The role of affect-communication and rule setting in perceived family support and school adjustment

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Previous research suggests that parental socialization styles affect the implementation of family support strategies and are related to school adjustment. Nevertheless, the precise nature of the influence of socialization practices on these variables during adolescence has yet to be determined. The aim of this study was therefore to examine (separately) the direct influence of maternal and paternal affectcommunication and rule setting on adolescent participants' perceived family support, and to analyze the relationship between these dimensions and school adjustment. The sample comprised 1190 secondary school and Spanish Baccalaureate students (47.1% boys and 52.3% girls; Mage = 14.76 years, SD = 1.55) from the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country. The Affect Scale (EA-H) and the Rules and Demands Scale (ENE-H) were used to assess parental socialization practices, and the subscale for perceived family support from the Social Support from Family and Friends (AFA-R) measure and the School Engagement Measure (SEM) were used to assess school engagement, with the mean grades earned by participants being taken as a measure of academic performance. The results obtained reveal that paternal affect-communication contributes more than maternal affectcommunication to adolescents' perception of having family support, whereas in relation to rules, only maternal rule setting was found to have an effect on perceived family support, with this effect being negative. Both components of parenting styles were found to be linked to school engagement. In the final sections, the data are discussed and the study's limitations presented.

Keywords: Parental affect-communication, rules-parental rigidity, socialization style, parenting style, family support, school adjustment.

El papel de la comunicación afectiva y el establecimiento de reglas en el apoyo familiar percibido y el ajuste escolar. La investigación previa sugiere que los estilos de socialización parental son relevantes en la implementación de estrategias de apoyo familiar y están relacionados con el ajuste escolar. Sin embargo, la aportación diferencial de las prácticas de socialización sobre estas variables en la adolescencia aún está por determinar. Por ello, el objetivo principal de este estudio es examinar la influencia directa del afecto-comunicación y el establecimiento de normas del padre y la madre por separado sobre el apoyo familiar percibido de los hijos/as, así como analizar la relación de estas dimensiones con el ajuste escolar. La muestra se compone de 1190 estudiantes (47.1% hombres y 52.3% mujeres; Medad= 14.76 años, DT= 1.55) de E.S.O. y bachiller de la Comunidad Autónoma del País Vasco. Para ello, se emplean la Escala de Afecto (EA-H) y la Escala de Normas y Exigencias (ENE-H) para evaluar las prácticas de socialización parental, la subescala relativa al apoyo familiar percibido de la medida Apoyo Social Familiar y de Amigos (AFA-R), y la escala School Engagement Measure (SEM) para analizar la implicación escolar y la media de las calificaciones como medida del rendimiento académico Los resultados obtenidos ponen de manifiesto que el afecto-comunicación del padre contribuye en mayor medida que el de la madre a que las personas adolescentes perciban tener el apoyo de su familia y que únicamente el establecimiento de normas de la madre tiene un efecto, y negativo, sobre dicho apoyo. Ambos componentes de los estilos parentales se relacionan con el ajuste escolar. Se discuten los datos y se presentan sus limitaciones.

Palabras clave: Afecto-comunicación parental, normas-rigidez parental, estilo de socialización, estilo educativo, apoyo familiar, ajuste escolar.

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The ecological theory of behavior (Bronfrenbrenner, 1979) highlights the influence of contextual factors on human behavior, identifying benefits at a behavioral and emotional level (King & Ganotice, 2014; Nishikawa, Sundbo, & Hägglöf, 2010), as well as in terms of school engagement (King & Ganotice, 2014; Perdue, Manzeske, & Estell, 2009; Veiga et al., 2012), particularly during childhood and adolescence (Nishikawa et al., 2010). However, in order for these benefits to be effective, the social relationships established in these context must guarantee positive affective support (Hughes & Chen, 2011; Mercer & DeRosier, 2008), as well as the absence of rejection by the subject's significant others (Ali, Khaleque, & Rohner, 2015).

