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Self-esteem and communication competence of female students pursuing degree in pedagogy in view of dimensions of family communication

Samoocena i kompetencje komunikacyjne studentek pedagogiki w świetle wymiarów komunikacji w rodzinie

Abstract

Research context: A high level of communication competences, which often correlates with self-esteem, has a significant impact on the quality and effectiveness of the future professional work of students of pedagogical faculties. While deliberating on their sources, the authors decided to focus on family and dimensions of family communication.

Goal: The aim of the presented paper was to identify communication skills and self-esteem presented by students pursuing a degree in pedagogy and to check whether dimensions of family communication act as their mediators.

Methods: A diagnostic survey and the following measures were used to collect data: Self-Esteem Scale (SES), The Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale (SPCC) and Kwestionariusz wzorców komunikacji rodzinnej (Family Communication Patterns Questionnaire, Polish acronym: KWKR).

Results: The study group was found to present low self-esteem and average communication competence, and the obtained results additionally pointed to the modifying role

of dimensions of family communication, primarily in the context of self-esteem and to its restricted scope in the context of communication competence.

Conclusions: The results revealed a significant role of family and family communication patterns in human development and functioning, in particular with reference to individuals planning to pursue a career resting on relations with other people.

Keywords: self-esteem, communication competence, family, dimensions of family communication, female students pursuing degree in pedagogy, emerging adulthood.

Abstrakt

Od studentów kierunków pedagogicznych oczekiwane jest aby prezentowali wysoki poziom kompetencji komunikacyjnych, który często współgra z samooceną. Zastanawiając się nad ich źródłami postanowiono skoncentrować się na rodzinie i występujących w niej wymiarach komunikacji. Celem przedstawionego tekstu było rozeznanie się, jaki poziom kompetencji komunikacyjnych i samooceny prezentują studenci kierunków pedagogicznych oraz sprawdzenie czy wymiary komunikacji rodzinnej pełnią funkcję ich mediatorów. Zastosowano sondaż diagnostyczny oraz następujące narzędzia: Skala Samooceny SES, Skala Kompetencji Komunikacyjnych (SPCC) oraz Kwestionariusz wzorców komunikacji rodzinnej (KWKR). Uzyskane wyniki scharakteryzowały badaną grupę jako prezentujących niski poziom samooceny, przeciętny poziom kompetencji komunikacyjnych oraz modyfikującą rolę wymiarów komunikacji rodzinnej, przede wszystkim w kontekście samooceny i jej ograniczony zasięg w kontekście kompetencji komunikacyjnych. Uzyskane wyniki pokazują istotną rolę rodziny i stosowanych w niej sposobów komunikowania się dla rozwoju i funkcjonowania człowieka, szczególnie w odniesieniu dla osób wiążących swoją przyszłość z zawodami opierającymi się na relacji z drugim człowiekiem.

Słowa kluczowe: samoocena, kompetencje komunikacyjne, rodzina, wymiary rodzinnej komunikacji, studentki pedagogiki, wyłaniająca się dorosłość.

1. Introduction

Authors of the paper during the work with students pursuing a degree in pedagogy have observed diversified levels of communication competence presented by the students in question. This competence is of particular importance for their future careers, where it has been perceived as one of the key competences (Kwaśnica, 2007, pp. 291–319; Bochniarz and Grabowiec, 2016, pp. 271–284; Noskova et al., 2014, pp. 188–198). This has served as the starting point of deliberations

on the sources of this diversity. Referring to the literature and to authors' experience, a thesis was formulated that it is family where key competences of all individuals are formed, including the communication competence. Self-esteem appears to be another question that should be examined more closely.

Nowadays, despite an extensive body of research on and theoretical connotations of self-esteem, this term lacks a clear definition (Brown and Marshall, 2001, pp. 575–584; Mruk, 2013, pp. 157–164). The literature has defined self-esteem from different perspectives, e.g. as a relatively stable disposition understood as a conscious attitude towards oneself (Łaguna, Dzwonkowska and Lachowicz-Tabaczek, 2007, pp. 164–176) or as a set of beliefs, attitudes and expectations related to assessment of the global self-worth (Rosenberg, 1965, pp. 3–16). It has also been presented as a well-organised and relatively coherent pattern of observations about oneself, determining the mood and significantly influencing an individual's behaviour towards oneself, as well as the person's relationships with others (Turowska, 2010, pp. 61–83). Józef Koziński (1987, pp. 8–9) defines self-esteem as a substantive component of self-knowledge which in turn is a part of personality regulating instrumental actions of a man in the area of cognition and emotions.

