

## Domestic Climate of Spanish Families with 6 to 14 Year-Old Children, Depending on the Type of Family (Conventional, Reconstructed, Single Parent and Adoptive)

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### Abstract

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The present-day family has been one of the most transformed social organisations in the last decade, due to the adaptation to changing social situations, resulting in new forms of families, which necessarily involve new ways of relation between its members. In order to do this, the domestic climate of those families with children between 6 and 14 is analysed, considering that this stage is key to the transition from childhood to adolescence. The sample universe is defined as Spanish households (nuclear, single-parent, reconstituted and adoptive parents) in which children from 6 to 14 years old reside. In the study different variables have been analysed that affect the "family atmosphere", such as the relationship between parents and children and among siblings, and also with their peers, in addition to analysing the main sources of conflict between parents and children, different family profiles are provided in relation to the different types of families analysed. It is important to emphasise that, in our study, all the family types analysed state that although there is a nice "family climate" and good communication among them, single-parent families show an increased social and educational risk. In addition, they claim social and economic measures to improve family life and the possibility of reconciling, with flexible working hours, both work and family life

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**Keywords:** family, conventional, reconstructed, single, adoptive

In recent decades, in our country and the rest of the so-called advanced societies, the family has become one of the most valued social institutions. It is now considered an affective environment that must properly manage the care, protection, education and training required to join the society. Traditionally, the family and school were assigned the role of being transmitters of knowledge for life, as well as work socialization norms and values of the group. However, the duties of parents today do not finish here, they also include holding families accountable for the welfare of their children and providing them with a quality education in an appropriate emotional environment that fosters their cognitive, personal and social development. In the educational context, parents have been recognized as key players in the education of their children, and the family as the primary scenario for a child's socialization (Cortés and Canton, 2000, Burke, 2010).

The contemporary family, in the last decade, is undergoing perhaps one of the most profound changes of all social organizations. It is a functional, dynamic and normative human group in which the behaviour of individual members strongly influences the others. It is subjected in time to changes and pressures, both internal and external. The role of the family in shaping personality is highlighted by numerous authors. Rodríguez Neira (2003) recognizes that the family organization leaves an imprint that accompanies human beings throughout their lives and that these early experiences are like grooves that open the mind and which will be supplemented by subsequent experiences. Currently, we have new family forms (conventional, single parent, reconstructed and adoptive) involving new forms of relationships between its members. Alongside the nuclear family, the single parent family, is now increasingly common. This is a family in which one adult (mother or father) lives with the children in the family.

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There are also increasing numbers of reconstructed families in our country, formed by a couple with children from a previous relationship. We also have adopters, which are families who have resorted to adoption to increase their family. These changes have introduced major changes in the traditional roles that the family has been performing regarding the socialization of children. We share with Pérez-Díaz, Chulia and Valiente, (2000) that we are witnessing a profound transformation of the family as an ancient institution. But this is not to be considered the end of it, rather that there are different ways of developing plural family models, including the conventional family that is adapting to a situation of social change.

Different studies have shown the important role that the family climate and parental educational practices play in their children and adolescent's adjustment. When the atmosphere is not appropriate due to the existence of conflicts, lack of cohesion and support among its members, it is more likely that children will suffer more in a stressful atmosphere, causing internal and external problems (Harold and Conger, 1997; Ostrander, Weinfurt and Nay, 1998). We agree with Cummings, Davies and Simpson (1994) to recognise that parental conflict may be necessary and perfectly normal. However, when the disagreements reach high levels of anxiety and anger, they may be negative for the child's adjustment.

In his research, Cooper (1983) established that family cohesion, when assessed through the child perceptions, has an important influence in the development of self-esteem and the child's adjustment. When children perceive parental conflict we observe in them a low personal adaptation and self-esteem, even when the conflict occurred several years ago. In this way, Mestre, Samper and Perez-Delgado (2001), found that in general, a family climate in which a high level of mutual understanding and support among its members dominates, there is a higher confidence in externalizing emotions and clear planning and organization of activities and responsibilities. This, as well as a low level of conflict among the family members, is the ideal setting for good self-concept development, which is one of the pillars of a child's emotional and social competence.

