



Features of communication between spouses during long-term forced self-isolation as a factor of constructive marital relationships

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Abstract

The relevance of this article lies in the need to study the communication strategies of spouses in conditions of forced self-isolation during quarantine, since the features of communication between spouses affect the degree of constructiveness of marital relationships. In a difficult situation of uncertainty, when the question is not clear: about the virus itself, about the time of the end of quarantine and the financial side of family life, many family members have an emotional reaction to each other, disputes and unsolvable conflicts arise, some of which end in a breakup or quarrels between spouses, parents and children. The aim of the study is to identify the features of communication between spouses during the period of self-isolation. Research methods: as a research method, a questionnaire survey was used to identify the features of communication between spouses as a factor of constructive marital relationships in conditions of self-isolation due to quarantine. The novelty and originality of the study lies in the fact that the features of communication between spouses during forced self-isolation are considered for the first time. It is shown that ego positions, communicative control, listening skills, and the ability to establish emotional contacts in relationships affect the degree of constructiveness of marital relationships. It was found that in a stressful situation of uncertainty related to the coronavirus quarantine, all strategies, both adaptive and non-adaptive (aggression, irritability, manipulation, illness, depression), developed by the family members during their joint family life deteriorate, when these family members spend a lot of time together in a closed space during the quarantine and when they do not have personal psychological spaces (which are required for all people). Men often have a tendency to drink alcohol. It was revealed that during the period of forced self-isolation under quarantine due to the coronavirus pandemic, families with a constructive type of relationship are characterized by a coincidence of representative systems, and spouses have similar systems for searching, receiving and processing information. It is determined that the ability to control behavior in relationships in a situation of forced self-isolation, the ability to use the psychotherapeutic function of communication between family members, the skill of mood management, is also characteristic of families with a constructive type of relationship. Practical significance: the data obtained in this work can be used in family psychology, extreme psychology, social psychology, as well as for further theoretical development of this issue.

Keywords: married couples, marital relationships, communication, forced self-isolation

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INTRODUCTION

Stabilization of marriage and family relations, strengthening of the family is one of the most important tasks of social practice and psychological science. Adaptation of spouses to family life is not an easy process, but rather complex, multi-faceted and at the same time holistic (James, 1996; Aleshina, 1999; Golod, 1996; Sorokoumova & Lobanova, 2015). Interpretation

of the understanding of family and family relations can be found in various areas of psychological theory: psychoanalysis, interactionism, behaviorism, social psychology, sociology, etc. (Budinaite & Varga, 2005;

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Vitek, 2008). Nowadays there is a significant amount of domestic and foreign research devoted to the problem of marital well-being (Satyr, 1992; Admiralskaya, 2008; Sorokoumova & Zanzari, 2015; Kratochvil, 2008; Eidemiller & Justitskis, 2001; Menshikova et al., 2018). The socio-psychological characteristics of a family affect its stability and well-being not directly, but through the internal conditions of its existence, especially when the family falls into stressful conditions, such as quarantine and forced self-isolation. Family members are faced with the uncertainty of what kind of virus it is, about which is widely discussed but so little is known, when the period of self-isolation will end, what will happen next, and so on (Usak et al., 2020; Sorokoumova et al., 2020). Currently, there are changes associated with the coronavirus, which radically change the life of society: social differentiation of society is growing, socio-economic development is very ambiguous, and technical progress is rapidly growing. In a stressful situation of self-isolation and uncertainty, the negative impact of external factors is often compensated by internal family foundations and attitudes: marital compatibility, consent, the strength of marital feelings, and a developed communication culture. The formation of intra-family communication is, first of all, the establishment of relations between spouses (Gozman & Dubovskaya, 2004; Kartseva, 1999; Vaclavik, 2003; Sysenko, 2003). During their life together, spouses develop their personal, unique features of communication and their own ways of resolving conflict situations and conflicts themselves. These can be either adaptive strategies that support friendly, respectful, and kindhearted relationships in the family, or non-adaptive ones (illness, manipulation, aggression, and so on). At the same time, in a stressful situation of uncertainty about the quarantine of coronavirus, being in a closed space, not having a personal space (which is required for each person), all the developed strategies, both adaptive and non-adaptive, are aggravated and strengthened. Most spouses make considerable efforts to improve family relations, but not everyone gets the desired result. In a difficult situation of uncertainty, when the question is not clear: about the virus itself, about the time of the end of quarantine and the financial side of family life, many family members have an emotional reaction to each other, disputes and unsolvable conflicts arise, some of which end in a gap between spouses, parents and children. Marriage in a stressful situation, in a period of self-isolation, is the center of gravity of the whole family, its focus, the point of attraction, which either turns the whole family into a single unbroken whole, or vice versa, increases the separation of family members from each other. The basis for a happy marriage is the compatibility of spouses, which is a very complex, multi-component and multi-level characteristic (Navaitis, 2004; Tarnovsky, 2002; Brown & Christensen, 2001; Labunskaya & Mendzheritskaya, 2001).

