

Socializing Styles and Intensity of Communication in Parent-Child Relationships

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The objective of this research is to assess the relation between family education and communication. The family communication questionnaire (C. F. 88, Musitu *et al.*) and an adaptation of the Family Education Scale were applied to a sample of 424 male and female secondary school students between the ages of 14 and 18 (EMBU). The same procedure was followed with the parent's child-rearing patterns. Once these groups had been obtained the differences between the Family Education and Communication scale factors in both variables were analysed by applying the General Linear Model and Turkey's Test. Firstly, the Family Education is assigned as dependent variable and the Family Communication as independent variable. Then, the same process is repeated with the Communication as the dependent variable and the parental structure groups as the independent variable. With regards to the results, it is important to emphasize the strong bidirectional relation found between both variables.

Adolescence is a stage of human life which is characterized by the dramatic increase of the importance and intensity of friendship and the notorious decrease in parent-child relationships (Dickens & Perlman, 1981; Hunter, 1985; Kon, 1981; Pip *et al.*, 1984; Moore, 1987; Noiler & Bagi, 1985; Steinberg, 1981). However, Bell (1967) emphasized the study of the relationship between parents and adolescents and regarded this period as a "taking-off period" (a period in which the adolescent tries to increase his/her independence and, eventually, abandons the immediate family system). On the other hand, Erikson (1959) pointed out the fact that, along with the need of a greater independence, the adolescent also needs the affection and support from his/her parents. Likewise, Noller and Callan (1991) consider the quality of family relationships to be of the utmost importance in order to determine the adolescent's competence and confidence when

facing this stage of life. According to McGoldrick & Carter (1980), the changes in the family system might lead to a relationship more in accordance to the age of the parents and adolescents.

Family Communication in this period is a very conclusive factor in the family atmosphere. In relation to this, several researches have shown connections between parent-adolescent communication and self-esteem (Matteson, 1974; Noller & Callan, 1991), school adjustment (Sporakowski & Eubanks, 1976; Fontaine, 1990) and academic achievement (Christopher, 1967). Other researches have pointed at the negative effects of a family communication breakdown (Chatier & Goehner, 1976; Noller & Callan, 1991) and the advantageous effects on self-esteem and well-being arising from a positive communication increase (Bachman, 1970; Noiler & Callan, 1991).

Some authors have connected the characteristics of the communicator to the acceptance level of discipline strategy (Cody *et al.*, 1981) or else to individual characteristics or the dispositional characteristics of the "discipline demanding" person (Boster *et al.*, 1984).

The influence of the **Family Discipline** technics are conclusive for the adolescent

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socialization (Parker *et al.*, 1979; Maccoby, 1980; De Man, 1982; Rollins & Thomas, 1979; Ownby & Murray, 1982; Rose *et al.*, 1983; Fontaine *et al.*, 1986, 1992; Noller & Callan, 1991). The concept "Family Discipline" refers to the set of strategies used by the parents and aimed to influence their children by urging a series of values and cultural patterns which guide the children's social behaviour (Molpeceres, 1991). Two main sources of variability in the parenting discipline have been identified; support and control (Rollins & Thomas, 1979; Rohner & Pettengill, 1985; Musitu *et al.*, 1988; Garcia *et al.*, in press). Parenting Support has been defined as "the behaviour displayed by a parent towards his/her child which makes the child feel confident with his/her parent and assures the parent's full acceptance and approval as a person" (Thomas *et al.*, 1974). Parenting Control refers to the type or degree of the parent's influential power (Musitu *et al.*, 1988). Generally speaking, the two types of parental discipline have been made according to the type of control exerted on the child (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1990). Although different terms have been used three main family discipline styles have been pointed out. Musitu and Gutiérrez (1984) have distinguished between "inductive" or support discipline, "coercive" discipline and "indifferent" or "negligent" discipline in a dimensional study which is consistent with the theoretical conclusions from other authors.

