

Chapter 259

Family 4.0: Communication in the digital age



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Daniela von Mühlen

Graduação em Psicologia e Sistemas de Informação.
Especialização em Terapia Familiar; Tecnologias Digitais aplicadas à Educação e Gestão Administrativa da Educação;
Mestranda em Psicologia Clínica e da Saúde.
E-mail: danielavm.psi@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The present article has as its general objective to verify forms of family communication in the current digital age and its specific objectives are to contextualize the role of the family today; identify the main forms of destructive and constructive communication and point out relevant aspects of communication between

couples and children. Starting from the reality of the fourth industrial revolution, Family 4.0 has great challenges in the area of communication and relational skills mediated by technology and also in person in its day-to-day life. We do not intend to present a cake recipe or solution, as family and relationships are constantly changing and adapting, so being on the move and open to dialogue is necessary for quality of life and individual and collective mental health.

Keywords: Family, Communication, Technology, Family Therapy, Systemic.

1 INTRODUCTION

We are living in the so-called fourth industrial revolution and in this reality much is questioned about the influence of digital technologies on family communication. Finding a culprit for the lack of family communication seems to be the goal of many. More and more quickly we come across new forms of communication that seem to move us away from the closest people and get closer to the most distant. In this sense, the current research that will be presented in this article arises.

The research has as its general objective to verify forms of family communication in the current digital age and has as specific objectives, to contextualize the role of the family today; identify the main forms of destructive and constructive communication, and point out relevant aspects of communication between couple and children.

This work has as personal motivation the concern with blaming communication technologies for the withdrawal and cooling of family relationships. The research assists in the exposure of forms of destructive and constructive communication, contributing to the reflection on the influence of communication on the mental health of society in general, thus having its relevance also for Psychology and Family Therapy, as well as for the field of scientific research.

2 DEVELOPMENT

The present research has the qualitative approach and follows the procedures of bibliographical research with an exploratory objective, because it provides greater familiarity with the researched problem, seeking to make it more explicit.

The choice for the qualitative research approach was due to the answer to very particular questions. "The qualitative approach delves into the world of the meanings of human actions and relationships, a side that is not perceptible and not graspable in mean and statistical equations" (Minayo, 2002, p. 22).

The procedures of the bibliographic research were made from the survey of theoretical references already analyzed, and published by electronic means. Any scientific work begins with bibliographic research that allows the researcher to know what has already been studied on the subject. There are, however, scientific researches that are based solely on bibliographic research, looking for published theoretical references to collect information or previous knowledge about the problem about which the answer is sought (Fonseca, 2002; Mazuim, 2015).

Data collection occurred through bibliographic research available in books and on the internet. The articles used as sources were selected from the consultation of the words "Communication in the family", "Family 4.0" and "Communication in the digital age" in the search site "Google Scholar" being chosen those of greater relevance and that could contribute and meet the objectives of this research.

The data collected were a reference for the construction of this article, seeking to establish a connection between theory and practice and to construct a critical text from the theoretical framework to the final considerations.

The technique for data analysis identified as appropriate for the study was the interpretative one based on the sources researched and selected. The interpretive paradigm requires specific efforts of the researcher, including the questions he proposes to the work and the interpretations he brings as relevant (Denzin, 2006).

Finally, the final considerations on the researched theme are presented.

2.1 FAMILY

The concept of family in a generalist way varies from common sense to the view of specialists according to the context they wish to use it. A place of love, peace, and harmony is the idealized vision that remains to this day and has as expectation a safe place, where one can return at any time and be accepted, receive affection and warmth. In the literature, we also see concepts of the family as being a social unit whose function is the socialization of children, and organizer of society (Macedo, 1994).

For the psychology of family relationships, according to Macedo (1994, p. 2), the family is:

The first environment in which the nascent personality of each new human being develops. Thus, the family is seen as the first psychosocial space, a prototype of the relationships to be established with the world. It is the matrix of personal and social identity since it develops the feeling of belonging that comes

with the name and grounds the social identity, as well as the feeling of independence and autonomy based on the process of differentiation. (Macedo, 1994, p. 2)

The family is composed of relationships of affection and commitment and has as its characteristic the circularity in the interactions, forming a web of relationships in which the same people occupy different positions in these relationships. The family can be identified as a system, with interdependent parts where the focus is on relationships and not on individuals. The rules of this system are formed by the relationships themselves, involving all the participants. This system can be functional or not, the family will certainly go through numerous situations of change during its life cycle as Macedo (1994, p.5) states, "the family is subject to external and internal pressures related to the development of those who constitute it. The change of each member implies changes in the total system."

