

The “Bossman” Factor Influence on Family Communication: The Perception of Married Women

William Kodom Gyasi¹, Eugene Kwarteng-Nantwi², Marcelinus Dery¹

¹Department of Communication Studies, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana

²Counselling Centre, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana

Email: william.gyasi@ucc.edu.gh, eugene.kwarteng-nantwi@ucc.edu.gh, marcelinus.dery@ucc.edu.gh

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Abstract

The “bossman” factor, the “headship role of men” in Africa, is entrenched in the social fabric of Africa. Nonetheless, there is little attention to how this headship role of men in the family influences family communication. The present study explored the influence of the headship role of men in family communication. The researchers selected 10 participants from the Cape Coast Metropolis and elicited data through interviews. Using family communication theory as a guide, the researchers analyzed the transcribed data and came out with the following findings. Firstly, the headship role of men serves as a barrier to family communication because men serve as the final authority in decision-making, conflict resolution, and children’s openness. Secondly, the researchers discovered that married women adopt coping strategies such as effective listening, sex appeals, and third-party counselling. Finally, the study revealed that sociocultural variables such as ethnicity, religion, and gender greatly influence the perpetuation of men’s headship role, thus the ‘bossman role’ in family communication. The researchers recommend that counsellors should consider guiding husbands to be considerate in dealing with family communication issues because men overstressing their headship role affect effective family communication.

Keywords

Family, Communication, Headship Role, Counselling, Conflict Resolution, Family Communication Pattern

1. Background to the Study

The family is one of the most fascinating and important human institutions

(Hovick, Thomas, Watts, & Tan, 2021). According to Reiss ((Reiss, 1981) cited in (Rajkai, 2022)), families are defined by common ideologies, values, and beliefs. These values and belief systems affect how family members perceive their social environment and responsibilities in society, and how they interact inside and beyond the family (Rajkai, 2022). The family's influence on individual behavior is crucial to family communication scholars (Hovick et al., 2021).

McLeod & Chaffee (1972) defined family communication as a coordination of relatives that balances informational, and control aims with related purposes. The development of a robust and healthy family communication pattern is an important factor in allowing households to be more flexible (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Fitzpatrick, 2004). According to Baxter, Bylund, Imes, & Scheive (2005), and Koerner & Fitzpatrick (2002), integrating views, traditions, and family history over time leads to distinctive communication patterns among families. These patterns often described as “family communication patterns” are conversation and conformity (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Fitzpatrick, 2004). The interaction between conversation orientation and conformity orientation provides four sub-categories of family communication patterns which are protective, laissez-faire, pluralistic, and consensual (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). While understanding these family communication patterns is primarily based on the theoretical assumption, the need to assess the sociocultural variables such as headship role influence on family communication is key to understanding the nitty-gritty that stifles or cushions family communication in reality (Fitzpatrick, 2004; Gyasi & Bangmarigu, 2022; Warmuth, Cummings, & Davies, 2020; Zhou, Cao, & Leerkes, 2017).

Family headship involves controversy over the man's leadership position in marriage (Alard & Freeks, 2020). Ortlund (2006: p. 95) defines male headship as “the man's primary responsibility to lead the partnership in a God-glorifying path”. This definition is largely biblical, thereby stressing the religious point of view of the role of the father to head the family institutions. In the African setting, the institutional subjugation of women to give men an urge in the family union presents a unique socio-cultural perspective of headship that needs investigation (Maisiri, 2015). Moreover, there is evidence in literature e that gender, in this case as a social construct and biological phenomenon, influences communication styles (Wood, 2007). While men are found to be problem-solving, straightforward, forward, and sometimes harsh in their communication style; women, on the other hand, are emotional, conversation-oriented, and relationship-based in their communication style (Wood, 2007). The socio-cultural basis of men's hegemony in the family unit as well as the empirical evidence of a difference in communication styles between males and females make the exploration of the headship of men in family communication an interesting topic of discussion that bridges theory and practice of communication in the family setting.

