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An Exploratory Examination of the Cultural Understandings of Communication Competence Among Nigerian Immigrant Adult Children

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AN EXPLORATORY EXAMINATION OF THE CULTURAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF

COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE AMONG NIGERIAN IMMIGRANT ADULT

CHILDREN

by

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ABSTRACT

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Although "communication competence" may be considered a trans-cultural concept, its unique meanings and practices across cultures have yet to be studied. Communication between parents and children in African households, for example, have often been associated with a restive and high level of control. Specifically in Nigerian households, a major critique of parenting communication styles is the necessity of continually seeking the permissions of a patriarchal and hierarchical family structure. When families immigrate, parents and children alike must navigate learning to communicate in the new culture while also seeking to preserve their culture of origin. Past research shows that adult immigrant children acculturate quickly and in doing so may also create parent-child communication problems as they seek to communicate with their comparatively reticent to acculturate parents. This thesis theorizes that the roots of some immigrant parent-child communication difficulties may lie in how immigrant adult children are understanding the concept of "competent communication" as they acculturate. This study addresses this problem by reporting the results of a qualitative, exploratory study of Nigerian immigrant adult children's understandings of "communication competence" within the context of parent-child relationships. The results of the study found that Nigerian immigrant adult children perceive communication competence in the US as freedom to express themselves without judgment, contrasting the more restrictive communication in Nigerian communities.

American culture's openness on topics like mental health is admired, while Nigerian parents are seen as controlling. The hierarchical nature of Nigerian culture hinders open expression. Generational differences shape parents' communication style, and respect is highly valued. Academic success is prioritized, reflecting good parenting. Education is highly valued, and sacrifices are made for children's success. Cultural dynamics and generational differences impact communication competence in Nigerian immigrant families in the US.

This thesis is dedicated to every Nigerian child who felt unheard and unseen by their Nigerian parents due to the cultural barrier that limits lack of effective communication between Nigerian parents and children. I understand that many immigrant children like myself also struggled with the communication differences between the western culture and African culture. I hope you understand that there are cultural and generational differences that limit effective communication between you and your Nigerian Parents. I'm hoping this research allows you to better understand and develop a more competent communication that allows for a flourishing relationship with your Nigerian parents.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

1.1 What is the problem being addressed and why?

It is no secret that communication between parents and children is not always easy (e.g., see Socha & Stamp, 1995; 2009). As children develop and more life and social complexities are introduced (e.g., see Socha & Punyanunt-Carter, 2022), parent-child communication can become increasingly difficult to navigate. Undoubtedly, the process of immigration adds additional layers of complexity to parent-child communication as parents and children alike struggle to acculturate.

Immigrating to a new country is a monumental undertaking that involves immense risks, sacrifices, and emotional turmoil. Leaving behind familiar surroundings, including friends and family who depend on them, individuals embark on this journey in pursuit of a better future for their loved ones, often placing their family's needs above their own. Like all immigrant children, children of immigrant Nigerian families (that includes me) often struggle with communicating competently with parents, and these struggles can result in numerous and difficult conflicts. This may be due in part to typical parent-child developmental problems, clashing generational-values, and misunderstandings, but also due in part to juggling at least two different cultural systems as they communicate. To date, the process of acculturation has been conceptualized as occurring primarily within individuals. However, for mutually interdependent immigrant parents and children this thesis will argue that it is theoretically useful to conceptualize this process as "co-acculturation" where parents and children are mutually influencing their individual acculturation processes. However, co-acculturation difficulties can become especially acute when cultural values are divergent.

Nigerian culture, for example, is rooted in African cultural values that might not be fully understood or appreciated by US immigrant offspring who have far less Nigerian culture experience than parents. Differentially valuing these changing cultural qualities can affect how immigrant Nigerians parent their children. Previous research on Nigerian families has shown, for example, that Nigerian parents value authoritarian parenting (Nwosu, 2016, p.33). Independent of culture, authoritarian parental communication can cause friction in parent-child communication (Nwosu, 2016, p.33). But between US immigrant Nigerian parents and adult children, this friction can be particularly acute. That is, it would seem that strictly following a Nigerian parenting style can create confusion and misunderstandings, potentially hampering the development of communication competence not only between Nigerian parents and adult children, but also affecting the development of adult children's communication competence in both the new culture and culture-of-origin. Immigrant Nigerian adult children's Nigerian communication competencies can be influenced, for example, by US western cultural communication styles and vice versa. Such cultural values may of course be very different. Immigrant Nigerian children face communication conflicts as parents expect Western influence while preserving Nigerian heritage, leading to a rift in parent-child communication due to their socialization in Nigerian cultural values during acculturation.

Among many tasks that immigrant adult children face is learning how to communicate competently within their new culture, while also communicating with their parents who may not understand that communication competence itself may be understood differently from western culture, but who may also struggle with their own acculturation into western values.

Research about the concept of "communication competence" has been almost exclusively conducted in the US and following US cultural values (e.g Spitzberg, 1983, finds that

communication competence is dependent on both effectiveness and appropriateness). This thesis seeks to extend work on communication competence conducted in the US to Nigerian culture so as to increase understanding of immigrant parent-child communication through an examination of Nigerian immigrant adult children's understandings of what it means to "communicate competently."

This study is important to conduct because it will provide information about the cultural barriers that impede on the communication between Nigerian parents and their adult children. Oftentimes, Nigerian adult children struggle with effectively communicating with their Nigerian parents, and so this research will provide needed insight about how generational differences and cultural values might restrict effective communication between parents and children.

This study also is important because interviews conducted with Nigerian immigrant youth will provide new information identifying and describing some of the problems that Nigerian children struggle with growing up as Nigerian children with immigrant parents while being immersed in a western culture. Information about what communication competence means to Nigerian children will be elaborated in this research study that extends work in the US.

Most importantly, this study is important as it will lay a foundation for the development of solutions that could help children from Nigerian families navigate how to communicate better with their parents to foster a healthier relationship. This work might later be extended to all immigrant families. Overall, this study can help Nigerian adult children cultivate more competent communication that allows for effective communication between parents and children.

Although there are many potential points of departure for intercultural communication research about the topic of communication competence development of children in parent-child

relationships, this thesis chooses to explore Nigerian immigrant offsprings' understandings of the concept of "communication competence" itself. This is because how communicators understand a communication process can affect their communication behaviors. For example, Bandura's research on social learning theory states that "observation and modeling play a primary role in how and why people learn" (Bandura et al., 1977, p. 145). Because previous research about communication competence is grounded in taken-for-granted US cultural understandings, how the concept of communication competence is understood in other cultures is unknown. Thus, this thesis will add to the intercultural communication by conducting and reporting on a qualitative interview study of Nigerian adult children's understanding of the concept of "communication competence." By doing so, this thesis adds to the research literature of communication competence, acculturation, immigrant parent-child communication, and indirectly to parent-child communication in general. In the next chapter, the thesis reviews past research about communication competence as well as an Afrocentric approach to communication inquiry.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Communication competence within and across cultures

2.1.2 Communication competence defined

Communication competence has been defined as "the extent to which personal objectives are optimized through communication and legitimacy of a message to the context of interaction" (Spitzberg, 2002, p. 375). Competence is achieved in communication when individuals can effectively satisfy their goals within the limit of a given social situation. Lakey and Canary (2002) argue that communication is competent when individuals can achieve their goals as well as the goals of their listeners when conversing. Individuals are considered to be competent communicators when they are "rated to be high on both effectiveness and appropriateness" (Wang et al., 2020, p. 1172). For example, when a speaker communicates, the message must be passed across not just appropriately, but also effectively to ensure that the listener's needs are met as well.

When fostering healthy family relationships between parents and children, it is essential for parents and children to communicate competently. Research has shown that children adopt their communication patterns from their parents' communication style. For example, if a child is raised in a family that doesn't communicate competently, it might impact the communication competence of the child. Conversely, if a child is raised with parents who communicate effectively, it increases their ability to communicate more competently.

2.2 Communication competence studies and measures

The importance of communication competence in the parent-child relationship cannot be overstated, as both effectiveness and appropriateness are essential components of communication

competence. Family members learn about themselves, each other, and their relationships through their interactions. Research has demonstrated that "interpersonal communication processes within the family could create a shared 'social reality' of interactions within the family" (Wang et al., 2020, p. 1171). Communication competence is achieved when "interaction accomplishes personal objectives in an interpersonally appropriate manner" (Wang et al., 2020, p. 1171). To achieve communication competence in parent-child communication, both parties must understand what knowledge and performance are appropriate.

According to Spitzberg (1983), communication is "the ability to perform situationally appropriate behavior, while competence is the ability of an individual to demonstrate knowledge of situationally appropriate behavior" (p. 323). Competence is dependent on both effectiveness and appropriateness (Wang et al., 2020, p. 1173), and it is assessed through observable behaviors during relational interactions. Spitzberg's research suggests that one can be effective but incompetent in communication. For example, if a speaker effectively communicates their thoughts, but the receiver does not comprehend the message, then the speaker is considered effective but incompetent.

Spitzberg's research has shown that communication effectiveness is not a "necessary nor sufficient condition for a judgment of communication competence" (Spitzberg, 1983, p. 323). In addition to being effective in conveying a message, one must also possess the knowledge and skills to appropriately communicate their thoughts. McCroskey's research has further distinguished between the ability to perform competent behavior and the actual performance of competent behavior (Spitzberg, 1983). For instance, communication competence is assessed by the degree to which information is successfully communicated within a given context.

2.3 Intercultural communication competence defined

When exploring the concept of intercultural communication competence, it is important to note that "intercultural communication competence is considered very broadly as an impression that behavior is appropriate and effective in a given context." (Spitzberg, 2000, p. 379). While communication competence typically focuses on effectiveness and appropriateness, intercultural communication competence encompasses a wider understanding of communicating appropriately and effectively in intercultural settings. Competent communication in intercultural contexts is achieved when the "communication objective is appropriate to the context and relationship." (Spitzberg, 2000, p. 380). At the individual level, research has found that "as communicator motivation increases, communicative competence increases." (Spitzberg, 2000, p. 381).

It is important to understand that appropriateness and effectiveness of communication can differ across different cultural contexts. According to Spitzberg (2000), "appropriateness means that the valued rules, norms, and expectancies of the relationship are not violated significantly. Effectiveness is the accomplishment of valued goals or rewards relative to costs and alternatives." (p.380). Different cultures have varying expectations for communication competence, and it is crucial to recognize and adapt to these expectations. For instance, communication competence in the United States may differ significantly from communication competence in Nigerian culture. When both communication parties feel satisfied with the interaction, "interactants are likely to perceive both self and other as communicatively competent, and feel relatively satisfied that objectives were accomplished." (Spitzberg, 2000, p.381).

When discussing intercultural competence from Spitzbergs research (2000), it has been noted that many existing models are fragmented. To address this issue, a study has broken down the model of intercultural competence into three levels of analysis (Spitzberg 2000, p.381) The first level is the individual system, which includes an individual's characteristics that facilitate competent interaction in a normative social sense. The second level is the episodic system, which includes features of a particular actor that facilitate competence impressions on the part of a specific co-actor in a specific episode of interaction. The third level is the relational system, which includes components that assist a person's competence across the entire span of relationships rather than just a given episode of interaction.

To attain intercultural communication competence, the model portrays a dyadic interaction that allows motivation to communicate knowledge in a way that is fitting to the intercultural context. Throughout the interaction, behavior is matched to the expectancies that each interactant has of the other and the interaction process. It is crucial to note that communication appropriateness and effectiveness differ in different cultural settings. For instance, communicating with eye contact in the United States may be seen as a sign of confidence, while in Nigeria, it may be considered disrespectful. Incompetent communication in an intercultural context occurs when communication is not appropriate and effective.

2.4 Intercultural communication competence studies & measures

Research has been conducted to identify the factors that contribute to intercultural communication competence. According to Spitzberg (2000), the ability to adjust to different cultures is crucial for becoming a better intercultural communicator. For instance, understanding that Nigerian culture requires a different communication style than Western culture is vital for demonstrating intercultural communication competence. Establishing "awareness of self and

culture" (p. 381) is another factor that contributes to communication competence. When communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds, it is essential to be aware of the cultural differences that exist. As Spitzberg (2000) notes, engaging in cultural interaction allows one to become more self-aware about cultural differences when communicating (p. 381). Understanding the implications of cultural differences is also critical in learning about intercultural communication competence. As Spitzberg (2000) asserts, one must comprehend the cultural differences' implications to communicate competently across cultures (p. 381). Communication patterns that are acceptable in one culture may be deemed incompetent in a different culture. For example, even within African cultures, it is crucial to acknowledge that the communication style in Nigeria may differ from that in Ghana. Although both are African countries, existing cultural differences affect the communication competence expectations of both nations.

Confidence is another skill set that is required for intercultural competence. "As communicator confidence increases, communicator motivation increases" (Spitzberg, 2000, p. 382). When meeting new people and interacting with people from different cultures, it is important to exude confidence. Research has shown that "a person who is nervous about meeting strangers is more likely to be less confident when meeting people from different cultures'' (Spitzberg, 2000, p. 382). Showing confidence when communicating with people from different cultures allows for better cultural interaction.

Again, understanding different cultural norms and values also allow people to be better communicators when communicating with people from different cultures. "Communicative knowledge increases when communicative competence increases.'' (Spitzberg, 2000, p. 383). A

research study by Spitzberg revealed that "the more an interactant knows about how to communicate well, the more competent the person is likely to be.'' (Spitzberg, 2000, p. 383).

When discussing cultural social interaction, it is crucial to recognize the importance of understanding the "how" of social interaction, rather than just the "what." According to Spitzberg (2000), "the more a person knows how to perform the mannerism and behavioral routines of a cultural milieu, the more culturally competent they become" (p. 384). This means that being knowledgeable about appropriate social behavior in different cultural settings is an essential component of intercultural communication competence. For instance, a joke that is acceptable in the United States may be considered offensive in Nigeria, highlighting the importance of adjusting one's communication style to fit the expectations of a particular culture. Engaging with diverse cultures and immersing oneself in different cultural settings can enhance intercultural communication competence. Spitzberg's research shows that individuals with a highly complex self-image, reflecting various social identities and experiences interacting with different types of people, are better equipped to understand and adapt to cultural differences (2000, p. 384).

Effective communication skills are crucial for improving intercultural communication competence. As Spitzberg (2000) points out, "no specific behaviors are universally competent" (p. 385), meaning that what is considered culturally competent in one culture may not be in another. For example, handshakes during interviews may be seen as incompetent in some cultures but competent in others. Each culture has its own perspective on what constitutes competent communication. Nevertheless, Spitzberg suggests that there may be "skill modes or clusters that are consistently competent according to standards of appropriate usage within each

culture" (p. 385). For instance, most cultures value a smooth flow of conversation, regardless of specific behaviors and cues that may differ across cultures.

