierarchical or the growth model. How one sees the world can be deduced from following aspects: how we define a relationship, how we define a person, how we explain an event and what attitudes we have towards change (Banmen, 2008).

These phenomena are universal. They characterize all people and their relationships with one another (Satir et al., 1991). In the hierarchical model, relationships exist in only one variety: somebody is on top and over another (Banmen, 2008). It is important to distinguish between a person's role in a relationship and the definition of that person (Satir et al., 1991). The role becomes their identity. Individuality gets lost. People then manifest themselves through their roles, sometimes negating their own thoughts and interests (Innes, 2002).

In the hierarchical model, one's definition of oneself depends on other peoples' rules which can be very limiting (Innes, 2002). Satir defines people as being equal in value. Each person is unique in his or her combination of human similarities and differences. No two people have the same fingerprints. Whatever race, gender or religious background we come from, we each began as an egg and a sperm that came together and activated us as individual beings (Satir et al., 1991).

In the Satir growth model, unlike the hierarchical model which is restricted to the status quo, change is essential and inevitable. When people perceive their equality of value and are conscious of their uniqueness and sameness, they accept and welcome change. The growth model provides choices and encourages taking risks. Love is a stable component of the model, which means that people are free to express their feelings and differences (Satir et al., 1991).

The way we perceive the world first takes shape in the family. Individuals come into this world as part of an original or primary triad: mother, father and child. Within the primary triad, children learn the family rules about safety, their bodies, their lovability and ability to love. Parents expect and frequently say what and how their children should be, showing them approval for certain acts and punishing them for others. The children's identities are the outcome of this three person learning situation which eventually impacts them in their relationship with their spouses (Innes, 2002).

The basic element in family therapy is the primary triad. Self worth is learned, especially through the primary triad. Since learned information can be unlearned or transformed, human beings are capable of change. It is this potential for change and growth that guides the treatment process (Satir et al., 1991). The family is responsible for its members' communication styles in a systemic perspective; not in a linear, blaming way. Working with the whole family becomes a major approach to resolving a client's coping stances.

A child who does not learn self worth faces severe obstacles. Low self - esteem impairs one's ability to learn, work and relate with others. Without the sense that one is of intrinsic value, he/she does not have enough confidence to try new things, pursue goals or reveal self to any meaningful degree. Underneath the question of survival are usually the beliefs that others are in charge of others' lives, that one cannot cope without them and that they define others. People can then look at survival in terms of context, self and others which are defined as survival stances. These patterns can continue into marital relationships thus bringing unhappiness for both partners since there is no genuine communication (Satir et al., 1991).

The 'personal iceberg metaphor' is one of Satir's chief metaphors to illustrate the various layers that make up the human being. In this representation, the person is viewed as a multi - dimensional system (Satir, 1988). Behaviour and communication represent only the 'tip of the iceberg' in the multi - layered totality of personality. For one to know self there is need to go deeper below the water line of consciousness and get in touch with the many hidden parts of self (Tam, 2006). Satir's 'personal iceberg metaphor' has three dimensions: interpersonal, intra - psychic and universal - spiritual. Congruence is the ultimate goal of communication. It is achieved through harmonious interaction of these key dimensions within a person (Lee, 2001).

The interpersonal dimension in the 'iceberg metaphor' of the Satir model is characterized by the four survival communication stances of blaming, placating, being super-reasonable and irrelevant. These four stances are incomplete or incongruent stances. Each leaves out an important component of congruent communication that includes acknowledgement of the self, the other or the context in relationships and especially in marital conflict thus causing more conflict (Lee, 2008).

The intra-psycho dimension encompasses various levels and dynamics that occur internally in a person. This dimension includes feelings, feelings about feelings, perceptions and beliefs and expectations. Within perceptions and beliefs are implicit family rules one lives by such as "one must not say anything that hurts someone else's feelings" or "one must always be happy." Perceptions include the associations, interpretations and meaning we make of a person or a communication. Expectations are what we expect from others and of ourselves and what we think others expect of us. Any of these variables can influence others in the intra-psycho dimension. For example, if a person interprets an action to be punitive, this perception could in turn affect one's feelings and expectations, as well as the interpersonal outcome in a marital relationship (Lee, 2001).

Universal - spiritual dimension and the self are conceptualized as one universal - spiritual dimension. They represent experience that is common to humanity regardless of historical, cultural and familial backgrounds. The two fundamental levels illustrated in the 'iceberg metaphor' are universal human yearnings; the self or "I am". Yearnings consist of our need to love and be loved; to be accepted and validated and our search for purpose and meaning (Satir et al., 1991). Yearnings and self represent a dimension of a person that transcends cultural conditioning. Yearnings are part of the human make up.

They cannot be denied or disregarded. Doing so results to coping which causes incongruent communication in a marital relationship. Being congruent at the level of yearnings means to acknowledge one's humanity, what one longs for and strives to actualize (Lee, 2001).

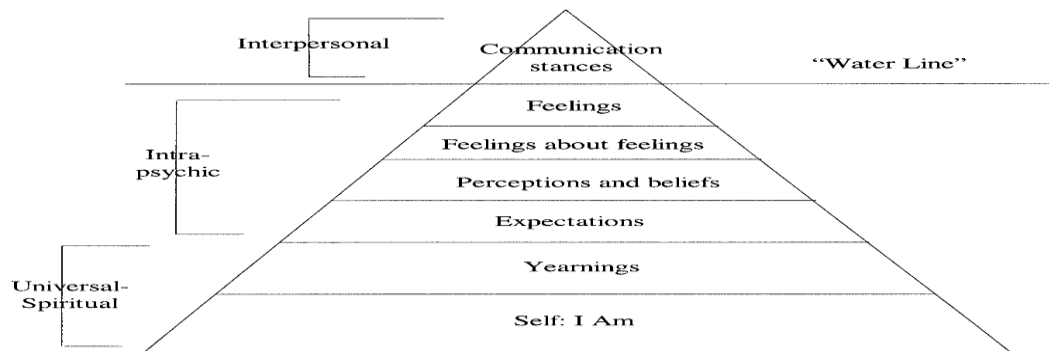


Figure 3: Three layer Personal iceberg metaphor. (Adopted from “*congruence couple therapy for pathological gambling* by B.K, Lee, 2008, *international journal of mental health & education*, p.5.).

Example

A wife who is preparing dinner in the kitchen while her husband watches television takes a blaming stance complaining that her husband is not considerate. She feels not loved because her expectation of a loving husband is one who assists her in the kitchen work. She also feels like a slave and hurt because her expectations is that her husband should automatically assist her without having placed the request. In her family of origin, she was the only girl who was doing all the house hold chores . Her yearning was that one day she would get married and get out of that enslaving family of origin environment where she will get married to a husband who will always assist her in household chores. The husband's belief and perception based on his family of origin schema is that household duties are wife's roles. Blaming stance escalates marital conflict (Lee et al., 2011). The above example indicates that one interprets issues according to his/her IWM .

If the IWM is of low self- esteem, then he/she will cope in reaction to his/her interpretation and not according to the partner's action . The coping stance is elicited.