We conclude therefore, that family atmosphere is a fundamental variable because it affects the personality of the children. Thereby adolescents from families with a high level of control, show less expressiveness and autonomy, while those from families with high levels of social recreational activities and cultural interests, claim to have many friendly relationships (Jiménez, Ferro, Gomez and Parra, 1999).

In this regard, we believe that the human child is characterized by the immaturity in which it is born: it must learn the conduct roles to be able to adapt to its environment (Pérez, 1992). Children need to learn to express themselves in the aggressive or emotional terms of the context, survive in the environment and be considered as members of the group. They also learn whether violent action has advantages and if it is effective or not in the handling of a situation. Thus, by imitation, in aggressive contexts, children and youth tend to resolve conflicts through violence, since they have no constructive behaviour models to manage their anger. Their own experiences confirm that, using violence, their goal is reached. Frustrating events trigger them to strike out at the weak, because they have not learned an alternative way to overcoming their frustration. Individuals that have not experienced love and protection in their childhood often have self-esteem issues. Their confidence in themselves and in others is limited, keeping them from being able to face life with courage and establish stable affective bonds.

In non-aggressive contexts, and from an early age, they learn that expressing what they want through language instead of attacking is more effective; and from that moment on, they speak and do not attack. Continued aggression is, in most cases, a response to an experience of rejection, frustration or aggression in a hostile environment. If they experience that violence is an effective action to achieve something, they will continue the behaviour. Experiences had in the past, together with social models, teach children that violence and aggression are effective ways to handle the situation. It has been found that parents of aggressive children often implement a coercive family style, an assertion of power type of discipline, physical punishment and a lack of verbal explanations and reasoning (Pérez and Cánovas, 2002). For social learning theorists, these data suggest that parents serve as aggressive behaviour models for their children, which repeat what they see. These families are often characterized by their censorship conduct, quarrel and threat. Their relationships are unfriendly, uncooperative and highly hostile and negative. In turn, children often disobey, importune and annoy parents. They get frustrated with each other and the siblings start scolding and assaulting each other.

In this way, parents and children end up using aggression to control each other and trying to get what they want. Children who learn this form of interaction at home and have no other opportunities to learn positive behaviours and skills, show aggression in other situations and often end up maintaining serious antisocial behaviours. But also in permissive and individualistic contexts where children are not taught rules and limits, they are accustomed to achieving their aims, at any price, and never feeling guilty. This type of children can become insensitive and not be moved by the pain of others, including pain they have caused, and act causing harm to others.

Conflicts increase between parents and children in the early years of adolescence (Grotevant, 1998; Rice, 2000) as they are seeking independence and autonomy from parental figures. But these conflicts can be modified if faced and resolved properly using appropriate strategies to solve them. Thus contributing to the development and maturity of adolescents, while improving relationships and family functioning. It is very positive way to move forward as a family.

The stage we are analysing in this study (6-14 years) is basic, since the childhood to adolescence transition is characterized by a strong increase of conflict between parents and adolescents. Those conflicts entail changes in family structure, especially in those families that do not have good communication or adequate resources for the improvement of the family atmosphere (Adams, Montemayor and Gullota, 1990).

When children begin to experience preadolescence changes such as psychological, cognitive, biological and cultural (12-14 years) independence from the family happens through discussions about curfew, sharing chores, outputs, clothing and other issues. Depending on how the family meets these demands, conflicts may increase or decrease, influencing decisively in the family climate.

Therefore, we considered it necessary to analyse the Spanish family's perception (conventional, single-parent, reconstructed and adoptive) with children between 6 and 14 years of age, taking into account different variables and educational guidelines that influence the family climate. We believe that to be able to improve the reality, first it is necessary to know and understand it. Along these parameters, the presentation of this study is a breakthrough in understand parental perception in this developmental stage, as there are not many studies from this approach.

The research analyses the climate of the family according to different family types (conventional, reconstructed, single-parent, adoptive), providing information of family educational guidelines. This research, whose partial data is presented in this report, has been funded by the CICYT and produced by the Institute for Creativity and Educational Innovation at the University of Valencia.

## **Method**

The objective of this research is to understand and analyse the patterns of education and family relationship types (conventional or nuclear, single parent, reconstructed, adoptive or not) in our society, with children aged from 6 to 14 years. With a representative sample of the Spanish population as a base we will offer guidelines for improvement.