In a situation of forced self-isolation, uncertainty, fear, unbalance and limbo, when unresolved problems and emotional stress accumulate and close people feel that they are always on the verge of a quarrel, spouses should have a high degree of mutual understanding, respect and mutual assistance. Communication between spouses in this difficult situation must perform a kind of psychotherapeutic function, be a means of relaxation and reassurance. A conflict situation occurs, and, as a rule, the longer it was tried to prevent, the stronger the outburst of negative emotions is. The process of interaction in the family is carried out through interpersonal communications, but this process may be disrupted. Successful communication is manifested in achieving and maintaining psychological contact with a partner in order to stabilize interpersonal relationships at their optimal stage of development through achieving compatibility, agreement, mutual fitness and satisfaction by flexibly adjusting goals, skills and mental states, and methods of influence in accordance with changing circumstances (Obozov, 1999; Ball, 2002; Aleshina, 2003; Olkhovaya et al., 2019; Shmelev, 2001).

The understanding shown by a spouse, during a difficult period of forced self-isolation due to the quarantine, helps the other member of the couple to get out of a difficult situation. A misunderstanding or withdrawal at a critical moment is a mistake that can be very difficult to correct or forgive later. Since family communication is extremely complex, the reasons for its violations can be just as complex and diverse. A significant role is played by awareness of the process, the presence of communication attention, the ability to express their feelings in an adequate form, so that violations of interpersonal communication in the family do not act in the future as a basic source of psychological trauma to the individual.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For this study, we selected married couples with an experience of living together from three years to ten years. It should be noted that 58% of married couples have a difference in education, and 42% have the same education level. Of these, 89% of the couples have secondary and higher education, and 11% have secondary and specialized education.

At the first stage, a study was conducted on the constructiveness or destructiveness of family relationships. The diagnosis was aimed at identifying trends that prevail in families. The subjects were offered a questionnaire with twenty statements concerning four indicators by which the spouses evaluated their relationships in the family. Depending on the points scored, the family referred to itself as one or another type. At the next stage, the spouses' self-control in communication was revealed. The method of identifying self-control in communication is aimed at determining

the skills of spouses to control their behavior in relationships, studying the skills to control their feelings, managing their mood, so as not to have a negative impact on the participants in communication and not to create a conflict situation. Furthermore, the study of the ego positions of spouses, which find their expression in interactions, was carried out according to the method of E. Bern. The diagnosis consisted in identifying the ego positions of the spouses and the transactions prevailing in communication. Based on the results of all stages of the study, a package for processing and analyzing statistical information was used to identify rank correlation (the influence of various communication patterns of spouses in family relationships on the degree of constructiveness of their relationships that lead to problems).

