

# Developments in Educational Sciences

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## Chapter 27

### Parent-Child Communication<sup>1</sup>

Hatice VATANSEVER BAYRAKTAR\*

#### INTRODUCTION

The family is an institution, the effect of which on the child starts during the prenatal period and is maintained throughout the child's life. The important role of the knowledge, skills and attitudes learned as a result of the parent-child interaction in the first years of life on adulthood has started to be understood better. Modern society needs self-confident, constructive, creative individuals with the developed sense of responsibility, who monitor themselves, can express their emotions and thoughts freely, have developed social skills such as solidarity, sharing and cooperating, and can establish positive social relations with other people. This depends on the healthy communication that parents will establish with their children since early ages and their positive attitudes and approaches towards them (Çağdaş, 2012).

This section includes the subjects of the research such as the main elements of the communication with children, communication in family life, family communication models by the communication behavior in the family, family classification by the level of speech and adaptation orientation, attitudes of the parents, and family communication.

#### 1. MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN

##### 1.1. Acceptance

The main principle in the communication process between people is to accept. Accepting people with their unique qualities plays a significant role in communication (Yavuzer, 1996). Individuals that communicate with children, especially parents, should consider their children as different individuals. They should think that they are free in their thoughts and behaviors and accept them as they are.

Accepting people as they are is an important element in developing a relationship. In such a relationship, the person who is accepted may grow, develop, go through constructive changes, and learn to solve one's problems, show important developments in one's psychological health, become more productive and creative and activate all one's hidden power. The language of acceptance opens up children. It sets them free in sharing their emotions and problems (Gordon, 2005, p.30). Accepting is different than approving. The person who is accepted is the individual himself/herself. However, it is the behavior that is approved or disapproved. Thus, parents should accept their children as they are, whether positive-negative, good-bad, competent-incompetent (Dönmezer, 1999; Çağdaş, 2012).

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<sup>1</sup>This study is an excerpt taken from the PhD dissertation of the author.

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Acceptance helps a child increase his/her sense of confidence by feeling that they are loved and cared for, behave according to one's own self, and become more productive and creative individuals. Thus, adults should accept children as they are, with their positive-negative, good-bad, competent-incompetent aspects.

Accepting one's children and making them feel this are different things. As long as the acceptance of the parents does not reach a child, this does not have any effect on him/her. The parents should know how to show the acceptance in order for the child to feel this.

Parents can show that they accept their child by not interfering with what they do. For example, not interfering with a child who draws and letting him/her draw as he/she wants is an acceptance that is sent to the child. Acceptance can be expressed with gestures and mimics. A child whose head is caressed, hand is held, hugged and looked at with a smile receives a message of non-verbal acceptance. Passive listening (silence) is a powerful non-verbal message and can be used effectively in order to make an individual feel that he/she is actually accepted (Gordon, 2005). Active listening method, which is more effective than passive listening, should be used in verbal communication.

Children sometimes have difficulty in expressing one's emotions and problems. They need encouragement for talking and expressing one's problems. They are encouraged to talk with sentences such as "Would you like to talk about this subject?", "I'm interested in your thoughts.", "I'm curious about your emotions." Talking encouragement or door opening sentences facilitate communication and create the thought that the child is accepted or respected (Dönmezer, 2009, p.71).

Among acceptance and effective listening skills, non-interference and passive listening are non-verbal, while encouraging to talk and active listening are verbal communication skills (Dönmezer, 2009, p.73).

### **1.2. Empathy**

"Empathy", which is an individual attitude and quality, is one's ability to see, hear and perceive the other person's state of mind, emotions, needs, attitudes, experiences, etc. from their point-of-view (Özgülven, 2010).

"Empathy" means that a person puts himself/herself in another person's place, looks at incidents from their point-of-view, and understands and feels the emotions and thoughts of that person correctly and lets him/her know this. People with developed empathy skills are loved and approved by others (Tutar and Yılmaz, 2010, p.90).

Empathy skill has been functional in developing a qualitative social structure and social sensitivity and bringing people closer (Kabapınar, 2003, p. 170). In empathy, the most important element in correctly perceiving a person's emotions and thoughts is communication. If effective communication cannot be established with another person, meaningless results can be obtained on emotions and thoughts (Holm, 1997, p.131).

With the empathic approach in interpersonal communication, it is possible to understand the needs and point-of-view of other people and help them, perceive the environment of the other person, find solutions to the problems of the other person and reduce the defense of the other person, and thus, to establish and maintain a healthy interpersonal communication (Reynolds and Scott, 1999, p.363).

Katz, who defends that empathy is a communication process, defines empathy as an interpersonal communication process in which people share their experiences. Empathic communication includes the verbal and non-verbal communication between

the person who emphasizes and is emphasized. Interpersonal empathic communication is based on getting to know the other person by sharing his/her experiences, as well as sharing things about oneself. Verbal communication, i.e. understanding the language and symbols of the language, is quite important in empathic communication (Teresa, 2004, p. 23).

Empathic communication requires the acquaintance and understanding of each other by the parties. Empathic communication is far from prejudices. Not believing, but knowing is the basis of empathy. The last stage of empathic communication includes expressing to the other party that we understand them (Tutar and Yılmaz, 2010, p. 91). An individual with the developed empathic understanding also has the developed ability to understand the world of other people. However, it is hard for an egocentric person to get into the role of another person and look at incidents from the point-of-view of that person, and understand his/her emotions and thoughts. It is necessary for a person to get rid of egocentrism and assess the other person in terms of perceptual perspective, cognitive perspective, and emotional perspective. The perceptual perspective is about realizing the point-of-view of the other person; cognitive perspective is about realizing what the other person thinks about; and emotional perspective is about wondering about the emotions of the other person (Dökmen, 1994, p.141).

