Family Communication with Adolescent Children Integrative Literature Review

Fernanda Fernandes[1]; Angélica Santos[2]; Dora Machado[3]

Summary:

Background: Crises resulting from adolescence require a family readaptation that ensures their functionality, prevents risky behaviors, and promots health in young people. Objectives: to analyze the communication strategies between family and adolescent children and to identify whom the latter turn to clarify doubts. Methodology: An integrative literature review was carried out, between March and April 2019, in the Google Scholar, SciELO, and B-On databases. Results: The analysis of the six selected articles allowed us to conclude that the strategies adopted by parents to reach a conversation with their adolescent children are multiple. They range from, the search for professional intermediaries to the use of technologies, including the demonstration of greater availability and flexibility, to deal with the change's characteristics of this phase. The mother, on the other hand, was the most cited, by young people, as the family member sought to initiate the disruptive conversations of adolescence. Conclusions: It was evident the importance of family relational balance for the adjustment of adolescents, in the achievement of their individuality and personality definition.

Keywords: Adolescent, Communication, Family Relations

1. Introduction

Communication is the main instrument of social progress and is essential to guarantee the coexistence between different family members. In fact, with few exceptions, it is within the family that the child experiences the process of primary socialization, which influences him in different aspects, namely in secondary socialization. During adolescence, young people seek answers to their doubts, adapting their communication to the different elements that surround them – family and friends. Dialogue is imperative in the formation of adolescents' identities, however, not infrequently, parents verbalize a lack of preparation to conduct a conversation with their children. Considering the above, an integrative literature review was used, which aimed to analyze the communication strategies between family and adolescent children and identify whom adolescents turn to clarify doubts.

2. Development

By allowing a dialogue with people and groups, communication favors the development of different relational strategies. Part of a sender, which intends to transmit a message, is constructed by articulating words, feelings, and gestures and culminates with the perception of the receiver of the information contained in the message1. In terms of family relationships, communication is essential to guarantee the coexistence between the different elements and, since it is molded to the different stages of the life cycle, to promote the effectiveness of the development and functioning of the family dynamics. Family harmony is promoted by the socialization of its members, who have their interpersonal relationship roles well defined and, therefore, can adapt to the synchronous family language2. Therefore, the family presents itself as the first institution of frequent social contact. It is, in most cases, within the family that the child experiences the process of primary socialization, which influences him in different aspects, ranging from the transmission of education to the sphere of beliefs and values. This process becomes the basis of what will be the socialization coming from society – the secondary3.

The definition of the communication pattern within the family depends on the phase of the life cycle in which the family is, which is the starting point of intervention to sustain and strengthen the coexistence of the

---

[1] Master in Family Health Nursing, 0000-0002-0751-1618, Specialist in Family Health Nursing Usf Vale do Vez, Aces do Alto Minho, integrated researcher at Cintesis, Portugal, Viana do Castelo
[2] Master Family Health Nursing, 0000-0002-4200-5585, Specialist in USF Cruz de Malta, ACeS PV/VC, integrated researcher at Cintesis, Portugal, Porto
[3] PhD Student, Instituto Ciências Biomédicas Abel Salazar, Oporto University, MSc, RN Specialist Nurse, ACeS Grande Porto III, Maia/Valongo, 0000-0001-8135-7201, Portugal, Porto

elements, based on communication2. As is known, adolescence is the transition period between childhood and adulthood, characterized by the volatility of feelings and behaviors, responsible for physical, mental, emotional, sexual, and social development4. During this process, the teenager tries to adapt his communication to the family and society, hoping to get answers to his vast concerns3. Hence, family dialogue becomes essential for the formation of identity at this stage. However, not infrequently, parents verbalize a lack of preparation to initiate, lead or guide a conversation with their children5. Hence the need to carry out the present study, as a way of analyzing communication strategies between family and adolescent children and identifying whom adolescents turn to clarify doubts.

3. Methodology

In the present study, an integrative literature review was used, selecting the theme "family communication with adolescent children". Seeking to meet what Galvão, Sawada, and Trevizan6 advocated, this work began with a survey of evaluated and published bibliography, by written and electronic means, establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria for the selection of articles. Subsequently, the selected studies were categorized, organized, identified, and evaluated. Finally, by analyzing and interpreting the results, the knowledge obtained was synthesized from the available evidence.

