Communication between Parents and their University Offspring and Sources of Personal and Social Support

Mónica Guerra-Santana[1]
Josefa Rodríguez-Pulido[1]
Josué Artiles-Rodríguez[1]

1) Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain

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Mónica Guerra-Santana
U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

Josefa Rodríguez-Pulido
U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

Josué Artiles-Rodríguez
U.de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

Abstract

Communication allows the interrelationship of family members and has an influence on the personal and social adjustment of offspring. This research paper analyzes the types of family communication that exist between parents and their offspring and the sources of personal and social support available to university students. The link between the gender and the search for parent-offspring support variables are studied against the types of family communication. A quantitative analysis has been performed based on a descriptive, correlational and comparative design, and taking 906 students from a European university as the sample. The results indicate it was found that, overall, university students had a positive relationship with their parents. It was further discovered that daughters develop more negative behaviors and hurtful attitudes toward their mother than sons. University students tend to value and turn to different sources of support depending on the issue they wish to solve, with differences being noted based on gender. We conclude that university students have an open and satisfactory friendly relationship with both their parents, and value the family support they receive positively when they have personal and social problems.

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Comunicaciones Padres e Hijos Universitarios y Fuentes de Apoyo Personal y Social

Mónica Guerra-Santana
U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

Josefa Rodríguez-Pulido
U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

Josué Artiles-Rodríguez
U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

Resumen

La comunicación permite la interrelación entre los miembros de la familia e influye en el ajuste personal y social de los hijos/as. Esta investigación examina el tipo de comunicación familiar entre padres/madres e hijos/as y las fuentes de apoyo personal y social que tienen los universitarios. Se estudian las relaciones entre las variables género y búsqueda de apoyo padres/madres e hijos/as con los tipos de comunicación familiar. Realizamos una investigación cuantitativa, con diseño descriptivo, correlacional y comparativo, en 906 estudiantes de una universidad europea. Los resultados indican que chicos y chicas universitarios mantienen una buena comunicación con sus padres y madres. Las chicas, desarrollan conductas más negativas y actitudes hirientes con su madre a diferencia de los chicos. Los universitarios valoran y tienen diferentes fuentes de apoyo según el problema que quieran resolver, encontrándose diferencia según el género. Concluimos que los universitarios mantienen una comunicación familiar abierta y satisfactoria con ambos progenitores, valorando el apoyo familiar de manera positiva ante un problema personal y social.

Palabras clave: apoyo personal, apoyo social, comunicación familiar, educación superior, estudiantes universitarios

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Family is the best pillar to supervise and support their offspring, in particular regarding personal relationships and academic matters (Dorrance, Scharp, Sanders, & Beaty, 2020). For this situation to flow positively, there is a fundamental aspect that defines family functioning: communication (Leibovich & Schmidt, 2010). Communication, in a family system dynamic, creates an interrelationship between family members (Garduño, Luna, Ceja, Silva, & Govea, 2019). For Olson (2000), family communication refers to the action between parents and their offspring of sharing information related to feelings and emotions; and if such communication is functional, it will develop a positive self-concept in their offspring (Estévez, Murgui, Moreno, & Musitu, 2007). Where the university student has adequate self-esteem, this has a positive effect on the perception of their academic competences (Cabanach, Gestal, Rodríguez, Cervantes, & González-Doniz, 2016). Offspring that have an appropriate communication relationship with their parents appear to be more prepared to share their worries, preferences and needs (Rodríguez, Barreto, & Huertas, 2016). Families that have a balanced cohesion system among their members develop better communication skills than those who are situated within the extreme dimensions (Olson, 2011). On the other hand, where communication between parents and their offspring is based on distrust and a lack of respect, this has consequences on their offspring's personality development, leading them to have negative feelings (Alfonso, Valladares, Rodríguez, & Selín, 2017).

Nobody doubts the significance of a strong family support network for university students (Myers & Myers, 2015). When somebody starts at university, they enter a new stage in their life which implies personal, social and academic changes; and where this situation does not take place under the family wing and supervision, this could lead to risky situations (Aldeis & Afifi, 2013). Notwithstanding the importance of the role played by family in the emotional stability of youth, the influence of other environments that contribute to emotional wellbeing should also be considered. Orcasita & Uribe (2012) state that the youth that have high levels of social support have a high self-concept and self-esteem and much better tools to confront stress. However, the personal, social, and academic success of university students will be conditioned by multiple support networks, which include family, friends, their partner, to name a few. According to Nora (2002), low family

support is directly linked to the abandonment of university studies. It has been demonstrated that personal, family and social variables have a significant influence on how students adapt to university life and, when this is negative, students tend to abandon their degree (Adams, Berzonsky, & Keating, 2006; Benítez, Pérez, Cabrera, Pérez, & Afonso, 2017). University students with larger support networks better adapt to this new stage of their lives (González, López, Vacas, Couñago, & Fernández, 2012; Rodríguez, Tinajero, & Páramo, 2017). If the family support network has good communication between its members, this becomes a protection factor for the offspring (Musitu & Calleja, 2017) and, although they initiate new relationships with their peers, if the affectionate link with their parents remains, then they will become their most important support and help (Fuentes, Motrico, & Bersabé, 2003). Research carried out by Gil-Flores and Besa-Gutierrez (2018) confirms that family support received by first-year university students is a protection factor against stress symptoms. Upon analyzing the role of support networks among peers at university, Brouwer, Jansen, Flache, & Hofman (2016) state that support relationships between friends on networks have a positive impact on academic success throughout the first year at university; hence, there would seem to be a link between high levels of social support and learning outcomes (Li, Han, Wang, Sun, & Cheng 2018).