It is up to the family system to manage in the best possible way these transition points, these crises, because each member is at a different point in the family life cycle and these turning points make the family more vulnerable. When there are not enough resources in the system to implement the necessary changes, symptoms arise.

Even in a constant process of transformation and evolution, the family system has a fundamental role in the constitution of individuals, being extremely important in the determination and organization of their personality, in addition to having a primordial role in the maturation and biopsychosocial development of its components (Pratta, 2007).

We can then consider the family as a social sphere formed by individuals who have very strong affective ties to the point of generating a need for coexistence that, in turn, gives rise to the family nucleus. Not necessarily biological ties, but rather, living in the same physical environment, shared in person, not relevant here the types or family compositions, but the relationships established between individuals who chose, for some reason, to live together (Cabral, 2012).

2.2 DESTRUCTIVE VS. CONSTRUCTIVE COMMUNICATION

Every family is different, it is influenced by the values and culture of past generations, but one can learn, train and adapt to improve communication in the family and relational skills. Relationships are dynamic and always changing. Nothing else will be as it used to be, everything changes every day.

Nowhere is there a family without problems, who always live happily. All families suffer from diverse and different realities where they are inserted and keeping this in mind is already an important resource to deal with the daily adversities of family life.

Observing the form of communication reveals a lot about a family. Words have incredible power. They can calm and strengthen us, but they can also bring us down and hurt us. Communication can be constructive or destructive.

2.2.1 Destructive Communication

We cannot ignore that coexistence generates conflicts that often leave us with emotions at the forefront of our skin. To some extent, conflicts are positive because they represent opportunities for change.

Verbal violence is a form of destructive communication in which one person offends another. It is a communicative pattern sustained over time in which, more or less intentionally, continuous verbal abuse is exercised that affects the victim's self-esteem causing unpleasant emotions and generating doubts about their value as a person. (Suarez, 2019, p.1)

This occurs when there is a recurring pattern; that is, when shouts, insults, threats, and humiliations are continually used to subdue the other. According to Suarez (2019), destructive communication can be subdivided and presented in several ways:

a) Insults and shouts

Insults and yelling are the most obvious expression of verbal abuse.

b) Humiliation and destructive criticism

There is a more subtle but very damaging type of verbal abuse: humiliation and destructive criticism. In this case, the person does not resort to shouting, but to sarcasm, shame, contemptuous gestures, and degradation to exert control. The other may resort to jokes that make you feel bad or use words and gestures that disparage you and/or make you feel incompetent.

c) Accusations and guilt

In some cases, verbal abuse hides manipulation. The person holds you accountable for all the bad things that happen, disclaiming any responsibility, to make you feel bad. This person will not hesitate to accuse and blame you, always blaming you for bad intentions or total incompetence.

d) Trivialize

This type of verbal abuse is more subtle and difficult to detect, as it consists of minimizing your opinions and feelings, to the point of making you feel completely insignificant. This person shows no empathy, continually minimizes their problems, and even refuses to address them. To despise, to pretend that nothing is happening.

e) Threats

In addition to the typical threats by which a person tries to control their behavior, some threats resort to a type of emotional blackmail. One of the most extreme examples is, "If you leave me, I kill myself," but there are many other forms of threats and extortion in all kinds of relationships. Parental alienation often comes in as well.

f) Objectification

In this case, there are usually no insults or shouts, the person simply limits himself to treating you as if you were an object, which means that you do not pay attention or satisfy their emotional needs. This person systematically ignores you, pretending that you don't exist.

g) Blocking dialogue

Generally, we identify verbal aggression with yelling and insults, but silence can also be brandished as a weapon to cause deep wounds. Not talking to a person, intending to make them feel bad, and preventing dialogue that can resolve the conflicts that exist in the relationship, is a form of verbal violence.

2.2.2 Constructive Communication

It is impossible to prevent family relationships from suffering damage or injury. But maintaining constructive communication is necessary for individual and family mental health. Oliver (2018) brings some ways to maintain constructive communication in the family:

a) Communicate openly and honestly, and share feelings, desires, expectations, and needs. Before answering, stop, think, and choose, we all have choices.

b) Avoid secrets in the family. The secret can be devastating because it is linked to people's fantasy, the imagination that can often be much crueler than reality.

c) Commitment, sacrifice, and surrender. It takes effort, to make adjustments to your communication style to increase the quality of the relationship.

Constructive communication encompasses not only words but attitudes and looks. Prevention is better than cure, daily meetings and a weekly rest day dedicated to the family are good practices to establish peace and harmony within the home.

