Investigating the Relationship between Family Communication Patterns and Life Satisfaction According to the Mediating Role of Self-Esteem in Students

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between family communication patterns and satisfaction with life according to the mediating role of self-esteem. This research is correlational. 185 students (boys and girls) were selected by multistage cluster sampling among the high school students. Level of self-esteem was measured using self-esteem questionnaire of Rosenberg, Family communication patterns were measured using revised family communication patterns scale of koerner and Fitzpatrick, and life satisfaction was measured using life satisfaction questionnaire of Daniz et al. Data were tested using Pearson correlation and multivariate regression. Research results showed that conversation orientation and conformity orientation predicted life satisfaction positively and negatively, respectively. Also, conversation orientation is a more appropriate predictor of life satisfaction from among the dimensions of family communication patterns and self-esteem and also findings indicated that self-esteem variable can play a mediating role between family communication patterns and life satisfaction. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that conversation plays a key role in students' life satisfaction.
Keywords: Family Communication Patterns, Life Satisfaction, Self-Esteem

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, due to the importance of positive psychology, most researches have focused on protective factors, health improvement and health care experiences. Life satisfaction is a condition in which family members often feel happy and satisfied with each other. Life satisfaction is created through mutual interests, taking care of each other, acceptance, understanding each other and satisfying needs (Khosravi et al.,2009; Gohari et al.,2004). So far, researchers have proposed a number of factors in the sense of life satisfaction, among which family has the greatest role in the sense of life satisfaction (Kapteyn et al., 2009). Among the variables whose role in the life satisfaction has been investigated in the present study are the family communication patterns.

Researches in the context of the relationship between family communication patterns and life satisfaction have confirmed that communication patterns are protective, and in comparison with unconditional patterns they are followed by more fun and more satisfaction in both parents and children (Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2008; Khosravi, 2007; Rahimiyan, 2009).

In other words, researches revealed the highest life satisfaction is in the families with high conversation orientation, and in the families with conformity orientation, the life satisfaction is low (Gohari et al., 2004).

Self-esteem is also one of the variables whose role has been investigated with life satisfaction and family communication patterns. Self-esteem is an excitement associated with self-worth that arises from our thoughts, feelings and experiences during the life. A person's overall self-esteem is his overall evaluation of his worth in what he does (Kelly et al., 2002; Mruk, 1999; Zaki, 2008; Kermode, 2001; Huang, 1999). A large volume of research literature suggests the relationship between variables such as inappropriate control from parents, parental-child conflict, Adolescent responses to the family evaluation plan and teen's description of negative atmosphere of family with low self-esteem. Emotional environment that provides the right conditions for gaining positive attention toward self is associated with successful transition to adolescence, mental health and also educational attainment (Koerner and Maki, 2004; Gudykunst and Nishida, 2001; Vittengl and Holt, 1998; Landman-Peters et al., 2005).

Research questions: Which variables of family communication patterns and self-esteem are better predictors of life satisfaction?

- Is the self-esteem variable a mediator variable between the family communication patterns and life satisfaction?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research is correlational. The study sample consists of 185 people (94 male, 91 female) of high school students of Sadist city that were selected by multistage cluster sampling.

Measurement instruments: Revised scale of family communication patterns: This scale has 26 five-point items. In this study the reliability and validity of this scale was calculated; the reliability for conversation and conformity orientation and the overall scale with Cronbach's alpha was 0.74, 0.73 and 68, respectively and also the validity of the scale was calculated using factor analysis and was 0.67 (28).

- Self-esteem questionnaire of Rosenberg: This scale consists of 10 self-reporting items. In the present study the reliability was calculated to be 0.67 using Cronbach's alpha and the validity was calculated to be 0.60 using factor analysis.

- Questionnaire of life satisfaction: It has five seven-point items. The present study examined the reliability and validity, the reliability was calculated to be 0.78 using Cronbach's alpha and the validity was calculated to be 0.76 using factor analysis.

