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Parenting Mistakes as a Factor in Communication Difficulties in Children

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Abstract

The article investigates the social and cultural nature of impaired communication in preschool children. The author presents the findings of an empiric research into the influence of parenting styles as a trigger of variable communication difficulties in children. The research shows that maternal parenting mistakes (hyper protection, gratification of whims, excessive sanctions, lack of confidence in upbringing abilities, the fear of losing one's child, encouragement of infantilism) and paternal parenting mistakes (hyper protection, insufficient requirements, undeveloped paternal feelings, preference of male traits in a child) cause specific basic, content-related, instrumental and reflective communication difficulties in children. Such mistakes determine non-constructive behavioural forms in communicative situations (aggression, protest, demonstrative behaviour, shyness, conformity).

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1. Introduction

Children in contemporary Russia face acute problems of communication: the nature of their interpersonal relationships is destructive; they tend to view social contacts as stereotypical and pragmatic and are unable to cooperate and solve communication tasks effectively in the dynamic situational context. In our opinion, family upbringing is the leading factor in communication difficulties arising at the early stages of ontogenesis, as, despite other numerous factors, communication with one's nearest, i.e. parents, determines the nature of children's socialization and development of subjectness. Family relationships form the social capital that enables children to adapt to and integrate into various social groups effectively; it is the family that develops basic communication experience and patterns of communicative behaviour in interaction. According to Rogers, the main parenting mistake is lack of unconditional attention to a child. Only unconditional acceptance of children,

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regardless of their actions, can fully develop their personality [1]. Only a dialogue in the family develops a positive self-identity and readiness to communicate in a constructive way [2]. Conversely, unfavourable conditions and parenting mistakes, parents' failure to provide adequate support, non-constructive communication patterns chosen by adults are bound to result in various communication difficulties in children. For instance, a demonstrative style in parental communication hinders the development of self-sufficiency and responsibility in children [3]; a maternal authoritative style leads to children's shyness, social fears, hyper anxiety and excessive obedience in interpersonal interaction [4]. Hyper protection and excessive parental control result in children's lies, cruelty, dominance, intolerance to others [5]. An implicit emotional rejection of children causes their mistrust of the world, hostility, touchiness, destructive patterns of communicative behaviour [6]. Children develop a higher risk of communication difficulties when their psyche is affected by a chronic, constant influence of parental behaviour in comparison with a single influence of more serious factors; chronic factors, therefore, lead to graver consequences [7].

We understand communication difficulties as objective or subjective communication barriers varying in degree and manifestations that disturb the inner balance of a child, complicate interpersonal relations and hinder efforts to overcome these barriers. We classify communication difficulties into four categories: basic, content-related, instrumental and reflective. Basic communication difficulties include those determined by specific features of a child – difficulties related to empathy or getting into contact with others; difficulties stemming children's egocentrism, low expectations of other people, emotional and personal excessive dependence on interlocutors. Content-related communication difficulties include cognitive problems resulting from the lack of knowledge about communication, difficulties in forecasting, planning and altering one's communication strategy. Instrumental communication difficulties manifest themselves in the inability to implement intended communication acts – verbal, non-verbal, prosodic, extra linguistic difficulties as well as the inability to continue a conversation. Reflective communication difficulties include those of self-analysis, self-observation and self-development [8].

The purpose of the research was to identify the influence of parenting styles on the nature of communication in preschool children. We aimed to test the hypothesis that maternal and paternal parenting mistakes result in variable communication difficulties (basic, content-related, instrumental and reflective) in preschool children.

2. Method

The participants of the study were 60 triads: preschool children – the only children in the family– aged 6–7 (M=6.6), their mothers and fathers. These nuclear families reside in Kostroma and experience no social problems.

The methodological design of the study was based on the questionnaire *The Analysis of Family Relations to identify parenting styles and mistakes* (Eidemiller Je.G., Yustitzkis V.V.) [9]; expert evaluation of children's communicative development to identify communication difficulties in children (Samokhvalova A.G.) [10]; the technique of expert evaluation of children's non-constructive behaviour in communication (Weiner M.E.) [11]; the Hands-test (Bricklin B., the modification by Semago N. Ya. and Semago M.M.) [12]. Educators and psychologists (at least, five people) acted as experts, carrying out the systematic standardized observation of communication manifestations in various communicative situations and identifying communication difficulties. The data were processed through the multiple regression analysis with SPSS V.19.0 package. The parents gave their voluntary consent for the participation of their children in the research. The empirical data were coded; the research was ecological and met the requirements of anonymity and confidentiality.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Maternal parenting mistakes and their role in arising communication difficulties in children.

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