

Relationship between the Quality of Family Functioning and Academic Achievement in Adolescents

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine the relationship between the quality of family functioning and academic achievement in adolescents, as well as to evaluate their extent as related to gender and age. The sample consisted of secondary school students aged 14 to 19 (N = 584) from six secondary schools in Vojvodina, Serbia. Data was collected using the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale (Olson et al., 1985) and the Questionnaire on Socio-Demographic Characteristics (Erdeš-Kavečan et al., 2010). Descriptive statistical methods, t-test for Independent Samples, two-way ANOVA and Linear Regression Analysis were used for data processing. The results obtained in this research paper indicate that the level of cohesion and the level of adaptability within the family are significant predictors of school success in adolescents. Concerning the respondents' gender, there were statistically significant differences in the evaluation of both dimensions of family functioning observed (i.e. cohesion, adaptability), as well as in the academic achievement in adolescents.

Key words: *academic achievement, school success, quality of family functioning*

Introduction

Research on the structure and models of family functioning usually involves measuring constructs or dimensions. In this way, functionality of the family system is provided, such as the construct of cohesion, adaptability, control and autonomy within the family, family coherence, educational styles and attitudes of parents, emotional attachment, strategies of coping with problems and difficulties, and many others (Parke, 2004; Olson, 2000; Mitić, 1997, as cited in: Zuković, 2008). However, there is

an evident consensus on the fact that cohesion and flexibility are two key dimensions in the study of the family functionality and understanding of the complexity of the entire family system (Gorall et al., 2006).

Studies of these constructs are most often based on the so-called 'systematic approach' in educational research in which the central place is given to the student's personality. The studies start with a systematic research of the phenomena influencing the development of personality, as well as the phenomena affecting the very person, motivating him or her to action and to specific relations both with the social and natural environment' (Oljača, 1998, p. 133). The results of the cited study (Oljača, 1998) provide the basis for understanding the strength of relations among the parts of the family subsystems. According to the systematic research approach ... 'fragmentary research and fragmentary research results, as well as the fragmentation of experiences, threaten our sense of connection between the world and the phenomena in it, creating cultural and cognitive impoverishments' (Oljača, 1990, p.17). The family is a system comprising subsystem components (relating to individuals, partnerships, parenthood and the subsystem created by children), where relations among the parts of the system are perceived as circulating (Goldner-Vukov, 1988).

The most familiar and the most common multi-dimensional model of the family functioning both in theory and practice is the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems, proposed by Olson and his associates. This model is an attempt to connect theoretical concepts and practical aims and objectives of research in the very approach to the family (Milojković et al., 1997). The model consists of two basic dimensions of functionality of the family systems: cohesion and flexibility. According to Olson, the author of this model, family cohesion is defined as a mutual emotional connection between family members. It includes the following family components: emotional attachment, support, family borders, time and friends, as well as interests and recreation (leisure). Family adaptability (flexibility), on the other hand, implies changes in the family management, roles and rules. Research of family adaptability is focused on the analysis of the extent to which the family and its members are willing to change (Olson, 2000). Many studies, motivated by the Circumplex Model, have proved that healthy, functional families differ from dysfunctional families in appropriate and close emotional relationships within the family, with high respect for individuality and autonomy. Also, it seems that they differ in the flexible family organization which includes an ability of the family to change, with clear distribution of roles, parental cooperation and collaboration, clear intergenerational boundaries and flexible control, with continuous negotiations (Olson, 2000; Kouneski, 2000).

Concerning adolescent families, a number of studies indicate that most families are flexible and able to adapt to new situations in spite of turbulent relationships related to this developmental phase of the family and that there is 'a process of interaction here, merging into unity, mutual influence, repeated differentiation and development of family members' individuality' (Oljača, 1989, p.309). Young people from incomplete

families are generally assessed as less cohesive than adolescents from complete families (Kouneski, 2000).

Concerning family functioning research in Serbia, a number of studies have been conducted following the initiative of Zotović and her associates (2007). One of the studies states that adolescent families significantly differ in the level of adaptability as related to the financial situation of the family. Namely, the lowest adaptability is registered in the families with very poor economic situation, whereas adaptability is the highest in the families with satisfactory economic situation. In her research, Erdeš-Kavečan (2009) was also interested in the differences in the functioning of structurally different families on the territory of Vojvodina, concluding that structurally different families differ significantly concerning the cohesion component of the quality of family functioning. Higher level of this dimension was found in complete families.

Analysing the structure of differences among the families observed, it is evident that in two-member family systems there was a greater support and emotional connection among the family members, as well as more frequent spending of quality free time. The same research also found that in single-parent families children were involved in the decision-making to a greater extent, and the obligations and rules within the family were more clearly defined. Earlier research by the same author (Erdeš-Kavečan, 2007) points to the fact that single-parent families do not significantly differ from two-parent families regarding adaptability. Based on the data obtained, it was established that single-parent families were highly adaptable and capable of responding to the developmental and non-developmental requirements of adaptation.

Family Context and Academic Achievement

Academic achievement has been a focus of research for several years now, resulting in a large number of research papers in this field (Bruinsma, 2004; Chen et al., 2000; Le et al., 2005; Robbins et al., 2004, cited from: Mohorić, 2008). This interest derives from the importance of the topic both for individuals and the society in general, 'since developmental changes in the essence are interactive, and they are the grounds for understanding behaviour and discovering the ways of functioning and conditions of complex educational processes occurring in the family' (Oljača, 1989, p.311). However, there are very few studies which comprehensively investigate the influence of the family and community, or their interaction on the academic adjustment and achievement in adolescents. Still, the research by Zubrick and his associates (Zubrick et al., 2000) identified a set of five key indicators of social and family functioning related to the child's welfare and academic competences. This set consists of human, psychological and social capital, the family income and the time the family members spend together. It was established that the factors listed were significant predictors of a child's adjustment and achievement at school (Zubrick et al., 1997; Ryan & Adams, 1998).

Socio-economic status has been found to have significant and pervasive influence over children's school achievement. In addition, higher standard of living has been

found to lead to more productive school-related work habits and academic skills. Kellaghan and his associates (Kellaghan et al., 1993, according to: Ryan & Adams, 1998), for example, observed that this relationship was probably largely due to the superior learning resources and experiences made available by parents with more substantial finances. Some other studies indicate that greater family dysfunction was associated with more hostile-ineffective parenting, resulting in reduced academic skills and learning effectiveness (Glasgow, Dornbusch, Troyer, Steinberg, & Ritter, 1997; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn & Dornbusch, 1991).

However, there is a small number of studies trying to answer the question whether in families with an adolescent child there is a connection between the quality of interaction among family members and the child's academic achievement. Therefore, the main goal of this research was to examine the relationship between the quality of family functioning and school achievement in adolescents, as well as to determine gender and age differences in the evaluation of the variables mentioned. It is assumed that the obtained data would contribute to a better understanding of family relations in adolescent families and that they would provide a significant source to the experts in supporting primarily parents, as well as all other family members concerning the academic functioning of adolescents.

Methods

Sample

The research sample consisted of 584 adolescents aged 14 to 19. The sample was divided into four age groups according to the grade they attended at secondary school. Accordingly, the sample consisted of 136 first grade students (23.3%), 198 second grade students (33.9%), 112 third grade students (19.2%), and 138 fourth grade students (23.6%). The number of male respondents was 283 (48.5%), while the number of female respondents was 301 (51.5%). The research data was randomly collected in six secondary schools in Vojvodina in cooperation with their expert associates, teachers and tutors. The questionnaires were anonymous and taking up to 45 minutes to fill in.

