



Pedagogical aspects of family functioning

Aile işleyişinin pedagojik yönleri

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Abstract: Social functioning consequently affects the functioning of the family. Respecting the personality and autonomy of the individual, the connection between the quality of family functioning and educational outcomes of children cannot be neglected. The pedagogical influence of the family on the individual is recognisable by the adopted value orientations and social norms; models of behaviour; learning strategies; ways of distributing power and taking responsibility; by communication and ways of solving problem situations, as well as flexibility and expressiveness. Understanding family functions (economic, socio-emotional, religious, reproductive etc.) and their simultaneous impact on children, it is unjustified to interpret their educational outcomes based on separated aspects of family functioning. The purpose of this paper was to gather relevant research which indicate that a number of latent and intervening variables are associated with children's educational outcomes, making the family a nonlinear dynamic system. Changes and children's outcomes are certain, but not easily predictable.

Keywords: Children's well-being, Children's rights, Educational outcomes, Flexibility, Family functions, Family structure, Family dynamics

Öz: Aile işleyişinin pedagojik yönleri. Sosyal koşullardaki ekonomik, politik ve kültürel değişiklikler aileye ve ailenin işleyiş şekillerine yansıtılır. Bireyin kişiliğine ve özerkliğine saygı duyarak, aile işleyişinin kalitesi ile çocukların eğitimsel sonuçları arasındaki bağlantı ihmal edilemez. Ailenin birey üzerindeki pedagojik etkisi, benimsenen değer yönelimleri ve sosyal normlar, davranış modelleri, öğrenme stratejileri, gücü dağıtma ve sorumluluk alma yolları, iletişim ve problem durumlarını çözme yolları ve bireyin esnekliği ve ifade gücü ile tanımlanabilir. Aynı zamanda, tüm aile fonksiyonları (ekonomik, sosyo-duygusal, dini, üreme...) çocuklar için eğitimsel öneme sahiptir. Ancak, çocukların çıktıları aile işlevlerinin izole yönleri temelinde yorumlamak haksızdır. İlgili araştırmalar, çocukların eğitim çıktularına ilişkin bir dizi gizli ve araya giren değişkenleri göstermektedir. Aile bu nedenle doğrusal olmayan dinamik bir sistem olarak kabul edilir, ve bu nedenle değişiklikler ve dolayısıyla çocukların çıktuları kesindir, ancak kolayca tahmin edilemez.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çocukların Refahı, Eğitim Çıktıları, Aile Fonksiyonları, Aile İşleyişi, Esneklik

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INTRODUCTION

The family is undoubtedly one of the longest-lived communities in society. Although in a permanent interactive relationship with the social environment, it is separated from society by specific ideographically oriented socio-emotional relationships of their members - children and parents. The quality of these relationships affects the development of the individual (both child and parent), even in situations where these relationships seem to be absent (single-parent families, children growing up without parents, etc.).

Modern scientific research, as a rule, is not focused on the etiology of the family but on the effects of family functioning as predictors of the current and long-term well-being of children. There is a growing understanding of the connection between the quality of family functioning and cultural, economic and / or ideological social trends. Consequently, the interpretation of the family and the educational aspects of the family are changing.

Around sixty years ago, the family was defined as “an intimate, blood-related social unit” (Encyclopedic Dictionary of Pedagogy, 1963, 710). Social changes reinterpret the definition of the family, so the General Encyclopedia (Yugoslav Lexicographic Institute, 1981) states that the family can also consist of members who are not necessarily related by blood, such as adopted children. Croatian Bureau of Statistics (CBS, 2011), for the purposes of the census, interprets the family through the structure: parents (both or one) and their children. The Social Welfare Act of the Republic of Croatia (NN 157/13, Art. 4, paragraph 3) interprets the family as a community of parents, children and other relatives who “live and work together”. Newer scientific definitions of family do not cite blood related ties as a determinant of the family. In Europe, the number of families with children is also decreasing, and in 2019 it was 28.8%, while single-parent families with children were 4% (Eurostat, 2020).

Joint housing of family members, due to different social situations (separation of the family due to business obligations, long-term hospitalisation, or incarceration of an individual family member), is also no longer (the only) acceptable determinant of the family. Moreover, a family member is also considered a “child who does not live in a family and attends institutional education... no later than the age of 29” (Social Welfare Act, NN 157/13, Art. 4, paragraph 3). This interpretation is significant in the analysis of the economic function of the family, especially in the context of recent statistical reports, which state that more and more adult individuals, due to the economic crisis remain living with their parents, e.g., in 2019 men average age 27.1 years and women 25, 2 years (Eurostat, 2020).