During the period of self-isolation, the results of a pilot study of the constructiveness of relationships showed the following: 67% of couples showed signs of constructive families. These families are based on mutual affection, stability of relations, and mutual awareness. In 22% of married couples, both unifying and separating tendencies were identified. 11% of couples have exceeded the permissible value for the indicator of the influence of one of the spouses in relation to the other spouse. The dominance of women in these families is usually associated with higher education and leadership compared to the husband. These women are prone to maximalism, confidence in the incorrigibility of the spouse. In 6% of these couples, the excess of the indicator of frustration in women was revealed. The energy of the spouse in such a couple is mainly turned inward, to constantly list their sacrifices and efforts in order to make the spouse a "person", which turn out to be fruitless. A woman is aware of the limitations of her abilities, the inability to change something, the insuperability of dividing barriers, which precede her actions, block them in advance, and make them ineffective. For 6% of the couples, this tendency is observed in a husband in relation to the wife. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the wife does not work and is financially dependent. During the period of self-isolation, 18% of spouses had a pronounced indicator of alienation, which is the most sensitive indicator of family relations. A high score may be an indication that they are ready to withdraw, to take off the burden of marital responsibility, and this may be caused by fatigue, lack of mutual understanding, lack of privacy, and resentment. The study of the representative system of spouses showed that 67% of families have one representative system as the leading one. In 17% of these couples, the predominance of the kinesthetic representative system was found in the spouses. In 56% of couples, the auditory representative system prevails. In 27% of the couples, the leading representative system is visual. In these families, mutual understanding is possible, since couples communicate on the same sensory level and

have similar sensory preferences. In 33% of the couples, different representative systems are leading, which can probably lead to different perceptions, conflicting relationships, misunderstandings, and communication difficulties, especially in stressful situations, such as forced self-isolation due to quarantine. 33% of the couples identified the couple sensory preferences: 60% - visual and auditory, 13% of the couples identified the predominant auditory and kinesthetic representative system, 27% of the spouses identified visual and kinesthetic representational system. It should be noted that for pairs with non-constructive variants of relationships, representative systems did not coincide. Perhaps this is one of the facts that negatively affect the constructiveness of married couples during the period of self-isolation.

RESULTS

The results of the study of communication control and listening skills in a stressful situation of self-isolation showed the following: 78% of the couples had the same level of communication control and a fairly high level of development of listening skills. 56% of these couples showed high communication control. Spouses with high communication control easily fit into any role, they respond flexibly to changes in the situation and are even able to anticipate the impression they make on others. This quality proved to be especially important in the conditions of self-isolation. It is impossible to judge their internal state by their appearance: they skillfully hide their feelings and emotions, and in a situation of forced self-isolation, such qualities of the spouses contribute to mutual understanding and increase the family stress tolerance. In 16% of the couples, both spouses have an average level of communication control and an average level of development of listening skills. We can say that this is a union of two people who are sincere, but do not hold back in their emotional manifestations. 22% of the couples with non-constructive tendencies have different levels of communication control and different levels of listening skills, which can lead to disagreements during the period of forced self-isolation due to the quarantine, and possible conflict relationships. In these couples, one spouse has a high communication control and high listening skills, while the other has a low communication control and low listening skills. This is a union of people, one of whom is sincere, but does not hold back in emotional manifestations, and the other easily enters into any role, reacts flexibly to changes in the situation and skillfully hides their feelings and emotions. The study of the spouses' ego positions showed that 56% of the studied couples had the same ego positions in the personality structure. In 11% of the couples, the structures of the three "I" coincided, that is, the positions of "Adults", which suggests that these are the unions of people with a developed sense of responsibility, with