Although traditionally family, friends and the school environment have been considered the three most significant contexts for determining adjustment (Ou, 2005; Sinclair, Christenson, Lehr, & Reschly-Anderson, 2003), family has been identified as the most important (Felizardo, Cantarinha, Alves, Ribeiro, & Amante, 2016) due to its influence on the development of psychological characteristics, at least until adolescence (Stocker, Richmond, Rhoades, & Kiang, 2007). This influence is exerted through the socialization process that occurs in the family, for which parents are mainly responsible. This process is known as parental socialization (Musitu & García, 2004).

Parental socialization can be defined as the promotion of the child's acquisition of certain norms, values, beliefs and behaviors which are inherent to the society in which they live (Gallarín & Alonso-Arbiol, 2012), with parents being the principal agents in this process. The main tasks involved in parental socialization are to provide children with a warm, safe environment, while at the same time trying to ensure they adapt to social rules and standards (Haan, Prinzie, & Dekovic, 2012). Two dimensions of parental behavior have been identified as being vital to this: affect-communication (understood as engagement and affective reciprocity) and control.

Affect-communication constitutes all displays of affection by either parent aimed at making the child feel accepted and comfortable (Rollins & Thomas, 1979). It encompasses behaviors such as expressions of paternal or maternal love and affection, praise, approval, help, support, engagement and caresses. It has been found that adolescents who perceive high levels of affect from parents also have better communication with them and consequently enjoy higher levels of emotional wellbeing and better psychosocial and behavioral adjustment (Collins & Laursen, 2004).

For its part, control is a dimension that has generated much debate and controversy, not only due to the name itself, but also as regards how it is related to adolescent development and adjustment (Oliva, Parra, Sánchez, & López, 2007). Some authors link control to family discipline, coercion, dominance and restriction, and identify it with parental practices aimed at directing their children's conduct with the ultimate aim of helping them learn to regulate and control their own behavior (Musitu, Román, & Gracia, 1988). Other researchers, however, view the term as encompassing other, less

coercive actions, such as demanding that children assume responsibilities, setting limits, supervision and monitoring and understanding children's activities, etc. Parents' aim in engaging in these practices is to keep an eye on their child's activities and friendship groups and to monitor where they spend their free time (Oliva et al., 2007).

Although some studies report a relationship between parental control and the prevention of behavioral problems (Fletcher, Steinberg, & Williams-Wheeler, 2004; Jacobson & Crockett, 2000), this terminological bipolarity and the lack of differentiation between the two definitions in the majority of papers published makes it very hard to clearly determine which of the two extremes of parental control is indeed associated with better adjustment levels during adolescence.

Despite the aforementioned problem, however, there is clear agreement regarding the fact that different combinations of high or low levels in affectcommunication and rule setting (Glasgow, Dornbusch, Troyer, Steinberg, & Ritter, 1997) give rise to the existence of a number of different parenting styles (usually oscillating between 3 and 4). The theoretical model of three different parenting styles envisages the existence of the authoritative or democratic style, the authoritarian style and the permissive style (Baumrind, 1971), while the four-style model (see Table 1), which was reformulated by MacCoby on the basis of Baumrind's 3-style model, identifies the authoritative or democratic and authoritarian styles, but divides the permissive style into two: permissive- indulgent and permissive-neglectful, with the latter being more closely associated with abuse (MacCoby & Martin, 1983).

Table 1. Parental styles reformulated by MacCoby and Martin (1983)						
	No affective engagement					
Strict control	Authoritative-democratic	Authoritarian				
Lax control	Permissive-indulgent	Permissive-neglectful				

It is also worth pointing out that the majority of studies have considered the practices employed by both parents together when assessing parental social support, despite the fact that more recent studies have highlighted the need to analyze paternal and maternal styles separately, since adolescents seem to evaluate their relationship with each parent on an individual basis (Milevsky, Schlechter, & Netter, 2007; Samper, Cortés, Mestre, Nácher, & Tur, 2006). No study has yet analyzed which of these dimensions of paternal and maternal socialization has a greater influence on the support perceived by children.