The family communication literature has covered different perspectives on family communication such as family communication patterns (partners' negative direct behaviors (Eğeci & Gençöz, 2006; Ross, Karney, Nguyen, & Bradbury,

2019; Overall, 2020), parental conflict effect on children's future parenting (Ampofo, 2001; Warmuth, Cummings, & Davies, 2020; Zhou, Cao, & Leerkes, 2017; Caughlin, 2003), nonverbal communication cues in family communication (Gyasi & Bangmarigu, 2022) among others. Despite the extensive studies on different themes within family communication, there is little attention on the headship role of men's influence on family communication. Moreover, the extensive literature on family communication has largely been dominated by western scholars thereby leaving the intricacies that are peculiar and situational to the African and Ghanaian family institutions under-explored (Gyasi & Bangmarigu, 2022).

Meanwhile, in most African cultural contexts "gender roles are explicitly spelled out right from the home to the larger community level" (Kuada, 2008: p. 21). "Women are supposed to care for the home and ensure the continuity of the lineage, while men are considered to be strong, knowledgeable, skillful, risk-taking and powerful and are therefore supposed to play the headship role and work to be breadwinners (Dolphyne, 1995: p. 5)." This ideological social construction that has championed and institutionalized male hegemony over females in the leadership of family institutions in the African context in general and Ghanaian setting, in particular, provides a blazing opportunity to contextualize western theories and evidence on the nature and practice of family communication. It is on this basis that this study explores the headship role of men and its effect on family communication in the Ghanaian setting. The study is underpinned by the following research questions:

- 1) How does the headship role of men in the family constitute a barrier to effective communication in the family?
- 2) What communication strategies do married women employ to assert their positions when a husband claims to have the final say in the name of headship?
- 3) How do certain sociocultural variables have or are influencing the perception of women on the headship role of men and its effects on family communication?

This study is vital because effective communication is important to create and maintain a family system. The more effectively family members can communicate together, the better your interpersonal relationship in the family (Hendra, Rudianto & Khairani, 2021). Thus, family communication appears to be an area worth exploring in attempting to understand more fully communication in the family. This study specifically explores whether the headship role of men in the family constitutes a barrier to effective communication in the family. The findings derived contributed to the existing body of knowledge through the identification of the headship role of men and how these roles are important in family communication.

2. Literature Review

Communication is viewed as a paradigm that specifies proper interaction behaviors and sets communication objectives in the family (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie,

1993, 1994). The ability of family members to effectively communicate in the face of enormous upheaval remains a significant variable. A lack of communication and trust among family members may lead to the development of unfavorable characteristics in the family. The development of a robust and healthy family communication pattern is an important factor in allowing households to be more flexible (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Fitzpatrick, 2004).

Studies of family leadership and decision-making in the home, the married partnership, or the nuclear family are some of the ways scholars have attempted to address the idea of headship in the family in academic literature (Ortlund, 1991; Vangelisti & Daly, 1997). The household head lacks a uniform definition across nations (Liu et al, 2016). African culture defines a household head as one who is both ruler and a single representation of his or her wife and children at home (Biri & Mutambwa, 2013). The importance of the position of head of a family in the African community is heightened by the socio-cultural practices and beliefs that underpin it. Men and women have historically been fostered in different ways in most cultures because of the intrinsic distinctions between men and women and the varying cultural interpretations of those disparities (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

As claimed by Eagly & Karau (2002) in their social role theory, people have developed descriptive and prescriptive gender role expectations of other people's conduct because of the evolutionary gender specialization. Chigwata (2014) says that in African tradition, females and males were taught specific cultural ideas and behaviors that promoted maleness over femaleness. An argument made by Eagly et al. (2004) contends that the division of work traditionally has associated males with breadwinner roles and women with domestic roles. Women are often portrayed and considered to be more cooperative, relational, and caring than males, based on societal norms, whereas men are regarded and assumed to be more forceful and autonomous than women.