While addressing the self-esteem concept, it is useful to refer to Morris Rosenberg's approach (1965 pp. 16–38), according to which every person displays a specific self-attitude. While developing a tool for measuring self-esteem, he distinguished its levels, emphasized the value of high self-esteem, which he believed was linked to thinking well about oneself, which does not involve the feeling that one is better than others (Rosenberg, 1965, pp. 16–38; cf. Dzwonkowska, Lachowicz-Tabaczek and Łaguna, 2008, pp. 16–21). A person with high self-esteem usually has a strong sense of self-worth, faces difficulties and challenges in a constructive manner, skilfully uses his or her resources and sets himself or herself ambitious life goals. A person with low self-esteem is often dissatisfied with oneself, more often experiences anxiety and the feeling of hopelessness, finds it more difficult to enjoy life, most often responds inadequately to stress and setbacks (Dzwonkowska, Lachowicz-Tabaczek and Łaguna, 2008, pp. 21–28).

Nathaniel Branden (2012, pp. 24–55), emphasized the importance and meaning of experiencing relevant self-esteem, that is one allowing an individual to believe that he or she copes with life challenges successfully, is ready to satisfy one's needs and desires, which undoubtedly is linked to the ability to cooperate, creativity and flexibility in the context of emerging changes (cf. Appelt, 2005, pp. 293–296). Scholars have shown self-esteem to be one of the essential parts of personality, at the same time being a significant regulator of an individuals'

behaviour (Wojciszke and Grzyb, 2024, pp. 172–178; Szpitalak and Polczyk, 2015, pp. 47–56).

Modern psychology points that self-esteem is contingent on two fundamental sources: external and internal (Branden, 2012, pp. 452–455). Self-esteem has a dynamic structure, its level is not fixed once and for all. External determinants of self-esteem include upbringing and experiences from the relationships with significant others. Therefore, it may be said that it is parents' opinions, whether and in what manner they satisfied their child's needs, whether they noticed and listened to their child and the way they were speaking about their child that to a significant extent determine the child's self-esteem. Internal determinants of self-esteem on the other hand, primarily include the emotional disposition of an individual which may also result from attending to the child's emotional needs or emotional neglect (Branden, 2012, pp. 452–455).

In colloquial speech, as well as in scientific deliberations, the term self-esteem is often used interchangeably with self-confidence. Self-esteem, as the name suggests, is the estimation of oneself, in consideration of one's dispositions and limitations, achievements and failures; it is an individual's emotional response to oneself (Wojciszke, 2002, pp. 147–149; Wojciszke and Grzyb, 2024, pp. 171–172). Self-confidence is about accepting oneself just as one is, acknowledging all one's talents and flaws, skills or lack of abilities. It is determined by child's experience of being accepted just as he or she is (Jull, 2012, pp. 103–108).

In this paper, the term self-esteem shall be referred to the definitions proposed by Koziellecki (1987, pp. 8–9), Rosenberg (1965, pp. 16–38) and Turowska (2010, pp. 61–83), who described it in the context of self-knowledge and estimation of oneself.

Another issue addressed by the authors in the article is communication competence. Presented deliberations focused on the social aspect of communication competence and assumptions of the model by Kevin Barge, Shewryn Morreale and Brain Spitzberg were adopted (2024, pp. 70). According to the scholars referred to above, communication competence is “verbal and non-verbal behaviour intended to achieve the preferred goals in a manner matching the context” (Barge, Morreale and Spitzberg, 2024, pp. 70). Communication competence defined in this manner includes the following components: motivation, knowledge, skills and communication context. The authors distinguished three types of communication contexts depending on the number of communicators: interpersonal (informal interaction between people engaged in social and/or personal relationships), group (referring to a larger number of people and usually related to formal tasks) and public speaking (Barge, Morreale and Spitzberg, 2024, pp. 75–85). In this approach, communication competence is assessed based on:

clarity (transparency and understanding enabling comprehension of the meaning of the speaker's message), appropriateness (adequacy of communication in a given context which is determined by the norms and rules in force in a given social group) and effectiveness (degree to which communication achieved the desired goal). Listed components of communication competence are interrelated and they impact each other. Authors of the quoted approach described these relationships and proposed four ways of communicating:

