

A comparative study of students' communication styles

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Abstract

The manner in which a person organises his interpersonal relationships can be determined by the way they communicate. In actuality, a student's communication style reveals how they see and evaluate the world around them. These, the teachers claim, can help families interact better. The art of good communication should encompass all types of communication, not just the proper use of words. In order to avoid competing styles of communication, we have suggested to give a theoretical and practical perspective to how the gender of students affects communication. The approach is a Solomon Marcus questionnaire, developed by a psychologist from Romania. It encompasses the aggressive, assertive, persuasive, and passive communication styles. 60 students are involved, with an equal number of females and boys.

1.

2. Introduction

The value of early development of effective communication skills cannot be emphasised enough. Teachers, parents, and even the kids themselves are aware that good communication fosters not only mutual understanding but also later-life professional achievement. The young person learns to speak in a way that leads to success earlier if communication skills are developed earlier in life.

3. Communication styles – theoretical approaches

Communication style is defined as a set of speech features of a person participating in a communication event. Style refers to specific ways of receiving a message, personal ways of interpreting messages; concrete ways of expressing response, feedback. Communication style shows how a person constructs the world of social relations. The second communication style shows how information is interpreted in social judgments and transformed into active behavior. Also very important is “the combination of proper styles in context, not reducing to a single style” (Pânișoară, 2010).

Each person has a unique communication style, learned earlier or later in life.

There are a lot of classifications of the pattern or style. Anyway, every style has some features which it is better to be developed. For example, in a study, Jackson (2014) reveals that participants considered “the effectiveness of different learning activities for developing oral communication skills during their undergraduate studies.” (Jackson, 2014) So, we plead for an early education of very expressive communication.

A very important role of forming great communication skills is played by the parents.

As Cramaruc says “if the parents speak in an opened and efficient way, there are better chances to develop in young person’s proper ideas and convictions” (Cramaruc, in Pânișoară, 2011).

One study of Runcan and Constantineanu clearly highlights the importance of communication between parents and children, “this having a significant role in developing a qualitative interaction between them.

Communication is very important in the parent-child interaction, especially if the parents want to find a better way to transmit to their children the important life values by which they could guide the present and especially the future”. (Runcan, Constantineanu et al. 2012).

But to form a certain style of communication, assertive or supportive, it is very important that one or both parents have such a style of communication. For example, “the tested prediction model of family satisfaction as a whole has shown, that besides affective component of mothers and fathers upbringing style, regulatory dimension of mothers and fathers upbringing style, that is, implementation and explanation of rules of behavior, evaluation and consideration of consequences of the actions undertaken by children have also great significance.

Contribution of father’s warmth and regulation is more significant for being satisfied with a family, than mother’s upbringing style”. (Todorovic, Matejevic, et al. 2012). So in this order the teachers and the parents have to realize what are going to develop at future adults.

For a successful person it is important to develop positive communication with aspects of assertiveness,

negotiation etc.

Gulkekin says that "educating the students as potential future negotiators starting in primary school will both contribute to the concept of social communication significantly and help build the culture of consensus and living together peacefully concept in social, personal and cultural communications" (Gulkekin, 2012).

Based on the literature and reviewing various studies about the profile university teaching staff, the qualities expressed by the research participants were grouped into eight dimensions, among which we find the relational competences - dialog with students, tutoring activities (Duță, Pânișoară, G. & Pânișoară I.O., 2014).

We started our research from the classification of psychologist Solomon Marcus (1987). There are four styles of communication which we are going to investigate.

The aggressive style presents tendency to be always in front of everybody else, impose himself at any costs. This attitude stimulates aggressiveness, hostility, antipathy.

The assertive style refers at self imposed attitude, but in an honest way, stimulating clearly his/her personal rights without hurting the others; the capacity to follow your interests without hurting the others.

The persuasive style has as a main feature to play an underground role until a favorite climate for our objective is put in valuable light.

The passive style is the one which has its main characteristic being non-active.

García-Ramírez (2012) highlights the need for communicative interaction and especially empathetic listening in order to achieve visible excellence in university teaching. The way in which a teacher communicates with his/her students is important, and if he/she uses attractive ways to display information through interaction, the results will be immediate (Duță, 2010, 2012).