Instruments

The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale / FACES III (Olson et al., 1985)

The Scale was designed for the research of family functioning by considering its two dimensions: family cohesion and family adaptability. The Scale is based on the Circumplex Model, which supports the idea that there is a curvilinear relationship between the dimensions of cohesion and adaptability and effective family functioning. It means that extremely high and extremely low levels of cohesion and adaptability contribute to the dysfunction of a family system. FACES III is a self-response instrument, which consists of 20 items, with a five-point Likert-type response scale. Each dimension (cohesion and adaptability) is estimated through 10 items. Dimension of cohesion includes items that describe emotional attachment between family members, such as 'Family members ask each other for help' or 'Family members

feel very close to each other', while the dimension of adaptability includes items that indicate the extent to which family members are willing to adapt to developmental and non-developmental changes of their environment (e.g. 'In solving problems, the children's suggestions are followed' or 'Rules change in our family').

Types of the family system are identified based on the standardized values (balanced, extreme and mid-range types) of the Circumplex Model of family functioning. A further analysis in this research treats the results of the dimensions of cohesion and adaptability as continuous scores. Higher scores on the test indicate a higher level representation of the two dimensions of family functioning. Original validation studies indicate a high internal consistency of the Scale (.84 for cohesion, .79 for adaptability), and indicate a moderate inter-correlation of the two dimensions researched ($r = .30$) (Olson et al., 1985).

The following table contains the data on the internal consistency of the FACES III instrument used in this research.

Table 1. An Overview of the Reliability of Dimensions of Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale / FACES III (Olson et al., 1985.)

Dimensions	Cronbach's Alpha
FACES III-cohesion	.803
FACES III-adaptability	.597

The data from the table above indicates high reliability of the subscale *Cohesion*, while the lower reliability ($\alpha = .597$) is registered for the *Adaptability* subscale. Considering that other studies indicated lower internal consistency, as well as the multi-factorial structure of the aforementioned dimension (Edman, Cole & Howard, 1990; Erdeš-Kavečan, 2009), this ratio, indicating lower homogeneity of items within the aforementioned subscale, was likely and expected.

The Questionnaire on Socio-Demographic Characteristics (designed for the purposes of this research).

The Questionnaire on Socio-Demographic Characteristics has been designed in order to collect the basic data on the families of the students surveyed (e.g. the educational level of parents, their employment and financial situation of the family), information on gender, age, education, academic achievement and extracurricular activities of the adolescents (e.g. arts and crafts groups, sports, etc.). The *school success* variable of this Questionnaire was defined by the adolescents' average grade in all subjects at the end of the semester preceding the one during which they filled in the questionnaire. The higher average of the *School success* variable indicates better academic achievement.

Data Processing

The data in this research was processed using the software package 'Statistica for Windows', and the package 'SPSS for Windows 17.1'. The obtained research data was primarily normed and standardized. Transformation of the results, norming and

standardization was performed on the total sample, so that all results would be at the same or approximately same (metrical) level. Descriptive statistical methods (arithmetic mean, standard deviation, frequencies, percentages) were used in the original analysis, followed by an analysis of the internal metric characteristics of the scales. Determining the significance of differences between means for the groups of respondents (gender and age) was done using a t-test for independent samples, as well as ANOVA. In order to determine the connections between the variables observed, correlation and linear regression analysis were applied.

Results

Descriptive Indicators of the Quality of Family Functioning and School Success in the Sample

Table 2. Students' Perception of Their Families

	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
Cohesion	19	50	39.80	6.26
Adaptability	14	47	28.27	5.73

The average values in Table 2 indicate that *the level of cohesion* is higher than *the level of adaptability* in adolescent families, which means that students' perception of emotional connection between family members is higher than the flexibility and readiness of the family to cope with changes. Based on the average value of cohesion ($M=39.80$), the families involved in this research belong to the central type of family system (separate families), with the values for the level of adaptability ($M=28.27$) also illustrating a central type of the family system (structured families) (Olson et al., 1985).

Concerning *school success* of adolescents, the majority of adolescents had excellent (43%), or very good average grades (39%), while 15% of them had average (good) grades, 3% had sufficient, and only 1% had insufficient grades.

Considering socio-demographic variables, those relating to the parents' education, as well as the financial situation of the family have been analysed. It has been found that the highest percentage of both mothers (51.4%) and fathers (57%) finished secondary school, while the smallest number of parents finished only elementary school (8.2%; with 5.3% of this percentage being mothers and 2.9% fathers). Only 18.6% of parents had a Master's or PhD degree (8.9% mothers and 9.7% fathers).

The majority of respondents assessed the financial situation of their family as slightly below average (49.9%) or good (45.6%), while only 4.5% stated that they live in poor economic conditions.

Gender and Age Differences in the Quality of Family Functioning and School Success

The results indicate that both male and female secondary school students differ significantly in the assessment of both dimensions of family functioning researched ($p = .00$).

Taking into account the age difference, significant differences have appeared only in estimation of cohesion ($F = 3.15$, $p < .05$).

Table 3. Gender and Age Effect on Family Cohesion

Effect	SS	df	MS	F	p
Gender	406.839	1	406.839	11.373	.001
Age	633.698	4	158.424	4.429	.002
Gender * Age	472.435	4	118.109	3.302	.011

Table 3 indicates that gender and age have a significant effect in estimating family cohesion.

Figure 1 clearly indicates that girls have assessed *family cohesion* higher than boys. It is also clear that the estimate of the level of family cohesion drops slightly as the respondents' age increases. The gender-age interaction is significant and it indicates that male and female students of different age assess family cohesion in a different way. The level of assessment of family cohesion rises with girls aged 14, 16 and 18, whereas with boys of the same age there is a downward tendency.

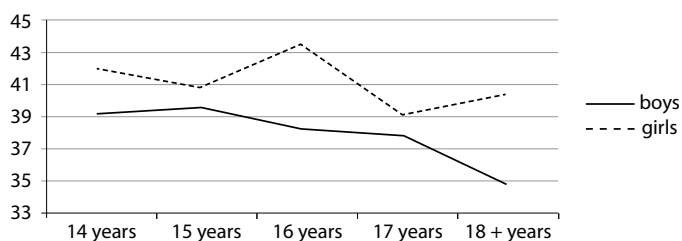


Figure 1. Overview of Gender and Age Differences as Related to the Level of Family Cohesion (Two-way ANOVA).

The *post hoc* analysis has indicated that with the cohesion estimation most differences exist among the students of the second and third grades (aged 16-17; $p = .000$). Statistically significant differences have also been found between those aged 15 and 17 (i.e. between students of the first and third grades of secondary schools; $p < .05$). With other age groups there were no significant differences related to cohesion.

Table 4. Gender and Age Effect on Family Adaptability

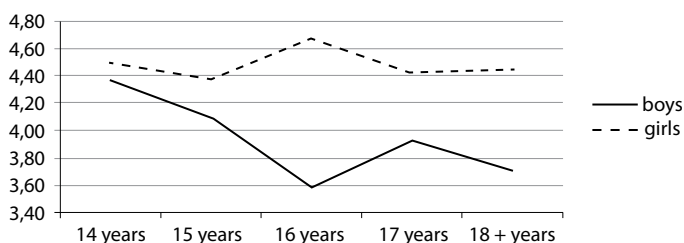
Effect	SS	df	MS	F	p
Gender	85.163	1	85.163	2.635	.105
Age	51.911	4	12.978	.402	.808
Gender * age	167.607	4	41.902	1.297	.270

Table 4 indicates that gender and age have no significant effect on the respondents' assessment of family adaptability, as well as that there is no significant interaction among the aforementioned variables.