The sample is defined as Spanish households (conventional, single parent, reconstructed) where children reside (6-14 years). The INE (Statistics Nacional Institute) states that the Spanish population between 6 and 14 years of age is of 3,647,400 individuals, representing approximately 8.9% of the total. Estimating the average number of children (6-14 years) in households with children is 1.32%, we can infer that the universe composed is 21.5% of Spanish households.

In order to give information within the acceptable level of error in the overall results (less than 3.5%) and the function of each of the variables segmentation of the sample, it was considered convenient to work with a sample of at least 1,000 individuals, ensuring, on a global level, a maximum of error of  $\pm 3.2\%$  less than  $\pm 3.5\%$ , with a population level  $p = q = 50\%$  and a of 95, 5% confidence level. The sample used was random, establishing independent assessments of sex, age and regions.

**Table 1: Family relationships among parents / children (P /H) and sibling (H) (%)**

	Conventional		Reconstituted		Single-parent		Adopter	
	P/H	H	P/H	H	P/H	H	P/H	H
United with trust and communication	69,7	48,1	57,6	53,8	68,0	42,5	63,2	53,8
Good but could be better	27,8	40,1	35,6	34,1	24,3	42,5	34,2	38,5
Slightly distant	1,3	2,7	1,7	7,3	4,2	1,9	2,6	-
No conflict as I tolerate almost anything	0,1	-	1,7	-	1,4	-	-	-
Either affective or hostile	0,7	7,6	1,7	2,4	0,7	9,3	-	7,7
Conflictive, poor communication with behaviour problems	0,4	1,2	1,7	-	1,4	1,9	-	-
Very bad, is aggressive and violent toward us	-	-	-	2,4	-	-	-	-
Doesn't know/Doesn't answer	0,1	0,3	-	-	-	1,9	-	-
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

It can be seen how parent-child relationships are generally perceived as good. Among siblings we observe a higher lack of communication and trust, approximately 69.7% in the conventional family has the lowest percentage in the sibling relationship (48.1%). All the other types of families have a low percentage of communication and trust between parents and children: reconstructed (57.6%), single-parent (68%) and adoptive (63.2%).

Regarding the relationship between siblings it is highlighted in a negative way in reconstructed families. The relationship between siblings face a very bad aggression and violence that has the highest rate (2.4%), although the significance is low.

The data of our research shows that Spanish children, in general, communicate well with parents, have confidence and maintain harmonious relationships.

One of the most important ways to test the family climate is to observe the causes of the children's behaviour. We are able to observe it in the following table.

**TABLE: Views on Major Issues Causing Conflict with the Children by Family Type (%) (Multiple Choice)**

	A lot / Enough					A Little / Nothing				
	Con vent.	Reco ns	Singl ePar ent	Ado p	No Ado p.	Con vent	Rec ons	Singl ePar ent	Ado p	No Ado p.
Issues related to appearance: Clothes, necklines, piercings, tatoos..	9,0	11,9	11,8	15,8	9,3	79,8	83,1	76,4	71,1	79,8
Going out (discos, time to come back home...)	5,0	10,2	5,6	7,9	5,3	89,8+	81,4	85,4	81,6	89,0
Alcohol and/or drugs	1,0	5,1	1,4	-	1,3	97,1	94,9	94,4	94,7	96,7
Time spent playing computer games/internet	8,3	15,3	10,4	13,1	8,8	77,1	69,4	73,6	65,8	76,6
He´s aggressive and violent	1,5	-	4,2	13,2	1,4	92,9	96,6	88,2-	76,3	93,0
Lack of collaboration in the house (tasks, errands, siblings help care)	10,9	11,9	10,4	10,8	10,9	67,3	66,1	64,6	65,8	66,9
Regarding money (pay, living allowance, spending Mobile, etc.)	4,7-	6,8	9,7+	5,3	5,4	86,6+	81,4	74,3	89,5	84,5
Lack of effort and interest in studies, grades	8,8-	13,6	13,9	18,4	9,3	71,2+	62,7	63,9	44,7-	70,6+
Mass communication	3,8	5,1	6,3	10,5	3,9	85,7	83,0	82,7	84,3	85,2
Their interest for brands shopping	6,6	11,9	7,0	13,1	6,7	83,7	79,7	79,8	84,2	82,9
Do not know how to wait, when they want something it to be in that moment	21,5	23,8	26,4	34,2	21,8	52,3	54,2	51,4	44,8	52,6
Has obsession with food, doesn´t stop eating	4,6	6,8	7,0	15,8	4,6	89,8+	86,5	84,1+	76,3	89,3
Has obsession with weight loss, which leads to not eating well	1,2	6,8	3,5	7,9	1,6	94,7+	89,8	91,0	86,9	94,2
Friends influence	6,8-	15,3	13,2+	13,2	7,9	79,0	77,9	71,5-	71,0	78,2
Hours spent watching TV	10,5	11,9	13,2	10,5	10,9	69,2	69,4	66,7	63,2	69,1