1. minimizing communication, which is ineffective and inappropriate; persons communicating this way fail to achieve the desired outcome and discourage others from participation in the communication process;
2. sufficing communication, which is not inappropriate but it is ineffective; persons communicating this way use norms and rules binding in a given communication context appropriately, but they fail to achieve the planned outcomes;
3. maximizing communication, used by an inappropriate but effective communicator; a person using this way of communication will be characterised by assertiveness or aggression in communication, without consideration of standards and rules in force in a given group, which may imply dislike and avoidance of interactions from partners to the communication process;
4. optimizing communication is both effective and appropriate; a person preferring this way of communicating achieves their goals and adheres to the functioning social norms (Barge, Morreale and Spitzberg, 2024, pp. 75–85).

Based on the distinguished ways of communicating, Barge, Morreale and Spitzberg (2024, pp. 86–87) proposed three levels of communication competence describing a given individual:

1. completely incompetent (ineffective and inappropriate – minimizing style);
2. partially incompetent (ineffective but appropriate – sufficing or effective but inappropriate – maximizing style);
3. highly competent (effective and appropriate – optimizing style).
4. The next area addressed in this paper is family and family communication.

Robert de Barbaro (1999, pp. 5–8) describes family primarily through interpersonal relationships, emphasizing interactions between family members. Family is a system of interrelated individuals forming an integral whole (de Barbaro, 1999, pp. 5–8; cf. Bakiera and Harwas-Napierała, 2016, pp. 107–117). Family

is the fundamental learning environment, the most significant social group in which we grow and build, e.g. our self-esteem (McKay and Fanning, 2004, p. 11), and where we learn to communicate (Bakiera and Harwas-Napierała, 2016, pp. 107–117).

Family is the first social environment affecting child's development so strongly. It is an elementary group where our behaviour is assessed for the first time, where parents expect their children to behave in a particular way, at the same time developing a given emotional attitude towards themselves. This is where a child makes the initial self-assessment. The child estimates oneself according to positive or negative categories, which depends on parents' attitude (cf. Milerski and Śliwerski, 2000, p. 192; Grabowiec, 2011, pp. 67–69). According to Maria Ryś (2011, pp. 76–77), healthy self-esteem is significantly influenced by relationships in the family environment, well-meaning way of communicating and the sense of security that help a child make contacts with other people more easily, which translates into experiencing one's own effectiveness in communicating with others and building of a positive self-image.

Family, as any other social group, has its internal set of norms and rules specifically governing the internal interactions. The way a family communicates produces family-specific communication patterns formed as a result of repeatable, direct, long-term, mutual and feeling-based family interactions (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2002a, pp. 70–91; 2002b, pp. 36–65).

A study by Ascan Koerner and Mary Anne Fitzpatrick (1997, pp. 234–251) showed that conversation orientation and conformity orientation are central to family communication. They refer to such areas as: way of coping with conflicts in the family, children's resilience to adverse environmental influences, future romantic relationships of children, use of social self-restriction and social withdrawal behaviours and introduction of family rituals (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 1997, pp. 234–251).

The conversation orientation and conformity orientation dimensions allow to describe the parent-child communication. Conformity orientation refers to the degree to which family communication stresses a climate of homogeneity and stability of attitudes, values and beliefs (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2006, pp. 50–65). Families characterised by high conformity orientation focus on harmony and interdependence of family members, they avoid conflicts, they display a traditional family structure with asymmetrical relationship, where parents make decisions and children must be obedient to them. Typically, they do not favour relationships external to the family, they focus on the intra-family needs, subordination of personal interests and plans to family interests and plans. Families low in conformity orientation emphasize independence of their members, conflicts are natural

where there is a difference of opinions; they are characterised by a more symmetrical relationship between adults and children. They are more open to relationships outside the family, they favour independence of family members and personal space (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2002a, pp. 70–91, 2002b, pp. 36–65, 2002c, pp. 234–151; Shearman and Dumlao, 2008, pp. 186–211). Comparison of families low and high in conformity orientation is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Conformity orientation – family characteristics