Baku, Adanu, & Adatarara (2017: pp. 1-10) also investigate "Socio-cultural factors affecting parent-adolescent communication on sexuality in the Accra Metropolitan, Ghana". The research used a qualitative exploratory descriptive approach and incorporated focus group discussions (FGD) and in-depth interviews to investigate the socio-cultural elements that influence parents' communication about sexuality. The outcomes of this research suggested that parents attributed their inability to engage in sexual communication with teenagers to religious and cultural taboos. This implies that sociocultural determined values influence communication in the family.

In another study, Kpoor (2019) examined: "Assets and livelihoods of male- and female-headed households in Ghana." This study adopts the livelihoods approach—a multidimensional perspective—to examine the human, social, financial, and economic assets and livelihoods of male- and female-headed households in Ghana utilizing in-depth interviews and a survey. The findings of the study show that households led by males have better livelihood outcomes than households headed by women; suggesting that families headed by men have a

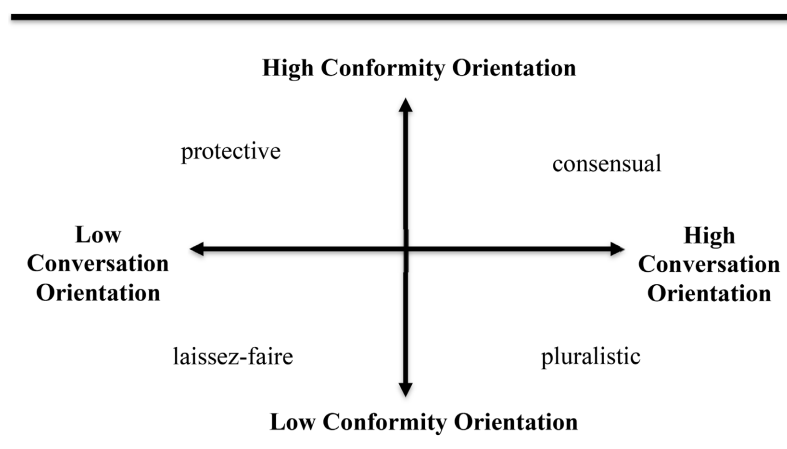
greater chance of success.

The literature provides evidence to test the validity of the assumptions on communication patterns in family functioning and individuals' success in their relationships. The findings from the literature give the basis to approve or disprove our claim on how communication impacts and influences family well-being. However, the literature failed to take into consideration the moderating variables with the potential to influence communication in the family. Therefore, this study aims to fill the void by considering the socio-culture variables that may have been influencing communication variables in the family.

2.1. Family Communication Theory

Communication is “a ‘God’ term in our society because it is viewed as a panacea for ailing human relationships” (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 2009: p. 565). Communication is becoming a must-have for family life. Due to familial communication patterns, personal relationship expectations have shifted (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 2009). Family communication pattern theory presupposes people's perceptions about family relationships differ in how open and structured communication is regarded. Family communication pattern theory focuses on how people identify their communication with other relatives (Keating et al., 2013). Fitzpatrick & Ritchie (1994) characterized the family communication pattern as to how others view the family structure and what households do in family communication. The family communication pattern framework provides conversation-oriented and conformity-oriented communication. These orientations' dimensions determined how communication is done in the various family types. Figure 1 displays Koerner & Fitzpatrick (2006)'s family communication patterns model.

Koerner & Fitzpatrick (2006) argue that families may be categorized into four groups based on their conversation orientation and conformity orientation: “consensual, pluralistic, protective, or laissez-faire”. First, consensual family communication pattern attains shared reality by balancing high levels of both dialogue (value communication) and compliance (rules of authority and decision



Source: Adopted from Koerner & Fitzpatrick (2006).

