Chapter – I
Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

"Halt Communication and Life comes to a Stand Still"

(Mehta 1997)

Communication is continuous and intricately interwoven in the life of human being. Communicating is a fundamental aspect of not only any individual but also of family and larger social organization. It is anything that conveys meanings that carries a message from one person to another.

The word communication originates from a Latin word "Communis" which means "common" (Gross, Crandall and Knoll, 1980), something common between any two individuals. The communication can be intrapersonal, interpersonal, group or mass.

Communication is a process by which people seek to share meaning via the transmission of symbolic messages. It is essential element in building healthy relationship between individuals (Stone and Freeman, 1998). Communication in the family is essential to satisfy the needs of inclusion, control, affection, expression, affiliation and identification (Mehta, 1997). It is through the communication that the family members share their experiences, ideas and personal news. Communication in the family life is essential for the management of its resources. Communication is also basic to the management of family resources which include decision making related to planning and controlling of resources, establishing goals, decisions related to choice making etc. When the family begins, the goals are set, the family members communicate their needs, desires, likes-dislikes, approval or disapproval of goals and related decisions. Plans are made to use the resources to achieve the set goals and the delegation of responsibilities for each action. Decisions are made as to when, where and how each action will take place, such organizing consists of dividing,

delegating and grouping activities and assigning them to the family members, usually the parents and grandparents have the responsibility of doing this. Controlling of activities becomes necessary once they are organized. Controlling in the management process is the activity that aids in putting and keeping the plan in action, that keeps the family going on its planned path. Here the energizing phase becomes important where the parents and grandparents help the youths to start the work and motivate for initiating the task assigned to them. Generally the youths have a feeling of laziness to get started, This can be overcome by energizing. The adults frequently keep checking the progress of children by guiding and supervising them. Each of this can be done only through effective communication. It is needless to say that communication is an essential component of management. It is also essential among family members in the course of their performance of the managerial activities of the household. It keeps the family moving on its day-to-day course. One of the purpose of communication is to promote future oriented managerial process (Gross, Crandall and Knoll, 1980), whereby the family members need to communicate with each other in order to make decisions regarding use of resources not only for the present but also for future use. So to effect good management, interpersonal communication, which requires the family members to treat each other with understanding, is essential. The sharing of communication is assumed to be a dynamic force, which influences family's style of management. Communication between the family members fosters interaction between them, which helps to exchange information regarding goals, values, standards and the managerial aspects essential for family living and which are unique for each family. These are transmitted in a family from one generation to the other through the communication. For promoting training and socialization of children communication plays an important role. It is through the communication that they teach their children to perform various activities, especially the managerial tasks.

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"Communication in healthy and open family systems is supportive, that is, it has dimensions of information seeking/giving, spontaneous problems solving empathetic understanding, and equality (Deacon and Firebaugh, 1975)."

As in all communication groups, barriers may interfere with communication among family members by preventing message from getting through to each other. Within families, variations are found in age, status (between parent and child), value, and language. Word meanings become altered and teenage speech often differs from speech of middle age. Such discrepancies are communication barriers for members of the family (Deacon and Firebaugh, 1975). Also it is seen that if communication lacks and misunderstanding prevails the relationship between parents and youth is not a positive one. The home atmosphere also plays an important role in good interpersonal communication. If the home atmosphere is healthy, it fosters family interaction. More discrepancies between the individuals lead to more conflicts.

It is usually observed that when a number of people live together under a common roof conflicts are bound to occur. Conflict is a struggle with values, with power, or with resource allocation. People who interact across time are bound to have differing opinions or perceptions about some aspects of family life. (Nickel, Rice and Tucker, 1976). Conflicts occur because every person has his/her own personality and thinking which differs from the other person. Conflicts may affect his/her peace of mind, create tension and also affect the health. The family's co-operation for smooth functioning of household is negatively influenced by conflicts. Conflicts are more evident where members of various age group reside together such as parents, grandparents and young children.

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Since the time immorial, it has been observed that there exists a constant and consistent rift between the younger and older generations. There was a time when "gray hair" was respected as they were able to give guidance based on their own past experience. But at that time the areas of experience were more limited than today. Now the child may have more exposure to outer world than his parent and/or grandparent. The refusal to go by the parents' experiences creates misunderstanding between both the generations (Hurlock, 1955).

> "There are some areas where both the generations are passing through a new span of time, there is great change in some of the social values, which would include moral values, religious values, ritual, respect for elders, and other values concerned with social relationship and spirituality " (Gardens, 1962).