Conformity orientation		
	Families high in conformity orientation	Families low in conformity orientation
Nature of interaction	Focused on harmony and interdependence of family members	Focused on independence of family members
Attitude towards conflicts	Conflict avoidance	Conflicts are approached as an outcome of an acceptable difference of opinion
Family hierarchy	Traditional and hierarchical structure of the family, emphasized obedience of children to parents	Families are less hierarchically organised, they do not believe in a traditional family structure; emphasized equality of all family members
Family decision-making	Parents make decisions for the family and children are obliged to act in accordance with their parents' instructions and wishes	Children are usually less engaged in making decisions for the family
Values and beliefs	Significance of homogeneity of beliefs and attitudes; parents expect their children to share their values and beliefs	Focused on heterogeneity of attitudes and beliefs; parents are interested in their children's views and beliefs; acceptable difference of opinions
Importance of family relationships	Family members favour their family relationships over relationships external to the family; individual schedules should be coordinated among family members to maximize family time	Belief that relationships outside the family are as important as family relationships; family should encourage the personal growth of individual family members
Individual plans and interests	Family members subordinate their interests and plans to that of the family	Importance of independence of family members and personal space even if that requires subordination of family interests and plans to that of an individual

Source: Wysota, M. (2019). *Kwestionariusz wzorców komunikacji rodzinnej (KWKR) konstrukcja i ocena psychometryczna*, p. 207.

The other dimension of family communication is conversation orientation. Families high in conversation orientation are characterised by open and frequent communication; daily situations are freely discussed by all family mem-

bers. In such families, communication is a mean of socialisation but also a way of developing close relationships between family members. Families low in conversation orientation are characterised by small frequency and scope of discussed topics. Discussions are superficial, they do not promote building of close relationships, they are not treated as an important component of the family (Korner and Fitzpatrick, 2002a, pp. 70–91, 2002b, pp. 36–65). Comparison of families low and high in conversation orientation is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Conversation orientation – family characteristics

Conversation orientation		
	Families high in conversation orientation	Families low in conversation orientation
Importance of family communication	Belief that often and frequent communication is essential for an enjoyable and fruitful family life; communication is essential to bring up and educate children and to socialise them	Belief that open and frequent exchange of ideas, beliefs and values is not necessary for the function of the family in general and for the children's socialisation and education in particular
Character of family discussions	Family members freely interact on a wide array of topics	There are only few topics that are openly discussed among all family members
Discussing problems	Problems are discussed in great detail; parents encourage children to consider multiple sides of the issues	Problems are not discussed in great detail, parents fail to encourage children to an in-depth consideration of all sides of an issue
Family interactions	Family members spend a lot of time together sharing their thoughts, feelings, discussing their activities and daily life events	Family members unwillingly interact with each other, rarely sharing their thoughts and feelings, as well as daily life events
Family decision-making	All family members are engaged in the decision-making process, and before the decision is made, the problem is discussed in great detail	Some family members make decision independently of other family members
Individual activities and interests	Interests and activities engaging specific family members are well known to other members, they are often subjects of family discussions	Interests and activities engaging specific family members are not known to other members, or they are known but without any details

Source: Wysota, M. (2019). Kwestionariusz wzorców komunikacji rodzinnej (KWKR) konstrukcja i ocena psychometryczna, p. 208.

Impact of the above two dimensions on family communication results from their cross determination, they are in constant interaction.

The presented study was inspired by observations made by the authors regarding student's functioning. The study period encompasses a period of human development referred to as late adolescence or early adulthood (Harwas-Napierała and Trempała, 2000, pp. 7–8; Brzezińska, 2005, pp. 21–40). Scholars have emphasized the fuzziness of age boundaries across these periods and pointed to the extension of late adolescence over the past dozen or so years (Brzezińska, Ziółkowska and Appelt, 2019, pp. 245–295). The literature has also indicated that the development of individual's adult identity is more important than age boundaries. This opinion is shared, among others, by Zbigniew Melosik (2013, p. 13), who observed that the moment of transition into adulthood is, for this reason, highly individualised. Boundaries between adolescence and adulthood have become increasingly blurred; Jeffrey J. Arnett (2000, pp. 469–480) distinguished a stage between adolescence and adulthood referred to as emerging adulthood, beginning around 18 years of age and lasting through the thirties. The criterion distinguishing these three life periods is the fact of assuming social roles typical of adulthood. And so, in adolescence this is very rare, in early adulthood it is common, whereas in the transition period, that is emerging adulthood, this makes a highly diversified issue. Persons in emerging adulthood focus on learning about possible life directions and are characterised by explorations in love, work and ideology. To characterise and describe the study group, the authors have adopted the term of “emerging adulthood” in accordance with Jeffrey Arnett's concept.

