



Relationship between perception of parental communication styles incompatibility amongst high school students

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Abstract

Family is an influential setting in physical and mental health of children and adolescents. Accordingly, studying the atmosphere and current relationships in the family in terms of their effect on children and adolescents is highly necessary. This study was designed and conducted to investigate the relationship between students' perception of parental communication styles and their own incompatibility. In this descriptive study, population consisted of female students of high school, of whom, 300 were selected and studied in a random cluster method. Data were collected using the standardized students' compatibility and family communication pattern questionnaire. The results showed a significant relationship only between emotional incompatibility and conformity communication orientation. A statistically significant relationship was also observed between general incompatibility and conformity communication orientation. The results also showed that parental communication styles have a role in children's incompatibility. Analysis of each dependent parameter alone showed a difference in parental communication styles only in emotional incompatibility component. Pluralistic family communication style is associated with emotional compatibility of children of the family. The present study results relating to role of communication styles in students' compatibility suggest that it is necessary to teach parents appropriate communication styles.

Keywords: Communication, Incompatibility, Parents, Students

Introduction

Today, despite deep cultural and lifestyle changes, many people lack necessary capabilities for facing problems in life, making them vulnerable to dealing with these problems [1]. Undoubtedly, compatibility in the form of extensive social changes and traumatic life events is inevitable, and compatibility to self and the environment is essential for anyone, especially students [2]. Adolescents are future

country-builders and educators of the next generation, and their compatibility today will have a dramatic impact on their future compatibility in performing occupational and family duties [3].

Family is one of the most influential environmental factors in children's cognitive development, and many of children's problems originate from their families [4].

Family is considered an effective environment in individual's physical and mental health [5]. A perception based on lack of kindness, conflict and enmity has a huge impact on children's mental health [6-8]. Hence, students' in-family interactions are highly influential in their compatibility. Interaction is important in life, since we all enjoy interaction and profound involvement in relationships. Inability to interact with others will result in loneliness and depression [9]. Family communication is also highly important, since wrong communication leads to tension in the family and affects children [10]. Recognizing and defining family communication patterns, which are the channels for family members to interact with one another, is very important. Researchers have tried to define family communications and categorize their styles and patterns [11]. Chaffee & Stone were the first to use social orientation and conceptual orientation reforms as two family communication patterns [12]. In social orientation, parental authority is emphasized, while in conceptual orientation, members are encouraged to propose their beliefs, debate and exchange views [13]. This communication model was developed by Fitzpatrick & Ritchie in 1995, who argued that family communication can be divided into a continuum of conformity and dialogue dimensions. In the dimension of conformity, huge emphasis is placed on consistency of attitudes and beliefs in interactions, and also on obeying adults and parents. In contrast, in the dimension of dialogue, all family members are encouraged to interact and debate about various issues. Family members freely and consistently interact with one another. Combining these two orientations produces four family communication styles:

Consenting family: There is huge emphasis on compromise and harmony, and both dialogue and conformity dimensions score high in this type of family.

Pluralistic family: Free and open communications rule in this family; they are emotionally supportive, and score high in dialogue, but not so in conformity.

Protective family: In this family, emphasis is on conformity and obedience. They score poorly in dialogue, but high in conformity.

Easygoing family: There is minimum interaction, and both dialogue and conformity score poorly in this family [14,15].

Each of these communication orientations has its own particular psychological consequences. In his study, Hang showed that dimension of dialogue had positive and dimension of conformity mostly negative consequences. Other studies in this area have shown a positive relationship between dimension of dialogue and self-esteem and social support, and a negative relationship between dialogue and depression and anxiety [13,15,16]. In their study, Mackey and Koerner showed that communication pattern of dialogue was positively related to self-esteem and social support and negatively to depression and anxiety, and conversely, conformity was positively related to anxiety and negatively to self-esteem and social support [17]. Larsen and Mooney showed that students that had qualitatively good relationships with their parents had better compatibility compared to those that had not [18]. Given the above discussion about the role of parental communication styles on children and adolescents, a question is posed whether type of family communication pattern affects adolescents' compatibility. Thus, the present study was designed and conducted to investigate adolescents' compatibility in relation to family communication pattern.