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to analyze the relationship between parents-offspring communication and the personal and social support received by university students. The different hypothesis on which this study is based oscillate between two types of relationships: a positive relationship with an open and flexible communication and satisfactory personal and social support, on the one hand; and negative correlations which are expected to be found between family communication based on aggressive and offensive behaviors and the student's search for personal and social support, on the other hand.

Method

Design

The methodology used for this research paper is quantitative and has a descriptive, correlative and comparative design, in a natural situation.

Likewise, the variables to be studied are: a) of relational and/or communicative nature: types of Parent-Offspring communication; Search for Personal and Social Support; and b) of a qualitative nature: gender.

Participants

The figures published by the university under study reveal that there are more women enrolled in degrees than men. More women enrolled in first year university studies than men with 58.13%. Furthermore, the percentage of female graduates surpasses that of male students with 58.90% against 41.1% of men who complete their degrees. Data additionally shows that women still choose arts degrees over technical or science degrees. The sample (N=906) was randomly made of by students from a university located in southern Europe, specifically 604 women (66.7%) and 302 men (33.3%), with an age between 18 and 22 years (M= 20.84; Dt= 287). Regarding the 66.7% of women included in the sample, 40.4% are aged between 18 and 19 years; 27.5% are aged between 20 and 21 years; and 32.1% are aged 21 years and over. With regard to men (33.3%), 42.9% were aged between 18 and 19 years; 28.6% were 20 to 21 years of age; and 28.5% were aged 22 years or more.

The sample has a 95% reliability level, 50% heterogeneity and 4% margin of error.

Instruments

Degree of Social and Personal Support by Gracia, Herrero, & Musitu (2002), adapted by Rodrigo & Byrne (2011). This questionnaire assesses the different sources of support that the participants have and how they evaluate them. To this extent, four problems are set forth: a personal problem, followed by a problem involving the father or mother, another with a friend and a final problem with their partner. Thus, students must first establish, on a Likert-style scale of 6 points, where 1 is *"Never"* and 6 is *"Always"*, the frequency regarding to whom they turn for help (father, mother, sibling, etc.). Secondly, students must also evaluate on a Likert-style scale of 6 points, where 1 is "*Nothing"* and 6 is *"Extremely"*, the importance they give to the help received.

Parent-offspring Communication Scale by Barnes & Olson (1982). This questionnaire has 22 items and the aim is to measure the relationship between the participants and their parents. On a Likert-style scale, where 1 = *"Never"* and 6 = *"Always"*, the students have to assess their communication level with their father and mother based on three factors or components: open and flexible communication, aggressive communication and fear to communicate. With regard to mothers, the three factors represent 65.39% of the total variance and, regarding fathers, these components explain 65.09% of the total variance.

Procedure

In order to perform this study, the collaboration of lecturers from the different faculties of a south-European university became necessary, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the cooperation of the directors from the different departments also became an indispensable requirement; both parties were informed of the aim and purpose of the research. Hence, it was possible for the participating students to complete the questionnaires.

Data Analysis

The following analysis were performed using SPSS 20.0 and IBM AMOS IT statistics packages:

a) *Parents-Offspring Communication Scale* (two versions: one for fathers and one for mothers):

Univariant analysis were performed and *multi-varied statistics* were used in order to confirm the empirical structure and the factorial validity of the questionnaire; to this extent, an Analysis of the Main Components (AMC) was carried out, which previously assessed its relevance and applicability through the Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) sample adequacy measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity, after which the Main Components extraction method was used together with the varimax rotation technique with Kaiser normalization (Bisquerra, 1987; Camacho, 1995; Kaiser, 1977; Lloret-Segura, Ferreres-Traver & Hernández-Baeza, 2014). Furthermore, the *reliability indexes* included on the Scale and the resulting components were also calculated in

order to ascertain their internal consistency; therefore, to achieve this, Cronbach's coefficient α and the *goodness of fit indexes* of the model were used.

b) Personal and Social Support Scale:

The *univaried descriptive statistics* of the main trend were calculated, dispersed and distributed in order to classify and summarize the information regarding the main features of the sample.

Likewise, Cronbach's α was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the Scale's total and of the four dimensions that compose the personal and social sources.

c) *Contrast statistics.* On both scales, the variables being studies were submitted to the Anova analysis, which highlights possible differences based on gender. Likewise, in order to determine which component or components are most discriminating in the type of family communication, a statistic paired t-test has been used to measure any significant possible differences.

d) *Corrective analyses* were carried out in order to explore the relationships that take place between the types of family communication and the variables: searching for support from the mother, searching for support from the father, and gender.

Results

Parent-Offspring Communication Scale

The following are the results obtained from the Scale, first focusing on the version for mothers and subsequently, the version for fathers.

a) Version for mothers:

The AMC gave extremely appropriate values, index KMO = .942 and Bartlett's test of sphericity, p = .000, thus the factorial solution was determined by three factors that explain 65.39% of the total variance. *Table* 1 reflects the covariance matrix that represents the factorial structure, the items that make up each factor, factorial weights, the values themselves, the explained variance and the reliability coefficients.

Table 1.