2. Methods

It was an exploratory study aimed at examining communication competence and self-esteem presented by students pursuing degree in pedagogy and checking whether dimensions of family communication act as their mediators. The following research questions were put forward:

1. What self-esteem is presented by the respondents?
2. What communication competence is presented by the respondents?
3. Do dimensions of family communication modify respondents' self-esteem and communication competence?

The following research hypotheses were formulated for Q3:

H1: Conversation orientation in the family modifies respondents' self-esteem.

H2: Conversation orientation in the family modifies respondents' communication competence.

H3: Conformity orientation in the family modifies respondents' self-esteem.

H4: Conformity orientation in the family modifies respondents' communication competence.

In order to find answers to thus formulated research questions, a diagnostic survey and the following measures were used to collect data: Family Communication Patterns Questionnaire (Polish acronym: KWKR), The Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale (SPCC) and Self-Esteem Scale (SES).

The Family Communication Patterns Questionnaire (KWKR) by Monika Wysota (2019, pp. 205–224) was designed for individuals aged 18–26 to evaluate communication with their parents – separately with the mother, and separately with the father. Therefore, two versions of the tool are available: KWKR-M referring to mother's communication patterns and KWKR-O – describing father's communication patterns. Each version of the questionnaire (KWKR-M and KWKR-O) consists of 30 items. Both scales – conversation orientation scale (ZNR) and conformity orientation scale (ZNZ), contain 15 items each. Respondents indicate their agreement with questionnaire items on a scale from 1 (I strongly disagree) to 5 (I strongly agree). For each scale, respondents can score from 15 to 75 points (Wysota, 2019, p. 212).

The Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale (SPCC) by James C. McCroskey and Linda L. McCroskey is a self-report measure developed to obtain information concerning how competent people feel they are in a variety of communication contexts and with various types of receivers. The measure has generated good alpha reliability estimates (above .85) and displays strong validity. The Polish version of the scale is not available, the authors have translated the items themselves. The measure consists of twelve descriptions of situations in which one might need to communicate. A respondent is expected to indicate, on a scale from 0% to 100%, how competent he or she believes to be to communicate in each of the described situations. Obtained scores may be interpreted as the global score of self-estimation of communication competence, as well as within the sub-scales: communication contexts (public, meeting, group, dyad) and receivers (stranger, acquaintance, friend) (McCroskey and McCroskey, 1988, pp. 108–113).

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES) by Morris Rosenberg (Łaguna, Lachowicz-Tabaczek and Dzwonkowska, 2007, pp. 164–176) is a standardised tool designed to measure global self-esteem in adolescents and adults. The measure consists of 10 diagnostic items. The total score reflects the global self-esteem

and ranges from 10 to 40 points. In addition, the scale contains norms that allow to return the scores as sten (Standard Ten) scores. It is a reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.81-0.83$) and valid tool.

The study was conducted as an on-line survey with the use of a Google Form. The questionnaire was distributed among students of the following fields of study: Pre-school and early childhood education (68%), Pedagogy (32%) (full-time and part-time programmes), receiving instruction at a number of public HEIs across Poland (UMCS, APS, UR); participation was voluntary. Responses of 240 female students (all respondents were women, the statements of 19 respondents were rejected due to providing incomplete answers) were subject to the analysis, of whom vast majority lived in a city (63% city, 37% rural areas); respondents were aged from 18 to 24. The study was conducted from March to April 2024.

Analysis

In order to find answers to the research questions and to verify the research hypotheses, statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 26 software package. The software was used to analyse the basic descriptive statistics, including the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, whereas correlations were analysed using the Pearson's correlation analysis.

In response to the first two research questions, empirical data were analysed using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and The Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale (SPCC). Data contained in Table 3 show that an average global self-esteem score in the study group was $M = 27.19$.