The study of the relationship between family communication and socializing styles has been neglected in previous literature. Some approaches have analysed the relationship between communication/self-esteem (Chartier & Goehner, 1976; Noller & Callan, 1991) and school adjustment (Fontaine, 1990). Moreover, there is a vast tradition in the field of pathologic communication and psycho-social adjustment (Watzlawich *et al.*, 1967; Selvini, 1990; Bertando *et al.*, 1992; Buelga *et al.*, 1993). The present study intends to analyse the relationships between the different family-socializing styles (Musitu & Gutierrez, 1984) and family communication. The hypothesis of the study is as follows: families with a higher understanding and support of the education of their children

yield a higher communication level; families with lower communication levels develop a higher frequency of coercion and physical punishment.

Methodology

Description of the universe and sample

The sampling technique of this study is the proportional distribution according sex, age and academic level.

The universe of this work consists of 424 Valencian secondary-school students who were in their first, second and third year courses during 1988-89. With regards to the sex, there is a similar proportion of male and female subjects: 48,11% male and 51,89% female subjects.

Table 1.

Distribution of frequency with the sex variable.

Sex	Fr.	Fr. A.	Pc.	Pc A.
Male	204	204	48.1	48.1
Female	220	424	51.9	100.0

The ages of the subjects range between 14 and 18 years old. 65% are between 15 and 16 years old, 11,3% are 14 years old, 17,2% are 17 years old and 5,7% are 18 years old.

Table 2.

Distribution of frequency within the age variable.

Age	Fr.	Fr. A.	Pc.	Pc. A.
14	48	48	11.3	11.3
15	126	174	29.7	41.0
16	153	327	36.1	77.1
17	73	400	17.2	94.3
18	24	424	5.7	100.0

As for the percentage of pupils in each of the three Secondary Education levels (Bachillerato Unificado Polivalente) 26,9% attend the first level, 41% attend the second level and 32,1% attend the third level.

Table 3.

Distribution of frequency within the education level.

Level	Fr.	Fr. A.	Pc.	Pc. A.
1st	114	114	26.9	26.9
2nd	174	288	41.0	67.9
3rd	136	424	40.8	100.0

Instruments

The instruments used in this research are an adaptation of the Family Education Questionnaire EMBU (Perris *et al.*, 1980) and a Family Communication Questionnaire specially designed for this study.

The Family Communication Questionnaire assesses the filial perception of the communication level within the family environment. In accordance with the available literature and after interviewing some teenagers, twelve topics were obtained: T.V., entertainment, studies, friends, drugs, sexuality, politics, religion, present-day issues, personal projects, family life and culture. We could empirically assess their comprehensiveness by including an open item at the end of the questionnaire. In this last item, the subject was asked to add any other communication topic which was not included previously.

Communication was defined by the following directional pairs: parent communication with their children (father-son/daughter, mother-son/daughter) and the children's communication with their parents (son-father/mother, daughter-father/mother). The son/daughter is always the one who explains the perceptions he/she experiences when his/her parents talk to him/her, or else, when he/she talks to his/her parents. In order to assess the reliability of this instrument, six inner-consistence coefficients were applied. These coefficients conveyed the following correlations: Spearman-Brown coefficient (.709), correlation between the two halves (.754), Guttman-Rulon coefficient (.826), alpha coefficient for all the items (.913), for the odd items (.826), for the even items (.877). The consistency of the

Family Communication Questionnaire with the children's self-concepts proves its validity (Garcia, 1987; Garcia *et al.*, 1988; Musitu *et al.*, 1989a, b, c; Musitu, 1990). The different levels of communication between the family members are a decisive factor in regards to the children's self-concept. As a result, children from families with a low communication level present lower levels of family interaction, higher levels of emotional lability, lower levels of peer interaction and lower levels of academic achievement. Moreover, the self-concept results are predictable in 63% of the subjects with a high family communication level and in 69% of the subjects with a low family communication level.