2.3 EVOLUTION OF FAMILY COMMUNICATION

According to Pratta (2007), "the structuring of the family is closely linked to the historical moment that crosses the society of which it is part", at present, there are several factors that exert pressure on the family system, among them, the role of women in society, in search of their identity, in addition to the home, as a professional, with personal projects, changes the family configuration, as well as the valorization of the participation of the man in the education of the children, greater affective involvement. The relationship between parents and children is also stimulated, based on the possibility of a dialogue in an open relationship, that is, the tendency of the modern family is a greater symmetry in the distribution of roles and obligations both internal in the family context, and external in a cultural and professional context (Macedo, 1994; Pratta, 2007).

Another important aspect is the fact that it is inserted in the technological world with great challenges concerning its relations and functioning, access to social networks, virtual commerce, digital TV, and other virtual tools, increasingly individualizing people, causing a possible distancing and weakening of real relationships in the family. The computer can lead people to live in isolation, even if they physically live in the same environment as others, what unites them is the physical space, because their minds can be connected to other places, not necessarily real (Cabral, 2012).

Even so, the relationships generated through the network can be transposed to the real world, because in the virtual world, the subject also constitutes social ties and maintains them, in this case, the

internet has a great influence on social and also family relations (Cabral, 2012). The components of these families who are in contact with technologies and experiencing the virtual relationships of their members are developing their ways of adjusting to the relatively unexplored circumstances in which they find themselves. The challenge is to maintain the affective bond and life projects with common purposes, generating and maintaining mutual commitment (Teixeira, 2014).

Currently, we are living in the so-called fourth industrial revolution, Industry 4.0, Commerce 4.0, Education 4.0, Management 4.0, Internet of Things, Big Data, Artificial Intelligence, 5G Internet, and 4D Printers.

We can ask ourselves how prepared we are for this new world, ruled by communication technology, and information in the palm of our hand. We are learning about the subject and preparing to follow this new era in the labor market, in the area of education, and also in our homes, in our families, and in our relationships. How are we preparing or acting to keep up with all these changes and maintain healthy and necessary communication in the family nucleus?

Regardless of the type and composition of the family, we need to always talk about communication. How communication happens between your family members. In today's times is communication easier or more difficult than it used to be?

Not infrequently we come across comments like...

"In my time it wasn't like that..."

"It used to be good!"

"The family is in crisis!"

"In my time it was enough to see that the child was quiet..."

"Parents don't know how to educate their children!"

"Young people behave worse and worse."

Could it be that in the old days, there was more communication between people? We cannot generalize either yesterday or today. Nor can we blame technologies for the lack of communication, because each epoch has had its technologies, development, its forms of communication. What we must observe is how each deals with the technologies that are at their disposal in their time, and how each couple and/or family work their communication.

Of course, the current technologies have an impact on people's lives and family dynamics, we have to learn to deal with the speed of change also with the ease and intensity of access to the most varied technologies.

Cortella (2017) brings several reflections on family communication. Are we losing the ability to communicate? Is the word losing its meaning? With communication technology in the palm and the use of communication applications, it often seems that this same communication suffers noise and interference.

We must keep in mind that we cannot be possessed by what we possess. Technology cannot or should not dominate us.

Technology, social networks, and communication applications generate expectations, number of likes, family members who do not comment on posts, views without responses, etc. Knowing how to use these tools healthily can add to family communication, but it cannot make us hostages or cause illness by the form and intensity of their use.

Knowing how to dose the technology with real life is essential. Technology cannot dominate us, but we can and must appropriate it and use it to our advantage.

So are we losing the ability to communicate because of technology? Or are technologies just another excuse for our lack of interest in practicing and honing our relational skills? If all this technology is here to stay if the 4.0 world is already present and the trend is to advance, is this a problem? Is it that bad? If it came to make life easier, and better business, could it have also come to the end of the family?

2.3.1 Communication between the couple

The couple is considered the foundation of the family. Communication between the couple should be a priority. Adjusting the lines and respecting yourself are key. Regardless of whether the couple is still in marriage or separated, communication must be maintained for a good coexistence and the education of the children.

Oliver (2018) talks about the relationship of the couple, that although so much is said that no one is anyone's and defends a love with lightness, without charges or commitment, within many people beats a heart that wants to give body and soul to real love. Deep down what everyone wants is to love and be loved.

Those who marry enter a school where they will never, in this life, graduate. But every human being is imperfect and investing in a relationship every day is essential to building a solid relationship.

