

EDUCATIONAL INFLUENCE OF PARENTS IN CONTEMPORARY FAMILIES

^aELEONÓRA MENDELOVÁ, ^bHANA ZELENÁ, ^cLIBUŠA GUŽÍKOVÁ

^{a,b,c}Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Faculty of Education, Department of Pedagogy, Dražovská cesta 4, 949 74 Nitra, Slovakia Email: ^aemendelova@ukf.sk, ^bhzelen@ukf.sk, ^clibusa.guzikova@ukf.sk

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Abstract: We perceive the family as a social institution that fulfills important social functions, which undoubtedly include an educational function. However, concerning the impact of socio-economic conditions, cultural changes as well as the impact of other cultures, the educational activities in contemporary families are changing. The study deals with the research focused on determining the educational influence of current parents. Parents from different regions of Slovakia took part in the research. The research results were processed using the descriptive statistics methods and the Student t-test was used for the purpose of comparison. Based on obtained results it may be stated that current parents are perceived as quite liberal, without setting limits and clear rules in raising their children, and with a tendency to excuse children's mistakes. Their raising is marked by high pressure on children's school performance while they attribute the responsibility for school results and education to school.

Keywords: family, social changes, parents, child, education

Introduction

The family is a universal social group, in which important processes of socialization and education of each individual take place. The educational importance of the family is emphasized by many publications written by teachers, psychologists, sociologists and doctors. They point to the fact that the family environment shapes specific traits in each individual and its influence is far-reaching and diverse. Authors (e.g. Kurincová, 2005; Švaříčková Slabáková, Sobotková, 2018; Bereznička, 2014; Capaldi, 2019) emphasize the importance of the family from several aspects of its influence: from the point of view of primary education; provision of socially desirable values, standards and their interiorization; the formation of behavior models and identification with identification patterns as well as from the point of view of acquiring forms of verbal and non-verbal communication; forming emotional relationships etc. The irreplaceability and primariness of the family's educational influence is an immutable fact, but under the influence of social changes, the raising of children in contemporary families is changing.

1 Changes in the society and in the family

The changes that society has been going through in recent decades affect the life of families, their structure, functioning, relationships, as well as the sphere of parents' educational activities. In principle, it can be stated that the processes of social changes have an impact on families and the social changes in families have the impact on society.

Contemporary society is accompanied by globalization, which causes the expansion of individual freedom, the development of communication technologies, the expansion of opportunities for mobility, education, and existence (Somlai, Tóth, 2002). There is more and more individualization, depersonalization of relationships, sharp rationalization, and the increase of demands (Kraus, 2015). According to Kraus (2015, p. 19), contemporary society is mainly characterized by two moments: individualism and dynamism. Individualism can be understood as "breaking free from the shackles of traditions, historically sold customs and obligations" (Helus, 2007, p. 139), as "a gradual transition from given relationships, prioritized by the origin of a person to predominantly chosen relationships, formed by the free choice of the individual" (Guráň, Filadelfiová, Ritomský, 1997, pp. 5-6). According to Bacenkova, Sushhenko (2018, p. 88), "on the one hand, the individualization of society expanded the autonomous space for the activities of individuals (opportunities for education, independent decision-making, realization of one's own potential, constant self-improvement), on the other hand, it

deformed the sphere of marriage and family life, because the individual became free from the traditional norms of the family". According to Mastalski (2015), individualism dangerously creeps into the family lives, causes the decision-making only in one's own intentions, leads to tension and misunderstandings. Today, we notice elements of family individualism, which is manifested in a lack of communication, reluctance to tolerate the needs of other household members, a selfish approach to fulfilling one's needs, the perception of oneself as a "family hero", the need to achieve success and new experiences even at the expense of the family. The dynamism, which is an accompanying phenomenon of transforming society in recent decades, leads to the acceleration of society, but also of the individual. As a result, the family becomes more open, more accessible, more adaptable to changes brought by the development of society, but also to changes in individual human development (Guráň, Filadelfiová, Ritomský, 1997, pp. 5-6).