The Family Discipline Questionnaire EMBU, was developed by Perris *et al.*, (1980) in order to measure the subjects memories of the socialization practices of their parents. The present research modified the original questionnaire in two ways. Firstly, bearing in mind previous researches (Gutierrez, 1989) which obtained similar factors for both sexes, the questionnaire was simplified and the questions were formulated to either the father or the mother. The second alteration was the reduction of alternatives in a question from four to three alternatives ("always", "sometimes" and "never"). In the present paper we thought it would be more suitable to ask the questions in the present tense, in order to analyse their perception of the education and discipline patterns which their parents were currently following. In order to determine the reliability of this instrument the same inner consistence coefficients were applied and the following correlations were obtained: Spearman-Brown coefficient (.898), correlation between the two halves (.815), Guttman-Rulon coefficient (.898), alpha coefficient for all the items (.915), for the odd items (.840), for the even items (.851). The parents' educational background not only correlates to their children's self-concept (Perris *et al.*, 1980; Estarrelles, 1987; Herrero *et al.*, 1990), but also to their children's prosocial behaviour, school adjustment and academic achievement (Gutierrez, 1989), which, at the same time, accounts for the validity of the instrument.

Results

The procedure followed in order to ascertain the hypothesis of the research was this: Firstly, the subjects were grouped according to the maximum similarity of their educational patterns within the same group and the maximum dissimilarity in relation to the other groups by applying the K-means Technic; the same procedure was followed with the parenting-filial communication patterns. Once these groups were obtained in both variables, their differences in the scale factors of the Family Communication and education were analysed by applying the General Linear Pattern and Tukey Statistic Test. In the first place, the family education is assigned as dependent variable and the family communication as independent variable. Then, the same process is repeated

with the communication being the dependent variable and the parental structure groups the independent variable.

Family Education. A factor analysis was carried out and six factors were found (Overprotection/Restriction, Understanding and Support, Excessive Punishment, Achievement Pressure, Rejection/Predilection and Guiltness/Disapproval). Moreover, a cluster analysis according to the family education factors was made so as to identify the different structures of the adolescent population. Four family structures were obtained ($p < 0.01$). Turkey Test applied in order to ascertain the significance of the differences between the averages of each cluster in the different discipline factors (See Table 4).

It was found that there existed important differences foremost of the averages ($\alpha=0.001$) exceptuating the averages between

Table 4. Differences between the averages of the family education clusters

VARIABLE	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	.05(*)	.001(**)
Overprotection/Restriction	21.900	18.022	20.286	14.267	1.008	1.475
Understanding and Support	55.058	49.043	40.623	35.600	1.279	1.871
Excessive Punishment	45.667	41.370	43.286	31.800	0.926	1.354
Achievement Pressure	22.058	19.739	22.532	17.800	1.064	1.557
Rejection/Predilection	24.313	22.685	22.104	18.267	0.803	1.175
Guiltness/Disapproval	32.217	28.120	28.779	23.267	0.972	1.422

(*) High indexes in the understanding and support factor mean high understanding and support. On the other hand high indexes in the other factors mean that these characteristics exist in a lower degree.