Table 5. Gender and Age Effect on School Success

Effect	SS	df	MS	F	p
Gender	12.212	1	12.212	19.522	.000
Age	1.971	4	.493	.788	.533
Gender * age	16.449	4	4.112	6.574	.000

Further analysis has indicated that gender, unlike age, has a significant effect on adolescents' school success. Namely, girls are more successful in school (i.e. their school success is higher than the boys' $F = 19.522$, $p = .000$). Figure 2 indicates that the best school success is achieved by the girls in the second grade of secondary school while, at the same time, the boys of the same age achieve the poorest results. This interaction of the variables indicates that boys and girls aged 16 achieved different results in their school activities: while girls show a significant increase in their school performance, a significant decline is registered for boys. After that period, there is a slight decline in school success among girls, while in case of boys there is an abrupt rise in the third grade, succeeded by a near stagnation. However, the *post hoc* analysis has not indicated significant age differences concerning school success of the secondary school students.

**Figure 2.** An Overview of Gender and Age Differences as Related to School Success

Prediction of Academic Achievement in Adolescents Based on Variables of Family Functioning and Socio-Demographic Variables

In order to explore the prediction of academic achievement in adolescents on the basis of variables of family functioning and socio-demographic variables, linear regression analysis has been used.

There are five predictor variables: the quality of interaction among family members (the level of cohesion and adaptability) and the socio-demographic variables (the financial situation of the family, the parents' level of education), while the criterion variable is the adolescents' school success.

Table 6 indicates a detailed relationship between the predictor variables and school success as the criterion variable. The regression coefficient for the family cohesion ($\beta = .17$) and for the adaptability ($\beta = .16$) is statistically significant at the level $p < .001$. It means that these two variables are significant predictors of school success in adolescents. The socio-demographic variables do not appear to be significant predictors of school success. It is important to note that the explained variance is only 7%.

Table 6. Predictors of School Success in Adolescents: Family Functioning and Socio-Demographic Variables

Predictors	β	R ²	F	df
		.078	7.843**	5.465
Cohesion	.169**			
Adaptability	.158**			
Material situation of the family	.043			
Mother's education	.069			
Father's education	.019			

Note: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

Discussion

Data obtained in this research provides an insight into the quality of family functioning of adolescent families in Vojvodina, as well as the influence of family relations on the academic achievement in adolescents.

Research into the perception of family functioning shows that the levels of cohesion in the adolescent families are higher than the levels of adaptability. According to the Circumplex Model of family functioning, the examined families belong to the central type of family system, both concerning the level of cohesion (separated families), and that of adaptability (structured family). Such results indicate that these families belong to the balanced levels of the Circumplex Model according to the dimension of cohesion, which is usually demonstrated as more functional throughout the life cycle of the family.

In relation to the ability of the family to change the leadership and rules in situations where this is required from the family (i.e. family adaptability /flexibility/), the families have proven to be the environment which fosters democratic leadership, openness in collusion, with occasional involvement of children, and rules which are not so much modified. A combination of the dimensions of cohesion and adaptability points to the general type of family functioning, and it can be concluded that the families in this research are balanced. These results are consistent with the results of more than 250 studies which have applied the questionnaire FACES III (Thomas, Olson, 1993; Zuković, 2008) with results indicating that most of the families are balanced. Olson's research indicates that the families with adolescents have significantly lower scores on the dimension of cohesion than the families in other stages of development (families with small children, empty nest families). However, in this study, the distribution of scores on the dimension of cohesion shows a tendency towards higher values, which is opposite to Olson's findings.

A possible explanation of such differences could, on the one hand, be attributed to specificities of the local culture where the family is still a central pillar for an individual, supporting him/her in daily challenges, where family members are connected and turn to each other for help. On the other hand, independence of children in the local culture is realized much later in comparison to young people in the Western countries.

Therefore, adolescents are also emotionally much more attached to their primary families, so the very assessment of cohesiveness level is higher.

Concerning adolescents' school success, a majority of adolescents in the sample had an excellent (43%) or a very good (39%) grade, while the remaining 19% had average or very poor grades. Such results certainly require more consideration since they indicate that, on average, every fifth young person has problems when it comes to academic functioning. Although the study does not indicate a link between a family's financial situation and the academic success of adolescents, a series of earlier studies have proven that the economic status of the family can be a significant predictor of the academic achievement and aspiration of adolescents in relation to their future (Trice, 1991). According to Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider (2000), as well as many other authors, low economic status of a family can directly impose limitations on available resources, possibilities and support required for acquiring education. On the other hand, some studies have proven that family cohesion was related to adolescents' school engagement, but not directly to their academic achievement as well (Annunziata et al., 2006), stating that parental monitoring and parental educational style are essential in achieving school success (Steinberg et al., 1992). Bearing in mind that the educational atmosphere within families was not included in this research, testing its importance remains a task for future studies.

Regarding the respondents' gender, statistically significant differences in this research have been recorded for both dimensions of family functioning, where girls' assessment of emotional connection among family members (cohesion) and flexibility of the members for the developmental and non-developmental requirements of the environment (adaptability) is higher than the boys' assessment. Since it has been repeatedly determined that parents, especially mothers, generally prefer to talk about emotions with their daughters (Fivush, 1989), and that mothers provide emotional support to their children in their everyday interactions more often than fathers (Dunn et al., 1987; Fivush, 1989), it is assumed that the model of a mother's care and behaviour within the family is definitely significant for girls who acquire patterns of behaviour similar to that of their mothers. Girls also pay more attention to emotional exchange among family members than boys, estimating it thus as higher.

Regarding school success, the results have shown that girls are more successful in academic functioning, which is not surprising, since previous research (Jacobs, 2002) has indicated that education and good results at school are more valued in girls, and they are therefore more focused on learning. Also, the researchers attribute girls' greater interest in learning to the influence of traditional and stereotypical expectations and education of male and female students. Boys are more oriented towards sports, while girls are more focused on reading, watching videos and TV (Havelka et al., 1990; Larson, 2001). Also, the current findings inform the growing research base by suggesting that family process variables might interact to affect school success, and that gender differences may be present in these interactions (Pittman and

Chase-Lansdale, 2001; Richards et al., 2004; Sirin and Rogers-Sirin, 2005, according to: Annunziata et al., 2006). The same study indicates that parental monitoring and family cohesion contribute to the likelihood that girls would be engaged in school, that their influence is additive and that girls from cohesive homes with high parental monitoring are most likely to be more engaged in school. On the other hand, family cohesion affects school engagement of boys, but only in families that are good monitors.

This study explored the age differences as predictors of the level of cohesion. Namely, the obtained data indicates that junior adolescents assess the emotional connection among their family members as greater compared to the assessment of their senior colleagues, as well as that a slight decline in the family cohesion level is evident as the age rises. Similar results are found in Tafa and Baiocco's research (Tafa & Baiocco, 2009), where younger adolescents perceived a higher level of cohesion in the family, but at the same time displayed a more negative perception of family functioning, as expressed by a higher score on the Rigid and Enmeshed dimensions. These results are in line with the expectations, taking into account that a special aspect of the family functioning in this developmental stage is related to the developmental task of individuation and achievement of the adolescents' identity, and that the adolescent-parent relationship in this period of development is characterized by an increased reduction in the emotional attachment, increased independence, and decision-making (Kapor-Stanulović, 2007). A possible explanation could also be that older adolescents have a more realistic picture of their family's functioning as compared to that of the younger adolescents, who are more prone to idealizing the institution of the family.

