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The importance of play in the parent-child interaction

Patricia Luciana Runcan^{a*}, Simona Petracovschi^b, Claudia Borca^c

^aAssistant Lecturer, Social Assistance Department, Faculty of Sociology and Psychology, West University of Timisoara, Romania

^bLecturer, Faculty of Physical Education and Sports, West University of Timisoara, Romania

^cAssistant Lecturer, Educational Sciences Department, Faculty of Sociology and Psychology, West University of Timisoara, Romania

Abstract

Play is a defining element for the harmonious development of children. Play is the child's basic activity that engages his/her global psychism. The parent can efficiently prepare his/her child for the adult life through play: for the role of parent, professional, and even for civic responsibility. Play is a form of specific manifestation which can be encountered in the case of every child. Every child needs to play in order to develop oneself and to form a distinctive personality. The purpose of this paper is stress the role of play in the harmonious development of the parent-child interaction.

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1. Introduction

The contemporary family represents the psycho-pedagogical and moral environment most suitable for the child's necessities of development, with the condition that the system of relationships between the family members is based on trust, mutual support, optimism and affection, but also on the common effort for accomplishing a goal.

The joy of being a parent also implies a great responsibility. The impressions, habits and guidelines of the child during childhood have a significant influence on his/her future.

During childhood, the material needs cannot be separated from the affective needs, due to which the child needs to have those needs satisfied by parents, in a uniform and constant way. Furthermore, the good understanding between parents is important for the harmonious development of the child; their respect and mutual affection is a permanent model that contributes to establishing the child's neuropsychological equilibrium. But, often, the child does not have the physical and emotional warmth of the mother, the tender and delicate vocal timbre that cannot be replaced with any new postmodern myth of education (Garcin, 2009: 13, 34-37).

Play prepares the child for the activities of adult life. The importance of play is defining for the children's normal and complex development.

Play is a form of specific manifestation that can be encountered in any child, regardless of sex, ethic, cultural or social background. Every child needs to play in order to develop oneself and to form his/her individual personality. The playful atmosphere signifies, first of all, freedom and joy, a withdrawal from the realms of reality and stepping into the world of imagination and of the impossible, which can become *possible*.

* Patricia Luciana Runcan. Tel.: +40 731356779

E-mail address: patyruncan@yahoo.com

The importance of playing with one's own child is fundamental in the construction of the parent-child relationship, in the understanding of the child, when approaching the child, as well as in gaining the child's trust. Play can be used by the parent as an efficient and pleasurable means of educating and disciplining the child.

1.1. Classifications of play

Play knows a variety of forms (Popeangă, 1994:31) that help both in the harmonious development of the child, as well as the parent-child interaction, if parents involve themselves in these forms of play with their own children:

1.1.1. Creation play

This is characterized by the spontaneous initiation and development, by the pleasure with which the child plays his role (mother, educator). And as toys become children, patients, clients, through the transposition in the play atmosphere of a number of acts which have been noticed in daily life, through the introduction of some story or fairytale elements and through the rendering or living of certain relationships observations between children and their friends. Through creation play, the influence of society manifests itself over the child.

1.1.2. Construction play

This is a form of play that uses prefabricated materials, but one which also be conducted in nature. In this form of play, imagination has an important part, fact which makes one conclude that this form of play is close to that of creation play.

1.1.3. Didactic play

This is very important because it blends the tendency to play with learning. The child plays, exercising the experiences of the grown-ups, trying to understand them, and thus discovering the surrounding world, through play, that, under the appearance as a form of entertainment, has the validity of seriousness. Didactic play refreshes information, as well as contributes to a solid fixation of the information.

1.1.4. Movement play

This brings a significant contribution to the general physical development of the child. This type of motive activities can favour both the preparation of children for a performance sport, as well as instructing them towards a healthy lifestyle.

1.1.5. Sportive play

This is predominant in the scholastic activity and has educative consequences far more complex for the physical development and social integration; it is specific for the secondary school and high school pupils. It develops competitiveness through team competitions, but it is also a means of developing moral traits (will, cooperation, resilience to effort, building team spirit etc).

2. Methods and instruments used in the research

In this study we have used the structured interview as a survey method, and the instrument used was the questionnaire. The themes included in the interview for the parent were concentrated on the following three sections: the relationship between family members; play as an element of optimization of the parent-child interaction; the child's manifestations that prove a harmonious development. The two work instruments applied to parents that are emphasized on the themes mentioned above, are the following: (1) The questionnaire for emphasizing *play* as an optimizing factor of the *parent-child interaction* and (2) The questionnaire for emphasizing the *child's harmonious development*.

