COMMUNICATION AND FAMILY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT:

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 was
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 Tukey'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.

INTRODUCTION

There exists a vast amount of literature which regards adolescence
as a period of life in which the importance of relationships with friends
increases and the importance of relationship with the parents decreases
(Dickens y Perlman, 1981; Hunter, 1985; Kon, 1981, Pip et al., 1984; Moore,
1987; Noller y 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, abandon the immediate family
system). On the other hand, Erickson (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. According to McGoldrick y 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), school adjustment (Sporakowski y Eubanks, 1976) and academic achievement (Christopher, 1967). Other researches have pointed at the negative effects of a family communication breakdown (Chartier y Goehner, 1976) and the advantageous effects on self-esteem and well-being arising from a positive communication increase (Bachman, 1970).

Some authors have connected the characteristics of the communicator to the acceptance level of discipline strategy (Cody, McLaughlin y Schenieder, 1981) or else to the individual characteristics or the dispositional characteristics of the "discipline demanding" person (Boster, Stiff, y Reinolds, 1984).

The influence of the **Family Discipline** techniques are conclusive for the adolescent's socialization (Parker et al., 1977; Maccoby, 1980; Demon, 1982; Rollins y Thomas, 1979; Ownby y Murray, 1982; Ross et al., 1983). 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 y Thomas, 1979; Rohner y Pettengill, 1985; Musitu et al., 1988). Parenting Support has been defined as "the behaviour displayed by a parent towards their child which makes the child feel confident with their 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 y Pardeck, 1991). Although different terms have 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.

In this study we intended to analyse the influence of a given discipline (Musitu y Gutiérrez,1984) on a family communication level and vice-versa rather than the analysis of the subjects individual characteristics within the interaction pairs. This analysis was carried out by means of the EMBU as well as the Family Communication Questionnaire C.F.88. Within this context, the following hypothesis was formulated: families with a higher communication level use a more understanding and coercive discipline styles. Likewise, those families with a higher understanding and support level will present a higher communication level.

METHODOLOGY

DESCRIPTION OF THE UNIVERSE AND SAMPLE

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. 48,11 % of the sample were male students and 51,89% were female students and their ages ranged between 14 and 18.

INSTRUMENT

The instruments used in this research have been an adaptation of the Family Education Questionnaire EMBU (Perris et al., 1980) and the Family Communication Questionnaire (Musitu y García, 1988).

The Family Communication Questionnaire assesses the filial perception of the communication level within their 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 assess empirically 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 in any of the previous ones.

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/daughters are always the ones who explain the perceptions they experienced when their parents talk to them, or else, when they talk to their parents. In order to assess the reliability of this instrument, six innes-consistance 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 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 has been modified (in relation to 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).

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 patterning-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.

Cluster Analysis. 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 Guiltiness/Disapproval). Moreover, a cluster analysis according to the family education factors was made so as to identify the different family structures of the adolescent population. Four family structures were obtained (p< 0.01). Tukey Test was applied in order to ascertain the significance of the differences between the averages of each cluster in the different discipline factors (See Table 1).

<center>T a b l e   1</center>

It was found that there existed important differences for most of the averages (alpha = 0.001) excepting the averages between cluster 2 and 3 in Guiltiness/Disapproval and Rejection/Predilection factors, as well as for the clusters 1 and 3 in the Achievement Pressure factor (See Diagram 1).

<center>D i a g r a m   1</center>

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 its understanding and support practices and a minor presence of Overprotection/Restriction, Punishment, Achievement Pressure, Rejection/Predilection and Guiltiness/Disapproval. This predominant group represents one extreme of the sample and it 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 the Overprotection/Restriction, the Punishment, the Achievement Pressure, the Guiltiness/Disapproval and the Rejection/Predilection and it lacks in Understanding and Support. Bearing in mind these characteristics, this discipline has been called *coercive discipline.*

The intermediate clusters, clusters 2 and 3, include a population of 92 and 77 subjects respectively in which the different discipline factors

<center>— 4 —</center>

intermingle. Cluster 2 presents a higher Overprotection/Restriction, Punishment, Achievement Pressure and Understanding/Support factors, while the Rejection/Predilection and Guiltiness/Disapproval factors present the same levels. Since this cluster is characterized by the presence of Overprotection/Restriction, Punishment, Achievement Pressure, Guiltiness/Disapproval and Rejection, along higher understanding and support, this type of discipline has been called *directive discipline*. However, cluster 3 presents a lower degree of all the factors and it can be regarded as *indifferent discipline*.

Cluster Analysis. 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 significative.

Anova. 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 2).

T a b l e   2

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

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 significative differences (See Table 3).

T a b l e   3

The family communication differences in Understanding and Support are statistically significative in all the groups (alpha = 0.001). With regards to the Punishment factor, there only exists significative 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 all significative.

These results show the fact that if there exists a higher degree of communication in the family 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 a lower understanding and punishment, while rejection and disapproval appear more frequently.

Anova. Family Communication in relation to Education. The differences in family communication according to the type of discipline are statistically significative ($p \leq 0.001$) for all the possible pairs among parents and children (See Table 4).