Gottman Couple Therapy

Gottman & Silver (1999) state that when a couple argues about something , the issue is not actually the identified item of argument but frustrations emanating from unmet needs which the couple is not talking about. These unmet needs then are as a result of internal communication of an individual which is coping. Marital conflict is not based on the number of times the couple argue but how they argue. How the couple argue will either escalate the problem or de - escalate it (Lee et al., 2011). This is dependent on whether there is coping or not.

Gottman & Silver (1999) identify six signs in a marriage relationship which escalate marital conflict to divorce. The first is harsh start up. This is starting a conversation in a negative or accusatory manner. The second is the four horsemen. These are: criticism, contempt, defensiveness and stone walling. The third sign is flooding. The spouse's negativity is becoming so overwhelming that one cannot stand it anymore. The fourth sign is body language. It pushes the spouse away instead of attracting. The fifth sign is failed repair attempts. Repair attempts are those steps a partner in a marriage tries to take to de - escalate a negative communication or behaviour. The sixth sign is bad memories. These are the couple's tendency to rewrite their past on negativity due to their current marital conflict. When these six signs appear in a marriage, the end of the marriage is near. It is necessitated by the fact that the partners in the marriage view their marriage problems as severe and talking over it seems useless. This causes the partners to start living parallel lives leading to loneliness thus endangering the survival of the marriage. This then pushes the marriage in a state of marital conflict thus creating an enabling environment for coping stances to thrive even more (Gottman & Silver, 1999).

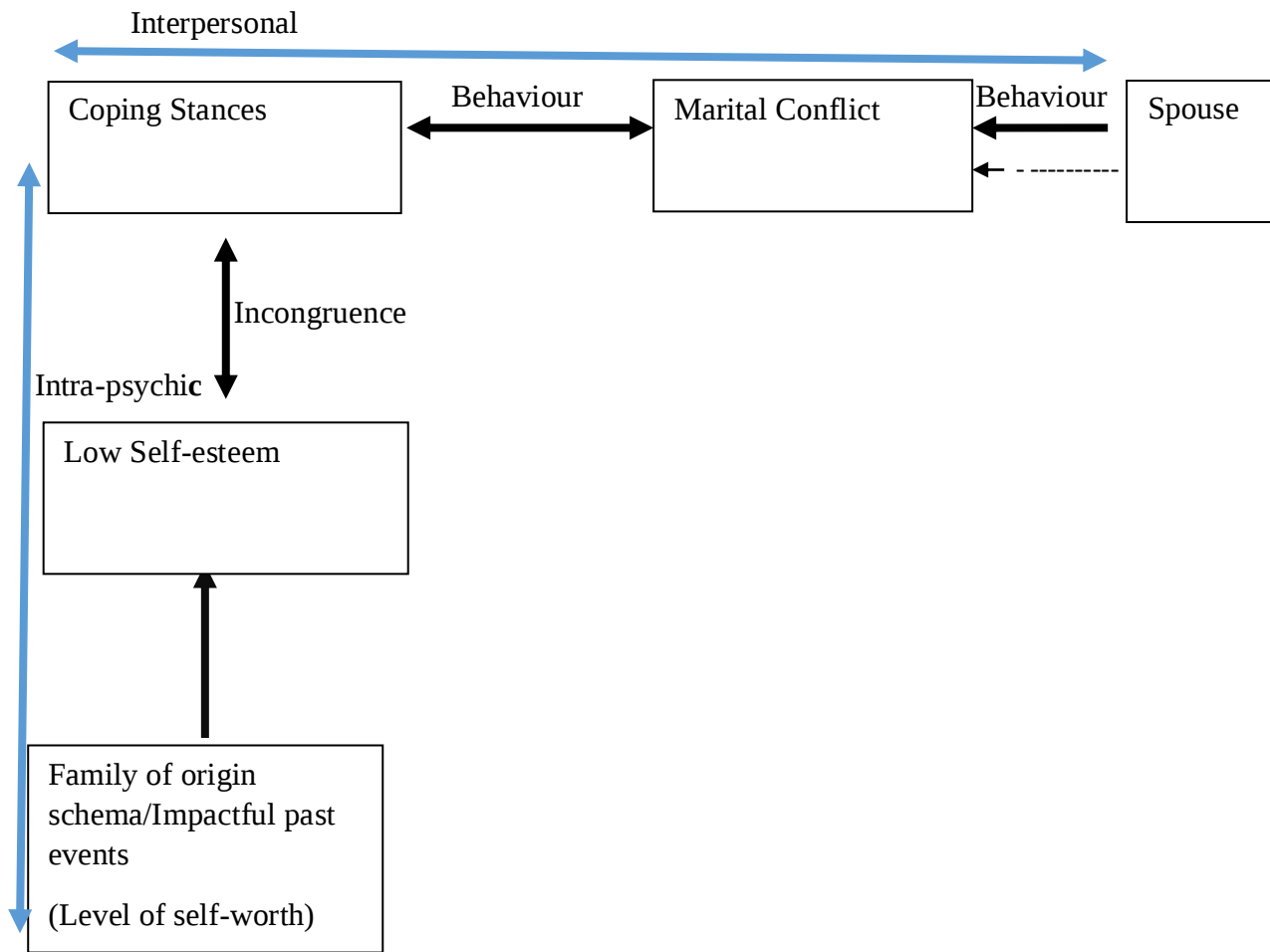
Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is an internal communication of a partner in a marriage involving interaction of different layers which could also be termed as antecedent variables of IWM. The antecedent variables are: family of origin schema or impactful past event, low self - esteem and incongruence. These variables are intra - psychic. They determine the communication stance one will take depending on how they interact with each other. Behaviour is the intermediating/moderating variable. It is as a result of coping stance necessitating or increasing marital conflict. Coping and behaviour interact at the borderline between intra - psychic and interpersonal level. The other spouse may or not show any coping stance for marital conflict to happen in the respondent's perception (Lee, 2008).

Example

Behaviour	:	Failing to verbalize ones needs
Coping stance	:	Placating
Feeling	:	Disrespected
Feeling about feeling	:	Guilt, resentment, anger
Perception	:	Unreasonable, wrong, unfair
Expectation	:	Respect and meet my needs
Yearnings	:	To be respected and validated
Self	:	Low self - esteem

Family of origin schema (rule): One is not supposed to express personal feelings, just obey otherwise you will be scolded or rejected (Yang & Lou, 2013).



Adopted from the "Three layer Personal iceberg metaphor"

Chapter summary

In this chapter both empirical and theoretical literatures were discussed touching on the three objectives of the study; the experience of coping stances in marital conflict, the relationship between coping stances and marital conflict and the effect of coping stances on marital conflict. Five communication stances were identified; placating, blaming, being irrelevant, super - reasonable and congruence or levelling stances. Four of these stances were identified as coping stances meaning that one is unable to express his/her inner feeling without difficult. The fifth is congruence. It was seen as the ideal way of communicating since one expresses his or her inner feelings without difficulty.

