

ICMC 2023**The 3rd International Conference on Management and Communication****ANTECEDENTS OF QUALITY INTERPERSONAL
COMMUNICATION IN MARRIAGE: A VIEW FROM DIVORCEES**

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Abstract

Any relationship, including marriage needs effective interpersonal communication to grow and endure. Due to a lack of awareness on effective interpersonal communication, married couples frequently undervalue the importance of interpersonal communication in their relationship as society adopts new communication channels. The purpose of this study is to understand better on how to conceptualise effective interpersonal communication using Relational Dialectic Theory and to examine how divorcees view communication in marriage. The causes of poor interpersonal communication and how it affects married couples were also examined in this study. By including communication technology as a medium of communication, the current study also expanded Knapp's Relational Development Model. A purposive sample strategy was used to select 20 divorcees from various states in Malaysia for in-depth interviews. The NVivo 12 programme was used to assess and compile the collected data into a thematic data analysis. This study found the antecedents of poor-quality interpersonal communication are communication skills, attitudes, third-party involvement and emotional condition. Overall, by incorporating the negative impacts of inadequate interpersonal communication into the model's degradation stages, the current study offers a new paradigm for Knapp's Relational Development Model.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background of study

The ability to communicate with others is essential since the existence of mankind. It is described as the exchange of information between two people (Hanson & Haridakis, 2008; Hargie, 2021), whether through verbal or nonverbal means (DeVito, 2014), or through the use of various technologies (Macdonald & Hülür, 2020; Zhuo, 2016; Zhang et al., 2019). Additionally, the foundation of any connection is interpersonal communication (Braithwaite et al., 2021). According to Sillars and Vangelisti (2018), interpersonal skill and communication are two concepts that are interdependent on and intertwined with one another. Interpersonal communication enables people to collectively work on their goals, gain understanding and achieve mutual agreement among themselves, as well as deliver intended messages. A strong, deep and close attachment can also be formed between people through interpersonal contact in the form of friendships and love relationships. This association can be divided into six stages: contact, participation, intimacy, degradation, repair and dissolution (DeVito, 2019; Guerrero, 2020). These associations can be based on friendship, love, business or other sorts of social commitment. Interpersonal communication is therefore essential at every stage of a relationship.

Interpersonal communication is vital at all stages of all types of relationships because it is inextricably linked to interpersonal relationships. One type of interpersonal relationship is romantic relationship, which includes marriage. Marriage is referred to as matrimony, which is a union between a man and a woman that is abided by laws, beliefs, customs, and attitudes that define the spouse's responsibility (Nyarks & Hope, 2022). Despite that the definition of marriage may differ according to culture and religion, effective communication is required in all marriages to maintain the relationship. Daniell (2021) agrees that men and women use communication with each other to build intimacy in relationships, especially in romantic relationships such as marriage.

In regard to effective interpersonal communication, it is vital to acknowledge the quality of the interpersonal communication as it is crucial to the maintenance of relationships. To begin with, quality interpersonal communication is defined as the "interpersonal, transactional, symbolic process by which marriage partners achieve and maintain an understanding of each other" (Montgomery, 1981). Quality interpersonal communication is a process that depends on time and development, and the purpose is to maintain mutual comprehension. When it comes to family communication, quality communication enhances the quality of life to develop presence and interpersonal engagement (Stewart & Koenig Kellas, 2020). Moreover, good quality interpersonal communication is necessary to develop a healthy marital relationship. Previous research discovers that a positive interaction pattern indicates a quality relationship (Ahsan & Hanif, 2020; Farooqi, 2014). Haris and Kumar (2018), investigating the notion, find that the quality of interpersonal communication between spouses could affect the judgment of relationship satisfaction. Couples who communicate more about their activities and feelings are most likely to stay in a relationship. This proves that good quality of interpersonal communication is essential in maintaining a marital relationship. As technology advances, traditional quality of interpersonal communication has evolved. Scholars suggesting the quality of interpersonal communication has been altered or even jeopardize with the dependency of communication technologies. Many studies conducted find that there

