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THE PERCEIVED PARENTING STYLE AS A PREDICTOR OF THE GENERAL FEMALE COMMUNICATION STYLE

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Abstract. *Communication is of great importance for all facets of human life. Its role in parenting is manifested in the transfer of values, beliefs, norms, and new skills from parents to the younger generation. As documented in the scientific literature, maternal parenting style has a greater impact on a child's development than paternal one (Baumrind, 1991; Patock-Peckham, et al., 2006; Barton, 2012). Therefore, understanding the general communication style of women and its relations to the perceived parenting style of their mothers and fathers will allow us to study family dynamics from a more holistic perspective.*
There is no consensus in the scientific community about the classification of communication and its connection to the perceived parenting styles among females.

We aimed to study the interaction between perceived parenting style and general female communication style. To this end, we performed quantitative research using the Communication Style Inventory (Vries, 2011) and the Experiences in Close Relationships – Relationship Structures Questionnaire ECR-RS (Fraley et al., 2011) adapted for the Bulgarian cultural context by Totkova (2014). In our research took part 281 Bulgarian adult females.

We have found that both the perceived mother's authoritarian and perceived father's permissive parenting styles are strong predictors of the general communication style of adult females. Furthermore, all four perceived parenting styles exhibited a strong correlation with certain communication styles. In conclusion, the perceived paternal parenting style is just as strong a predictor of general female communication style as the maternal one.

Keywords: perceived parenting styles; general female communication styles; classification; predictor.

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Introduction

Parenting plays one of the most important roles in society - to prepare the next generation for the future. Its perplexity attracts scientific interest for centuries. The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus stated that "character is destiny". He claimed that it is a parental purpose to guide children through their path toward the development of a good character (Gregg, 2021). There are multiple opinions on the topic. In more modern times John Lock (1869) saw children as a tabula rasa or a whiteboard to which society transfers all the collective knowledge, through parenting and schooling. Jean Jacques Rousseau (1762) shares a similar, to both philosophers, view on the matter. According to him, children are born with internal virtue and the role of society and parents is to nourish and aid them to expand this attribute (Spera, 2005).

Psychology gives its input on the topic too, by researching the practices which parents use to transfer values, beliefs, and abilities to their offspring (Totkova, 2014). Literature separates parenting into styles and practices. The parenting styles are an umbrella term including the practices. They are typologies of behaviors, low or high on demand, and responsiveness. On the other hand, parental practices explain the actual behaviors parental figures implement to teach their children various rules, values, and norms to help them become functional adults (Spera, 2005). The main classification of parental behavior comes from the field of clinical psychology. In 1967, Diana Baumrind made a groundbreaking publication about her research, which includes the identification of parenting styles. She categorized parents based on two dimensions, responsiveness (how occupied are parents with children's emotions and needs), and demandingness, referring to how high are their expectations for achievement and maturity from the children (Spera, 2005). She identifies three parenting styles: the authoritative style (I), the authoritarian style (II), and the permissive style (III) (Baumrind, 1967). Later, Maccoby and Martin, (Maccoby and Martin, 1983 as mentioned in Power, 2013) describe a fourth parenting style, namely the negligent style (IV). Research today links each style to specific behavioral patterns, a child's self-perception, and school performance:

(I) The *authoritative style* is connected to high responsiveness to the child's needs, parental behavior, and high demands for achievement towards the child. Such parents tend to rare assertive kids with a positive self-image, and the ability to self-regulate and show responsibility (Segrin et al., 2012). It is very characteristic for authoritative parents to expect their children to follow rules and norms and show high achievements. However, they tend to explain their demands and elaborate on the meaning of the rules (Spera, 2005).

(II) The second parenting style -*authoritarian*, was described as high on demands towards the child and low on care for its needs. This parental approach is associated with the upbringing of unhappy children with little self-confidence (Power, 2013). Authoritarian parents are strict, do not tolerate immature behavior, do not discuss the rules with their children and simply expect obedience. When kids misbehave, they tend to enforce their expectations (Spera, 2005).

(III) The third – *permissive parenting style* shows low demands for achievement but practices behaviors which meet children's needs to a high extent. Here progenies tend to exhibit little self-control, the ability to self-regulate their emotions, and a low level of independence (Power, 2013).

(IV) The *uninvolved parental style* is characteristic of parents with no control or attempts to exert control over their children's behavior, no demands for maturity or achievements, and lack of care and communication. These parents are neither strict and demanding nor caring for their children. They offer no guidance, do not set clear rules, and express little to no affection to their offspring (Totkova, 2014). This parenting

style is also mentioned in the scientific literature as *negligent*, due to the low levels of both demandingness and care (Spera, 2005).

