MOTHER - TODDLER RELATIONSHIP BASED ON SYNERGOLOGICAL READING - AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Discrepancies that occur between the objective and subjective perception of the same phenomenon are reflected in contradictory experiences and generate gestures and mother and baby do unconsciously. Synergological reading conducted in the communication process between mother and child decodes divergent messages and inhibits the interrelationship. The child instinctively "reads" the adult's unconscious gestures that betray his real thoughts, and reacts strongly to them - by explosive or implosive negativism. The mother usually pays more attention closer to the verbal communication and captures only fragmentary gestures made unconsciously by the child. Among the objectives of our study there were the analysis of the range of unconscious gestures, the recording of the frequency of their manifestations in mother-child dyads, and establishing the correspondence between gestures, events and contexts. The sample included 27 mother-infant pairs, the subjects being monitored in four different contexts. The instruments used were: an observation grid comprising synergological indicators, a questionnaire targeting the mother - child relationship, a test of decoding unconscious gestures. The conclusions drawn from the data processing revealed many aspects that will be detailed in this article.

Keywords: mother - child interrelationship, synergology, communication

INTRODUCTION

The discrepancies that arise between the objective and subjective way of perceiving the same phenomenon are reflected in contradictory experiences and generate gestures both mother and baby do unconsciously. Synergology is the science that proposes models of reading unconscious body language [1], explaining the relationship between thoughts, words and body movements which taken separately would have no meaning (e.g., neck itching that occurs suddenly and requires moving one of the hands in that area). Generally, these gestures appear only under the impact of emotions [2].

SINERGOLOGIC READING AND MOTHER-CHILD INTER-RELATIONSHIP

Synergological reading conducted in the communication process between mother and child decodes divergent messages and inhibits networking [3]. The child instinctually reads adults' unconscious gestures that betray his true thoughts and reacts strongly to them - by explosive or implosive negativism. The mother, who pays more attention to the verbal language, captures only fragments of the child's unconscious gestures.

As they grow older, people learn to pay more attention to the verbal than to the non-verbal language; parents' synergological reading is poor, thus lies appear as a necessary certainty [4]: appearance surpasses substance. While words mean something, the body can convey something totally different [5]. In his studies on non-verbal gestures, Collett even considers that gestures are "autonomous behavioural indicators" [6] that could reveal the true feelings of the speaker. In general, body language supplements or underlines words. It so happens, however, that body language contradicts the verbal one, without the transmitter realizing it: this is the field of synergology [1]. Even if human beings are trying to hide and falsify their mimics, gestures, or posture, their wishes / feelings are clearly expressed in the brain and the body reacts to the brain's signals, manifesting a number of synergological indicators in their behaviour. The correct decoding ("reading") of emotional messages is a source of information that guides the way we behave. The ability to understand and discern others' emotions is essential to the manifestation of empathy and pro-social behaviour [7]. The development of the emotions - communication dyad can only be beneficial to the harmonious development of both children and adults, who can learn, along with their children, healthy ways of emotional and behavioural manifestation.

1. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

1.1. Hypothesis and objectives

The study assumed that if the mother performed a correct synergological reading, it would substantially improve the relationship between her and her child. This article only refers to the results of achieving objectives targeted at the range of unconscious gestures analysis (synergological indicators), at recording the frequency of their manifestations in a mother-child dyad and at establishing a correspondence between gestures, events and contexts.

1.2. Tools

The instruments used were: 1) *An observation grid for synergological behaviour* – it included four dimensions (head, limbs, posts, micro-itches), totalling 20 synergological indicators (skull, eyes, eyebrows, nose, mouth, chin, fingers, hands, arms, elbows, shoulders, legs, static positions, dynamic positions, micro-itches of face, neck, chin, nose, eyes, forearms); each indicator was assigned with 2 to 5 items for the registration of their frequency (position, tilt, orientation, etc.); the positive or negative connotation of the synergological indicators was established following the descriptors provided by P. Turchet [1]; 2) *Parent-Child Relationship Questionnaire* - it included 20 items, 5 items aimed at factual data and 15 items with open answers; 3) *The Unconscious Gestures Decoding Test* – it included 10 pictures, with 50 indicators, each image having between 3 and 6 synergological indicators; a point is assigned for each indicator which is correctly decoded; 1-10 points show a very low level of decoding, from 11 to 20 points indicate a low level decoding, from 21 to 30 points, an average decoding, between 31-40 points, show a high level of decoding, and between 41-50 points indicate a very high level of decoding.