In addition to being aware of cultural differences in communication styles, intercultural communication competence also requires an ability to recognize and respond to behavioral differences across cultures. Spitzberg (2000, p. 385) refers to this as "centrism," which involves being attuned to different verbal and nonverbal cues in different cultural contexts. For example, eye contact can have different meanings in different countries. In Nigeria, avoiding eye contact is a sign of respect, while in the United States, direct eye contact is often seen as a sign of confidence. Therefore, it is essential to understand the behavioral cues that are considered appropriate or inappropriate in different cultural contexts to communicate more effectively across cultures.

Understanding and recognizing different cultural and social cues is also crucial for intercultural communication competence. As an example, different cultural rules apply when asking questions. For instance, in Nigerian families, children are expected to only speak when asked, whereas in the United States, children are encouraged to freely express their thoughts when talking to their parents.

In addition, different body languages can convey different meanings in different cultural contexts. It is essential to understand appropriate body posture and language for different cultures to avoid misunderstandings. For instance, in French culture, "La bise" is a tradition that involves kissing on the cheek when greeting family, friends, and even coworkers. This type of kiss is equivalent to both a handshake and a hug. However, in Nigeria, kissing someone on the cheek you are not romantically involved with is considered culturally inappropriate. In the Nigerian culture, kissing someone on the cheek when greeting them is viewed as an invasion of

personal space. Intercultural communication competence requires one to recognize that what might be acceptable body language in one culture might be perceived as culturally inappropriate in another culture.

In today's multicultural society, it is essential to develop intercultural communication competence. According to Arasaratnam and Doerfel, (2005), "Intercultural communication competence (ICC) is an area of study that is becoming more relevant in the increasingly multicultural communities that we live in" (p. 137). Good listening skills are crucial for intercultural communication competence. By listening and understanding how cultural cues differ, one can gain a broader insight into intercultural communication competency. Additionally, having a global outlook rather than an ethnocentric one can also improve one's cultural communication competency (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005).

A study conducted by Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005) defined intercultural communication as "a communication between people from different cultures" (p. 140). This research delves into cross-cultural attitudes, behavioral skills, and cultural identity that contribute to one's proficiency in intercultural communication competence. According to the study, "The ethnography of the speaking approach follows the tradition of researchers such as Geertz (1973) and Katriel and Philipsen (1981), who find the essence of culture in the fabric of meaning transmitted through language and symbols" (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005, p. 140).

When examining the cross-cultural approach to intercultural communication competence, research has shown that "the cross-cultural attitudes approach refers to a cognitive approach to intercultural communication competence" (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005, p.150). By analyzing different cultural contexts in various behavioral situations, one can learn how to better understand and communicate more competently in intercultural situations. For example, when

visiting a different country, understanding how people of a different culture act and behave in different contexts can teach one how to be a better communicator in intercultural settings. Intercultural communication competence requires understanding and applying cultural cues. For example, in Nigeria, avoiding direct eye contact with older individuals is a sign of respect. The behavioral skills approach focuses on applying communication skills in intercultural contexts (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005, p. 151).

Gudykunst (1995) links effective communication to managing uncertainty and anxiety, especially with culturally different "strangers" who are geographically close yet distant due to differing ideas and practices. Gudykunst identifies six factors for coping with anxiety and uncertainty: self-concept, motivation to engage, reaction to hosts, social categorization, situational processes, and connection with hosts. Intercultural adaptation reflects communication competence, and these factors may be part of a competence model (Gudykunst, 1995). Establishing connections with individuals from diverse cultures enhances cultural competence in communication.

A research study conducted by Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005) aimed to gather data on qualities that led to an individual being perceived as a competent communicator during intercultural social interactions. The study focused on international students and their definition of intercultural communication competence. According to the authors, intercultural communication competence was defined as "people coming from different backgrounds and countries, and effectively communicating messages and ideas that are being conveyed across to the others from different cultural backgrounds" (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005, p. 156).

During their interviews, participants were asked how they would define intercultural communication, the communication competency level of people in their lives, and what aspects

of their cultures categorized one as good or bad communicators (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005, p. 154). The results revealed that interview participants defined intercultural communication competence as "the ability (able) to verbally communicate (language) or talk (talking) across these cultural and religious backgrounds" (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005, p. 155). This means that participants believed that when people from different parts of the world are able to communicate effectively based on the cultural expectations of their culture, they are viewed as interculturally competent communicators. Overall, the study suggests that intercultural communication competence not only requires an understanding of different cultures but also the ability to effectively communicate across cultural boundaries based on cultural expectations.

According to Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005), in intercultural social context, competent communicators are person-centered, sensitive, and kind, have experience with different cultures, want to learn about cultural matters, and are skilled in communication processes. For instance, when communicating with someone from a different culture, such as a person from Nigeria and one from the United States, it is important to be sensitive to cultural differences. This is because different cultures have their own rules when communicating, and being aware of these norms is crucial for effective intercultural communication.

Empathy is crucial for intercultural communication competence as it contributes to interpersonal sensitivity and social competence (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005, p.157). Demonstrating empathy when communicating with people from different cultures reflects a desire to learn and understand different cultures. Intercultural communication competence requires individuals to comprehend and react suitably to the cultural backgrounds of others, even if they originate from different cultures. Observing communication through a cultural lens and

being motivated and sensitive are key aspects of effective intercultural communication (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005, p.157).

Speakers must observe whether they are communicating from their own cultural perspective, the respondent's cultural perspective, or a neutral perspective. For instance, when an American communicates with someone from Nigeria, they need to be aware of how they respond and whether it aligns with Western communication norms or Nigerian cultural norms. Learning to communicate effectively with people from diverse backgrounds can be challenging, but it requires observing, learning, understanding, and applying one's knowledge in conversations with others.

Research conducted by Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005) highlights the significance of intercultural sensitivity in enhancing intercultural communication competence. That is, individuals who exhibit intercultural sensitivity while communicating demonstrate traits such as asking questions, being considerate of others' backgrounds, displaying kindness, and adopting a global outlook. It is essential to acknowledge that different cultures have unique communication styles, and being open-minded to learning about their cultural norms through asking questions can facilitate better communication. By being sensitive to these norms, individuals can become more competent communicators in intercultural settings.

Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005) also found that empathy and active listening were identified as positive traits, whereas a lack of listening and eye contact emerged as dominant themes of weak interpersonal communication competence (ICC). Results revealed that "empathy and being a good listener were themes that emerged as positive traits, while not listening and lack of eye contact (can't face me) were dominant themes in regards to weak ICC'' (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005, p.155). When communicating with individuals from different

cultures, it is crucial to pay attention to their verbal and nonverbal expressions, body language, and other cues to understand their communication style better. Being a good listener and empathetic can lead to better communication outcomes in intercultural settings.

According to research by Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005), effective communication that lacks appropriateness can be considered incompetent. The study found that disrespecting a cultural communication style was associated with communication incompetence. Participants reported viewing those who fail to respect different cultural communication styles as incompetent communicators. The final cluster of traits that characterized bad communicators included a lack of effort, poor communication skills, failure to be personal, make eye contact, and display politeness (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005, p. 159). However, it is crucial to note that what qualifies as bad communication varies among different cultural groups. For instance, while making eye contact may be viewed as a sign of good communication in some cultures, participants from Asian and African backgrounds mentioned that maintaining eye contact with someone who is older is seen as disrespectful (e.g., see Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005, p. 159). In 2013, according to the United Nations Population Fund (2015), there were more than 230 million individuals living outside their country of origin. Developing intercultural communication competence is crucial for effectively communicating in diverse cultural and social settings. As Barker (2016, p. 13) notes, the concept of intercultural communication competence involves the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with members of a host culture, which necessitates not only adequate language skills and knowledge about the host culture, but also a willingness to understand host-culture members.

Effective and appropriate communication across diverse cultures broadens an individual's communication competence horizon. As Barker (2016) concludes, since both verbal and

nonverbal communication differ significantly across cultures, various patterns impact intercultural communication differently based on the cultures involved in the interaction. It is crucial to consider verbal and nonverbal communication differences in cross-cultural settings. Casmir's research revealed that cultures are not static but, rather, dynamic and evolving through communication (Casmir, 1999).

Intercultural interactions enhance intercultural communication competence. According to Barker (2016), Berry (2009) recommended examining the key features of both cultures and the nature of the relationship between the two groups in terms of compatibility, level of respect, and equality since intercultural interaction results in changes in both groups. It is essential to observe how cross-cultural differences are perceived in different cultural settings. Actively learning to acquire new cultural communication skills enables one to adapt to new cultural environments. As Barker (2016) states, "ICC rests on the premise that competencies acquired in one particular setting aid in future intercultural encounters" (p. 16).

Findings from a research study conducted by Moore and Barker (2012) revealed that multicultural participants did not assert full competence in every culture they had lived in, despite viewing themselves as highly adaptable. As Barker (2016) notes, both verbal and nonverbal communication patterns vary significantly among cultures. Those who prefer low-context communication typically advocate for direct and verbal communication as the most effective approach, while those who prefer high-context communication view directness as a threat to group harmony and rely instead on contextual and nonverbal cues (p. 16).

Hofstede (2001), in his now famous book, *Cultural Consequences* described his theory of culture that included the dimensions of power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long term-orientation, and indulgence. Using the website, *Hofstede Insights* (2023), a

direct comparison between Nigeria and the US can be calculated for each dimension. Of

particular relevance to this thesis is the significantly different metrics of power distance (40

Nigeria; 80 US), and individualism (30 Nigeria; 91 US). That is, Nigerian culture values,

emphasizes, and coordinates interactions based on relational power differences grounded in

generational, educational, and economic states, whereas the US values, emphasizes, and

coordinates interaction based on assumptions of low power distance or equality. The other stark

contrast refers to the Nigerian culture valuing, emphasizing, and coordinating interactions

collectivism versus individualism in the US. (i.e., see Hofstede Insights, 2023,

https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool?countries=nigeria*%2Cunited

+stat). The remaining dimensions for Nigeria and the US are somewhat similar.

2.5 Afrocentricity

Maintaining African cultural values while raising children no matter where is crucial,

especially for Nigerian parents living abroad. The clash of cultures between immigrant Nigerian

parents and their children can create communication challenges. Immigrant Nigerian parents may

find it difficult to impact Nigerian values to their children, who grow up in American culture.

Moreover, the prevalence of American culture over African culture could make it difficult for

Nigerian children to adopt their cultural values. Asante's concept of Afrocentricity is a response

to this power imbalance between Western and African cultures, aimed at breaking the cycle of

Western cultural dominance.

Molefi Asante's (e.g., see 1973) research on Afrocentricity revealed that power plays a

huge role in intercultural communication. He examined power relationships between different

cultures and research revealed that "where cultural differences exist and are the bases for

misunderstandings, the control problem is an imbalance of power'' (Asante, 1973, p. 3). Asante's

research delves into the power dynamic that exists between different cultures, with cultural differences often leading to misunderstandings, and an imbalance of power exacerbating the issue.

Asante's research notes that the perceived power and status difference between Africans and Europeans make communication challenging. Historical research has shown that there is a huge difficulty when Africans communicate with Europeans. This is due to the difference in power between both cultures. "That difficulty has been the result of perceived power and status'' (Asante, 1973, p. 3).

Asante's research proposes that addressing the material conditions of people is necessary to achieve mature and effective intercultural communication. The culture with greater power often dictates what is considered reasonable, logical, and correct. "Thus, we cannot achieve intercultural communication which is mature and effective until we address the material conditions of the people'' (Asante, 1973, p. 3). The culture with greater power "dictates so much of what is right, correct, logical, and reasonable'' (Asante, 1973, p. 3). Asante's research on Afrocentricity sought to see how Afrocentricity helped to enhance effective communication between Africans and non-Africans. Asante's research on Afrocentricity proposes that "effective intercultural communication must be based upon the equality of the interactants because the sharing of meaning is the fundamental prerequisite of communicative understanding.'' (Asante, 1973, p. 6).

When there is an imbalance of power between cultures, it can create communication barriers due to one culture feeling superior over the other. For instance, during an interaction between an American and a Nigerian, effective communication may be hindered if the American perceives themselves as having more power and the Nigerian feels intimidated. To achieve

effective intercultural communication, Asante emphasizes the need for power equality between both cultures. Asante contends that "a holistic philosophy is required for the development of the Afrocentric perspective in relation to the objective conditions for the liberation of African minds" (Asante, 1973, p. 6).

Furthermore, distorted European images about Africans have led to inaccurate representations of Africans. Europeans have historically and stereotypically portrayed Africans as uneducated and incapable of speaking English fluently. Despite the existence of schools in African countries, stereotypes about Africans as illiterate still exist (Asante, 1973, p. 6). It is important to recognize that education is prevalent in many African countries and that numerous African children are educated.

According to Asante's argument on power play in Afrocentricity, effective intercultural communication can be interrupted if Americans automatically assume that Africans are unable to communicate effectively due to their African heritage (Asante, 1973, p. 6). In fact, Asante posits that even among Africans living in the Western world, their rhetorical discourse is often influenced by European images and symbols, leading to pollution, distortion, and dismemberment of their communication (Asante, 1973, p. 6).

Unfortunately, some Westerners continue to hold distorted images of Africans, viewing African countries as zoos filled with wild animals like lions and monkeys, while remaining unaware of the infrastructures, buildings, and technology that exist in many African countries (Asante, 1973, p. 6). Asante believes that sharing authentic images of Africans can help to shift these negative perceptions to a more positive light, emphasizing the importance of reasonable, valuable, and positive image sharing, rather than image domination which perpetuates colonial conquests, and is therefore vile, repressive, and negative (Asante, 1973, p. 6).

Afrocentricity aims to develop ways to promote more positive intercultural interactions, with the ideology serving as the centerpiece for human regeneration by systematizing history and experiences with culture at the core of existence (Asante, 1973, p. 7). In order to facilitate effective communication between Africans and non-Africans, cultural sensitivity is crucial, recognizing that different cultural norms and values can impact communication effectiveness (Asante, 1973, p. 7).

Asante's research recognizes that in intercultural encounters, no one can dictate how individuals will behave towards one another (Asante, 1973, p. 7). However, it is critical for all individuals to understand and define their power dynamics regardless of their ethnicity. Both Westerners and Africans must define what power means to them to effectively communicate with one another (Asante, 1973, p. 7). Asante asserts that exploring alternative perspectives from an African cultural standpoint is necessary to foster effective intercultural communication (Asante, 1973, p. 7).

Asante's research on Afrocentricity examines the relationship between economics and communication, noting that they contribute to power dynamics between Africans and Westerners (Asante, 1973). Asante asserts that guardians of world power conference among themselves to maintain their positions and prevent African communication and economic maturity, both on the continent and in the diaspora (Asante, 1973). Due to the Westerners' more significant economic power, power dynamics affect communication, as a market system seeking profit correlates with a view of intercultural communication that uses people (Asante, 1973). Africans are at a disadvantage in communication due to the higher status of Westerners, as they are often in a position of servitude (Asante, 1973). Asante's research highlights the intense battle and struggle

for status and power, and how communication between Africans and Westerners cannot be as equals when the economic position is that of servants (Asante, 1973).

