

FAMILY COMMUNICATION AS THE KEY TO SOLVING FAMILY CONFLICTS: A SOCIO-RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

It is a reality that the family as a whole is experiencing a general crisis which is worth analyzing in several different aspects so that we can find the right cure. Communication within the family should be considered as the main key that will help solve problems between couples. One of the main elements of communication between spouses in family communication is the way of addressing each other. Addressing, which is an indicator of the love, respect and connection of the spouses, is an important dynamic to establish balances and maintain a relationship of mutual love, respect and compassion in the family. One aspect of this issue is the effect and perception that will be passed on to generations raised in this atmosphere.

Among the most fundamental disciplines that must be analyzed in the name of healthy communication within the family is *counseling*. Consultation is the discussion of the issue in all parties, the exchange of ideas, and the most accurate opinion/decision taken and implemented before the final decision is taken on any issue. Unilateral decisions taken regardless of the needs and sensitivity of the interlocutors in domestic and family life have caused great damage to communication within the family. Protection and escape from these harms is only possible through consultation fulfilling the rights that come with living together and sharing the same place. Now in the family consultation, the goal is to continue the happiness of the family by ensuring that the most accurate and fair decision is made together.

Keywords: Communication, Family, Consultation, Spouses, Solutions

INTRODUCTION

Islam is one of the fastest-growing religions in the world, with over 1.8 billion adherents worldwide. Islamic beliefs and practices are shaped by a variety of factors, including cultural and historical contexts, individual experiences, and social interactions. Family communication, in particular, plays a critical role in the transmission and maintenance of Islamic traditions across generations.

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Communication within the family unit can serve as a powerful tool for the development and expression of Islamic identity, shaping beliefs, values, and practices that are passed down from one generation to the next.

Effective family communication has a significant impact on the practice of Islam. It is through communication that family members can share their knowledge and understanding of Islam with one another. This is particularly important for children who are learning about Islam for the first time. Effective communication within the family unit can help children develop a deeper understanding of Islamic teachings and values.

Family communication also plays a critical role in promoting Islamic ethics and behavior. It is through communication that family members can encourage one another to practice Islamic values, such as honesty, kindness, and compassion. Family members can hold each other accountable for their actions and help one another stay on the right path.

Moreover, family communication helps to create a supportive environment for individuals to practice Islam. Family members can provide emotional support, encouragement, and guidance to one another. This support can be particularly important for individuals who are struggling to maintain their Islamic practice in a challenging environment.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Our analysis draws on several theoretical frameworks that highlight the role of family communication in shaping religious identity. Social learning theory posits that individuals acquire knowledge and behavior through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within social contexts. In the case of Islam, family communication serves as a primary source of social learning, as parents and grandparents' model and reinforce Islamic beliefs and practices for their children and grandchildren. Social identity theory emphasizes the importance of group membership in shaping individual identity, with family communication serving as a primary mechanism for the development and maintenance of Islamic group identity. Finally, communication accommodation theory highlights the role of communication styles and strategies in shaping intergenerational communication patterns and the transmission of cultural knowledge.

COMMUNICATION INSIDE FAMILIES IN OUR PERSPECTIVE

Traditionally, the family has been the institution that not only guaranteed intimacy, love and compassion for the individual, but it has also been the basic unit of economic, political life, the basic unit of social structures, the most important educational, cultural institution, etc. But, during the establishment of communism, in Albania, the communication on religion it was prohibited not only at the public domain but also inside families.

Children were urged to denounce their parents' traditional behavior and their parents' religion and thus created an artificial war between younger and older generation. This clash between generations it was reflected by diminishing the moral authority of the family and enhancing the values of the Party and the communist ideology.

In this way, although the Communist Party did not destroy the Albanian traditional family, it created indeed a very secular society and a very secular education system. Thus, at the beginning of 1990s, when the regime collapsed, it was the duty of the older family members, (especially grandfathers and grandmothers) to start speaking again about religion and their secret faith and beliefs to their children and grandchildren. This was a very healing phase that it was accompanied by a renaissance of religion in Albania, especially among young people.

Yet, 'religion' and 'communication' are both very broad concepts and they can have a deep impact if mixed in small social laboratories like the 'nuclear family'. It has been proved that 'as children grow and develop, their understandings of social reality are influenced by those around them, and in many cases, those who shape such understandings most profoundly are family members'².

However, it has been noted that unfortunately 'most studies in this area examine variables related to parents or children rather than the interaction among them'⁹⁰.

In Albania prevails the separation between the religion and the state and at the same time the education system is secular. The current Albanian constitution (from 1998) stipulates that: 'In the Republic of Albania there is no official religion. The state is neutral on questions of belief and conscience and guarantees the freedom of their expression in public life. The state recognizes the equality of religious communities'³. There is freedom of religion as stated in the Albanian constitution, but there are no clear links to relate and address the individual to his own religion or the religion which he or she has inherited from his predecessors. There are several dimensions to the phenomenon of secularization, and thus there are diverse secularization theses. The thesis to be discussed here is that ritual has become less important for the communication of meanings than it was in the past⁴.

In the Western and developed countries, the religious education constitutes a major portion of a holistic education. An important part of religious education is peace education or education for peace⁵. In Albania, The Ministry of Education states that public schools in the country are secular and that the law prohibits ideological and religious indoctrination.