Rotated components matrix. Factorial structure of the Parents-Offspring Communication Scale, version for mothers

Items	Component		
	1	2	3
Item 1. If I had a problem, I could tell her	**.835**	-.053	-.193
Item 2. I can tell her my real feelings	**.807**	-.018	-.247
Item 3. She pays attention when I talk to her	**.752**	-.293	-.075
Item 4. We get on well	**.705**	-.361	-.099
Item 5. I think it is easy to share my problems with her	**.826**	-.049	-.223
Item 6. She tries to understand my point of view	**.791**	-.208	-.232
Item 7. I show her affect easily	**.679**	-.098	-.049
Item 8. I can tell her what I think without feeling bad or uncomfortable about it	**.796**	-.018	-.262
Item 9. I usually believe what she says	**.697**	-.197	-.024
Item 10. She knows how I'm feeling without even asking me	**.749**	-.028	-.102
Item 11. She tries to offend me when she gets angry with me	-.193	**.714**	.202
Item 12. I say hurtful things to her	.007	**.816**	.130
Item 13. She says hurtful things to me	-.252	**.811**	.244
Item 14. When I'm angry, I speak badly to her	.024	**.659**	.204
Item 15. When we speak I get a bad temper	-.200	**.680**	.277
Item 16. When I ask her questions, she answers back badly	-.264	**.692**	.278
Item 17. There are things I prefer not to tell her about in case she gets angry	-.187	.219	**.755**
Item 18. If I do something, I don't dare tell her in case I get told off	-.095	.187	**.830**
Item 19. Sometimes I lie because I don't want her to get angry with me	-.081	.223	**.831**
Item 20. I don't think I can tell her how I really feel in certain situations	.355	.197	**.674**
Item 21. I don't ask for what I want or need in fear of getting told off	-.208	.286	**.764**
Item 22. I'm scared of telling her what I think in case she gets angry	.192	278	**.780**
Own values	9.20	3.35	1.82
Percentage of the explained variance	41.82	1525	8.31
Cronbach α	.89	.90	.86

Note. Extraction method: Analysis of main components. Rotation method: Normalization Varimax with Kaiser. Rotation converged with 3 iterations.

The factorial solution achieved has 3 components: C1: "Open and flexible communication with the mother"; C2: "Aggressive communication with the mother"; C3: "Fear of communicating with the mother". The internal consistency index for the total of the Scale is Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$.

Finally, the goodness of fit and error indexes of the factorial structure demonstrate a good adjustment of the model: GFI: .928; AGFI: .898; RMR: .067; RMSEA: .08; CFI: .97; NNFI: .96 and WRMR: 1,93.

b) Version for fathers:

Similar to the version for mothers, the AMC statistics of this Scale presented quite adequate values, KMO index = .938 and Bartlett's test of sphericity, $p = .000$. The factorial structure also provided three components that represent 65.09% of the total of the variance: C1: *Open and flexible communication with the father*" C2: *Aggressive communication with the father;* C3: *Fear of communicating with the father*. *Table 2* shows the co-variance matrix that represents the factorial solution, the items that make up each component, the factorial saturations, the values proper, explained variance and reliability indexes.

Table 2.

Matrix of rotated components. Factorial structure of the Parents-Offspring Communication Scale, version for fathers

Items	Component		
	1	2	3
Item 1. If I had a problem, I could tell him	**.835**	.001	-.167
Item 2. I can tell him my real feelings	**.814**	.012	-227
Item 3. He pays attention when I talk to him	**.780**	-.181	-.076
Item 4. We get on well	**.791**	-.249	-.053
Item m 5. I think it is easy to share my problems with him	**.818**	-.057	-.238
Item 6. He tries to understand my point of view	**.821**	-.180	-.178
Item 7. I show him affect easily	**.743**	-.102	-.047
Item 8. I can tell him what I think without feeling bad or uncomfortable about it	**.819**	-.073	-.242
Item 9. I usually believe what he says	**.738**	-.160	.006
Item 10. He knows how I'm feeling without even asking me	**.798**	-.009	-.102
Item 11. He tries to offend me when he gets angry with me	-114	**.640**	.289
Item 12. I say hurtful things to him	-.015	**.808**	.132
Item 13. He says hurtful things to me	-.255	**.760**	.278
Item 14. When I'm angry, I speak badly to him	.051	**.664**	.123
Item 15. When we speak I get a bad temper	-.180	**.709**	.203
Item 16. When I ask him questions, he answers back badly	-.262	**.648**	.332
Item 17. There are things I prefer not to tell him about in case he gets angry	-.160	.262	**.704**
Item 18. If I do something, I don't dare tell him in case I get told off	-.083	.216	**.806**
Item 19. Sometimes I lie because I don't want him to get angry with me	-.027	.182	**.834**
Item 20. I don't think I can tell him how I really feel in certain situations	-.287	.156	**.687**
Item 21. I don't ask for what I want or need in fear of getting told off	-.159	.245	**.785**
Item 22. I'm scared of telling him what I think in case he gets angry	-.189	.246	**.795**
Own values	8.81	3.77	1.73
Percentage of the explained variance	40.06	1713	7.89
Cronbach α	.93	.85	.91

Note. Extraction method: Analysis of main components. Rotation method: Normalization Varimax with Kaiser. Rotation converged with 3 iterations.