The study of Afrocentricity is a challenge to the Eurocentric approach to communication. Asante argues that "the majority of communication theories developed in the West serve to maintain the status of the exploiter or the dominator, and if that was not their intention, it has become the reality" (Asante, 1973, p. 15). An illustration of this is the Nigerian educational system which still follows the educational model of their British colonizers. Asante contends that "the free flow of information strengthens the oppressor and keeps the weak nations weak" (Asante, 1973, p. 15). Consequently, understanding Afrocentricity is crucial to challenging Western domination.

Although the Western world promoted globalization as an opportunity for the free movement of information worldwide, Asante posits that "this perspective haunts our theoretical positions on intercultural communication" (Asante, 1973, p. 15). When Africans communicate with Europeans, they must stand up for their cultural norms to avoid communication barriers. For example, if an African only speaks in a manner that conforms to European communication style, it hampers effective intercultural communication. Asante asserts that "the most creative solutions to intercultural communication estrangement are within our grasp" (Asante, 1973, p. 15).

Africans must reclaim their power in communicating with Westerners. "Our history defines us, and the effectiveness of any liberation paradigm must be rooted in that history" (Asante, 1973, p. 15). The African cultural heritage is significant due to the struggles that the continent faced in the past. Therefore, in our attempt to re-establish and mobilize our power, we need to educate ourselves on Afrocentricity. According to Asante, "the Afrocentric person possesses two vital qualities: (1) African symbolization and (2) culture creation" (Asante, 1973,

p. 16). Maintaining our roots and culture is crucial even in communication. Asante explains that "to symbolize means finding symbols that represent our thoughts, ideas, values, and attitudes to teach us how to create and improve our creativity" (Asante, 1973, p. 16).

Maintaining African cultural values while raising children (no matter where) is crucial, especially for Nigerian parents living abroad. The clash of cultures between immigrant Nigerian parents and their children can create communication challenges. Immigrant Nigerian parents may find it difficult to impart Nigerian values to their children, who grow up in American culture. Moreover, the prevalence of American culture over African culture could make it difficult for Nigerian children to adopt their cultural values. Asante's concept of Afrocentricity is a response to this power imbalance between Western and African cultures, aimed at breaking the cycle of Western cultural dominance.

Parents use a variety of methods to teach their children cultural values, such as teaching them the language, ensuring they eat traditional food, and exposing them to Afrobeat music. In the past, African children were discouraged from embracing their culture due to bullying in school (CITE). For instance, some children were called derogatory names like "African body scratcher" because of their African heritage (Afolayan, 2020).

A new era has dawned as African culture gains more recognition, particularly through social media platforms that showcase the fascinating aspects of African culture. Afrobeat music, viral TikTok dances, and traditional African cuisine are now widely accepted and appreciated by people around the world, including Americans. This newfound love for African culture has made it easier for Nigerian parents to educate their children about their heritage, and Nigerian children are increasingly proud of their African roots and no longer feel ashamed or embarrassed (Iwelunmor et al., 2021).

Asante (1973) argues that it is important for Africans to remain vigilant in their efforts to combat dehumanization and promote their cultural heritage, particularly in the face of Western cultural dominance. He asserts that communication theory derived from Afrocentricity must remain open to human development and be rooted in African cultural heritage to effectively communicate with Westerners.

It is crucial to be mindful of one's cultural background when communicating with Westerners. Asante (1973) asserts that awareness encompasses wariness and illumination and that it is essential to rescue African culture from being ignored or overlooked by embracing knowledge and emotions. One way to deepen our understanding of African culture is to study African literature, which Afrologists should view holistically in terms of politics, culture, and economics.

Asante's early, foundational, and original work on Afrocentricity highlights the importance of comprehensively understanding African culture and not surrendering power to Westerners. For far too long, Westerners have dominated and enslaved Africans, and we must strive for power equality in intercultural communication (Asante, 1973). Both Westerners and Africans should hold equal communication power to ensure effective intercultural communication.

2.6 Communication competence, parent-child communication, and Nigerian culture
2.6.1 Nigerian family culture

Nigerian culture commonly associates family dynamics with a household consisting of a father, mother, and children residing together. According to Dun et al. (2017), the concept of family in the Western part of Nigerian culture is defined as a kinship group connected by blood or marriage, with members sharing a common dwelling. Typically, the father is regarded as the

family head responsible for providing financial support and is highly revered as the breadwinner of the family. Moreover, he is known to make final decisions regarding issues such as family size, place of residence, and education choices for the children. The father is also (mainly) responsible for meeting the financial obligations of the household, including payment of rent, providing funds for food, and paying for the children's education. In contrast, the mother is expected to take on the nurturing role by caring for the children and managing household duties such as cooking and cleaning. Children are expected to pursue education as a means of securing their future and are also required to assist with household chores. In Nigerian culture, the practice of patriarchal authority is widespread, where fathers are viewed as the head of the household and mothers and children are expected to submit to their decisions. As a result, it is common for women and female children to be raised to serve men and follow their lead.

In Nigerian culture, the traditional family system is hierarchical, with the father recognized as the head of the household. However, the communication between parents and children can be hindered by this system. A research study focused on the family systems of the three main ethnic groups in Nigeria: Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa. (Otiti, 1991, p. 10). The research utilized observational techniques, questionnaires, and published books to collect data on traditional forms of marriage and family systems. The Hausa ethnic group, located primarily in the northern states of Nigeria, was the focus of the study.

In a Hausa family, the father has authority over his wife or wives and children and is responsible for providing for the essential needs of his family, including shelter, food, and clothing (Otiti, 1991, p. 23). The wife is expected to obey and respect her husband and fulfill domestic responsibilities while also providing for the children's needs. Family cohesion is maintained through the recognition of rights and obligations towards each other (Otiti, 1991, p.

23). Male children are granted higher status within the family as they are expected to work hard and provide for the family, while female status is determined by factors such as generation, age, ethnicity, and marital career, as well as the position and prospects of their offspring (Otiti, 1991, p. 23). Overall, this research suggests that the traditional Hausa family system is characterized by a hierarchical structure with the father as the head of the household, and the wife is responsible for household duties. The research conducted on the Igbo family system, found that they reside in the southern region of Nigeria and their family unit comprises the father, mother, and children. Both monogamy and polygyny are accepted in Igbo culture, and it is expected for men to take responsibility for the children in their family, even if they are not biologically related. As stated by Otiti (1991), the Igbo family system functions to reproduce and act as a unit for the socialization and education of its members. Parents are responsible for teaching their children how to interact and behave within the family, at school, and in society. The child's early socialization and education process begin in the family, and this continues even after they join "the wider village or town socialization system through the age-grade system when they are around 5-7 years old''(Otiti, 1991, p. 24). The father holds a position of authority in the household and plays a crucial role in training and managing the family, but he is not autocratic in his control of the family (Otiti, 1991, p. 24).

According to Otiti (1991) in the Igbo family system men are expected to work hard and provide for the family's financial needs. The man is in charge of controlling the family's general income to provide for their material and spiritual needs, such as shelter, food, clothing, and education. (Otiti, 1991, p. 25). On the other hand, women are responsible for taking care of the children, and children are required to earn an education and jobs to provide financially for their parents. Mutual obligations and expectations, such as a father undertaking the expenses of his

son's first marriage and a mother providing equipment for her daughter's first marriage, maintain family cohesion. "These mutual obligations and expectations give continuity to the cohesion of the family"(Otiti, 1991, p. 25).

Meanwhile, in the Yoruba cultural group, men and women are expected to get married and start a family as adults to avoid ridicule, and the man is required to take care of his family and other relatives. "They are one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, numbering 9,667,612 out of a total of 10,265,848 people, thus being the most populous ethnic group, in Western Nigeria in 1963" (Otiti, 1991, p. 31). Women are responsible for domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children. Women are also allowed to work and are sponsored financially by their husbands. A man is responsible for his wife's health expenses.

The research conducted found that communication and cooperation were similarities between these ethnic families. Each family member has clear responsibilities, and Nigerian families focus on building both nuclear and extended families. In Nigerian urban families, the Christ Ordinance marriage is the preferred form of marriage (Otiti, 1991).

Recent research suggests that Nigerian families are undergoing changes in response to globalization and exposure to other cultures. These changes have had significant impacts on Nigerian society as a whole. According to Otiti (1991), "Changes in the Nigerian family have themselves been means for changing the wider society of Nigeria" (p. 46). As a result of these changes, there have been shifts in traditional gender roles within the family, with women taking on more financial responsibilities and men being more open to domestic duties. Communication patterns within the family have also changed, with greater openness between parents and a move towards mutual decision-making rather than the traditional patriarchal model. While men are still

regarded as the head of the household, there is now a greater emphasis on communication and shared responsibility when it comes to parental commitments for the family.

A recent study has highlighted the challenges facing Nigerian families in the 21st century. The complexity and conservatism of society have resulted in significant changes to the traditional family structure. Researchers have focused on identifying solutions for family stability and societal advancement in light of these challenges. According to Achalu and Achalu (2002), there are three primary types of families in Nigeria: nuclear families, extended families, and single-parent families. The nuclear family, which includes a husband, wife, and their children living together in the same household, was adopted during the colonial period as a result of British influence. However, recent studies have shown that "the moral code of the nuclear family system has steadily declined, and there has been a rise in the number of single-parent families in Nigeria" (Achalu & Achalu, 2002).

Recent studies have highlighted changes in the structure of Nigerian families, with significant impacts on communication patterns. Globalization has played a role in shifting gender roles and responsibilities within families. Women are increasingly taking on financial responsibilities, while men are becoming more involved in domestic duties (Otiti, 1991). Although men are still seen as the head of the household, decision-making has become a more collaborative process. The nuclear family, a household consisting of a husband, wife, and their children, is the most common family type in Nigeria, but the number of single-parent families is on the rise due to changing societal values (Achalu & Achalu, 2002).

One key challenge facing Nigerian families in the 21st century is the breakdown of communication, leading to family instability. Effective communication between spouses is crucial for a successful marriage, while a lack of communication can lead to anger, bitterness,

and resentment, which are common in many relationships today (e.g., see George & Ukpong, 2013, p. 54). Poor family communication can prevent couples from resolving marital conflicts and threaten the overall family dynamic.

In recent times, several family challenges have been identified in Nigeria, with finances being a major concern. According to George and Ukpong (2013), money issues can have adverse effects on family communication and stability. Couples frequently argue over how to spend, save or invest money, and these disagreements can strain relationships. The pressure to earn more money also prevents families from spending quality time together.

Another significant issue affecting Nigerian families is the shifting family roles. Traditionally, men were responsible for financial obligations, while women were in charge of domestic chores. However, recent research has shown that Nigerian families are reevaluating the division of labor and management (George & Ukpong, 2013). Women now desire to pursue their careers, leading to a redistribution of family roles. To mitigate confusion and maintain peace within the household, assigning specific responsibilities to family members, including children, has been recommended (George & Ukpong, 2013).

Furthermore, communication breakdowns within Nigerian families have also been identified as a significant challenge. Effective communication between spouses has been found to be crucial for a successful marriage, with the lack of it leading to anger, bitterness, and resentment (George & Ukpong, 2013). Poor family communication can threaten the family dynamic, leading to instability and conflict resolution problems. In conclusion, Nigerian families face several challenges, including financial issues, shifting family roles, and breakdowns in family communication. However, assigning roles to family members and effective communication can help mitigate these challenges and promote family stability.

Due to the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society, household tasks are often viewed as the exclusive domain of women and girls, resulting in frequent family disputes when women insist on shared responsibilities with men. According to George and Ukpong (2013), societal progress and the desire to empower women to reach their full potential and contribute significantly to their families and communities necessitate a reduction in the burden of household duties borne by women.

To facilitate the distribution of household chores among family members, it is recommended that families engage in open communication. However, in Nigeria, many families are hesitant to seek professional help through family counseling to resolve conflicts. Research findings indicate that family counseling can enhance communication between parents and promote effective communication between parents and children. As George and Ukpong (2013) noted, while counseling or therapy may be necessary in certain circumstances, individuals often require resources that can assist them in transitioning through significant life changes and achieve a balance between work and family life. In this regard, a family coach can assist parents in aligning their personal goals with their values and priorities.

Various obstacles can impede communication and interaction between parents and children throughout their lives. For instance, when a child transitions into adolescence, the communication dynamics between parents and their children may change, and when women pursue career goals like men, this can also alter communication between parents concerning household duties and other significant life changes. Nevertheless, as George and Ukpong (2013) pointed out, counseling can play a critical role in preserving family stability by serving as a preventative, remedial, and rehabilitative measure (p. 57).

2.6.2 Communication patterns in Nigerian families

According to Dun et al. (2017), this article investigated how personalized communication devices impact Nigerian family patterns of communication. The concept of family in the western part of Nigerian culture was defined as a kinship group linked together by blood or marriage, with members occupying a common household. The study aimed to determine whether the use of personalized technology affects family communication patterns compared to face-to-face interaction among Nigerian families. The authors noted that communication is an epitome that either fosters family bond or causes disunity among family members. In Igbo culture, which was the focus of the study, family is regarded as an inviolable institution that is nurtured and protected as the only means of sustaining the human lineage (Dun et al., 2017, p. 28).

Previous research indicates that new technologies can either hinder or assist family conversations (Dun et al., 2017). Specifically, new media technologies can facilitate interaction among family members by bridging generational and digital divides. However, these technologies can also result in growing privatization within family life, with individuals increasingly using technology independently rather than collectively (Dun et al., 2017, p. 30).

The impact of new technologies on communication patterns in Nigerian families has raised concerns about its effect on family values, such as declining marriage rates and increased individuality in spousal relationships (Dun et al., 2017, p. 30). The use of technology has been viewed as a threat to Nigerian family communication dynamics. However, scholars suggest that the internet can enhance social ties by enabling users to maintain more frequent contact with family and friends, re-establish and intensify familial relationships, strengthen connections with extended family members, and increase interaction with family and friends (Dun et al., 2017, p. 30).

According to research, new technologies have improved communication between parents and their children. For instance, social media platforms have made it possible for children to communicate and bond with their family members (Dun et al., 2017, p. 31). WhatsApp is one of the commonly used platforms by Nigerian families who want to communicate with their parents and siblings. In spite of this, the use of new technologies can also lead to isolation and privatization within families (Dun et al., 2017, p. 31).

Nigerian families have a critical role in educating their children on acceptable social norms and values (Dun et al., 2017, p. 31). The parents educate their children on crucial aspects such as dressing and fashion choices, desired aspirations, career path choices, proper educational pursuits, and appropriate sexual behavior. Moreover, Nigerian parents often encourage their children to pursue higher education in professional fields such as Medicine, Law, Engineering and other technological fields. Additionally, children are taught to effectively relate and engage with elders within and outside the family circle (Dun et al., 2017, p. 31).