Method

In this study 300 high school students of Birjand city, the east of Iran, was selected in a random cluster method. To observe ethical principles, participation of students was on voluntary basis, and questionnaires were anonymous. Data were collected using standardized students' compatibility and family communication pattern questionnaire. Family communication pattern was assessed using Fitzpatrick and Koerner's revised self-assessment scale, containing 26 items. Studies

have reported reliability of the scale with Cronbach's alpha 0.89 for dialogue dimension and 0.79 for conformity dimension (Fitzpatrick and Koerner) [15]. Rahimi reported Cronbach's alpha 0.88 for dialogue dimension and 0.85 for conformity [19]. Koreshnia assessed validity through confirmatory factor analysis, and found Kruit-Bartlett coefficient 2319.49 at significance level 0.01 [20]. To assess students' compatibility, Sindhi high school students' compatibility questionnaire in 1993 was used, which measures 14-18 year-old students' compatibility in emotional, social, and educational areas with 60 items. This questionnaire produces four scores, of which three relate to the three areas and one to overall score, which is the sum total of these scores, and indicates overall compatibility of student. Scores of the three areas are interpreted as follows:

Emotional compatibility: High scores indicate emotional instability and low scores, emotional stability.

Social compatibility: High scores indicate being dominated and retarded and low scores, being aggressive.

Educational compatibility: High scores show poor academic interest and low scores, high interest in education and school [21].

Reliability of the original version of this test was found 0.95 in split-half method, 0.93 in test-

retest method, and 0.94 in Kuder-Richardson method. Face validity of this questionnaire was confirmed by three professors from counseling, psychometric, and statistics departments, who concluded that this questionnaire was acceptable for assessment of high school students' emotional, social and educational compatibilities. Validity of this scale was also found 0.73 using parallel forms. Using split-half method, reliability of this questionnaire was found 0.78 in social area, 0.74 in emotional, and 0.7 in educational, and 0.71 in overall scale [22].

Data were analyzed in SPSS 18 using single-sample t-test, multivariate analysis, correlation coefficient and stepwise regression coefficient at significant level 0.05.

Results

Descriptive results showed that 67.7% of participants were male and 33.3% were female. According to results, communication styles were rated by students as follows: dialogue style with mean 50.95 and standard deviation 11.63 and conformity style with mean 34.53 and standard deviation 8.75.

According to single-sample t-test, students rated dialogue communication style (with possible mean scores) higher than average (Table 1).

Table 1 One sample t-test in assessment of communication orientations of dialogue and conformity

	45=test value		t	df	Sig
Conversation's Communication style	Mean	SD	8.68	289	<0.01
	50.95	11.63			
Conformity's communication style	33=test value		2.98	289	<0.01
	Mean	SD			
	34.53	8.75			

According to single-sample t-test, students rated parents' conformity communication style (with possible mean scores) higher than average (Table 1).

Assessment of children's incompatibility showed their mean emotional incompatibility 6.73, mean social incompatibility 11.2, and mean educational incompatibility 10.6. Hence,

students' social incompatibility was higher than their emotional and educational ones.

Assessment of the relationship between children's incompatibility and parents' communication orientation showed a statistically significant relationship only between emotional incompatibility and conformity communication orientation (Table 2).

Table 2 *The relationship between children's incompatibility and parents' communication orientation*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Conversation's communication style (1)	1					
Conformity's communication style (2)	-0.29**	1				
Emotional incompatibility (3)	-0.11	0.27**	1			
Social incompatibility (maladjustment) (4)	0.10	-0.06	0.12*	1		
Educational incompatibility (5)	0.06	0.11	0.30*	0.42**	1	
Total incompatibility (6)	0.001	0.17**	0.75**	0.65**	0.75**	1

p<0.01**, p<0.05*

The relationship between criterion variable (students' incompatibility) and predictor variable (parents' communication orientation) was assessed using stepwise regression analysis. In explaining social and educational incompatibilities, because of the insignificant effect on predicting criterion variable, none of the parents' communication

orientations were included in analysis, and in emotional incompatibility, only conformity communication orientation was included in analysis. Table 3 presents values of correlation coefficient, determinant coefficient, adjusted determinant coefficient and its standard deviation.

Table 3 *The relationship between emotional incompatibility and conformity communication orientation*

Predictor variable	Criterion variables	Correlation coefficient	Determination coefficient	Adjusted determination coefficient	Standard deviation of multiple determination coefficient
Conformity's communication	Emotional incompatibility	0.27	0.07	0.067	3.68

Table 3 shows a significant relationship between conformity communication orientation and emotional incompatibility of students (adjusted $R^2=0.067$, $p<0.01$, and $F(1,280)=21.25$). However, no significant

relationship was found between parental communication style and social and educational incompatibility. Table 4 presents regression coefficient for each predictor variable.

Table 4 *Regression coefficient for each predictor variables*

Criterion variables	Non standardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	T Statistical	Sig
	B	Standard deviation	Beta		
Emotional incompatibility	0.115	0.025	0.266	4.61	0.000

($F(834,9)=2.46$, $p=0.0001$; Pillai's Trace=0.078; partial $\eta^2=0.026$)

Evidently, students' emotional incompatibility can be explained according to parents' conformity communication orientation. Assessment of the effect of parents'

communication style on children's incompatibility showed a significant difference. Each independent variable alone was assessed using adjusted Bonferroni alpha.