RESULTS

In this study, Pearson correlation coefficients between the variables showed that there is a significant relationship between dimensions of family communication patterns and students' self-esteem and life satisfaction at the level of (P < 0.01) and (P < 0.05). This means that there was a positive significant relationship between conversation orientation and self-esteem at the level of (P < 0.01) and there was a positive significant relationship between conversation orientation and life satisfaction at the level of (P < 0.05).

There was also a negative significant relationship between conformity orientation and life satisfaction at the level of (P < 0.01) and there was a negative significant relationship between conformity orientation and self-esteem at the level of (P < 0.05). There was also a positive significant relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction variables at the level of (P < 0.01). Results are presented in table 1.

Conversation and conformity variables were simultaneously entered in the multivariate regression to predict life satisfaction by dimensions of family communication patterns; the beta value of conversation orientation on life satisfaction was positive and significant (β=0.35, P<0.001). The beta value of conformity orientation on life satisfaction was negative and significant (β= -0.23, P<0.05). Table 2 represents the results.

Then, simple regression was used to predict life satisfaction by self-esteem variable and beta value was positive and significant (β=0.36, P<0.001). Table 3 represents the results.

Stepwise multivariate regression was used to determine the predictive role of the dimensions of family communication patterns and self-esteem in relation to life satisfaction. The beta values obtained for predictor variables showed that the conversation orientation is a better predictor than other two variables, namely conformity orientation and self-esteem. Table 4 represents the results.

Table 1. Correlation matrix of variables

Variable	Average	SD
Conversation orientation	49.85	11.14
Conformity orientation	35.35	7.93
Self-esteem	6.30	2.05
Life satisfaction	20.02	6.66

Table 2. Regression of life satisfaction on dimensions of family communication patterns (N=185)

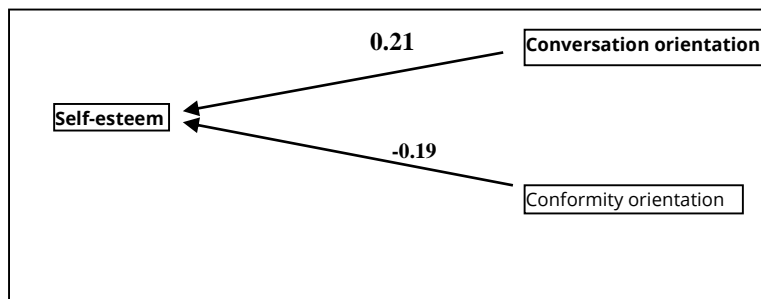| Desired variable	Predictive variable	β	T	Sig.	R	R²
Life satisfaction	Conversation orientation	0.35	3.28	0.001	0.48	0.24
	Conformity orientation	-0.23	-2.19	0.05		

Fig1. Regression of self-esteem on dimensions of family communication patterns (N=185)
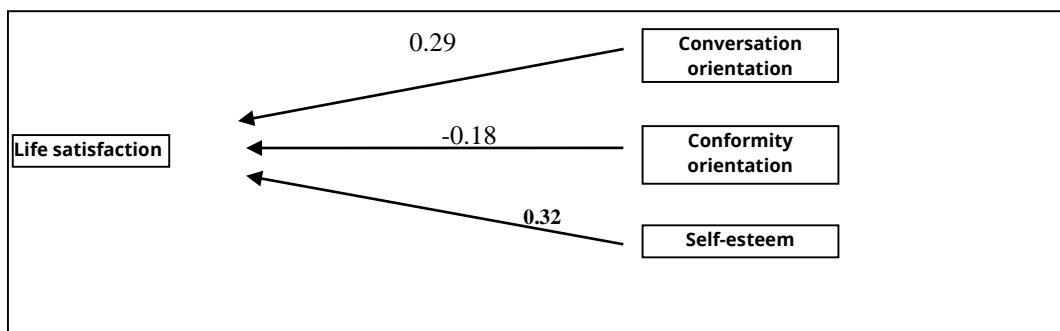
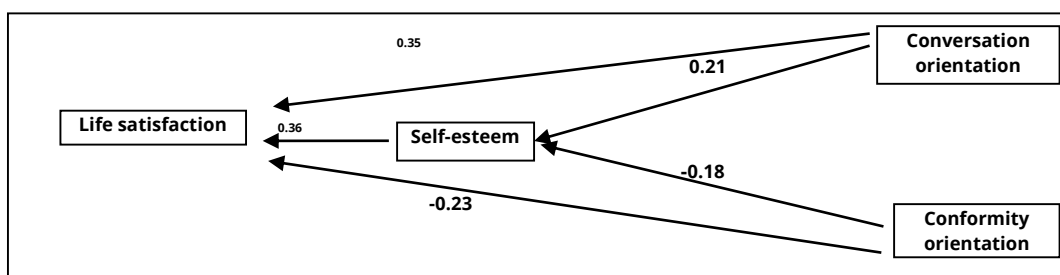**Fig 2.** Regression of life satisfaction and self-esteem on dimensions of family communication patterns