Figure 1. Koerner & Fitzpatrick (2006)'s family communication patterns model.

making). Consensual pattern values opinions of each member, but the ultimate decision is based on the opinion of the highest authority. This pattern makes room for child to parents communication, but emphasis is placed children obedience to parents' authority (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990).

Second, pluralistic households are high in dialogue and low in conformity (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). This patterns values communication over compliance, hence children are not strictly expected to obey parents' opinion if the children deem their own opinions as valid. They support the child's right to make his or her own decisions in these homes (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006; Fitzpatrick, 1994). Discussions on a wide range of tough issues are common in these households; hence pluralistic families promote communication, placing minimal stress on subscribing to a particular position.

Third, protective family communication pattern is quiet and orderly in communication (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Children are depended on parents for decisions, and there is high level of consistency in communication. To construct a common reality, protective families depend primarily on conformity, stressing deference to a dominant family member's viewpoint above debate. Families of this kind prioritize parental control and unity above free and honest communication. Parents in these families do not tend to justify their actions, and members are expected to preserve harmony within the family by avoiding confrontation (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002).

Fourth, laissez-faire communication pattern is low in both discussion and compliance (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Families with a laissez-faire attitude are less concerned about sharing their experiences and hence place less emphasis on one over the other. Family members are extremely independent and may look disconnected (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994). Because of the lack of transparency in the family, people are more than likely to avoid engaging in a discussion if they think they have a tough subject to address, therefore, family discussions may be particularly difficult (Keating, 2016). Depending on how one member of the family reacts, the whole family may have either a positive or negative reaction (Russell, 2013).

As Fitzpatrick & Koerner emphasized, "family communication environments differently foster the development of various functional communication skills". By way of the family communication environment, norms and patterns are developed, maintained, and adjusted (Fitzpatrick, 2004). Whether conceived as a process of developing and sustaining definitions of reality in relationships (Keating et al., 2013), communication theory plays a central role in this study to identify the communication pattern in a modern family. The theoretical work on communication is important for understanding the dynamics of modern family communication. Conversely, the family is in many ways a unique context of communication. For this reason, a theory of family communication is important for understanding communication processes in general.

The theory as well as empirical reviews has provided insight on the factors that influence effective family communication. From the theoretical perspective,

communication orientation and conformity are greatly responsible for the level of effectiveness of communication in the family. In a family where there is value for communication over compliance, there is mostly likely to be effective communication because of the openness, flexibility and dialogue opportunities granted to all members of the family (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006; Keating, 2016). On the other hand, when there is high demand for conformity, there is most likely ineffective communication because the strict rules, power play and demand for obedience discourage communication (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006; Keating, 2016). To then understand the conformity orientation, especially in the African context, the empirical studies provide glimpse as to what factors hinder effective communication. These factors include gender, religion, society, economic value, and power play. For instance, Kpoor (2019) found economic factor as influential in communication; while Baku et al. (2017) found religion and cultural taboos as barriers to effective communication. Eagly et al. (2004) found societal roles as restricting the communication potentials of members in a family. Since religion and society are aspects of culture, it is expedient to argue that culture largely influences effective communication in the family system. The aspects of culture such as defined roles of authority, such as headship, which leans on the conformity orientation is under explored, hence this study.

Researchers seek to uncover the set of communication skills that lead to healthy family functioning, or conversely, those that are correlated to distress or abusive relationship. Though not without pragmatic value, much of the research on communication in the family is theoretical (Fitzpatrick, 2004). According to Fitzpatrick & Ritchie (2009), family communication is a challenging phenomenon to theorize about because it simultaneously depends on intrapersonal and interpersonal processes. It is therefore particularly useful to employ the insights gained from the general model for the development of a theory of family communication for this study.

