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The role of communication in the parent-child interaction

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Abstract

The more the parents communicate with the children, the more the children will improve their communication abilities and will relate better to the people around them. The purpose of this paper is to present the importance of communication in the parent-child interaction. In this study we have applied the structured interview as a survey method, and the instrument used was the questionnaire, applied on a sample of 100 parents from Romania. The study's conclusions highlight the role of communication as a significant factor in the development of the qualitative relationship of interaction between parents and children.

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1. Introduction

Communication is the engine of social relationships and upon it depend the quality of the relationship or its bankruptcy! It is necessary in any relationship. Communication involves listening, availability, understanding, mutual respect and emotion. In essence, to communicate means to know how to give and to know how to receive!

Defined in the most practical way, communication is the natural process of transmitting ideas, information, emotions and feelings from one person to another in a certain amount of time!

Communication between parents and children is not necessarily difficult but requires certain skills, availability, and time. Relations between parents and children represent some significant communication interactions. Communication between the parent and the child involves more than just simple expression. Through it the parent seeks to be intelligible to child, both in terms of the specific content of communication and in terms of its general content.

"Communication is done on three levels: logical, verbal and nonverbal. Out of these, the logical level (of words) is only 7% of the total act of communication; 38% occurs at the paraverbal level (tone, volume, speed of speech) and 55% at non-verbal level (facial expression, position, movement, clothing etc.). If there is no contradiction

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between these levels, communication can be effective otherwise the message will have no effect. "(Petronela Liviță Pracsu, 2008, 60).

2. Why is parent-child communication required?

In our times debate in ongoing more and more about communication, but, unfortunately, communication is less encountered! There is a certain tendency of postmodern people towards communicating superficially on appearance, on the surface, but this is very dangerous. People talk more than ever about the importance of the way in which the communication process within the family, but we cannot help but ask regarding what is required for communication between parents and children. To the question above, we can formulate a number of possible answers:

- Family functions cannot be operationalized in the absence of communication;
- Communication establishes and maintains relationships between parents and children;
- Through the feedback achieved through communication, interaction between parents and children becomes more powerful and effective;
- Through communication, as the basis of the motivational process, parents can identify, know and then satisfy the real needs of children;
- Communication between parents and children contributes significantly to creating fair and effective relationships, understanding and mutual acceptance between parents and children.

Therefore, there is no aspect of the relationship between the parent and the child that does not involve communication. But the issue in the contemporary family is not if the parent or child engage in the communication process, but if they know how to communicate, if they succeed through the message conveyed to tell the other what he/she wants. Often when the child does not "capture" the real meaning of a message, the fault belongs, most often, to the parent who failed to make himself understood and did not choose the most appropriate form of communicating the message to his own child.

In family relationships, members are increasingly more open to others as they gain more confidence. Mutual communication, not unilateral, contributes significantly to this openness and to the creation of ties in the parent and child interactions. Also, when parents communicate with children, they must use an appropriate vocabulary that is understood by them, also, it is indicated to use a calm and appropriate body language. Using an appropriate vocabulary has two significant implications: on the one hand it implies using words that are understood by the child and the other hand it implies the degree of appreciation of those words as acceptable in social terms. A calm tone used in communication leads to the creation and induction of psychological comfort, and the message will be faster and better understood than if the parent uses an angry tone. Anger which accompanies communication leads to feelings of panic, fear, misunderstanding of the message and blocking of the communication process. The body language associated with communication can lead to the support or denial of a claim submitted by the parent or child. When the parent tells the child that he/she is forgiven and this message is accompanied by a smile, the child understands the message transmitted and believes it much easier than if the message of forgiveness would be accompanied by a frown. The message must be consistent with body language, to be better understood and believed while also avoiding the confusion that may arise in the minds of children!

Effective daily communication with the child helps the relationship interaction between parent and child and the latter's harmonious and complex development. Few things are more valuable to the child than the chance to talk with one of his/her parents (Maurice Elias. Steven Tobias. Brian Friedlander, 2007: 215).

3. Methods and instruments used in research

This study is based on quantitative research, in which we used the structured interview survey method and work instrument used was the questionnaire, with closed questions, in order to highlight communication as a contributing factor in the parent-child interaction. The topics included in the interview for the parent, were focused on the following three sections: the relationship between family members, communication which intervenes in optimizing the parent - child interaction, manifestations of the child attesting signs of a harmonious development.