Based on the topic under study and seeking to guide the delimitation of the problem, data collection, and their analysis and interpretation, the following research questions were formulated:
• What are the family's communication strategies with adolescent children?
• Whom do teenagers turn to clarify doubts?
To operationalize the research, valid descriptors were defined in the DeCS, in Portuguese and English. In the Portuguese databases, the descriptors Adolescent, Communication, Family relations were used, with the Boolean operator AND.
The following were defined as inclusion criteria:
- articles published and indexed in scientific databases between January 2002 and December 2018;
- full and free access;
- articles in Portuguese and Spanish;
- articles based on quantitative/qualitative studies that addressed the topic and answered the guiding questions.
And as exclusion criteria:
- repeated articles;
- articles without free access;
- articles that did not address the theme.
Data collection took place in March and April 2019, using the following databases: Google Scholar, SciELO, and B-On.

3.1. Categorization of studies

Initially, 13 articles were selected based on the defined inclusion criteria. Subsequently, the objectives, methodology, and results of each article were read, and 7 articles were excluded, according to Table 1.

Table 1 - Selection of articles found in the databases

Database	Number of selected articles	Articles excluded from the study	Articles included in the study
Google Scholar	8	5	3
B-On	2	1	1
Scielo	3	1	2

Table 2 arises from the exhaustive reading of the selected articles, which were classified, following the technique of coding, categorizing, and interpreting the results7 and coded in ordinal numbers from 01 to 06.

Table 2 – Analysis of the selected articles

Title of the article	Author/Year	Objective	Type of study	Study participants	Magazine
01. Factors that impede communication between father and son[8]	Costa, Rabelo, Moraes, Siqueira & Cabral. 2014	To analyze factors that interfere in the communication about sexuality between parents and adolescent children in situations of social vulnerability	Qualitative	8 young people aged between 13 and 18 and their parents.	Journal of Nursing UFSM
02. Technology and interaction in families with adolescents: Communication between mothers and children[9]	Martinho & Pires. 2017	Analyze the influence of technologies in communication in families with teenagers	Qualitative	13 mothers and their children	Journal of Studies and Investigation in Psychology and Education
03. Communication between family and their teenagers: Building a dialogic relationship[10]	Ruzany, Pepe, Aquino, Cantinho, Leis, Silva, et al. 2008	Study on situations experienced by adolescents and the degree of knowledge of those responsible	Transversal Qualitative	140 hospitalized adolescents and 152 guardians	Adolescence & Health
04. The influence of communication with family and peer groups on well-being and risk behaviors in Portuguese adolescents[11]	Tomé, Camacho, Matos & Diniz. 2011	To analyze the influence of parents and peer groups on risk and health behaviors of Portuguese adolescents.	Quantitative Longitudinal	4877 students from the 6th, 8th and 10th grades	Psychology Magazine: Reflection and Criticism

05. *Family communication strategies: the perspective of adolescent children*[12]	Wagner, Carpenedo, Melo & Silveira. 2005	Know the communication strategies used by adolescents with their parents.	Qualitative focus group technique	35 students aged between 12 and 15 years old.	Psychology: Reflection and Criticism
06. *Communication in families with teenage children*[13]	Wagner, Falcke, Silveira & Mosmann. 2002	Knowing how adolescents evaluate the communication they establish in the family	Quantitative	295 young people aged between 11 and 16 years old	Psychology in Study

After the data collection steps, the answers to the guiding questions of the study were collected for each of the selected articles, thus facilitating the synthesis of the research (Table 3).