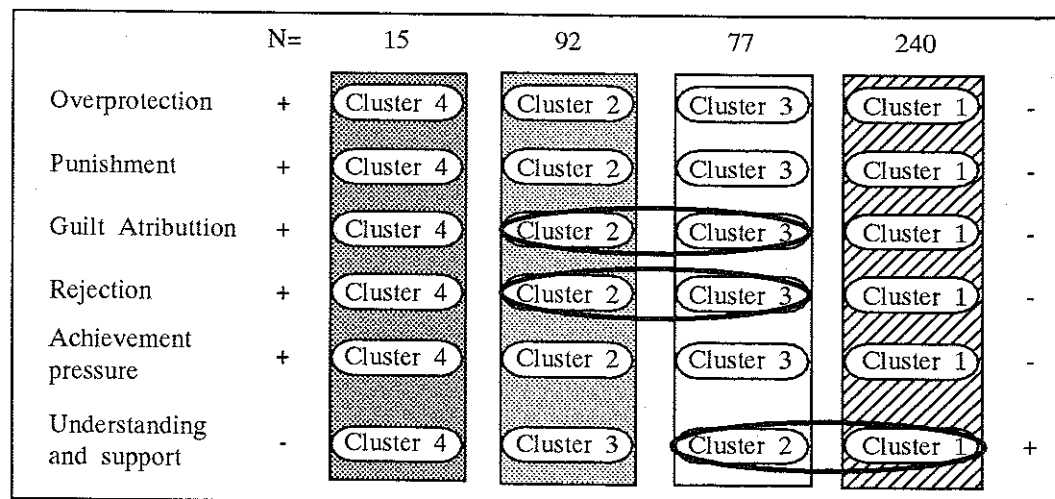


Diagram 1. Visual Reproduction.

cluster 2 and 3 in Guiltness/Disapproval (28.120-28.779) and rejection/predilection (22.685-22.104) factors, as well as for the clusters 1 and 3 in the Achievement Pressure factor (22.508-22.532) (See Diagram 1).

The four different types of family discipline obtained were defined as follows: The first group, which we call *inductive* consists of 240 subjects and its typical feature is the predominance of understanding and support practices and a minor presence of Overprotection/Restriction, Punishment, Achievement Pressure, Rejection/Predilection and Guiltness/Disapproval. This predominant group represents one extreme of the sample and is the one which presents higher scores in understanding and support and lower scores in the rest of the factors.

The opposite extreme of the sample is represented by cluster 4, which consists of fifteen subjects. It presents a predominance of Overprotection/Restriction, Punishment, Achievement Pressure, Guiltness/Disapproval and Rejection/Predilection and a lack of Understanding and Support. Bearing these characteristics in mind, this discipline has been named *coercive discipline*.

The intermediate clusters, clusters 2 and 3, include a population of 92 and 77 subjects, respectively, in which the different discipline factors intermingle. Cluster 2 presents a higher level of Overprotection/Restriction, Punishment, Achievement Pressure and Understanding/Support, while the Rejection/Predilection and

Guiltness/Disapproval factors present the same levels. Since this cluster is characterized by the presence of Overprotection/Restriction, Punishment, Achievement Pressure, Guiltness/Disapproval and Rejection, along with higher understanding and support, this type of discipline has been named *directive discipline*. However, cluster 3 presents a lower degree of all the factors and it can be regarded as *indifferent discipline*.

Family Communication. In the same way as with the family education variable, a cluster analysis was carried out in terms of the family communication degree. Three groups were identified ($p < 0.01$): High communication (Cluster 1), Medium Communication (Cluster 2) and Low Communication (Cluster 3). All the differences between the averages of the three groups are significant (See Table 5).

Family Education in relation to the Communication. A variance analysis was undertaken with the Family Discipline being the dependent variable and the Communication the independent variable (See Table 6).

This analysis conveyed the fact that communication influences the following education factors: Understanding and Support ($p < 0.001$). Excessive Punishment ($p = 0.029$), Rejection/Predilection ($p \leq 0.001$) and Guiltness/Disapproval ($p \leq 0.001$). In the other family discipline factors no significant differences were found: Overprotection/Restriction ($p \leq 0.351$) and Achievement Pressure ($p \leq 0.283$).

Table 5. Averages of the three clusters in both ways and directions, frequencies, percentages and results of the variance analysis of the three groups from the cluster analysis.

Averages						
	Child-Mother	Child-Father	Mother-Child	Father-Child	Freq.	Pct.
CLUSTER 1	25.229	22.295	23.555	22.595	227	40.2
CLUSTER 2	35.618	32.249	34.644	32.966	233	41.3
CLUSTER 3	44.923	44.481	46.712	46.913	104	18.4
Variance Analysis						
F	383.710	416.724	557.997	479.359		
p	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001		

Table 6.
ANOVA. Family Education in relation to Family Communication.