2.1. Description and operationalization of the concepts useful to the research

The basic concept of the research has been measured through a number of relevant dimensions for this study: **Play**, as a significant factor in the parent-child interaction, represents a way of preparing the child by the parent for

the adult lifestyle, an anticipative exercise, an essential process necessary in building the parent-child relationship, in approaching and gaining mutual trust. Play is essential in the efficient disciplining of the child, as well as in his/her education in the spirit of moral and esthetical values; **The good interaction in a family** represents the suitable climate and atmosphere for the family, the affective dynamics of a positive nature, the presence of affective support and the lack of scandal, of the hostility between parents and acts of violence. This interaction positively influences the state and behaviour of the child and participates in the child's development and normal upbringing, both physical and psychological; **The harmonious development of the child** is the result of a good interaction between family members. This offers the child the possibility of defining oneself, of finding models and, furthermore, offers a suitable position in the social universe. This also contributes to the child's socialization and individualization and, last, but not least, to the setting of the main resorts that determine the personality's specifics.

2.2. Presentation of the investigated sample

For achieving the purpose and the proposed objectives, we used a sample of 150 subjects of both sexes. A single category of subjects has been used: parents aged between 35 and 55. The research has been conducted in Romania, in the western part of the country.

Table 1. Presentation of the raw data characteristic of the sample's description

Number of subjects	Age	Sex F	Sex M	Studies – Average	Studies - High	Married	Divorced	Urban	Rural
150	35-55	129	21	87	63	121	29	105	45

2.3. Initial statistical data

Each number obtained following the evaluations and measurements is followed by a significance and can have three acceptances: **The maximal value** indicates a positive asymmetrical distribution through the high frequency of high values; **The minimal value** indicates a negative asymmetrical distribution through the high frequency of the small values. The correlation coefficient characterizes the group from which the respective sample was extracted, for this we use the critical correlation coefficient. This coefficient represents the minimal value that a correlation coefficient has to be in order for it to be significant ($p = .10$, $p = .05$, $p = .02$, $p = .01$). The raw data has been statistically processed with the help of the 11.0, 2001 statistics program.

3. Results of the research

We will present the research hypothesis, the correlations made and the results obtained:

The more the parent engages in play activities with the child, the better the quality of their interaction will become!

3.1. The first correlation and the results obtained

Following the correlation of the two questions: (1) Do you know what types of play does your child prefer? (2) Is everyone feeling understood within the family?

The following results have been gathered from the Output offered by SPSS:

- 70% of parents have answered *YES* to the two questions;
- 18% of parents chose *SOMETIMES*;
- 6% of parents chose the option *NO*.

As regards to the significance of the correlation between the two questions, it has been noticed that the data supports the correlation between the questions, having a significance smaller than .05 (0,05).

3.2. The second correlation and the results obtained

Following the correlation of the two questions: (1) Do you know where the children prefer to play? (2) Is communication open?

The following results have been gathered from the Output offered by SPSS:

- 70% of parents answered *YES* to the two questions;
- 30% of parents answered *SOMETIMES*.

As regards to the significance of the correlation between the two questions, it has been noticed that the data supports the correlation between the questions, having a significance smaller than .01 (0,01).

3.3. The third correlation and the results obtained

Following the correlation of the two questions: (1) Do you know who the child prefers from the family as a play partner? (2) Is there mutual respect?

The following results have been gathered from the Output offered by SPSS:

- 74% of parents have answered *YES* to the two questions;
- 20% of parents have answered *SOMETIMES*;
- 6% of parents have answered *NO*;

As regards to the significance of the correlation between the two questions, it has been noticed that the data supports the correlation between the questions, having a significance smaller than .01 (0,01).

The correlation coefficient for all the three combinations of questions is significant, which means that the data supports the research.

4. Conclusions

From the study made, as well as from the specialized literature of this field, we can point out the following conclusions:

- A low involvement of the parent in the play activity with the child draws upon itself instantly a low level of quality of the interaction between the two;
- Play helps the child interact with the environment, giving the possibility to develop the capacity to use the senses;
- Play in itself involves a plan that implies the fixation of a purpose, of rules, so that finally one can realize a certain action that produces satisfaction;
- Through play the child's ego and personality develop and affirm themselves;
- Up to the school age, play is the only possibility of affirmation for the child;
- Play offers children a sum of impressions and experiences that contribute to the enrichment of knowledge on the world and on life and, at the same time, enlarge the capacity of understanding of certain complex situations.

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