Some sociologists believe that “family life is evolving and that the family is gradually changing in order to more effectively meet the needs of society as a whole and each family member individually” (Haralambos & Holborn, 2002, p. 503). Nevertheless, the family structure, the functions and ways of functioning, are justifiably accepted as permanent determinants of the family that have an impact on the conditions of children’s development and growing up. The family can thus be interpreted as an ideological and symbolic construct i.e., “a community of parents and their biological and / or adopted children who uniquely perform their family tasks arising from the roles they have in the family” (Ljubetić, 2014, p. 10), where the personality of each member affects the overall functioning of the family (Janković, 2008).

In order to gain the widest possible insight into the understanding of the family and the educational aspects of the family, theoretical scientific sources, legal documents and statistical indicators in the range of about 50 years were analysed. Family functions and family functioning and as predictors of current and long-term outcomes for children were analysed. Relevant scientific sources from the fields of pedagogy, sociology and psychology are included.

The concept of modern parenting

Parenting is one of the fundamental characteristics of a family. It is possible to interpret it as a relationship, a role and as a process (Ljubetić, 2014). It includes the attitudes, emotions, and activities of parents (biological or social) toward children (Smyth & Craig, 2017). Quality parenting implies a systematic focus on promoting the overall development of children, creating optimal growing conditions, appropriate response to children’s psychophysical needs, acceptance and respect for children as equal partners in the educational process (Visković, 2018). The outcomes of quality parenting are recognised by Lareau (2011), through the development of the child’s strengths. Parents who combine emotional warmth, acceptance and attachment with clarity and consistency in the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, have a positive impact on the development of self-esteem, self-regulation and self-confidence, and the development of pro-social behaviours in these children (Vandell et al., 2010). Parental values, attitudes and relations have manifold pedagogical significance that directly affects children’s development and personality formation. At the same time, children adopt values and norms creating personal attitudes and behaviours as one of the outcomes of family functioning (Visković & Škutor, 2019).

In the context of the current pandemic, family functioning is changing, and consequently the way of parental functioning and the quality of parenthood.

Exploring the relationship between risk factors such as economic stressors (e.g., job loss) and social stressors (e.g., virus exposure) on family functioning (e.g., parental mental health, parental involvement, and children's socio-emotional behaviour) and current pandemics, and the degree of environmental support and co-parenting in protecting against the negative effects of stressors on their well-being, researchers have found both positive and negative correlations. Mothers and fathers who reported more economic stressors also noted that their children behaved more prosocially, and fathers had more mental health difficulties during the pandemic. Mothers and fathers who reported more social stressors reported being less engaged with their children and that they showed more behavioural problems compared to the time before the pandemic. Also, mothers and fathers who felt more positive were also found to feel less depressed and less stressed during a pandemic, and their children more prosocial, compared to the time before the pandemic (He et al., 2021). It is clear from this, but also from a series of recent studies (Feinberg et al., 2021; Yang, Wu, Wang & Peng, 2021) that family processes and family resilience or vulnerability are strongly influenced by social events that directly reflect on children's well-being. Parental stress increases due to fear of illness, job loss, and financial insecurity (Manzo & Minello, 2020; Wu & Xu, 2020). Social relationships are limited, and communication is most often virtual (Crook, 2020). Consequently, parental behaviours are changing which Manzo and Minello (2020) interpret as parental guilt for insufficient commitment to children due to other (professional) responsibilities. Although there are still insufficient findings on the family's outcomes due to pandemic, it is reasonable to assume that it will affect the upbringing of children. Therefore, it is justified, among other important aspects to analyse the pedagogical aspects of the family as one of the predictors of children's development and achievement.

FAMILY AS A NONLINEAR DYNAMIC SYSTEM

Family functioning and outcomes of family functioning for children can be analysed in the context of systems theory (Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of the Human Environment, 1994; Johnson Ecological Model of the Micro-system, 2010). Understanding the family as a system focuses on the study of educational aspects of the family as a socio-emotional community and the environment as economic and cultural conditions of children's growing up.

With its structure and ways of functioning, the family has all the essential features of the system:

– components - parents and (biological or social) children as subsystems in mutual interaction that conditions constant dynamic changes,

- structure - which is not just a “sum” of members but their interactive relationships and connections,
- functions - as a social purpose at the level of the individual and the society in which the individual participates,
- limits in the range of im/permeability and un/flexibility.