has been shift from face-to-face interpersonal communication to electronic communication through the Internet (DeVito, 2008). Especially when Covid 19 hit the world in early 2020, the communication activities have changed whereby the government strongly recommended online communication, and it is becoming the new norm of interaction. Thus, this inevitable current situation had a significant impact on social connectivity and the quality of interpersonal interactions (Matthes et al., 2021; Pietromonaco & Overall, 2021; Shao et al., 2021; Zhang & Ma, 2020). Communication technologies have helped develop, maintain, and enhance relationships (Hertlein & Ancheta, 2014; Kardos et al., 2018), and are widely used due to their convenience, ease of use, and cost-effectiveness. Despite that the world is becoming more connected, the implications of communication technologies on interpersonal relationships are inexorable. The Internet not only alters the dynamic of interpersonal communication, but it also alters the quality of interpersonal communication because it changes the way people communicate with each other. A few prominent adverse effects that affect the quality of interpersonal communication are a lack of non-verbal cues and the absence of immediate feedback during online communication (Baten & Hoque, 2021; Henderson & Bowley, 2010; Lieberman & Schroeder, 2020). The constant progress of technological advancement has led some to believe that people worldwide are becoming more connected, while others deem it isolating and dividing them.

2. Problem Statement

Communication technologies have progressively transformed communication into social dialogue, dominating and reshaping society and culture. Thus, the need to recognise the role played by these virtual platforms and technology in interpersonal interaction is crucial. A great deal of research has been carried out to investigate the influence of communication technologies on quality of interpersonal communication on various types of relationships, such as adolescent friendship (Gapsiso & Wilson, 2015; Lenhart et al., 2007; Ngunde, 2017; Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008), teacher-student relationships (AlSaleem, 2018; Kaesberry, 2018; Mazer et al., 2007) and family members (Mesch, 2006; Mauthner & Kazimierczak, 2019; Ngonidzashe, 2016; Pace et al., 2015). Nevertheless, research into how communication technologies have altered quality of interpersonal communication in marriage is still scarce.

Communication technologies have an impact on relationships, significantly on romantic relationships. Literature has found that the use of communication technologies not only changes communication activities within romantic relationships, but it also alters the outcomes and direction of the relationship. According to Coyne et al. (2011), married couples use communication technologies to facilitate and maintain relationships. They also added that married couples consume more communication technologies than dating couples because married couples use communication technologies as an additional medium of communication to run and coordinate their daily routines with their spouses. Thus, the effect of communication technologies may be more prominent in marriage compared to other dyadic relationships.

There has been ample research on the communication between married couples, whereby researchers found a correlation between quality of interpersonal communication and marital satisfaction. Both theory and research suggest that the quality of interpersonal communication between married

couples is associated with stability and satisfaction (Gottman, 1994; Rhoades & Stocker, 2006; Vazhappilly & Reyes, 2018). Therefore, both can be seen as a determinant of relationship success (Bertoni et al., 2020; Stanley et al., 2002; Theiss & Solomon, 2006). Lavner et al. (2016) classify communication patterns in marital relationships into three categories: positive communication, negative communication, and effective communication. They propose that positive communication promotes positivity and enhances relationships, whereas negative communication results in a destructive relationship. This proposition is consistent with Stanley et al. (2002) and McNelis and Segrin (2019), who have provided empirical evidence indicating that negative interactions have a potent association with discussions and thoughts of divorce between married couples, thus indicating the critical nature of interpersonal communication in marriage and how it might lead to divorce.

The consequences of divorce are unavoidable. Divorce may result in emotional distress that exacerbates psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression (Derichs, 2014; Maforah et al., 2021; Tosi & van den Broek, 2020). It also has detrimental impacts on children and parent children's relationships (Oren & Hadomi, 2020; Yoo, 2022), besides the other negative consequences for children, including poor academic performance, low self-esteem, lack of social skills, and proclivity for future divorce (Bloem, 2013; Donahey, 2018). Not only that, but divorce can also be costly to a nation. According to Meyer and Abdul-Malak (2015), divorce contributes to a higher number of individuals relying on welfare, resulting in higher taxes and a more significant deficit and significantly affecting the country's economic growth (Saridakis et al., 2018). This situation is evident when 50 percent of parents with children end up living in poverty after a divorce (Fagan & Rector, 2000). Considering divorce has the potential to influence a family institution and the nation, it is imperative for a country to manage its number of divorce cases. In order to do so, research needs to be done to investigate the reasonings for divorce filing. This need is addressed in the National Family Policy (NFP) Malaysia, which has formulated research development in family well-being as strategies to develop healthy and resilient families to ensure social stability.