Table -3 Answers to the study questions in the different articles

Articles selected	Theme of the study's guiding questions	
	Strategy for communication	Teenagers'resources
1	Use of education and health professionals and a open dialogue suffers different themes, namely sexuality	Peers and/or strangers
2	Use of technologies	Parents
3	Making the most of the longer time spent together with the teenager to create greater proximity	Relatives, friends, professionals
4	Maintaining a good relationship with your children	Parents and/or friends
5	Flexibility mediated with authority	Parents, uncles and siblings
6	Provide a safe and balanced environment with boundaries. Encourage dialogue and provide Attention to their children's needs and interests. Be consistent and have the ability to understand.	Mother, older brother and father

4. Discussion of results

Five (029, 0310, 0411, 0512, 0613) of the six selected articles were published in journals in the field of psychology, as would be expected since it is a discipline that studies human behavior. Only one publication (018) was made in a nursing journal. That said, it is not surprising that the authors were, for the most part, psychologists.

Most of the studies (018, 029, 0310, and 0512) were qualitative, which is to be expected since the objective of their nature is to produce knowledge about subjective phenomena14. The remaining ones (0411, and 0613) were quantitative.

The years of publication ranged from 2002 (0613) to 2017 (029) through the years 2005 (0512), 2008 (0310), 2011 (0411), and 2014 (018).

In half of the studies (0411, 0512, and 0613) the population consisted exclusively of young adolescents, and in the other semis (018, 029, 0310) the respondents' parents were included.

The analysis of the selected articles made it possible to answer the questions that led to the present investigation. To discuss the results, since two questions were raised, an approach was chosen at two different times.

Question 1: What are the communication strategies of the family with adolescent children?

When the topic of the conversation focuses on sexuality, it is notorious for parents their children´s shame8 for exposing their doubts and concerns. This feeling is often based on a cultural perpetuation of sexist behaviors and thoughts within the family, where the initiation of male adolescents into sexual activities is seen as virility and, in the case of female adolescents, as vulgarity8. However, the same study pointed out that as a communication strategy, between parents and adolescent children, the use open dialogue, is stimulated by the parents. This dialogue according to the same investigation8, can be facilitated by health and education professionals.

The transformations that adolescents undergo during this period of life are certain. The search for their affirmation, autonomy, and personality construction results in their distance from the family and an approximation to their peers9. Technologies, according to study 029, emerge as a strategy for parents to be able to get closer to their children, either because they are always accessible, or because young people can learn content and share learning with their parents, resulting in moments of greater family interaction. However, it should be noted that technologies are often the cause of the minor's isolation. The same study9 explains that adolescents are aware of the excessive time they spend with them, and that this fact leads to fewer family interactions.

Article 0310 refers to the specific situation of the internment of young people in the adolescence phase. As expected, in these situations it is the family that tends to have more time to monitor the process. Hence, the strategy used by family members to communicate with adolescents is to strengthen ties, with stimulation of understanding by taking advantage of the greater time they spend together10.

Study 0411 analyzed the influence and impact of peer groups and parents on adolescent health and risk behaviors. Several studies15,16,17 relate good communication between parents and children to promoting salutogenic behaviors and preventing risky behaviors. Bearing this in mind, parents seek to communicate with their teenagers, using strategies that promote their well-being, based on a positive relationship wrapped in happiness and understanding.

In investigation 0512, although the objective was to analyze the strategies adopted by adolescents to communicate with their parents, from which the choice of the right moment related, namely, to the guardian's mood, it was also possible to verify that the parents are equipped of strategies to communicate with young children. Thus, without limiting the need to impose their children's identity and their individualization, parents tend to develop a good family relationship that is based on mediated flexibility with the necessary authority to prevent risky behavior.

The last article selected 0613 shows the distance of the young man from his nuclear family, characteristic of the adolescence phase. The strategies adopted by the family to be able to communicate with the teenager depended on the family element under study. In this way, for the father figure and adolescent son to be able to reach a communication, it was considered important for the father to adopt an understanding and coherent posture. The mother, on the other hand, should present herself as an understanding and easy-to-understand character. Above all, according to this work, it is essential that parents show themselves as coherent members, so that they can start effective communication with the young person.

Question 2: Whom do adolescents turn to for clarification?

The answers to this question are as disparate as the reasons given for the choice made.