The family structure is relatively stable (parents and children), but their relationships are subject to constant dynamic change. The growth and development of children in the family, conditions its dynamic developmental cycles (Visković & Ljubetić, 2019). Interactive relationships of all family members result in a social network of roles and meanings that creates a family (Widmer, 2010). Family relationships do not correspond to the classical model of cause-and-effect relationships and do not assume linear relationships, so certain behaviours will not always result in the same outcomes (Devaney, 2003). By creating conditions for growth and development, the family applies initiating and / or controlling behaviours. Changes are certain, but not predictable. Dynamic family behaviour takes on certain patterns over time with relatively stable periods, but passivity is not a primary feature of family functioning. Seemingly static family relationships most often experience latent processes of distancing among family members, which then lead to entropy and extinction (Olson, 2011). The unpredictability of social relations and the variability of dynamics determine the family as a complex nonlinear dynamic system.

Family relationships are affected by a number of latent, intervening, and dormant variables, so outcomes are often uncertain. The cause of the change in time may be significantly further away from the symptoms. Previous events are most often just triggers of reactions that condition change. For example, a parent’s reaction to a particular child’s behaviour is most often not conditioned by the immediate event, i.e., the child’s current behaviour, but by parental value orientations, style, accepted norms, and / or current psycho-physical status. In a complex system, a phenomenon that is temporally and spatially close to symptoms usually acts as a compelling cause, although often isn’t (Devaney, 2003; Halmi, 2012). This is particularly important for understanding family functioning, especially during (potentially) crisis events that may trigger chaotic dynamics or joint social support. For example, in family therapy in the treatment of alcoholism of family members and in the treatment of depression, stabilisation is possible through a broader social network of family support (Miljenović, 2010).

This is also recognisable in the context of the current situation due to the Corona-virus pandemic that unquestionably generates parental stress (Abramson, 2020; Wu & Xu, 2020) and reflects on family relationships, although the effects have not been fully investigated. While Cluver et al. (2020) state that crisis situations provide an opportunity to strengthen the connection between children and parents, Abramson (2020) and Keresteš (2020) estimate that the crisis during a pandemic has a negative impact on the quality of these relationships. Various findings point to the importance of family relations before a crisis situation, as well as the need to explore long-term outcomes of the quality of family functioning. Proponents of the theory of determined nonlinear dynamics in the social sciences believe that understanding nonlinear changes is the starting point for mitigating negative effects, and for (preventive and curative) quality action (Halmi, 2012). It is therefore possible to assume that systematic pedagogical action and social support can prevent the development of socially unacceptable situations (addictions, social maladaptation, dropping out of school, underage pregnancies, etc.) and improve the processes of structuring, functioning, and stabilising the family system (Kapetanović, Skoog, Bohlin & Gerdner, 2018; Maglica, 2021).

Unfortunately, practice indicates that, even if they were able to include all possible (known and available) impacts on initial conditions, they would still not be able to fully predict future outcomes (Devaney, 2003; Halmi, 2012). Quantitative research, which seeks to include as many variables as possible as initial conditions and factors of change, can determine only the probability but not absolute causality, nor the certainty and outcomes of change (Cohen, Lauren and Morrison, 2007; Turina, 2009). This attitude suggests a kind of pedagogical pessimism.

In contrast, family strengths are protective factors that can contribute to the quality of family functioning and affirmative outcomes of children. Stable families have a high level of family connection, e.g., secure attachment, trust, closeness, affirmative socio-emotional expressiveness, and time together, constructive and open communication. This contributes to children's sense of security and long-term family well-being (Dalton et al., 2020).

Minor changes in the environment (input variables) are unlikely to significantly disrupt the family functioning of stable families. In structurally unstable and unresilient families without cohesion, even the slightest change can significantly impair their functioning. By not knowing the initial conditions, e.g., latent experience of the individual, mutual expectations, and a certain transmission of parenthood (Belsky, 2008), it is possible to conclude that dramatic changes, seemingly divergent and chaotic are only apparently caused by changes in these conditions (Turina, 2009). Some research shows that during lockdown (as an epidemiological measure) domestic abuse increases (Abramson, 2020), suggesting the need to reconsider parenting even before crisis situation began.