According to Dun et al. (2017), Nigerian families often emphasize respect when communicating with older generations. However, there is a concern among parents that the use of new technologies has disrupted this communication pattern. The study suggests that new technologies can either reinforce or weaken inter-household connections (Dun et al., 2017, p. 36). For instance, children are exposed to new norms through their interactions with the internet. The Nigerian Communications Commission (2015) reported that over 97.06 million Nigerians access the internet through Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM), while about 151 thousand are connected to the internet via Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) networks.

According to Dun et al. (2017), data were collected from families in the Eastern part of Nigeria, and the survey was distributed to family members aged between 24 – 33, who were

educated and technologically savvy. The study found that "communication in the family still largely centers on face-to-face domestic conversation (38.4%) even with the prevalence of the New Personalized Communication Devices (NPCD)" (p. 38). The research also revealed that families in Nigeria still have a high preference for face-to-face conversation patterns of communication despite the high use of and access to these new devices (Dun et al., 2017, p. 38).

2.6.3 Parenting styles in Nigerian families

According to Odubote (2008), parenting styles in Nigerian families have often been associated with authoritarian parenting, characterized by high levels of control and little independence. The communication level between parents and children is often restricted, and children fear communicating their opinions and thoughts to their parents due to the cultural belief that it is disrespectful. Research on the parenting style of Nigerian parents revealed that "more restrictive parenting styles with high levels of control and little independence (authoritarian) have been associated with delinquency'' (Odubote, 2008, p.150). However, the results also revealed that authoritarian parenting styles were linked to positive child outcomes among Nigerian families and were considered a survival strategy adopted by the group to cope with its environment and racial status (Odubote, 2008, p.150).

According to Odubote (2008), the authoritarian parenting style implemented by Nigerian parents is seen as a traditional heritage that is part of Nigerian culture, with studies suggesting that this parenting style is a heritage from their African origin. Even when Nigerian parents migrate to the United States, they often still raise their children using the authoritarian parenting style as a way to keep their children grounded. The research conducted by Odubote (2008) revealed that parents who incorporated the authoritarian parenting style had a more positive developmental outcome for Nigerian adolescents.

Nigerian parents in the diaspora are concerned about their children derailing from Nigerian cultural values, as argued by Okoroafor et al. (2012). According to the authors, many Nigerians feel that the traditional values that are deeply rooted in Nigerian culture have been eroded, misplaced, overtaken, or suppressed by pop culture and some negative Western values. The authors emphasized the need to preserve and promote Nigerian cultural heritage, including traditional parenting styles (Okoroafor, et al., 2012).

When discussing the effects of inadequate parenting on children, research has shown that children who are raised in homes with inadequate parenting have a higher likelihood of developing negative behavioral and emotional outcomes. For instance, children raised in homes with poor parenting tend to "exhibit social maladjustment, aggression, delinquency, and emotional problems'' (Okoroafor, et al., 2012, p. 28). The effects of poor parenting can be long-lasting and can even affect the child's adult life. Therefore, it is important for parents to be aware of the impact of their parenting style on their children and to make changes where necessary. The research suggests that "parents should be educated on how to use appropriate discipline techniques and how to foster positive parent-child relationships'' (Okoroafor, et al., 2012, p. 28) to ensure positive developmental outcomes for their children.

According to Okoroafor et al. (2012), parenting is a complex process that involves various tasks, functions, and challenges. It requires effective communication between parents and children, which can sometimes be challenging. Children who lack good communication skills may find it difficult to communicate with their parents, while parents may struggle to communicate with their children as they grow into their teenage years or become young adults. Overall, parenting is a task that is bestowed on individuals who become parents, and it requires a lot of effort, commitment, and patience.

According to a research study, Okoroafor (2012), effective parenting is not solely based on biological ability, but rather on the commitment to meeting the demands of parenting, such as providing adequate care and support for children. As the study states, "Parenting requires continuous hard-work, dedication and commitment to meet up" (Okoroafor, et al., 2012, p. 27). Failure to fulfill parental responsibilities can result in the relinquishment of the parental title, as "anything short of providing within your means and capability, the needs of one's children, denies a father or mother the status of a parent" (Okoroafor, et al., 2012, p. 27). According to Okoroafor et al. (2012), parental problems investigated in the Nigerian family revealed that literacy is one of the reasons that affects communication between parents and children. Literacy levels are below average in many Nigerian families who are not educated. The authors state, "This problem is affecting parenting in Nigerian families because many parents would have been in better position to understand their children well and be able to impact positively on them by inculcating into them Nigerian laudable traditional values that are necessary in this modern and globalized world while instilling the Nigerian cultural values" (p. 28). Additionally, research has shown that when Nigerian parents receive more education, it better equips them with the communication skills required to effectively communicate with their children.

Another parenting problem that limits effective communication between parents and children is over-domineering. As Okoroafor et al. (2012) pointed out, "Some parents can be described as over-domineering because they exert total control and influence on many things their children do" (p. 28). This can be seen in the Nigerian context, where parents often choose their children's career paths. The researchers also found that "children are trained to believe that they cannot take a step without their parents' direction" (Okoroafor et al., 2012, p. 28), which can

lead to children lacking confidence in their decision-making abilities. As Okoroafor et al. (2012) highlighted, "These children, in the future, have problems with making intelligent decisions, and this may affect what they can achieve in life" (p. 29).

The issue of over-domineering also extends to the career choices of children, particularly in the Nigerian context. As Okoroafor et al. (2012) pointed out, parents often dictate their children's career paths and "children are unable to make career decisions for themselves" (p. 28). The authors also noted that parents typically encourage their children to pursue careers in medicine, law, engineering, and other STEM fields, while discouraging them from pursuing creative career paths such as painting or music. As a result, career fields outside of science, law, and technology are often viewed as less respectable.

In addition to over-domineering, overprotection is also a prevalent issue in Nigerian families that hinders effective communication between parents and children. According to Okoroafor et al. (2012), overprotection "causes many children to not have normal social contact with other children in their neighborhood or in school" (p. 29). This overprotectiveness often leads to restrictions on children's freedom, which can result in rebellion as they perceive their parents as too overbearing. This can further hinder communication between parents and children, particularly teenagers and young adults who are seeking to establish their own identity outside of their parents' influence.

According to Okoroafor et al. (2012), overprotection of Nigerian children limits their involvement in activities that allow them to explore their skill sets due to fear of hurting their parents. This overprotection results in children living in constant fear and developing a lack of faith in their own capabilities. Children often become unable to make independent decisions for themselves because they depend on the decisions made by their parents. This overprotection puts

a restraint on their children, which can influence them to act rebellious if they feel too restricted in their homes. For instance, if a child is being told not to visit friends because their parents are too overprotective, oftentimes, these children will see the need to explore when they finally move to college or outside their family homes (Okoroafor et al., 2012). This overprotection ultimately leaves the child acting wild in pursuit of exploring things they were restricted from doing in their homes.

The statement "The presence of parental care, support and direction helps to make a child gain the right knowledge and socialization that can prepare that child for the challenges of adolescence and adulthood" (Okoroafor, et al., 2012, p. 29) highlights the importance of parental control in promoting effective communication between Nigerian parents and their children. When parents fail to provide adequate care and support, children may feel distant and disconnected, leading to a breakdown in communication.

Research by Okoroafor et al. (2012), says that parents are required to serve as the primary protectors of their children, as they are the first socialization institutions that children encounter. The authors further state that "Parents carry out very important functions that give children the moral, mental, psychological and economic support they need to develop a normal personality" (p. 29). This includes providing their children with vital needs such as food, clothes, and shelter, as well as quality education and emotional support. However, children who grow up without receiving adequate care and support from their parents often feel resentful towards them, leading to communication issues and even cutting ties with their parents.

According to Okoroafor et al. (2012), parenting in Nigerian culture is considered a lifetime commitment, as parents are expected to take care of their children for the rest of their lives. The authors note that "Parents do not stop looking after their children when they get to eighteen years as it is commonly practiced in the Western world" (p. 29). Unlike in the Western

world, where children are expected to become financially independent at the age of 18, Nigerian parents are still responsible for their children's well-being even if they are 38 years old or older. This cultural expectation means that Nigerian parents are required to continue caring for their children throughout their lives.

Okoroafor et al. (2012) suggests that while Nigerian parents may seek to preserve traditional Nigerian values in their parenting, it is important to recognize the impact of globalization and to adapt parenting methods to fit the modern age. The authors note that "a fusion of both Nigerian traditional parenting and Western parenting are worthy of emulation" (p. 29) to promote effective parenting among Nigerian families. Traditional parenting styles may cause a communication gap between parents and children due to generational differences in a more modernized world. The authors argue that in a globalized world, it is not feasible for a developing nation like Nigeria to operate in isolation or to cling to all its traditional systems and values (Okoroafor et al., 2012, p. 29).

Again, research by Okoroafor et al. (2012), suggests that children who are raised in a more modernized society may find it difficult to understand the traditional parenting styles of their parents, leading to poor communication between parents and children. Nigerian children may perceive their parents' parenting style as too restrictive and outdated. However, the authors argue that while some aspects of traditional parenting may be undemocratic and infringe on the rights of children, others help to enforce discipline and conformity to social norms and values. Okoroafor et al. (2012) state that "while we may agree that some aspect of our traditional style of parenting are undemocratic and tend to infringe on the rights of children, some others help to enforce discipline and conformity to our social norms and values" (p. 30).

Okoroafor et al. (2012) suggests that to achieve more effective parenting in Nigerian families, parents should acquire some level of formal or informal education that will enable them to instill good traditional values in their children without being abusive. The authors argue that

Nigerian parents need to be educated on how to parent their children without being too overbearing or authoritative, as this can harm the communication between parents and children. For example, parents need to avoid imposing communication restrictions on their children. The authors state that "parents need to gain some degree of (in)formal education that will empower them to inculcate our good traditional values without abusing their children" (Okoroafor et al., 2012, p. 30).

Okoroafor et al. (2012) caution that Nigerian parents need to avoid imposing communication restrictions on their children as it can negatively impact effective communication between parents and children. In Nigerian tradition, children are expected to remain silent unless instructed otherwise, but this practice needs to be reconsidered to foster open communication between parents and children. The authors advise parents to continue parenting their children throughout their lives and to educate them on the importance of Nigerian traditional values while also integrating good Western values. According to Okoroafor et al. (2012), "the good Nigerian traditional values must be complemented with good Western values if Nigerian parents hope to produce children of the 21st century that will have respect for themselves and the society they lived in" (p. 30).

2.7 Nigerian culture and parenting: studies and measures

Studies have shown that culture impacts parenting styles. Research has also shown that "parenting styles have influence on the development of the child and could be directed by culture'' (Nwosu et al., 2016, p. 32). In Nigerian culture, family is very important and deeply rooted in its cultural values and beliefs. A research study by Nwosu et al. (2016) looks at the parenting gaps that still exist in parenting styles. The study adopted the correlational research design, and a test was conducted on Nigerian children to test for anxiety and self-efficacy

resulting from parenting styles. Parenting styles play a huge role in child development. The personality of a child is heavily influenced by the way they were raised. "The home environment serves as the major environment a child finds himself in and has been conceptualized as the quality of human interactions which include family trust and confidence, sharing of ideas and parental support, approval, encouragement, care, affection, and as well parenting'' (Nwosu et al., 2016, p. 32).

According to Nwosu et al. (2016), Nigerian parents have high expectations for their children, which are influenced by cultural values and beliefs. These expectations are reflected in their aspirations for their children's academic performance, as parents tend to prioritize academic success as a key measure of achievement. The authors note that "culture influences the aspirations, societal mores/values and their perceptions on how to parent their children" (Nwosu et al., 2016, p. 33). However, when children fail to meet these expectations, it can lead to strained relationships between parents and children, as parents tend to be strict and less understanding of their children's struggles in school.

In Nigerian culture, parental hierarchy is deeply ingrained and impacts family dynamics. Children are expected to be obedient to their elders, which can sometimes be taken too far by some parents. For example, children are not allowed to talk while their parents talk. They are also rarely asked their opinions about family issues. This is because children are ranked lower in the family hierarchy and parents are ranked higher which impacts family discussions. As a result, parenting styles in Nigeria tend to revolve around authoritarian or authoritative parenting styles. This hierarchical expectation often restricts family communication, as children may feel fearful or hesitant to express their opinions. As Nwosu et al. (2016) state, "The trajectories of parenting

styles in Nigeria revolve around the authoritarian/authoritative parenting, and the authoritative parenting styles" (p. 33).

One of the critiques of authoritarian parenting style is that it exerts control over the child. Children are required to adhere to parental wishes without any expression of their opinions. According to Nwosu et al. (2016), "Hence the parents become the sole regulating authority in the child's life and adopt punishment to ensure compliance without explaining the reason behind the rules and regulations." (p. 33). This could often be very hard for children who grow up in Nigerian families because these children feel unheard. Because they are required to completely follow their parental rules, it often causes withdrawal in communication.

Another critique of Nigerian parenting style is that it lacks flexibility and does not consider the feelings of the child. The authors noted that "Authoritarian parents are seen as parents who do not care much about the feelings of the child, and they only require compliance from their children" (Nwosu et al., 2016, p.33). In this parenting style, parents set the standard for their children without giving them the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings. The study further showed that children raised by authoritarian parents often feel a lack of independence and autonomy within the family.

According to Nwosu et al. (2016), research findings showed that children who grow up in Nigerian families feel like they are parented in a climate of high warmth and behavioral control (p. 33). These parenting styles play a significant role in the development of the child's life. However, it is crucial for parents to avoid imposing their own expectations on their children, which can cause them to be inauthentic to themselves. For instance, Nigerian parents may force their children to pursue a career that they themselves were unable to pursue, which can limit the children's ability to pursue their own career path.

The research study showed that anxiety was another significant issue for children who grew up in Nigerian families. Nigerian students tend to feel very anxious when taking tests because of their desire to meet their parents' expectations. The stress of not wanting to disappoint their parents often translates to anxiety during exams. As a matter of fact, research showed that "anxiety disorders, which are dominant mental problems in children leading to major dysfunctions, have been found to have a large overlap with parenting practices in many family studies" (Nwosu et al., 2016, p. 33).

The idea that children's self-perception as adults is influenced by their upbringing is supported by research. According to Nwosu et al. (2016), "Children who come from families that have rigid rules are likely to experience anxiety more than those who come from families that give them guided opportunities to express their opinions in decision making" (p. 33). Therefore, a child's upbringing, particularly in a Nigerian household with strict parenting styles, can have long-lasting effects on their mental health and self-perception as they enter adulthood. There is a significant impact of Nigerian parenting styles on the anxiety levels of children. For instance, children who were constantly yelled at and required to meet their parents' expectations tend to grow up feeling very anxious, not only about meeting their parents' expectations but also about meeting the expectations of their social circle, including friends and acquaintances outside the family. This highlights the importance of parenting practices in shaping a child's self-perception and overall mental health (Nwosu et al., 2016).