4. Organization of the research

The purpose of the research

The objective of the research is to identify the predominant communication style of students and potential differences between girls and boys at preadolescence. Analysis and identification of dominant communication style for students will enable a diagnosis for education, future amelioration and better management of career.

Hypothesis

There are differences between girls and boys on communication styles.

There is a predominant communication style of the preadolescents' students.

Subjects

The participants are 60 pupils, equal numbers of girls and boys, 12-14 years old, studying in Bucharest. Subjects were held a short training for correct completion of the questionnaire. Participants that completed the questionnaire in this research were chosen by age and gender, with an average level of attainment.

Methods

The method used is a questionnaire of the Romanian psychologist Solomon Marcus. It includes four styles – aggressive, assertive, persuasive and passive. The method of the questionnaire was answering questions with true or false. Responses were rated as "1" for Truth and to "0" for False. Responses to the questionnaire indicate the dominant attitude in communication, relatively stable and predictable characteristics of communicative behavior in the school environment.

5. Results

The results were entered into the SPSS programme. To find differences between boys and girls, we performed the statistical t test. Also, we looked to determine if the preadolescents already had a tendency of passivity or aggression. According to current studies, students must have an orientation towards interpersonal communication if they are to succeed in the future and contribute to the development of human civilization. To assist students communicate more effectively in the future, teachers must recognise the value of communication in their interactions with students and promote the growth of effective communication skills.