Different studies (Hasting et al., 2002; 2005, as mentioned in Mahasneh et al., 2013) suggest that authoritative parenting supports autonomous pro-social behavior in girls comfortable in testing social situations. On the contrary, girls reared by authoritarian parents were more reserved in the same social situations; The second group of young females could not exhibit spontaneous behavior with their peers, without being led by a mother figure. Additionally, when authoritative parents share pro-social values and beliefs and teach their children by such example, and it is more likely for those children to exhibit care for others and the community, when they reach adolescence (Pratt et al., 2004).

There is a gender difference in parenting style, when it comes to children's maturity, independence, and life satisfaction in adolescence and adulthood. A series of studies show that the maternal parenting style has a more determining effect on the female child's behavior at any age than the paternal style (Baumrind, 1991; Patock-Peckham, et al., 2006; Barton, 2012).

Research done in Bulgaria shows that the parenting style plays a determining role in the future development of important relationships. More specifically, warmth, positive communication, and responsiveness characteristic of the authoritative style are linked to secure bonds in adulthood with all groups of important others (parents, romantic partners, and close friends). Similarly, a lack of attention and inconsistent or unexplained rules, negatively affect the human ability to connect to others in all three categories mentioned above (Totkova, 2014).

In the Archives of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Moghaddam et al. (2017), stress the importance of communication, claiming that:

The role of intra-family communication and the relationship between parents, parents, and children, and between children is considerable in the formation of personality, peace of mind, confidence, and ultimately the development of appropriate behaviors and lack of mental disorder. (p. 37-38)

Our main objective is to understand family communication, which is one of the key educational tools that mothers use to upskill their children. More specifically, we aim to examine for a possible connection between perceived parenting style and adult female communication, which is crucial for all living species. It helps parents warn their offspring of dangers and protect them. For humans, the process is even more complicated because our infants are extremely vulnerable and incapable to remain remnant for a long time without the care of a mature individual. In this dyad, communication helps the baby bond with the caregiver (often the mother), forming a crucial for its survival relationship (Honig, 1982). Furthermore, research shows that communication plays a decisive role in all aspects of child-rearing. For instance, maternal emotional talk not only builds the foundation for the child's later understanding of emotion but also the mother's non-verbal emotional behavior sets an example, showing the offspring how he or she should react to certain situations (Garrett-Peters et al., 2008). In other words, communication lays the foundation for proper development, and both emotional, and social adaptation (Kobielski, 2002). However, we cannot understand communication solely by examining the individual. It is a behavior characteristic of groups and serves as the most significant social structure-the family (Kobielski, 2002; Fitzpatrick, 2002; Horowitz, 1994). Horowitz, (1994), refers to it as one of the main aspects of parenting. Parents use different types of communication to support and control their children (Buerkel-Rothfuss et. al, 1995).

Additionally, communication could be verbal, nonverbal, and meta-communication (Horowitz, 1994). How effective are parental practices, however, depends on the parental communication style (Buerkel-Rothfuss et. al, 1995). Regardless of the paramount importance of communication styles for the understanding of human behavior, there is no unity in the scientific field, when it comes to

their classification (Vries et al., 2009; Vries et al., 2011). Approximately twenty years ago, scientists pinpointed the need for a theoretical explanation and classification of communication. They suggested that such a theory "should involve symbols, the cognitive process by which they are created and interpreted, and the social conventions governing the relationship of symbols to their referent" (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Still, the matter remains mainly unresolved (Vries et al., 2009; Vries et al., 2011; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Nevertheless, it is broadly accepted that communication could be verbal or nonverbal (behavioral) and it is a process, which requires at least two parties involved (Ivanov, 2010). Also, it is an exchange that begins at the very first moments of life, when infants are capable solely of crying. How this interaction would evolve in time, depends by and large on the quality of the responses that a caregiver offers systematically (Kobielski, 2002).

Balanced family relations are characterized by positive communication (Segrin et al., 2012). However, the term positive is broad and undefined. Since the process itself is quite complicated, there have been multiple attempts to explain communication. According to the Intergenerational Transmission theory (Buerkel-Rothfuss et. al, 1995), parental behaviors are passed on to the next generation. Studies based on this theory support that, daughters adopt their father's communication style when he is an androgynous type (caring for the family and sharing responsibilities with his spouse) of a father; and sons, when the father is either traditional (his main responsibility is to support the family financially) or androgynous (Buerkel-Rothfuss et. al, 1995).