According to Dökmen (1994, p. 155-156), two types of communication, which are conflictual and conflict-free occur between individuals when empathic communication cannot be established. Conflict-free communication is a type of communication that is generally targeted in all relations and considered to always bring about positive results. However, parties feel lonely in conflict-free cases as they fail to transmit their emotions and thoughts completely, and they also want to communicate less. Conflictual communication is the type of communication in which the transfer of emotions and thoughts is very little and none. Problems constantly occur between people, conflicts occur and the problems encountered cannot be solved. Thus, people become unhappy and no satisfaction is obtained from relationships. Empathic listening is the effort to understand the inner world of people and see the world with their eyes. This process includes understanding and interpreting individuals within their personal context without judging their behaviors, emotions, and thoughts.

Empathic listening is to grasp the value judgment of another person. To try to understand what they say from their point-of-view. We do not empathize if we look at what they say from our point-of-view and value judgments (Tutar & Yılmaz, 2010, p. 91).

Adults should put themselves in the place of the child in order to be able to empathize with the child and look at incidents from his/her point-of-view. And for this, it is necessary to get into the role of the child and look behind his/her glasses (Dökmen, 1994). For example, when a child is crying as the pages of his/her book are torn by a friend, instead of saying "Why are you crying for a book?" or "We'll buy you a new one", adults should put themselves in the place of the child and try to understand his/her emotions by saying "You are very sorry as the pages of your book are torn."

The adult should understand the emotions and thoughts of the child correctly in order to be able to empathize. However, this is not sufficient. For, it is important for the empathic understanding formed in the mind of the adult is transmitted to the child in order to empathize. Empathic reactions become more effective with the combination of body language and verbal messages.

The emphatic understanding, which has the quality of bringing people closer and facilitating communication is important in reflecting the emotions of understanding and being understood in interpersonal communication and establishing effective communication by creating mutual trust. It is possible to ensure mutual benefit as a result of the behaviors of opening up oneself, trusting, being approved and loved by the environment, etc., by creating interaction between the person who empathizes and is empathized (Gürtüz and Eğinli, 2010, p. 39). As an important element of effective communication, the ability to empathize between individuals should be gained and developed.

### **1.3. Listening**

Listening is the process of effective receiving and interpreting the messages. It includes mental processes such as perceiving and comprehending. Listening also means to understand, assess, and organize the thoughts that are put forth in speech, organize them, determine the relations between them, and sort out those values that we deem worth keeping in our memory among these thoughts (Ergin, 2008, p. 113).

Listening is an indispensable part of verbal communication. Being able to respond to the message received through communication is only possible by perceiving that message correctly. And this, the precondition is to listen, understand and then answer the message. While listening seems necessary for the receiving party at first, the party that starts the communication, i.e. the sender, has the same responsibility in receiving the feedback. Whether the message is correctly received first can be learned by listening to the answer received (Aziz, 2010, p. 91).

Listening is showing respect. A person who is listened to has more self-confidence and the probability of being a happy person at peace with oneself is high. In order to be able to listen, our brain should first perceive the messages sent. Above all, it is necessary to be ready to take the message without prejudice; and this is only possible through emphatic listening (Tutar and Yılmaz, 2010, p. 91).

The nature of listening in any communication can be either active or passive. Active listening is in question when the listener exhibits certain behaviors (verbal or non-verbal) showing that he/she clearly listens. However, passive listening is about the invisible aspects of the individuals rather than visible behaviors. In passive listening, the listener tries to cognitively give meaning to the messages received, however, he/she does not do this by exhibiting behaviors showing that he/she clearly listens (Hargie et al., 1994; Harlak, 2007, p. 125). While active listening is the way to understand the world of another person. Active listening is to listen to people without judging them for the things they say and exhibiting reactions showing that we understand the emotions revealed by the speaker. The most important key to active listening is to use feedback. As the listener succeeds in receiving and giving feedback effectively in active listening, he/she has the opportunity to check whether what is said is understood (Harlak, 2007, p. 126-127).

In active listening, the listener constantly uses the feedback process. The listener with the attitude of active listening gives the impression that he/she is interested in what the speaker tells and actually listens to his/her problem. That the listener listens to the speaker very carefully and shows this gives to the speaker great peace and confidence. Active listening provides a good opportunity to reveal implied meanings. Active listening allows getting to know someone well. Active listening may cause the person in

question to share himself/herself with you. Thus, communication and social relations based on stronger bases are born (Yüksel, 2008, p.177-178).

In family communication, a person who listens and understands gives the speaker great peace and confidence. It gets the opportunity to penetrate into one's inner world and reveal the closed, hidden meanings inside of him/her. Although children and mother are two closest creatures, if the mother fails to apply the active listening method to the child, she cannot understand the basic problems of the child. Active listening allows the individual to open up more sincerely and share oneself with the listener. Thus, human relationships are established on stronger bases in the family and relations develop more easily (Doğan and Doğan, 2011; p. 185). A child or adolescent needs a good listener. Gordon (1970) talks about the need for active listening when a child or adolescent has a problem. The child can solve his/her own problem if the adult listens actively with an empathic approach. In this case, the child has a more positive feeling about the situation and oneself. Listening to a person tells the individual that he/she is respected and helps to form a solid relationship. Both respect and relationship help the formation of self-respect (Whirter and Acar, 1998, p. 101).

Listening transmits the child such messages as "You are valuable", "You are strong", "I love you", "I accept you" and "I care about you." Such messages help the child to have positive feelings about one's own self, feel that he/she is cared for and loved and feel confident.

Listening helps the child relax by expressing one's problems with verbal expressions rather than crying, rage, aggression or turning in upon oneself. A child who knows that he/she is listened to feels more peaceful and relaxed. This ensures that the child develops healthily in emotional and social terms. It increases his/her self-confidence. A child who is listened to by others learns to listen (Navaro, 2001).