1.3. Sample

The sample included 27 mother-toddler pairs; the subjects were monitored in four different contexts: on the playground, at dinner table, when changing clothes, and shopping in the store. Maternal age was between 21 and 35 years (four between 21 and 25 years old, 16 from 26 to 30 years old, and 7 between 31 and 35 years old) and the children were aged between 1 and 3 (12 children ranging from 1 to 2 years and 15 children between 2 and 3 years old). The whole lot came from urban areas, with good health condition for all. As concerning the mothers' education, 15 graduated high school and 12 had a university degree. The material conditions were poor for one mother, medium for 19, good for five, and very good for two.

1.4. Results

The connotation of the synergological indicators manifest in the mothers' non-verbal language was decoded as positive or negative based on the descriptors provided by Touchet and adapted to the context in which they were found. Their frequencies are shown summarized in Table 1, divided for each indicator. There is also presented the frequency of the children's positive or negative behavioural reactions in response to the defining elements of the indicators, depending on orientation, tilt, motion, etc.

Table 1. Summary of the frequency of the synergological indicators

No.	Dimension	Indicator	Connotation of the mother's synergological indic.		Child's behavioural reaction	
			positive	negative	positive	negative
1	Head	Skull	178	347	173	352
		Eyes	245	571	224	592
		Eyebrows	183	272	156	309
		Nose	76	149	71	154
		Mouth	141	366	114	389
		Chin	173	298	147	324
2	Limb	Fingers	67	342	67	342
		Palms	112	329	98	343
		Hands	46	217	42	221
		Shoulders	61	253	59	255
		Elbows	91	174	86	179
		Legs	118	286	113	291
3	Posts	Static	72	328	66	334
		Dynamic	129	152	122	159
4	Micro-itches at:	Neck	28	183	27	184
		Face	63	271	58	276
		Chin	172	232	168	236
		Nose	16	283	16	283
		Eyes	29	347	21	355
		Forearms	48	239	41	246

As it can be seen from the data recorded, high frequencies of negative synergological indicators are associated with high frequencies children's negative behaviours. Children decoded correctly, with amazing accuracy, the adult's gestures performed under the impact of emotions.

Table 2. The context-indicators-events relationship

Context	Frequency of indicators		Frequency of events	
	positive	negative	conflict	cooperation
On the playground	358 ♦	136	136	358 ♦
At dinner table	59	294 ♦	294 ♦	59
When changing clothes	71	367 ♦	367 ♦	71
Shopping in the store	127 ♦	139 ♦	139 ♦	127 ♦

The contexts are those that favour the emergence of synergological indicators, marking their positive or negative connotation, depending on the feelings they generate. When the interaction between mother and child is harsh (e.g., when serving food or when changing clothes), there is a dominance of negative indicators, seconded by conflicts. On the playground, where the interaction is reduced, the relation between mother and child is positive, cooperation behaviours dominating. Inevitably, there arise conflicts, too, but their percentage is lower (...%) than in other contexts. In stores, when shopping, the percentages are almost similar for cooperation and conflict situations, being influenced by the stands visited (e.g., conflict at stands with sweets or toys; cooperation at stands with vegetables or canned food).

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions drawn from the data processing revealed many aspects that require the learning of synergological reading.

The imperative of parenting education results from a series of problems [8] such as: lack of information about the psychological profile of the child's age; use of educational methods based on family history; parents' inability to predict the effects of certain educational measures on the child's development (reward, praise, conflict resolution, encouraging adversity-collaboration behaviours); lack of basic knowledge on mental health (sleep schedule, alternation of resting and activity, endurance); overcrowding the children's programme with extracurricular activities; the existence of incompatibilities or discontinuities between the family's values and norms and those promoted by the nursery/school, etc. Parenting programs are beginning to consider the children's emotional side, too (The SELF KIT programme), emotional communication being of paramount importance in the parent-child relationship [9]. Non-verbal indicators of emotions expressed through unconscious facial expressions and gestures are hard to fake.

Developing mothers' synergological reading skills optimizes the relationship between them and their children, as the latter react according to the connotation of the synergological indicators transmitted.

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