Although statistically significant age differences have not been found concerning the academic achievement, it is necessary to point out that the students attending the first and the final grade have been the most successful, while the so-called 'sandwich' generations are the least motivated to learn. Such results could be attributed to the fact that students who have just enrolled secondary school want to prove themselves to their peers and teachers through their achievements, hence they invest more effort and try harder in order to present themselves and be accepted, because being accepted by classmates is both academic and social goal that has a direct and positive impact on school achievement (Wentzel & Asher, 1995). The students in the fourth grade become aware of the significance of school success for further education, enrolling the college, etc., and therefore they are motivated to achieve it. The latter data is very important both for management and administrative services of secondary schools, which certainly have a major role in creating educational programmes that would additionally motivate students of all ages, encouraging thus their intrinsic motivation for high academic achievement.

This research paper has obtained further significant data concerning school success. It has been established that the most evident difference in the results regarding school activities exists between boys and girls aged 16: with girls of this age there is a significant rise, whereas with boys there is a significant decline in their school success.

The data cannot be linked to any existing theory or results of similar research, so they are attributed to the sample randomness.

This paper has researched the relationship of the quality of family functioning and academic achievement, and has determined that the cohesion and adaptability dimension are significant predictors of adolescents' academic achievement. Numerous studies support this finding and indicate that higher family cohesion facilitates academic achievement and social adjustment in school (Brody et al., 1995; Brody, Stoneman and Flor, 1996; Barber and Buehler, 1996; Carbonell, Reinherz and Giaconia, 1998; Georgiou, 1995; Weist, Freedman, Paskewitz, Proescher and Flaherty, 1995, according to: Adams & Ryan, 2000). Concerning the claim that family cohesion describes the way all family members interact with each other and the type of atmosphere that characterizes the family as a unit, research findings suggest that an adolescent's educational aspirations and effort applied to school performance may depend on a supportive and cohesive family climate.

Conclusion

Data obtained from the research points to the state and characteristics of the relationships within adolescent families which have, in spite of the increasing tendency of adolescents for individualization, appeared to be a significant source of support in daily academic functioning of the young. Therefore, it is very important to introduce the experts to the data and implicate the significance of using family as a secure base for the elaboration of promotional educational programmes which would deal with academic motivation and work effectiveness of adolescents, as well as explain the effects of family interactions on academic functioning of the young to their parents.

Although it is believed that this study is a significant contribution to the existing research on the impact of family relations on the academic achievement of young people, particular limitations should be noted. Firstly, the results of the research have been based on the adolescents' self-evaluation, and in order to obtain an appropriate insight into family functioning it would be relevant to involve other family members in further research. Given the complexity of the structure of family members' relations and the unique contribution of each of its members to the family dynamics, further investigation of family relationships should be based on longitudinal studies in order to obtain a more adequate insight into the development of relations and the atmosphere within the family. Some causes of poor academic functioning of individuals are difficult to detect. In this light, the more precise information could be obtained by examining personal characteristics of both parents and adolescents, as well as examining the context in which the academic functioning of adolescents has been taking place.

The issues discussed in this paper certainly provide an inexhaustible source for studies in the field of pedagogy, psychology, as well as other social studies and humanities dealing primarily with family and improvement of pedagogical and

developmental culture of educational institutions pointing to the need for the development of strategies in the social sphere that would provide possibilities for the development of academic skills among the young, and facilitate active cooperation between individual family members and the school environment.

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Odnos između kvalitete funkcioniranja obitelji i akademskog postignuća adolescenata

Sažetak

Cilj je rada ispitati odnos između kvalitete funkcioniranja obitelji i akademskog postignuća adolescenata, kao i procijeniti njihov uspjeh s obzirom na spol i dob. Uzorak se sastojao od učenika srednjih škola u dobi od 14 do 19 godina (N = 584) iz šest srednjih škola u Vojvodini, u Republici Srbiji. Podatci su prikupljeni pomoću Skale procjene obiteljske prilagodljivosti i povezanosti (Olson i sur., 1985) i Upitnika o sociodemografskim obilježjima (Erdeš-Kavečan i sur., 2010). Pri obradi podataka korištene su deskriptivne statističke metode, t-test za nezavisne uzorke, dvosmjerna ANOVA i linearna regresijska analiza. Dobiveni rezultati u ovom istraživačkom radu pokazuju da su razina povezanosti i prilagodljivosti unutar obitelji značajni prediktori školskog uspjeha u adolescenata. Pri usporedbi prema spolu, statistički značajne razlike utvrđene su u procjeni obje promatrane dimenzije funkcioniranja obitelji (tj. povezanost, prilagodljivost), kao i u akademskom postignuću adolescenata.

Ključne riječi: akademsko postignuće, školski uspjeh, kvaliteta funkcioniranja obitelji

Uvod

Istraživanje strukture i modela funkcioniranja obitelji obično podrazumijeva mjerenje konstrukata ili dimenzija. Na taj je način osigurana funkcionalnost obiteljskog sustava, kao na primjer pomoću konstrukta povezanosti, prilagodljivosti, kontrole i autonomije unutar obitelji, obiteljske povezanosti, odgojnih stilova i stavova roditelja, emocionalne povezanosti, strategija suočavanja s problemima i poteškoćama, te mnogih drugih (Parke, 2004; Olson, 2000; Mitić, 1997, citirano u: Zuković, 2008). Međutim, jasan je konsenzus o činjenici da su povezanost i fleksibilnost dvije ključne dimenzije u istraživanju obiteljske funkcionalnosti i razumijevanju složenosti cjelokupnog obiteljskog sustava (Gorall i sur., 2006).

Istraživanja ovih konstrukata najčešće se temelje na takozvanom 'sustavnom pristupu' u istraživanju odgoja i obrazovanja u kojemu središnje mjesto zauzima osobnost učenika. Studije počinju sustavnim istraživanjima pojava koje utječu na

razvoj ličnosti, kao i pojava koje utječu na samu osobu, potičući tu osobu na djelovanje i stvaranje specifičnih odnosa s društvenom i prirodnom okolinom (Oljača, 1998, str. 133). Rezultati navedenog istraživanja (Oljača, 1998) pružaju osnovu za razumijevanje snage odnosa među dijelovima obiteljskih podsustava. Prema sustavnom pristupu u istraživanju ... 'fragmentarna istraživanja i fragmentarni rezultati istraživanja, kao i fragmentacija iskustava, ugrožavaju naš osjećaj povezanosti svijeta i pojava u njemu, stvarajući kulturno i kognitivno siromaštvo' (Oljača, 1990, str. 17). Obitelj je sustav koji čine komponente podsustava (koje se odnose na pojedince, partnerstva, roditeljstvo i podsustav koji stvaraju djeca), gdje se odnosi među dijelovima sustava percipiraju kao kružni odnosi (Goldner-Vukov, 1988).

Najpoznatiji i najčešći višedimenzionalni model funkcioniranja obitelji u teoriji i praksi je Kružni model bračnih i obiteljskih sustava, koji su predložili Olson i suradnici. Taj je model pokušaj povezivanja teorijskih koncepata i praktičnih ciljeva s ciljevima istraživanja u samom pristupu obitelji (Milojković i sur., 1997). Model se sastoji od dvije osnovne dimenzije funkcionalnosti obiteljskog sustava: povezanosti i fleksibilnosti. Prema Olsonu, autoru ovoga modela, obiteljska se povezanost definira kao zajednička emocionalna povezanost članova obitelji. To uključuje sljedeće komponente obitelji: emocionalnu privrženost, podršku, obiteljske granice, vrijeme i prijatelje, kao i interese i rekreaciju (slobodno vrijeme). Obiteljska prilagodljivost (fleksibilnost), s druge strane, podrazumijeva promjene u vođenju obitelji, ulogama i pravilima. Istraživanje obiteljske prilagodljivosti usmjereno je na analizu granice do koje su obitelj i njezini članovi spremni na promjenu (Olson, 2000). Mnoga istraživanja, motivirana Kružnim modelom pokazala su da je razlika između zdrave, funkcionalne obitelji i disfunkcionalne obitelji u primjerenim i bliskim emocionalnim odnosima unutar obitelji, i naglašenom poštivanju individualnosti i autonomije. Također, ispostavilo se da se razlikuju u fleksibilnosti organizacije obitelji koja uključuje sposobnost obitelji za promjenu, s jasnom raspodjelom uloga, roditeljskom suradnjom i zajedničkim radom, jasnim međugeneracijskim granicama i fleksibilnom kontrolom, uz kontinuirano pregovaranje (Olson, 2000; Kouneski, 2000).