VARIABLE	SC	GL	MC	F	P
Overprotection/Restriction	25.066	2	12.533	1.050	0.351
Understanding and Support	701.637	2	1850.818	43.689	≤0.001
Excessive Punishment	107.287	2	53.644	3.560	0.029
Achievement Pressure	26.718	2	13.359	1.267	0.283
Rejection/Predilection	173.231	2	86.615	13.152	≤0.001
Guiltiness/Disapproval	359.518	2	179.759	14.947	≤0.001

Table 7.
Differences between the averages of the Family Education clusters.

VARIABLE	Cl./C. High	Cl./C. Medium 2	Cl./C. Low 3	0.5(*)	.001(*)
Understanding and Support	53.764	49.826	45.820	1.815	2.775
Excessive Punishment	44.268	43.865	42.899	1.082	1.655
Rejection/Predilection	23.860	23.489	22.146	0.715	1.094
Guiltiness/Disapproval	31.433	30.174	28.966	0.967	1.478

(*) High indexes in the understanding and support factor mean high understanding and support. On the other hand high indexes in the other factors mean that these characteristics exist in a lower degree.

Tukey Test was applied in order to ascertain the importance of the differences between the averages of each cluster in each family education factor with significant differences (See Table 7).

The family communication differences in Understanding and Support are statistically significant in all the groups ($\alpha = 0.001$). With regards to the Punishment factor, there only exist significant differences for cluster 1 and 3. As far as the Rejection/Predilection and Guiltiness/Disapproval factors are concerned all the differences between the group averages are significant.

These results define that if there exists a higher degree of communication in the fami-

ly system, understanding and support are also higher and there is a lower frequency of punishment and disapproval on the subject. On the other hand, in the families with a low degree of communication there exists lower understanding and punishment, while rejection and disapproval appear more frequently.

Family Communication in relation to Education. The differences in family communication according to the type of discipline are statistically significant ($p \leq 0.001$) for all the possible pairs among parents and children (See Table 8).

In order to find the direction of the differences between the averages, a Tukey Test was applied. The communication pairs being

Table 8.
ANOVA. Family Communication in terms of Family Education.

VARIABLE	SC	GL	MC	F	P
Child-Mother	6029.899	3	2009.966	28.154	≤0.001
Child-Father	5231.819	3	1743.940	18.648	≤0.001
Mother-Child	5233.240	3	1744.413	21.950	≤0.001
Father-Child	4304.213	3	1434.738	14.230	≤0.001

Table 9.
Differences between the averages of the family communication clusters.

VARIABLE	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	.05	.001
Child-Mother Communication	43.746	38.467	35.260	32.267	2.982	4.362
Child-Father Communication	40.054	36.413	31.506	30.200	3.413	4.993
Mother-Child Communication	42.942	39.489	35.377	29.867	3.146	4.602
Father-Child Communication	40.971	36.652	33.390	32.600	3.543	5.184

intermingled with the family structures present in the cluster analysis (See Table 9).

With regards to the *Child-Mother* communication the differences the communication averages are statistically significant for all the groups ($\alpha = 0.001$), apart from groups 3 and 4 which have significant differences between its averages for an $\alpha = 0.05$. The same tendency was observed in the pair *Child-Father*, apart from the fact there exists no significant differences between clusters 3 and 4. At the same time, in groups 2-3 the differences are significant for an $\alpha = 0.05$. In relation to the *Mother-Child* communication, all the differences are significant ($\alpha = 0.001$) apart from the fact that the differences are only significant for an $\alpha = 0.05$ and between the clusters 1-2 and 2-3. Finally, in the *Father-Child* pair no significant differences were found between clusters 2-3 and 3-4, but they were significant in the rest for an $\alpha = 0.05$.

Discussion

The results of this study determine that families with prevailing educational practices based on understanding and support present the highest level of communication and parent-child exchange. Therefore, in these families the parents and children hold frequent conversations by means of a constant and very dynamic feedback process. Furthermore, this intensive communication allows for more flexibility when trying to solve family conflicts.

The existence of understanding and support in these families prevents the need of other socializing styles such as rejection, punishment or guilt attribution. The more channels and possibilities of communication between the family members, the more resources the parents possess to exert influence over their children.