The four coping stances were seen to be a reality in marital conflict. It was noted that nearly all couples who present themselves for therapy report of communication difficulties, some of which can be compared to Gottman's four horsemen which are criticism, contempt, defensiveness and stone walling during conflicts. All these are outward signs of coping. Satir & Gottman both agree that it is not the magnitude of the issue which causes marital conflict but coping. Therefore 'the problem is not the problem but coping is the problem'. For one to understand his/her coping status, Satir states that one has to enter his/her 'personal iceberg metaphor' which is a multi - layered platform .It has the following components: self, yearnings, expectations, perceptions and beliefs, feelings about feelings, feelings and coping stances.

CHAPTER THREE: DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter, the research focused on the research design, where the study was located and the target population. Sampling procedures and size were discussed together with the methods of data collection, research instruments, data collection procedure and the methods of data analysis. Ethical issues in this research were addressed.

Research Design

The research was conducted using qualitative data collection and analysis. It was descriptive. Qualitative research focuses on process, meaning and understanding. The purpose of this research was to make meaning from the processes of coping in relation to marital conflict. This study used the phenomenology type of qualitative research. Phenomenology is an experiential study. It explores how that experience becomes aware in peoples' minds (Sharan, 2014). This research used phenomenology type of qualitative research since coping stances are experiential.

Study Location

The research was conducted at the Gatundu Sub - County children's office. Most of the marriages which are attended in this office are already in conflict hence a direct reach to the researcher's population. Gatundu Sub - County children's office is one of the children's offices among the 200 Sub - Counties in Kenya. The office is established under the Children Act 2001 laws of Kenya. The office's mandate includes reconciling marriage partners and families which are in conflict and mediating couples for child upkeep. In Gatundu Sub - County, all the clients are referred from the chiefs, where they have tried reconciliation and failed. The office serves partners in marriages that are already in conflict. Since this study was dealing with marital conflict, the location was found to be suitable.

Target Population

The research targeted the couples who attended counselling sessions at Gatundu Sub - County children's office. The study period received 26 eligible participants who were already in marital conflict. Anyone who consented to be involved in the study was given an informed consent form to review. Only after voluntarily signing this was one able to participate in the study.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The research used purposive sampling to study couples receiving counselling at Gatundu Sub – County children's office. It was purposive. The research wanted participants who were already in a marital conflict. The research then used convenience sampling to identify the four consenting couples who were conversant in Kiswahili or English to study the phenomenon in question. In qualitative inquiry, sample size depends on what the research wants to know, the purpose of inquiry, what will have credibility and what can be done with the available time and resources (Patton, 2015). The researcher was studying the phenomenon of coping stances and not the characters. He wanted to gather a general idea (not specific) from the subjects (Creswell, 2003). The sample size indicated was able to bring out the required themes for analyses. The research interview was in - depth open ended.

Methods of Data Collection

The research conducted in - depth semi - structured interviews and observations. The semi - structured questions were part of Nagel (2013) research tool. Only one question was added to adequately address one research objective. The interviews were separate from the counselling sessions. Each individual participant was interviewed one – on -one but in the presence of his or her partner in marriage to help in identifying non - verbal communication. There was only one interview session per participant.

Research Instruments

The research used observation and interview schedules. The interview schedule addressed the following areas; demographic data, marital relationship in terms of internal and external communication and patterns of interaction. These shed light on current interactions, experiences and factors leading to conflict. The interview schedule was formulated from a set of questions developed by Nagel (2013) which addressed two objectives of the study. One question was added to address the third objective of the study. There were also demographic questions that provided data that was helpful in knowing the participants. The observations helped to delineate participants' congruence or incongruent tendencies to be recorded as the field notes. The interview was audio recorded for transcription and thereafter data analysis.

Data Collection Procedure

An introduction letter was issued by the Registrar Academics – PACU. It was submitted to NACOSTI among other required documents. NACOSTI then issued a permit to carry out the research in Gatundu Sub - County, Kiambu County through the County Director of Education, Kiambu County.

Data Analysis

Data was transcribed from audio records. Each participant's session was corresponded with their field notes to come up with descriptive data. Thereafter, content analysis was done to identify themes and patterns that emerged. The themes and patterns were inductively and comparatively analysed. All these were aided by the use of Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS) known as NVIVO. This assisted the researcher in building themes (nodes) connections for development of more insight on the objectives of the study.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher sought consent to carry out the research from NACOSTI.

Prior to participation in the study, each participant was required to sign a consent form to allow data collection. The scope and parameters of the study was clearly stated. The limits to confidentiality were also clearly stated. Participants were made aware of the fact that their participation was completely voluntary and that they could withdraw their consent to participate at any point without any negative repercussions to them.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher used qualitative data collection method known as phenomenology to study the phenomenon of coping stances. The study used a purposive sampling to reach couples who were in a marital conflict seeking help from Gatundu Sub - County children's office. The target population was 26 eligible participants. The sample size was eight participants sampled through a convenience sampling method. The researcher then used in - depth semi - structured questions which were from Nagel (2013). Observations and demographic questions were also used. Data was analysed using NVIVO.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this chapter, demographic data for the respondents is reported in a bar chart. Other results were analysed and discussed using the NVIVO software for qualitative data analysis. Themes here referred to as nodes were identified through content analysis and edited to match the objectives of the study. The NVIVO tools used to analyse the raw data were; project maps, auto - coding to come up with sentiments and cluster analysis (Pearson Correlation Coefficient).

Demographic Information

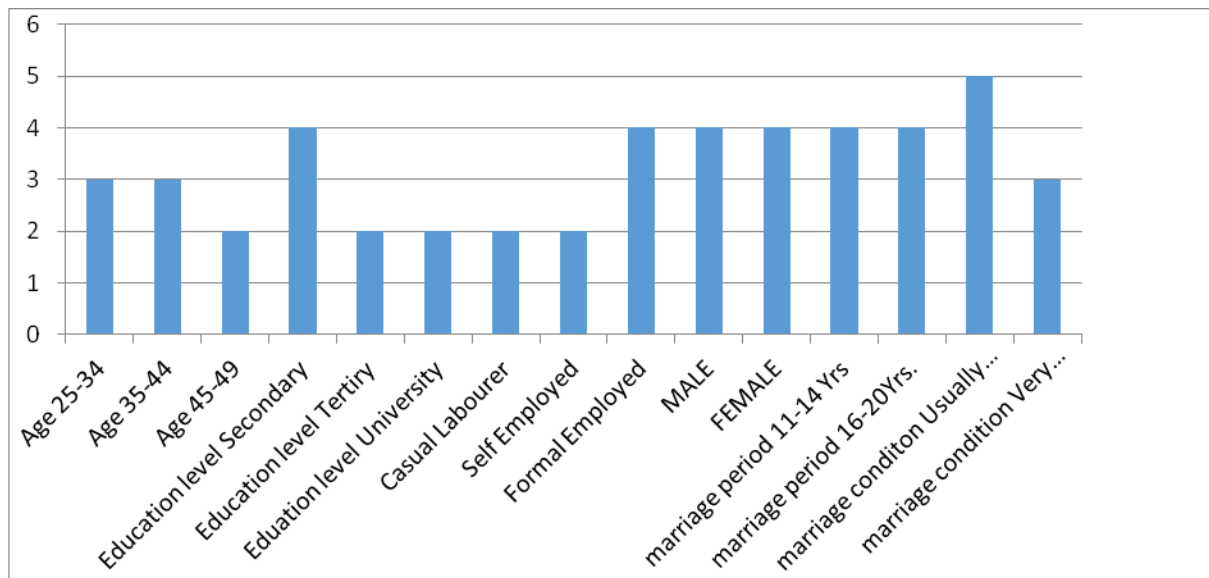


Figure 4: Demographic information for the eight respondents

Figure 4 is on demographic qualities of the population and on gender. There were four couples participating as respondent's hence four men and four women. On the age bracket, three of the participants were on the category of between 25 to 34 years. The other three on the age bracket of 35 to 44. The other two were on the age bracket of between 45 and 49. On the matters of education level, four of the respondents had attained a KCSE certificate, two Diploma courses and two undergraduate degrees.