Research has shown that children who are discouraged from expressing their thoughts and opinions may experience increased anxiety levels and difficulty expressing themselves as adults. This restriction on their expressions may result in a tendency to hold back their thoughts as adults, and they may struggle to communicate their emotions effectively, particularly in

situations such as arguments with their partners. Nwosu et al. (2016) proposed that genetics and social modeling are major mechanisms for the transmission of anxiety disorders from parents to children. However, children who are raised in an environment where freedom of speech is encouraged may be more confident in expressing themselves and less likely to experience anxiety as adults. Research has shown that such children are able to communicate their emotions effectively and do not feel anxious about the opinions of others, thanks to the positive reinforcement they received from their parents (Nwosu et al., 2016).

While authoritarian parenting may negatively impact a child's self-belief system, research has shown that this parenting style can have positive effects on academic achievement. However, children with authoritarian parents may still experience anxiety, as studies have found a strong relationship between parenting styles and anxiety in children. For instance, Nwosu et al. (2016) found that mothers of anxious children had significantly higher levels of conflict with their children and lower levels of accessibility, warmth, and responsiveness to their children. Research has shown that corporal punishment is one of the factors that increase anxiety in children. Despite being viewed as an acceptable way of correcting children in some cultures, such as Nigeria, corporal punishment has been found to have negative effects on children's mental health. Specifically, Nwosu et al. (2016) found that children of authoritarian parents who experienced high levels of corporal punishment had higher levels of anxiety.

Nigerian parents are encouraged to use moderate punishments when disciplining their children to reduce anxiety levels. While high levels of corporal punishment are harmful, moderate corporal punishment may be harmless in specific parenting contexts (Nwosu et al., 2016). Furthermore, research has shown that self-efficacy in students can be successfully built by not only conveying positive appraisals but also structuring situations that bring success and avoid

placing people in situations prematurely where they are likely to fail (Nwosu et al., 2016).

However, parenting styles heavily influence students' self-efficacy, as unhealthy parenting styles

and expectations can place heavy demands on children and stress them beyond their limits

(Nwosu et al., 2016).

The research also revealed that when parents do not allow their children to have their

own opinions, students may begin to feel that they are not good enough and lack belief in

themselves (Nwosu et al., 2016). For instance, a child who is not allowed to express their

opinions may seek external validation throughout their life because they did not grow up in an

environment that encouraged them to be confident in their abilities. Therefore, parents must learn

to encourage their children to advocate for themselves and be confident in their abilities, which

will help them become self-assured adults.

According to Nwosu et al. (2016), Nigerian culture has been criticized for promoting a

patriarchal and hierarchical family structure, which can compromise the family unit of the father,

mother, and children being the central focus. The authors explain that culture plays a significant

role in shaping parenting practices, as it encompasses a people's way of life and tends to

influence activities, practices, and beliefs. Nigerian parents may be deeply rooted in their culture,

and therefore, may be less open to adopting more Western parenting styles. (Nwosu et al., 2016,

p. 34).

It is crucial to understand that effective parenting practices may vary across cultures.

Research studies revealed that what might " be considered effective parenting practices in one

culture may not necessarily turn out effective in another culture.'' (Nwosu et al., 2016, p. 35).

The authors stated that what may be deemed effective parenting in one culture may not

necessarily be effective in another culture. For instance, Nigeria is a collectivist society that

promotes values such as conformity, interdependence, and helpfulness, which distinguish it from individualistic societies. (Nwosu et al., 2016).

According to Nwosu et al. (2016), Nigerian parents often prioritize obedience and compliance from their children, reflecting the collectivist values of Nigerian culture. However, this parenting style can lead to a lack of affection and emotional expression towards children. Nigerian parents have been criticized for their reluctance to express affection towards their children. While Nigerian parents do love their children, they often struggle to say "I love you" to them. As a result, many children feel unloved and neglected by their parents because they never receive verbal expressions of affection. Instead, Nigerian parents tend to show "tough love" to their children, which may include strict discipline and expectations. The authors suggest that "Nigerian parents need to show their love and affection to their children, even if it means embracing an individualistic parenting style that differs from the cultural norms of the society" (Nwosu et al., 2016, p. 35). Failure to do so can result in children feeling unloved and unappreciated, which can impact their emotional and psychological wellbeing.

It is important for Nigerian parents to express sensitivity and open affection to their children (Nwosu et al., 2016). Children who grow up without receiving affection from their parents often struggle with expressing and receiving affection themselves. In fact, the study found that children preferred parents who fostered an affectionate relationship with them. Nigerian children want their parents to tell them how much they are loved and struggle to express their emotions to their parents if they don't feel loved themselves. The children appreciate parents who openly expressed how much they cared for them without relying solely on tough love (Nwosu et al., 2016).

Nigerian children yearn for open communication with their parents without the fear of punishment or being labeled as disrespectful towards their elders. According to Akinsola (2013), In Nigerian culture, children's expression of their opinions is often perceived as being disrespectful. This leads to a hybrid form of parenting where Nigerian children perceive their parents as authoritarian and authoritative at different times. As a result, many children do not express their thoughts and feelings, which can leave them feeling unheard and undervalued. Therefore, it is important for parents to create an environment that encourages open communication and respects the opinions of their children.

The parent-child interaction is heavily influenced by cultural context. A research study dived deep into the different parenting styles implemented by Nigerian parents. The three main types of parenting style techniques used by Nigerian parents were "authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles" (Akinsola, 2013, p.160). Authoritarian parenting styles was described as a "a parenting style that is restrictive and places a firm limit and control on children with little or no verbal exchange" (Akinsola, 2013, p. 160). For example, parents are the only ones expected to express their thoughts while children are required to just listen as a sign of respect. "This parenting styles lead to social incompetence and poor communication skills'' (Akinsola, 2013, p.161).

The second parenting style that many Nigerian parents used was authoritative parenting style. "This parenting technique puts some limits and controls on their children's actions, but they allow verbal dialogue'' (Akinsola, 2013, p. 170). Although parents are strict when parenting with this style, they also give room for their children to express their thoughts. This "promotes parental responsiveness and encourages independence.'' (Akinsola, 2013, p. 170). For example, children feel more confident in their abilities because they were raised by parents who

encouraged them to express themselves. Research also discovered that children whose parents employed this parenting style, allowed for social and cognitive competence (Akinsola, 2013).

Children are able to communicate more confidently in a social setting without any pressure of feeling incompetent in their communication abilities. Research studies also discovered that authoritative parenting style also encouraged "self-reliance and social responsibility in the children.''(Akinsola, 2013, p. 170). Children were not so dependent on their parents when it came to decision making like children who were raised in authoritarian families. Findings from the research that these children felt more competent enough to handle responsibilities.

The third parenting style employed by many Nigerian parents was permissive parenting style. In permissive parenting few or no rules and little or no controls are exerted over the children.'' (Akinsola, 2013, p. 180). For example, research discovered that children raised by permissive parents were given freedom to make their own decisions. They were also allowed "to behave autonomously and independently.'' These children were allowed to live life as they pleased without so much parental control. Research results revealed that "this type of parenting style is also presumed to be associated with social incompetence and lack of self-control.'' (Akinsola, 2013, p. 180).

To gain more insights about Nigerian parenting styles, 852 participants were recruited through the convenience sampling method. "Of this sample, 585 students were from Ibadan, and 267 students were from Ikom. The students from Ibadan are from the Yoruba tribal group, and those from Ikom are from the Efik tribal group. There were 436 males and 416 females in the sample with their ages ranging between 11yrs and 24 yrs, and a mean age of 15.7yrs'' (Akinsola, 2013, p. 182).

The participants were required to fill out the parenting style scale to determine how they were parented. Some of the questions asked were "My parents respect my privacy", "My parents really expect me to follow family rules", "My parents give me a lot of freedom" (Akinsola, 2013). After collecting data from the students, results showed that Nigerian children's perception of their parents' parenting styles progresses and shifts towards authoritative parenting as they grow up (Akinsola, 2013). Because most of the data were collected by students who belonged to the Yoruba tribe, they were more likely to perceive their parents as more authoritative as compared to authoritarian as they grow older (Akinsola, 2013).

Many Yoruba parents demand "respect and obedience from their children'' (Akinsola, 2013). Results from the study showed that "authoritative parenting ranked highest with (381 or 45.3%), followed by the hybrid combination of authoritarian/ authoritative style (248 or 29.8%), then undifferentiated parenting style hybrid followed with (81 or 9.0%), and then authoritarian parenting style with (72 or 8.1%)'' (Akinsola, 2013). Yoruba culture is very big on respect. They tend to believe that children are to be seen and not heard and to do as they are told. (Akinsola, 2013).

Yoruba parents believe showing love and warmth to their children requires "using behavioral and monitoring controls over their children'' (Akinsola, 2013, p.184). For example, parents exert excessive control over everything their children do. For example, they exert control over what they do and what they say. They aren't given the room and opportunity to flourish as an individual. The Yoruba is very "family oriented, and they value family integrity and dignity'' (Akinsola, 2013, p.184).

Research finding also showed parents who use authoritative parenting style also allowed for that parent-child dialogue. Parents were open to explain to their children why they executed

certain disciplinary measures and actions. For example, when children were punished, they were told why they were being punished and what lesson is supposed to teach them. In this respect their children may perceive their parenting style as either authoritarian, or authoritative, or a mixture of both. (Akinsola, 2013). The overall reason for this research study was to "determine the nature, and variety of practices that parents adopt while bringing up their children, and (ii) to examine the effectiveness and benefits of such practices'' (Akinsola, 2013, p.185).

Investigating Nigerian parenting styles showed that parenting differs from culture to culture. A parenting comparison was made between two tribes in Nigeria. "The participants were made up of 852 secondary school students from Ibadan a city in the Southwest of Nigeria and Ikom another city in the Southeast of Nigeria respectively. Of this sample, 585 students were from Ibadan, and 267 students were from Ikom'' (Akinsola, 2013, p.190).

Convenience sampling method was used in this study. When comparing the parenting styles of the Yoruba versus Efik tribe, studies showed that Yoruba parents demanded more respect and obedience from their children as compared to Efik parents. While Yoruba parents exercised excessive control when parenting their children, Efik parents saw parenting more community oriented. Yoruba parenting style was perceived as either authoritarian, authoritative or a mixture of both, Efik parenting style was perceived as more authoritarian (Akinsola, 2013).

Another comparison was done between Nigerian parents and Cameroon parents. "Participants were made up of 355 secondary school students from Lagos and Ibadan cities in Nigeria, and 156 college students from Bamenda in Cameroon.'' (Akinsola, 2013, p. 195). The participants were asked to answer questionnaires about their parents' styles. Reports from the research showed that Nigerian respondents viewed their parenting styles as either authoritative or a hybrid of both authoritarian and authoritative. Cameroonian parents were perceived to be more

permissive in their parenting style. "Cameroonian parenting style that puts the responsibility of parenting on the peer culture is permissive and that the stereotypic traditional authoritarian parenting style they so claim to be practicing has become dysfunctional or at best superficial.'' (Akinsola, 2013, p. 195). Research also showed that Cameroonian parents actively practice a hybrid parenting style of permissive/authoritarian parenting style.

Overall, the research proved that parenting styles differ not only between different countries, but also between different cultural tribes in Nigeria. Parenting style in Nigeria follows a "collectivistic and patriarchal society with values such as obedience to authority figures, compliance with parental instructions, cooperation and helpfulness within and outside the extended family systems, communal living and good interpersonal relationship'' (Akinsola, 2013, p.195). The studies also showed that Cameroonian parenting style also reflected a "collectivistic and patrilineal society that values communal living, extended family system and observational learning, learning through play and interaction with peers." (Akinsola, 2013, p. 195).

2.8 Summary

This chapter explores the relationship between communication competence, parent-child communication, and Nigerian culture. It provides an overview of Nigerian family culture, highlighting the traditional patriarchal structure and gender roles. The chapter examines specific ethnic groups within Nigeria, namely the Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, to understand their family systems and communication dynamics. It reveals similarities in the emphasis on communication, cooperation, and clear responsibilities within these ethnic groups. The impact of globalization and changing gender roles on Nigerian families is also discussed.

Challenges faced by Nigerian families, including communication breakdowns and conflicts arising from gender role expectations, are addressed. The importance of effective communication for successful marriages and family stability is emphasized, along with potential solutions such as family counseling and coaching. The impact of personalized communication devices on Nigerian family communication patterns is explored, highlighting a preference for face-to-face interaction. This chapter also provides insights into the complex relationship between communication competence, parent-child communication, and Nigerian culture. It emphasizes the significance of effective communication in maintaining family cohesion and adapting to cultural norms and societal changes.

Again, this chapter explores the relationship between parenting styles, communication, and Nigerian culture. It begins by highlighting the prevalence of authoritarian parenting in Nigerian families, characterized by high levels of control and limited independence. The cultural belief that children should not express their opinions or thoughts to their parents due to perceived disrespect contributes to restricted communication between parents and children. However, research indicates that authoritarian parenting styles are associated with both delinquency and positive child outcomes in Nigerian families, suggesting a complex relationship between parenting styles and cultural context.

To enhance effective parenting in Nigerian families, the chapter suggests that parents should acquire education, both formal and informal, to instill good traditional values without being abusive or overbearing. It emphasizes the importance of avoiding communication restrictions imposed on children, which can hinder effective parent-child communication. The integration of Nigerian traditional values with positive Western values is recommended to raise children who respect themselves and society in the 21st century.

The chapter further explores the impact of culture on parenting styles, emphasizing that culture influences parenting and subsequently child development. Studies conducted in Nigeria and Cameroon reveal differences in parenting styles between the two countries. Nigerian parents tend to adopt authoritative or hybrid parenting styles, while Cameroonian parents exhibit more permissive or hybrid styles. The research highlights the collectivistic and patriarchal nature of Nigerian society, which values obedience, compliance, cooperation, communal living, and interpersonal relationships. Similarly, Cameroonian parenting reflects a collectivistic and patrilineal society that emphasizes communal living, extended family systems, observational learning, and interaction with peers.

Overall, the chapter demonstrates the significance of understanding parenting styles, communication patterns, and cultural influences in Nigerian families. It underscores the need for parents to adapt their parenting approaches to foster open communication with their children while preserving cultural values. The findings highlight the importance of education and the integration of positive values from both Nigerian and Western cultures to support effective parenting and child development.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research questions

Similar to all immigrant children, one of the problems faced by Nigerian children is often the inability to communicate effectively with their Nigerian parents because of the differences in the communication pattern of Nigerian parents and their children. Because Nigerian parents are deeply rooted in their Nigerian communication style, and their children may have been more immersed in the western communication style, this can cause friction in the communication between Nigerian parents and their children. Among themselves, as parents engage in their own acculturation struggles, and although likely unprepared to do so, immigrant parents must function as new-culture communication coaches for their children. Parents undoubtedly also display varying levels of intercultural communication competence with the new culture. From the point of view of children there are undoubtedly moments of confusion and tension as parents seek to maintain their home cultures as they learn the ways of new cultures themselves as well as coach their children. Immigrating parents as intercultural communication coaches represents a new idea in the family communication literature.