As regards the relationship between parental socialization styles and school adjustment, past research has shown that high levels of affect and parent-child communication result in better school adjustment (Gaylord, Kitzmann, & Lockwood, 2003), both directly and indirectly through the enhancement of psychological resourcessuch as self-concept and resilience (Rodríguez-Fernández, Droguett, &

Revuelta, 2012; Rodríguez-Fernández et al., 2016). High levels of affect and communication also result in a greater capacity for developing positive social relationships (Alonso & Román, 2005). However, very little research has been carried out to date on the role played by the second component of parenting styles (i.e. the way in which parents establish and enforce family rules and demands) in school adjustment, in terms of both academic performance and school engagement. In a recent study, the authors found that rigid paternal control predicted academic performance, but not school engagement or its affective component, while rigid maternal control was found to have a statistically significant effect on both academic performance and overall school engagement (Rodríguez-Fernández, Revuelta, & Sarasa, 2018).

However, it has not yet been determined just how affect-communication and control are related to school adjustment, or indeed whether this relationship varies in accordance with the support perceived by children from their parents. This study therefore had a twofold aim: firstly to analyze the direct influence of the two dimensions of paternal and maternal socialization (affect-communication and control) on the family support perceived by adolescent children, using the SEM methodology; and secondly, to analyze the degree to which these dimensions (analyzed separately for mothers and fathers) are linked to school adjustment (academic performance and school engagement), in accordance with the sex of the adolescent in question.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 1190 secondary school and Spanish Baccalaureate students [560 boys (47.1%) and 622 girls (52.3%)] from high schools in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country. Five of the schools were semi-private (private with some state funding) and four were public. All participants came from families with a medium socioeconomic and cultural level and were selected for the study randomly. Ages ranged between 12 and 18 years (M= 14.76, SD= 1.55). The students were distributed throughout the different school years as follows: cycle 1 (years 1 and 2 of secondary school), 477 (40.1%); cycle 2 (years 3 and 4 of secondary school), 498 (41.8%) and cycle 3 (years 1 and 2 of the Spanish Baccalaureate), 215 (18.1%).

Variables and measurement instruments

To measure the socialization practices of both parents, children were administered two different questionnaires. Firstly, they were asked to complete the *Affect Scale* (EA-H; Fuentes, Motrico, & Bersabé, 1999) to assess affect-communication. This scale comprises 20 items, of which 10 measure affect-communication and 10 criticism-rejection. The internal consistency indexes (Cronbach's alpha) for this study were .88 and

.85 for the affect dimension (for fathers and mothers, respectively). Secondly, control, or the way in which parents establish and enforce rules and demands, was measured using the Rules and Demands Scale (ENE-H; Fuentes et al., 1999). This questionnaire measures inductive (10 ítems), rigid (10 ítems) and indulgent (8 ítems) forms of control. In both questionnaires, respondents answer on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= never to 5= always), with higher scores indicating higher levels in all items. For the purposes of this study, and in accordance with the results of the SEM measurement model analysis conducted previously, items 6, 9 and 18 of the affect scale and items 12 and 15 of the rules scale were excluded. The internal consistency reliability indexes for these measures in the sample used in our study were as follows: father's affect (α = .89; Ω = .89; *CRI*= .89; *AVE*= .54); mother's affect (α = .85; Ω = .84; *CRI*= .85; *AVE*= .46); father's rules (α = .81; Ω = .81; *CRI*= .81; *AVE*= .30).

Perceived family support was assessed using the subscale of the same name of the abbreviated version of the *Social Support from Family and Friends scale* (AFA-R; González-Ramírez & Landero, 2008, 2014). The original subscale comprises 8 items, although for the purposes of this study item 9 was excluded due to its inadequate psychometric properties in our sample. The internal consistency reliability indexes found for the perceived family support subscale were: $\alpha = .83$; $\Omega = .84$; CRI= .84; AVE= .43.

To measure the behavioral, emotional and cognitive dimensions of school engagement, the validated Spanish language version (Ramos-Díaz, Rodríguez-Fernández, Fernández-Zabala, Revuelta, & Zuazagoitia, 2016) of the *School Engagement Measure* (SEM; Fredricks, Blummenfeld, Friedel, & Paris, 2005) was used. This measure comprises 19 items, with a response range of one to five. The internal consistency reliability indexes found for our sample were as follows: behavioral school engagement (α = .47; Ω = .55; CRI= .63; AVE= .34); affective school engagement (α = .75; Ω = .49; *CRI*= .47; *AVE*= .37); and cognitive school engagement (α = .75; Ω = .57; *CRI*= .64; *AVE*=.28).