Learning from mistakes is part of the growth process, so there is no more room to hide facts and cover up feelings. There are no hidden secrets, but shared confidences. It is necessary to be an ally and not an adversary, in addition to having responsibility, trust, open communication, transparency, and managing conflicts (Grzybowski, 2017).

Then there will be a place to return after a difficult day of activities, with love and respect where everyone does their part.

Oliver (2018) also reminds us that one should avoid correcting in public, as it is inelegant and potentially destructive to the quality of a relationship. Dealing with jokes about marriage and family doesn't build anything up. Let go of what separates one spouse from the other and their family. Dedicate yourself to who matters.

Finally, do not be two halves that complete each other, be two whole that overflow, because who loves, cares!

2.3.2 Communication with Children

About the relationship with children, Oliver (2018) reminds us that there is no perfect child or rather, every child is perfect the way he is. It also brings questions to be thought about family relationships:

Before you point to the marriage, family, or child of others, observe, reflect, and take care of what is yours. Educating well takes time. Putting career and assets as a priority with the justification that they are for the good and comfort of the family is vague and distant because if you wait for retirement to "enjoy" the family, you run the risk of finding the children grown up and a broken marriage. Time is one of the greatest goods bestowed upon every person. And our way of using it demonstrates what matters to us.

The important thing is not the quantity of time, but the quality, is it? The quality of time does not compensate for the quantity. Quantity also influences quality. Communication with children is quality and is only achieved with quantity, that is, with daily experience, for example, closeness, bonding, and the achievement of trust. Actions speak a thousand words, so you need to be present to be a reference and example. Outsourcing the education of children is not the best option in any case.

To be afraid is not to respect, because fear inhibits and generates secrets. Having openness with respect is a daily exercise and takes work. Sharing the joys and difficulties of the family is a good way to win the trust of the children, but the problems of married life should be far from the experience of the children, what is of the couple stays between the couple, what is of the family, must be shared with the children (Grzybowski, 2017).

Family is a place to talk about everything, without secrets, bad things, and good things. Because the imagination is much bigger than reality, when things are not said, they are imagined, it is at the base of guesswork and then it is much worse, because the imagination is very creative and goes much further than reality.

It is always better to talk, to communicate, no matter how bad the situation, if not to speak, the imagination takes over the situation and creates much bigger problems than the real ones. Speaking it is possible to obtain forgiveness.

Forgiving someone who has wronged you, Oliver (2018) says it's the hardest part of loving. To forgive is not to become a doormat to be trampled on. It is not to make the other less responsible for their actions or simply to forget. To forgive is to give up the need to punish the other person. And this exercise should be practiced within the family.

Couples who learn to work together, as a team, during good times and bad, see their marriage and their family not only survive but thrive and live happily ever after. Family is the place of the most challenging experiences and also the place of the greatest joys of our life.

It is not technology that drives us away or worsens our relationships, but our relational skills, and our behavior in the face of situations. Having intimacy, respect, love, forgiveness, and trust is key to maintaining and thriving your family.

Gratitude for the small and many things we have is also a feeling to be valued and cultivated because emptiness will always exist, we will always be in search of something more, this is movement, and it is mental health, but how much space this dissatisfaction occupies in our life. We must have time and eyes for the little good things we find on the way because we will always be in search of something, but without detracting from what we have and what we have acquired along the way.

Our knowledge becomes more and more specific and, at the same time, more limited. Fascinated by the complexity of the brain, we ignore and relegate the richness of the human soul (Blazer, 2002). We all have problems, our family will never be perfect, it is constantly changing and learning. Therefore, recognizing our limitations in the face of situations in which we do not have the power to make changes also allows us some personal strengthening. Although paradoxical, resignation (the recognition that we don't have the strength for everything) can show us that we are not obliged to solve everything, not because we don't want to, but because sometimes this is impossible.

3 CONCLUSION

Given the reflections raised here on Family 4.0 and communication in the digital age, after the research was carried out, we can conclude that much is expected, and much is said, but perhaps little is reflected and changed.

Relationships are dynamic and are two-way streets, when we talk about family relationships then, we must keep in mind several relationships where everyone is interconnected and has their rights and also duties.

Blaming technology for cooling or pushing away relationships and family communication is "covering the sun with the sieve," as it is only a way of deflecting the responsibility that each member of the family has with the functioning of this group.

This article has no intention of closing the subject or pointing fingers, much less presenting definitive solutions, we are only sure that we live in movement and we must always be open to changes and also take responsibility for our relationships so that we have a favorable quality of life and mental health.

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