Divorce, formerly considered taboo, has recently become more common in the local setting. Based on the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) statistics, 45,754 divorce cases were reported in 2020 with an average of three married couples divorcing per hour. The number of divorce cases is increasing year after year. Based on the Malaysian Department of Statistics data, the number of divorces decreased by 19.2 per cent between 2019 and 2020. Based on JAKIM (2021), the temporary decrease in the number of divorce cases in 2020 was due to the pandemic COVID-19. The control movement order (MCO) and social distancing measures that were implemented in 2020 resulted in many divorce cases remaining pending due to the closure of courts, restricted the movement of the complainants to go to court to file for divorce, and exacerbated divorce filing tasks and logistics. Family members struggle to deal with urgent safety concerns and other COVID-19 related stressors while also attempting to initiate divorce proceedings (Stanley & Markman, 2020). Besides that, according to LPPKN, domestic issues were on the rise during the pandemic, which was evidenced by the increase in calls to the Talian Kasih hotline.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Marriage and divorce in Malaysia

Marriage as a social institution and family as the fundamental building block of a society are highly valued and revered in Malaysia. Marriages are frequently consummated through a written agreement endorsed by the religious constitution or accepted under civil law in the country. Marriage is seen as a legally binding and holy bond that lasts a lifetime. However, subsequent technological advancements have begun to question its sanctity. Families in contemporary Malaysia face different levels of difficulties and changes throughout their lives. Despite the fact that many religions forbid divorce, more spouses are turning to family courts than before for formal separation and marriage annulment. The Department of Statistics Malaysia (2022) said that 45,502 Muslim divorces were reported in 2019, an increase of 13.0 percent from 40,269 in 2018. In 2019, there were 2.3 Muslims per 1,000 CDR, up from 2.0 in 2018. Similar to this, there were 10,593 non-Muslim divorces in 2018 and 11,473 in 2019, an increase of 8.3%. From 0.8 in 2018 to 0.9 in 2019, the CDR for non-Muslims per 1,000 people increased.

Divorce, disagreements and marital dissolution are becoming an increasingly common occurrence throughout the world, and Malaysia is not exempt from this growing threat. In Malaysia, fractured families and single parenthood are becoming more prevalent at an alarming rate and ratio compared to intact families. All of these data and facts point to one truth: in Malaysia, the sacredness of the institution of marriage and the traditionally valued family unit are in danger. This situation necessitates quick and effective action to stop the decay.

The significant rise in relationship separation and disintegration among Malaysians has been attributed to a variety of factors. According to Kamarudin et al. (2020), there are several factors contributing to the rise including: 1) money problems, 2) adultery, 3) personality and 4) attitude. However, all of these reasons may not result in pair discomfort and marriage dissolution if a couple has good and healthy communication (Chakkyath, 2013). According to Vazhappilly and Reyes (2018), competent interpersonal communication can effectively close gaps brought about by the many issues that spouses experience during their marriage. The divorce rate among Muslims is twice as high as the divorce rate among non-Muslims, according to research by Jones (2021) on the divorce trend in Malaysia. He said that research on the factors that lead to divorce has not yielded much insight into the phenomena. To better comprehend the strain of marriage, he advised future researchers to look at the primary causes of divorce. Therefore, explain the current research.

3.2. Antecedents of quality interpersonal communication in marriage

3.2.1. Attitudes

Attitudes shape everything in lives including communication in relationships (Cole & Foito, 2019). Human behavior is shaped by attitudes and sentiment (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006). Cohan and Kleinbaum (2002) have conducted research on the antecedents of poor marital communication. They propose the relation between the notion of poor marital communication in marriage issues and premarital

cohabitation experiences. The result of their research showcases that premarital cohabitation is related to poor marital communication. Spouses with cohabitation experiences will express more negative and aggressive communication and will lead to marital conflicts and dissatisfactions. Spouses who have had cohabitation experiences are also reported to have less motivation and desire to communicate with their spouses especially during times of conflict. A survey was done by Strizzi et al. (2020) on 2371 Danish to investigate the motives behind their relationship dissolution. Approximately half of the respondents cited communication problems and less desire to communicate as the reasons for divorce. This indicates less desire to communicate promotes negative outcomes to the relationships.