The average final grade obtained by participants immediately prior to the data collection period was taken as a measure of academic performance.

Procedure and data analysis

Given that the preliminary analyses carried out indicated that the data distribution was not close to multivariate normality, robust procedures were used to estimate the goodness of fit boundaries of the tested models. A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted between the study variables with the aim of determining any possible connections and to verify the non-existence of multicollinearity. An analysis was also carried out of the means and standard deviations of all the study variables. Both the descriptive statistics and the correlation coefficients were calculated using the SPSS 22

program. To test the structural regression model we used the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique, provided by the EQS v.6.2 statistical program.

RESULTS

Previous analyses

In relation to the descriptive statistics of the study variables, Table 2 shows the mean scores for the main parental socialization practices (affect and rules), which oscillate between M= 19.98 and M= 27.76 (SD= 5.90/6.47). For the variable perceived family support, the mean score was 29.99 (SD= 4.78). As regards the intervals between the maximum and minimum values, the rules variable had the greatest range, meaning that the data dispersion was greater for this variable than for the others.

 Table 2. Descriptive statistics correlations between the main components of the parental socialization practices and the perceived family support

	1 2		3	4	5	
1. Paternal affect-communication	1					
2. Maternal affect-communication	.41 (.01)**	1				
3. Rules-parental rigidity	04 (.18)	40 (.01)**	1			
 Rules-maternal rigidity 	20 (.01)**	18 (.01)**	.56 (.01)**	1		
5. Perceived family support	.60 (.01)**	.45 (.01)**	05 (.11)	26 (.01)**	1	
n	1190	1190	1190	1190	1190	
М	27.02	27.76	20.55	19.98	29.99	
DT	6.18	6.12	6.47	5.90	4.78	
Rank	7 – 35	7 – 35	8 - 40	8 - 40	7 – 35	
P50	21.00	21.00	24.00	24.00	21.00	
<i>P</i> 50 Notes. ** <i>p</i> < .01.	21.00	21.00	24.00	24.00		

As shown in the Table, all the variables observed had significant correlations (p<.01), although none exceeded correlation level .90 (indicative of a possible collinearity between data), with the highest correlation being r=.60. The affect scales (maternal and paternal affect) had the highest correlation index (r=.56, p> .01). Finally, the perceived family support scale had the highest correlation index with the maternal affect scale (r=.45, p> .01).

Analysis of the hypothesized models

The first model tested was the paternal model, which proposed that the variables paternal affect and paternal rules would predict perceived family support. The initial analysis of the resulting parameters (Table 3) revealed that the proposed model correctly fit the empirical data: ($\chi^2(2.51)=574.01$, p<.01; *NFI*= .94; *CFI*= .96; *SRMR*=.031; *RMSEA*=.036).

Model	χ^2	SBχ2 SBχ2/gl rNFI			rNNFI	rCFI	rRMSEA (CI90%)	
M PATERNAL	574.01**	497.20**	2.51	.94	.95	.96	.036 (.032, .040)	
M MATERNAL	996.12**	838.98 ^{**}	4.24	.88	.89	.91	.053 (.049, .057)	
** **		4 93 1						

Table 3. Adjustment goodness indices in the paternal and maternal models for the incidence of the components of socialization practices on perceived social support

Notes. $*^{*}p < .01$. In the index and the coefficients marked in black robust estimators have not been used

The second model tested was the maternal model (Table 2), which proposed that the variables maternal affect and maternal rules would have predictive power for perceived family support. The analysis of the resulting parameters revealed that the proposed model correctly fit the empirical data: ($\chi^2_{(4.24)}$ = 996.12, *p*< .01; *NFI*= .94; *CFI*= .91; *SRMR*= .031; *RMSEA*= .053).

Standardized regression coefficients

The estimation of the normalized Mardia coefficient for multivariate kurtosis revealed a value of 53.69, which is higher than the cut-off point (5). Since this suggested a far-from-normal data distribution, robust goodness of fit indexes were used to guarantee a precise estimation of the model's fit to the data.