Što se tiče obitelji s adolescentima, brojne studije pokazuju da je većina obitelji ipak fleksibilna i sposobna prilagoditi se novim situacijama, unatoč turbulentnim odnosima na ovom razvojnom stupnju obitelji i da 'ovdje postoji proces interakcije, spajanje u jedinstvo, međusobni utjecaj, ponovljena diferencijacija i razvoj individualnosti članova obitelji' (Oljača, 1989, str. 309). Mladi iz nepotpunih obitelji općenito se smatraju manje povezanim od adolescenata iz cjelovitih obitelji (Kouneski, 2000).

Što se tiče istraživanja funkcioniranja obitelji u Srbiji, nekolicina istraživanja provedena je na inicijativu Zotović i njezinih suradnika (2007). Jedna od studija navodi da se obitelji s adolescentima značajno razlikuju prema stupnju prilagodljivosti u odnosu na financijsku situaciju obitelji. Naime, najniža prilagodljivost uočena je u obiteljima koje su u iznimno lošim ekonomskim prilikama, dok je prilagodljivost najviša u obiteljima sa zadovoljavajućom materijalnom situacijom. U svom istraživanju, Erdeš-Kavečan (2009)

je također pokazala zanimanje za razlike u funkcioniranju strukturno različitih obitelji na području Vojvodine, zaključivši da se strukturno različite obitelji značajno razlikuju s obzirom na komponentu povezanosti kao dijela kvalitete funkcioniranja obitelji. Viša razina ove dimenzije uočena je u cjelovitim obiteljima.

Analizirajući strukturu razlika između promatranih obitelji, u dvočlanim obiteljskim sustavima uočena je veća podrška i emocionalna povezanost među članovima obitelji, kao i češće kvalitetno provođenje slobodnog vremena. Isto je istraživanje također pokazalo da su u obiteljima s jednim roditeljem djeca u većoj mjeri bila uključena u donošenje odluka, te da su obveze i pravila unutar obitelji bila jasnije definirana. Ranije istraživanje iste autorice (Erdeš-Kavečan, 2007) ukazuje na činjenicu da se jednoroditeljske obitelji ne razlikuju značajno od obitelji s dva roditelja po pitanju prilagodljivosti. Na temelju dobivenih podataka, utvrđeno je da su jednoroditeljske obitelji značajno prilagodljive i sposobne odgovoriti na razvojne i nerazvojne potrebe prilagodbe.

Obiteljsko okruženje i akademsko postignuće

Akademsko postignuće u središtu je istraživanja posljednjih nekoliko godina, što je rezultiralo velikim brojem znanstvenih radova u tom području (Bruinsma, 2004; Chen i sur., 2000; Le i sur., 2005; Robbins i sur., 2004, citirano u: Mohorić, 2008). Takvo zanimanje proizlazi iz važnosti teme, kako za pojedince tako i za društvo u cjelini, budući da su razvojne promjene u biti interaktivne i osnova su za razumijevanje ponašanja i otkrivanje načina djelovanja i uvjeta složenih odgojno-obrazovnih procesa u obitelji (Oljača, 1989, str. 311). Međutim, postoji vrlo mali broj istraživanja koja iscrpno i detaljno istražuju utjecaj obitelji i zajednice ili njihove interakcije na prilagodbu školi i postignuće kod adolescenata. Ipak, istraživanje koje su proveli Zubrick i suradnici (Zubrick i sur., 2000) utvrdilo je skup od pet ključnih pokazatelja društvenog i obiteljskog funkcioniranja u vezi s dobrobiti djeteta i akademskim kompetencijama. Ovaj set sastoji se od ljudskog, psihološkog i društvenog kapitala, obiteljskih prihoda i vremena koje članovi obitelji provode zajedno. Utvrđeno je da su navedeni čimbenici značajni prediktori djetetove prilagodbe i postignuća u školi (Zubrick i sur., 1997; Ryan i Adams, 1998).

Istraživanja su pokazala da socio-ekonomski status ima značajan i sveobuhvatan utjecaj na dječji uspjeh u školi. Nadalje, uočeno je i da viši životni standard dovodi do produktivnijih radnih navika vezanih uz školske obveze i akademske vještine. Na primjer, Kellaghan i njegovi suradnici (Kellaghan i sur., 1993, prema: Ryan i Adams, 1998) primijetili su da je taj odnos vjerojatno u velikoj mjeri posljedica vrhunskih izvora učenja i iskustava koja su djeci omogućili roditelji značajnijih financijskih mogućnosti. Neke druge studije pokazuju da je značajnija disfunkcionalnost obitelji povezana s izraženijim neprijateljskim i neučinkovitim stilom roditeljstva, što ima za posljedicu smanjene akademske vještine i smanjenu učinkovitost u učenju (Glasgow, Dornbusch, Troyer, Steinberg, i Ritter, 1997; Steinberg, Mountsi, Lamborn i Dornbusch, 1991).

Međutim, postoji nekoliko studija koje pokušavaju odgovoriti na pitanje postoji li u obiteljima s adolescentima veza između kvalitete interakcije između članova obitelji

i djetetovog akademskog postignuća. Stoga je glavni cilj ovog istraživanja ispitati odnos između kvalitete funkcioniranja obitelji i školskog uspjeha adolescenata, kao i odrediti razlike u procjeni navedenih varijabli prema spolu i dobi. Pretpostavlja se da će dobiveni podatci pridonijeti boljem razumijevanju obiteljskih odnosa u obiteljima s adolescentima i da će osigurati značajan izvor podataka stručnjacima pri pružanju podrške, prvenstveno roditeljima, ali i svim ostalim članovima obitelji, kada je u pitanju funkcioniranje adolescenata u akademskom okruženju.

Metode

Uzorak

Uzorak istraživanja sastojao se od 584 adolescenata u dobi od 14 do 19 godina. Uzorak je bio podijeljen u četiri dobne skupine prema razredu srednje škole koji su ispitanici pohađali. Prema tome, uzorak se sastojao od 136 učenika prvih razreda (23,3%), 198 učenika drugih razreda (33,9%), 112 učenika trećih razreda (19,2%), te 138 učenika četvrtih razreda (23,6%). Uzorak je činilo 283 ispitanika (48,5%) i 301 (51,5%) ispitanica. Podatci su prikupljeni slučajnim odabirom u šest srednjih škola u Vojvodini, u suradnji sa stručnim suradnicima i nastavnicima škola. Upitnici su bili anonimni i ispitanicima je bilo potrebno do 45 minuta da ih ispune.

