

**The Golden Rule Principle and the Psychological Conditioning of Children
by Parents: A Religio-Ethical Assessment**

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Abstract

Marriage which is a divine institution is faced with a lot of challenges and violence. The home that is supposed to be a replica of Jesus' relationship with the church has turned out to be a war zone which has destroyed lives and properties due to narrow-mindedness, selfishness and misunderstanding of couples. Physical Violence in marriage, as a whole, has been thoroughly looked into. Albeit, Non-physical violence, such as psychological conditioning, has not been given proper attention, especially when it has to do with women being the perpetrator. The golden rule is a universal principle upheld by most world religions. This paper, the Golden Rule Principle and the Psychological Conditioning of Children by Parents: a Religio-Ethical Assessment proffers solutions to the negative psychological conditioning by mothers by examining the concept of the golden rule. This paper employed the qualitative research design. Desk research method and key informant interview method are used. An online survey conducted on social media was interrogated while 20 people were interviewed; 10 parents and 10 children. The purpose of the key informant interview method is to corroborate the data gathered from the online survey. Marriages are in shambles today because of the selfishness of all parties involved Women play a very important role in the family, and Africans see home-making as the sole responsibility of the mother hence they are saddled with loads of responsibilities. Ranging from taking care of the home, the children and every other activity in the home. Most fathers are always busy, therefore they make their wives go for some activities that pertain to the children. Although some mothers do not make their children hate their father, most mothers, often maximize the opportunity by psychologically conditioning the children to see the father as someone who does not love them enough. Fathers should always ensure to love their wives and be available to the children

Keywords: Marriage, Golden Rule, Non-Physical Violence, Psychology

Introduction

Marriage which is a divine institution is faced with a lot of challenges and violence. The home that is supposed to be a replica of Jesus' relationship with the church has turned out to be a war zone which has destroyed lives and properties due to narrow-mindedness, selfishness and misunderstanding of couples. Physical Violence in marriage, as a whole, has been thoroughly looked into. Albeit, Non-physical violence has not been given proper attention, especially when it has to do with women being the perpetrator.

Looking at the principle of the golden rule, all religion preaches doing unto others what you would want them to do unto you. Even though the saying is a common one, and the teachings are taught in most of the world's religions,



selfishness has not seized to exist. The family is no longer what it ought to be, disunity and discord have been sown even by members of the same family. Applying this principle in the home will foster love and unity, no one will look to see the downfall of any member of the family.

Objectives

Thus, this study pried into the world of marital non-physical violence and how it can damage the fundamental unity of the family. This study also examined the negative effects of psychological conditioning by the mother against the father. It will further address the fundamental responsibilities of fathers to a child's psychological development.

Justification of the Study

Several authors have written about the psychological conditioning of children but this study seeks to investigate psychological conditioning through the lens of the golden rule.

Methodology

This paper employed the qualitative research design. Desk research method and key informant interview method are used. Desk Research is a method that explores data from existing documents and previous research **secondary data** to gather information on a particular topic. It can provide solid arguments and help you elaborate a line of thought or fight for your ideas. And to do this, Desk Research relies on data already collected from other people.¹

An interview is a qualitative research method that relies on asking questions to collect data. Interviews involve two or more people, one of whom is the interviewer asking the questions. This method is used to corroborate the desk research method.² 20 persons were interviewed; 10 parents and 10 children.

Theoretical Framework

One of the theories used is Freud's Psychosexual Development Theory. Freud concluded that childhood memories and unconscious desires affect conduct.³ The behaviour of a child can be traced back to the childhood memories gotten either through observation or participation. According to Freud's psychosexual theory, child development occurs in a series of stages, each focused on different

1Editorial Aela. 2022. Desk Research: How To Conduct Secondary Research Efficiently <https://aelaschool.com/en/research/desk-research-conduct-secondary-research-efficiently/#:~:text=Desk%20Research%20is%20a%20method,or%20fight%20for%20your%20ideas>. date accessed 20/01/2022

2Tegan George.2022. Types of Interviews in Research: Guide & Examples. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/interviews-research/> date accessed 20/01/2022

3Breuer, J., & Freud, S. (1957). Studies on hysteria. Basic Books

pleasure areas of the body. During each stage, the child encounters conflicts, which play a significant role in development.⁴

Another theorist who propounded a theory about developmental psychology is an American psychologist Albert Bandura, he believed that children observe, imitate, and model the behaviours and reactions of others.⁵ Children learn by observation and will end up reinforcing what is heard or seen.