Active listening helps children discover their feelings. It helps them not to fear from negative emotions. It develops a warm relationship between the parents and the child. It helps the child solve his/her problem. Active listening renders children more willing to listen to what the parents say and think (Gordon, 2005, p.54).

The purpose of active listening is to transmit the child the deep understanding and acceptance feeling. It is assumed that the child can choose a form of expression in which he/she can express one's emotions and thoughts about one's problem and is satisfied in this environment of respect and acceptance. In order to achieve this objective, the adult listens to the emotions of the child about the problem with empathy. The adult uses listening techniques that create the feeling that he/she understands the child's feelings and is together with the child (Whirter and Acar, 1998, p.137).

Gordon (2005, p. 55) specifies the main attitudes that should exist while using active listening as follows: Parents should be willing to hear what the child says; if they do not have the time to listen to them, they should indicate this. They must be willing to actually help the problem of the child. They should be able to actually accept the feelings of the child. They should fully believe in the child's ability to find solutions to his/her problems. They should be able to consider the child as a separate individual.

#### **1.4. Language Used**

##### **1.4.1. I Language**

Parents should send messages to their children using I-language rather than you-language in order to communicate with them healthily and effectively. Talking using I

language does not mean that the speaker talks or brags about himself/herself. I language is an honest and responsible anger expression that defines the child's behavior that they do not accept, and explains how this behavior affects them materially and what kind of feelings they experience (Çağdaş, 2012).

I language means that parents express their feelings and what they feel as a result of a particular behavior when they do not accept the behaviors of the child. Explaining what one feels about an incident or event requires using I language. Parents sending messages using I language transmit the child that the problem is his/her own problem and express their feelings about the problem. For example, the parents use I message in the statements "I do not want to play when I am exhausted.", "I feel bad when I see the house messy." (Dönmezer, 2009, p.105).

I statements explain personal thoughts, emotions, and experiences. Statements such as "I am sorry" explain subjective reactions, ideas, hopes and beliefs of individuals. They enable people to express their emotions. This kind of communication includes the transmission of the reactions and emotions of a person (Gürtüz and Eğinli, 2010, p. 157).

I statements create more positive results in family communication than you statements. I statements do not threaten the person who is communicated and do not contain provocative statements. They facilitate creating their own behaviors as well as ensuring that they take responsibility in the development of the children. They enable focusing on a particular subject in solving the problems in the family. Gordon, who states that I messages generally express positive situations, problems do not occur in the future as individuals express their feelings and thoughts on time. I statements ensure defining unacceptable behaviors in family communication and the emotions experienced by parents and their subtle effects on parents (Gürtüz and Eğinli, 2010, p.158).

I statements do not provoke the child for resistance and revolt. I statements are much more effective as they give the responsibility to change one's behavior to the child. I statements help the child grow up and take the responsibility of one's behaviors. I statements are honest. They teach the child to express his/her emotions using similar honest messages (Gordon, 2005, p. 105).

#### **1.4.2. You Language**

You messages cause defensive communication by activating the defense mechanisms of an individual. You statements cause defensive communication by activating the defense mechanisms of the individual. Defensive communication prevents good communication between parents and the child (Dönmezer, 2009, p. 105).

You statements explain the situation, emotions, problems and thoughts of the other party. They enable guessing and explaining the emotions and thoughts of the other party (Gürtüz and Eğinli, 2010, p. 158).

That parents use you statements in communication makes the child feel that there is a distance between them. Nevertheless, when you statements are used, the other party feels that he/she is taken responsible and may start to defend oneself most of the time. While I statements are effective in establishing discipline, you statements cause conflicts. In addition to causing conflict, you statements may lead to the decrease of loving emotions within the family by preventing the solution of problems (Urban, 2007; Gürtüz and Eğinli, 2010, p.158).

You language is not effective in changing negative behaviors of the child. For, there is no open definition of unaccepted behavior in you language. Thus, the child may not know which behavior is not accepted or which behavior should be corrected. Furthermore, how the behavior that is not accepted in you language affects the other party materially and what kind of emotions it causes are not indicated. Thus, the child may not know how his/her behavior affects the other party and what kind of emotions it causes (Çağdaş, 2009, p.133).

## **2. COMMUNICATION IN FAMILY LIFE**

Family, which has many duties and functions for the care, development and education of children, is a very important institution for communication, as well. The first place where communication skills are gained is the family. The attitudes between the mother and father constitute the basis of family relations. Harmonious and warm ties expand from the parents to children. A tense and conflicting husband-wife relationship creates an insecure and nervous atmosphere for children. Healthy families raise healthy and happy children. Healthy families make up a healthy society. Then, the family should be based on solid bases at first.

The communication with the child starts by taking the child on one's lap. The communication and interaction of parents and other individuals in the family with the child determine the place of the child inside the family. Communication, which is the basic and indispensable property of social life, has an important function in the development and education of individuals. Regardless of the age of the children, parents should listen to them and give them the message that they want to hear what they say. Thus, the child will become aware that he/she is valuable, have more self-confidence and be more successful in his/her communication with the environment. Hence, it is important to respect children, accept their existence, make them feel that they are important for their personality development (Doğan and Doğan, 2011, p.319).

There must be effective communication between the parents and children in order for children to show good development. Effective communication ensures that family members understand each other's thoughts and emotions, leads to the behaviors of cooperation, helping each other and sharing, and creates a suitable environment for the development of children. Children develop an autonomous and independent personality and get the freedom and habit to express their thoughts and emotions in a well-communicated family environment. On the contrary, the development of children is prevented in a family environment where effective communication cannot be created and there are communication barriers. Children become dependent individuals who cannot think freely and express their thoughts and feelings explicitly; they encounter various problems and adaptation problems in the future (Dönmezer, 2009, p.59).