To assess the overall model, the residuals and fit indexes were evaluated. Together, the absolute standardized mean residuals (0.0335), those located outside the diagonal (0.0366) and the percentage of standardized residuals that showed a central tendency (95.25%) suggested an optimal fit of the paternal model. The robust goodness of fit indexes (presented in Table 2) confirmed this finding.

As regards the evaluation of the estimated individual parameters, the non standardized coefficients and the p-values associated with the modification indexes offered by the Wald test indicated that the association established in the model between paternal affect and paternal rules was not significant, and that the variable paternal rules did not contribute significantly to perceived family support. Thus, the data indicate that children perceiving their father setting rules neither increases their sense of family support nor prevents them from feeling supported. According to the data, it is only paternal affect which has a positive and decisive influence (γ = .702) on perceived family support (see Figure 1).

As regards maternal socialization practices, the study of the residuals of the tested model indicated that, while acceptable, the fit of the maternal model was poorer than that of the paternal one. The goodness of fit indexes confirmed this finding (see Table 3).

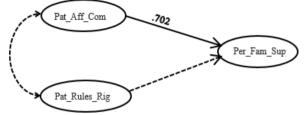
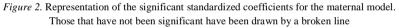


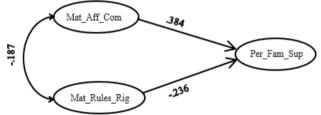
Figure 1. Representation of the significant standardized coefficients for the paternal model. Those that have not been significant have been drawn by a broken line

Pat_Aff_Co= Father's affect-communication; Pat_Rules_Rig= Father's rules rigidity; Per_Fam_Sup= Perceived Family Support.

As regards maternal socialization practices, the study of the residuals of the tested model indicated that, while acceptable, the fit of the maternal model was poorer than that of the paternal one. The goodness of fit indexes confirmed this finding (see Table 3).

As regards the individual parameters, on the other hand, in the maternal model, both affect (γ = .384) and rules (γ = -.236) were found to contribute significantly to explaining perceived family support. Moreover, the data indicate that the relationship between maternal rules and perceived family support is an inverse one, with high levels of rule setting by the mother leading to lower levels of perceived support during adolescence (Figure 2).





Mat_Aff_Com= Mother's affect-communication; Mat_Rules_Rig= Mother's rules rigidity; Per_Fam_Sup= Perceived Family Support.

Table 4 presents the data on the relationships between the two dimensions of parental socialization, the degree of family support perceived by children and school adjustment measures (engagement and performance), excluding the correlation between the variables paternal rules and family support, which was not found to be statistically significant in the structural models. The results are also differentiated in accordance with the sex of the adolescent child in question.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Parental affect-comunication	-	.42**	62**	22**	.53**	.34**	.37**	.29**	.34**
2. Marental affect-comunication	.44**	-	20**	69**	.32**	.26**	.20**	.22**	.22**
3. Rules-parental rigidity	52**	11*	-	.31**	42**	24**	34**	10*	-31**
4. Rules-marental rigidity	16**	58**	.33**	-	19**	21**	11**	07	21**
5. Family Support	.47**	.28**	35**	12**	-	.20**	.39**	.15**	.29**
6. Behavioral engagement	.26**	.32**	17**	20**	.17**	-	.37**	.41**	.48**
7. Affective engagement	.25**	.17**	18	02	.26**	.41**	-	.29**	.45**
8. Cognitive engagement	.24**	.28**	01	11**	.11**	.50**	.37**	-	.38**
9. Academic performance	.22**	.25**	26**	24**	.22**	.54**	.42**	.39**	-

Table 4. Matrix of correlations between the components of the parental socialization practices, the perceived family support, the school involvement and the academic performance according to the sex

Notes: p < .05, p < .01. On the lower diagonal, the correlations for men are collected and on the upper diagonal, those for women.

The results indicate higher correlations between perceived family support and paternal affect (r= .53) than between that same variable and maternal affect (r= .32) in the case of daughters, with the correlation with maternal rules being the lowest of all (r= .19). This pattern also emerged in the male sample, but with somewhat lower correlations.