Table 3. Self-esteem in study group – raw scores

Self-Esteem Scale (SES)	N significant	Min. value	Max. value	Mean	Standard deviation
Global self-esteem	230	11	40	27.19	5.79

Source: author's own study

Subsequent analyses refer to self-esteem in the group of responding students (Table 4). The analysis showed that the prevailing percentage of participants reported low self-esteem (48.6%), average score was reported by 28.7% of the respondents and high self-esteem was reported by 22.7%.

Table 4. Self-esteem in the study group

No.	Self-Esteem (SES)	N	%
1.	low	112	48.6
2.	average	66	28.7
3.	high	52	22.7
Total		230	100

Source: author's own study

Next, data referring to communication competence in the study group were analysed; it was found that average scores prevailed for all sub-scales and in the overall score. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Score distribution for communication competence (SPCC)

	Public		Meeting		Group		Pair/dyad		Stranger		Acquaintance		Friend		Overall SPCC	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Low	59	24.7	67	28	36	15.1	44	18.4	43	18	48	20.1	50	20.9	50	20.9
Average	128	53.6	135	56.5	125	52.3	127	53.1	156	65.3	121	50.6	136	56.9	131	54.8
High	43	18	30	12.6	73	30.5	56	23.4	33	13.8	57	23.8	41	17.2	46	19.2
Total significant	230	96.2	232	97.1	234	97.9	227	95	232	97.1	226	94.6	227	95	227	95

Source: author's own study

Responding to the first two research questions, the study group is characterised by low self-esteem and average communication competence.

In order to verify the research hypotheses assuming that family communication pattern, conformity orientation and conversation orientation modify self-esteem and communication competence in the study group, subsequent analyses were conducted. They showed that there is a relationship between the global self-esteem score and conformity orientation and conversation orientation presented by the parents. As regards communication competence, the only found relationship was between mother's conversation orientation and majority of the sub-scales and the overall score.

Table 6. Relationships between communication dimension presented by the parent and respondents' self-esteem and communication competence.

		Public	Meeting	Group	Pair/dyad	Stranger	Acquaintance	Friend	WO_SPCC	WO_SES
ZN-Z_M	Pearson's correlation	-.076	-.084	-.088	-.036	-.049	-.077	-.095	-.096	-.264**
	Significance (bilateral)	.247	.204	.177	.585	.458	.243	.147	.147	<.001
	N	232	233	236	233	232	232	233	229	230
ZN-R_M	Pearson's correlation	.197**	.132*	.077	.137*	.156*	.178**	.079	.195**	.356**
	Significance (bilateral)	.003	.044	.239	.036	.018	.007	.230	.003	<.001
	N	231	232	235	232	231	231	232	228	229
ZN-Z_O	Pearson's correlation	.090	.059	.016	.038	.088	.033	.016	.061	-.192**
	Significance (bilateral)	.172	.371	.805	.564	.185	.623	.809	.360	.003
	N	230	231	234	231	230	230	231	227	229
ZN-R_O	Pearson's correlation	.084	.046	-.028	.102	.106	.072	-.027	.099	.295**
	Significance (bilateral)	.208	.490	.676	.125	.110	.278	.684	.140	<.001
	N	227	228	231	228	227	227	228	224	225

**. Significant (bilateral) correlation at 0.01.

*. Significant (bilateral) correlation at 0.05.

Data presented in Table 6 show that if mother is high in conformity orientation, the study group has lower self-esteem. If, on the other hand, mother is high in conversation orientation, self-esteem is higher. If the father represents conformity orientation, respondents' self-esteem is lower. If, on the other hand, the father is high in conversation orientation, self-esteem is higher. Obtained results support the following hypotheses: H1: Conversation orientation in the family modifies respondents' self-esteem. H3: Conformity orientation in the family modifies respondents' self-esteem. This means that communication pattern presented by the parents modifies self-esteem in the study group.

As far as communication competence is concerned, it was found that higher overall scores and higher scores in particular sub-scales are reported by female respondents whose mothers presented conversation orientation. Obtained results allowed to verify the following hypotheses: H2: Conversation orientation in the family modifies respondents' communication competence – this hypothesis was partially supported. H4: Conformity orientation in the family modifies respondents' communication competence – this hypothesis was not supported. This means that the assumption about the modifying role of conformity orientation in the family was not supported in the presented study.