Socio-emotional stability of the family, quality relations, caring behaviours, distribution of power and open constructive communication with appropriate economic status, create an affirmative environment for optimal individual development (Belsky et al., 2008; Visković & Ljubetić, 2019). It is therefore justified to investigate the educational function of the family, the educational aspects of each individual family function, and the quality of the entire family functioning as predictors of individual achievement, well-being, and development.

FAMILY FUNCTIONS

The functions of the family change in accordance with economic-production relations, public policies and the culture of each community. Their variability does not change the importance of the family as the individual grows and matures. The family retains (modified) functions, even in the case of disturbed structures caused by the absence or death of an individual member.

Based on the first systematic research of family functions, the anthropologist Murdock (1948) defines the biological-reproductive, economic (including care for offspring and cohabitation), and educational function of the family as universal family functions recognisable in all societies. To these functions Davis (1950, according to Nicodemus, 2010) adds the function of social positioning, and Ogburn (1978, according to the 1998 edition) adds youth education, religious socialisation, recreation, protection, and affective function. Ogburn (1998) emphasises that in modern society the family is increasingly becoming an emotional community, because it is founded out of love. Divorce interpreted by Ogburn (1998) is an indicator of affective function. He believes that individuals who divorce and create new families do so primarily for the sake of love and emotional intimacy.

Social changes redefine certain family functions - some are gradually extinguished (e.g., biological, because the need to satisfy sexual urges is no longer a reason to start a family), some are redefined (e.g., economic function and cohabitation), while some are taken over by society (e.g., protection, education, care for the elderly and infirm). Pearson (2008) cites the primary socialisation of children and the stabilisation of the adult personality as important functions that the family retains. He interprets socialisation as an educational function in the context of transmitting culture (values, norms, behaviour), building a stable and adapted personality that is encouraged to express individuality without violating social norms. Giddens (2007) interprets socialisation as a process by which children learn the norms of the society in which they were born, while personality stabilisation refers to the socio-emotional status of adults and the taking of family roles. The outcomes of these processes can also have negative effects, so family problems can spill over into

society (Giddens, 2007). Minuchin (2008) argues that family functions can be conditionally divided into a protection function and a socialisation function, emphasizing that the family should be the primary refuge and protection from the outside world as a complex psycho-social protection of family members.

Regardless of the differences in the interpretation of individual family functions, it is reasonable to assume that they all have an educational impact on the individual. Aspects of the educational function are related to all other functions in terms of developing individual competencies and transferring the culture of the family community - core values, norms, behaviour, communication, power distribution and problem solving. The influence of the social environment depends on the permeability of the boundaries of the family system, the cohesiveness of family members, and the personality of the individual.

Biological-reproductive Function of the Family

The biological-reproductive function of the family, interpreted as a fundamental family function (Matulić, 2008; Murdock, 1948) may indicate doubts between responsibility and hedonism. Although it has a global social significance (towards offspring and society), it is basically a personal decision of an individual in a partnership. The social significance of the reproductive function of the family should be the reason for social support, especially of population and family state policy.

The regulation of the biological-reproductive function of family members depends on the individual's personality, community culture, tradition, religion, and possibly on public opinion, national consciousness, and state policy. It is determined by subjective (personal choices of individuals) and objective factors (economic status of potential parents, housing conditions, compatibility of parental and professional roles). Lanzieri (2013) links the biological-reproductive function of the family with its economic status and points out that the highest fertility rate is among lower educated women. Consequently, families with more children have a lower economic status. From a religious point of view, this function of the family is an ethical issue because sexual relation does not have to be an expression of love or desire to reproduce, but only the satisfaction of sexuality (Vuletić, 2010). The meaning that adult family members attach to biological-reproductive function and the way they satisfy it can be a model of behaviour for children.

Sexuality as a construct of feelings, instincts, values, attitudes, and behaviours, indicates the importance of family upbringing (Vuletić, 2010). Liberalisation of attitudes towards sexuality with non-acceptance of responsible behaviours is associated with the problem of premature sexual

intercourse, and consequently with an increased risk of sexually transmitted diseases and / or underage pregnancies (Jurišić & Županić, 2014). All outcomes of irresponsible sexual behaviour are generally poor and eventually leave negative consequences on the psychophysical status of the individual (Dabo, Malatestinić, Janković, Bolf Malović & Kosanović, 2008; Jurišić & Županić, 2014). Matulić (2008) states how early sexual activity has become a today's requirement and a social life criterion which can cause anxiety in individuals with different behaviours.