Meanwhile, Knapp et al. (2015) carry out research on quality interpersonal communication between spouses. The research reveals that family origin and attachment styles can significantly affect the quality of marital communication. Negative family origin can lead to negative communication styles and adverse marital outcomes. The research by Ebrahimi and Ali Kimiaei (2014) concludes that there are significant relationships between marital satisfaction and communication patterns in divorcing couples. Their research also highlights attachment styles as predictors of marital satisfaction. Narcissism conversational style, which refers to interpersonal dominance and low-interest intimacy in marital communication, is one of the examples of poor-quality communication in marriage. Partners evaluate this communication style as a cost to the relationship. Narcissism conversational style usually leads to predicted divorce after seven years after the birth of the first child (Leit, 2015). This style is often perceived negatively by the other partner and leads to conflict and marital dissatisfaction. This indicates negative communication style and behaviour lead to poor-quality interpersonal communication.

Qualitative research by Lucas (2018) indicates interpersonal behaviour such as the desire to communication fosters endurance in marriage. According to Williams (2020), couples who seek therapy often address communication as one of their major sources of conflict in their relationship. He adds that internal distractions such as rebuttal attitudes during an interaction can led to communication deficiency. This indicates a diminished desire to communicate and negative attitudes towards communication are indicators of poor interpersonal communication quality. This aligns with research by Mendoza et al. (2019) indicating a lack of desire to reciprocal communication as the determine of poor communication. Novak et al. (2019) introduce a concept of intentionality referring to partners' willingness to engage in positive communication. Positive communication between spouses can influence conflict interaction between them. Punyanunt-Carter (2004) adds that affectionate communication has a potent association with relational satisfaction in married and dating couples. The amount of interaction and communication pertaining to life and sex on a routine basis enhances marital satisfaction (McCroskey & Richmond, 1996). A study done by Bippus et al. (2011) incorporates humour as part of positive communication between spouses. The more humour elements are used in conflict discussion, the greater relational satisfaction. On the contrary, negative or destructive communication between spouses is significantly associated with lower marital satisfaction and contributes to a higher divorce rate (Gottman & Notarius, 2000; Johnson et al., 2022; Stanley et al., 2002). Negative communication and interaction between spouses are linked with the possibility of divorce, whereby spouses contemplate or talk about divorce (Stanley et al., 2002). Men are significantly psychologically impacted by the negative interaction in marriage (Markman & Kraft, 1989) and frequently withdraw more than women. In a nutshell, the

literature suggests that positive attitudes will lead to positive and good communication, whereas negative attitudes will lead to negative communication.

3.2.2. Knowledge

Consequently, due to intimacy, marriage relationships are prone to misunderstandings in communication. Misunderstandings can occur during either encoding or decoding processes (Noller, 1980). The antecedents of misunderstandings in the encoding process might be related to poor social skills and lack of expressivity, especially on the part of the husband. Empirical data show that husbands are less skilled compared to wives at communicating effective positive messages. This notion, which is aligned with the result by Bradbury and Karney (2004), indicates that husbands display fewer positive communication skills during marital communication than wives. Wives are also more aware of communication behaviours compared to husbands (Hughes et al., 2004). Gottman (1994) adds that wives might act as a “barometer” in a relationship to ensure the health of the relationship. As a result, knowledge of communication skills is important in ensuring good communication practices.

Even good interaction pattern is an indicator of a quality relationship (Ahsan & Hanif, 2020; Farooqi, 2014) and a predictor of relationship satisfaction, its understanding is relatively poor (Cook, 2010). A study by Ahsan and Hanif (2020) reveals that spouses who practice negative communication patterns demonstrate a lack of knowledge about the patterns. This could be because of poor marital communication skills, which are due to cognitive and cultural factors (Deylami, 2019). Similarly, research conducted by Hou et al. (2019) to investigate marital satisfaction and communication pattern among Chinese couples discovers that culture could influence communication patterns. In the study, wives demonstrate a higher quality of interpersonal communication compared to husbands, suggesting that women are more sensitive to the quality of interpersonal communication and relationships compared to men.

Amadi (2017) reveals that divorce happens in Nigeria is due to a lack of knowledge about effective communication. Many families in Nigeria are ignorant vis a vis to the significance of effective communication in marriage. To achieve a higher-quality marital relationship, couples attend family training. The training helps to increase knowledge and understanding on how to communicate effectively, besides improving communication skills among them. Zakaria et al. (2019), in similar research in Malaysia, suggests married couples to attend courses or workshops to increase knowledge to strengthen their marriage. This research argues that married couples are lack of knowledge to manage their interactions and that continuous learning on how to interact in relationships is needed. Understanding communication is the key to a successful marriage (Vanover, 2016). As mentioned by Novak et al. (2019), relationship education (RE) among spouses can increase communication knowledge and skills. It could also significantly increase the relationship quality pertaining to self-awareness and self-knowledge, which are also increased as the product of relationship education courses.