Central Trend, Dispersion, and Distribution Statistics

The internal consistency for the Scale's total is Cronbach's $\alpha = .95$. Likewise, the analysis of the model's goodness of fit contrasts show indexes with a positive adjustment: GFI: .917; AGFI: .905; RMR: .069; RMSEA: .09; CFI: .97; NNFI: .95 and WRMR: .98.

Having stated the above, regarding component 1, "Open and flexible communication", t high punctuations mean that communication presents a high degree of openness, whereas low punctuations are synonym of a lack of trust and flexibility in communication. Regarding component 2, "Aggressive communication", higher values refer to a terrible relationship between the mother/father and their offspring, with a lack of feeling of respect and hurtful behaviors; the opposite would be a sign of positive attitudes and a positive climate and family interaction. Lastly, regarding the third component, "Fear to communicate", should the punctuations be on the higher and more positive end of the scale, then the student does not share their feelings and emotions with their parents for the fear of anger and/or being told off. Whilst a lower punctuation shows that the student is not afraid of communicating and establishing a communicational relationship with their parents. *Table 3* presents the punctuations and values achieved for each of the components established on the Parents-Offspring Communication Scale.

Table 3.

Main trend, dispersion and distribution statistics of the Parent-Offspring Communication Scale, version for mothers and fathers.

Component*	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Asymmetry		Kurtosis	
	Average	S	Variance	Statistic	E.T.	Statistic	E.T.
C1: mother	4.9374	.98588	.972	-1.436	.082	2.305	.164
C1: father	4.4673	1.20641	1.455	-1.006	.084	.462	.168
C2: mother	2.4747	1.13643	1.291	.787	.082	-.024	.164
C2: father	2.1569	1.08301	1.173	1.054	.084	.740	.168
C3: mother	2.5447	1.25831	1.583	.739	.082	-.221	.164
C3: father	2.5834	1.24610	1.553	.676	.084	-.314	.169

Note. *Components: C1: Open and flexible communication; C2: Aggressive communication; C3: Fear to communicate. Scale of values: *1 = Never; 2 = Hardly ever; 3 = Seldom; 4 = Sometimes; 5 = Frequently; 6 = Always*.

Table 3 shows that component 1 is the better valued of the components, both in the version for mothers and for fathers. Therefore, the relationship that university students have with their parents is highly satisfactory and open; however, the scores achieved for mothers (M = 4.93; S = .98; S^2 = .97) are higher than for fathers (M = 4.46; S = 1.20; S^2 = 1.45). Furthermore, components 2 and 3 show low scores in both versions, hence, overall, students to have a positive behavior with their parents, they feel listened to, understood and that their feelings and emotions are respected.

Anova of the Scale's Factorial Structure Based on Gender

An Anova analysis has been performed in order to establish differences between the components of this Scale, the version for mothers and for fathers, and based on gender. The results are set forth in table 4.

Table 4.
Anova of the factorial structure of the Parents-Offspring Communication Scale based on gender.

		N	Average	S	gl	F	Sig**
C1:mother	Male	295	4.8641	.91468	1.889	2.444	.118
	Female	596	4.9737	1.01807			
	Total	891	4.9374	.98588			
C2:mother	Male	295	2.3664	1.10412	1.888	4.025	.045
	Female	595	2.5285	1.14925			
	Total	890	2.4747	1.13643			
C3:mother	Male	293	2.5950	1.24439	1.886	.698	.404
	Female	595	2.5199	1.26541			
	Total	888	2.5447	1.25831			
C1: father	Male	278	4.5550	1.10309	1.839	2.200	.138
	Female	563	4.4239	1.25297			
	Total	841	4.4673	1.20641			
C2: father	Male	279	2.0913	1.03502	1.839	1.534	.216
	Female	562	2.1895	1.10551			
	Total	841	2.1569	1.08301			
C3: padre	Male	277	2.6206	1.24851	1.836	.369	.544
	Female	561	2.5650	1.24561			
	Total	838	2.5834	1.24610			

Note. *Components: C1: Open and flexible communication; C2: Aggressive communication; C3: Fear to communicate
** *t* Student: The difference of averages is significant $p \leq .05$

The results shown in table 4 demonstrate that there are important differences in component 2 of the Scale, "Aggressive communication", of the version for mothers ($p = .045$). Although the scores reached by both genders show a trend toward the lower figures of the scale of values, the answer given by female students are mainly located in the intermediate values, 3 = "*seldom*", whilst male student answers oscillate around 2 = "*hardly ever*". This leads to the conclusion that the relationship between both genders and their mother does not present offensive and/or aggressive behaviors; however,

data reveals that female students show, on occasions, negative attitudes towards their mothers more frequently than male students.

T Test

Last, the paired t-test analysis is performed in order to identify, by creating pairs, any significant differences between the components of the Scale.

Table 5 shows 15 pairs established using statistics. The results find that there are differences in 12 pairings.

Table 5.
T-test of related samples of the factorial structure of the Parents-Offspring Communication Scale.