Parental sexuality is often a pattern of children's behaviour, although it is most often not implicitly discussed. Figs (2013) finds it unacceptable to prefer personal needs and / or parental desires (e.g., extramarital relationships) over family commitments. This author argues that the biological-reproductive function of the family is closely related to the educational function, the construction and transmission of fundamental value orientations, norms, behaviours, and gender roles.

Economic Function of the Family

Some authors believe that economic function throughout history is the reason for the emergence of the family Wesel (2004), which assumes the provision of the existential needs of all family members (Colney, 2010). Within society, family relations are legally regulated by the obligatory economic care of parents for minor children, and the care of adult children for vulnerable parents.

In the context of modern society, the economic function of the family is manifold related to the educational function in terms of ensuring the conditions of growing up, upbringing and education, and the development of financial literacy of members (Visković, 2018). Financial literacy can be interpreted as a process by which individuals improve their understanding of financial products and concepts to ensure financial well-being (OECD, 2017). Financial literacy raises the level of individual responsibility of individuals in financial decisions, but also the consequences of these decisions (Družić Ljubotina, 2012; Škreblić Kirbiš, Tomić & Vehovec, 2011). Available research data indicate that the population in Croatia is predominantly financially illiterate (Bejaković, 2010), so financial literacy should be one of the educational functions of the family, but also of the formal educational system.

The economic status of the family is reflected in the quality of family life, and consequently the quality of parenthood Ljubetić (2014) and the educational outcomes of the individual (Šućur, 2011). The low socio-economic status of the family is significantly related to the quality of parent-child interaction and the general family environment and poses a significant risk for dysfunctional behaviour of the child (Klarin, Proroković & Šimić Šašić, 2010). In these families, financial

insecurity increases the stress that contributes to parental depression, a greater tendency to punish children, and inconsistencies in the implementation of family rules (Ljubetić, 2014). Parents of optimal economic status are more likely to “explain, praise, consciously discipline and talk to their children, while lower-income parents are more likely to criticise their children and more likely to physically punish them” (Ljubetić, 2014, p. 27).

The economic status of the family is also related to the academic achievements of children in terms of the availability of learning resources, but also the attitude towards education (Visković, 2018). Research in Croatia shows that better results in reading literacy are achieved by students from families with better economic, social, and cultural status, who have more access to educational equipment at home (computers, books, dictionaries, quiet learning corner), or from families with more cultural goods (classic literature, poetry collections), as well as knowledge of information technologies (Braš Roth, Markočić Dekanić, Markuš & Gregurović, 2010). The effect of poverty is more pronounced in younger children than in adolescents when the contribution of quality family interaction is a more significant predictor of school success than the socio-economic status of the family (Klarin et al., 2010).

As a possible solution to the economic difficulties of the family, family policies encourage couple-parent families while providing social care for children. For example, by providing financial support, the EU advocates the inclusion of early and preschool children in shift and longer-term (longer than 10 hours per day) programs in educational institutions. At the same time, there are no exact studies that find pedagogical justification for such stays of children in institutions. Although there are several studies like Böddi and Serfőző (2020), Slunjski (2018), and Vujičić (2020) that confirm the value and benefits of involving preschool children in early and preschool education (ECE) institutions, D'Addato (2010) emphasizes that ECE setting as a form of social childcare should not be a “parking space for the children of working parents”. The well-being of children is ensured by a quality ratio of family and institutional education and care, visible as the outcome of epidemiological measure due to current pandemic. Parents (due to professional obligations and increased stress) are not able to adequately respond to the educational needs of children (Sangster Jokić, 2020).

The Religious Function of the Family and Spirituality

Religiosity can be a predictor of moral attitudes and political, social, and broader value orientations (Visković & Škutor, 2019). The development of religiosity depends on the environment, which indicates the importance of the culture of the community in which the individual grows up (Črpić

& Zrinščak, 2010; Matulić, 2008; Sekulić & Šporer, 2006). It is related to the values and attitudes of the individual. Values and attitudes towards adolescence are built in the family, while later the personality and previous experience of the individual have a greater influence (Visković & Škutor, 2019). Unlike religiosity, as a belief and acceptance of dogmas spirituality can be interpreted as a search for the meaning and value of life (Jakovljević & Begić, 2013). In a family context, both spirituality and religiosity can help overcome crisis situations and be powerful family resources (Walsh, 2011). They can be motivators and regulators of individual behavior, which is not always affirmative and can generate discriminatory attitudes (Leutar & Leutar, 2010). Some research that is not value-neutral indicates that families of pronounced religiosity have a more stable family structure, more children in the family, clearer family norms and more rigid value systems (Matulić, 2008; Vuletić, 2010).