2.2. Methods

This study adopted the qualitative research approach with phenomenology as the specific research design. Phenomenology started as a philosophical movement that focused on the nature of experience from the point of view of the person experiencing the phenomenon (known as “lived experience”) (Connelly, 2010). Phenomenology focuses on consciousness and the content of conscious experiences, such as judgments, perceptions, and emotions (Balls, 2009). Researchers used the phenomenology technique to investigate and collect extensive information on people’s experiences and the meaning of those experiences (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). This design is suitable for gathering a large amount of data where little is known to gain a thorough knowledge of a problem (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). The researchers used phenomenology in this study because it allowed them to gather adequate information on married women’s daily experiences in their families. This enabled the researchers to collect information

comprehensively and systematically that ensured in-depth information about each objective investigated. This method gave more room for participants (in this case married women) to describe their experiences and thoughts in their own words and language rather than from the assumptions of the researchers (Balls, 2009).

The population for this study constituted all married women in Amamoma, Cape Coast. The study employed a convenient sampling technique to select 10 married women for the study. The sample size is considered appropriate because researchers contend that the sample size in a qualitative study should be manageable: not so large as to make it difficult to extract rich information. Furthermore, it should be noted that a qualitative study does not derive its quality from the sample size, but rather from the depth of information (Hennink et al., 2020).

The researchers used structured interviews to collect data from the respondents. The in-depth structured interview guide was employed for data collection. The interview guide approach allows the researchers to have full control and select the order in which questions are asked and modify the phrasing of questions to best suit the particular interview (Creswell, 2014). The interview guide approach helped the researchers to establish some level of rapport and trust with the respondents. Before the collection of data, the respondents were informed with an introductory letter by the researchers for their consent. Having sought the consent of the participants and permission granted, the researchers then chose a date convenient to the respondents to conduct the interviews. The interview took approximately 20 minutes per participant and considering 10 respondents, the estimated minute for the interview was 200 minutes (10 × 20). It must be emphasized that the researchers conducted the interview personally with the respondents. To ensure that the data were accurately recorded, permission was sought from the interviewees to tape-record the interview session.

Transcription and interpretation of data are considered essential requirements that qualitative studies are expected to meet to obtain a rich outcome in the process of analyzing (Creswell, 2014). In line with this, the recorded interview for interview questions of each informant was transcribed. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis of the interview data. Braun & Clarke (2006)'s general approaches to analysing qualitative data were considered. However, to facilitate the identification of the themes in the data the researchers made use of the NVivo v10 qualitative analytical tool to identify similar codes in the response.

According to (Creswell, 2014), the primary ethical considerations that must be addressed in every research are voluntary involvement, the right to privacy, anonymity, and information secrecy. All efforts were made to ensure that these ethical issues were addressed. For instance, all respondents were allowed to participate in the data collection exercise on their own accord through voluntary participation. Respondents' right to privacy was protected by allowing them to complete the interview of their own will, and no information about them was

collected without their knowledge or consent. Finally, all respondents were assured that the information they provided would be kept strictly confidential. **Table 1** below contains the specific details of the participants.

3. Results and Discussion

The presented results are based on the interview with the selected married women in the study area. The names used along with the quotes from the interviews are pseudo-names to ensure the anonymity of the participants. The pseudo-names were agreed upon by participants as referencing names rather than their real names. Results and discussion according to the research questions underpinned the study.

Research Question 1: How does the headship role of men in the family constitute a barrier to effective communication in the family?

The phenomenon of interest in research objective one is to establish whether the headship roles of men influence effective communication in the family. The researchers further probe the participants to describe the headship role their husband plays in the family. From the interview data, the researchers discovered that participants' communication on key issues such as decision-making, parenting children, and communicating needs is hindered because husbands are the final authority on what eventually happens in the family. For instance, Angelina said: *"My husband is the leader, and he is the one who takes decisions in the family."* Similarly, Magdalene also posited that *"In decision making, he is the final decider, there is nothing I can do without my husband's consent. In everything, I must consult him"*.