Children need people to talk to and help them when they encounter any problem or obstacle. And parents want to help their children at such moments. However, especially in traditional societies and authoritarian families, children cannot talk to their families about their problems and parents cannot help their children although they want it very much. Then children prefer sharing their problems with their uninformed and inexperienced friends. However, they still cannot solve their problems, and they also move away from their families. Children's communication with their families is quite important in their world. In the triangle of parents and child, it is possible to find solutions to their problems in case they transmit their emotions and thoughts to each

other and establish successful communication. The failure to communicate means the suppression of feelings and failure to solve one's problems, and such a family environment is unhealthy.

Thus, it is quite important to establish effective communication between family members, and especially between parents and children. The failure to establish effective communication in the family occurs when parents do not know how to communicate with their children.

The communication in the family, both between spouses and parents and children should be mutual, i.e. bidirectional. The unidirectional communication environment, where one of the spouses constantly talks or gives "directives" and the other constantly listens creates the basis for unbalanced and unhealthy relations. Furthermore, parents should be in dialogue with children in order for them to share their thoughts and emotions with their parents and consult with them. If the communication is unilateral, i.e. parents talk more, criticize, give directions, and the child listens more and cannot express his/her thoughts, emotions, and experiences, the child can neither develop the skill to express oneself nor obtain real information about it. In today's world that becomes gradually complex, children who encounter many new situations and incidents should be able to ask his/her parents and express the subjects they are curious about. Thus, they can be protected from dangers (Krepner, 1996).

A person who can communicate well with one's environment and get on well with them becomes successful in social life and gets pleasure from life. Many successful women and men owe their success to be able to talk properly, correctly and well in many professions and different fields of life, and principally in the family. The proper functioning and successful maintaining of especially family life are based on verbal communication principles such as talks, discussion and exchange of opinions (Doğan and Doğan, 2011; p.102).

Each family has its own ways of behavior, forms of interaction, and different properties in terms of their functions. Nevertheless, all families have certain mutual properties on how family communication is formed and which functions are undertaken by the family. In terms of the system approach, the family may maintain its existence as a system as long as it can fulfill certain functions. Although changes occur in functions and growth characteristics by family type, family communication functions (Caputo, 1994, p. 238-240) are explained as follows:

Families have the function of "managing the emotional atmosphere and providing support". Families make family members feel the feeling of support in many different ways. Families have the function of "personality and identity guidance". The family is an important source for gaining children personality development and identity. Individuals develop their own communication behavior by being affected by the communication and interaction structure in their family. The family has the function of "managing values". Individuals' own perceptions are affected by the value system in the family. Components such as family traditions, rituals, celebrations, etc. have decisive significance as they are considered with family communication and as an ongoing type of interaction in the family. The family has the function of "managing the changes and arranging limits." The family has a regulating structure that ensures the sense of unity and integrity and allows for the flow of necessary and beneficial information for the family from the environment outside the family. The family has the function of "maintaining daily life." While individuals maintain their lives in the family

with fulfilling the daily life needs of family members, the fulfillment of these needs is based on the communication between individuals.

### **3.FAMILY COMMUNICATION PATTERNS BY THE COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOR IN THE FAMILY**

“Family Communication Patterns” developed by McLead and Chaffee (1972) focus on how and at which level family members communicate. The “Revised Family Communication Patterns” developed by Ritchie and Fitzpatrick (1990) examine the relations between parents and children and assess verbal and non-verbal communication behaviors of parents about young adults and children. Relational schemes in developed family communication patterns mean repeating, emotion-based and long-term communication system of the family (Ritchie and Fitzpatrick, 1990).

The difference between family communication patterns (FCP) and recent family communication patterns (RFCP) is while the communication between children and communication between parents are focused on separately, it is seen that the communication between parents and children is taken into consideration in recent family communication patterns (Koerner, Fitzpatrick, 2002, p.42). In both patterns, family typologies are determined by associating conversation orientation and conformity orientation with functional results on how families communicate. The determinative effect of these two main dimensions of family communication behavior can be explained as follows (Koerner, Fitzpatrick, 2002, p. 86).

#### **3.1. Conversation Orientation**

It is the first main dimension of family communication. Conversation orientation is the degree that family members are encouraged to participate in family interactions. In families with a high level of conversation orientation, family members can interact freely, quite frequently and as they wish, and they can make discussions in quite different and extensive subjects. Family members can spend time by talking to one another and share their personal activities, thoughts, and emotions.

In families with a low level of conversation orientation, family members talk to one another in quite rare and specific subjects. Family members share their private/personal emotions, thoughts and ideas quite rarely. Critical issues are not talked about in family activities where all family members come together, and all family members do not participate in making decisions about the family (Koerner, Fitzpatrick, 2002, p. 86).

#### **3.2. Conformity Orientation**

Another dimension of the family is conformity orientation. Conformity orientation is about creating a climate in family life, where beliefs, values, and attitudes are homogenous. There is a similarity between attitudes, beliefs and behaviors in families with high conformity orientation, and this is reflected in family life. It is seen that conflict is avoided for the purpose of ensuring conformity between family members, and loyalty is created among family members. The communication in the family is generally based on obeying parents or adults, and listening to them. In general, families with a high level of conformity have traditional family structure. The individuals in the family stick to one another and there is a hierarchical structure in the family.

Families with a low level of conformity are characterized by their interactions, the beliefs and attitudes of which focus on the heterogeneous, the independence and privacy

of family members are in the foreground. Communication is based on the equality among family members; in other words, children can also participate in making decisions. It is seen that these families do not have a traditional structure, and the hierarchical structure of the family is felt less. Family members attach importance to independence, believe in the existence of personal space, and the subjects about the family are generally of secondary importance. This may cause the failure to feel the integrity of the family most of the time and family interaction is not created well.