The style of life, habits, patterns of behavior, modernization, norms and values of the older generation are felt as inadequate and irrelevant to the aspiration and expectancies of the newer generation The youth in every era has regarded the old as outdated, old-fashioned, conservative and lacking in understanding. The son complains that his father cannot "understand him". On the other side, the older generation has felt the young as lacking in respect and radical in outlook, which is bound to mismanage the affairs of the world.

Due to advance of science and technology the gap between the older and the younger generation has become vast and the problem created by it have baffled all the concerned people. Today, there are less common ground between the ideas and the ideals of older and the younger generation.

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To avoid conflicts person should have control on his/her self for anger and should not loose temper. Conflicts can also be avoided by discussing and sharing problems in a group. Empathizing, seeing the situation from the other person's point of view and delaying reactions until the relevant information is weighted will help to reduce conflicts. (Stone and Freeman 1998).

In some families where authoritarianism is prevalent parents use dominance methods for resolving conflicts where they want the children to voluntarily submit their wishes/desires or let go their point of view. The families which believe in the democratic pattern of living, conflicts are resolved by compromise where the parents and children, both, let go some of their wishes or desire. Such families may also follow integration method where a totally new solution is found out by which both parents and youths, each one is satisfied. These methods call for open and free communication between parents and youth.

It should be noted that developing communication skills is very essential for smooth and healthy relationship Improvements in the communication skills are very reinforcing When one communicates well, people generally respond one in a positive way, even if they are not totally happy with the message. Poor communication can provoke a negative response that is self-perpetuating, in that it leads to even poorer communication. For effective communication it is essential to take time, accept the other person, listen actively, show empathy, and give timely and specific feedback, recognize differences and watch ones language (Tyagi, 1997)

It is also important that parents and grandparents should appreciate that in the fast changing society they should keep their minds open and be

ready to sort out the differences with the children On the other hand the youth. should also have respect for older generation. For healthy communication the elders should create such home environment in which the adolescent feels protected; a home, which fosters love, the stimulation' encouragement and appreciation. The home should provide the opportunity for adopting varieties of practice, experimentation and experience which prepare him to emerge later with an assurance and confidence into the larger world which is ruthless and impersonal For successful communication between child, parent and grandparent, it is important that the willingness to communicate with each other is accompanied by parental respect for the child's opinion and child's respect for parent and grandparents for their valued guidance. Thus effective communication practiced will surely foster good interpersonal understanding in the family. One needs to recognize communication as an often overlooked but dynamic force in human development and interaction.

Communication thus becomes the crux to the relationship between grandparent, parent, and youth. There is really no gap between generations, only a gap between talking and thinking and thinking and doing, that is indeed a "communication gap". Today, it becomes the need of the hour to evaluate the interpersonal communication amongst them. Once the assessment of the complexity and intensity of the problem has been made the solution thereof would become possible.

Justification

Interpersonal communication is important part of family life. It is vital to basic human relationship in the one social living unit, which does most to shape individual character. If wholesome, practical, affectionate and secure relationship are worthy to be generalized and sustained, then easy flow of thoughts and feelings is imperative. If the meaning of message is interpreted correctly by the receiver, a harmony arises between the sender and the receiver, or else there is disharmony between them. If there are

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similarities in attitudes, beliefs, values and perception between the youth and the elders, the interaction increases but if there are differences, conflicts increases. There is a tendency of strong adherence to the set pattern of values, attitude, standards, beliefs, ways of management, democratic or autocratic ways of behaviors and interaction. The children in the family learn these by observation and through communication with their parents and other family members. Children get exposed to the environment outside the home, where they come across different ways of behavior and interaction. There may be several things, which they find different than their own family. They may find outside environments changing faster than their home environment. Hence they may develop different attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and values than their parents or grandparents. Such differences increase conflict between them, resulting in reduced communication. It is this "communication gap" which is viewed as "generation gap" by and large.

Today the pace of change has terribly increased due to technological advancements. The communication gap is largely a symptom of modernization and technological advancement where there is a fast life in which parents do not have time for their children. Further an intergenerational conflict in the value system has become more apparent in recent times because societies in developed and developing countries due moving today at a much faster pace than in the past. (Gangrade, 1971)

Parental function of the inculcation of norms and values among children calls for considerable tact and understanding and, above all, a ready adjustment to the changes in society. The need for adaptation and adjustment to the shifting demands of society becomes particularly acute in modern society with its rapid pace of change. A certain amount of understanding and tolerance from both sides, a humility, readiness and earnestness to make certain adjustment between them would certainly

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facilitate a compromise between them. The parents and grandparents must know that obedience for its own sake, no matter how much enforced, seldom works. At this age there is more influence through less use of authority and resents it as impinging on the youths independence. But if the elders show understanding and skillfully guide the youth to make a choice, the youth will feel that here is somebody who loves and sympathize with me. One has to realize that once upon a time the parents too had some conflicts with their own parents. This is a natural extension of such a harmless conflict In case, the conflict is serious, there are ways of conflict resolution. They can be a face-to-face talk, free and frank discussions or the third party intervention.