According to several authors (Ondrejko, Majerčíková, 2006; Somlai, 2013; Horvát, Džambazovič, 2015; Beck, Beck-Gernsheim, 2016; Ganesini, Blair, 2016), the economic and cultural transformation of society causes the accelerating changes in the family lives observed in recent decades. Changes in society lead to the destruction of forms of family coexistence, to changes in the family value systems, to loosening of mutual relations, to doubt about the importance of marriage and family, and to the diversification of life possibilities. As Kraus (2015, p. 13) states, "the contemporary family is inconsistent, the relationships are unclear, with frequently changing constellations, often producing feelings of powerlessness." Because the family is a living, constantly evolving social institution, its transformation processes are also reflected in the educational activities of parents.

2 Education in contemporary family

The comparison of parenting shows that it has never been as complicated as it is today. Its complexity follows, as Brezinka (1996, p. 134) states, from the fact that "we live and educate in the era of cultural liberalism, i.e., in the age of diversity of ideals and value attitudes". Medne (2009) adds that the current child upbringing is more demanding than in the past since a certain period and has been replaced by distorted values and emotionally cold relationships.

Each historical period has its own specific social and economic conditions, which also influence the ideas about the education goals and the requirements that children must meet. "In the past, the education goal was to raise an "obedient and decent" child, while obedience meant complete and immediate compliance with parental demands. The goal of today's parenting is "a happy, self-confident and independent child". So that a "unique" personality will grow, that can "establish himself well" in life (Lacinová, Škrdlíková, 2008).

Contemporary forms of parent-child relations are different, more free and we find the elements of liberalism and anti-authoritarianism. According to Liu (2016, p. 122), "the present generation of children has experienced a democratization of the parent-child relationship, which has manifested in a transformation from respect and obedience to free communication." Manniová (2007) writes about modern educational activities, i.e., about anti-authoritarian upbringing in the family, which can lead to the loss of parental authority. The child's opinion has the same value as the parent's one. The above mentioned principles of loose upbringing have negative effect on the child's psychophysical condition, communication, education, emotional relationships and ultimately, they determine the child's life in the future.

Nowadays, the education in families is often marked by the lack of time that parents devote to their children. The reasons may arise either from their employment or from other social and

cultural interests, as the interest of the child is relegated to a secondary place. The problem is not only that parents do not have enough time for their children, but they often do not even know what their children do in their free time and are often not even interested in it (Przygońska, 2011; Njufeld, Mate, 2018).

The education of today's children is often characterized by high parental pressure on children's school performance (Karchach et al., 2013; Ochojska, Marmola, Wańczyk-Welc, 2017; Ponukalina, 2020). It is typical, as stated by Helus (2007), that parents constantly put more pressure on their children to deliver high performances, to show perfect results or to be always better than others. Parents have high demands on their children, they are focused too much on the child's success and later social prestige. High parental expectations connected with the educational path of the child are currently also determined by the pressure of society. Success stands on a public pedestal, which promises a guarantee of successful life. Parents are under pressure to demand performance from their children, to pay attention to education, because otherwise the children will not find employment, "they will not be well". The school is understood as the key to a good future.

3 Research - Education of current parents

3.1 The project of the research

Based on the currently ongoing changes in the family lives outlined above, including changes in the field of family education, we focused on finding out the parents' opinions regarding the education of current parents. In the context of research problem, we focused on three selected aspects of contemporary parenting: 1. parents' characteristics, 2. parents' relationship to the child's school results, 3. parents' educational practices. *The aim* of the research was:

1. to map the parents' opinions on selected aspects of raising of current parents,
2. to find out whether parental education level determines their opinions on family education.

We set following research questions:

- How do respondents evaluate current parents: are they strict or rather liberal? Tolerant or rather critical?
- Is it important for parents that their children achieve good results in school?
- What educational procedures do they apply when raising their children? Do we find elements of liberalism or rather democracy and authoritarianism there?
- Are there differences in the opinions of the respondents regarding the current education in the family due to their level of education?

The research sample consisted of 205 parents from different regions of Slovakia who had at least 1 child. To obtain the research data, we used a non-standardized questionnaire. The questionnaire involved bipolar scales that contained opposite adjectives at the extreme points. The questionnaire also contained Likert scales for measuring the respondents' attitudes and opinions with the aim to specify their level of agreement or disagreement with the given statements on a 5-degree scale: 1 - I totally agree, 2 - I rather agree, 3 - I cannot express myself, 4 - I rather disagree, 5 - I totally disagree.

The results obtained by the questionnaire method, we evaluated by using descriptive statistical methods: number, average, percentages, standard deviation. For comparison purposes Student t-test was used.