Socio-emotional Function of the Family

Socio-emotional function is one of the fundamental functions of the modern family. Widmer (2010) interprets the family as a network of interpersonal, primarily emotional relationships. Juul (2009) explains that in the family, everyone is connected by a constant interactive relationship, so everything that happens to an individual member affects all members. He believes that the quality of this interaction determines the progress of children and adults and how they will develop individual potentials, but also joint strengths (Bzostek & Berger, 2017; Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers & Robinson, 2007).

Due to the exceptional sensitivity of the child, especially in early childhood and his dependence on the parent, parental actions and parenting style have a strong influence on the child's personality and socio-emotional competencies (Riley, 2007; Visković & Ljubetić, 2019). Guiding, encouraging, and guiding the child in the adoption of socially acceptable behaviour and expression of emotions or regulation of the child's behaviour (according to self-regulation) is one of the fundamental parental responsibilities (Jurčević-Lozančić, 2016). Children experience and transmit all those emotional reactions and patterns of behaviour that they experience from others, primarily their parents (Brajša Žganec & Slunjski, 2007). Children with a richer, more complete, and more emotionally secure conception of the family environment have more success in social relationships with other children (Riley, 2007). In contrast, children who constantly require extra attention have parents who often express negative feelings and inappropriate parenting procedures (Ljubetić, 2014). At the same time, parents are also a model of behaviour. The child interprets interactions between parents and those in relation to themselves, and "based on the interpretation of personal

experience, shapes positive or negative, affective and behavioural reactions” (Jurčević-Lozančić, 2016).

The findings of some studies like Brajša-Žganec and Slunjski (2007), Covey (2008), Loka (2012) and Riley (2007) indicate that children in optimal growing up conditions can develop appropriate socio-emotional competencies. The fact that not all parents are aimed at promoting pro-social behaviours and encouraging the building of secure attachment with children, Belsky (2008) explains the developmental history of parents and their psychological profile, as well as the characteristics of children.

Educational aspects of the socio-emotional function of the family are recognised as:

- emotional attachment of family members which contributes to the safety and emotional stability of children and the development of self-esteem and self-confidence,
- emotional expressiveness that contributes to family relationships and the development of children’s socio-emotional competencies,
- contribution to the adaptive potential of the child.

The ways in which children experience and express love and affection are a crucial factor while growing up (Rijavec, Miljković & Brdar, 2008). Children who have experienced love and respect in the family have an affirmative self-perception (Juil, 2009). In contrast, children who are exposed to strong negative emotions and poor parental behaviours withdraw into themselves or have aggressive behaviours. Brajša Žganec and Slunjski (2007) warn that children exposed to punishment (physical or verbal) early on show more situational inappropriate, intense and rigid emotions, so they transmit anger, sadness, fear and shame outside the family. Consequently, they have difficulty establishing emotionally close relationships, poor social adjustment, and self-control (Jakobs & Crowley, 2007). Socio-emotional connection and adaptability of family members, following many years of research, are cited by some authors (Olson, 2011; Walsh, 2011) as a significant indicator of the quality of family functioning.

Family Leisure Time

One of the family pedagogical functions is to design and spend their leisure time in developing mutual trust and closeness, quality communication and empowerment, distribution of power and learning to solve (potentially) problem situations (Walsh, 2011). Quality leisure time for family members contributes to greater satisfaction with family life and a higher level of family connection

and adaptability (Agate, Zabriskie, Agate & Poff, 2009; Berc & Blažeka Kokorić, 2013). Widmer (2010) states that quality leisure time of family members encourages open mutual communication and cooperation between family members, which reduces the possibility of maintaining permanent conflicts. Quality family leisure time has positive effects on partnerships and reduces the risk of divorce (Berc & Blažeka Kokorić, 2013). For families that nurture family rituals, better adaptation skills and family stability have been found in daily activities (Fiese, Foley & Spagnola, 2006; Olson, 2011; Walsh, 2011).

The “free time” that parents spend with their children is an extremely important aspect of parenting. The participation of parents and extended family during children’s free time, especially in joint play, can significantly affect the healthy development of children, such as: the adoption of a healthy lifestyle; adoption of positive life values; contribution to the development of various social skills, and the strengthening of emotional intelligence. At the same time, the involvement of fathers and mothers in play and active involvement of children significantly contributes to a lower incidence of behavioural disorders (Fiese et al., 2006). The joint leisure time of family members varies according to the age of the children, so families with younger children spend more time together in play and various outdoor activities. As children grow older, joint family activities become less frequent and different in content (Buswell, Zabriskie, Lundberg & Hawkins, 2012).