Beyond the message itself and the social environment in which communication takes place, it is of paramount importance to understand the dynamics of the people exchanging information. The Intergenerational Transmission theory suggests that parental and communicational styles could be adopted by children from their parents, especially when both styles are similar between parents (Buerkel-Rothfuss et al., 1995).

Apart from the social setting, dynamics between family members, and self-expression, communication reflects human personality. Therefore, everyone possesses a certain general communication style, which represents him or her in all settings (Hartman, 2011).

Communication Styles

… the characteristic way a person sends verbal, paraverbal, and nonverbal signals in social interactions denoting (a) who he or she is or wants to (appear to) be, (b) how he or she tends to relate to people with whom he or she interacts, and (c) in what way his or her messages should usually be interpreted (Vries, Bakker-Pieper, et al., 2009, p. 179).

These theories give us the frame in which communication takes place and explain various aspects of communication. Regardless of how important the concept of a situation is, we need to look even deeper and go to a more specific level of the process, namely the communication style of each member in the family and how it relates to other important construals, such as the self-parenting styles and self-communication style.

Research shows that a person's communication style is directly linked to their personality, and it could be seen as an expression or a subdivision of it (Bakker-Pieper, 2013). Recognizing their importance scientists make numerous attempts to describe communication styles in the financial field, in leadership, in romantic or family settings, but not one refers to the general way human express themselves in all settings, as a manifestation of his or her personality traits (Vries et al., 2009; Vries et al., 2011). For this study, we adapt the concepts described by Vries and colleagues (Vries, 2011; Vries, 2009). They attempted to describe the general verbal communication style by conducting thorough linguistic studies. Their research led to the definition of six distinguished communication styles. Each style is represented by four substyles. In additional research Vries and colleagues (2011), link these communication styles to personality styles using the HEXACO personality inventory, thus confirming the connection between personality and verbal self-expression. From

the abovementioned studies (Vries et al., 2009; 2011) it becomes clear that each counterpart of the transactional process passes on the meaning in his/her unique way, which reflects their personality. The communication style carries information about the identity of the communicator, the way they interact with others, and what is the effect of their message (Vries, 2015). All these are conveyed through three aspect systems – the identity, interaction, and impact aspect systems (Vries et al., 2009; 2011; Vries, 2015). The first consists of a person's social identity, capacity to manage impressions they leave on others, and personality traits reflected in the communication. Impression Manipulativeness (ways of communication, which are considered socially approved or desirable) and Verbal Aggressiveness (communication practices that differentiate the individual from its in-groups) fall into this category (Vries, 2015). The second - the impact aspect system gives information about the channel used to convey the message. Preciseness and Expressiveness are included in this system (Vries et al., 2011). And last, Questioningness and Emotionality can be united in the interaction aspect system, which refers to the ability of the individual to relate to others, show empathy, and imitate (Vries et al., 2009; 2011; Vries, 2015). Each communication style will vary in efficacy depending on the settings or the aspects of the communication.

Given the line of reasoning we hypothesize that:

H1) Both perceived maternal and paternal parenting styles are predictors of the female general communication style, and not only the maternal parenting style.

H2) We expect to find that each perceived parenting style acts as a predictor for a specific general communication style adopted by the female adult children.

Methods

In this study, we included exclusively female members of the general population (N = 281). The mean value of their age was 36.6 (SD = ± 9.7, range 20 - 70). 81.6% (N = 211) of the participants answered that their father is still alive, and 18.4% (N = 70) of them, gave a negative answer to this question. The equivalent to this question about their mother received 91.3% positive answers and 8.7% - negative.

Tools

For this research, we chose to use two inventories. All the selected batteries match the theoretical framework and are adapted for the Bulgarian population. We choose to use the Communication Style Inventory (CSI) by Vries et al., 2009, which was translated from English to Bulgarian by three independent psychologists and then back translated. The scale was adapted for use in Bulgarian settings. The second scale we used is the Parenting Style Inventory (Totkova, 2014).

PSI: The PSI consists of three scales measuring the perceived parenting style of the mother, father, and self. Each scale included 32 questions, further information is presented in Table 1, below. PSI is also a Likert-type scale; Again, with answering categories ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). An item such as - "She used to force me to choose a profession that she wanted for me.", is an example of the scale, which measures the Perceived Authoritarian style of the mother. Similarly, the statement "He always paid more attention to others and was kinder to them than to me." Is an example of the subscale measuring the Perceive Negligent paternal style. The overall Cronbach's reliability of the entire scale was .809 with variations between .803 and .815 for all subscales.