3.2 The analysis of the research results

In the context of the above-mentioned research objectives, we investigated parents' opinions on education in contemporary families. At the same time, we verified whether the opinions of

the respondents (parents) are significantly different regarding their education on the statements presented by us.

The first group of questions was formulated in the form of bipolar scales with opposite adjectives on both sides of the scale, on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – very, 2 – rather, 3 – undecided, 4 – quite, 5 – very). Our intention was to find out how respondents evaluate current parents, what qualities they attribute to them. If the qualities related to liberal and democratic, or rather to authoritative education.

Table 1 Characteristics of parents – all respondents

Characteristics of parents Descriptive Statistics	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Most parents today are strict / liberal	205	2.0	5.0	4.054	.7290
Most parents today are tolerant / critical	205	1.0	5.0	3.327	1.1697

Table 1 shows that the respondents characterized the parents as quite liberal (value on the scale 4.054), but with an ambivalent, ambiguous evaluation of the qualities: tolerant/critical (value on the scale 3.327). We can state that this finding corresponds to the practice of family education, where current parents are relatively liberal in the upbringing of their children and equally tolerant and critical towards their children.

We tested the statistical significance of the differences between two groups of respondents (parents with the highest secondary education and those with university education) in the answers on two bipolar scales. The results are in Table 2 (statistically significant differences are marked *) and it follows that the differences between the respondents' opinions regarding their education were statistically significantly different when evaluating the strict/liberal characteristics. Parents with university education attributed more liberality in parenting to parents than those with primary and secondary education. When evaluating the tolerant/critical qualities, there were no statistically significant differences in the respondents' opinions regarding their education.

Table 2 Characteristics of parents - respondents according to

Characteristics of parents according to respondents' education		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Descriptive Statistics					
Most parents today are strict / liberal	primary and secondary	91	3.923*	.7635	.0800
	university	114	4.158*	.6859	.0642
Most parents today are tolerant / critical	primary and secondary	91	3.308	1.1224	.1177
	university	114	3.342	1.2108	.1134

The second group of questions, formulated in the form of Likert scales, was aimed at finding the parenting practices. In the previous question, the parents were rated as rather liberal, so we researched how their liberal parenting style is presented. The Likert scale contained five levels (1 - completely agree, 2 - rather agree, 3 - I can't express, 4 - rather disagree, 5 - completely disagree) and our aim was to find what are the expressions of liberal upbringing of current parents. We found out the respondents' opinions through statements (no. 1 - 7), average values are in Table 3.

Table 3 Parents' educational practices – all respondents

Statements/ Descriptive Statistics	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Parents allow their children a lot, they do not set boundaries, clear rules.	205	1.0	5.0	2.000	1.0479
2. They tend to do everything for the children so they can have peace of mind.	205	1.0	5.0	2.220	1.1655
3. They give their children fewer responsibilities than the previous generation of parents.	205	1.0	5.0	1.541	.8428

4. They tend to justify some manifestations of children's behavior.	205	1.0	5.0	1.737	.9123
5. Parents are inconsistent, they do not require compliance with rules.	205	1.0	5.0	2.171	1.1355
6. They don't have enough patience to raise more children.	205	1.0	5.0	1.995	1.0869
7. The upbringing is warm, but much more free.	205	1.0	5.0	1.893	.8622

We also tested the statistical significance of the respondents' differences in their opinions on the statements regarding their education, but statistically significant differences did not appear. As shown in Table 3, the respondents, regardless of their level of education, rate the upbringing of their current parents as liberal. The respondents rather agreed that current parents do not set clear rules for their children, tend to give them fewer responsibilities, and justify their undesirable behavior. At the same time, we found that because of the release of educational principles, upbringing is more based on the emotional relationship. However, it is also looser and inconsistent, that weakens the existence of clear rules and principles in the family. Based on the results, we can conclude that parents take the initiative instead of children, in the fulfillment of household and school duties.