		N	Average	S	t	gl	Sig (bilateral)**
Pair 1	C1 mother – C2 mother	890	4.93 2.47	.986 1.136	41.848	889	.000
Pair 2	C1 mother – C3 mother	888	4.93 2.54	986 1.258	37.336	887	.000
Pair 3	C1 mother – C1 father	832	4.93 4.46	.978 1.209	12.098	831	.000
Pair 4	C1 mother – C2 father	832	4.93 2.15	.978 1.084	49.917	831	.000
Pair 5	C1 mother – C3 father	829	4.93 2.58	.979 1.245	37.521	828	.000
Pair 6	C2 mother – C3 mother	888	2.47 2.54	1.137 1.258	-1.853	887	.064
Pair 7	C2 mother – C1 father	831	2.47 4.46	1.132 1.209	-31.556	830	.000
Pair 8	C2 mother – C2 father	832	2.47 2.15	1.131 1.084	10497	831	.000
Pair 9	C2 mother – C3 father	829	2.47 2.58	1.133 1.245	-2.926	828	.059
Pair 10	C3 mother – C1 father	829	2.54 4.46	1.252 1.210	-28.461	828	.000
Pair 11	C3 mother – C2 father	830	2.54 2.15	1.252 1.084	8.976	829	.000
Pair 12	C3 mother – C3 father	829	2.54 2.58	1.252 1.245	-1.696	828	.090
Pair 13	C1 father – C2 father	840	4.46 2.15	1.206 1.082	35.569	839	.000
Pair 14	C1 father – C3 father	837	4.46 2.58	1.203 1.246	26.910	836	.000
Pair 15	C2 father – C3 father	838	2.15 2.58	1.084 1.246	-11.167	837	.000

Note. *Components: C1: Open and flexible communication; C2: Aggressive communication; C3: Fear to communicate

** Bonferroni: The difference of averages is significant at $p < .05$ (bil) level.

In order to facilitate the reading of the information provided in table 5, the main differences are summarized in *table 6.*

Table 6.
Summary of the main differences between the main paired components

	C1 mother	C2 mother	C3 mother	C1 father	C2 father	C3 father
C1 mother		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
C2 mother			.064	.000	.000	.059
C3 mother				.000	.000	.090
C1 father					.000	.000
C2 father						.000
C3 father						

The results achieved demonstrate that there are no differences between *aggressive communication with the mother* and *fear to communicate with the mother* (p = .064) and between *aggressive communication with the mother* and *fear to communicate with the father (p = .059).* Likewise, significance has been found between the components *fear to communicate with the mother and the father (p = .090)*, which seems evident, based on the content of the afore-mentioned factors.

Notwithstanding the above, there is an interesting aspect from the presented results that deserves to be highlighted. Differences have been found between *aggressive communication with the mother* and *aggressive communication with the father* (p = .000). This information links to the data achieved based on gender. Thus, it can be observed that female students mildly stated, more than male students, the trend, in some occasions, of having had negative and hurtful behaviors towards their mother, but not their father. Taking this into account, the underlying idea in this component can be uncovered intuitively (aggressive communication): female students show more conflictive behaviors and attitudes towards their mother than their

father.

Based on the results achieved, an *open and flexible communication with the mother and father, as well as aggressive communication with the mother* postulate in discriminative elements in establishing the relationship between mothers/fathers and their offspring.

Personal and Social Support Scale

Regarding the reliability values obtained from the Scale in general, and from the four sub-scales or dimensions included therein, the analysis of Cronbach's α shows an internal consistent coefficient for the total of the instrument of .87; for the second of the cases, the reliability indexes are distributed as follows: a) personal problem dimension, $\alpha = .68$; b) problem with parents dimension, $\alpha = .65$; c) problem with friends dimension, $\alpha = .61$, d) problem with partner dimension, $\alpha = .63$.

Central Trend, Dispersion, and Distribution Statistics

Table 7 presents the statistic results which refer to the type of support students usually turn to whenever they have a problem.

Table 7.
Central trend, dispersion and distribution statistics on the Personal and Social Support Scale

Dimensions	Seach for support	*M*	*S*	*S²*	Asymmetry		Kurtosis	
		Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	E. T.	Statistic	E. T.
Personal problem	*Father*	3.32	1.623	2.635	-.029	.088	-1.219	.176
	Mother	4.43	1.413	1.997	-.910	.087	.085	.174
	Siblings	3.25	1.727	2.983	.003	.089	-1.340	.177
	Friends	4.27	1.427	2.037	-.844	.087	-.016	.174
	Partner	4.07	2.017	4.069	-.650	.089	-1.256	.178
Problem with parents	*Father*	2.91	1.901	3.616	.335	.102	-1.468	.204
	Mother	3.50	2.022	4.090	-.162	.101	-1.627	.202
	Siblings	3.63	1.938	3.756	-.248	.102	-1.484	.204
	Friends	3.46	1.851	3.428	-.159	.101	-1.440	.201
	Partner	3.94	2.091	4.371	-.481	.102	-1.487	.204
Problem with friends	*Father*	2.67	1.749	3.058	.562	.095	-1.080	.190
	Mother	3.95	1.810	3.275	-.502	.094	-1.132	.188
	Siblings	3.03	1.910	3.648	.230	.096	-1.507	.191
	Friends	4.13	1.765	3.114	-.814	.094	-.713	.188
	Partner	3.97	2.104	4.428	-.519	.096	-1.475	.192
Problem with partner	*Father*	2.35	1.681	2.827	.906	.109	-.560	.217
	Mother	3.55	1.906	3.632	-.147	.108	-1.493	.216
	Siblings	2.85	1.948	3.793	.432	.109	-1.411	.218
	Friends	4.43	1.585	2.512	-.982	.108	-.053	.215
	Partner	3.06	2.171	4.714	.267	.108	-1.725	.216

Scale of values: *1 = Never; 2 = Hardly ever; 3 = Seldom; 4 = Sometimes; 5 = Frequently; 6 = Always.*

The results that are described in table 7 leave no room for doubt. The main sources of support that students can turn to when they face a problem are: the "mother", "friends" and their "partner"; these pillars of support received a higher amount of response in each of the dimensions. Thus, for example, "friends" received an average score above the value of "4" for three of the four dimensions, whilst "partner" also reached scores of approximately "4" in three of the four dimensions. On the other hand, support by the "mother" becomes the most important dimension for "personal problem" as it received the highest scores by the students. Therefore, for the latter sub-scale, their progenitor is the person whom students turn to whenever they encounter a

difficulty; their "partner" scored highest for "problem with parents"; and "group of peers" scored highest for "problems with friends" and "problems with partner".