Fig 3. Final model of the path

DISCUSSION

In explaining the findings of the first hypothesis it can be stated that conversation orientation refers to situations in which the family encourages the members in freely and easy interaction and conversation in various fields. Family members with high conversation, interact openly, consistently and spontaneously with each other, and are allowed to propose a wide range of issues, without time limit. However, conformity orientation can be considered an evidence of family relationship, which prompted members to have equal attitudes, values and beliefs.

It means that families with high conformity emphasize on equality of beliefs and attitudes in their interaction and communication between the two generations of this family is based on obeying parents and other adults (Zaki, 2008). On the other hand, life satisfaction is created through mutual interests, taking care of each other, acceptance, understanding each other and satisfying needs (Gohari et al., 2004; Kapteyn et al., 2009). Given the results of the above researches and the results of the present study, it can be expected that in families with high conversation, interaction between individuals is much more and also mutual acceptance and understanding each other will rise. In such families the opportunity is created for family members to assert themselves and people can present their interests and attitudes very well that leads to enhancement of life satisfaction in family members. In contrast, the more the conformity in the family, the lower the mutual acceptance and less their understanding will be. It can be said that students who live in families that have high conformity and can't express their interests due to lack of assertiveness and

denial may lead to decrease in self-esteem and increase in anxiety that may cause to lower satisfaction with life in families with high conformity.

As Figure 1 shows, there was a positive significant relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction at the level of ($P<0.001$). It means that increase in self-esteem, life satisfaction also increases. These findings are consistent with the results researches (Mruk, 1999; Zaki, 2008; Kermode, 2001). In explaining these findings, it can be stated that self-esteem is an excitement related to self-worth that arises from thoughts, feelings and experiences during life (Zaki, 2008). Self-esteem is a good predictor of motivation and education achievement and is one of the theoretical models explaining the reasons for dropout, theoretical framework of failure- self-esteem that assumes that failure in school lowers students' self-esteem. On the other hand, high self-esteem is associated with high mental health, and also high quality of life that can lead to high life satisfaction (Zaki, 2008; Kermode, 2001). According to these results it is expected that given the interaction of individuals in the family, the more the students have opportunity for assertiveness and expressing interests and feelings will have higher self-esteem and it can lead to increase in mental health, quality of life and also life satisfaction.

The findings suggest that conversation orientation is a more appropriate predictor than self-esteem and conformity orientation for life satisfaction. In explaining the findings it can be stated that in conversation orientation family members are encouraged to participate in interaction and conversation in various fields and family members interact with each other freely, continuously and spontaneously (Koerner and

Maki, 2004; Vittengl and Holt,1998). It can be said that increase in conversation in family leads to teenagers' happiness in a variety of ways. On the one hand, families taking advantage of teenagers in decision-making, in addition to providing opportunity for assertiveness and independence for teenagers, enrich the emotional atmosphere of the family and teenagers will also feel family's social support and the consequences of both conditions is increase in satisfaction and life satisfaction of the family members (Vittengl and Holt,1998). On the other hand this communication model leads in growth of teenagers' self-confidence, which, in turns, makes teenagers to easily express their feelings and emotions in the family (Kermode, 2001).

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