In the world of tomorrow, adolescent will have to grow beyond the models, their parents can provide but they still need appropriate parental models to build on, and they need then parent's love and active concern. It is usually observed that the families where the authoritarian and conservatism is practiced the extent of communication may be less whereas in the democratic and liberal families the extent of communication may be more. Also another factor responsible for the time and extent of communication could be the parents employment, It may happen that where the parents are employed in such families the time devoted for communication may be less and the children may feel neglected that there is no one in the family who can spare enough time for them. This may lead to more of conflicts between the youths and parents. The leisure activities today have also increased as the internet surfing, television, chatting, freeking out, dating etc which reduce the time and extent of interpersonal communication between the family members.

Through this study remedial measures by providing guidelines through the medium of booklet would be suggested to such families for improving their interpersonal communication. Recent interest in

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communication at all levels, individual, interpersonal and organizational is encouraging with necessary awareness of fundamental role of communication in the lives of us all, one may know more about how to develop and manage our communication resources.

The need for the present study was felt because, though many studies (Pathak, 1960, Bakshi, 1972, Vaish 1976, Sethi 1977, Makhijani 1977, Mehta 1990, Shah 1990, and Kaur 1991) have been conducted on the associated factors and extent of intergenerational conflict, the concept of communication in relation to the management of resources among three generation is not yet explored. As pointed out by Gross, Crandall and Knoll, (1980), recently some investigators have become interested in the influence communication may have not only on decision making, but also on other managerial processes such as planning and implementing. The study would be helpful to grandparents, parents and youth to get a deep insight into the interplay of communication. It is also hoped that the study would be helpful to educationist's students, counsellors and social workers to look at the age-old problem in a new perspective.

Communication among family members and others in the near environment is very closely interwoven with daily living (Gross, Crandall and Knoll, 1980). It is the foundation stone for all types of human relations whether it is between husband and wife parent and children or within family members. Stability of the home depends upon the good interpersonal communication among the youth , parents and grandparent; otherwise it cannot be called a home. Since interpersonal communication is basic to all types of human relations, it also needs to be studied in detail that how interpersonal communication takes place among the three generations. The families where the extent of communication was found to be low case study of such families was done to get a deep insight into the dynamics of such families. Also a booklet was developed which included the guidelines

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for effective interpersonal communication for such families. It is hoped that these guidelines would be helpful to grandparents, parents and youth for improving interpersonal communication and also for interpersonal understanding in family decision-making and management. Thus the study is a fact finding one into the dynamics of interpersonal communication among the youth, parents, and grandparents.

Statement of the Problem : The present study aims to study the dynamics of interpersonal communication among three generations i.e. youth, parents and grandparents in selected families.

Objectives

1 To study background characteristics of youth, parents and grandparents living in one family.

2. To identify various values held by the three generations living in one family.

3. To study the perception of youth regarding home environment.

4. To assess the parent child relationship as perceived by youth of the family.

5 To study the selected aspects of interpersonal communication between grandparents, parents and youth viz.

- The extent of communication

- The content of communication

- The purpose of communication

6. To identify the barriers of communication between three generations as reported by them.

7. To find out the areas of conflict and methods of resolving conflict between grandparents, parents and youth.

8. To study the methods used for effective communication between the grandparents, parents and youth.

9. To find out the relationship between selected variables considered in the study.

10. To undertake case study of selected families to understand dynamics of interpersonal communication among these families.

Delimitations

1   The study was limited to only those families who had the three generations in the family namely youth, parents and grandparents staying together in one home.

2. The study was limited to youth ranging between age of 18-21 years.

3 The study was limited to 50 families of Baroda city selected purposively.

4 The case study was limited to 10 families

Limitation

1 Since change in behavior requires long time and concious efforts, it was anticipated that the change in existing pattern of interpersonal communication would require long time. Hence the study of effect of counselling and providing guidelines through a booklet on interpersonal communication was beyond the scope of present study.

Assumption

1. There exists some communication among grandparents, parents and youth in each family.

Hypotheses

1   There will be a variation in the extent of communication, extent of barriers and extent of conflict between youth, parents and

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grandparents according to their selected personal, family and situational variables.

2   There will be a relationship between

    (i)   Extent of communication, and extent of conflict as expressed by youth, parents and grandparents.

    (ii)   Extent of communication and barriers to communication as expressed by youths, parents and grandparents.

    (iii)   Extent of barriers and extent of conflicts as expressed by youth, parents and grandparents.