Measurement between the Frequency and Importance of Support

When the data put forward is analyzed with the weight that students graded the support with, a tighter measurement is achieved of which elements are those which students turn to when they have personal and social problems. *Table 8* presents the calculation of this relationship.

Table 8.
Adjusted measurement between the frequency and the importance of support on the Personal and Social Support Scales

Dimensions	Search for support	Frequency	Significance	ΣX
		Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
Personal problem	Father	332	4.78	4.05
	Mother	4.43	5.22	4.82
	Siblings	3.25	4.82	4.03
	Friends	4.27	4.94	4.60
	Partner	4.07	5.30	4.68
Problem with parents	Father	2.91	4.92	3.91
	Mother	3.50	5.24	4.37
	Siblings	3.63	5.05	4.34
	Friends	3.46	4.80	4.13
	Partner	3.94	5.30	4.62
Problem with friends	Father	2.67	4.65	3.66
	Mother	3.95	5.12	4.53
	Siblings	3.03	4.83	3.93
	Friends	4.13	5.05	4.59
	Partner	3.97	5.32	4.64
Problem with partner	Father	2.35	4.81	3.56
	Mother	3.55	5.12	4.33
	Siblings	2.85	4.95	3.90
	Friends	4.43	5.00	4.71
	Partner	3.06	5.09	4.07

Note. Scale of values: Frequency - *1 = Never; 2 = Hardly ever; 3 = Seldom; 4 = Sometimes; 5 = Frequently; 6 = Always.* Scale of values: *Significance: 1= None; 2 = Hardly any; 3 = Little; 4 = Some; 5 = Quite; 6 = High*

As can be appreciated, the "mother", "friends" and the "partner" can be confirmed as the most popular pillars of support. Regarding the significance given to the sources of support, it can be highlighted that each and every one of them have been awarded a value above 4.60 points. This means that students, irrelevant of the context, situation or circumstance they are going through, and turn, one way or another, to each of the mentioned sources.

One final aspect to take into account is that, despite the moderate or relative frequency with which students score their father's support, the values given regarding the significance of that help provided by their progenitor is considered fairly necessary, notwithstanding whether the problem is personal or social. The scores near to "5" demonstrate this.

Anova of the Scale's Factorial Structure based on Gender

Next, the results are set forth regarding the Anova analysis carried out within this Scale based on gender, taking into account the main support for each of the dimensions.

Table 9.
Anova of the main searches for support on the Personal and Social Support Scales based on gender

Dimensions	Support		*Average*	*S*	*gl*	*F*	*Sig**
Personal problem	Father	Male	3.51	1.560	770	5.041	.025
		Female	3.23	1.645			
	Mother	Male	4.22	1.452	787	7.542	.006
		Female	4.52	1.387			
	Siblings	Male	2.80	1.688	762	23.871	.000
		Female	3.45	1.708			
	Friends	Male	4.07	1.489	789	6.633	.010
		Female	4.36	1.392			
	Partner	Male	3.49	1.963	755	29.414	.000
		Female	4.33	1.881			
Problem with parents	Father	Male	2.94	2.021	572	.044	.834
		Female	2.90	1.962			
	Mother	Male	3.40	2.011	585	.502	.479
		Female	3.53	2.027			
	Siblings	Male	3.34	2.008	573	4.460	.035
		Female	3.73	1.904			
	Friends	Male	3.17	1.872	587	5.254	.022
		Female	3.56	1.835			
	Partner	Male	3.36	2.093	568	16.007	.000
		Female	4.15	2.053			
Problem with friends	Father	Male	2.84	1.753	659	2.254	.134
		Female	2.61	1.745			
	Mother	Male	3.51	1.799	671	15.300	.000
		Female	4.12	1.788			
	Siblings	Male	2.71	1.830	653	7.279	.007
		Female	3.16	1.928			
	Friends	Male	4.11	2.083	671	.023	.881
		Female	4.14	2.060			
	Partner	Male	3.32	1.796	646	24.737	.000
		Female	4.22	1.755			
Problem with partner	Father	Male	2.72	1.731	502	9.205	.003
		Female	2.22	1.644			
	Mother	Male	3.50	1.846	510	.148	.701
		Female	3.57	1.929			
	Siblings	Male	2.57	1.854	501	3.896	.049
		Female	2.95	1.974			
	Friends	Male	4.26	1.591	512	2.226	.136
		Female	4.50	1.580			
	Partner	Male	2.75	2.089	508	4.098	.043
		Female	3.18	2.192			

Note. * *t* Student: The difference of averages is significant $p \leq .05$

In general, female scores are more positive than male scores for each type of support included in the dimension. Likewise, there are some clichés that stand out; for instance, male students prefer to talk with their father when they have a personal problem, despite both parents having positive scores, whereas female students mainly turn to their mother.