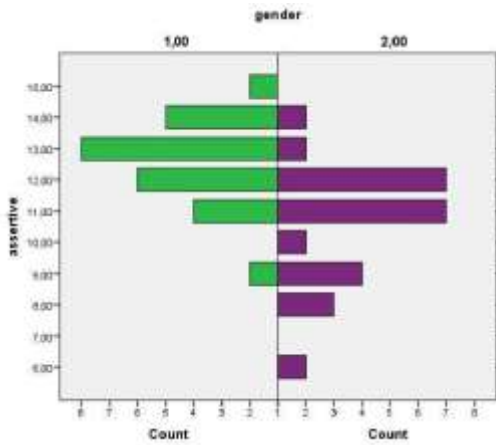


Fig. 1. Histogram Assertive style

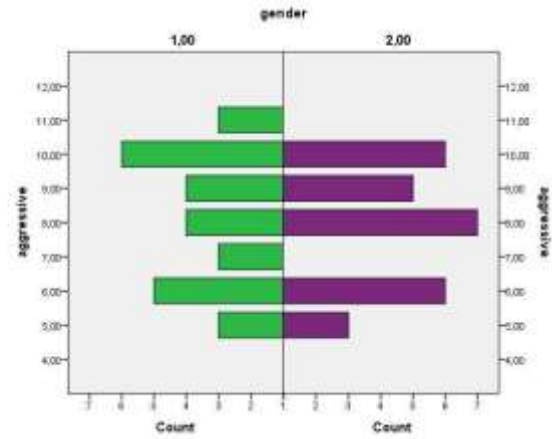


Fig. 2. Histogram Aggressive style

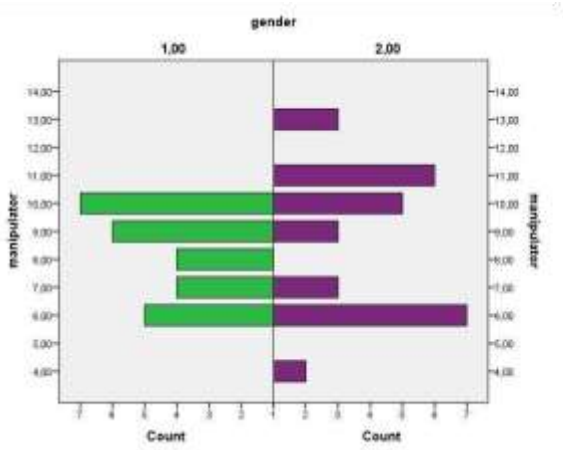


Fig. 3. Histogram Persuasive style

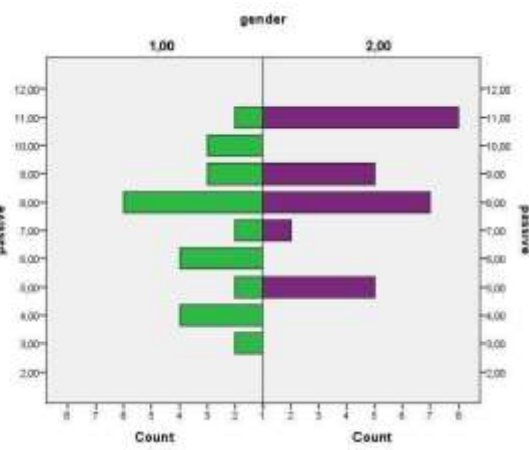


Fig. 4. Histogram Passive style

The charts above are of histogram and show us the distribution of responses by gender. Thus, the dispersion of responses is large, eg Figure 3, persuasive style, we can see the boys around the mean and in the case of girls, there are answers to maximum.

In Figure no. 2, aggressive style, high responses can be observed for both categories of subjects – males and females.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
aggressive	male	30	8,10	2,171	,396
	female	30	8,07	1,911	,349
assertive	male	30	12,07	2,067	,377
	female	30	10,47	2,161	,395
persuasive	male	30	8,53	2,030	,371
	female	30	8,83	2,692	,491
passive	male	30	7,03	2,671	,488
	female	30	8,53	2,193	,400

In Table no. 1 presents descriptive statistics (sample volume, mean, standard deviation) for the four communication styles: aggressive, assertive, passive and persuasive.

Thus, for example, assertive communication style, media responses boys is higher (m = 12.07) compared to the average responses of girls (M = 10.47).

Table 2. Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means					
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
aggressive	Equal variances assumed	1,108	,297	,063	58	,950	,033	,528	-1,024	1,090
	Equal variances not assumed			,063	57,078	,950	,033	,528	-1,024	1,091
assertive	Equal variances assumed	,531	,469	2,931	58	,005	1,600	,546	,507	2,693
	Equal variances not assumed			2,931	57,884	,005	1,600	,546	,507	2,693
persuasive	Equal variances assumed	4,961	,030	-,487	58	,628	-,300	,616	-1,532	,932
	Equal variances not assumed			-,487	53,918	,628	-,300	,616	-1,534	,934
passive	Equal variances assumed	1,640	,205	-2,377	58	,021	-1,500	,631	-2,763	-,237
	Equal variances not assumed			-2,377	55,879	,021	-1,500	,631	-2,764	-,236

To see the statistical differences between the two groups, we used different samples t test in SPSS programme. As it can be seen, persuasive communication style, sig =, 030, which means that there are differences between girls and boys for this style and I can say that girls have higher results therefore are more persuasive than boys.

4. Conclusions

Communication skills are very important for the future personality of a young person, for his quality in life and for professional success.

The way in which they communicate is important for his future success and in society, so the teachers must do an extra effort at early age of subjects to be learnt to communicate in a positive, assertive way.

As it is seen in our lot of students they learnt to use assertive style. Anyway we can predict how extended is this way of action in general.

An important factor in the analysis of results is represented and background of the students, and they have families with a low level of education and finance, this contributes to the forming of communicative aggressive behavior in some of the students.

Anyway they learn how to behave in a controlled space like school, being assertive or persuasive in some of their behaviors.

As Zhamilya et al. (2013) says, the “pedagogical communication is a specific form of communication with its peculiar features and, at the same time, obeying general psychological interrelations, specific to communication as a form of interaction between humans, including communicative, interactive and perceptive components”.

Communication is the key to controlling the interactions in the process of teaching and learning tool and the basis for the social relationships of all the members that compose the university community.

According to Codina (2004), to develop the interpersonal communicative competence is vital to reach students and the society in general. Coinciding with the famous phrase of Winston Churchill: “It takes courage to stand and speak. But much more to sit and listen”.

Communication competence, as a system of knowledge, skills, abilities, motivational disposition, attitudes and properties in teaching communication and social interaction, is the essential competence of teachers and students.

In conclusion, we consider important the need to promote communicative interaction and interpersonal relationships between professors and students in order to improve the excellence visible in Higher Education.

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