



Analyzing the lived experience of birth order in the communicational dimension based on the perspective of first children: a phenomenological study

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Abstract

Aim: This research was conducted with the aim of analyzing the live experience of birth order in the communicational dimension based on the perspective of the first children. **Methods:** The present research method is applied and qualitative type of phenomenology. The participants of this research included the first children of Isfahan city in 2022. The selection of the participants was continued in a targeted manner until the saturation point and finally the selection of the first 16 children and the participants were subjected to semi-structured interviews. In order to analyze the data, the Colaizzi theme analysis method was used. **Results:** Data analysis led to the identification of, 53 primary concepts 10 central themes and 3 main themes. The results showed that intra-family communication was classified into 6 themes of (continuity of relations with parents, separation of relations with parents, improvement of relations with other children, separation of relations with other children, satisfaction with marital relationship and repressed psychological needs). The second main theme of personal communication included (increasing and decreasing the quality of communication with oneself). Finally, the theme of social communication was classified into the sub-themes of (lack of social interest and limitation in friendships). **Conclusion:** Overall, the results showed that being the first child can affect various aspects of communication and create challenges in marriage, friendships, social and family relationships. Modifying interactive patterns and informing parents and children can be effective in preventing challenges. Because the order of birth plays an important role in the formation of intra-family and extra-family relationships.

Keywords: Communication, Birth order, First child, Phenomenology.

Introduction

One of the important concepts in family counseling is the family life cycle. Each stage of this cycle has its own needs, tasks and crises. So that the lack of conformity and compatibility with these needs and tasks will make it difficult to enter the next stage of the life cycle (Zahrakar & Jafari, 2022). The birth of a child is also known as one of the most important events in the life cycle (Martinez, 2019). In such a way that family therapists have described the birth of the first child and the changes related to roles as a crisis that creates many challenges for parents and the born child (Whitburn et al., 2018).

In this regard, the communication dimension is also a central issue in family communication approaches. These approaches analyze the conflicts between family members not in the form of separate problems, but as an insufficient and reactive relationship. Failure and weakness in communication is one of the most common problems reported by unhappy families. Especially when a new member enters the family and how to deal with and communicate properly for the members is vague and ambiguous (Hamid et al., 2017). Therefore, ineffective communication causes a deep interpersonal distance that is experienced in all aspects of life and all parts of society. Not using the communication skills necessary for an enjoyable family life cycle can lead to loneliness, physical illness and mental stress, feelings of inadequacy and job dissatisfaction, family problems and even death. Disappointment, biased and incorrect views and wrong relationships, in addition to the side effects it has on the communication between children, undoubtedly also shakes the family structure (Ghasempour, 2011).

As mentioned, the birth order of children is considered one of the most important and challenging developmental stages, and due to the overlap of roles and increasing responsibilities of parents, it seems necessary to redefine the communication dimension of the language of the first children. On the other hand, it seems necessary to analyze the communication dimension in order to reduce social-communication challenges, adapt to new conditions, increase the well-being of first children, and make appropriate decisions in relationships (Kwan and Kwan, 1992). Also, the deep discovery of the experiences of the first children leads to the expansion of awareness about the next cycles of life and makes their decisions for marriage, education and career better. Despite the many researches conducted in relation to the period of transition to parenthood, such as the research of Jahandar et al. (2021) who studied the phenomenology of the changes in the marital identity of mothers after the birth of the first child, the void of qualitative research in the field of communication challenges of first children is felt. In addition, most of the existing research studies the changes and perceptions of parents at this stage and examining the problems and concerns of the first children has been neglected. While the importance of children's roles, especially in the culture of our country, can have a tremendous impact on their identity. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to analyze the concept of birth order in the communication dimension based on the perspective of the first children.

Method

The present research method is applied and qualitative type of phenomenology. The participants of this research included the first children of Isfahan city in 2022. The selection of the participants was continued in a targeted manner until the saturation point and finally

the selection of the first 16 children and the participants were subjected to semi-structured interviews. In order to analyze the data, the Colaizzi theme analysis method was used.

Results

Data analysis led to the identification of, 53 primary concepts 10 central themes and 3 main themes. The results showed that intra-family communication was classified into 6 themes of (continuity of relations with parents, separation of relations with parents, improvement of relations with other children, separation of relations with other children, satisfaction with marital relationship and repressed psychological needs). The second main theme of personal communication included (increasing and decreasing the quality of communication with oneself). Finally, the theme of social communication was classified into the sub-themes of (lack of social interest and limitation in friendships).

Conclusion

This research was conducted with the aim of analyzing the concept of birth order in the communication dimension based on the perspective of the first children. Based on the analysis of the interviews of the first children participating in the research, 3 main themes were obtained: intra-family communication, individual communication, social communication. Regarding the first theme of intra-family communication, it included the themes of continuity of relations with parents, separation of relations with parents, improvement of relations with other children, separation of relations with other children, satisfaction with marital relationship and suppressed psychological needs.

Therefore, it is suggested that in the next researches, research should be done on challenges and other behavioral, cognitive, and emotional problems. It is also suggested that the role of psychological and counseling interventions for the communication self-improvement of first-born children should be considered by researchers. It is suggested to conduct this research on second children and compare the findings of both researches with regard to new lifestyles. In the end, it is suggested that considering that in this research, important components were obtained in order to understand the communication challenges, developing a suitable counseling protocol for management and counseling with first children should be put on the agenda of counselors and psychologists. It is hoped that this article will be an approach to raise the awareness of counselors and therapists.

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