Some research indicates that lockdown (as an epidemiological measure) has enabled more frequent and better family leisure time (Cameron & Moss, 2020). At the same time, other research links the situation during a pandemic to lower quality leisure time (Sangster Jokić, 2020). The lack of quality time together during a pandemic can be linked to increased parental and, consequently, family stress (Manzo & Minello, 2020; Wu & Xu, 2020).

Educational function of the Family

For most children, the family is the first and possibly the most important educational instance, and family upbringing is an authentic and unique experience for each individual (Buswell et al., 2012; Jurčević Lozančić, 2016). Paraphrasing Watzlawick’s rules of communication, it is possible to conclude that family members, who are aware of each other, always interact with each other, without assessing the quality of that action. The apparent absence of the influence of interactional relationships in the family has an equal, if not stronger influence. The educational role of the family, in this sense, can hardly be replaced by any other community or educational institution (Zloković, 2012).

The family can change, and family functions can be (partially) taken over by society, but the family still retains sufficient continuity of the educational function (Minuchin, 2008). The belief that modern families have a quality pedagogical influence and that many parents show resilience, flexibility and pedagogical competence shows pedagogical optimism.

In addition to directly influencing the development of an individual's personality, the educational function of the family unites all other family functions. The ambiguity of the educational function of the family is recognisable through the influences on the development of the individual, and the creation of conditions for that development. All family functions can be interpreted, in the broadest context, as the creation of a socio-emotional and spatial-material environment for the optimal of the child's development, and the totality of the influence of family members in their joint environment. At the same time, all family functions have an educational function in building a socio-emotionally and professionally competent individual, economically and financially literate, capable of responsible social behaviour (Hercz, Pozsonyi & Takács, 2019; Visković, 2018).

Children's Rights and Well-being within Family Functioning

Every child has the right to grow up in a quality family (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989), so it is reasonable to expect from the family:

- ensuring an optimal socio-emotional atmosphere in which the child can develop appropriate socio-emotional competencies and experience support, which is a predictor of the development of self-confidence and self-esteem.
- encouraging the development of personality and children's independence appropriate to the age and potential of children.
- emotional connection of family members and providing conditions for meeting the psychological needs of the individual (for belonging and love, emotional support and security, self-realisation),
- ensure (appropriate) financial conditions for growing up and develop the financial competencies of the individual.
- well-designed leisure time, but also encouraging the development of children's competencies in joint time management.
- transfer of affirmative life values, orientations and socially acceptable norms within the authentic culture of the community.

- ethics development.
- development of gender roles, attitudes towards gender roles and responsible sexual behaviour,
- development of responsible behaviour towards oneself, others, and the world around,
- effective resolution of problem situations and coping with stress,
- development of lifelong learning and education competencies.

Predictors of the realisation of the educational function of the family are primarily quality family functioning and parenting that respects the child as an active participant in personal education. This includes caring, affirmative and constructive relationships with clear emotional expression; two-way and open communication; distribution of power and joint solution of problem situations; flexible organisation (time and activities). Parents should practice an unobtrusive pattern of behaviour that is determined by agreed boundaries. Control and discipline as assumed dimensions of parenting style, as opposed to permissive disinterest, are not acceptable patterns. Skinner, Johnson, and Snyder (2005) emphasize the need to adapt parenting style to a child's personality. The child's personality thus becomes, along with emotional expressiveness and social determinism, the third dimension of parenting. Preferred dimensions of parenting that are appropriate for the child are accessibility and engagement without intrusiveness and coercion. In addition to appropriate models of behaviour, opportunities for personal experiential learning and affirmative experience, in addition to the basic and specific competencies of the individual within appropriate models of behaviour, there are opportunities for personal experiential and affirmative experience as expected educational outcomes. Those with desirable educational outcomes can be accepted as specific competent individuals with appropriate personal potentials, imaginative and self-aware, confident, and dynamic who possess a passion for learning and life (Ljubetić, 2014).

Low levels of parental involvement are a risk factor for socially unacceptable behaviour, socio-emotional difficulties, and school failure (Buswell et al., 2012). The absence of restrictive and aggressive psychological control of parents with a high level of acceptance, especially in adolescence, contributes to a better relationship between children and parents and better academic and other achievements (Rohner, 2010; Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2011).