3. Discussion and Conclusions

The aim of the presented deliberations was to identify communication competence and self-esteem presented by students pursuing a degree in pedagogy and to check whether family communication patterns are likely to modify them.

Prospective educators are expected, among others, to effectively use their language in speech and in writing, clearly express their intentions in interactions with different entities, have good self-presentation skills, effectively cope with exposure to social situations and effectively establish interactions with children and adults (Noskova *et al.*, 2014, p. 190). Communication competence to a large extent affects educators' effectiveness and quality of educational interventions. The way an educator communicates plays a considerable role in building relationships, increasing motivation to change, and building classroom atmosphere and climate at educational therapist's office (Pankowska, 2010, pp. 45–76; Guzmán-Simón, Gil-Flores and Pacheco Costa, 2020, pp. 229–247). There has been a research gap in the literature in the area of communication competence of prospective educators. If it happens to be addressed, the studies oscillate primarily around linguistic abilities (Szumna and Kalandyk, 2017, pp. 92–100), verbal and non-verbal communication (Sałata, 2014, pp. 420–427) and

the way it affects effective learning (Kozłowska and Ryszkowski, 2012, pp. 39–46). This would seem to indicate that communication competence in a group of students pursuing a degree in pedagogy has not been sufficiently explored; this is likely to result from the common belief that such programmes are selected by individuals with high communication competence.

Authors of the presented paper decided to verify the beliefs referred to above, considering their own observations that communication competence of students pursuing a degree in pedagogy is highly diversified. This has been reflected in the research question: “What communication competence is presented by the respondents?”. The analyses have shown that the responding group of students pursuing a degree in pedagogy is characterised by the average communication competence (approx. 55% of respondents), as regards the overall score and scores for individual sub-scales. Similar results have been obtained in other studies, such as e.g. by Grzegorz Sanecki (2017, pp. 51–69.), or Justyna Sala-Suszyńska and Ewa Sosnowska-Bielicz (2023, pp. 437–450). Therefore, it may be assumed that the common belief about high competence of individuals enrolled in pedagogy programmes is not supported by the conducted study, and the obtained results reflect actual student competence in this area.

Another issue addressed by the authors of the paper was self-esteem which significantly impacts all areas of human functioning. Self-esteem determines the way in which we build the relationship with the self and with others, it regulates emotions and our thinking patterns (Góralewska-Słońska, 2011, pp. 97–112). Studies on self-esteem of students pursuing a degree in pedagogy, present it as a variable affecting, among others: the feeling of loneliness (Wrótniak, 2024, pp. 107–124), eating patterns (Buczak and Samujło, 2013, pp. 232–242). Self-esteem conditions our self-perception, but it also translates into our effectiveness. Persons having low self-esteem and experiencing self-uncertainty approach tasks in a manner allowing them to avoid failures, as they rather do not believe they can be successful, for this reason they often avoid taking action (Blaine and Cocker, 1993, pp. 55–85; Di Paula and Campbell, 2002, pp. 711–724; Heimpel, Elliot and Wood, 2006, pp. 1293–1319). Individuals having high self-esteem believe in their abilities and they willingly take up different activities that make them approximate the achievement of a defined goal, they are more persistent and resilient to criticism (Sandelands, Bruckner and Glynn, 1998, pp. 208–216). Self-esteem has been researched quite extensively, also in the context of students pursuing a degree in pedagogy; the presented paper attempted to verify their current self-esteem. It was found that majority of respondents (48.6%) reported low self-esteem, and mean self-esteem for the study group was $M=27.19$. Obtained results fail to correspond with research available in the literature,

among others with the study by Mariola Łaguna, Kinga Lachowicz-Tabaczek and Irena Dzwonkowska (2007, pp. 164–176) where student self-esteem was $M=29.8$, with the study by Agnieszka Bochniarz (2018, pp. 242–247) where high self-esteem prevailed $M=29.81$, or with results obtained by Dominik Strzelecki (2022, pp. 95–112), who found that respondents' self-esteem ($M=28.7$) is slightly above average. A tendency may, therefore, be observed that self-esteem in students of teacher education programmes has been decreasing over a relatively short period of time. This is quite alarming, as low self-esteem carries specific consequences, among others: lower resilience to failure, and consequently, more frequent avoidance of taking up difficult tasks due to fear and anxiety against expected failure (Krakowiak and Łukaszewska, 2015, pp. 273–294). What is more, individuals with low self-esteem may tend to avoid interpersonal contacts and be unwilling to participate in discussions, which in the context of necessary skills and competences of prospective educators is of considerable concern for the success of their future career, as well as for effective self-development and quality of life (Baumeister *et al.*, 2003, pp. 1–44).