The third group of questions, also formulated in the form of Likert scales, focused on parents' relationship children's school performance. The Likert scale contained five levels (1 – completely agree, 2 – rather agree, 3 – cannot express myself, 4 – rather disagree, 5 – completely disagree). Our aim was to find out what importance respondents (current parents) assign to their children's school success, whether parents require good school results from their children and whether responsibility for the children's success assign to school. The respondents' opinions we found through statements (No. 8-11), their average values on a scale from 1 to 5 are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Parents and children's school results – all respondents

Statements / Descriptive Statistics	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
8. They require excellent academic results from children.	205	1.0	5.0	1.868	.9586
9. They transfer educational responsibility to school.	205	1.0	5.0	2.127	1.2060
10. They try to make schoolwork easier for children.	205	1.0	5.0	2.210	1.0146
11. They are very focused on the child's success and later social prestige.	205	1.0	5.0	1.888	.9762

Based on the results in Table 4, we can conclude that the respondents partially agreed with all the statements regarding the children's school results. Above mentioned average values (range between 1.868 and 2.210) show that nowadays the raising children is characterized by high pressure from parents on their school performance (statement no. 1 and no. 3). Concerning this goal, parents try to make schoolwork easier, e.g., help with home preparation for lessons (statement no. 3). At the same time, our findings show that parents assign the responsibility for children's school success mainly to school (statement no. 2).

Moreover, we tested the statistical significance of the respondents' differences in their opinions regarding their education level. Based on the results shown in Table 5, we can conclude that the respondents evaluated statistically significantly different statements no. 3 and 4 (marked in Table 5 *), but without statistical difference statements no. 1 and no. 2. Parents with university education expressed greater extent of agreement with the statement "They are very focused on the child's success and later social prestige" than parents with lower education. Based on this data, we can conclude that university-educated parents prefer the value of success to a greater extent, which is related to their higher expectations for their children's education,

they have a higher motivation to stimulate their children in education.

Table 5 Parents and school results - respondents according to education

Statements/ Descriptive Statistics		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
They require excellent academic results from children.	primary and secondary	91	1.846	1.0102	.1059
	university	114	1.886	.9194	.0861
They transfer educational responsibility to school.	primary and secondary	91	2.121	1.2278	.1287
	university	114	2.132	1.1937	.1118
They try to make schoolwork easier for children.	primary and secondary	91	2.385*	1.1621	.1218
	university	114	2.070*	.8593	.0805
They are set up for the child's success and later social prestige.	primary and secondary	91	2.044*	1.0101	.1059
	university	114	1.763*	.9341	.0875

4 Discussion and conclusions

In the presented study, we focused on the issue of raising current parents in the context of changing aspects of current family lives. With the rapid development of science, technology, but also consumer life, the family is turning into a post-modern one with new features, but with the ongoing full responsibility for raising the child. As we mentioned, the patterns of parent-child relationship have changed. Authoritative education is less widespread, at the expense of the expanding tolerant, liberal style of education.

This fact was also confirmed by the findings of our research, which showed that current parents are rated as quite liberal, who do not set clear rules for their children, or they don't require compliance. Parents are more tolerant to children, they tend to justify their undesirable behavior, perform their duties instead of them. The mentioned educational procedures are probably related to the acceleration of liberalism in society, in moral values, standards, but also to the lack of time and patience of parents, to the limited interventions of other people in the upbringing of the child, as well as to the efforts of parents to shift parental responsibilities to institutions outside the family (especially to school).

Our findings correspond with the findings of Kasáčová et al. (2017), according to which current parenting is characterized by excessive benevolence and not setting boundaries. The modern values of society determined the increase in accommodating and inconsistent education without rules. As Rabušic, Kusá, Rabušicová (2019) write, the child's obedience has been replaced by its own autonomy and independence. The principles of free governance indicate the dominance of liberal education, but liberal education has its limitations. According to Kasáčová et al. (2017) the child does not master the prosocial rules of behavior and action, is more prone to pathological behavior, has problems with respect for authority and self-regulation of behavior. Lacinová, Škrdlíková (2008, p. 23) state that this is a trend that shifts the emphasis from demanding obedience to the word rather, to an appeal for the perception of the child as a unique and respected human being. Paradoxically, if the difficulties with upbringing are discussed today, parents often express doubts about the relationship of children to authorities and talk about the children's inability to listen and their impaired adaptation to the demands of the surrounding world.

Our research also confirmed that, despite the liberality of family education, the importance of a child's school success resonates in the respondents' opinions. From the respondents' opinion, it emerged that parents demand good school results from their children, and school is understood as the key to a good future. This pressure has recently intensified, because a decisive condition for good social employment is quality education in the

future. Parents often expect good school performance, but a mismatch between parental and the child's expectations can lead to adverse effects on the child's mental health. At the same time, the parents' ambition to compensate for their own failures through their children, or unfulfilled goals is also a wrong approach.

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