Marriage

Marriage is a socially and legally recognized partnership, typically involving a man and a woman. It is governed by laws, norms, conventions, beliefs, and attitudes that specify the partners' obligations and grant status to their children (if any). The many fundamental social and personal functions that marriage provides a structure for, including sexual gratification and regulation, the division of labour between the sexes, economic production and consumption, and the satisfaction of personal needs for affection, status, and companionship, are what is responsible for marriage's universality across different societies and cultures⁶.

God created marriage in the Garden of Eden, one of the two institutions established at creation.⁷ God observed that Adam was alone and lonely, and as the general saying goes, "loneliness kills faster than sickness⁸", it was important for God to find a companion, a help meet suitable for him.⁹ When God created marriage, He wanted man to have someone like him; all creatures were created in pairs. Adam was alone and this loneliness was eating him up from within, God noticed this and swung into action and created for him a help meet.

God created marriage; therefore, it is a sacred rite that should never be entered into with an attitude of self-centeredness. To determine whether their course of action is in line with God's will, those who are considering this move should sincerely and fervently reflect on its significance and seek spiritual guidance. It is important to carefully study the guidance provided in God's word on this subject. A marriage that is created with the sincere intention of following the instructions in the Bible is regarded favourably in heaven. The topic of marriage should be thought through with cool reason and impartial judgement. Before making a decision that ties people together for life, the Bible should always be consulted as a guide.¹⁰

4Silverman, D. K. (2017). Psychosexual stages of development (Freud). In V. Zeigler-Hill & T. Shackelford (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of personality and individual differences*. Springer.

5Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice Hall.

6 "Marriage." n.d.<https://www.britannica.com/topic/marriage>. Accessed November 21, 2022

7Olabode, Omotosho. 2019. *Biblical Disposition on Marriage: A Model for African Christian Church*.Lagos, Lagos: MonkmediaNig Ltd. 5

8Oladapo, Ayodele. 2019. "Loneliness Kills Faster t... | AyodeleOladapo | YourQuote."Loneliness Kills Fasterthan Chinese Poison. August 18, 2019. <https://www.yourquote.in/ayodele-oladapobj90o/quotes/loneliness-kills-faster-than-chinese-poison-udtdl>. Accessed November 26, 2022

9"The Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."(Genesis 2:18).

10Ellen, White. 1991. *Counsels for the Church*. Washington, D.C: Review and Herald Publishing Association.116

Marriage is a relationship of love; According to the Bible, wives should be loved by husbands (Ephesians 5:25), and young women should be taught to respect and cherish their husbands (Titus 2:4). Unlike any other relationship, love in a marriage can be both more altruistic and deeper¹¹. That is why God said “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.¹²” the union God expects from husband and wife is deep. Genesis 2:24 illustrates; that once a man leaves, he is instructed to “cleave” to his wife. This means to glue, to adhere, to join, to stick. The Hebrew word used in Genesis is more expressive: to cling, to adhere, to abide fast together, to follow¹³.