3.2.3. Communication technologies

According to Bala (2014) and Alsadoon (2018), communication technologies such as social media can affect communication patterns in society. Social media has affected intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, public, and mass communication. Previous scholarly literature on communication technology provides valuable insights into how digital interpersonal interactions have altered people's dating and mating behaviour (Dall'Agnola & Thibault; 2021; Zheng et al., 2019). For interpersonal communication, social media has changed its landscape by enabling communication to be faster, cheaper, and more accessible. To an extent, social media leads to narcissism because the media is a staged self-presentation. People have disengaged from the physical world and become more engaged in the virtual world of fictitious intimacies. Meyer and Sledge (2022) have argued that communication technologies contribute to poor-quality of communication in marriage because of the interdependencies toward communication technologies such as the social media. This aligns with the previous study by Northrup and Smith (2016) indicating couples who will engage more on Facebook will spend less time engaged in their romantic relationship.

As a result of increased reliance on the Internet to communicate, people will become less engaged in face-to-face communication, leading to the decreased competence when communicating with others. In other words, the Internet has lowered the quality of human communication and relational closeness (Amichai-Hamburger & Etgar, 2016; Gapsiso & Wilson 2015; McKenna et al., 2002; Wang et al., 2017). Partners in marriage expect their spouse to give them more attention than to their communication technologies such as smartphones (Chambliss et al., 2015). The use of communication while spending time with their partner might lead to less enjoyable interactions (Brown et al., 2016; Dwyer et al., 2018; Murray & Campbell, 2015; McDaniel & Coyne, 2016). Other than that, according to Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008), there are several impacts of social media on communication. One of the biggest impacts is message overload. Therefore, people must possess media literacy skills to handle the deluge of information available online. Another concern is technology addiction. People who spend more time communicating via technology have less interaction with those around them, thus harming face-to-face relationships.

Furthermore, social media undermines social skills, especially those who spend more time online in-person communication. People prefer communicating with their family members and friend through electronic devices rather than face-to-face communication. This affects their ability to communicate face-to-face, thus impairing their interpersonal social skills. Not only do social media affect the quantity of communication, but it also affects the quality of interpersonal communication through the language used during online interaction. For example, social media also change the way people communicate in terms of writing techniques. For example, Twitter limits to 280 characters per post. Thus, users need to write messages in succinct, which has cultivated the culture of using abbreviations in conversation. These acts have jeopardised the way people communicate their messages and ideas.

Several studies have outlined the pros and cons of communication technology on intimate relationships in terms of psychological, relational, and economic well-being, such as studies by Eichenberg et al. (2017) and Akanle et al. (2021). The pros include allowing partners to communicate throughout the day, helping partners to manage and communicate relationship problems and increasing

partners' intimacy. On the other hand, the cons include cyber infidelity, cybersex addiction and online jealousy. This notion is supported by Abbasi and Dibble (2021), who note that excessive social media use can lead to social media-related infidelity. Internet infidelity can be categorised into emotional and sexual infidelity. Emotional infidelity refers to online flirtation with other people that leads to extra-marital affairs. Besides emotional infidelity, there are also sexual and physical infidelity. A study was done by Fisher and Tiller (2021) to investigate the aftermath of online infidelity among genders. The study reveals that women experience greater guilt following emotional infidelity, while men will experience greater guilt following sexual infidelity.

Besides, social media can lead to sexual infidelity, it can also affect sexual activities in an intimate relationship. The exposure to sexual content online via social media can significantly affect the level of commitment in marriage (Olmstead et al., 2016). This notion is supported by research done by Alimoradi et al. (2019), which discovers that social media addiction has a negative effect on sexual dysfunction among women. Meanwhile, a study done by Muusses et al. (2015) shows how social media addiction to sexual content has a reverse association with sexual satisfaction among men. Therefore, social media addiction does not only affect women but also men's sexual desire