The respondents' economic activities were also tabulated whereby two were casual labourers, two were self - employed and four were in formal employments. The number of years the respondents were married also varied. Four were married for between 11 and 15 years. The other four were married for a period of between 16 to 20 years. Concerning the number of children each respondent had, four respondents had between one and three children. The other four had four to six children. There was rating on the opinion of each respondent concerning their marital well - being. Five respondents stated that they were usually unhappy. Three responded that they were very unhappy in their marriage relationship. This shows that all the respondents in this study were in marital conflict during the research period.

Experience of Coping Stances in Marital Conflict (Project Maps)

Four of the eight respondents interviewed manifested placating stance in the way they dealt with their marital relationship during marital conflict as shown in Figure 5 below.

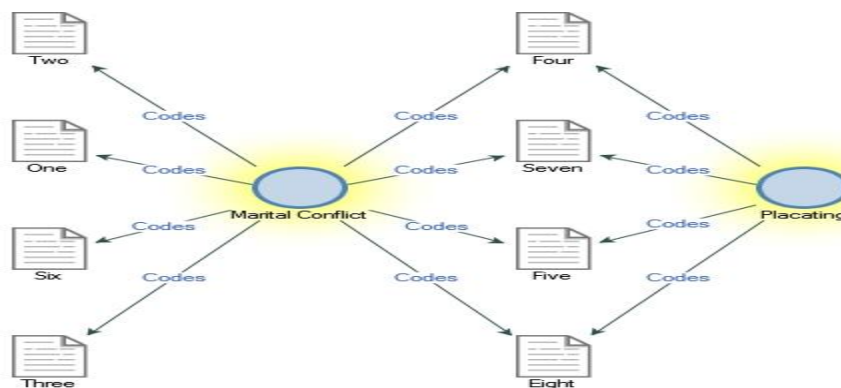


Figure5: Marital conflict versus placating stance

An example is client number five who said the following when asked how the respondent dealt with an uncomfortable relationship situation with the spouse: *"I felt bad but I used to ignore and chose not to respond to the insults"* is a statement indicating that one is exhibiting placating stance. Placating stance is demonstrated when one values context and other more than her feelings (Satir et al., 1991).

Since one is unable to express his/her feelings during marital conflict, the result is feelings of being hurt manifesting the state of hopelessness which was observed through his/her affection.

Four of the respondents exhibited blaming stance in their relationship during marital conflict as shown in Figure 6 below.

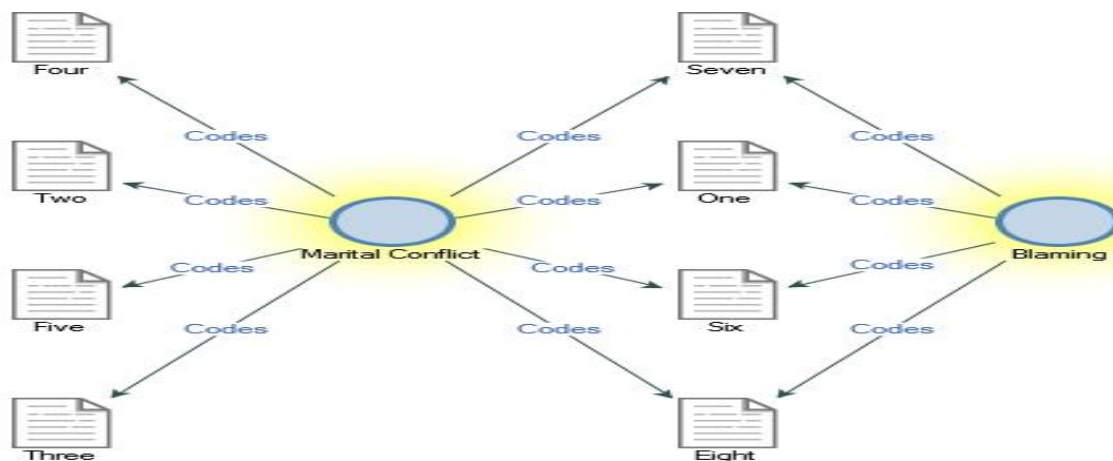


Figure 6: Marital conflict versus blaming stance

Blaming stance is exhibited when one attempts to build oneself by tearing others down because one has no confidence of surviving in any other way (Banmen, 2016). This is well demonstrated by respondent number seven:

“If I had known earlier I wouldn’t have wasted those twelve years I was waiting for him to change. I would have left him long time ago. I would have progressed much because he used to sell things bought for the house e.g. gas cylinder and cupboard and I would replace them every time. I realized that he couldn’t change because it was not even the effect of alcohol……. He never had time for me and every time I tried talking I was met with slaps. If I tried looking for a job for him so that he can be employed but all he could do is to beat me up, asking what I was doing with other men”.

The above statements demonstrate one in a state of anger, suppressed, hurt and frustrated. These are signs of one exhibiting blaming coping stance (Banmen, 2008). The one who is in a blaming stance has an underlying belief that the spouse is wrong yet the marriage relationship is very important thus portraying the spouse as incompetent and unable to cope with the situation at hand (Otto & Bend, 2000).

This makes the one in a blaming stance to escape the responsibility of any irresponsible decision he/she makes concerning his/her marriage relationship. The result could enhance marital conflict which already they were in.

Two of the respondents exhibited the stance of being irrelevant during marital conflict as shown in Figure 7 below.