Table 5 Effect of parents' communication styles on students' incompatibility in each independent variable

Independent variable	Variables	Analysis result
Parents' communication styles	Emotional incompatibility	F(278,3)=5.14, p=0.002 , partial $\eta^2=0.053$
	Social incompatibility (maladjustment)	F(278,3)=1.97, p=0.311 , partial $\eta^2=0.013$
	Educational incompatibility	F(278,3)=1.78, p=0.150 , partial $\eta^2=0.019$

According to Table 5, a difference was observed only in emotional incompatibility in terms of parents' communication styles. To follow-up these results, Tukey post hoc test was used, and results obtained showed a significant difference in emotional incompatibility component between consenting and pluralistic communication styles, and between protective and pluralistic family communication styles. Hence, children of families with pluralistic communication style have less emotional incompatibility compared to those of families with consenting and protective styles. In other words, pluralistic family communication style is associated with emotional compatibility of children in that family.

Discussion

The present study results showed that both dimensions of communication orientation (dialogue and conformity) were higher than average. A significant relationship was found only between children's emotional incompatibility and conformity communication orientation, which agrees with results obtained by Larsen and Mooney that showed adolescents with good quality relationships with their parents had better compatibility compared to those with little relationship with their parents [18], and results by Golchin [23], Khodayarifard [24], Jenani [25], Dadfar-Tayeri & Amani [26], and Saghi & Rajae [27] that argued that healthy family performance is significantly related to compatibility. This finding also agrees with result obtained by Griffin et al. [27] which confirms that good relationships with parents and family reduces incidence of aggression. This result also concurs with those found by Andrews et al. that showed hatred of family relationship leads to adolescents' aggression and antisocial behaviors,

and results by Haley that showed conformity orientation as a negative and significant predictor of resilience [28]. Families with dialogue communication orientation easily, frequently, freely, and without prejudice talk about a wide range of subjects in details. Hence, when children of these families receive a massage; they are affected by quality of the massage rather than the massage per se. These families consider their children sufficiently capable of decision-making and development of personal beliefs, and show interest in what they have to say and support them. In other words, there is support and warm and intimate relationships in these families [17,29], and issues are discussed openly, with participation of all, and parents do not feel that they have to control children and make decisions for them. In contrast, in families with high conformity, parents are authoritarian and controlling, and stress that their children should avoid conflict with others and respect elders [30]. In these families, interactions rely on avoidance of conflict and mutual dependence on each other, with emphasis on obedience from parents and elders; and children are expected to act in the way their parents wish them to [31]. Therefore, in families with high conformity, the emotional atmosphere together with support causes flexibility in the face of events and problems, leading to adolescents' compatibility.

The present study results also showed that family communication styles have a role in children's incompatibility. Children of families with pluralistic communication style have lower emotional incompatibility compared to those in families with consenting and protective communication styles. These results concur with those found by Khosravi et al, [32] that studied the effect of family

communication patterns on marital satisfaction in a group of couples in Shiraz and showed that pluralistic and consenting communication patterns produced the most marital satisfaction in women, and protective and easygoing patterns produced the least marital satisfaction [32]. These results also agree with those found by Noller and Fitzpatrick [33], Bloomberg [34], Griff [35], Yalsin [36], Halford [37], and Troy [38] that showed teaching pluralistic family communication pattern affects couples' satisfaction. Because pluralistic families have low conformity and high dialogue orientations; they have open and unrestricted interactions, members freely take part in decisions, parents have the ability to accept children's views, thus children develop high levels of social, problem-solving, leadership, and self-expression skills [39]. Such attributes make them seek appropriate solutions in situations of conflict in social interactions, and enable them to use new and creative solutions [40], which leads to improvement in children's compatibility, and thus reduces their incompatibility.

The present study limitations included use of self-reporting questionnaires, which may have biased answers. Another limitation was non-extendibility of results to rural community. The present study was conducted on high school students. Future studies can conduct their investigations on university and primary school students.

Conclusion

This study was designed and conducted to investigate the role of family communication styles in students' incompatibility. The results obtained showed a significant correlation between parents' communication style and students compatibility. Communication orientation of dialogue and pluralistic communication style are beneficial to students' compatibility. All things being equal, children of parents with dialogue communication orientation and pluralistic communication style have higher levels of compatibility compared to those of parents with conformity orientation and consenting and protective communication

styles. According to clinical implications of this study, teaching communication patterns and their benefits can lead to improvement in psychological ambience of the family and children's compatibility. Hence, teaching parents effective and beneficial communication styles by those formally and informally involved in education appears highly necessary.

Contribution

Study Design: MA

Data Collection and Analysis: MA

Manuscript Preparation: MA

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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