In a sense, all parents are intercultural communication coaches for their children. However, because they are living in their home culture, they may not recognize this role until confronted with a "new" cultural situation due for example, to travel, and more. Immigrant children are often eager to embrace their new world that they must now live in. But they too bring their understanding of their home culture into new cultures. If the literature on intercultural immigrant family communication is to move forward, a grounded understanding of how immigrant children understand the meanings of the fundamental concepts they are expected to

communicate is essential. For example, cultural meanings of root terms like "communication competence" require deep examination as immigrant children struggle to figure out how to display competent communication in their new culture, while also retaining understandings of competent communication in their country of origin. As the literature review showed, although the concept of communication competence is universal, studies of communication competence are rooted in US white culture. It is unclear how the concept of communication competence itself is understood outside the US as well as what does communicating competently mean to immigrants learning to communicate in a new culture (while seeking to preserve the ways of their countries of origin)? Also, because parents may be slower to change than children, there may be many moments of conflict as parents, struggling to maintain their culture of origin and their new culture, seek to teach their children to communicate competently in their new culture. This thesis argues that struggles of this sort are rooted in differing understandings of meanings of key cultural concepts such as what is required to be considered a competent communicator in the new culture?

To better understand what immigrant adult children are actually managing as they learn to become competent communicators in a new culture (as guided by their parents) this thesis studied immigrant Nigerian adult children's understandings of what communication competence means in both the US and Nigerian cultures:

RQ 1. How do adult children of Nigerian descent understand the concept of communication competence?

RQ 2. How do understandings of communication competence of Nigerian adult children differ from White western children?

RQ 3. What are the problems that impact western communication competence

development between Nigerian parents and their adult children?

3.2 Data collection

To address the research questions, an interview method was chosen to better understand

how Nigerian adult children perceived the communication competence of their children. This

research method was used to understand from the child's perspective how they feel about their

parents' communication. Using a semi-structured interview research method was effective for

this research as it "provided the opportunity to uncover information that is might not be

accessible using other techniques like questionnaires'' (Alshenqeeti, 2014, p. 43). Using the

interviewing technique provided an opportunity for a more natural way of interacting with the

interviews to gain a wider understanding of Immigrant Nigerian children.

Researchers have argued that one of the main advantages of using the interview research

method is that it's not merely a data collection tool, but "it provides a presence for the

interviewer to rephrase and simplify questions that were not understood by the interviewees

which often results in the provision of more appropriate answers and subsequently more accurate

data" (Alshenqeeti, 2014, p. 43). The interview method was chosen to allow the Nigerian adult

children to give more elaborate answers about their understanding of their parents'

communication competency. Interviews conducted for this research study lasted for an hour.

3.3 Participants

Participants chosen for the interview were Nigerian adult children of Immigrant parents.

Participants chosen were close friends from college and family friends. These interviewees were

either born in the United States to immigrant parents or migrated to the United States with their

parents. Having both types of immigrant Nigerian adult children provided broader insights as to

how both parties perceived their Nigerian parent's communication competence. Interviewing these participants also sought to see if there were similarities or differences in how children who were born or migrated to the United States perceived their Nigerian parents' competence.

All participants were required to answer 10 interview questions that assessed their perception of the Nigerian communication competence in comparison to the western parents. The following interview research questions were asked. (1) How long have you lived in the United States? (2) What does communication competence in the US mean to you? (3) How would you explain communication competence in the US to others? (4) How would you describe a communicative competence US parent? (5) As an adult, do you view your parent's communication competence differently as compared to when you were a child? (6) What does communication effectiveness and appropriateness in the US look like for children with Nigerian immigrant parents? (7) What does US communication competence mean for Nigerian parents? (8) What does Nigerian communication competence mean for Nigerian parents? (9) What is the concept of good parenting in the Nigerian culture? (10) What are some problems that impacted your parent-child relationship? (11) Do you have any advice for other immigrant children who may be facing similar challenges in their parent-child relationship?

3.4 Sample

Using personal cultural connections, a convenience sample of participants was recruited based on their age, Nigerian nationality, and availability. All participants were above 18 years of age. This resulted in a sample of 10 adult-children of Nigerian immigrant parents. The participants were either born as United States citizens or had immigrated to the United States within the last 7 years. All personal information about the identity of the participants were kept confidential to protect the identity of the participants. Only information collected from the

participants were used to gather data for the research study. The interview research was conducted in person and online setting. Interviews took about 30- 60 minutes to complete.

The interview research questions were reviewed by the Old Dominion University (ODU). College of Arts & Letters Human Subject Review Committee. All interview questions were approved by the IRB committee and were found to be in compliance with all rules and regulations of the IRB review (ODU File 928892, January 30, 2016, see Appendix A). 10 children of Nigerian immigrant families were chosen as the participants for the study. Privacy of the participants were protected by not revealing personal information except data collected for the research purposes.

Table 1 - *Summary of Qualities of Participants*

Pseudonym	Age	Years in US	Sex	Tribe
Anjola	24	24	Female	Yoruba
Dammy	26	10	Female	Yoruba
Ife	22	12	Female	Yoruba
Tini	28	14	Female	Yoruba
Bolu	25	10	Female	Igbo
Tolu	26	11	Male	Yoruba
Seyi	23	10	Male	Igbo
Niyi	28	15	Male	Yoruba
Tayo	27	24	Male	Yoruba
Toni	26	20	Male	Igbo

3.5 Data analysis

Data were analyzed employing a combination of an interpretative approach–analytical induction (Bulmer, 1977) and supplemented with a semi-quantitative approach using NVivo-12 (NVivo, 2023). First, the manifest content of the interviews was transcribed. Second, following analytical induction, responses to each question were submitted to repeated readings searching for primary and secondary organizing themes. Third, responses to all the questions were also read and the emergent themes examined by a second reader (Dr. Socha). Fourth, responses to each question were then also submitted to NVivo-12 to examine the frequency of occurrence of each theme identified by analytical induction. This last step allowed for an additional layer of evidence concerning identifying emergent themes.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Understanding the concept of communication competence

To address each Research Question (RQ) in the study I conducted a qualitative analysis of responses to various interview questions. For each interview question, I transcribed their responses and then through repeated readings identified conceptual themes using analytical induction. I double checked these themes with a second reader (thesis advisor). I then used NVivo-12 to assess the frequencies of themes found in the responses. There are several questions that combine together and address each RQ to paint pictures of understanding.

4.2 RQ 1. How do children of Nigerian descent understand the concept of communication competence?

For interview question #1 examining the concept of communication competence, I identified three major themes that were associated with the meaning of "competence." These themes were (in order of highest to lowest occurrence): freedom, communication effectiveness, and individual expressiveness. Using NVivo-12 a word cloud (based on frequency of occurrence of terms) this appears in Figure 1.

Figure 1

The first results of the research study indicated that Nigerian children perceived

communication competence in the US to uniquely be synonymous with "freedom." Coming from

restrictive family backgrounds, they saw communication competence in the US to be an

opportunity to express themselves freely without the fear of judgment from their parents. This

attribute is clearly different from general definitions of communication competence that were

covered in Chapter 2. However consistent with definitions appearing in Chapter 2, the study also

revealed that children viewed US communication competency as the ability to communicate

effectively.

Participants highlighted that in the US, there was more open communication and transparency compared to Nigerian communities, where communication was far more restrictive. For example, Toni stated that growing up in the Us he admired the fact that his American friends found it easy to talk about mental health issues. Dammy also said "Growing up, it was really hard to talk about dating because they were not open to hearing about me talk about anything that didn't include education.'' They expressed that in the US, people were more open to questioning and providing answers, unlike the controlling nature of Nigerian parents that does not allow for these kinds of communication. Some participants mentioned that American parents were less aggressive in their communication style compared to Nigerian parents who sought to control every aspect of their children's lives. This difference in communication style led the children to perceive US communication competency as a form of freedom.

Furthermore, the sample of adult children believed that the US communication style was more vocal and expressive, which they associated with communication competency. They found it fascinating that Americans had the freedom to express their opinions openly. Overall, the research findings indicated that US communication competency allowed individuals to freely express their emotions without fear of repercussion.

Interview question #2 asked. "How would you explain 'communication competence' in the US to others"? For this question based on repeated readings and analytical induction, I identified three themes: freedom of expression, active listening, respecting opinions. The word cloud created using NVivo-12 showed that "freedom of expression" had the highest word count frequency, with 46 occurrences and a weighted percentage of 1.73%. The term "active listening" followed closely behind with 44 occurrences and a weighted percentage of 1.66%. "Respecting opinions" had a word count frequency of 42 and a weighted percentage of 1.58%.

To visually represent these findings, a word cloud based on the frequency of occurrence of terms was generated using NVivo-12 software. The word cloud, depicted in Figure 2, provides a visual representation of the themes identified in the participants' responses and highlights the prominence of the terms associated with freedom of expression, active listening, and respecting opinions.

Figure 2

When asked to explain communication competence in the US to others, Nigerian adult children emphasized the concept of freedom of expression. For example, when asked, Seyi said, "I think it means more freedom. It's like a fresh breath of air to have freedom that I don't have in my Nigerian culture." Anjola also said "there is more freedom while Nigerian parents are more restrictive." They found that American parents were more attuned to their children's feelings and created a calm and light-hearted environment. Specifically, they highlighted the importance of having open discussions about topics like mental health, which they felt was lacking in Nigerian households.

Nigerian immigrant adult children expressed their struggles in finding a space to communicate with their parents about their feelings, particularly regarding mental health issues such as depression. Toni said, "to me it means communicating effectively and being understood. I like that I can freely express my emotions without fear. I mean, with my Nigerian parents I couldn't talk about my mental health struggles." They felt that their parents did not provide a comfortable environment for them to express themselves openly. This lack of active listening and understanding from Nigerian parents often led to fear and hesitation among the children in opening up.

Furthermore, Nigerian adult children described communication competence as involving active listening and respecting different perspectives. They observed that in Nigerian households, there was often a controlling atmosphere where parents did not actively listen to their children's needs. In contrast, they believed that communication competence in the US included respectful communication.

Overall, Nigerian adult children highlighted the importance in the US of freedom of expression, active listening, and respecting different perspectives when explaining

communication competence in the US to others. These aspects stood in contrast to their experiences within Nigerian households.

Interview questions #3 asked. "How would you describe a communicatively competent US parent?" Using repeated readings and analytical induction to assess the responses to the question several themes emerged that I labeled as: communication without fear, relationship building, and empathy & understanding. These themes were identified based on the analysis of the data collected from the research study. The theme of "communication without infliction of fear" was the most prominent, with a word count frequency of 46 and a weighted percentage of 1.73%. Nigerian adult children expressed the importance of being able to communicate without fear in the US, highlighting the contrast to their experiences in Nigerian households.

The theme of "relationship building" had a word count frequency of 20 and a weighted percentage of 0.75%. Nigerian adult children recognized the value of building strong relationships through effective communication in the US context. The theme of "empathy & understanding" also had a word count frequency of 20, but with a lower weighted percentage of 0.26%. Nigerian adult children emphasized the significance of empathy and understanding in communication, particularly in comparison to their experiences in Nigerian families. A Word Cloud visualizing these themes, generated using NVivo-12 based on the frequency of occurrence of terms, is presented in Figure 3. It provides a visual representation of the prominent themes as well as concepts identified in the data analysis.

Figure 3

The results of the interview research study indicated that children from Nigerian

immigrant families perceived communicatively competent parents as those who could

communicate with them without instilling fear. For example, Anjola said, "I see them as a parent

that allows their children to talk freely without any fear of judgements." Children do not have to hold

their tongue when communicating to their parents. They also reassure their kids. In Nigerian

culture, communication tends to be more hierarchical and authoritative, which often discourages

children from expressing themselves freely. The Nigerian adult children in the sample shared

that their parents often used fear as a disciplinary method, making it difficult for them to

communicate their true feelings for fear of reprisal. For example, Seyi said "it was hard communicating with them because oftentimes I was disciplined.'' On the other hand, the findings revealed that US parents fostered a more friendship-based relationship with their children, which led the Nigerian adult children to view them as communicatively competent. Many Nigerian adult children expressed a lack of genuine connection with their parents due to the hierarchical nature of their households. Bolu said "It's more of a dialogue and relationship in terms of communication. Nigeria is more hierarchy-based and authoritative when communicating, but in the US, there is more room to have a friendship relationship between parents and children. But in Nigeria, that doesn't exist unless you are an adult. The western way is more relationship/friend-based when parents communicate with their children.''

Additionally, the interviewees highlighted that US parents were perceived as communicatively competent because they showed empathy and understanding. Tini said "they are more understanding and willing to listen. For example, they are more open with their communication, and they don't really hide when communicating with their children. For example, they are open about communicating about things like sex which is taboo in Nigerian communication.''

American parents were more likely to acknowledge and understand their children's emotions, in contrast to Nigerian parents who often neglected their children's emotional needs. Some of the Nigerian adult children discussed struggling with loneliness as a result of emotional neglect from their parents. Bolu said "American parents were more proficient in communication due to their ability to provide reassurance and support their children's feelings.'' American parents were seen as more sensitive to their children's emotional needs and concerns. Furthermore, they were considered communicatively competent because they fully supported

their children's growth and development while respecting their autonomy. In contrast, some of

the children mentioned that their Nigerian parents did not respect their boundaries, leading them

to perceive American parents as more competent for their willingness to respect their children's

privacy and boundaries.

Interview question #4 asked, "As a young adult child, do you view your parent's

communication competence differently as compared to when you were a child?" For this

question, a clear theme of generational differences emerged. A Word Cloud analysis using

Nvivo-12 revealed that generational differences had a word count frequency of 47 and a

weighted percentage of 1.72%. The NVivo-12 analysis also generated a word cloud (based on

term frequency) displayed in Figure 4.

Figure 4

The interviewees expressed a shift in their perception of their parents' communication competence from their childhood. This change was influenced by their own generational differences, as the participants recognized that their Nigerian parents were raised in a different era with traditional values that shaped their parenting style. Anjola said, "I view it differently and I'm more aware about why they act the way they do. I understand how they are raised, and their generation is different. As an adult, I've learned they didn't know better. The participants now understand that their parents aimed to uphold cultural values and pass them on to their children. Anjola proceeds to say, "they want to retain their culture and so I understand why they acted like that because they want to hold on to the Nigerian values and pass it on to their kids.'' They also acknowledged that their parents' communication competence was influenced by their level of education and knowledge at the time. Seyi said, "as an adult, I understand how they think. Now I understand that they only educated me based on their knowledge. I have been heavily influenced by the Western culture as a child, but now I recognize the hard work and work ethic they taught me.'' Dammy also said "I definitely feel differently now that I'm mature. I also don't necessarily agree with everything they did but now I understand that all the discipline was for the betterment of my future. Although it was harsh, yet I understand it allowed me to be a better person.''