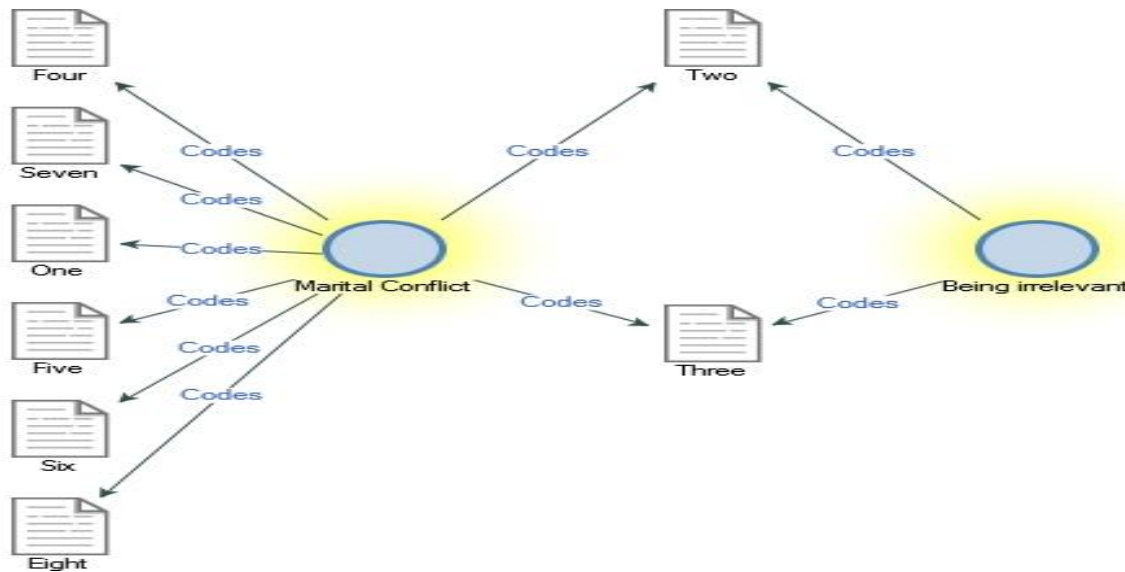


Figure 7: Marital conflict versus being irrelevant stance

The stance of being irrelevant also known as "distracter" makes one fail to concentrate on the impact of the issue but rather wants to deal with the content or a different thing all together (Banmen, 2016). When respondent number three was asked what defences or reactions triggered within him when something uncomfortable happened in his marital relationship, he responded:

"I keep quiet and run away from my problems and tried to forget everything that is happening instead of solving them"

Respondent number two responded: *"I feel bad because I never thought that my marriage would be the way it is and I don't even know what caused the problems in my marriage.....I have looked for solution through prayers..... I am still waiting upon God"*.

This shows that the above stated respondent was out of touch with self and lacks confidence in trying to solve their marital conflict which is typical to the coping stance of being irrelevant (Nagel, 2013).

This is an escapist stance where one does not want to solve the problem at hand. It was exhibited by only two participants in the study, an indication that majority of people in a marriage relationship are able to recognize when their marriage is in a problem and hence the method of solving is the one that differs. Another way one could exhibit the stance of being irrelevant is when one has previously attempted to solve the problem in his own way several times without getting any meaningful results thus entering into a state of despair.

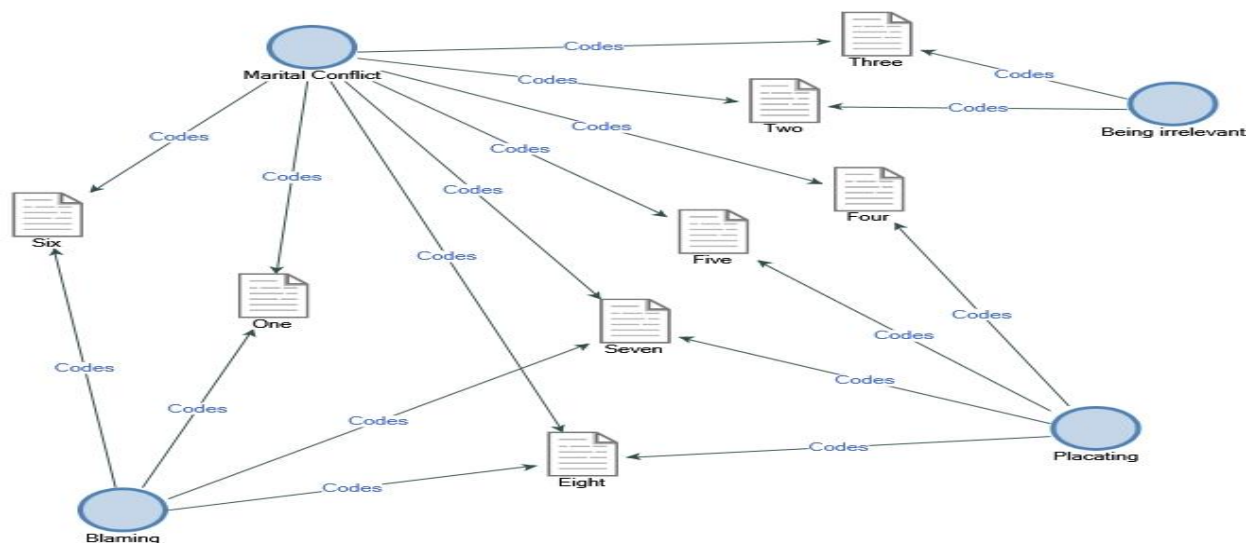


Figure 8: Marital conflict versus the three coping stances (Blaming, placating and being irrelevant)

In summary, every respondent was found to have at least a coping stance during marital conflict. Some had more than one coping stances as shown in figure 8 above. In a strained marriage relationship, one is likely to exhibit at least a coping stance as a mechanism of survival in a relationship (Benthein, 2013). This explains why every respondent exhibited a coping stance because every ones desire in a marriage relationship is acceptance. Respondent numbers one, six, seven and eight exhibited blaming stance. Respondent numbers four, five, seven and eight displayed placating stance. The most exhibited stances were blaming and placating. They are the extreme opposites of each other. When one partner has a tendency of exhibiting the blaming stance, the other partner may exhibit the placating stance and vice versa.

This is a tendency of trying to cool down the other partners coping. In doing so, they are only facilitating each other's coping mechanisms. Respondent numbers two and three revealed being irrelevant stance which is a state of giving up. This can be the final state before divorce happens. It is interesting to note that none of the respondents presented super - reasonable stance in this study. This is an indication that all the respondents put the responsibility of marital conflict to the participants in a marital relationship.

Relationship between Coping Stances and Marital Conflict (Pearson Correlation Coefficient)

Cluster analysis was executed to show the relationship between the coping stances and marital conflict. Pearson correlation coefficient was the output which stood at -0.060655 as shown in table 2 below. This indicates that there is no direct relationship between the coping stances and marital conflict. Marital conflicts often happen to both congruent and incongruent couples (Gottman, 1999). The way the conflict is handled makes the difference. 'The problem is not the problem but coping is the problem' (Satir et al., 1991). Coping enhances the conflict. Congruence reduces the conflict thus the need for couples to be aware of their inner non - verbal communication.

Table 2: Pearson correlation coefficient

Node A	Node B	Pearson correlation coefficient
Nodes\\Marital Conflict	Nodes\\Coping Stances	-0.060655

Coping is a result of unresolved past issues and not prevailing marital issues. The prevailing marital issue can only trigger what is unresolved in the personal iceberg metaphor like: self, yearnings, expectations, perceptions and beliefs, feelings about feelings or feelings which can cause one to cope (Banmen, 2016). The external behaviour which can culminate in what Gottman (1999) terms as the four horsemen which are criticism, contempt, defensiveness or stone walling, the result being escalated marital conflict.