Regarding the significance between the items that make up each dimension based on gender, it can be stated that, out of the 20 combinations performed, there are 14 differences. Thus, with regard to the personal problem dimension, all the elements analyzed show differences. Regarding this difficulty, it appears that female students turn to their partner ($P = .000$) or siblings ($p = .000$) for support more than male students, whereby the latter tend to turn more frequently to their friends ($p = .010$) and father ($p = .0025$). It is worth noting that both genders, when deciding who to turn to for support upon a problem with their parents, both genders share the same criteria regarding their father or mother; to this regard, there were no important differences ($p = .834$; $p = .479$).

It can be jointly explained that female students turn to their mother, friends and partner for centered support, whilst male students prefer support from their mother, father and friends.

Bi-varied Correlations

The *table 10* denotes the correlation between the types of family communication on the *Parents and Offspring Communication Scale*, the search for support from the mother and searching for support from the father variable from the *Personal and Social Support Scale* and the gender variable.

Table 10.
Bi-varied correlations between the factorial structure of the Parents and Offspring Communication Scale, the searching for support from their mother and searching for support from their father variables from the Personal and Social Support Scales and the gender variable.

		Gender	C1 mother	C2 mother	C3 mother	C1 father	C2 father	C3 father	B1 mother	B1 father
Gender	Pearson Correlat.	1	.052	.067(*)	-.028	-.051	.043	-.021	.039	.001
	Sig. (bill)		.118	.045	.404	.138	.216	.544	.250	.988
	N	906	891	890	888	841	841	838	885	836
C1 mother	Pearson Correlat.	.052	1	-.364(**)	-.438(**)	.464(**)	-.220(**)	-.318(**)	.304(**)	.270(**)
	Sig. (bill)	.118		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	891	891	890	888	832	832	829	878	822
C2 mother	Pearson Correlat.	.067(*)	-.364(**)	1	.569(**)	-.225(**)	.722(**)	.455(**)	-.134(**)	-.158(**)
	Sig. (bill)	.045	.000		,000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	890	890	890	888	831	832	829	877	821
C3 mother	Pearson Correlat.	-.028	-.438(**)	.569(**)	1	-.252(**)	.460(**)	.818(**)	-.124(**)	-.102(**)
	Sig. (bill)	.404	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.003
	N	888	888	888	888	829	830	829	875	819
C1 father	Pearson Correlat.	-.051	.464(**)	-.225(**)	-.252(**)	1	-.347(**)	-.369(**)	.208(**)	.440(**)
	Sig. (bill)	.138	.000	.000	,000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	841	832	831	829	841	840	837	821	829
C2 father	Pearson Correlat.	.043	-.220(**)	.722(**)	.460(**)	-.347(**)	1	.559(**)	-.134(**)	-.215(**)
	Sig. (bill)	.216	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	841	832	832	830	840	841	838	821	829
C3 father	Pearson Correlat.	-.021	-.318(**)	.455(**)	.818(**)	-.369(**)	.559(**)	1	-.093(**)	-.166(**)
	Sig. (bill)	.544	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.007	.000
	N	838	829	829	829	837	838	838	818	826
B1 mother	Pearson Correlat.	.039	.304(**)	-.134(**)	-.124(**)	.208(**)	-.134(**)	-.093(**)	1	.755(**)
	Sig. (bill)	.250	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.007		.000
	N	885	878	877	875	821	821	818	885	821
B1 father	Pearson Correlat.	.001	.270(**)	-.158(**)	-.102(**)	.440(**)	-.215(**)	-.166(**)	.755(**)	1
	Sig. (bill)	.988	,000	.000	.003	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	836	822	821	819	829	829	826	821	836

Note. Components: C1: Open and flexible communication; C2: Aggressive communication; C3: Fear to communicate. B1: Search for support * The correlation is significant at level .05 (bilateral). ** The correlation is significant at level .01 (bilateral).

It is noticeable that there are positive and negative correlations between some the parameters of the analyzed variables.

Hence, it is observed that between the gender variable and the aggressive type of communication with the mother, there is an importance coefficient of $r = .067$. This data confirms the results that were obtained from the contrast analysis (table 4 and table 5). Therefore, it can be corroborated that the family relationship between female students and their mother are a little tenser and are prone to slightly negative behaviors. On the other hand, intense negative correlation coefficients are appreciated between the open and flexible communication with the mother and, for instance, fear to communicate with the mother ($r = .438$). Regarding the variables search for support in the mother and the father, both have a positive correlation with the gender and the open and flexible type of communication, both with the father and mother, whereby the bilateral indexes are negative for the types of communication with negative content, i.e., aggressive communication and fear to communicate.

In definite, the analysis of the results confirms that university students, both male and female, have and establish optimal family relationships with their parents. Similarly, it can be added that they also search for support from their parents when they have a personal or relationship problem; they turn to them, as well as to their friends and partner. Furthermore, it is noticeable that in the father/mother and offspring relationship, *open and flexible communication of male and female students with their mother and with their father, and the female student's aggressive communication with the mother* could be considered discriminative items and, potentially predictable, of how relationships between parents and their university-level offspring work. At the same time, the studied components and dimensions present a strong relationship, they are linked between themselves and, it could be concluded that they are basic and key elements in order to understand, nowadays, the relationship between parents and their offspring.