As adults, the participants developed empathy towards their parents' developing parenting style, recognizing the sacrifices they made for a comfortable life in the United States. For example, Ife said, "Now that I am an adult, I understand my parents better and appreciate them for all the sacrifices they have made for me. As an adult, I understand that being an immigrant is not easy, especially when you don't speak the language fluently. I also understand that there are cultural differences that impact our relationships. Their way of communicating love is more tough love, but that doesn't mean they don't love me.'' They understood that their parents

showed tough love to ensure a better future for them. Having a deeper understanding of their

parents' hardships, such as working multiple jobs and enduring struggles, the participants now

perceive their parents' communication competence differently.

Interview questions #5 asked. "What does communication effectiveness and

appropriateness in the US look like for children with Nigerian immigrant parents?" For this

question, through repeated readings and analytical induction, I identified the two prominent

themes: communication without fear of judgements and communication with respect. A Word

Cloud created using InVivo-12 showed that communicating without fear of judgements. had a

word count frequency of 65 and a weighted percentage of 2.26%. Communicating with respect

had a word count of 52 and a weighted percentage of 1.81%. Using NVivo-12 a word cloud

(based on frequency of occurrence of terms) appears in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Anjola said she viewed communication effectiveness and appropriateness in the US as a safe and judgment-free space to freely express themselves. Dammy also said, "Growing up without a platform to openly discuss emotional and mental health issues, I saw effective communication in the US as an opportunity to share their feelings without hesitation.'' Many participants emphasized their desire to talk about emotional burdens, but often lacked the emotional capacity to engage in those conversations.

For example, Niyi said, "Growing up as Nigerian immigrant children in the US, we've learned that effective and appropriate communication requires us to integrate both our Nigerian cultural values and the values of the American culture," shares a Nigerian immigrant child reflecting on their experience of navigating between two worlds. Respect holds significant importance in Nigerian culture, and participants mentioned the importance of communicating with respect, particularly towards older individuals, as influenced by their Nigerian heritage.

Moreover, participants discussed the need to code-switch, that is, move from using one cultural communication code system to another, due to differing cultural communication expectations. For example, Dammy said, "maintaining eye contact is seen as a sign of confidence in American culture, but it is viewed as disrespectful in Nigerian culture.'' Some participants expressed challenges in making eye contact with Westerners due to their upbringing and the avoidance of eye contact in their interactions with Nigerian parents. Overall, communication effectiveness and appropriateness for Nigerian immigrant adult children in the US encompassed creating a safe environment for emotional expression, merging cultural values, and adapting to diverse communication norms. For example, Tayo said "I think what we admire the most is the freedom that American children have. As an immigrant child, I always wished my parents were more understanding and that I didn't feel so scared of them, which caused me to become distant.

For us, communication effectiveness and appropriateness mean having the freedom to express

our feelings openly.'' Toni also said "to me, it's all about being able to communicate freely. For

instance, being able to say what I want to my parents and having them listen to me effectively

without interrupting. That's why I appreciate the freedom of expression that American children

have with their parents.''

Interview question #6 asked participants, 'what does US communication competence mean

for Nigerian parents?" Using repeated readings and analytical induction I identified three

themes: privilege, cultural differences, and freedom. A Word Cloud created using InVivo-12

showed that privilege had a word frequency of 52 and a weighted percentage of 1.79%.

communicating with respect had a word count of 50 and a weighted percentage of 1.71%.

Cultural differences had a word count of 47 and a weighted average of 1.62%. Freedom had a

word count of 30 and a weighted average of 1.03%. Using NVivo-12 a word cloud (based on

frequency of occurrence of terms) appears in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Findings from the research indicated that children perceived that Nigerian parents perceive communication competence in the US as granting excessive privileges to children, which they believe leads to disrespect towards parents. For example, Bolu said "Nigerian parents often view American communication style as too straightforward and lacking in respect compared to the Nigerian communication style.'' According to Tini, "Nigerian parents consider US communication competency less effective than the Nigerian approach because they believe it allows children to challenge parental authority.'' They prefer an authoritative parenting style where they can exert control over their children's actions. Dammy also said Nigerian parents are perceived to value their Nigerian cultural values and are hesitant to embrace new cultural ideas, resulting in limited freedom for their children. Participants expressed feelings of constraint and restriction in their communication with their Nigerian parents, which can still impact their communication with individuals from Western cultures due to their upbringing.

In summary, Nigerian parents perceive US communication competence as granting excessive freedom, leading to disrespect. They prefer a more authoritative parenting style aligned with Nigerian cultural values, which restricts communication with their children. This cultural difference influences their perception and approach to communication within the Nigerian immigrant community.

Interview question 7 asked, "What does Nigerian communication competence mean for Nigerian parents?" Using repeated readings and analytical induction I identified two themes: respect, and fear & control. The word cloud analysis using NVivo-12 revealed that "respect" had a word frequency of 74 and a weighted percentage of 2.51%, indicating its significance in the context of the research. Similarly, the term "fear" had a word count of 66 with a weighted

average of 2.24%, suggesting its relevance as well. Figure 7, generated using NVivo-12, displays

the word cloud based on the frequency of occurrence of these terms.

Figure 7

Dammy said, "In Nigerian culture, communicating with respect is considered absolutely

essential for effective and appropriate communication.'' Tayo also said "respect holds significant

value in the Nigerian communication competence'' They highlighted that respect is deeply

ingrained in Nigerian cultural values, emphasizing the importance of respectful communication.

For instance, Ife said "avoiding eye contact is seen as a sign of respect when interacting within

the Nigerian community.'' Some participants also mentioned the challenges they faced in

maintaining eye contact while communicating in the Western world, as it is viewed as disrespectful in Nigerian culture. This cultural upbringing also impacted their ability to freely express themselves and maintain eye contact.

Bolu disclosed that Nigerian communication competence for parents often involves instilling fear and exerting control over their children. Nigerian parents emphasize the importance of respect from their children and sometimes resort to excessive control to enforce it. Participants shared instances where their parents disciplined them without providing explanations, and where their parents exerted significant control over various aspects of their lives, including career choices. For example, Bolu also said, "I felt restricted in expressing my thoughts and emotions, as I wasn't encouraged to communicate openly with my parents.''

Many participants also revealed that even as adults, they still experience fear in their relationship with their parents. For example, Dammy said "Nigerian parents discourage questioning and expect obedience from their children.'' Participants discussed how they were raised to listen without actively communicating their own thoughts and were often forced to suppress their emotions. Nigerian parents perceive effective communication as encompassing respect, considering it a core value within Nigerian society.

Finally, interview question #8 asked, "What is the concept of good parenting in the Nigerian culture?" Using repeated readings, analytical induction and then assessed using NVivo, three prominent themes emerged: respect, discipline, and fear. Respect had the highest word frequency, with 74 occurrences and a weighted percentage of 2.45%. Discipline and fear both had a word count of 66, with discipline having a weighted average of 2.18% and fear having a weighted average of 2.24%. These themes shed light on the significant aspects related to

communication competence within the Nigerian cultural context. The word cloud, displayed in

Figure 8, visually represents the frequency of these terms in the data.

Figure 8

Niyi said, "good parenting is strongly associated with the achievement and success of

their children. Nigerian parents take great pride in their children's accomplishments and have a

competitive mindset.'' Dammy also said "they believe that being good parents means raising

children who excel academically and in their chosen careers.'' Participants shared their

experiences of growing up with parents who placed high expectations on their academic

performance. Tolu mentioned that his parents didn't make them feel fulfilled if he didn't perform

well in school. Even as adults, some participants felt pressured by their parents to succeed in

their careers so that their parents could boast about their achievements to others. In the Nigerian cultural context, parents who have successful children in terms of academic and career achievements are highly praised and regarded as good parents.

Nigerian parents tend to be disciplinarians and exert significant control over their children's lives. They influence major decisions concerning their children's education, career choices, and even dating partners. Instilling the value of respect in their children is seen as a reflection of their parenting abilities. Toni also said, "good parenting in the Nigerian culture also involves making sacrifices for the well-being of their children.'' Participants acknowledged the sacrifices their parents made as they grew older. Many Nigerian parents immigrated to the United States with the goal of providing their children with better lives than they had. Some participants shared stories of their parents working multiple low-income jobs to support their family's well-being. Education is highly valued as the key to success, and Nigerian parents are willing to make sacrifices to ensure their children have ample opportunities to thrive in life.

4.3 RQ 2. Are understandings of communication competence of Nigerian adult children different from White western adult children?

When asked about communication competence in the US, Nigerian adult children highlighted and valued freedom of expression. For example, Dammy said that American parents prioritize their children's feelings and emotions more than Nigerian parents. The study found that Nigerian adult children viewed American parents as more attentive to their emotional needs and providing a space for open communication about topics like mental health. They perceived US communication competence as involving active listening, respecting different perspectives, and creating a friendship-based relationship between parents and children. Nigerian adult children felt that American parents understood their feelings and reassured them, while also supporting

their growth and respecting their boundaries. In contrast, Nigerian parents were seen as controlling, less attentive to emotional needs, and focused on hierarchy and discipline rather than open communication. Overall, Nigerian adult children viewed US communication competence as a positive and freeing experience compared to their experiences in Nigerian households.

4.4 RQ 3. What are the problems that impact western communication competence development between Nigerian parents and their adult children?

This research paper highlights the primary challenges that impact the parent-child relationship in Nigerian immigrant families, with a focus on poor communication. The study reveals that ineffective communication arises from various factors, including the authoritative nature of Nigerian parents, cultural norms discouraging open discussions, and prioritization of academic success over mental health. Additionally, the hierarchical family structure and high parental expectations contribute to strained relationships and limited autonomy for the children. Generational differences and the clash between Western and Nigerian parenting styles further exacerbate the communication challenges. Financial limitations, such as the parents' multiple low-paying jobs, also restrict quality time for meaningful conversations. Overall, these barriers hinder effective communication, leading to strained relationships and difficulties in expressing emotions and discussing important topics within Nigerian immigrant families.

4.5 Summary

This research study explores the perception of communication competence among Nigerian immigrant adult children in the United States. The findings reveal that these adult children view communication competence in the US as synonymous with freedom and the ability to express themselves without fear of judgment. They appreciate the open and transparent communication style in the US compared to the more restrictive communication patterns in

Nigerian communities. Participants admire the American culture's openness to discussing topics like mental health and dating, which they feel is lacking in Nigerian households. American parents are seen as less controlling and more attuned to their children's feelings, creating a calm and light-hearted environment. The hierarchical and authoritative communication style in Nigerian culture often discourages children from freely expressing themselves. The participants recognize generational differences and understand that their parents' parenting style is influenced by traditional values and cultural norms. They now perceive their parents' communication competence differently, acknowledging their hardships and the aim of preserving cultural values. Respect is deeply ingrained in Nigerian cultural values, and parents emphasize respectful communication. Nigerian parents often prioritize their children's academic achievements and success, viewing them as key indicators of good parenting. Education is highly valued, and parents make sacrifices to ensure their children's opportunities for success. Overall, the research highlights the cultural dynamics and generational differences that influence communication competence within Nigerian immigrant families in the US.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Primary findings

Results from this exploratory research study indicated that Nigerian adult children associated communication competence in the US with the notion of freedom. Coming from restrictive family environments, these children believed that communication competence in the US provided them with greater freedom to express themselves. They perceived US communication competency as a platform for open and judgment-free expression of thoughts and ideas, contrasting with their experiences of parental control in Nigeria.

Another significant finding was that communication competence was seen as the ability to communicate effectively. Participants noted the presence of open communication and transparency in the US, where individuals were more receptive to questioning and providing answers, in contrast to the more restrictive Nigerian communities. Additionally, American parents were perceived as less aggressive in their communication with children compared to Nigerian parents, who exerted control over various aspects of their children's lives. This contrast in communication styles further reinforced the perception of US communication competency as a form of freedom.

Moreover, the majority of Nigerian adult children interviewed believed that the US communication style was characterized by being more vocal and expressive. They were fascinated by the freedom Americans had to express themselves openly. Overall, the research findings suggested that US communication competency provided individuals with the opportunity to freely express their emotions without fear of judgment or reprisal.

When Nigerian adult children explain communication competence in the US to others, they often highlight freedom of expression as a key aspect. The research study found that these children perceived American parents as more attuned to their children's feelings. They described them as calm, considerate, and creating an environment that allows for open discussions, including topics like mental health.

Many Nigerian adult children shared their struggles in communicating with their parents about their emotions, particularly regarding mental health issues like depression. They expressed a lack of space to comfortably express themselves, which hindered their ability to address their internalized feelings. Immigrant children from Nigerian families frequently mentioned the absence of a supportive environment for discussing mental health concerns.

Furthermore, Nigerian adult children described communication competence as involving active listening and respect for diverse perspectives. They observed a tendency in many Nigerian households for parents to create a controlling atmosphere where their children's needs were not actively heard. As a result, Nigerian adult children often felt hesitant to open up to their parents due to a perceived lack of attentive listening. They believed that communication competence in the US encompassed respectful communication. Overall, Nigerian children emphasized freedom of expression, consideration of emotions, and respectful listening as important components of communication competence in the US.

The interview research study revealed that children from Nigerian immigrant families perceived communicatively competent parents as those who communicate without instilling fear in them. Nigerian communication style is often hierarchical and authoritative, which hinders open communication between parents and children. The interviewed Nigerian adult children

expressed that their parents' disciplinary methods primarily relied on fear, making it difficult for them to honestly express their feelings.

On the other hand, the study found that American parents create an atmosphere that fosters a friendship-based relationship with their children, which Nigerian adult children viewed as communicatively competent. They felt that the hierarchical structure in Nigerian households hindered a genuine connection with their parents. The interviewees also highlighted the empathetic and understanding nature of American parents, which contributed to their perception of communicative competence. American parents were more likely to understand and address their children's emotional needs, unlike Nigerian parents who often neglected them. Some Nigerian adult children spoke about their experiences of loneliness because of emotional neglect from their parents.

Additionally, American parents were seen as communicatively competent because they reassured their children's feelings and respected their boundaries. They were perceived as more sensitive to their children's emotional needs and concerns. American parents were viewed as providing full support for their children's growth and development in all aspects of their lives while respecting their autonomy. Some of the interviewed children mentioned that their Nigerian parents did not respect their boundaries, leading them to consider American parents as more competent due to their willingness to honor their children's privacy and boundaries.

All of the interviewees acknowledged that they perceive their parents' communication competence differently as adult children compared to when they were younger. The participants recognized that generational differences play a significant role in shaping their perception of their parents' communication competence. They understand that their Nigerian parents were raised in a different era, influenced by traditional Nigerian values, which in turn affects their

parenting style, especially in a Western cultural context. For instance, one participant mentioned that they now understand their parents' desire to preserve their cultural values and pass them on to their children, a realization that has come with maturity. Additionally, some participants attribute the differences in their parents' communication competence to the level of education and knowledge their parents possessed at the time of their upbringing.