Influence of Coping Stances on Marital Conflict: Map/ Auto-coding

Six respondents indicated that their relationship was further affected by their coping behaviours. Two never thought that their coping further affected their marriage as shown below by Figure 9 below.

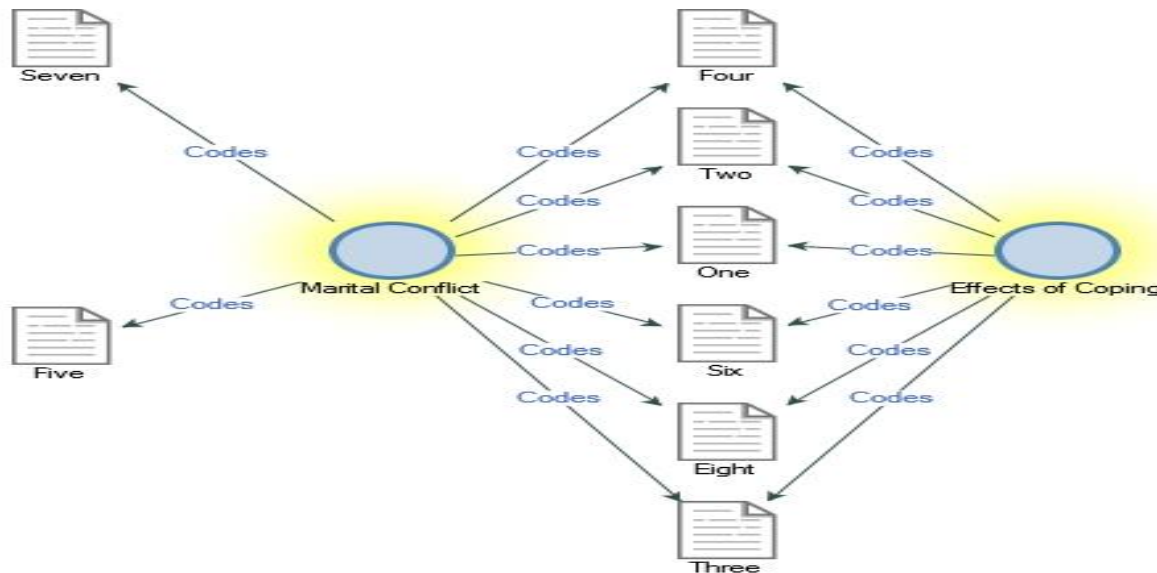


Figure 9: Influence of coping on marital conflict

Each of the coping stances elicited during marital conflict was analysed to show how it affected marital conflict. According to the study, seven references in blaming stance behaviours were moderately negative. Only two references were very positive as illustrated in figure 10 below. Blaming stance always shift responsibility of failure to others. This is the reason it scored one effect as very positive but after further probing, they were in touch with themselves and could place their behaviours as moderately negatively affecting their marital conflict by realizing that, their coping contributed negatively much more than their partners' behaviours. At first, one projected at his or her spouse but after one getting in touch with self, he/she realized that the problem was not the spouse but coping.

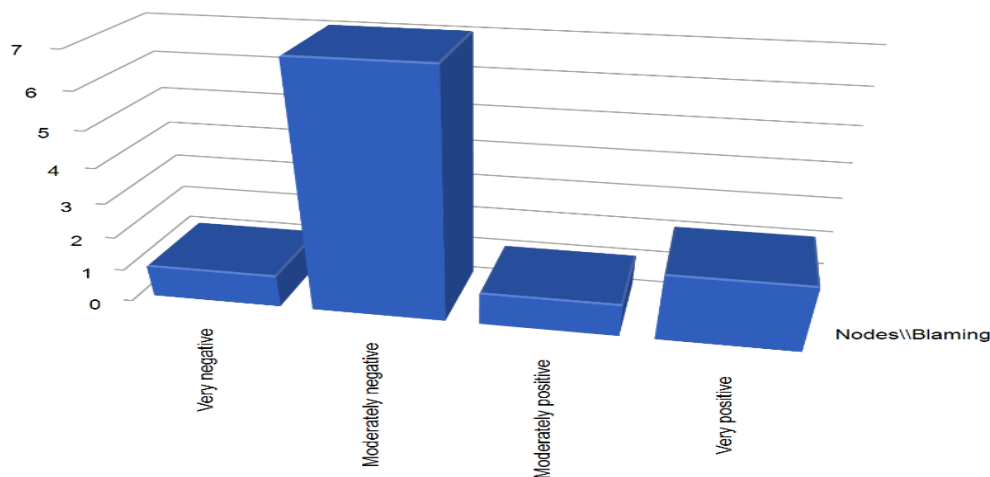


Figure 10: Influence of blaming stance on marital conflict

The placating stance behaviours had only one very negative and one moderately negative effect as shown in figure 11 below. The partners who became aware of their coping stances during probing realized that their actions of not respecting themselves in a marriage relationship were negatively affecting their marital conflict. This is after they came into realization that even though they were caring, they lacked respect in a marital conflict. This only facilitates the other partners coping especially if the partner exhibits a blaming stance which leads to stressed relationship(Nagel, 2013).

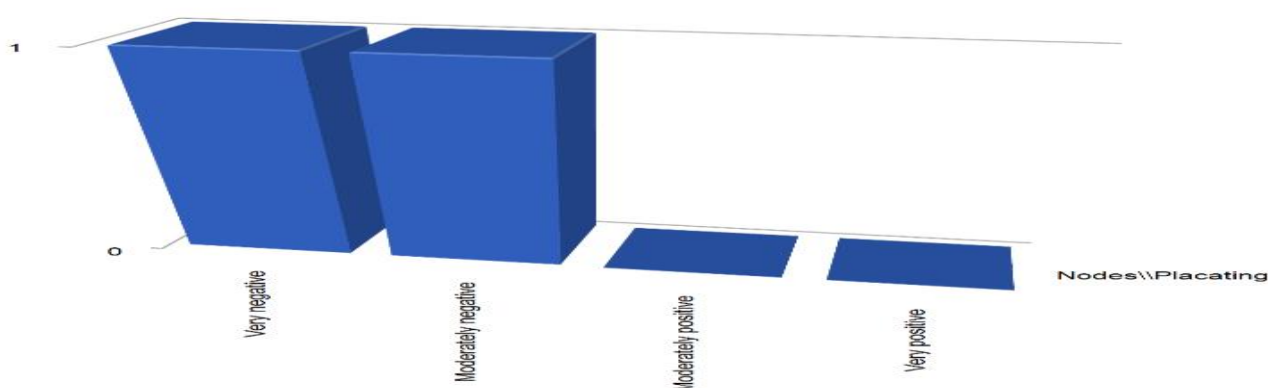


Figure 11: Influence of placating stance on marital conflict

There were two moderately negative effects in the being irrelevant stance as illustrated by figure 12.