Numerous pieces of evidence have demonstrated the impacts of communication technologies on interpersonal communication in relationships. However, in terms of the pros and cons of social media, the evidence is mixed. The factors that lead to conflicting findings include methodology, group of respondents, types of communication technologies and the varying effects of technologies (Goodman-Deane et al., 2016). According to previous studies, it is gathered that the benefits of social media, besides that it is convenient, including enhancing and facilitating communication and maintaining and developing relationships. However, the downsides of social media on relationships are that it promotes infidelity, jealousy and online surveillance. It also could jeopardise relationship commitment and cultivate less desire for face-to-face interaction. Therefore, even the evidence is mixed, the adverse effects of social media outweigh the positive effects. Above all, communication technologies can be considered as one of the predictors to poor-quality of interpersonal communication.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research design

Inductive interpretivism is the research's chosen philosophical framework. Due to the exploratory and explanatory nature of this study, the inductive methodology was adopted. Phenomenological phenomenology with a one-method approach was the methodological approach of choice. The time span for this investigation was cross-sectional. This research leaned towards the interpretivism paradigm after taking the nature of the research problem into account. The best approach for this research is qualitative because it examines a problem that a segment of the population has while attempting to comprehend the importance that individuals attach to various aspects of their lives. In-depth interviews are a good approach of gathering data for the study because it aims to examine the effectiveness of interpersonal communication in married partnerships. In order to gather information for the first, second, third and fourth research questions, the interview method was employed.

4.2. Sample size

The subject of this study was divorced Muslims. Muslim divorcees were chosen because there were more Muslim divorce cases than non-Muslim divorce cases for every 100. Additionally, there is a recognised government division that specialises in handling Muslim divorce matters. In order to examine interpersonal communication in past married relationships, divorce cases from all around Malaysia served as the study's sample. The number of interviewees for this study was 20, as recommended by Sandelowski in 1995. Purposive sampling, also known as nonprobability sampling was utilised in this study. The informants' requirements were set. The following criteria were used: 1) legally divorced under Malaysian Syariah law, 2) previously married legally under Malaysian Syariah law and 3) recently divorced.

4.3. Data analysis technique

The study's qualitative content analysis method was used to examine the interview data. The transcript of the interview was completed right away and given back to the informant for content confirmation. Before the data processing procedure started, all of the transcripts were translated into English. As Nvivo software aids in data organisation and idea management to understand the generated notion, it was chosen as the tool for data analysis. Data traceability, standardisation, edification and standardisation of data reporting are all factors. Coding, compiling codes under prospective sub-themes or topics and contrasting clusters of the emerging coding with the total data set are the components of data analysis.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Demographic profile

The six demographic profile components that the study focused on were age, gender, educational background, career, age of marriage and years since the last divorce was filed. Seven men and 13 women made up the group of 20 informants. Two of the 20 informants were under the age of 30, 15 were between the ages of 31 and 40, one was between the ages of 41 and 55, and two were over the age of 55. 20 informants were interviewed and of those, three had Sijil Rendah Pelajaran (SRP), eight had Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM), eight had diplomas, and one had a degree. One of the informants worked for the government, four of them were executives, five of them were business owners, one of them was a teacher, one of them was retired, four of them were jobless, and the final four were engaged in various occupations. Six informants were married for less than two years, eight remained married for three to 10 years, five remained married for 11 to 20 years, and one informant was married for more than 20 years. Six of the informants divorced in 2021, 10 of the informants divorced in 2020, and the final four informants divorced prior to 2019.

5.2. Themes and subthemes

The objective was to investigate the antecedents of a poor-quality interpersonal communication in marriages. The antecedents were categorised sequentially into communication skills, attitude, third-party involvement, knowledge, time, communication technology, others, and health. The informants mentioned that communication skills were the most prominent antecedent of a poor-quality interpersonal communication.

Communication skills were divided into poor feedback which refers to the responses gained by the informants while communicating with their spouse. They mentioned that when the responses of the communication were poor or not up to their expectation, this would demotivate them to communicate, thus, jeopardising the quality of the interpersonal communication. Next was poor conflict resolution. Informants mentioned that whenever conflicts occurred, poor conflict resolution skills diminished the quality of interpersonal communication. Meanwhile, some informants shared that their spouse rather ignored and avoided communication pertaining to any conflict. Thus, the unresolved conflicts snowballed to become more complex. The third skill was nonverbal. The informants mentioned that lack of nonverbal communication, especially intimate physical touches has undermined the interpersonal communication quality. The informants also revealed that lack of decent appearances had somehow contributed to lack of communication between the spouses. Next skill was listening skills. Most informants said that their spouse lacked listening skills whereby they refused to listen to the stories and messages conveyed by their spouse. Other than that, the informants acknowledged ineffective oral communication skills as one of the antecedents. The informants shared that their marriage suffered from poor quality interpersonal communication because their spouses, including them, lack oral communication skills. Sometimes, the way they talked led to more arguments and conflicts. The last skill was intimacy. The informants mentioned that they lacked romantic communication or intimacy in their marriage which also led to poor quality in interpersonal communication.