Discussion and Conclusions

The results demonstrate that, overall, university students have an open and flexible communication with both their parents. Musito & Callejas (2017)

reached the same results stating that the most common pattern is that family communication is open and functional among the members of the family. Students declared that they feel listened to and understood by their father and mother and, at the same time, asserted that their parents respect their feelings and emotions. The work performed by Rodríguez et al. (2016) concludes that the youth that communicate positively with their parents have more social resources that allow them to have better relationships with their peers. Research confirms that there are gender differences, a paper published by Jiménez & Delgado (2002), confirmed that family communication is predetermined by gender. Aggressive communication has been observed in female students towards their mother as opposed to male students, whereby the former show more conflictive behaviors and attitudes towards their mother than towards their father. Pursuant to the results extracted, significant differences can be appreciated in the "Aggressive communication" component of mothers' version of the Scale (p= 0.45). In this case, it is observed that although the relationship of both genders with their mother does not present any offensive and/or aggressive behaviors, it would appear that young women, on occasions, show negative attitudes towards their mother whilst their male counterpart do not. Currently, there continues to be gender differences in parent-offspring relationships during the process of adulthood (Lee & Goldstein, 2016). This affirmation may be confirmed in the discussion following the research performed by Noller & Bagi (1985), who state that the point of disagreement that mothers and daughters have may be due to the fact that the latter, as opposed to males, talk with their mothers with more frequency. On the other hand, a study performed by Mendoza et al. (2006) revealed that talking with their mother becomes complicated or very complicated after the age of 15 years, and that females find it more complicated. It should be taken into account that the lifestyle of young women has changed over the last decades, yet there are activities that many families continue to consider as masculine, such as going out at night, drinking alcohol, partner relationships, etc. This situation of not accepting gender equality on behalf of some families may lead to arguments or offensive communication between mothers and daughters. The fact that an offensive model may exist at some point between family members could demonstrate the existence of conflicts within the family dynamics (Garduño et al., 2019). It is also worth

mentioning that Noller & Bagi (1985), had already discussed the fact that female students talk more frequently with their mother than male students. Hence, it could be understood that they may also reach disagreements with them. According to Garduño et al. (2019), the offensive model of communication between family members could also reflect the existence of conflicts in the family dynamic.

With regard to the results taken from the main sources of support available to university students, it is clear that students value these sources extremely positively, despite them turning to one person or another depending on the need they may have at each given time. The results provided in this paper are backed by the study carried out by Uribe, Orcasita, & Gómez, (2012) who asserted that having appropriate social support is beneficial for the individual development of the person, answering to transitional needs in procedures of personal development. Furthermore, where students feel that they have support from these sources, this translates into a better adaptation to the new university context and increases the resources available thereto to confront academic stress (Friedlander, Reid, Shupak, & Cribbie, 2007).

During adolescence and youth, the need to start prioritizing and distinguishing sources of support appears, and further to family, friends are also important (Hombrados & Castro, 2013); this assertion supports the results achieved in this paper. For the participating students, the main sources of support when confronting a problem, by order of preference, are: the mother, friends and the partner. Family support, with regard to the mother, is the most valued for the dimension "family problem", followed by friends and partner. However, where the need to solve a problem with their parents arises, university students turn to their partner for support; meanwhile, where they need to overcome a problem with their peers, they usually turn to their friends for support, firstly, and then to their partner. It is interesting to highlight that it is not until this stage of their life when their partner appears as a source of support, particularly valued by female students; moreover, it is known that the transition to adulthood is the period where a person starts searching for a partner as a project to create a family (Arnett, 2001). It is also worth highlighting that, despite the father receiving moderate scores, the students who were surveyed consider this person necessary where dealing with a social or personal problem.

On the other hand, taking into account the gender variable, it has been found that female students turn to their mother, friends and partner for centered support, whilst male students prefer to turn to their mother, father and friends for support.

As a final conclusion, it could be asserted that by examining the Parents-Offspring Communication Scale and the Personal and Social Support Scale, it has been possible to observe in the results of the different analysis carried out that there is a strong link between an *open and flexible communicative family relationship between university students and their parents and the support provided by their parents when encountering a personal and social problem.* This leads to the belief that, to date, and with so many technological advances, a society under constant changes and transformations, and a near-instant transmission of information and knowledge, the role of the family remains a basic source of support for the youth, notwithstanding the relationships that they may establish with their friends and partner (Fuentes et. al, 2003; Musitu, Buelga, Lila, & Cava, 2004).

Within the limitations of the hereby paper, and taking them into account for further empirical research and research field, it is noteworthy to state that this research has been carried out on university students. For future studies, it would be interesting to broaden the sample to other non-university youth groups in order to analyze the aspects focused on herein and contrast the results achieved. To this extent, it would also be necessary to examine the predictive capacity of the youth's different lifestyles (attitudes, behaviors, training, consumption of substances, etc.) against the variables studied by means of a multiple linear regression analysis and optical scaling, taking their lifestyles as independent variables and the type of family communication and personal and social support as dependent variables. Despite youth having other support networks, such as their friends or partner, they still consider their family as their main support network. Future research could focus on the sources of social support that university students rely on, in those cases where the family scenario is not adequate.

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Josué Artiles Rodríguez (corresponding author) is professor at University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain.

Contact Address: josue.artiles@ulpgc.es