Married couples are meant to be unified in every possible way. They are expected to be unified physically, financially, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Sexual intimacy is an expression of love that brings happiness and unity into a marriage. It is also the power by which married couples can “multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 1:28). Intimacy is a blessing that can lead to the incomparable joy of children as part of the eternal family unit.¹⁴

Modern-day misconception about marriage is on the high side because the purpose of marriage is not known. God created marriage primarily for companionship, the purpose of marriage is to meet man’s need for companionship,¹⁵ once this purpose is known and properly understood, marriages will stand the test of time. The idea of procreation and propagation of the human race is not the sole purpose of marriage¹⁶. Adam said “ Intimacy apart from the commitment to remain together is not adequate; commitment to remain in association apart from intimacy is equally deficient. Both elements are necessary to defeat loneliness”¹⁷

Therefore, for marriages to work, both couples must put in an adequate amount of work and commitment, for “marriage without commitment is a sorry situation”.¹⁸ marriage is a lifelong commitment that must be seen as such; many do not want to put in the effort to resolve their differences, since they know they can call to quit at any time. The Bible describes marriage as a covenant. According to the English dictionary, a covenant is “an agreement to do or not do a particular thing; a promise, incidental to a deed or contract, either express or implied; a pact or binding agreement between two or more parties”¹⁹. Knowing that marriage is a covenant between two people, it is important to treat it as

11 Church of the, Latter Day Saint. n.d. “Why Is Marriage So Important? | ComeUntoChrist.”Why Is Marriage So Important? | ComeUntoChrist. Accessed November 26, 2022. <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/comeuntochrist/belong/family/why-is-marriage-so-important>.

12 Genesis 2:24

13 Ekpendu, Ikechi. 2016/09/01, Understanding The Concept of Leave to Cleave in Gen.2:24 and Mark 10:7. As A Model For Political and Societal Marriage Dynamics. IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science. Volume 21. DOI 10.9790/0837-2109143945. 45

14 Church of the, Latter Day Saint. n.d.

15 Jay, E. Adams. 1980. Solving Marriage Problems: Biblical Solutions for Christian Counselor. E.O Overcomers & Co. Ltd. Aba, Abia State, Nigeria. 20

16 Jay, E. Adams. 1980. 21

17 Jay, E. Adams. 1980. 21

18 Jay, E. Adams. 1980. 23

19 The Oxford English Dictionary. V 5.2.2

such. The commitment in marriage is called the *covenant of companionship*²⁰. The marriage covenant is sacred²¹ and that is why it is advised that if men and women are in the habit of praying twice a day before they contemplate marriage, they should pray four times a day when such a step is anticipated. Marriage is something that will influence and affect your life, both in this world and in the world to come.²²

Violence

Violence is defined by the World Health Organization on WRVH as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against a group or community, that either result in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation.”²³ there are two major classes of violence; physical violence and non-physical violence. Other forms of violence include, but are not limited to:²⁴

1. Self-directed violence: this includes suicidal thoughts or actions and forms of self-harm.
2. Interpersonal violence: this includes acts of violence and intimidation that occur between family members, partners or individuals, whether or not they are known to one another, and whether the violence is specifically intended to further the aims of any group or cause. E.g. child maltreatment.
3. Collective violence: it is the “instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group...against another group or set of individuals, to achieve political, economic or social objectives”.
4. Sexual violence: sexual violence can occur at an interpersonal or collective level. Sexual violence incorporates non-consensual sexual contact and non-consensual non-contact acts of a sexual nature, such as voyeurism and sexual harassment.
5. Gender-based violence: it is a term that recognises that violence occurs within the context of women’s and girls’ subordinate status in society, and serves to maintain this unequal balance of power.
6. Intimate partner violence: it refers to physical, sexual or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse.
7. Domestic violence: “Domestic violence can be better understood as a chronic syndrome characterised not only by episodes of physical

20 Jay, E. Adams. 1980. 24

21 Ellen, White. 1899. Christianity in the Marriage Tradition. Washington, D.C: Review and Herald Publishing Association. 7

22 Ellen, White. 1888. Marrying and Giving in Marriage. Washington, D.C: Review and Herald Publishing Association. 12

23 Krug E; Dahlberg L; Mercy J. et al. (2002) World report on violence and health. Geneva: World Health

Organization <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2652990#>!po=6.73077 date accessed 20/12/2022

24 Krug E; Dahlberg L; Mercy J. et al. (2002)

violence but also by the emotional and psychological abuse the perpetrators use to maintain control over their partners²⁵."