3.1. Description and operationalization of the concepts useful to the research

The first phase in the operationalization of the psychosocial variables is the formulation of the definition of the main concept of the research. The concept used is the interaction between parents and children as a determinant resort of the feelings, characteristics, patterns and actions of the child. In developing the research and implicitly of the instrument of social investigation, we started the process of defining operational concepts. Operationalization of the parameters of the basic concept of research is performed by the following procedures of investigation: detection of subjects (parents) considered as having a good attitude and behavior towards their children and their evaluation using the following methods investigated on the following socio-psychological parameters: communication , a good family interaction and harmonious development of the child. The basic concept of the research was measured by several dimensions relevant to this study:

- **Communication**, as a factor that implies listening, understanding, respect, offers child what he thinks and what is felt by the parent towards him. Communication with children requires certain skills: appropriate vocabulary, a calm tone and body language suitable to the message;
- **A good family interaction** represents the climate and good family atmosphere, positive dynamics of an emotional nature, the presence of emotional support and lack of scandal, of hostility between parents and of violence. This interaction positively influences the state and the child's behavior and the development and normal formation of his/her mental and physical traits;
- The harmonious development of children is the result of a good interaction between family members. This gives children the opportunity to define themselves, to their own designs, but also offers a favourable position in the social universe. The socialization and individualization of the child last but not least contributes to the constitution that determines the specific personality of the main resorts.

3.2. Presentation of the investigation sample

To achieve the goals and objectives a sample of 100 male and female subjects was resorted to. A single category of subjects was used: parents aged between 30 and 50. Most parents who participated in the questionnaires are female, 85%, and the remaining 15% is the male sample. The research was conducted in Romania in the west of the country.

Table 1. Presentation of the raw data characteristic of the sample description

Number of subjects	Age	Sex F	Sex M	Education - Average	Education - Higher	Married	Divorced	Urban	Rural
100	30-50	85	15	78	22	89	11	87	13

3.3. Initial statistical data

Each number obtained from the assessments and measurements is accompanied by a significance and may have three meanings: The maximum value indicates a positively asymmetrical distribution through the high frequency of the large values. The minimum value indicates a negatively asymmetrical distribution with a high frequency of lower values. The correlation coefficient which characterizes collective sample was extracted respectively, for this we use the critical correlation coefficient. This coefficient is the minimal value you need to take a coefficient of correlation obtained to be significant (p = .10, p = .05, p = .02, p = .01). The raw data was processed statistically using the SPSS 11.0 statistical software, 2001.

4. Research results

We will present research hypothesis, the correlations made and the results obtained: The better the parent communicates with the child, the better the interaction between the two becomes!

4.1. The first correlation and the results obtained

Following the correlation of the two questions: Do you watch your child and listen to what he/she has to say? Is communication open? The following results were obtained from the Output provided by SPSS: 70% of the parents answered *YES* to the two questions, and 30% chose the answer *SOMETIMES*. When it comes to the significance of the correlation between the two questions, it has been noticed that the data supports the correlation of the two questions, having a significance lower than .01 (0,01).

4.2. The second correlation and the results obtained

Following the correlation of the two questions: Do you try to understand the logic and thinking of your child? Does everyone feel understood within the family? The following results were obtained from the Output provided by SPSS: 76% of the parents answered *YES* to the two questions, 18% chose the answer *SOMETIMES* and 6% answered *NO*. Moreover, it can be noticed that the majority of the parents that have given a certain answer to a question that represents a good or bad communication with the child, they have answered in the same way to the question that supports the good or bad interaction between the two. When it comes to the significance of the correlation between the two questions, it has been noticed that the data supports the correlation of the two questions, having a significance lower than .01 (0,01).

4.3. The third correlation and the results obtained

Following the correlation of the two questions: Do you try to take into consideration the child's point of view before commenting, answering or disagreeing to it? Is there any mutual respect? The following results were obtained from the Output provided by SPSS: 74% of the parents answered *YES* to the two questions, 20% chose the answer *SOMETIMES* and 6% answered *NO*. When it comes to the significance of the correlation between the two questions, it has been noticed that the data supports the correlation of the two questions, having a significance lower than .01 (0,01).

5. Conclusions

Parents who have obtained a high score on the parent-child interaction variable claim that in the process of communication with their own children, a few of the rules of effective communication are: prefer to speak with the child without "preaching"; do not say things that could hurt; listen carefully to what the child says, encourage children to talk and express emotions and feelings; avoid to speak up.

The study clearly highlights the importance of communication between parents and children, this having a significant role in developing a qualitative interaction between them. Communication is very important in the parent-child interaction, especially if the parents want to find a better way to transmit to their children the important life values by which they could guide the present and especially the future.

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