

ENCOURAGING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND FAMILY TOGETHERNESS – STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Results of the analysis the students' answers in the discussion about improving family relationships, indicates that the students mostly think positively about this topic. The authors emphasize the importance of family therapy as concrete procedures aimed at empowering positive family relationships.

Keywords: family relationships, communication, cohesion, consultation, family therapy

Introduction

During the 20th and at the beginning of the 21st century, contemporary social transformations reflected on the families making them as unsafe and inhumane environment. It is almost impossible not to wonder whether these relationships can be better or whether discussions about "strong and happy" families are just imaginations at different scientific and social levels. Correlation of good family relationships and satisfaction with family life is evident from scientific and professional literature [3]. The perspective of family members of adversity, suffering and opportunities is strongly influenced by the family belief system [5]. L'Abate and Frey [4] propose a model of family approach classification, based on three main aspects: emotions, reasons and activities, including, among other things, fostering quality family relationships through the expression of emotions, interpersonal interactions, and the definition and resolution of specific problems in the family.

An analysis of student discussion about family empowerment opportunities

As part of the college course, the author conducted a forum discussion about topic „What makes a family successful?“. Students expressed their views by answering to the question: *How do you personally see and what opportunities do you see at the family and society level in order to foster better family relationships with respect to different generations: between parents and children; between adult parents and their elderly parents and between grandchildren and grandparents?* We highlight some illustrative examples that relate to young people's thinking about some conditions and opportunities to improve and empower positive relationships between family members. According to the students reflections, it is necessary to find a compromise between sufficient control and sufficient affection in relationships between parents and children, in order

to become more quality. *Too many parents do not care enough about their children, allowing them too much freedom, which is harmful to the development of their maturity.* Furthermore, students believe that open, frequent and clear communication can contribute to creating a trustful and supportive relationship. *Communication between parents and children must be open and reasonable. Confidence must be gained from both sides and must be constantly worked on.* In the relationship of adult children with older parents, students find emotional support, mutual respect, a sense of cohesion and positive communication very important. *Children must provide support to their elderly parents and care for them in case of illness.* Students believe that quality relationship between adult children and their elderly parents can also influence the creation of relationships with their children. Considering family relationships, the relationship between grandchildren and grandparents should not be neglected. *Grandparents play an important role in raising children. Children can rely on them, look up to them, and can learn a lot from their experience.* The opinions expressed by students, young people and possible future parents, give an optimistic view of family values and the importance of family in each person's life regardless of his/her age.

Improving relationships through family therapies and counseling

Assuming that quality family relationships are in the interest of all family members, especially when relationships are broken, it is hard to imagine that someone would disagree with the idea of improving it. However, individuals often find themselves in a situation where they do not have the resources to cope with arising challenges. That is the moment for creating a space for different family therapies, family mediation [1], counseling, information, but also removing the stigma that such counseling sometimes carries. There are many family therapies known to date, but we particularly emphasize the psycho-educational approach to enriching family functioning, which focuses on various aspects of family interactions, taking into account the behavioral, emotional and cognitive dimensions of family relationships. The psycho-educational approach specifically includes encouraging empathy, communication skills, conflict and stress management, giving importance to the educational part of the program for families (Parent Effectiveness Training, Gordon, 1975; Nurturing Parent Program, Bavolek i Comstock, 1985 etc. [2]).

Conclusion

An analysis of students reflections about family values and relationships highlights necessity of empowerment the family and fostering positive relationships, and that such an endeavor is not an utopia. However, knowing that it is not always possible to simply encourage positive relationships through advocacy, it is necessary to wonder what else can be done. More attention should be given to family counseling but also making available various family therapies and

overcoming stigma that similar therapies often carry with itself. Persons who could educate parents about the possibilities to deal with the crisis in the family are precisely those who are in the immediate vicinity: experts in the school (psychologists, pedagogues) as well as teachers. Higher education study programs should also follow the future needs of all family members regardless of age, in order to educate competent students of teacher studies, pedagogy and psychology and future practitioners who will educate young generations and transmit educational, moral and positive family values.

This scientific work is also the result of scientific research work on the project "Empowering Families for the Development of Positive Relationships and Family Togetherness" (lead by Jasminka Zloković, code: uniri-societies - 18-6, 1132), which started in March 2019 with the support of co-financing the project by the University of Rijeka.

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