These two excerpts from the interviews show that the headship role of men greatly impacts dialogue on major issues among couples, and sometimes, including children. The wives perceived their husbands as the final authority or as Magdalene put it *"the final decider."* This implies the headship role of the man has gradually necessitated the consensual communication pattern (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). In the consensual pattern of communication, there is the liberty to share ideas, but the ideas that prevail are those from the one with the highest authority. This means that the headship role places the man as the final authority, thereby reducing the use of family communication to arrive at based

Table 1. Socio-Demographic information of participants.

Characteristics	Categories	Frequency (<i>n</i> = 10)	Percentage (%)
Marital status	Married	9	90
	Divorced	1	10
Years married	1 - 5 years	3	30
	6 - 10 years	4	40
	11 years and above	3	30
Religion	Christian	10	100

on shared ideas of family members.

Therefore, the headship role of a man has a significant impact on the family's well-being. In all, most of the participants (8 out of 10) claimed that the headship tag given to men greatly influences communication in the family. For instance, Rosemary said: *“Well, I could say yes, because he is the head of the family, but at times he takes decisions which conflict with my interest. I cannot take that decision on my own without consulting him first. Some of the decisions sometimes affect us but I cannot do anything about it because he is the head.”*

In this quote, the participant indicated that men are usually unopposed in their decision-making for the family because the woman considers the man to be the head. In cases where the decision even affects the family, the woman and kids are most likely to remain mute because the father cannot be questioned. After all, he is the head. Similarly, Yaa also said: *“Of course, my husband's headship role does affect communication in the family, being frank and honest I think it is uncomfortable because I believe I also have to play a role and it looks like a competition.”* The case of Yaa is quite insightful because even though she perceives the man to be having the final authority in communication, she is of the view that the authoritarian headship of men is uncomfortable. After all, women should have a role to play in communication on decision-making.

In another light, Grace stated: *“Sometimes, it depends on how he presents the issues or how we communicate, I think my husband has a nicer way of presenting issues to me. But when things are not going right, you will see a different side of him he will be authoritative. Sometimes I have to compromise in some situations even if I am right.”* In Grace's view, the authoritarian nature of men is situational in that in cases where the man is in difficult times, it tends to affect communication. In such cases, Grace considers compromising as the best way to keep the relationship cool.

Participants were also interviewed on how the headship role of the man influences the children's openness in the family. Communication between parents and children contributes significantly to creating fair and effective relationships, understanding, and mutual acceptance between parents and children. There is no aspect of the relationship between the parent and the child that does not involve communication. This means that family communication plays an important role in the children's well-being. The participants were asked whether the headship role of the husband constitutes a barrier to children's openness in the family. Except for one participant, Mary, who stated: *“children find it difficult to get to their father with any issues.”* All the participants acknowledged that the headship role of their husbands' play does not influence children's openness in the family.

They contend that children are open with their communication, however, they are selective with the issues they discuss with either the mother or the father. For instance, Angelina stated: *“Despite the role my husband plays as the head, the children relate well with him, so they find it easy to communicate their*

issues as it is in the family. So, I will say my husband's role as the head does not affect the children's openness in the family." The participants also noted gender influence on communication in that male children are most likely to open up with their fathers than female children. For instance, Caroline stated: *"There is openness in children, especially with the boys. They always relate well with their father especially and discuss boys' stuff."*

The finding implies that mutual communication, not unilateral, contributes significantly to this openness and the creation of ties in parent and child interactions. Relationships in the family influence the forming of personality traits such as emotional stability, individual maturity, personal integrity development, and preparedness to accept social roles. For this reason, Vreeland et al. (2019) contends that the positive development of children depends largely on the environment created within the family. Sullivan (2019), Barbato, Graham, & Perse (2003) in a study on communication in the family also revealed that the family communication environment had a significant impact on both parents and children's motivations for interpersonal communication. There was a strong correlation between the communication atmosphere and parental motivations for communicating with their children. It is a good thing that the headship role does not influence the children's openness in the family.