Instrumenti

Skala procjene obiteljske prilagodljivosti i povezanosti/FACES III (Olson i sur., 1985)

Skala je konstruirana za istraživanja funkcioniranja obitelji s obzirom na dvije dimenzije: obiteljska povezanost i obiteljska prilagodljivost. Skala se temelji na Kružnom modelu koji podržava ideju da postoji krivolinijski odnos između dimenzija povezanosti i prilagodljivosti i učinkovitog funkcioniranja obitelji. To znači da ekstremno visoke i ekstremno niske razine povezanosti i prilagodljivosti pridonose disfunkcionalnosti obiteljskog sustava. FACES III je instrument samoprocjene koji se sastoji od 20 čestica, s pet ponuđenih odgovora na skali Likertova tipa. Svaka dimenzija (povezanost i prilagodljivost) se procjenjuje u 10 čestica. Dimenzija povezanosti uključuje čestice koje opisuju emocionalnu povezanost između članova obitelji, kao što su 'Članovi obitelji obraćaju se jedni drugima za pomoć' ili 'Članovi obitelji osjećaju se vrlo bliski jedni drugima', dok dimenzija prilagodljivosti uključuje čestice koje pokazuju koliko su članovi obitelji spremni prilagoditi se razvojnim i nerazvojnim promjenama u svojoj okolini (npr. 'Prijedlozi djece uzimaju se u obzir pri rješavanju problema' ili 'Pravila se mijenjaju u našoj obitelji').

Vrste obiteljskog sustava identificiraju se temeljem standardiziranih vrijednosti (balansirani, ekstremni i srednji tip) u Kružnom modelu funkcioniranja obitelji. Daljnja analiza u ovom istraživanju obrađuje rezultate dimenzija povezanosti i prilagodljivosti kao kontinuirane rezultate. Viši rezultati na testu pokazuju viši stupanj zastupljenosti dviju dimenzija funkcioniranja obitelji. Izvorna istraživanja valjanosti ukazuju na visoku unutarnju konzistenciju ljestvice (.84 za povezanost, .79

za prilagodljivosti), te pokazuju umjerenu interkorelaciju dviju istraživanih dimenzija ($r = 0,30$) (Olson i sur., 1985).

Sljedeća tablica sadrži podatke o unutarnjoj konzistenciji instrumenta FACES III koji se koristi u ovom istraživanju.

Tablica 1.

Podatci prikazani u Tablici 1 pokazuju visoku pouzdanost podskale *Povezanost*, dok je niža pouzdanost ($\alpha = 0,597$) dobivena za podskalu *Prilagodljivost*. S obzirom da druga istraživanja pokazuju nižu unutarnju konzistenciju, kao i na višefaktorsku strukturu spomenute dimenzije (Edman, Cole i Howard, 1990; Erdeš-Kavečan, 2009), ovaj omjer, koji ukazuje na nižu homogenost čestica unutar spomenute podskale, bio je očekivan.

Upitnik o sociodemografskim obilježjima (konstruiran za potrebe ovog istraživanja)

Upitnik o sociodemografskim obilježjima konstruiran je kako bi se prikupili osnovni podatci o obiteljima anketiranih učenika (npr. stupanj obrazovanja roditelja, njihovo zaposlenje i obiteljska financijska situacija), podatci o spolu, dobi, obrazovanju, akademskom postignuću i izvannastavnim aktivnostima adolescenata (npr. umjetnost i tehničke aktivnosti, sportske aktivnosti, itd.). Varijabla *školski uspjeh* ovoga Upitnika definirana je prema prosječnoj ocjeni iz svih predmeta tijekom semestra koji je prethodio semestru u kojem su adolescenti ispunjavali upitnik. Veći prosjek varijable *školski uspjeh* pokazuje bolje akademsko postignuće.

Obrada podataka

Podatci u ovom istraživanju obrađeni su pomoću programskog paketa 'Statistica za Windowse', i paketa 'SPSS za Windowse 17.1'. Dobiveni podatci istraživanja prvo su normirani i standardizirani. Transformacija rezultata, normiranje i standardizacija provedeni su na cjelokupnom uzorku kako bi svi rezultati bili na istoj ili približno istoj (metričkoj) razini. Deskriptivne statističke metode (aritmetička sredina, standardna devijacija, frekvencije i postotci) korišteni su u izvornoj analizi, nakon čega je provedena analiza unutarnjih metričkih značajki skala. Značajnost razlika između vrijednosti aritmetičkih sredina za skupine ispitanika (spol i dob) određena je pomoću t-testa za nezavisne uzorke, kao i pomoću ANOVA testa. Da bi se odredila veza između promatranih varijabli, primijenjena je korelacija i linearna regresijska analiza.

Rezultati

Deskriptivni pokazatelji kvalitete funkcioniranja obitelji i školskog uspjeha u promatranom uzorku

Tablica 2.

Prosječne vrijednosti u Tablici 2 pokazuju da je *razina povezanosti* viša od *razine prilagodljivosti* u obiteljima s adolescentima, što znači da je percepcija učenika o

emocionalnoj povezanosti između članova obitelji viša od fleksibilnosti i spremnosti obitelji da se nosi s promjenama. Na temelju prosječne vrijednosti dobivene za povezanost ($M = 39,80$) obitelji uključene u ovo istraživanje pripadaju središnjem tipu obiteljskog sustava (odvojene obitelji), a vrijednosti dobivene za razinu prilagodljivosti ($M = 28,27$) također ilustriraju središnji tip obiteljskog sustava (strukturirane obitelji) (Olson i sur., 1985).

Što se tiče *školskog uspjeha* adolescenata, većina adolescenata ostvarila je odličan (43%) ili vrlo dobar uspjeh (39%), dok je 15% njih ostvarilo dobar uspjeh, 3% dovoljan, a samo je 1% ispitanika s nedovoljnim uspjehom u školi.

Od sociodemografskih varijabli analizirane su one koje se odnose na obrazovanje roditelja, kao i na materijalnu situaciju u obitelji. Rezultati su pokazali da najveći postotak majki (51,4%) i očeva (57%) ima završenu srednju školu, dok je najmanji broj roditelja završio samo osnovnu školu (8,2%, od čega su 5,3 % majke i 2,9 % očevi). Samo 18,6% roditelja ima magisterij ili doktorat (8,9% majki i 9,7% očeva).

Većina ispitanika ocjenjuje da je obiteljska financijska situacija nešto ispod prosjeka (49,9%) ili dobra (45,6%), dok je samo 4,5% izjavilo da žive u lošim ekonomskim uvjetima.

Spolne i dobne razlike s obzirom na kvalitetu funkcioniranja obitelji i školski uspjeh

Rezultati su pokazali da se srednjoškolci i srednjoškolke značajno razlikuju u procjeni obiju istraživanih dimenzija funkcioniranja obitelji ($p = .00$).

Uzimajući u obzir razlike u dobi, značajne razlike pronađene su samo u procjeni povezanosti ($F = 3,15, p < .05$).

Tablica 3.

Tablica 3 pokazuje da spol i dob imaju značajan učinak na procjenu obiteljske povezanosti.

Slika 1 jasno pokazuje da su procjene učenica o *obiteljskoj povezanosti* više nego procjene učenika. Također se može uočiti da procjena razine obiteljske povezanosti blago pada s porastom dobi ispitanika. Interakcija spola i dobi značajna je, što znači da srednjoškolci i srednjoškolke različite dobi različito procjenjuju obiteljsku povezanost. Razina procjene obiteljske povezanosti raste kod djevojaka u dobi od 14, 16 i 18, dok kod dječaka iste dobi uočavamo tendenciju pada.

Slika 1.

Post hoc analiza je pokazala da kod procjene povezanosti razlike postoje uglavnom između učenika drugog i trećeg razreda (u dobi od 16-17, $p = .000$). Statistički značajne razlike uočene su i između ispitanika u dobi od 15 i 17 godina (tj. između učenika prvih i trećih razreda srednjih škola, $p < .05$). Između ostalih dobnih skupina nije bilo značajnih razlika s obzirom na varijablu povezanosti.

Tablica 4.

Tablica 4 pokazuje da spol i dob nemaju značajan utjecaj na procjenu ispitanika o prilagodljivosti obitelji, kao i da ne postoji značajna interakcija među navedenim varijablama.

Tablica 5.