Attitudes can be divided into character, responsibility, and respect. Other than that, third-party involvement is another antecedent that was mostly raised by the informants. The informants stated that interference by their peers, in-laws, scandals, and children had somehow interrupted the momentum and dynamic of the communication process with their spouse, thus, endangering it. The next antecedent was knowledge. The informants mentioned that lack of knowledge pertaining to communication, marital knowledge, religion, and knowledge about their spouse had affected the way they communicated with their spouse.

The next antecedent was time. The informants mentioned that their quality of communication was poor due to the lack of time spent communicating with their spouse.

Some of the reasons are they were busy with their job and daily activities. Other than that, physical distance with their spouse also contributed to less time spent talking to their spouse. The next antecedent of poor-quality interpersonal communication was communication technology. Communication technology was divided into phone games, K-dramas, and social media. The informants mentioned that communication technology had somehow affected their communication because their spouse was more occupied and focused on the communication technology rather than communicating with them. The next antecedent was other factors that influenced the interpersonal communication quality, namely financial

issue, culture, and demography. The last antecedent was health. Health was divided into consumption of illegal substances and illnesses. The informants mentioned that the physical and mental conditions of their spouse and themselves had affected the way they communicated.

6. Conclusion

In a nutshell, the antecedents of poor-quality interpersonal communication can be divided into eight categories, namely communication skills, attitude, third party involvement, knowledge, time, communication technology, others, and health. All the antecedents can be categorized into two categories, which are internal and external antecedents.

Internal antecedents refer to the antecedents that originate within oneself, such as communication skills, attitudes, and knowledge. Therefore, for internal antecedents, one can improve and manage the antecedents on their own. On the other hand, external antecedents are the antecedents that are beyond the control of oneself. External antecedents include third party involvement, time, communication technology, others, and health. Hence, external antecedents might be difficult to manage by oneself.

In the current study, both antecedents are identified as contributing to the poor quality of interpersonal communication in marriage in the local context. Some of the antecedents are similar to previous findings, while others are new serendipitous findings. This might be due to differences in the cultural contexts from previous studies which were mostly conducted in Western countries. Because of the world's cultural diversity, there are numerous types of communication differences between regions. For example, in a low-context culture, people are direct. This is different from people in a high-context culture who rely more on subtlety. They use communication that focuses on the message's underlying context, meaning, and tone rather than just the words themselves. The current study is conducted in Malaysia, which practices collectivism and high context culture. The country practices collective and contextual understanding that allows people to communicate a great deal about a thought, opinion, or feeling without ever directly stating it.

Not only that, but cultural dimensions affect the perceived gender roles. Religions and philosophical discourses transmit gender-based values, norms, and roles to people. In the context of marriage, the roles of husband and wife are predetermined by culture, norms, and beliefs. For example, a husband is expected to be the provider for the family, while the wife is expected to manage house chores. When this does not happen, it brings conflict and communication breakdown in the marriage. As a result, there is a bigger picture underlying the antecedents found in this current study that can be explored in future research.

Other than that, with the current pandemic, there are more antecedents of poor-quality interpersonal communication in marriage due to the many new practices and norms that arise during this time. In this pandemic, antecedents such as communication skills, knowledge, communication technology, health, and time are the dominant antecedents. This is because during the pandemic, the way people communicate and spend their time have changed. Not to mention, health, especially mental health, changes dramatically during the pandemic due to the increment of fluctuations and stress level. However, in a different light, some people gained new perspectives of life during the pandemic. People were more appreciative of the people surrounding them. As the world has lost so many lives to the pandemic, it

makes people more caring of others and spend more time engaging in quality communication at home and with people in their circle. Whether or not the pandemic has changed the quality of communication, future research might need to be done to unravel it. Thus, future research could examine the antecedents of poor-quality interpersonal communication specifically during the period of a pandemic.

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