T a b l e   4

In order to find the direction of the differences between the averages, a Tukey Test was undertaken. The communication pairs being intermingled with the family structures present in the cluster analysis (See Table 5).

T a b l e   5

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

DISCUSSION

The hypothesis of the study was proven. When the parents use a discipline practice with a predominance of understanding and support, the level of family communication increases: parents maintain more conversations with their children and, at the same time, the children interact more frequently with their parents. The presence of understanding and support in such families fusters the abandonment of other more violent and frustrating educational practices such as the rejection, the punishment or the attribution of guilt (Musitu et al. 1988). The more possibilities and ways of communication within the family systems, the more technics and sources for the parents to influence by means of reasoning with their children. Moreover, this helps to relax the family atmosphere and allows a higher communication level. If the communication is poor, the process is reversed and coercive technics arise (rejection, punishment, etc.), which reduce the chances of communication. Due to the low communication level, the transmission of complaints about the insufficiencies in the discipline system is prevented and a vicious circle is produced. In this circle the number of ways to express disagreement decreases at the same time that the process of socialization increases.

We have found that the communication level in families with an inductive or coercive discipline is consistent with the defining features of each one. It seems logical that in the family structures which foster understanding and support, the level of communication is very high, while in the family structures with a very low socialization level and rejection, punishment, etc., the communication level is rather low.

A very interesting fact is that the indifferent discipline group presents a lower support and understanding levels that the directive discipline group. This is explained by the fact that the level of understanding and support in the first group (indifferent discipline group) is lower than in the second group (coercive discipline group) because the second group families use support devices along with the control devices, which are regarded as negative by the subject.

Therefore, the reached communication level can be taken as a gange of the health level in the established relationship within the family system. We have noticed that the violent practices are fostered when the level of communication is low and, consequentially, the adolescence socialization becomes a restrictive issue rather than a reasoning one.

To sum up, Socialization (in relation to the family discipline practices) and communication interact by favouring or restricting each other according to their reached levels.

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T a b l e 1

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
Guiltiness/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, the high indexes in the other factors mean that these characteristics exist in a lower degree.

T a b l e 2

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

T a b l e 3

Differences between the averages of the Family Education clusters*

VARIABLE	Cl.1/C. Hihgt	Cl.2/C. Middle	Cl.3/C. Low	.05(*)	.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

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T a b l e   4

ANOVA. Family Communication in terms of Family Education

VARIABLE	SC	gl	MC	F	p
Child-Mother Communication	6029.899	3	2009.966	28.154	<0.001
Child-Father Communication	5231.819	3	1743.940	18.648	<0.001
Mother-Child Communication	5233.240	3	1744.413	21.950	<0.001
Father-Child Communication	4304.213	3	1434.738	14.230	<0.001

T a b l e   5

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

Table 1

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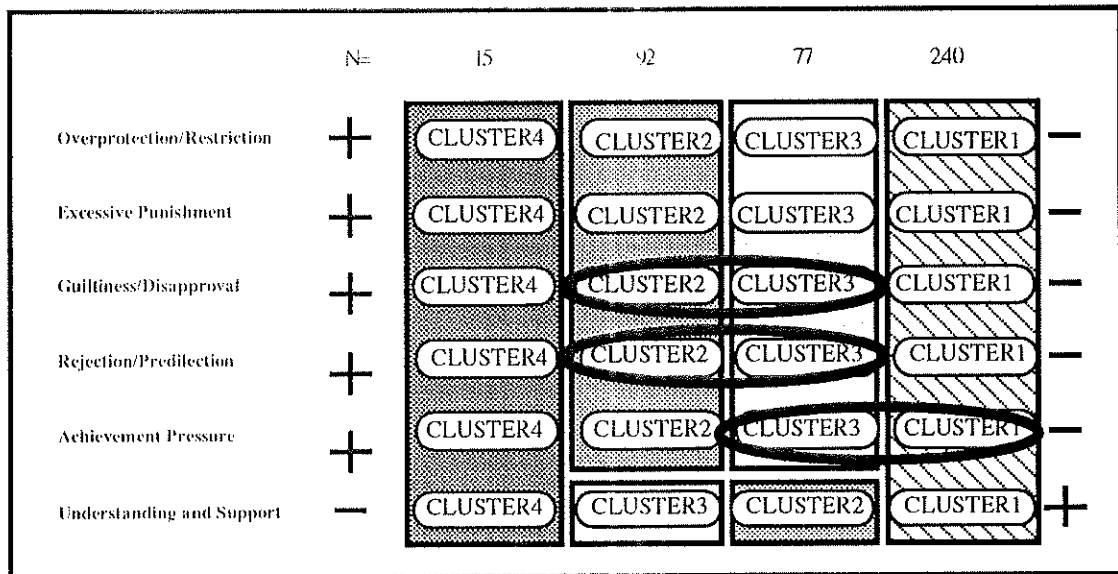## Diagram 1

Visual Reproduction

T a b l e   2

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