² The Influence of Family Communication Patterns on Religious Orientation among College Students. *Journal of Family Communication*, 14. 14: 72–84, 2014; Fife, Eric M. & C. Nelson, Leigh. (2014).

The Influence of Family Communication Patterns on Religious Orientation among College Students. *Journal of Family Communication*, 14. 72–84, 2014.

³ Albanian Constitution. (1998).

⁴ Ritual: Communication in Action. *Sociological Analysis*, 53(4), 363; Cheal, D. (1992).

⁵ Us and Them: Religious Education and the Role of Proper Communication in Conflict Prevention. *Interchange*, 41(3), 286; Massoudi, M. (2010).

Referring to the law the Ministry of Education must license such schools, and curricula must comply with national education standards. At the same time, there are very few media who write or publish religious books, magazines or newspapers. This poses a challenge to families, who need to discuss more about religion inside their families.

But communicating inside families is not always an easy task, and communication is never something that can be dealt only internally, because different issues arise from the external environment. Many problems hamper the daily communication between family members related to social and economic matters, but religion is something that stands on top of daily issues and is the basis in the creation of a family, is its daily meaning, the things that you understand without speaking.

Being member of a religious family is a different story. It asks for dedication, not only to each other but to the whole world and it a continual trip towards the good and truth in our life journey. It is a philosophy of living with the good and the bad things that happen in your life, the way you manage them, and how to react your problems if something does not go as you firstly expected.

Social studies regarding communication inside families usually focus only on conflict prevention, and all the patience and love that parents give to their children. It is not only about long hours of communication is about a lifetime actions and non-verbal communication. Sociologically speaking the ‘overall process by which children acquire religious beliefs from parents is still not well understood, but it has been proved that children generally tend to be more religious if parents are themselves religious. Talking about religion also has been associated with adolescent religiosity⁶.

The early relationship between parents and their children, the way they handle little mistakes that in future can be converted in bigger mistakes or even sins, will be an early sign of the adult individual that is going to be a citizen of the world. In the past, a good parent was he or she who educated a person who loved his family and his country, while today has become nearly a prerogative for the new parents, to educate children who accept diversity in the world and try to make the world a better place not only for humans but for the whole planet and everything living in it.

According to religious researcher Vincenzo Pace, religions can be seen as systems of belief with different layers and hierarchies, which interact with changing social environments. Successful religious communication relies on the power of communication itself, which transforms a convincing word into an organized system of belief and communication. If love and belief in the truth of the communicated content are not enough to motivate people to accept religious systems, then money or violent power may be used.

⁶ The Influence of Family Communication Patterns on Religious Orientation among College Students. *Journal of Family Communication*, 14.: fq. 73; Fife, Eric M. & C. Nelson, Leigh. (2014).

However, in the modern era of high-speed information technology, there is an irony in the emergence of a technological sacramentality in religious communication, where material elements such as letters, tapes, and books are used to represent the intangible aspects of religion.

Empirical Evidence: Several studies have examined the relationship between family communication and Islamic beliefs and practices, with consistent findings across diverse Muslim populations. For example, a study by Saleem and Khalid (2019) found that positive family communication was positively associated with Islamic religiosity and engagement, with higher levels of communication quality predicting greater religious knowledge, practice, and belief. Similarly, a study by Al-Abdallah et al. (2020) found that intergenerational communication played a significant role in the maintenance of Islamic values and beliefs, with parents serving as key role models for their children's Islamic identity.

Implications and Conclusion: The implications of our analysis for future research and practice are significant. By highlighting the role of family communication in shaping Islamic identity, we underscore the importance of promoting positive communication patterns within Muslim families. This may involve interventions that aim to improve communication skills and promote intergenerational dialogue around Islamic values and practices. Such interventions may also seek to address communication barriers and conflicts that may arise within families due to diverse perspectives and experiences. By enhancing family communication, we can promote the transmission and maintenance of Islamic traditions across generations, ensuring the continued growth and vitality of the Muslim community worldwide.

It is important to open a new public discussion on importance of religion in the life of children and their future development as citizens of a developed society. We still miss this kind of discussion in Albania. In this way, religion is treated by the Albanian society as good promoter of peace. Religion is a broad concept, it is a culture, it is a behavior, a school, a ritual, a process, it depends on how we understand it. Its meaning should be rooted in our spirit and it must create new meaningful actions towards life. These kinds of relationships between faith and cultural forms, most clearly discerned in small, compact, premodern cultures, may seem difficult to trace in our differentiated, large-scale, secular societies.

From the creation of humanity, there was no doubt that a sense of faith in the Almighty was born, so this is something that lives as a light within all the human beings, it is upon us then to widen it and bring it to life. In the real religions at their core of their thinking and philosophy is brotherhood and the religious consciousness that all nations, ethnicities, races are worth living in peace as created by the One and Almighty God.

So, this is what we should teach to our children, how to make this world a better place, by love and by believing and by respecting diversities and embracing them as possibilities. Each human is perfect in its own way. Clearly there is no single “religion” in a denominational sense that primarily shapes and is reflected in Albanian culture, but in this general understanding of religion, parents need to communicate their real religion.

They can do this by transmitting their spirituality as they have understood it. The communication in the traditional and modern families can be disrupted by many external factors, but parents need to explain to their children every disruption according to their belief and faith systems. This is a very important process that will have a deep impact in their future.

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