8. Family violence
9. Child maltreatment
10. Youth violence
11. Elder abuse
12. Workplace violence
13. Structural violence
14. Armed conflict

All of the above stated are forms of both Physical and Non-physical violence. However, this paper will focus on non-physical violence such as Psychological or Mental abuse, Emotional or Verbal abuse, and Economic or financial abuse.

Conflicts In Marriage

There is no marriage without its fair share of conflicts. Many young people's brains appear to be bewitched by the prospect of marriage. When two people get to know one another, they fall in love with each other and are completely engrossed by them. Judgement is thrown out and the reason is blinded. They insist on doing things their way no matter the consequences, and they won't listen to advise or follow orders. The infatuation that grips them is like an infection or contagion that must eventually run its course; there doesn't appear to be a way to stop it. There may be others in their immediate vicinity who understand that marriage between the folks involved has the potential to only bring about lifelong sadness.²⁶ Marriage vows are frequently ignored in today's environment. Marriage was never intended to atone for the many sins that people commit. Sensuality and immoral behaviour in a marriage set up the mind and moral taste for immoral behaviour outside the marriage environment.²⁷

It is easy to view conflicts in marriage as the sole doing of the man, especially when it comes to all forms of abuse.

Roles of Mothers in the Psychological Conditioning of Children

"If a woman has to choose between catching a fly ball and saving an infant's life, she will choose to save the infant's life without even considering if there are men on base," once stated the eminent American humorist and author David Barry. This clearly illustrates a woman's parental instincts. Women make better parents because they naturally care for their children better due to innate

²⁵Hegarty K; Hindmarsh E D; Gilles M T. Domestic violence in Australia: definition, prevalence and nature of presentation in clinical practice. Med J Aust 2000;173:363-367.

²⁶Ellen, White. 1888.9

²⁷Ellen, White. 1887. The Sin of Licentiousness. Washington, D.C: Review and Herald Publishing Association.2

maternal impulses.²⁸ In the past, it was believed that a good mother would devote her entire life to her family. Because mothers are responsible for giving children the nurturing care and support they need as they grow, they have traditionally been the glue that ties families together. A mother's nurturing is unmatched and essential to a child's upbringing.

The mother has the greatest impact on her child, and their bond begins while the infant is still in the womb.²⁹ A mother can impact a child's life positively and negatively. Because a woman is a child's first and most crucial teacher, youngsters are more likely to believe their mothers than their fathers. A mother is the one who is with the baby before its arrival and every moment later. She knows what her little one wants and learns naturally about the right ways of upbringing. Hence, every gesture, action, and behaviour of a mother greatly influences the child's character.

There are 8 different ways, as highlighted by Sadiya³⁰, in which a mother is expected to influence a child's development. They are as follows:

1. Build the first bonds of emotional attachment

A mother, as a primary caregiver, is the child's first point of emotional bonding and attachment during the child's first few days, weeks, and months. The infant will have their first feelings toward the mother. This feeling will have a significant impact on the child's general well-being and development. The mother-child bond that is built in the earliest years will have a significant impact on how they behave in social and emotional contexts, especially as they get older. Such a child will learn a lot about comprehending others' and their wants from how quickly the mother responds to them and how swiftly their emotional requirement is attended to.

2. Teach them about trust and security

To understand the significance of mothers in child development, learning to trust and provide emotional security are two very important life skills that must be taught to the child. It is the responsibility of the mother to teach the child about the value of trust and being trustworthy. Always be available to guide and direct the child on the right path, this unwavering support and encouragement will propel them to do better for themselves and their environment.