The educational function of the family is realised through the interactive relationship of all family members. The foundation of the relationship is partnership and equal dignity (Juul, 2009; Ljubetić, 2014) which requires socially and emotionally competent parents. Considering the broader context,

it is a call for further analyse the concept of parenting as a specific social and personal construction subject to learning and development.

Today, perhaps more than ever before, the views of the uniqueness and value of each child overcomes. Upbringing and education gradually focus on the fact that children should develop personal potentials and be what they are, knowing and accepting themselves (Juul, 2009). Self-perception, self-confidence, and self-esteem, along with the development of basic competencies are set as a fundamental task of education, where the child is perceived as an active participant in personal education (Maleš & Kušević, 2011). As an equal member of the family, the child has the right to express and act on their own (Jurčević Lozančić, 2016). In this context, Juul (2009) emphasizes that with equal participation and distribution of power, there is a high chance that both parents and children will be satisfied. The satisfaction of all family members is a predictor of quality family functioning, which again ensures optimal educational outcomes.

FAMILY FUNCTIONING

Quality family functioning can be interpreted as a process of interactive relationships that allows each family member to optimally meet existential, physical, socio-emotional, and spiritual needs (Visković & Ljubetić 2019). It unites the quality of all family functions and the interrelationships of all members. It is reasonable to assume that family functioning is one of the basic predictors of an individual's quality of life which, directly and indirectly, also affects other aspects of an individual's quality of life: physical health; level of self-esteem and self-confidence; low levels of depression; education and self-realisation through work and social relations (Amato, 2014).

Research that seeks to explain the impact of family functioning on an individual's personal satisfaction and the development and growth of children differs in understanding the importance of certain aspects of the family. This refers to family structures and dynamics, roles, interconnections, and the ways in which they perform certain family functions. Therefore, it is necessary to look at family functioning through interactive processes of all dimensions of the family system (Benokraitis, 2010; Minuchin, 2008; Visković & Ljubetić, 2019). Widmer (2010) emphasizes that the quality of family functioning is actually a subjective experience of the individual, and that general models can offer only fundamental dimensions. Exploring family functioning, Benocraitis (2010) emphasizes that those changes in family structures are the result of individual choice and social constraints. At the individual level, individuals have relatively large personal freedoms, but at the macro level, opportunities are increasingly diminishing. Family life is increasingly shaped by economic and technological change, and government policies. Through political and legal

institutions, tax laws, and the welfare system, the state increasingly influences family life. Unfortunately, this is also evident in the current situation of the global pandemic. The transition to a virtual way of working, educating, and communicating, redefines family relationships (Crook, 2020). In addition to increasing parental stress, some research like Abramson (2020) found an increase in domestic abuse and an increase in authoritarian parenting that neglects children's needs and their right to participate in personal upbringing and education (Fontanesi et al., 2020). The findings of these studies indicate the need for necessary systematic social support for parenting and the organisation of family life.

CONCLUSION

The family can be interpreted as a subtle network of interpersonal, primarily emotional relationships of individuals who take on the roles of parents and / or children. Research on childhood and the outcomes of childhood stakeholders (especially children) link an individual's personality to an early experience of family relationships. Depending on the quality of family relationships, the way in which the family performs certain functions and responds to the needs of its members, as well as the quality of the entire family functioning, it gives the family a unique characteristic. The family can therefore be a protective but also a risk factor for child development. The functioning of modern families therefore needs to be viewed holistically, as follows: looking at the individual's personality and parenting as a social construction; lifestyle and education; physical and mental health; life values and beliefs of family members; socio-economic status of the family; culture and religion; family tradition and public (educational and demographic) policy as a frame of reference. The quality of family functioning is indisputably related to the quality of individual family functions and can alleviate the objective economic, social, and internal difficulties of the family.

The pedagogical function is a (relatively) permanent family function, although within that function society participates more and more intensively (formal educational system, state educational policies and media). Family upbringing is not a one-way act but an interactive process of all family members - parents and children, children with each other and extended family members. Current social developments (pandemic, global migration, poverty, and inequality), especially in the context of the family, have a transformative effect. Only the realisation of the right to quality upbringing and education are long-term recognisable as positive outcomes for children, which indicates the need to systematise the partnership between families and educational institutions with clear social support. This paper is a contribution to the systematic, theoretical thinking of family functions and

functionalities with the aim of encouraging and empowering families to face the current and the challenges ahead.

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