CSI: The CSI includes 96 communication behavior items. They are divided equally among the following six domain-level scales (16 items per scale): Expressiveness, Preciseness, Verbal Aggressiveness, Questioningness, Emotionality, and Impression Manipulativeness. Each of the domain-level scales consists of four facets, each with four items. All items were answered on a Likert-type scale with answering categories ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). Some of the

Table 1
Cronbach's Alpha for CSI Subscales

Scale	N	Subscale	Items	Cronbach's α
Expressiveness	281		16	α = .864
	281	Talkativeness	4	α = .726
	281	Conversational Dominance	4	α = .860
	281	Humor	4	α = .842
	281	Informality	4	α = .638
Preciseness	281		16	α = .728
	281	Structuredness	4	α = .496
	281	Thoughtfulness	4	α = .712
	281	Substantiveness	4	α = .549
	281	Conciseness	4	α = .719
Verbal Aggressiveness	281		16	α = .653
	281	Angriness	4	α = .697
	281	Authoritarianism	4	α = .709
	281	Derogatoriness	4	α = .704
	281	Unsupportiveness	4	α = .723
Questioningness	281		16	α = .719
	281	Unconventionality	4	α = .677
	281	Philosophicalness	4	α = .676
	281	Inquisitiveness	4	α = .653
	281	Argumentativeness	4	α = .588
Emotionality	281		16	α = .785
	281	Sentimentality	4	α = .516
	281	Wearisomeness	4	α = .663
	281	Tension	4	α = .493
	281	Defensiveness	4	α = .678
Impression Manipulativeness	281		16	α = .805
	281	Ingratiation	4	α = .808
	281	Charm	4	α = .667
	281	Inscrutableness	4	α = .706
	281	Concealingness	4	α = .695

items we use are: "I always have a lot to say" for the Expressiveness scale; "When I tell a story, the different parts are always clearly related to each other." to measure Preciseness; An example of the Verbal Aggressiveness scale is – "If something displeases me, I sometimes explode with anger".

Procedure

We combined the inventories into one single questionnaire. To avoid face-to-face interaction during the COVID-19 pandemic, we decided to create a Google Form and distribute it online. The questionnaire was published on social media (Facebook, LinkedIn) and

informational platforms followed by a message informing the participants about the purpose of the study. The study was introduced as a study of communication in the family. We did not disclose any further details to prevent possible biases. Since Google Forms collect participants' emails, we decided to include a personal information declaration at the beginning of the questionnaire, to which participants must answer with "yes" to continue with the rest of the study. This way we took consent to collect their email addresses for the sole purposes of this study. They were informed that neither their emails nor their answers were subject to disclosure to anyone but themselves, and they reserve their right to retreat their answers from the study if they wish to.

All data obtained in the current study is inserted and analyzed with the statistical program SPSS version 19.0. We used the following methods of analysis: descriptive statistics for all demographic variables (gender, age, alive father and mother, marital status, number of brothers and sisters, order of birth in the family, living situation, parental status); To examine our hypothesis we used one-way ANOVA and Multinominal Logistics Regression Analysis.

Results

A logistic regression analysis to investigate the effects of the perceived parental (PPS) style of the father and mother on the general communication style of adult females, was conducted. The predictor variable [PPS] was tested beforehand, verifying there was no violation of the assumption of the linearity of the logit. The predictor variable, [PPS], in the logistic regression analyses was found to contribute to the model. The estimated odd ratio favored the decrease/increase of nearly (28.6%), [Exp (B) = [.286], 95% CI (.101, .804) for general communication style every one unit of PPS.

Table 2
Model Fitting Information

Model	Model Fitting Criteria			Likelihood Ratio Tests		
	AIC	BIC	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	924.010	942.184	914.010			
Final	963.385	1199.646	833.385	80.625	60	.039

Table 3
Parameter Estimate: Preciseness as parameter category

Communication Style Women [a]		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B) Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B) Upper Bound
Expressiveness	Mother Authoritarian	-1.253	.528	5.636	1	.018	.286	.101	.804
	Father Permissive	1.266	.601	4.432	1	.035	3.547	1.091	11.527
Impression Manipulativeness	Father Authoritative	-1.453	.586	6.156	1	.013	.234	.074	.737
	Father Permissive	1.274	.607	4.407	1	.036	3.574	1.088	11.735

Note: a. The reference category is Preciseness.
b. The rest of the variables (remaining CSs, remaining PS, and the demographic characteristics of the participants) were excluded from the model because their effect was not statistically significant.