normal impulsivity, emotionality, not inclined to teach and edify, which undoubtedly contributes to mutual understanding during the period of forced self-isolation due to the coronavirus quarantine. 16% of the couples had the same "Child" position. It is a union of people who are children at heart and teach others how to live, we can say that the structure of these marriages is a contract between children. These are people whose emotionality and spontaneity are mediated by a sense of responsibility (in second place) and they are able to keep their feelings and emotions under control. In 68% of the couples, the personality structure did not match. In couples, it is observed that one of the spouses (husbands) is in the position of a "Child", emotional and direct, but they are able to keep their emotions under control, and their spouses have the positions of "Parent" and "Adult". During the period of forced self-isolation, this factor can contribute to an increase in conflict situations. In couples (8%), where the spouses have the position of "Parent" - "Child", we can say that this is a union of "Parent" and "Child", in which the spouse from the position of "Parent" shows categorical, self-confidence, a tendency to teach and edify with a developed sense of responsibility, difficulties in communication are possible. In couples (32%), the spouses occupy the positions of "Adult" and "Child". A spouse with the position of an "Adult" is moderately impulsive, emotional, and not inclined to teach and edify. And the spouse from the position of a "Child" may show increased emotionality, resentment, and therefore friction is possible. In couples (8%) the positions of "Adult" and "Parent" were identified. A spouse with the position of a "Parent" who has self-confidence, a tendency to teach and edify may have misunderstandings and conflicts with his spouse. During the period of self-isolation, the level of conflicts increased significantly. The study of communication features in these couples, the features of establishing emotional contacts during self-isolation due to quarantine, showed the following: according to diagnostic data, married couples (48%) may have some emotional problems in everyday communication. The following problems were identified: 6% of women exceeded the permissible value on the scale of "Unwillingness to get close to people on an emotional basis"; 12% of men on the scale of "Undeveloped emotions"; 24% of spouses exceeded the permissible value on the scale of "Inadequate manifestations of emotions" (this indicator is more often exceeded in men); 16% of spouses exceeded the permissible value on the scale of "Inability to manage emotions, dose them" (this excess is more common in women). The remaining married couples did not exceed the score values on the scales, and they did not have emotional problems in daily communication during the period of forced self-isolation.

In general, summing up the results of the empirical study, it can be noted that in the conditions of forced self-isolation due to quarantine, 32% of couples are quite well-off, 18% of couples have both rallying and disuniting tendencies, and 50% of couples have mostly disuniting tendencies and are possibly unstable and unconstructive.

According to the results of the study, it can be assumed that mutual understanding in stressful situations, such as forced self-isolation in quarantine conditions due to the coronavirus pandemic, is possible in families with similar ego positions, sensory preferences, where spouses are able to cope with emotions, adequately express them, are able to listen and contact each other. The results of the study showed that these communication features are possessed by spouses with a constructive type of relationship.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

Analysis of the results of the study revealed that the constructiveness of family relationships during the period of forced self-isolation under quarantine due to the coronavirus pandemic is not affected by the education and age of the spouses. Calculations have shown that there is a correlation between the spouse's ego position and the ability to establish emotional contacts, which indicates that psychological factors such as: ego positions, self-control in communication, the ability to listen to the other, and the ability to establish emotional contacts are factors that affect the degree of constructiveness of family relations between spouses during self-isolation.

It can be concluded that during the period of forced self-isolation under quarantine due to the coronavirus pandemic, families with a constructive type of relationship are characterized by a coincidence of representative systems, and spouses have similar systems for searching, receiving and processing information. The ability to control their behavior in relationships and manage their mood is also characteristic of families with a constructive type.

Communication between spouses during the period of forced self-isolation under quarantine due to the coronavirus pandemic with a constructive type of relationship is characterized by: the coincidence of representative systems, the spouses have similar systems for searching, receiving and processing information. The spouses have developed the ability to control their behavior in relationships in a situation of forced self-isolation, the ability to use the psychotherapeutic function of communication between family members, and the skill of mood management. Also, the ability of spouses to manage emotions and adequately express them affects the constructiveness of their relationships. Psychological understanding of constructive marital relationships is of theoretical and

practical importance in terms of achieving well-being and stability of family relationships.

The problems of family relations and the determination of their psychological foundations are relevant not only because of the forced self-isolation of the modern family due to the coronavirus quarantine. Psychological understanding of family and marital relations is of theoretical and practical importance both in terms of achieving the well-being and stability of family relations, and in terms of implementing the goals of scientific research in a situation of crisis in social systems. Throughout Russia, this situation is particularly acute, since the family crisis is dominant, all-consuming and still difficult to overcome.

A consistent solution to the problem and analysis of the data obtained allowed us to obtain significant results indicating that there are indeed a number of interrelated psychological factors that determine family conflicts in the conditions of forced self-isolation of the modern family under quarantine due to the coronavirus pandemic. Summing up the results of the study, it should be noted that the psychological properties and communication skills of spouses are factors that determine the constructiveness of marital relations in the difficult conditions of forced self-isolation of a modern family due to the coronavirus quarantine.

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