The presented paper also addressed the question of the modifying role of dimensions of family communication in the context of self-esteem and communication competence of the respondents. Conducted analyses confirmed that these dimensions may play such a role. Dimensions of family communication moderate self-esteem and communication competence.

Obtained analyses have shown that if parents presented conformity orientation (that is, they focused on harmony and interdependence of family members, expected children to act in accordance with their parent's instructions, share their values and beliefs, and be obedient to them), then the respondents reported low self-worth and higher dissatisfaction with oneself (low self-esteem). If, on the other hand, parents presented conversation orientation (that is, they were engaged in open discussion on a variety of topics, encouraged children to analyse different sides of an issue, spent a lot of time with their children, shared their thoughts and feelings), this made the respondents perceive themselves as a valuable person, showing self-respect and being less self-critical. Similar conclusions were drawn by Agnieszka Pawluk-Skrzypek and Anna Witek (2016, pp. 23–41) in their paper on the positive impact of family communication patterns (including: attentive listening to children, giving them the sense of safety and at the same time encouraging them to speak their mind and pursue autonomy) on self-esteem in adolescents. The study by Urszula Gruca-Miąsik (2023, pp. 139–154) also found the significance of positive parent communication for high self-esteem of the respondents in all areas of their development. High conversation orientation presented by the parents may be observed in a climate of a family created,

among others, by unrestrained interactions by all members of the family, sharing thoughts, feelings, ideas and spending time together (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2002a, pp. 70–91; Wysota, 2019, pp. 205–224). This shows how much family and family communications patterns, and in particular the communication dimension presented by the parents, impacts children's self-esteem.

Results obtained for the modifying role of family communication patterns for communication competence have shown that in the study group, this function is only significant when a mother presents the conversation orientation. Therefore, if the mother is open to interact, talks with her children on a wide array of topics, encourages them to express themselves and speak their mind, and shares her observations, then her daughter (respondents were 100% female) has higher communication competence. In an effort to interpret the obtained results, one may refer to the basic learning mechanisms displayed by individuals that include, among any others, imitation, modelling and identification. Imitation may also refer to social skills, that is communication competence, as children learn quickly and effortlessly by imitating other people, including their parents (Wang, Williamson and Meltzoff, 2015, pp. 562; Meltzoff and Marshall, 2018, pp. 130–136). Through imitation, humans are actively engaged in the cognitive and social learning process (Over, 2020, pp. 93–109) also, according to scholars, imitation is useful for building and strengthening interpersonal relationships (Nielsen, 2012, pp. 170–181). Modelling, on the other hand, is sometimes identified with learning through observation (Bakiera and Harwas-Napierała, 2016, pp. 107–117; Rudkowska, 1996, pp. 99–114), however as opposed to imitation, a significant role is played by the motivation to act. This means that a child selects emotionally charged qualities or activities of the role model (mother) and the model is significant for them (Bakiera and Harwas-Napierała, 2016, pp. 107–117). The process of identification with the mother as a significant other may serve as the additional explanation for the modifying role of the conversation orientation dimension presented by the mother on communication competence of the responding female students (Brzezińska, 2005, pp. 21–40).

Since the paper presents findings from exploratory research, they require further and more in-depth examination. The study group was not sufficiently heterogeneous to allow for generalisability of results. The study was inspired by the authors' experience of working with students pursuing a degree in pedagogy. Obtained results showed a somewhat alarming tendency of decreasing self-esteem in the group of students pursuing degrees in pedagogy. In the context of their current status and future career, this may lower their quality of life in different areas. The significance of family communications patterns is an important self-esteem modifier. As far as communication competence is con-

cerned, the only significant family communication pattern is that presented by the mother.

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