Daljnja analiza pokazala je da spol, za razliku od dobi, ima značajan utjecaj na školski uspjeh adolescenata. Naime, učenice su uspješnije u školi (tj. ostvarile su bolji školski uspjeh od učenika $F = 19,522, p = .000$). Slika 2 pokazuje da su najbolji školski uspjeh ostvarile učenice drugih razreda srednje škole, dok su učenici iste dobi ostvarili najlošije rezultate. Ova interakcija varijabli pokazuje da su srednjoškolci i srednjoškolke u dobi od 16 godina postigli različite rezultate u svojim školskim aktivnostima: dok se kod srednjoškolke može uočiti značajno viši školski uspjeh, kod srednjoškolaca se bilježi značajan pad. Nakon ovog razdoblja, postoji blagi pad školskog uspjeha kod učenica, dok kod učenika dolazi do naglog porasta u trećem razredu, nakon čega slijedi stagnacija. Međutim, *post hoc* analiza nije pokazala značajne dobne razlike s obzirom na školski uspjeh učenika i učenica srednjih škola.

Slika 2.

Predviđanje akademskog postignuća adolescenata na temelju varijabli funkcioniranja obitelji i sociodemografskih varijabli

Kako bi se istražila predviđanja akademskog postignuća adolescenata na temelju varijabli funkcioniranja obitelji i sociodemografskih varijabli, primijenjena je linearna regresijska analiza.

Analizirano je pet prediktorskih varijabli: kvaliteta interakcije među članovima obitelji (stupanj povezanosti i prilagodljivosti) i sociodemografske varijable (materijalna situacija u obitelji, stupanj obrazovanja roditelja), dok je kriterijska varijabla školski uspjeh adolescenata.

Tablica 6 pokazuje detaljan odnos između prediktorskih varijabli i školskog uspjeha kao kriterijske varijable. Regresijski koeficijent za obiteljsku povezanost ($\beta = .17$) i za prilagodljivost ($\beta = .16$) statistički je značajan na razini $p < .001$. To znači da su ove dvije varijable značajni prediktori školskog uspjeha adolescenata. Sociodemografske varijable nisu se pokazale značajnim prediktorima školskog uspjeha. Važno je napomenuti da je udio objašnjene varijance svega 7%.

Tablica 6.

Rasprava

Podatci dobiveni ovim istraživanjem pružaju uvid u kvalitetu funkcioniranja obitelji s adolescentima u Vojvodini, kao i utjecaj obiteljskih odnosa na akademsko postignuće adolescenata.

Istraživanje percepcije funkcioniranja obitelji pokazuje da je razina povezanosti u obiteljima s adolescentima viša od razine prilagodljivosti. Prema Kružnom modelu funkcioniranja obitelji, ispitivane obitelji pripadaju središnjem tipu obiteljskog sustava,

kako s obzirom na stupanj povezanosti (izdvojene obitelji), tako i s obzirom na stupanj prilagodljivosti (strukturirana obitelj). Dobiveni rezultati upućuju na zaključak da ove obitelji pripadaju uravnoteženim razinama Kružnog modela prema dimenziji povezanosti, koja se obično očituje kao povišena funkcionalnost tijekom cijelog životnog ciklusa obitelji.

U odnosu na sposobnost obitelji da promijeni vodstvo i pravila u situacijama gdje je to potrebno (tj. obiteljska prilagodljivost /fleksibilnost/), obitelji su pokazale da potiču demokratsko vođenje, otvorenost, povremeno uključivanje djece u donošenju odluka i imaju pravila koja se ne mijenjaju previše. Kombinacija dimenzija povezanosti i prilagodljivosti upućuje na opći tip funkcioniranja obitelji i može se zaključiti da su obitelji u opisanom istraživanju uravnotežene. Ovi su rezultati u skladu s rezultatima dobivenim u više od 250 istraživanja koja su primijenila upitnik FACES III (Thomas, Olson, 1993; Zuković, 2008), a ukazuju da je većina obitelji uravnotežena. Istraživanje koje je proveo Olson pokazuje da su kod obitelji s adolescentima značajno niži rezultati na dimenziji povezanosti u odnosu na obitelji u drugim fazama razvoja (obitelji s malom djecom, obitelji 'praznoga gnijezda'). Međutim, u ovom istraživanju, distribucija rezultata na dimenziji povezanosti pokazuje tendenciju prema višim vrijednostima, što je u suprotnosti s Olsonovim rezultatima.

Moguće objašnjenje ovih razlika može se, s jedne strane, pripisati specifičnosti lokalne kulture, u kojoj je obitelj još uvijek glavni oslonac za pojedinca, izvor podrške u svakodnevnim izazovima, gdje su članovi obitelji povezani i obraćaju se jedni drugima za pomoć. S druge strane, samostalnost djece u lokalnoj kulturi ostvaruje se puno kasnije u odnosu na mlade iz zapadnih zemalja. Dakle, adolescenti su emocionalno mnogo više povezani sa svojim primarnim obiteljima, zbog čega je i sama procjena razine povezanosti viša.

Što se tiče školskog uspjeha adolescenata, većina adolescenata u uzorku ima odličan (43%) ili vrlo dobar (39%) uspjeh, dok je preostalih 19% postiglo prosječan ili vrlo loš uspjeh. Ove rezultate svakako treba više uzeti u obzir jer pokazuju da, u prosjeku, svaka peta mlada osoba ima problema kada je u pitanju akademski uspjeh. Iako istraživanje ne ukazuje na vezu između obiteljske financijske situacije i akademskog postignuća adolescenata, niz ranijih istraživanja pokazao je da ekonomski status obitelji može biti značajan prediktor akademskog postignuća i težnji adolescenata s obzirom na njihovu budućnost (Trice, 1991). Prema Csikszentmihalyi i Schneider (2000), kao i mnogim drugim autorima, nizak ekonomski status obitelji može izravno ograničiti raspoloživa sredstva, mogućnosti i potporu koja je potrebna za stjecanje obrazovanja. S druge strane, neka su istraživanja pokazala da je povezanost obitelji u svezi sa školskim angažmanom adolescenata, ali ne i izravno njihovim akademskim postignućem (Annunziata i sur., 2006), navodeći da su roditeljski nadzor i roditeljski odgojni stil ključni za postizanje školskog uspjeha (Steinberg i sur., 1992). Imajući na umu da odgojno-obrazovna atmosfera unutar obitelji nije bila uključena u ovo istraživanje, provjera važnosti ove varijable ostaje zadatak za buduća istraživanja.

Što se tiče spola ispitanika, statistički značajne razlike u ovom istraživanju zabilježene su za obje dimenzije obiteljskog funkcioniranja, gdje su procjene učenica o emocionalnim vezama među članovima obitelji (povezanost) i fleksibilnost članova vezano uz razvojne i nerazvojne uvjete u okolini (prilagodljivost) više u usporedbi s procjenama učenika. Kako je u više navrata utvrđeno da roditelji, osobito majke, općenito više vole govoriti o emocijama sa svojim kćerima (Fivush, 1989), te da majke pružaju emocionalnu podršku svojoj djeci u njihovim svakodnevnim interakcijama češće nego očevi (Dunn i sur., 1987; Fivush, 1989), pretpostavlja se da je model majčine brižnosti i ponašanja unutar obitelji svakako značajan djevojkama koje usvajaju obrasce ponašanja slične onima njihovih majki. Djevojke također pridaju više pozornosti emocionalnim interakcijama među članovima obitelji nego dječaci, zbog čega su i njihove procjene više.