By reasoning with their children, the parents favour a more relaxed family atmosphere and they supposedly foster communication.

In the case of a deficient communication, there is a decrease in the expression of personal feelings, values and attitudes between parents and children, which causes a vicious circle; the lack of resources to express disagreement increases as years pass by. It can be observed that both family communication in families with an inductive discipline style are consistent with their respective defining characteristics. Thus, in family structures which foster understanding and support, the level of communication is considerably high, while in the family structures with a low-frequency of socializing factors and a high frequency of rejection, punishment and other negative socializing factors, the level of communication is much lower.

Other studies (Nolier & Callan, 1991) have assessed the existence of a paradox, that is, when understanding and support prevail and parents and children communicate and children communicate and negotiate, the child's independence is enhanced and, at the same time, the sentimentalities between parent and child strengthen. Adolescents are able to make their own decisions, which conversely, are satisfactory for the parents. As a result, this process prevents the existence of continuous conflicts, which could lead to the use of negative discipline techniques.

A very interesting fact is that the indifferent disciplined group presents a lower communication level than the directive-disciplined group. This is explained by the fact that the first group presents lower levels of understanding and support than the second group. We can conclude that even though it applies control devices, it also uses support devices which are viewed as negative by the subject.

The level of communication measures the good or bad state of the relationships established within the family system. In accordance to the existing family structures in the sample, it has been shown how violence increases when there is deficient communication, and the fact that the adolescent regards socializing more as an imposing process than as a reasoning process. In this respect Noller and Callan (1991) state that by using coercive techniques, parents press upon their children a sense of being incompetent and unreliable.

To sum up, socializing is not a one-way parent-child process, but a bidirectional process because it affects and is affected by the level of communication. Thus, socialization in relation to family discipline styles and communication interact, and favour or limit each other in accordance with the levels acquired.

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Résumé

Lila, M. S., Musitu, G., Perez, F. G. & Fontaine, A. M., Styles de socialisation et intensité de communication familiale, *Cadernos de Consulta Psicológica*, 1993, 9, 79-88. Cette recherche prétend évaluer les relations entre éducation familiale et communication. Un questionnaire de communication familiale (CF, Musitu et al., 1988) et une Echelle d'Education Familiale (EMBU, Perris et al., 1980) ont été administrés à un échantillon de 424 étudiants

de l'enseignement secondaire, âgés de 14 à 18 ans. Des analyses en clusters des facteurs de ces deux instruments ont permis d'identifier 4 styles de socialisation familiale et 3 types de communication nettement distincts. Des différences significatives des diverses dimensions d'éducation familiale en fonction des types de communication adaptés furent mis en évidence par des analyses de variances. De même, des différences de communication en fonction des styles de socialisation familiale furent observées. Ces résultats révèlent une forte interdépendance entre styles de socialisation et communication familiale à l'adolescence.

Resumo

Lila, M. S., Musitu, G., Perez, F. G. & Fontaine, A. M., Estilos de socialização e intensidade de comunicação nas relações pais-filhos. *Cadernos de*

Consulta Psicológica, 1993, 9, 79-88. O objectivo desta investigação é avaliar a relação entre a educação familiar e a comunicação. Uma amostra de 424 estudantes do ensino secundário com idades compreendidas entre os 14 e os 18 anos foi observada utilizando o Questionário de Comunicação Familiar (CF, Musitu *et al.*, 1988) e uma adaptação da Escala de Educação Familiar (EMBU, Perris *et al.*, 1980). Os sujeitos foram agrupados em função das práticas educativas parentais e procedeu-se à análise das diferenças entre os factores das duas escalas através do Modelo Geral Linear e do Teste de Tuckey. Inicialmente, a educação familiar foi considerada como variável dependente e a comunicação familiar como variável independente; depois, este procedimento foi repetido considerando a comunicação familiar como variável dependente e os grupos de estrutura parental como variável independente. Os resultados revelam uma forte relação bidireccional entre a educação familiar e a comunicação familiar.