How family members communicate reveals information on the communication behavior of families. The high or low level of conversation and conformity orientation in the family ensures determining family typologies of consensual, pluralistic, protective and laissez-faire family typologies (Koerner, Fitzpatrick, 2002, p. 87).

#### **4. FAMILY CLASSIFICATION BY THE LEVEL OF CONVERSATION AND CONFORMITY ORIENTATION**

##### **4.1. Consensual Families**

These families show a high level of conversation and conformity orientation. Communication in the family is characterized by the presence of an open communication environment where family members can share their opinions as well as a hierarchy.

In these families, parents care about their children more, and consequently, children participate in making decisions about the family. Children accept and care about the messages and values of their parents. Children are raised by their traditional gender roles. Consensual families successfully settle the conflicts in important subjects as required by the obedience in the hierarchy and traditional structure (Koerner, Fitzpatrick, 2002, p. 87).

##### **4.2. Pluralistic Families**

Families that focus on high level of conversation and low level of conformity are called pluralistic families. There is open communication in these families, and discussions are not delimited. Parents are willing to accept the ideas of their children, and children are allowed to participate in family decisions equally. The children of these families appreciate family conversations, and they also learn autonomy and independence. In addition to this, the family contributes to raising their children as individuals with the ability to make their own decisions, self-confidence and communication competence. In this type of families, men define themselves in their traditional roles, while women undertake such roles as being talented and sensible, in addition to their traditional roles such as child care and closeness. While these couples are successful in settling conflicts, they may become aggressive while talking about important issues. As there is not much conformity orientation in pluralistic families as in consensual families, they do not put pressure on their children for their expectations. This type of families provides a good communication model to their children. In such families, girls show a much more venturesome communication (Koerner, Fitzpatrick, 2002, p. 88). The possibility that consensual and pluralist families supporting conversation orientation have stress-resistant children is high (Fitzpatrick, Kroner, 2004). Problematic behaviors of adolescents are cared for in various ways in an open family communication environment. The quality of communication defines the quality of the relationship between parents and children. Thus, it affects child's loyalty to the family and participation in the peer group (Noller and Callon, 1991).

### **4.3. Protective Families**

Families with low conversation and high conformity orientation. The communication in protective families is characterized by listening to/obeying/complying with the authority of parents; it is seen that the family is open to communication at a low level. Parents in this family believe that they should decide for their families and children, and believe that making causal explanations to children is unnecessary. In protective families, the decision-making skills of children are not trusted, and thus, children do not believe in the value of family conversations. For this reason, children of these families are easily affected by external discussions on authority and obedience.

Protective families believe that the father should maintain his leadership role and the mother should maintain her woman's role within the society. While men show themselves with venturous, skillful and logical roles; women are inadequate in maintaining both female and male roles (Koerner, Fitzpatrick, 2002, p. 89). It was determined that mothers in protective families are more depressive than other parents (Segrin and Fitzpatrick, 2002).

The type of communication that exhibits verbal aggressiveness is high in this type of families that avoid discussion of different subjects. While boys are not restricted as parents are firmly committed to their traditional roles, they restrict girls and expect them to accommodate themselves to society. While the aggressiveness of men is not interfered, it is expected that girls are passive and avoid conflict (Koerner, Fitzpatrick, 2002, p. 89).

### **4.4. Laissez-Faire Families**

Families with a low level of conversation and low level of conformity orientation are called laissez-faire families. In these families, parents believe that all family members should make the decision together, but care very little for the decisions of the children. They value the communication with children very little and are in the form of an emotionally detached family in many aspects. The children of these families may not care about participating in family conversations and making their own decisions. Children start to question their own decision-making skills as they do not expect to get help from their families. Consequently, they are generally affected by the external environment in the process of obtaining information and making a decision, and emotionality outweighs in their decisions (Koerner, Fitzpatrick, 2002, p.89).

## **5. PARENT ATTITUDES**

At the beginning of the twentieth century, psychoanalysts showed that the attitudes and behaviors of parents are effective in defining the development of the child (Dönmezer, 2009, p.128). The attitudes of parents affect the personality of a child as they will constitute a role model for the developing child, and the child displays similar attitudes that they have obtained from the identification model (Ömeroğlu, 1996, p. 71). The attitudes and behaviors of parents may significantly affect the development of an adaptive-nonadaptive, active-passive, dependent-autonomous, introverted-extroverted, etc. personality about their conscience and moral development. These attitudes may be classified under six groups: authoritarian (oppressive) attitude, permissive attitude, protective attitude, unbalanced and indecisive attitude, indifferent attitude and democratic attitude (Dönmezer, 2009, p.129).

### **5.1. Authoritarian (Oppressive) Attitude**

Authoritarian attitude is the attitude, in which children are monitored excessively, but the sensitivity to their interests, wishes, and needs is low. In this attitude, the personality characteristics, interests and needs of children are not taken into consideration. The expectations of parents from the child are much more than what they give to the child. The wishes of the children are tried to be oppressed. There is a strict understanding of the discipline. Authoritarian parents set unchangeable standards for their children and want to shape, monitor and assess their children according to these standards (Dönmezer, 2009, p. 130).

As of their general qualities, authoritarian families expect their children to obey them absolutely and fulfill their wishes and orders indisputably. They do not want to behave sincerely and frankly in their relations with their children; they tend to see issues from their value judgments not with the eyes of the children. They make decisions about their children without giving much right to speak (Özgülven, 2010, p. 211).

In the authoritarian attitude, the verbal communication between parents and the child is not cared for, and the development of an independent personality and personalization are not supported. Young people are not allowed to express their opinions and thoughts, and reveal their self (Adams, 1995).