3.1. Conflict Resolution

Most of the participants again contend that conflict resolution is a bit of a challenge sometimes. They posited that if there is too much disagreement and uncertainty, arriving at a mutual solution sometimes becomes an issue. They believe that the headship tag of men gives them an egoistic attitude making it difficult for them to accept that they are wrong. Mary stated: *"conflict resolution is a bit of a challenge, sometimes he does understand himself and sometimes also he feels that he is the head so what he said is final. Even though I may be right with my argument, I just have to accept it like that."* Another participant, Angelina, also said: *"conflict resolution in most cases is difficult because he is the head, he at times feels like whatever he wants or say, it should be that way."*

Research Question 2: What communication strategies married women employ to assert their position when a husband claims to have the final say in the name of headship?

Good communication in marriage is the cornerstone of any happy and fulfilling relationship. The researcher sought to identify communication strategies married women employ to assert their position when a husband claims to have the final say in the name of headship. However, all the participants first agree that they sometimes have disagreements with their husbands. For instance, Rosemary said: *"yes, we disagree on so many things because I feel like his decision are sometimes affected by other factors."* This implies that disagreement usually happens in every marriage, but how it is been resolved is the issue.

The strategies they employ to assert their position include listening not talking

at the same time when their husband is talking. The interviewees indicated when members of the family listen to the head, thus the man, there is most likely satisfaction and less strife among the parties. Thus, you have to listen to whatever he is saying, and later when you realize he is calm you convince him with your perspective. For instance, Anita stated: *“I listen to him first to understand his point of view. I tried hard to resist the urge to interrupt him when he is speaking. However, I later explain my position to him when he is calm. And if he understands my point of view, he agrees with me.”*

Another strategy used by the women was prayer. Some assert praying over the issues is better than countering the authoritarian approach of the man. Rosemary also stated: *“I pray over it.”*

Also, the strategy used by the participants is sex. Some participants believe to convince their husbands in the bedroom. Participants believe that when emotions are running high, each person wants to get their point across, and a subliminal power struggle comes into play signifying that no one is interested in the conversation or resolution. For instance, participant, Susan said: *“With that when we enter the bedroom..., we iron out our differences.”*

In a further discussion around the question, another strategy Rosemary highlighted was third-party counselling. She posited that many couples seek counselling, a trusted friend, a church leader, or a family member to play a neutral party in an important decision. She contends that it is not a bad idea because a third person may bring a different perspective to the situation. However, she stated that not every man like their marital affairs to be heard by a third party.

Research Question 3: How do certain sociocultural variables influence the perception of women on the headship role of men and its effects on family communication?

Family communication may be influenced significantly by sociocultural determined values and norms. Because of the inherent differences between men and women and the various cultural interpretations of these differences, men and women have traditionally been nurtured in distinct ways in most communities. As discussed in the biblical interpretation of the headship role of men in the family, where men are primarily obligated to be the head of the family, societies could also have other socio-cultural values influencing the headship role of men and family communication. Thus, the study also aims to explore the socio-cultural values that may be influencing the headship role of men and family communication.

3.2. Ethnic Identity and Cultural Background

Culture plays a primary role in a person’s perception of the world. The culture of the people cannot be divorced from their behavioral patterns. Many studies have shown that people from different cultures perceive things differently (Baku, Adanu & Adatara, 2017). The participants indicated that the position of cultural beliefs on the headship role of the man generally influences communication in

the family. This usually happens if both parties are from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, the participants proclaimed. The participants had the following to say: *“I married from this tribe... (name withheld), where they have the perception that the man is the head of the household so he literally should be adored in all ways. And he was raised with this traditional mindset as well, so he does not do any work in the house which is tagged as women’s work..., and he sometimes talks with pride.”*

Likewise, Dorcas argued that: *“Well, I will say ethnic or cultural background affects communication sometimes. Even though my husband detests how his ethnic people perceive the headship role of the man, which we even discuss sometimes. His actions sometimes portray their behavior.” Tina*