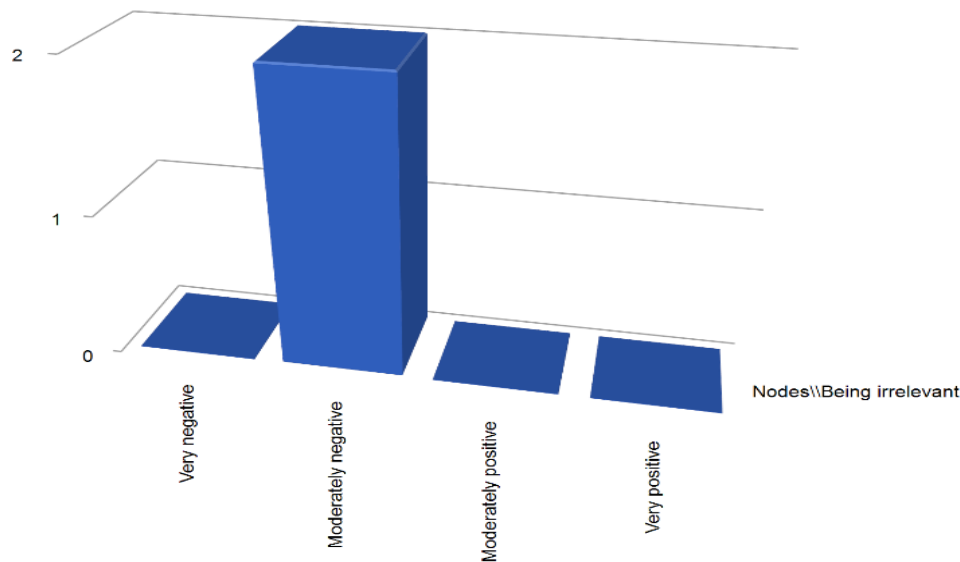


Figure 12: Influence of being irrelevant on marital conflict

They confirmed that coping had some negative effect on their marital conflict as demonstrated by respondent number four when asked if her coping had any impact on her marriage. This is what she responded:

“I think the silence may have brought many problems in our family to a point that we have reached a point of separating or else my silence from another perspective it is like it has saved me right now I am breathing. Yes because if I kept on talking...talking...talking and confronting my partner now and then, eh there were so many problems, so chances were even my life could have already been taken away. So I thank God because of the silence. So both it has disadvantage and advantages in it”

This confirms that coping stances are elicited to defend oneself from real or perceived threat. They can have an immediate positive impact while at the same time having a long time negative impact (Lum, 2008). The term positive effect mentioned above was that, the other partner stopped physically abusing her, but that did not solve their marital conflict. At the time of interview the couple was already separated.

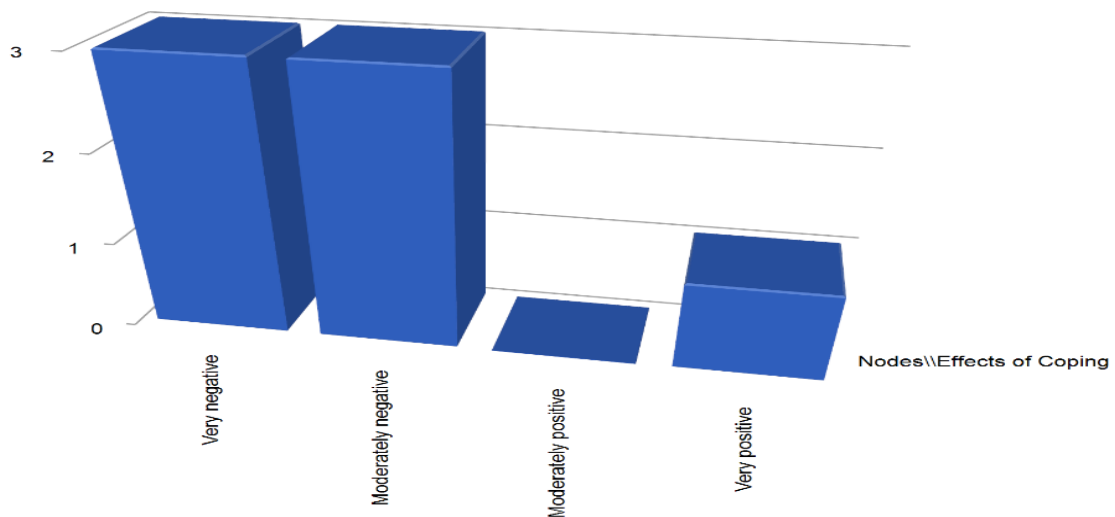


Figure 13: Influence of coping stances on marital conflict

The effects of coping behaviours on marital conflict were three: Very negative, three moderately negative effects and one very positive effect as illustrated by figure 13 above. This shows that coping caused more problems than providing a solution. Coping is a way of protecting oneself from threat and not a way of solving a problem (Banmen, 2016). This is an indication that coping can make one escape an impending negative issue but should never be prolonged. When coping is prolonged, the prevailing issue is no longer the focus but instead the underlying unresolved issues in one's intra - psychic world take prominence hence coping becoming the problem (Satir at al., 1991).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, demographic information for the eight participants was captured in figure four. Three of the four Satir coping stances were identified. Placating was experienced by four respondents. Blaming stance was experienced by four respondents. Being - irrelevant stance was experienced by two respondents. All the eight respondents experienced at least a coping stance. Some exhibited more than one coping stance during the interview.

Cluster analysis was executed to show the relationship between the coping stances and marital conflict. The result was that there was no relationship between coping stances and marital conflict. Six of the eight respondents indicated that coping during marital conflict had some effects on their marriage. Generally coping stance had negative effects on marital conflict. The only small positive effect was for short term.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Introduction

In this chapter, research analysis and findings are summarized. Recommendations based on the findings are made and areas of further research based on the research conclusion are identified.

Summary

This research studied the phenomenon of Satir's coping stances and their relationship to marital conflict. Eight participants who were already in marital conflict were interviewed. The first objective of the study was to identify the Satir's coping stance in marital conflict. Blaming, placating and being irrelevant stances were established in this study. No respondent exhibited super - reasonable stance during the study. Placating stance was exhibited by four respondents. Blaming stance was exhibited by four respondents. Being irrelevant stance was exhibited by two respondents. All the eight respondents exhibited at least a coping stance; some exhibiting more than one coping stance. This study concludes that everyone with low self - esteem under some duress due to marital conflict will exhibit coping stances. This is in line with Satir's findings that everyone who has a low self - esteem and is undergoing some relational stress will exhibit coping stance to protect him/herself from perceived or real threat of self- esteem (Satir, et al., 1991).

The second objective of the study was to look at the relationship between coping stance and marital conflict. For this to happen, cluster analysis was executed. It gave a negative Pearson correlation coefficient standing at -0.060655. This means that there is no relationship hence the two variables are independent to each other. Marital conflict can happen without prior coping stances.

Marital conflict in a marriage relationship is inevitable. What makes the difference is how couples solve the conflict that is, there are those who enhance it while others solve it.