It can be put forward that authoritarian and oppressive parents set strict rules while raising their children, do not let them express themselves, limit their relationships with their friends and do not find peer support positive (Çeçen, 2008). An insensitive and strict control is also perceived as the lack of love (Kuzgun, 1990).

Children of authoritarian parents are anxious, unhappy and worrisome in the emotional sense. They may resort to physical force when they get angry. They have inadequate communication skills, lack self-confidence, and this leads to their passive, shy and even aggressive behaviors in their social relationships. As a result of all of these, these children with inadequate social skills may show many behavior problems in the school environment (Santrock, 1997; Erkan 2013).

In the communication based on the authoritarian attitude, the child is communicated with in order to express the rules and orders without discussing and coming to terms with him/her and taking his/her wishes into consideration. As there is an interpersonal relationship that lacks love, children develop a shy personality with insecurity, fighting, argument and aggression-tendency, indecisiveness in emotions, selfishness and the tendency to blame others in addition to obeying without thinking and dependence (Gürtüz and Eğinli, 2010, p. 155).

In the findings obtained from the studies carried out by (Ulusoy, Demir and Baran 2005) on high school students, it is seen that parents that adopt the oppressive-authoritarian attitude, do not give responsibility to their children, do not let their children participate in the decisions about themselves, do not get to know their children's friends, criticize them, shout at them and find mistakes more than the parents that adopt other attitudes. It was understood that children get the feeling that they are not loved and wanted, are exposed to words and behaviors that make them feel like they are unnecessary, and cannot share their problems with their parents. In such families, it is seen that there are more problems of conflict, and parents apply violence to each other and their children.

In the study carried out by Çeçen (2008) on university students, it was found that students who perceive their parents as authoritarian-oppressive feel more loneliness

when compared to the students in other groups and get more support from families and friends in the findings related to loneliness and social support scores.

### **5.2. Permissive Attitude**

It is an attitude in which monitoring is low and the reactivity to the interests, wishes, and needs of the child is high. Any kind of behavior of the child is tolerated and accepted. The preferences of the child are not interfered. There is no certain attitude about sleeping, eating and studying conditions. There is no sanction when rules do not comply with (Dönmezer, 2009, p. 131). Permissive parents accept any kind of wish of children with no supervision and limitation. In such families, children are granted unlimited rights and their behaviors are not limited. Children have all the initiative, other family members accept their wishes unconditionally and fulfill them. There is no healthy communication between children and parents. The child, who is raised in an environment of exaggerated love, is spoiled excessively (Ekşi, 1990).

Seyars et al. indicated that families who adopt the permissive attitude towards their children have two kinds of beliefs. Such families either find any kind of behavior of their children natural or believe that it is appropriate to turn a blind eye to certain behaviors although they do not support them (Mızrakçı, 1994). Consequently, families will either tolerate the behavior of the child or show an indifferent and disinterested attitude. Parents who adopt a submissive attitude towards their children accept the dominance of children at home, children rule their parents and show them little respect. These attitudes and behaviors that are not only for parents turn into a type of personality that looks for ways to dominate the society and people outside the family in time. That parents are overly indulgent and fond of their children make the children selfish. Their social adaptation level is low. It can be said that children who are used to getting at all times lack sharing and cooperating with other people (Özgülven, 2010, p. 217).

### **5.3. Protective Attitude**

In the communication based on the protective attitude, parents care about children more than necessary, and children may get into emotional loneliness due to the excessive care and protection. Children are always treated like babies when communicating with them. Nevertheless, the excessive association is established with parents and it is ensured that children share everything only by communicating with their parents. Children who are in the excessive communication with their parents fail to develop in a social sense (Gürüz and Eğinli, 2010, p.155).

Protective parents bring about support in addition to setting many rules. However, an inappropriate emotional participation and anxiety are observed in parents while doing these. These parents are defined as parents who protect their children from a hostile environment (White and Acar, 1998, p.88).

The main characteristics of parents who have developed excessively protective parent attitude: They are giving in their relations with others, excessively protective towards their relatives, warm and loving, and generally anxious. As the anxiety of parents increases, they show more protective behaviors towards their children. In a family environment made up of parents with these qualities, children who are excessively controlled and protected are not let research and discover, and learn by living. Hence, individuals who are not involved in incidents, depend on others, prefer to live under the supervision of others, constantly wait for support in achieving their objectives and make it a habit that others solve their problems for them (Alisinanoğlu,

2003). Consequently, excessive protection based on love may become harmful for children.

As a result of the protective attitude of the family, children may become dependent on others, lack self-confidence, become emotional and resentful. Children are not allowed to be self-sufficient and independent. The possibility to maintain their lives as "externally controlled" during adulthood is also high. As parents undertake all the chores of the children, they show certain maladaptive behaviors. They wait for support, have a high level of selfishness and always want their wishes to be fulfilled. They are generally dependent, have low leadership properties and a vague personality. They feel insecure and indecisive (Özgüven, 2010, p.214).

#### **5.4. Unbalanced and Indecisive (Inconsistent) Attitude**

The unbalanced and indecisive attitude of parents may result from the dissensus between parents as well as the variable attitudes between parents themselves. One of the parents may have a tolerant and democratic attitude while the other adopts an oppressive attitude. Thus, while a particular behavior of children is punished by one of the parents, it may be considered normal and even awarded by the other.

Furthermore, parents who exhibit contradictory behaviors between each other may have an inciting and awarding attitude, may become really angry or punish the other day. In short, it is seen that parents have consistent and balanced attitudes (Dönmezer, 2009, p. 134). Indecisive and unbalanced behaviors of parents may also last during the adolescence period. Such double standards may lead young people to conflict in the social role they adopt. This may make young people confused and lead to the instability in their behaviors. The adolescent may not be able to estimate what the attitudes of their parents are.