As regards school adjustment, among girls, behavioral engagement, affective engagement and academic performance follow the same behavioral pattern, i.e. these variables are associated with higher levels of perceived paternal affect (r= .34, r= .37, r= .34, respectively) and maternal affect (r= .26, r= .20, r= .22, respectively) and with lower levels of maternal rule setting (r= -21, r= -11; r= -21, respectively). The same cannot be said of cognitive engagement, for which no association was observed with maternal rule setting and demands.

The relationship patterns observed between school adjustment and parenting styles were different among boys. A slightly closer association was found between maternal support and behavioral and cognitive engagement and academic performance (r=.32, r=.28, r=.25, respectively) than between paternal support and those same variables (r=.26, r=.24, r=.22, respectively). Maternal rule setting was more closely (and negatively) associated with academic performance (r=.24) and behavioral engagement (r=.20), and slightly less so with cognitive engagement (r=.11). No correlation at all was found between maternal rule setting and affective school engagement.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Recommendations made by researchers over recent years indicate the need to study children's perceptions of their parents' socialization practices separately for mothers and fathers (Torrente & Vazsonyi, 2008), since it has been found that children perceive

the practices employed by each parent in a clearly different manner (García, Cerezo, de la Torre, Carpio, & Casanova, 2011), particularly during adolescence (Brand & Klimes-Dugan 2010). The present study seeks to determine how these differentiated parental socialization practices affect adolescents' perceptions of the family support they receive, a factor which is important due to the close relationship which exists between this support and certain psychological variables such as resilience, self-concept and emotional intelligence (Rodríguez-Fernández et al., 2016; Rodríguez-Fernández, Ramos-Díaz, de Lahidalga, & Rey-Baltar, 2018).

The results found in this study reveal that while the level of affect and communication established between parents and their children does indeed have a positive influence on perceived family support, this influence is considerably stronger in the case of the father than in that of the mother. However, the same is not true in relation to parental rule setting and behavioral control, in which paternal practices seem to have no impact at all, while maternal practices do, but in a negative manner. In other words, perceived family support is positively influenced by the type of communication and affect levels shown within the heart of the family (with paternal affect and communication being more influential than the corresponding maternal practices); however, it is negatively affected by high levels of behavioral control and rigid rule setting by the mother, whereas paternal control and rigidity does not seem to prevent adolescents from feeling supported by their family.

As regards the relationship between the different components of parental socializing styles and school adjustment, the scientific literature in this field has traditionally associated styles with high levels of affect and moderate or low levels of control-rigidity with better adjustment among adolescents (Cenkseven-Önder, 2012), as opposed to styles with low levels of affect, which are usually linked to poorer adjustment and more problems during this life phase (Chan & Koo, 2011; Milevsky, Schlechter, Netter, & Keehn, 2007; Rinaldi & Howe, 2012), as well as to poorer academic results (Garg, Levin, Urajnik, & Kauppi, 2005; Im-Bolter, Zadeh, & Ling, 2013). The results of this study are fully consistent with these findings, with the same pattern being found for both adolescent boys and adolescent girls.

In this sense, although in this study, the parenting styles of both parents seem to be associated with school engagement and academic performance, the correlation is slightly higher in the case of fathers, a finding which is consistent with those reported by prior studies which observed a greater influence of paternal than maternal parenting style on these variables (Bastaits, Ponnet, & Mortelmans, 2012), although it is also true that the difference observed in this study was not as marked.

However, despite the importance of the findings reported here, one problem related to research into parental socialization styles is that parents do not always have one fixed, exclusive parenting style, and may act differently with different children or at different moments of their upbringing. Parents may manifest a main style mixed with specific parenting practices from other styles, and these combinations may also vary in accordance with the child's developmental stage, behavior and attitudes. Another of the study's limitations is that, although most of the research carried out uses MacCoby and Martin's two-dimensional model (1983), other dimensions also exist, such as the promotion of autonomy, revelation and humor, etc. These dimensions should also be taken into consideration in a multidimensional model of parenting styles (Oliva, Parra, & Arranz, 2008).

Finally, although diverse studies have found a low correlation between parents' and children's opinions regarding parental practices (Bersabé, Fuentes, & Motrico, 2001), it is the perception of adolescent children that is least biased and is considered the most objective in terms of predicting socialization styles, since parents' opinions regarding their own parenting practices are usually more affected by the social desirability bias.

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