3.3. Religious System Practice

Onodugo & Onodugo (2015) proclaim that religion has control over the roles allocated to men and women. Baxter et al. (2009) points to a positive relationship between religion and the roles of men and women. Bae & Skaggs (2019) in a similar vein also champion the positive correlation between religious beliefs and men’s and women’s roles. The findings of the study confirm the accessions of these studies. For instance, all the participants (10 out of 10) affirmed that the religious practice on the headship role of the man influences communication to a greater extent in the family. During the interview, some of the participants stated: *“I believe religion affects communication a lot in the family. My husband holds a big position in the church, and he is a deacon as well, so he always wants everything to be according to the bible. However, this decision does not always feel right.”* Rosemary said that *“Because of our Christian background where the bible proclaims the man to be the head, people think if you are the head, it means you should rule, and dominate over the wife in all cases. However, this assertion influences communication a lot because many men misinterpret the scripture on the headship role of the man...”* Few of the participants (2 out of 10) also indicated neighborhood interactions as factors influencing family communication. However, one of the participants, Tina claimed that these are mostly the people who are his friends. She believes her husband tries to copy friends’ lifestyles and how they handle their marital affairs.

It is important to add that headship role if not well-negotiated could hamper effective communication in the family, thereby creating some disadvantages. This has associated repercussions in that when family communication is hindered because headship role, there is mostly going to be issues of conflict, dissatisfaction as well as deviance among children. For instance, Baku et al. (2017) associated the lack of communication on sexual rights among children and parents to religion and cultural taboos. This finding of the authors by extension covers the belief that issues of sexuality are sacred and should be left to the “adults”, “bossmen” rather than young adults. This has led to a lot of youngsters having challenges understanding sexual reproductive rights. Overly headship

role could be the root cause of social vices such as teenage pregnancy, deviance and lack of parental control. It is therefore, high time the African families renegotiated the role of the head, thus the “bossman” in family communication so as to relinquish centralization of power on the man as the final authority on family communication pattern.

4. Conclusion

Despite the fatherly role, the decision-making role, the provision of basic needs, and other roles a man plays in the family as the head. It is evident to conclude that the perception attached to the headship role of the man influences communication in the family. These perceptions are greatly influenced by religious practices and cultural beliefs. Though the general belief is that a man should be the “head of the wife” and the woman should be “submissive”, how this assertion interpretation is very key to communication in the family. Family communication is paramount to the family’s well-being, and the headship role and its understanding and interpretation could make or unmake the family’s well-being. Thus, men should rather play a leadership role rather than being authoritative.

5. Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made: Use a colon.

- 1) Men should rather play a leadership role in the house rather than be a ruler.
- 2) Decision-making in the house should be shared responsibility, where women will also have a say.
- 3) Religious and cultural systems should redefine the role of both genders.
- 4) Marriage counsellors should educate couples more on the headship role of the household.

6. Counseling Implications

The present study provides some implications for counseling. They include the following:

Counsellors must be in known that in most cases, family-based conflicts are resolved on the surface with no attention to the root cause(s) such as ineffective communication due to the authoritarian nature of the husband as head of the family. It is therefore imperative on the part of all counsellors in general and marriage counsellors specifically to delve deep during counseling sessions of married couples and understand the sort of communication and power play in the marriage.

Also, counselors should be aware that husbands who are so bossy and authoritative can cause psychological issues in their wives. Some mental illnesses such as depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, bipolar, anxiety disorder, and a host of others can be experienced by wives who fall victim to bossy husbands. Counselors must highlight these issues to husbands to prevent such mental torture.

Men should be counselled to be considerate of the opinions and views of other members in the family. Moreover, husbands should consider also adopting effective listening as well as seeking the opinion of professional counsellors as ways to overcome with challenges of communication barriers.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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