As an appropriate attitude, parents must have consistent attitudes within themselves personally and between them as parents, and have similar attitudes for their reactions against the child's behaviors. The reasons for the limitations on children's behaviors and the rules that are asked to comply with should be explicitly expressed to the child and these should not be compromised. Thus, children know what they can and cannot do and develop a values system that fits the social and communal life (Özgüven, 2010, p.217).

Inconsistent and unbalanced family attitudes prevent creating a values system that will create the basis for personal behaviors of the child and conflicts in their relations with their parents. Such an attitude negatively affects the development of the child, and leads to the formation of internal conflicts, anxieties, and consequently, the development of an unbalanced and inconsistent personality (Oktay 1990; Quoted. Özgüven, 2010, p. 218).

#### **5.5. Indifferent Attitude**

In the indifferent attitude, both the supervision and the reaction towards the interests and needs of children are quite low. Indifferent parents do not allocate enough time for their children, show the effort needed for them and communicate with them as much as possible. They keep children away; they consider them as an obstacle for their work (Dönmezer, 2009, p. 135).

In the indifferent family type, parents do not care much about the lives of their children. Parents do not control the behaviors of the children much; they set them free. Children make decisions on their own. They neglect children and stay indifferent to

their basic needs. Children are left alone and ignored by their parents apart from their living needs (Özgülven, 2010, p. 215).

In the communication based on the indifferent attitude, children are not cared about much apart from their basic needs. It is not considered necessary to monitor the behaviors of children, determine their rights and wrongs and get them accustomed to the society. Children are communicated as long as it is necessary, and they are generally kept away from parents. That children are emotionally and behaviorally neglected affects their personality development negatively (Gürüz and Eğinli, 2010, p. 155). The most significant indicator of the indifferent attitude is the lack of communication between parents. Indifferent parents ignore and even psychologically refuse their children. The indifferent parent attitude is an attitude that both shows least love and controls their behaviors least. In the indifferent attitude, both monitoring and the sensitivity towards the interests and needs of children are quite low (Özgülven, 2010, p. 215). Possible attitudes and behaviors of children raised in an indifferent family environment show themselves as a personality that is not accepted in the society, much criticized by others, psychologically angry, aggressive, quarrelsome or introversive, and oppressive. As parents do not care about children both in terms of showing love and their development, health and economic needs, the child becomes rebellious, disobedient, showing rude behaviors, rageful or intimidated towards the parents, fearful and unable to make himself/herself be understood (Özgülven, 2010, p. 216).

#### **5.6. Democratic Attitude**

Democratic attitudes are attitudes that aim both the monitoring of the children and acting sensitively towards their interests and needs. Parents consider the opinions of their children important as well as asking for their own opinion to be valued. Rights are based on reciprocity. In addition to the sense of responsibility, the autonomy and development of an independent personality are desired and supported (Dönmezer, 2009). The attitude that is preferred in the family in order for the children's education to be healthy is the democratic and equality expressing competent attitude. This type of parent attitude includes autonomy in addition to regulating monitoring and love. These parents constitute a balance between acting alone and being together (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1998).

In the communication based on the democratic attitude, attitudes of valuing everyone in the family, giving them the right to choose and showing respect to the personality are dominant. The things that are wanted to be performed are not made by force but in accordance with equal rights and rules. Studies show that children with democratic parents have higher adaptation levels. Children are communicated with in the family and they are allowed to express themselves. Children are given the right to speak about making decisions about the family and thus, it is ensured that they feel themselves valuable. The feelings of love and closeness are transmitted to children through non-verbal communication, as well as verbal communication (Gürüz and Eğinli, 2010, p. 155). Behaviors of the parents in the democratic attitude are decisive and daring; they attach importance to power; they look for being powerful in themselves and others. They act objectively and rationally; they attach importance to their independence; they tend to express their needs without suppressing them and going against the society. They want to solve interpersonal problems by talking; they never give up struggling. In this democratic family environment created by parents with such qualities, children are accepted as individuals, and loved and respected

unconditionally. Decision making and learning by trial and error of the children are supported in this environment. The limits of the accepted and non-accepted behaviors of children are set. Within the scope of these rules, children are free and they have the right to speak within the family. It may be expected that children raised in such an environment have internally controlled personality (Alisinanoğlu, 2003). Being democratic parents is about the social capability of children. Thus, children of democratic parents are individuals with social competence, self-confidence, sense of responsibility, cooperative, friendly, emotionally happy, balanced and self-sufficient (Gordon and Browne, 1993; Santrock, 1997; Erkan 2013).

In democratic families, opinions of children are valued and children become part of decisions of the family. In the democratic family attitude, parents give information about the rules of family life; they present themselves to children as a source person that they can use at all times. Children are allowed to regulate their lives by themselves to the extent of their facilities.

Studies show that children raised in the democratic family environment tend to develop more in terms of personality development as well as mental development, and the democratic environment does not only give the children the right to be free but also encourages them to express themselves and gain experience. Children raised in such an environment become lively, fearless and independent (Özgülven, 2010, p.219).

## 6. STUDIES ON FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Dumlao and Botta (2000) performed the study "*Family communication patterns and conflict styles between young adults and their fathers*". It is claimed that conflict behaviors are learned at early ages, and these patterns are protected in future periods. In the study performed on 211 university students, whether the relational order created by the family communication environment leads students to different interpretations and cognitive focusing on the conflict was examined. Results show that family communication patterns between fathers and young adult children are related to the conflict styles of university students with their fathers.

Koerner and Fitzpatrick (1997) performed the study "*Family type and conflict: Effect of conversation and conformity orientation on family conflict*". This study examines the effect of how conformity and conversation orientation cope with the conflicts between parents and adolescents. A statistically significant relationship was found between conformity orientation and conflict avoidance, emotional expression and depression by examining 35 families and 117 test subject data. There is also a statistically significant difference between conversation orientation and conflict avoidance and seeking social support.