The study 018, adolescents, for fear of suffering reprisals from their parents, of disappointing them, and of not seeing their choices accepted, tend to hide information involving their sexuality from the family. The lack of dialogue with parents makes adolescents seek clarification of their doubts on the internet, in youth magazines, and with their peers or strangers. However, it should be noted that the same research8 warns that the lack of communication with parents, on issues such as sexuality, can create a distorted view of it and the adoption of risky behaviors, which promote sexually transmitted diseases or pregnancies. unwanted and unplanned. In addition, moments of conviviality, affection, and family intimacy are lost8.

Study 029, despite highlighting the ease of adolescents in using and resorting to technologies, expresses the recognition of young people in the importance of parents maintaining honest communication on different topics.

Article 0310, when addressing situations of hospitalization of adolescents, mentioned that, for the most part, the mother is the family member who tends to have a greater ability to understand the children, for the exchanges and agreements that characterize adolescence. Thus, considering that, during hospitalization, young people are more distant from their peers and school routines, they are more vulnerable to exposing their feelings of insecurity, mostly, to the mother figure or her substitute.

In the research presented in article 0411, it was clear that adolescent males tend to communicate easily with parents and friends. On the other hand, females, despite also having easy communication with friends, hardly communicate with their parents. However, age seems to influence this result, since the younger the adolescents, the more difficult it will be to communicate with friends and the easier it will be with their parents. The opposite is also true, that is, as age advances, communication becomes easier with friends and more difficult with parents.

In study 0512, the answers to the second question varied according to the subject in question. That is, if the conversation focused on asking for money, the teenagers tended to look for the fraternal side. However, in situations in which the young man wanted advice, he was the mother figure he sought. That is, the family figure of reference to initiate communication with the adolescent varies according to the understanding that the theme requires. Even so, it was also clear, in this study, that uncles and brothers can act as mediators for young people to address issues with their parents.

In the last study selected – 0613 – it became clear that the mother figure is the one the teenager uses most often to start conversations, as he presents himself as the most coherent family member. Older siblings are also communicative support for adolescents, as they present themselves as understanding elements and with congruent speech. On the other hand, the younger siblings did not present themselves as a communicative alternative for the young people in the study, due to a probable lack of feeling of understanding for their doubts. The father appears as the least sought-after element for the teenager to talk to when compared to the mother and older brother(s).

5. Conclusion

The adolescence phase is marked by transformations that lead to changes in the entire family system. The permeability to risk behaviors implies, to the family, a redoubled attention and the adoption of communicative strategies, to prevent them. In addition, how the family overcomes the crises caused by adolescence is essential in the formation of the young adult's potential. The present investigation sought to answer the questions "what are the communication strategies of the family with adolescent children" and "whom do adolescents turn to clarify doubts?", from which different possibilities of answers were obtained. For the first question, it became clear that strategies range from using health and education professionals to help maintain an open dialogue on different topics, to using technologies as a way of breaking the ice to start deeper conversations. In between, strategies were described to make greater use of time with the teenager, to enhance a greater degree of proximity, the use of flexibility mediated with authority and a concern for the needs and interests of the children, demonstrating coherence and capacity for understanding to your doubts and anxieties.

The answers to the second question were also different. Adolescents mostly look for peers, sometimes even strangers, uncles, brothers, and parents, to clarify doubts. Even so, the mother is the one who gathers the most agreement, as a person to look for to start a conversation. This is because, according to the adolescent community, it is the one with the greatest coherence.

Overall, it was also possible to conclude that, in adolescence, both interpersonal relationships and the balance between the relationship with parents and peers are essential factors for a positive adjustment of the adolescent. In addition, addressing more disruptive issues, involved in cultural issues and prejudices, such as sexuality, can be facilitated by resorting to health and education professionals, but above all, it implies frank and democratic communication. On the other hand, technologies, even though they can be an unblocking factor for conversation and promote greater approximation between parents and children, can also be a reason for the isolation of adolescents. And finally, good communication promotes teenagers' self-esteem and helps their independence, so it's always a good strategy to facilitate interaction between parents and teenagers.

It should be noted that in the articles studied, there was no analysis of the influence of sociodemographic characteristics on the results obtained. And they can positively or negatively impact the relationship of the nuclear family with their teenage children. Nor was reference made to factors such as transgenerational, which can also influence the behavior of young people. Even so, it was clear the importance that health professionals represent in the family functionality of families with adolescent children, namely in terms of communication. It is essential, therefore, that they seek to increase their skills in accompanying these young people and their families, to help maintain family balance and functionality, in this transition process, and to prevent risky behaviors.