Depending on the family profile, we notice that in reconstructed and single-parent households the different sources of conflict acquire higher values than in conventional homes. Although we are able to detect some percentages that show us the following trends: in reconstructed households (13.6%) adoptive (18.4%) and single-parent (13.9%) there are more disputes with the "Children lack of effort in studies" than in conventional families (8.8% -).

Furthermore, "money matter" (+ 9.7%), "the friends influence" (13,2+) and "time spent watching TV" (13.2%), are more significant problems in the single-parent case. The highest representation in the reconstructed and single parent households is the 'alcohol and / or drugs', being more significant in reconstructed (5.1%) and single- parent (1.4), according to the analysed data. Eating problems ('overeating' and food obsession) are also more common in adoptive homes (15.8%) reconstructed (6.8%) and single-parent (7.0) than in the conventional families (4.6%).

Another major concern of parents is the aggressive behaviour of their children.

**TABLE 3: Parental concern about their children's aggressive behaviour, by family type (%)**

TYPES OF FAMILIES	Very	Somewhat	Neutral	Slightly	Not	Doesn't know/Doesn't answer
Conventional	0,2	1,3	3,7	11,8	8,1	1,9
Reconstructed	-	-	1,7	11,9	84,7	1,7
Single-parent	0,7	3,5	4,9	13,2	75,0	2,8
Adopters	-	13,2	7,9	10,5	65,8	2,6

The parents' concern about aggressive and violent behaviour of their children is not very significant. We wish to highlight that the highest incidence of concern is observed in adoptive families. However, we emphasise that in the conventional families' case, the percentage of parents worried about the aggressive behaviour of their children rises to 1.5% (clustering "very" and "somewhat") and among single-parent families (4.2%) and within adoptive families it raises to 13.2%. However, taking into account the studied children's ages (6-14 years), the incidence of this matter is concerning, as it denotes the existence of a relevant domestic conflict at an early age.

**TABLE 4: Parental concern about their children's aggressive behaviour, by sex (%)**

SEX	Very	Somewhat	Neutral	Slightly	Not	Doesn't know / Doesn't answer
Boy	0,5	2,0	4,6	15,2+	75,4-	2,2
Girl	-	1,0	2,7	8,3-	83,6+	1,7

We observe that depending on the sex of their children, parents express differently if they are concerned about aggressive or violent behaviours. In this way, when we refer to very, somewhat and neutral in the table above is indicating prevalence of cases, and the total for boys is 9.1% and a 3.7% for girls. Concern for children's violent behaviour oversteps the family and is related to the school context also, as we will discuss in the table below.

**TABLE 5: How would you describe your son's / daughter's (6-14years) relationship with his/her classmates? By types of households (%)**

	TYPES OF FAMILIES				
	Conventional	Reconstructed	Single-parent	Adoptive	Not adoptive
He/She has problems with some children, and could even hit them	1,0	1,7	2,1	5,3	1,0
He/She has problems with some children without hitting	5,9	5,1	10,4+	7,9	6,4
Do not have problems with anyone, observes in silence even if his/her friends are aggressive	6,6	13,6	6,9	10,5	6,9
Do not have problems with anyone and their group is non aggressive	79,0+	76,3	70,1-	60,5-	78,3+
Some have problems with them even though there is no hitting	5,1	-	4,2	10,5	4,5
Pick on him/her, may even hit	2,3-	3,4	6,3	5,3	2,8
Doesn't know/ doesn't answer	0,1	-	-	-	0,1

The data shows us that statistically, conventional household children are those in a higher percentage in relation to avoiding conflicts with classmates (79,0+). This was also observed in the non-adoptive family cases (78,3+) versus adoptive families that significantly lie in (60,5%). Moreover the children of conventional households are those with a lower percentage of being assaulted by their peers (2.3% vs. 6.3% of single-parent).