Sillars, Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2005) performed the study titled "*Communication and understanding in parent and adolescent relations*". This study examined the understanding between communication and parent-adolescent. It includes the understanding, family conflicts, adolescent self-concept and instant ideas (or empathic accuracy). The parent understanding of the self-concept of the child was associated with constant open communication and high parent-child relationship satisfaction and strong child self-concept. The parent understanding of conflict perceptions was associated with high conformity and low relationship satisfaction. While the parent understanding of instant thoughts is generally low, it was found that it is not associated with communication, relationship satisfaction, and child self-concept.

Fitzpatrick, Marshall et al. (1996) performed the study titled the "*Effect of Family Communication Environments on Children's Social Behavior during Middle Childhood*". The family communication environments of school-age children in Grades 1, 4, 6, and 7 were measured using "talking picture books" containing dialogues representing various types of family communication. Children listened to the dialogues and examined cartoon pictures depicting different families. Using this information, children identified their families as either (a) pluralistic (high conversation and low conformity), (b) consensual (high conversation and high conformity), (c) protective (low conversation and high conformity), or (d) laissez-faire (low conversation and low conformity). Children completed the revised Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and teachers rated each child's social self-restraint and social withdrawal. Results revealed an interaction among family type, sex, and grade level for both social withdrawal and social self-restraint, suggesting that family communication environments may be differentially beneficial for boys and girls at particular points of development.

Ritchie and Fitzpatrick (1990) conducted the study titled "*Family Communication Patterns: Measuring Intrapersonal Perceptions of Interpersonal Relationships*". Mass communication researchers interested in family communication have traditionally assumed that family norms are shared by all family members, and apparent disagreement about family norms has been ascribed to instrument unreliability. A survey of 308 adolescent children and their parents, using a revised Family Communication Pattern (RFCP) instrument, yields evidence of systematic patterns of agreement and disagreement between mothers and fathers as well as between parents and children. Seventh-grade children are more likely to share their mothers' views on concept-orientation and their father's views on socio-orientation; by the 11th grade, they have just the opposite opinions. These results suggest that future work on family communication cannot ignore the influence of intrafamilial patterns of agreement and disagreement on communication norms defining the family.

Fang Hsu (1998) conducted the study "*Relationships between family characteristics and communication apprehension*". This study examines relationships between college students' communication apprehension and their perceptions of characteristics of their families of origin. The results indicated that a linear composite of parental acceptance-rejection, family cohesion, expressiveness, independence, conflict, and communication patterns was significantly correlated with communication apprehension. When analyzed separately for men and women, men's communication apprehension was only significantly and positively related to conformity-oriented family communication patterns, whereas women's communication apprehension was significantly and negatively related to parental acceptance, family cohesion, expressiveness, independence, and conversation orientation and positively related to conformity orientation.

In master's thesis titled "*Family Communication Patterns: Can They Impact Leadership Styles?*" conducted by Prasitthipab (2008), the correlation between leadership styles and family communication models during childhood was examined. Two hypotheses that represent the relationship between conformity orientation and task leadership, and conversation orientation and relationship leadership were suggested. University staff and students in leadership positions completed the Family Communication Pattern Scale and Leadership Behavior Defining Survey. Conformity orientation and task leadership hypothesis were found significant. In addition to this,

results point to a positive relationship between conversation orientation and relationship leadership. People in the sample are mainly from conversation oriented families and they use the relationship leadership style.

In Nardello's (2002) master's thesis titled "*Relationship between the communication model and control focus in the family*", the relationship between the family communication patterns of individuals during adolescence and their control focus emotions in their future life was examined. Interpersonal target control focus and revised family communication model scales were used. It is assumed that interpersonal communication patterns are related to the sub-scales of interpersonal target control focus scale. According to the practice performed on 215 university students, it was found that conversation orientation is positively correlated with internal, structural and another person's control focus, and negatively correlated with prescriptive, factual focus of control.

Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) conducted the study titled "*The impact of family of origin on conflict behavior in romantic relationships*". This study investigates the influence of communication patterns of families of origin on conflict behaviors of adult children in their romantic relationships. Based on the self-reports of 260 participants, differences in conflict behaviors were observed for persons stemming from consensual, pluralistic, protective and laissez-faire families. The differences involved mutually positive and mutually negative behaviors, as well as in the complementary behaviors of avoiding, threatening and resisting. These results support hypotheses predicting a socializing influence of the family of origin's communication patterns on adult children's communication in subsequent romantic relationships. In addition, by associating different family types with different socialization outcomes, this study further demonstrates the importance of assessing family types in investigations of family communication and of interpersonal conflict.

As a result of the study titled "Effect of Perceived Family Communication Types on the Self-Respect of Adolescents and a Sample Practice" carried out by Özmen (2007), it was found that adolescents with high self-respect have more democratic attitudes when compared to adolescents with low self-respect, and a more pluralistic or tolerating family communication pattern. While adolescents who perceive family communication types as authoritarian communication style and an authoritarian attitude generally develop either medium level or low-level self-respect. Another important point that attracts attention is that the level of self-respect in families with laissez-faire family communication style is not that low. Furthermore, as a result of the study, most (47.8%) of the adolescents in the study group believe that there is effective communication in the family. Those who believe in this are mostly adolescents at the age of 16 and 17. An equal proportion (36.4%) of people share the same thought at both ages. It was determined that adolescents at the age of 15 feel hierarchy more (2.5%). While the rate of male adolescents responding as "There is communication within the hierarchy in the family" is 10.2%, only 1.4% of female adolescents give this answer. This shows that male adolescents perceive the Authoritarian Family Communication Style more. Most of the girls think that they have the Tolerating Family Communication Style.

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