6. Bibliography

Almeida ACCH de, Centa M de L. The family and the sexual education of children: implications for nursing. Acta Paulista de Enfermagem. 2009 Feb;22(1):71-6.
Alain Braconnier, Marcelli D, Margarida M. As mil faces da adolescência. Lisboa: Climepsi; 2000
Bardin L. Content Analysis. Publisher70,'s editions. 1977. article/view/10216

Costa MA, Rabelo NS, Moraes ICM, Siqueira FC de M, Cabral ES de M. Factors that hinder communication between parents and adolescent children about sexuality. Rev Enferm UFSM [Internet]. July 10, 2014 [cited February 21, 2022];4(1):123-32.   Available   at: https://periodicos.ufsm.br/reufsm/

DeVore ER, Ginsburg KR. The Protective Effects of Good Parenting on Adolescents. Postgraduate Obstetrics & Gynecology [Internet]. 2005 Dec; 25(25):1- 5. Available from: 0930848096575173https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/5d/cbc5ebbdbeacd bafd 4b0df.pdf

Dias MO. A look at the family from a systemic perspective - the communication process in the family system. Gestão e Desenvolvimento [Internet]. 2011 Jan [1cited Nov 20202];(19):139- 56.Available from: http://z3950.crb.ucp.pt/biblioteca/gestaodesenv/gd19/gestaodesenvolvimento 19_139.pdf

Galvão CM, Sawada NO, Trevizan MA. Systematic review: a resource that provides the incorporation of evidence in nursing practice. Revista Latino- Americana de Enfermagem. 2004 Jun;12(3):549-56.

Gaspar De Matos M, Simões C, Tomé G, Gaspar T, Camacho I, Alves Diniz J, et al. SOCIAL ADVENTURE & HEALTH THE HEALTH OF PORTUGUESE ADOLESCENTS TODAY AND IN 8 YEARS PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE 2006 HBSC STUDY & Social Adventure Project Team National Coordination for HIV/AIDS Infection Health Behaviour in School-aged Children / World Health Organization Foundation for Science and Technology / Ministry of Science and Higher Education [Internet]. [cited Feb2022 22].Available from: http://www.fmh.utl.pt/aventurasocial/pdf/Relatorio_nacional_2006.pdf

Martinho R, Pires H. Technologies and interaction in families with adolescents: communication between mothers and children. Revista de Estudios e Investigación en Psicología y Educación. 2017 Dec 15;013-8.

Martinho R, Pires H. Technologies and interaction in families with adolescents: communication between mothers and children. Revista de Estudios e Investigación en Psicología y Educación. 2017 Dec 15;013-8.

Ruzany MH, Pepe CCCA, Aquino JHW, Cantinho HSA, Leis LB, Silva RB da, et al. Communication between family and their adolescent children: building a dialogic relationship [Internet]. Adolescência & Saúde; Available2008. from:

Sequeira C. Comunicação clínica e relação de ajuda. Lisboa: Lidel - Edições Técnicas; 2016.

Tomé G, Camacho I, Matos MG de, Diniz JA. The influence of communication with family and peer group on well-being and risk behaviors in Portuguese adolescents. Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica. 2011;24(4):747-56.

Wagner A, Carpenedo C, Melo LP de, Silveira PG. Family communication strategies: the perspective of adolescent children. Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica [Internet]. 2005 Aug [cited Jun 20215];18(2):277-82. Available from: https://www.scielo.br/j/prc/a/H3Y4XwDYY7gGKdSjctv9mdJ/?lang=pt&format =pdf

Wagner A, Falcke D, Silveira LMB de O, Mosmann CP. Communication in families with adolescent children. Psychology in Study [Internet]. 2002 Jun [cited 2020 Nov 29];7(1):75-Availablefrom 80.   : https://www.scielo.br/pdf/pe/v7n1/v7n1a08.pdf

Vilelas J. Investigação: O Processo de Construção do Conhecimento. 3rd Edition. Edições Sílabo; 2020