3. Be sensitive

Another way by which a mother is expected to influence the overall development of a child is by being sensitive. There will be times as a mother

28StudyCorgi. (2021, October 29). Role of the Mother in the Child's Life. Retrieved from <https://studycorgi.com/role-of-the-mother-in-the-childs-life/> date accessed 19/01/2023

29Sadiya Qamar. 2022. 8 Different Ways In Which A Mother Can Influence Child Development. https://www.momjunction.com/articles/different-ways-in-which-a-mother-can-influence-child-development_00353010/ date accessed 19/01/2023

30SadiyaQamar. 2022. 8 Different Ways In Which A Mother Can Influence Child Development.

when it feels like nothing is going as planned. It's normal to become agitated and give up in despair. Think about things from the child's perspective. An important life lesson about being considerate of the needs and opinions of others would have been taught if the mother is sensitive enough. A child might have a different perspective and approach to things, a mother is expected to be sensitive enough to recognize the child's viewpoint as well. Mothers should make an effort to connect with their children before criticizing the child.

4. Be kind and loving

The adopted Parenting style will have a long-lasting effect on how the child develops throughout childhood and into adulthood. No matter how anxious or upset the mother gets, kindness to the child should never be compromised. The mother's response to the child's regular wants and activities will teach them the value of showing others compassion.

5. Let them know that family is about being together

The value of a family will quickly be taught to the child, especially by the mother. Interactions with other family members will teach the youngster about a variety of crucial relationships in life. Make sure to take the youngster on numerous family outings and introduce them to other family members. Regularly spend time with other family members at home.

6. Have a positive attitude

Yes, life can be challenging, but how the mother responds to these challenges can show the child the value of maintaining an optimistic outlook. Adequate responses to numerous issues, no matter how minor or significant, can demonstrate to the child how keeping a positive outlook may help them get through many challenges. Make an effort to explain in the child's language by creating tales based on actual happenings.

7. Encourage your child to work hard

One other responsibility of the mother is to instill in the child the importance of perseverance! A child could think that working hard makes you exhausted at the end of the day, but inform them of the enormous happiness and joy it brings. Additionally, when a child makes an effort to take part in an activity or assist with a task, compliment them on their effort rather than their performance.

8. Teach them the importance of discipline and routine

Children will feel most at ease during the formative years of their life when they adhere to a routine. By sticking to a routine, the mother may demonstrate to the children how time and obligations are successfully managed. In addition to making sure certain basic routines are observed, teach the child about the value of discipline.

The Golden Rule: Multi-Religious Perspective

Virtues are standards for ethical, moral conduct—they enable you to look at yourself in the mirror without cringing³¹. at some point in our existence, we have had someone ask the very important question “How would you feel if treated the way you have done to someone else?” The lesson these adults were trying to teach us is what is popularly known in the West as the “golden rule.” This rule commands people to get beyond their own selfishness and self-absorbed isolation. The golden rule serves as a reminder that what hurts us hurts others and that what heals us, heals others³². To fulfil the law, we are to carry out the golden rule and do unto others as we would have them do unto us³³.

In nearly all the world’s religions, personal morality begins with this simple concept: Treat others as you would like to be treated. As such, the golden rule is perhaps the most basic of personal virtues.

The different faiths all have their version of this universal message³⁴:

- “Not one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother what he desires for himself” (40 Hadith of an-Nawawi 13, Islam).
- “Wound not others, do no one injury by thought or deed, utter no word to pain thy fellow creatures” (The Law Code of Manu, Hinduism).
- “Do not do to others what you would not like yourself” (The Analects 12:2, Confucianism).
- “If you do not wish to be mistreated by others, do not mistreat anyone yourself” (Counsels of Adurbad 92, Zoroastrianism).
- “We obtain salvation by loving our fellow man and God” (GranthJapji 21, Sikhism).
- “Having made oneself the example, one should neither slay nor cause to slay. . . . As I am, so are other beings; thus let one not strike another, nor get another struck. That is the meaning” (Dhammapada, Buddhism).
- “One should not behave towards others in a way which is disagreeable to oneself. This is the essence of morality. All other activities are due to selfish desire” (AnusansanaParva 113.8, Hinduism).
- “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Leviticus 19:18, Judaism).
- “Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them . . .” (Matthew 7:12, Christianity)

All the Religions of the world preach love and respect for one another; to be a true believer, one must treat people well, and embrace justice.