Što se tiče školskog uspjeha, rezultati su pokazali da su djevojke uspješnije u akademskom funkcioniranju, što ne čudi, jer su prethodna istraživanja (Jacobs, 2002) pokazala da se obrazovanje i dobri rezultati u školi više cijene kod djevojaka, zbog čega su one više usmjerene na učenje. Također, istraživači pripisuju veći interes djevojaka za učenje utjecaju tradicionalnih i stereotipnih očekivanja i načina obrazovanja učenika i učenica. Učenici se više bave sportom, a učenice su više usmjerene na čitanje, gledanje videa i televizije (Havelka i sur., 1990, Larson, 2001). Također, suvremene spoznaje sugeriraju da varijable obiteljskog procesa mogu međusobno djelovati i time utjecati na školski uspjeh, te da spolne razlike mogu biti prisutne u tim međuodnosima (Pittman i Chase-Lansdale, 2001; Richards i sur., 2004; Sirin i Rogers-Sirin, 2005, prema: Annunziata i sur., 2006). Isto istraživanje pokazuje da roditeljski nadzor i obiteljska povezanost doprinose vjerojatnosti da će djevojke biti angažirane u školi, da je njihov utjecaj zbirni i da će djevojke iz povezanih obitelji s izraženim roditeljskim nadzorom najvjerojatnije biti više angažirane u školi. S druge strane, obiteljska povezanost utječe na školski angažman dječaka, ali samo u obiteljima u kojima je izražen roditeljski nadzor.

Ova studija istražuje dobne razlike kao prediktore razine povezanosti. Naime, dobiveni podatci pokazuju da mlađi adolescenti procjenjuju emocionalne veze među članovima obitelji višom ocjenom u odnosu na procjene svojih starijih kolega, kao i da s porastom dobi dolazi do blagog pada razine obiteljske povezanosti. Slične rezultate nalazimo i u istraživanju koje su proveli Tafa i Baiocco (2009), gdje su mlađi adolescenti percipirali veću razinu povezanosti u obitelji, ali u isto vrijeme su iskazali negativniju percepciju funkcioniranja obitelji, što je vidljivo iz viših rezultata prema dimenziji strogosti i bliskosti. Ovi su rezultati u skladu s očekivanjima, uzimajući u obzir da se poseban aspekt funkcioniranja obitelji u ovoj fazi razvoja odnosi na razvojne zadatke individualizacije i ostvarivanja identiteta adolescenata, te da se odnos između adolescenta i roditelja u ovom periodu razvoja odlikuje izraženijim smanjenjem emocionalne povezanosti, povećanjem samostalnosti i razvojem sposobnosti donošenja odluka (Kapoor-Stanulović, 2007). Moguće objašnjenje može

biti i da stariji adolescenti imaju realniju sliku funkcioniranja svoje obitelji u odnosu na mlađe adolescente, koji su više skloni idealiziranju institucije obitelji.

Iako statistički značajne dobne razlike nisu uočene s obzirom na akademski uspjeh, potrebno je naglasiti da su najbolji uspjeh postigli učenici koji pohađaju prvi i četvrti razred, dok je tzv. 'sendvič' generacija najmanje motivirana za učenje. Takvi rezultati mogu se pripisati činjenici da se učenici koji su tek upisali srednju školu žele dokazati pred svojim vršnjacima i nastavnicima kroz svoja postignuća, zbog čega i ulažu više truda i nastoje se pokazati u boljem svjetlu i biti prihvaćeni, jer biti prihvaćen od strane kolega nije samo akademski već je i društveni cilj koji ima izravan i pozitivan utjecaj na školsko postignuće (Wentzel i Asher, 1995). Učenici četvrtog razreda postaju svjesni važnosti školskog uspjeha za daljnje obrazovanje, upis na fakultet, itd., te su stoga motivirani i žele ga ostvariti. Ovi podaci su vrlo važni i za vodstvo i administrativne službe u srednjim školama, koji svakako imaju značajnu ulogu u stvaranju obrazovnih programa koji bi dodatno motivirali učenike svih dobi, potičući na taj način njihovu unutarnju motivaciju za visokim akademskim postignućem.

Ovim znanstvenim radom dobiveni su značajni podaci vezani uz školski uspjeh. Utvrđeno je da su najveće razlike u rezultatima vezanima uz školske aktivnosti između učenika i učenica u dobi od 16 godina: kod učenica ove dobi vidljiv je značajan porast, dok se kod učenika može zamijetiti značajan pad školskog uspjeha. Ovi podaci ne mogu se povezati niti s jednom od postojećih teorija ili rezultata sličnih istraživanja, pa se pripisuju slučajnosti uzorka.

Ovaj rad je istraživao odnos kvalitete funkcioniranja obitelji i akademskog postignuća te je utvrđeno da su dimenzije povezanosti i prilagodljivosti značajni prediktori akademskog postignuća adolescenata. Brojne studije podržavaju ove rezultate i upućuju na to da veća obiteljska povezanost pomaže pri akademskom uspjehu i socijalnoj prilagodbi u školi (Brody i sur., 1995; Brody, Stoneman i Flor, 1996; Barber i Buehler, 1996; Carbonell, Reinherz i Giaconia, 1998; Georgiou, 1995; Weist, Freedman, Paskewitz, Proescher i Flaherty, 1995, prema: Adams i Ryan, 2000). Vezano uz stav da obiteljska povezanost opisuje način na koji svi članovi obitelji sudjeluju u interakciji i atmosferu koja obilježava obitelj kao zajednicu, rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da težnje adolescenata vezane uz obrazovanje i trud koji ulažu da bi postigli uspjeh u školi može ovisiti o podršci i povezanosti unutar obitelji.

Zaključak

Rezultati dobiveni ovim istraživanjem ukazuju na stanje i osobine odnosa unutar obitelji s adolescentima koje se, unatoč povećanoj sklonosti adolescenata za individualizaciju, ipak čine značajnim izvorom podrške u svakodnevnom akademskom funkcioniranju mladih. Stoga je vrlo važno upoznati stručnjake s dobivenim podacima i ukazati na vrijednost obitelji kao sigurne baze za izradu promotivnih obrazovnih programa, koji će se baviti akademskom motivacijom i radnom učinkovitošću adolescenata, kao i objasniti roditeljima učinke obiteljskih interakcija na akademsko funkcioniranje mladih.

Iako se vjeruje da ovo istraživanje značajno pridonosi dosadašnjim istraživanjima o utjecaju obiteljskih odnosa na akademsko postignuće mladih ljudi, važno je napomenuti i određena ograničenja dobivenih rezultata. Prije svega, rezultati istraživačkog rada temelje se na samoprocjeni adolescenata te, kako bismo dobili odgovarajući uvid u funkcioniranje obitelji, bilo bi relevantno uključiti i ostale članove obitelji u daljnjim istraživanjima. S obzirom na složenost strukture odnosa među članovima obitelji i jedinstveni doprinos svakog člana obiteljskoj dinamici, dodatna ispitivanja obiteljskih odnosa treba temeljiti na longitudinalnim istraživanjima s ciljem dobivanja potpunije slike o razvoju odnosa i atmosferi unutar obitelji. Neke je uzroke lošeg akademskog funkcioniranja pojedinaca teško otkriti. Stoga bi se preciznije informacije mogle dobiti uvidom u osobine oba roditelja i adolescenata, kao i uvidom u kontekst u kojem se odvija akademsko funkcioniranje adolescenata.

Problemi kojima se bavi ovaj rad svakako pružaju neiscrpan izvor za istraživanja iz područja pedagogije, psihologije, kao i drugih društvenih i humanističkih studija koje ponajprije proučavaju obitelj i bave se poboljšanjem pedagoško-razvojne kulture obrazovnih ustanova ukazujući na potrebu razvoja strategija u društvenom području koje će omogućiti razvoj akademskih vještina kod mladih te olakšati aktivnu suradnju između pojedinih članova obitelji i školskog okruženja.