Many participants expressed empathy and appreciation for their parents' sacrifices in providing them with a comfortable life in the United States. They now understand the hardships their parents endured, including working multiple jobs and facing significant challenges, to ensure their children had a better life. As adults, they have developed a deeper understanding and respect for their parents' tough love approach, realizing that it was driven by their parents' aspirations for their children's success and well-being. Consequently, they now view their parents' communication competence in a different light. Overall, the participants' maturity, cultural awareness, and recognition of their parents' sacrifices have influenced their perception of their parents' communication competence as they have transitioned into adulthood.

Adult children with immigrant parents perceived communication effectiveness and appropriateness in the US as a safe and judgment-free space to freely express themselves. Growing up without a platform to openly discuss emotional and mental health issues, they saw effective communication in the US as an opportunity to communicate these feelings without hesitation. The participants expressed a strong desire to discuss emotional burdens but often lacked the emotional capacity to engage in such conversations.

Moreover, as Nigerian immigrant adult children navigate between two cultures, they viewed communication effectiveness and appropriateness in the US as a blend of both cultural values. Respect holds significant importance in Nigerian culture, leading Nigerian adult children

to communicate with utmost respect, particularly when interacting with elders. The participants emphasized the influence of their Nigerian heritage in shaping their respectful communication style.

Additionally, the participants revealed the challenges of code-switching due to different cultural communication expectations. For example, in the Nigerian culture, avoiding eye contact is perceived as a sign of respect, while in American culture, maintaining eye contact is seen as a display of confidence. Some participants shared their struggles with eye contact when communicating with individuals from Western cultures due to their upbringing's emphasis on avoiding eye contact. Overall, immigrant children from Nigerian backgrounds sought communication effectiveness and appropriateness in the US as a safe space to express themselves freely, while also balancing the values of their Nigerian heritage and adapting to cultural differences.

Findings from the research study indicated that Nigerian parents perceive communication competence in the US as granting excessive privilege to children. They believe that American parents provide their children with an excessive amount of freedom, which, in their view, can lead to disrespect towards parents. Nigerian parents consider the American communication style to be too straightforward and lacking the respect they associate with the Nigerian communication style.

According to the Nigerian parents, they perceive US communication competency as less effective compared to the Nigerian approach because they believe it allows children to challenge parental authority. They expressed concerns that the freedom of expression allowed in American communication may lead to disrespectful behavior from their children. The results revealed that

Nigerian parents tend to adopt an authoritative parenting style, valuing control over their children's actions. As a result, they view American children as having too much privilege.

Nigerian parents take pride in their Nigerian values and may be hesitant to embrace new cultural ideas. This reluctance to fully immerse themselves in US culture contributes to their resistance in granting freedom to their children. Some participants shared that they felt constrained and restricted in their communication with their Nigerian parents, which can still impact their communication style with individuals from Western cultures. The upbringing they experienced, which discouraged open expression of thoughts and emotions, can influence their communication patterns even when interacting with non-Nigerians.

In summary, the research study revealed that Nigerian parents perceive US communication competence as granting excessive freedom to children, which they believe can lead to disrespect. They value the authoritative control they exert over their children and may be hesitant to fully embrace the cultural differences in communication styles.

In Nigerian culture, effective and appropriate communication is strongly associated with showing respect. Nigerian parents emphasize the importance of respect as a fundamental aspect of communication competence. Participants in the study shared that respect is deeply ingrained in Nigerian cultural values, and it is expected to communicate with respect in all interactions. For instance, avoiding eye contact is considered a sign of respect when communicating within the Nigerian community. Some participants also discussed the challenge of maintaining eye contact when communicating in the Western world, as the Nigerian culture perceives it as disrespectful. Their upbringing emphasized avoiding eye contact as a cultural norm.

Additionally, participants revealed that Nigerian communication competence, as expected by Nigerian parents, involves instilling fear and exerting control over their children. Nigerian

parents prioritize respect and demand it from their children, often leading to excessive control. Participants shared Nigerian parents frequently disciplined their children without providing explanations. They also described growing up with overbearing parents who sought to control every aspect of their lives, including restricting their freedom to express thoughts and emotions. Career choices were often dictated by parents, leaving little room for autonomy.

Furthermore, participants expressed that even as adults, they still experience fear when interacting with their parents. Nigerian parents discourage questioning and foster a communication dynamic where children are expected to listen rather than openly communicate their thoughts. This often results in suppressing emotions and inhibiting open expression. Nigerian parents consider effective communication to be rooted in respect, which is a core value in Nigerian society.

The study highlighted that in Nigerian culture, effective communication is closely tied to showing respect. Nigerian parents prioritize respect and expect their children to communicate in a respectful manner. Additionally, the Nigerian communication competence includes instilling fear and control, limiting the freedom of expression and autonomy for children. The emphasis on respect and hierarchical dynamics within Nigerian families shapes the communication patterns and expectations within the Nigerian community.

One of the core aspects of effective parenting in Nigerian culture is closely tied to the achievement and success of their children. Nigerian parents often hold a strong sense of pride and competitiveness, believing that being a good parent means raising children who excel academically and in their careers. Participants in the study shared that their parents were often strict and demanding when it came to academic performance during their childhood. Failing to meet academic expectations could leave them feeling unfulfilled and not valued. Even as adults,

some participants expressed that their parents continued to pressure them to succeed in their careers, as it served as a source of pride and validation within their families. Nigerian parents who have successful children academically and professionally are often praised and regarded as good parents within their communities.

Discipline is another key aspect of good parenting in Nigerian culture. Nigerian parents tend to be disciplinarians, exerting control and influence over major decisions in their children's lives, including education, career choices, and even dating partners. They prioritize instilling values such as respect, as it is seen as a reflection of their parenting skills.

Furthermore, good parenting in Nigerian culture is associated with making sacrifices for the benefit of their children. Participants disclosed that as adults, they have grown more aware of the sacrifices their parents made for their well-being. Many Nigerian parents immigrated to the United States to provide their children with better opportunities and a brighter future. Participants shared stories of their parents working multiple low-income jobs to support their children's well-being. Education is highly regarded as a pathway to success, and Nigerian parents are willing to make significant sacrifices to ensure their children have access to endless opportunities for success in life.

Overall, good parenting in Nigerian culture is closely linked to the achievement and success of children, with an emphasis on academic and career excellence. It involves being strict, disciplined, and making sacrifices for the well-being of the children. Nigerian parents take great pride in their children's accomplishments and prioritize instilling values such as respect. The drive for success and the sacrifices made by parents reflects the strong cultural values placed on education and the pursuit of a better life for future generations.

One of the primary challenges that significantly impacts the parent-child relationship in immigrant families is poor communication. The research study revealed that children from Nigerian immigrant families struggled to communicate effectively with their parents due to a lack of open communication. The authoritative nature of Nigerian parents often discouraged their children from engaging in meaningful conversations. Participants shared their difficulties in discussing issues such as mental health or emotional struggles with their parents. They felt that their parents were less receptive to communication about topics other than academic achievements and career success. Nigerian parents typically prioritize discussions on their children's academic performance, overshadowing conversations about mental health issues like depression.

Additionally, expressing feelings was often seen as disrespectful in Nigerian culture, making it challenging for many Nigerian children to communicate with their parents. They were raised to listen rather than speak up when engaging in conversations with their parents. Consequently, their relationships with their parents were strained, lacking the depth and openness typically associated with parent-child dynamics. The hierarchical structure of Nigerian families positioned children at the bottom of the hierarchy, with their opinions often disregarded. This created significant barriers for them to communicate their true feelings to their parents.

Another significant issue that affected the parent-child dynamic in Nigerian families was the high expectations projected onto children by their parents. Participants discussed the lack of autonomy in choosing their own career paths. Many Nigerian adult children felt immense pressure to meet their parents' expectations, leading to feelings of resentment and strain in their relationships as they grew older. The intense pressure to succeed and overachieve academically

and professionally resulted in burnout and strained relationships with their parents. The tough love shown by parents contributed to these difficulties.

Generational differences were also a significant factor impacting the parent-child relationship among Nigerian families. As adult children of Nigerian parents raised in a Western culture, participants had different expectations of parenting compared to their parents. They struggled with their parents' limited desire to incorporate Western parenting styles due to their commitment to preserving their Nigerian cultural heritage.

Financial limitations further exacerbated the parent-child relationship challenges. Some participants shared that their parents had to work multiple low-paying jobs as immigrants, resulting in limited quality time for communication. The demanding work schedules left little opportunity for frequent and meaningful conversations with their parents.

Overall, the parent-child relationship in Nigerian immigrant families is significantly affected by poor communication, cultural dynamics, high expectations, generational differences, and financial limitations. These challenges create barriers to effective and open communication, leading to strained relationships and difficulties in expressing emotions and discussing important topics.

5.2 Secondary findings

Participants were asked to provide advice on how children from Nigerian immigrant families can improve their communication competence with their parents. Here is a section that elaborates on the suggestions provided by the participants: One of the main suggestions emphasized by the participants was to engage in more communication with their parents. They recognized that communication is key to fostering a healthy and strong relationship. Participants

encouraged children from Nigerian immigrant families to have open and honest conversations with their parents about their feelings, concerns, and experiences.

Some participants suggested that rather than trying to change their parents' communication style, it would be more effective to find ways to communicate thoughts and feelings that align with their parents' cultural values. They highlighted the importance of respecting the cultural differences and finding a balance that works for both the parents and children. Participants acknowledged that generational differences play a significant role in shaping their parents' communication style. Developing empathy and understanding can help children not only comprehend their parents' parenting approach but also find ways to communicate more effectively with them.

Furthermore, participants recommended that children from Nigerian immigrant families, who have been exposed to both Nigerian and Western cultures, can gradually introduce their parents to the Western parenting style if their parents are open to learning. These adult children possess the knowledge and experience to adapt to both cultures, enabling them to teach their parents how to navigate the Western parenting style. For instance, participants expressed the importance of recognizing that Nigerian parents are human and not being overly critical of their actions. They emphasized that parents are doing their best with the knowledge they were raised with. Many participants also emphasized that as individuals grow older, they tend to appreciate and have more compassion for their parents.

In summary, participants suggested that children from Nigerian immigrant families can enhance their communication competence with their parents by engaging in open and honest conversations, respecting cultural differences, finding a balance between different communication styles, teaching their parents about the Western culture if desired, and

developing empathy and understanding. These recommendations aim to foster stronger and more effective communication between parents and children, ultimately improving the parent-child relationship.

5.3 Summary

The thesis aimed to explore the effectiveness and appropriateness of communication in the United States for children with Nigerian immigrant parents. The study examines the perception of communication competence from the perspectives of both children and parents, shedding light on the challenges faced by immigrant children when communicating with their Nigerian parents. The research delves into the complexities that arise in parent-child communication as children develop and highlights the impact of generational and cultural differences on communication between parents and children. The study acknowledges that Nigerian parents strongly hold on to their cultural values while their children are immersed in the Western culture, leading to challenges in effectively navigating both cultural systems.

Through interviews with children from Nigerian immigrant families, the research identifies one significant problem that contributes to the communication friction, namely the lack of freedom to communicate openly with their parents. The restrictive nature of Nigerian parenting style often leads many Nigerian children to perceive their parents as overly controlling, impeding their ability to communicate freely. For adult children with Nigerian immigrant parents, communication effectiveness and appropriateness in the US are seen as a safe space where they can express themselves without fear of judgment. Growing up without an open environment to discuss emotional and mental health issues, these children value the opportunity to freely communicate their feelings. However, they also face challenges in merging their

Nigerian cultural values with the expectations of American communication, leading to code-switching and conflicts in nonverbal cues such as eye contact.

Nigerian parents, on the other hand, perceive US communication competence differently. They view the communication style in the US as granting too much freedom and privilege to children, which they believe can lead to disrespect towards parents. Nigerian parents tend to be authoritative, emphasizing control over their children's actions and valuing respect as an integral part of communication. They often find it difficult to embrace US cultural norms due to perceived cultural differences and prefer to maintain their traditional values. In the Nigerian culture, communication competence for parents revolves around respect and the instillation of fear and control. Respect is highly regarded, and communication with respect is considered appropriate and effective. Parents enforce strict control over their children's lives, disciplining them without providing explanations and discouraging open questioning. As a result, children may suppress their emotions and have limited freedom to express their thoughts.

The concept of good parenting in the Nigerian culture is closely tied to the success and achievements of children. Nigerian parents value academic and career success and may place significant pressure on their children to excel. They are disciplinarians who make crucial decisions regarding education, career choices, and even dating partners. Sacrifice is also seen as an essential aspect of good parenting, with many Nigerian parents making personal sacrifices to provide their children with better opportunities for success.

The Nigerian parenting style draws its foundation from the rich tapestry of traditional Nigerian values, which, when juxtaposed with the Western culture in which their children are raised, can significantly impact their communication competency. For instance, adult children within Nigerian families often recognize that generational differences play a significant role in

shaping their perception of their parents' communication competence as they grow into adulthood. Numerous participants acknowledged the immense sacrifices their parents made to provide them with a comfortable life in the United States. Consequently, this newfound understanding has fostered a sense of empathy towards their parents' parenting style.

Overall, this research sheds light on the perspectives of adult children and parents in Nigerian immigrant families regarding communication effectiveness and appropriateness in the United States. The findings underscore the complexities that arise from merging different cultural values and highlight the importance of understanding and navigating these dynamics for effective intergenerational communication. By addressing these communication issues, the research aims to provide deeper insights into the challenges faced by children with Nigerian immigrant parents and foster a better understanding of the dynamics within parent-child relationships.

5.4 Limitations of the study

One limitation of this research study is the small number of participants recruited for data collection. With only 10 participants, the findings may not fully capture the diverse perspectives and experiences of children from Nigerian immigrant families. A larger sample size would have provided a more comprehensive understanding of how they perceive their parents' communication competency.

Another limitation is the omission of interviews with Nigerian immigrant parents. Without directly engaging with parents, the research lacks their perspectives and insights into their communication practices and parenting styles. Including interviews with parents would have provided a more well-rounded understanding of Nigerian parent communication competency.

These limitations highlight the constrained scope of the research and the missed opportunity to gather a broader range of data. A larger sample size and inclusion of parent interviews would have strengthened the research, enabling a more nuanced exploration of the cultural dynamics and communication competency within US immigrant Nigerian families.

5.5 Suggestions for future research

The limitations identified in this research study present valuable opportunities for future research to delve deeper into the communication dynamics within Nigerian immigrant families. To address the limitations, future studies should aim to recruit a more diverse range of participants, including Nigerian parents, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of Nigerian communication competency and its impact on parent-child communication.

While the current study focused primarily on the perspectives of adult Nigerian children regarding their parents' communication competency and their understanding of Western communication norms, future research could place greater emphasis on interviewing Nigerian parents. This would provide valuable insights into their own perceptions of communication competence, how it influences their parenting style, and how they navigate communication with their children.

By incorporating the perspectives of both children and parents, future research can offer a more balanced and nuanced understanding of the communication dynamics within Nigerian immigrant families. This would help to further explore the interplay between cultural values, generational differences, and communication competence, shedding light on effective strategies for fostering healthy and effective communication within these families.

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