31 Rabbi Marc Gellman; Monsignor Thomas Hartman. (2002). Religion for Dummies. Wiley Publishing, Inc. 111 River St. Hoboken, Indianapolis, Indiana. NJ 07030-5774. 264
 32 Rabbi Marc Gellman; Monsignor Thomas Hartman. (2002). 264
 33 Ellen, White. 1892. The signs of the Times. Washington, D.C: Review and Herald Publishing Association. 3
 34 Rabbi Marc Gellman; Monsignor Thomas Hartman. (2002). 265

Many marriages are in shambles because of selfishness³⁵. Make the Golden Rule the law for the Family. The most valuable rules for social and family intercourse are to be found in the Bible. There is not only the best and purest standard of morality but the most valuable code of politeness³⁶.

Findings

A survey was recently conducted on social media, people were asked to share their psychological conditioning experiences, and how they were emotionally conditioned to see their father as a bad person by their mothers. Several anonymous confessions were sent and the contents go to show that many people have a psychological condition to hate their fathers. Women play a very important role in the family, and Africans see home-making as the sole responsibility of the mother hence they are saddled with loads of responsibilities. Ranging from taking care of the home, the children and every other activity in the home. Most fathers are always busy, therefore they make their wives go for some activities that pertain to the children.

The father will give the mother money to pay the school fees of the children and buy clothes and other kinds of stuff for the children. Because of the direct contact and relationships, the mothers have with their children, they can manipulate the minds of the children to see their father as an irresponsible father, all the money being paid for fees and other things has been the sole responsibility of the mother. The children will in turn see their father in the exact light the woman had painted the man. This will cause a major strain on the relationship between the father and the children. To worsen the situation, African fathers portray themselves as 'almighty', they are never around to attend to some issues the children might be facing in their formative years. Whatever is being taught to the child by the mother will sink deep into the subconscious of the child.

Oral interviews were also conducted, out of the 5 parents interviewed, 3 claimed that even though mothers have a high influence on the psychological conditioning of their children, the influence can be used in a positive dimension. They affirm that if the father loves his wife sincerely, there is little to no chance of negative conditioning. While the remaining 2 interviewed insisted that no matter the amount of love shown, the innate selfish nature of a woman will make her consciously and unconsciously tilt the love of the children towards her direction.

Furthermore, 5 children were interviewed at random and they all attested to the fact that their mothers have, at one point or the other, consciously or unconsciously, influenced the way they see their fathers.

Conclusion

Conclusively, marriage is a gift from God to man, it is meant to be a union of bliss. The wife is a "help meet suitable" for the man, while children are a gift from God and they are supposed to "honour their father and their mother",

35Ruth & Philimon Amanze. 2020. Become a Better Family. Jamiro Press Link Seralfred Chambers, Anifowose, Ikeja-Lagos. 23

36Ellen, White. 1952. The Adventist Home. Washington, D.C: Review and Herald Publishing Association. 432

which implies a mutual love between the father, mother and children. Lots of mothers, for whatever reason, manipulate their children into loving them more than their fathers. But if the principle of the golden rule is put in the fore, mothers will not condition their children to hate their fathers but will rather be the glue that cements the family together.

Recommendations

Non-physical violence is an avoidable form of violence especially when it has to do with the psychological conditioning of children. Here are some recommendations:

1. Mothers should always remember the golden rule in their dealings with their children.
2. Fathers should show love to their mothers and their children as this will tighten the bond between them which will be difficult to break.
3. Fathers should not be “absentee” fathers. He must be involved in the day-to-day development of the children. This will show the children that they are their father’s priority.
4. Fathers should bridge the gap through constant and purposeful communication. Getting to know the children will help to foster unity as they would be free to tell their father about their challenges.
5. The fear of God should be the centre of the home. A home without God will be prone to all forms of satanic attacks.

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