Discussion

The study demonstrates that both *perceived parenting styles* of mothers and fathers can be predictors for the *general communication style* of the participants. The results indicate that *perceived authoritarian style* of the mother and *perceived permissive* of the father are strong predictors for expressiveness. The same way, both *perceived authoritative and permissive styles* of the father are predictors for impression manipulativeness among adult females. These findings support our first hypothesis and are in line with the existing literature. According to the Intergenerational Transmission theory communication style is transferred from parents to children, which is implied by our results (Buerkel-Rothfuss et al., 1995). On the contrary, our findings suggest that the *perceived paternal parenting style* also plays a significant role in communication style development, which disproves previous claims (Baumrind, 1991; Patock-Peckham, et al., 2006; Barton, 2012).

To explore our first and second hypotheses, we performed a multinominal logistics regression analysis, and the data suggests that the *perceived parenting style* can be a predictor for a child's CS, as we expected. Specifically, we found that the *authoritarian mother style* is a negative predictor for Expressiveness CS. While *authoritative father style* is a negative predictor for Impression Manipulativeness among adult females. The more authoritarian is the mother, the less likely is for the child to adopt such CSs. According to Chen et al., 2011, parental dominance in expression shows a negative relationship to a child's ability to express itself (Chen et al., 2011). Therefore, controlling mothers might discourage verbal expression in their female children. While *authoritative father style* might have a positive effect on the female CS, preventing the child from developing communicational behaviors such as Ingratiation, Charm, Inscrutableness, and Concealingness.

On the other hand, a *perceived permissive father style* seems to be a positive predictor for female CS -Expressiveness. Previous research suggests that this PS does not show a connection to a child's expression and self-esteem (Antonopoulou et al., 2012). However, according to Vries et al., 2011, there is a strong correlation between Expressiveness in CSI and Extraversion in both HEXACO-PI-R and NEO-PI-R personality inventories. According to them, communication is an expression of individual's personality traits. Additionally, our results suggest that *permissive fathers* raise expressive daughters. These findings differ from the already existing literature. Knowing that *permissive parenting* is characterized by low demands and authoritarianism, and *authoritarian* PS, shows the exact opposite properties (Power, 2013), we could say that these findings are logical continuation of the existing literature and offer a better understanding on the effect of parental behavior on communication. *Maternal authoritarian styles* suppress expressiveness. The same way, the exact opposite paternal behavior on the demandingness scale, fosters expression.

Furthermore, the *perceived permissive father style* is a positive predictor of Impression Manipulativeness (with subscales - Ingratiation, Charm, Inscrutableness, Concealingness). Therefore, the low on demands parental behavior might be creating predispositions for communicational practices such as Ingratiation, Charm, Inscrutableness, and Concealingness. These findings contradict our expectation (and our second hypothesis) to indicate single parenting styles as predictors for each communication style among adult females. They suggest that a parental style could affect children's communicational behavior in both positive and negative direction. Additional research must be conducted to examine the dimensions, directions, and nature of each parental style and their relationship with the CSs scales and subscales. However, this is a topic of research we are currently conducting.

Conclusion

This data contributes to a clearer understanding of the role, which parenting plays in the development of a communication style in adult females. Given the importance of communication for humanity in general, such

knowledge would be implicated in various settings. It could be useful to mental health practitioners, who work with dysfunctional families and/or unproductive female work communication. By connecting the parenting and communication styles, and obtaining a more holistic understanding of their relationship, and the way they interact, we will be able to address specific behavioral patterns, practices, and styles to help families communicate more effectively. Apart from that, we might be able to detect maladaptive parenting styles and address them from the observation of a child's communication style.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

The generalizability of the results is limited by our exclusively female Bulgarian sample. Also, the reliability of this data is impacted by the perception, which females have about their mother and father's parenting style, which might not be an objective reflection of their actual style, at least for some participants. The methodological choices were constrained by the global pandemic. Thus, we conducted the research exclusively with the use of online platforms, which gave us little to no control over the accuracy and diligence with which each participant had treated the questions.

Further research is needed to establish if there is a repeating pattern in the interaction between the perceived parenting styles and the general female communication style. Researching both genders, different age groups, and cultures could benefit the determination of a possible repetitive nature in the predictability we found. The inclusion of a personality inventory would support the interpretation of such findings. Previous studies show that people who are not parents themselves perceive their parents as more authoritative and permissive. On the other hand, participants who do have children see their mother and father as more authoritarian (Totkova, 2014). To this end, it is crucial to keep this in mind for future references in this line of work. Finally, studying entire families and measuring the actual instead of the perceived parenting styles, might lead to more objective and concrete results.

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