The third objective was the effect of coping stances on marital conflict. Generally, the effect of the three coping stances on marital conflict for the eight respondents was three scores on negative, three scores on moderately negative and one score on very positive. The six scores on the negative effect of coping stances on marital conflict indicate that the long run impact of coping stances on marital conflict lead to more conflict to the marital conflict. This can lead to separation. The one score on the very positive impact of coping stances on marital conflict indicates that there were some immediate perceived benefits of coping stances. This perceived immediate benefit of coping stances on marital conflict could mean a short term diffusion of tension during marital conflict which should never be prolonged.

Conclusion

Blaming, Placating and being irrelevant were coping stances exhibited by the eight respondents. They were stimulated by the marital conflict environment. In this study, there was no super - reasonable stance displayed. In some cases, blaming and placating stances were manifested by the same respondent. All the respondents brought out at least a coping stance of either blaming, placating or being irrelevant. Placating and blaming stances were very prevalent compared to being irrelevant stance.

The coping stances were not the cause of marital conflict but intensified it. They are prompted to protect one's presumed threat which is a short lived event. It was seen as a benefit while the long - term effect intensified marital conflict. This study helped the respondents to discover this with bewilderment. Pearson correlation coefficient showed that there is no relationship between coping stances and marital conflict.

This indicates that marital conflict can be caused by other factors apart from coping stances. The two variables, which are marital conflict and coping stances were independent of each other. There was more score on the negative impact of coping stances on marital conflict indicating that couples who exhibit coping stances during marital conflict enhance the conflict. The one score on the positive impact of coping stances on marital conflict indicates the temporal diffusion of tension occurring during the marital conflict.

Recommendations

- Since coping stances aggravate marital conflict, there should be congruence couple therapy in every couple counselling as part of therapy intervention.
- Congruence communication lessons should be part and parcel in every pre - marital counselling class. These will enable partners in marriage to reduce significantly perpetual problems.
- Each individual in marriage should strive to identify his/her dominant coping stance in order to deal with it by identifying past events which could have brought about the stance. This will help couples in marriages reduce exhibition of coping in their day today communication.
- Each partner in a marriage relationship should go through his/her ‘personal iceberg metaphor’ to identify and resolve unresolved past issues in order to live a healthy (congruent) life.

Areas for Further Studies

- There is need to have a quantitative research on the same topic to compare outcomes.
- A study should be done to come up with coping stances identification scale.
- Further research on coping stances in an African setting is necessary to establish whether there is relationship between the coping stances and African cultural

practices, proverbs, sayings or beliefs. Perhaps this could explain why some coping stances were more prevalent in this study than others.

- There is also need to research on congruence (the ultimate goal in communication) couple therapy on marriages so as to be established as a theoretically proven couple therapy.

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APPENDIX I: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear (*Prospective Interview participant*),

My name is Gabriel K. Kitili. I am a student at Pan Africa Christian University pursuing a Master's degree in marriage and Family Therapy. As part of the fulfilment of the Master's degree programme requirements, I am carrying out a research on communication patterns between partners in marriage relationships and inviting you to be a participant in this research. The interview will be tape recorded for the purposes of data analysis.

I assure you that confidentiality will be maintained and your names will not be mentioned even during tape recording and your direct responses will not be mentioned anywhere else apart from this research without your prior consent. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research.

Kindly sign this form to affirm that you are willing to participate in this research of your own volition. Remember, consent may be revoked at any point with no negative repercussions to you.

Sincerely,

Gabriel Kitili

Name_____

Signature_____ Date_____

APPENDIX II : DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Gender : Male_____. Female_____

What is your age bracket?

18-24_____25-34_____35-44_____45-49_____50-54_____

55+_____

What is your highest attained level of education?

Primary_____. Secondary _____.Tertiary_____. University_____.

Economic activity_____

How long have you been married? _____

How many children do you have? _____

How would you characterize your present marriage?

Very happy_____. Usually happy_____.Satisfactory_____

Usually unhappy_____. Very unhappy_____.

APPENDIX III: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What do you see and hear concerning your marriage?
(A factual, objective observation without interpretation)
2. What meaning do you make of what you see and hear concerning your marriage?
(Meaning is heavily influenced by the learning one received in the family of origin and one's self-esteem)
3. What are your feelings about the meaning? (Feelings are the result of making meaning, not a result of what you objectively saw and heard).
4. When you have those feelings, what judgments and decisions or rules do you make?
(Feelings about feelings are based on one's judgements and rules about particular feelings and decisions one makes about the feelings).
5. What defences or reactions get triggered within you? (Defences elicit ones survival coping stances).
 - Blaming - project.
 - Placate - deny
 - Super – reasonable - ignore.
 - Irrelevant - distort
6. Does it trigger more or reduce conflict? - (My addition to measure the cycle of the coping stance on the marriage).
7. What is your (external) response? (This is what the other person hears from you and sees you do). And how does it relate to the condition of your marriage?
8. What are your rules for commenting? (Family rules, safety, habits and automatic reactions determine how you share inner experiences).
(Nagel, 2013)

APPENDIX IV: (NAGEL, 2013)

THE SATIR MODEL STEPS OF AN INGREDIENTS OF AN INTERACTION

WHAT DO YOU SEE AND HEAR?

A factual, objective observation without interpretation.

WHAT MEANING DO YOU MAKE OF WHAT YOU SEE AND HEAR?

Too often step one and two are enmeshed: meaning is heavily influenced by the learning one received in the family-of-origin and one's self-esteem.

WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT THE MEANING?

Feelings are the result of making meaning, not a result of what you objectively saw and heard.

WHAT ARE OUR FEELINGS ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS?

Feelings about feelings are based on your judgments and rules about particular feelings and decisions you make about your feelings.

WHAT DEFENSES GET TRIGGERED?

Defenses elicit your survival coping stances:

- a. Blame – project
- b. Placate – deny
- c. Super-reasonable – ignore
- d. Irrelevant – distort

WHAT ARE YOUR RULES FOR COMMENTING?

Usually family rules, safety, habits and automatic reactions determine how you share your inner experience with another person and how open you are. Rules might be about safety, courtesy, assertiveness, etc.

WHAT IS YOUR (EXTERNAL) RESPONSE?

This is what the other person hears from you and sees you do.

APPENDIX V: BUDGET

Item	Budget (Kshs.)
Printing and Binding	20,000.00
Typing cost	5,000.00
Research Assistants	20,000.00
Transport	10,000.00
Online materials and software	20,000.00
Miscellaneous expenses	10,000.00
Total	85,000.00

APPENDIX VI: NACOSTI RESEARCH PERMIT

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:

MR. GABRIEL KITETU KITILI
of PAN AFRICA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY,
0-1030 Gatundu, has been permitted to
conduct research in Kiambu County

on the topic: THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN SATIR'S COPING STANCES
AND MARITAL CONFLICT: A CASE OF
COUPLES ATTENDING COUNSELLING AT
GATUNDU CHILDREN'S OFFICE, KIAMBU
COUNTY, KENYA.

for the period ending:
27th March, 2018

Permit No : NACOSTI/P/17/45592/16319
Date Of Issue : 27th March, 2017
Fee Recieved :Ksh 1000




Applicant's Signature


Director General
National Commission for Science,
Technology & Innovation