The single-parent households children are those with higher percentages in relation to school violence: firstly they obtained a higher value in the item "pick on him, may even hit" (6.3%) which seems that they may have a victim role in a conflict or violent situation. Moreover, we emphasize that in the "He/She has problems with some children without hitting" (10,4+) indicates that these children also could play an important role as aggressor to other children.

**TABLE 6: Reasons why parents believe that there are conflicts between children and teens. According to family type (%) (multiple choice)**

	Conventional	Reconstructed	Single parent	Adoptive	Not Adoptive
Not interested in studies or do not want to be in school	34,2	28,8	36,8	42,1	34,0
Because being tough and aggressive is valued among the group of friends	43,0	37,3	45,1	39,5	43,1
Because at school they are too strict	4,1	1,7	3,5	13,2	3,6
Drugs and/or alcohol	47,7	61,0+	49,3	44,7	48,7
Violent and aggressive temperament that young people have today	52,8	50,8	49,3	63,2	51,8
They can not handle that others do better in studies	5,8	10,2	2,8	10,5	5,4
Separation and divorce in the family	32,4	32,2	32,6	42,1	32,1
Lack of affection and family support	62,4	67,8	63,2	47,4-	63,4+
Violence in the media (TV, cinema, etc.)	59,6+	47,5	53,5	50,0	58,4
Lack of rules and boundaries in the family	55,0	44,1	55,6	47,7	54,8
Racism and xenophobia	30,6	42,4	31,3	28,9	31,4
If they witness insults and fights in the family	47,7	47,5	47,2	55,3	47,3
The frustration from not getting what they want	22,2	23,7	25,0	18,4	22,8
Doesn't know/Doesn't answer	0,2	-	-	-	0,2

The existence of conflicts in the family, is one of the variables that most negatively affects the family environment. Conventional parents and single-parent families follow a similar trend, and the main differences are between conventional households and reconstructed families. In the conventional households case they consider that "the media violence (TV, films...)" is the fundamental factor of the conflicts existing between children and preteens, followed by lack of affection and family support (62,4%). The lack of affection and family support is a factor that all types of families have considered fundamental to explain family conflict: conventional (62,4%), reconstructed (67,8%), single-parent (63,2%), except adoptive (47,4-). Uniting both factors (lack of affection and lack of rules and limits) could take us to an indulgent educational style or laissez-faire, which is pernicious and favours the development of conflicts between children and preteens.

Another factor to highlight is the use of alcohol and drugs. Almost half of all the types of families surveyed considered it as the first element of risk leading to conflict, especially in the reconstituted families: conventional families (47,7%), reconstructed (61,0+), single-parent (49,3%) and adoptive (44,7%). Our study also highlights another factor that directly influences the family climate, which is "if you see insults and fights in families". Of all the types of families surveyed, almost half of them believe that the act of observing inappropriate and violent behaviour at home, can lead the children to be more controversial: conventional (47,7%), reconstructed (47,5%), single-parent (47,2%), adoptive (55,3%). Finally another factor as "that at school they are too strict" and the one about "cannot handle that others do better in studies" are very minor factors in terms of perceiving that those are the basis of conflicts in our children. So in the school setting, we highlight the item "not interested in studies or in want to be in school" as considered a relevant factor in all the surveyed families: conventional (34,2%), reconstructed (28,8%), single-parent (36,8%) and adoptive (42,1%).

One of the most crucial elements in the family climate is reconciling work and family. In the following table we can appreciate the input from parents regarding this variable.

**TABLE 7: Parents' opinion about what social measures or situations would improve family life (%) (Multiple choice)**

	Conventional Families	Single Parent Families
Flexible schedule to reconcile family and work life	73,4	69,4
Special permission for cases when children are sick and under the age of 11 years	43,6-	55,6+
Increase school hours (kindergarten, schools, etc.)	34,3	40,3
Facilitate access to employment for women so that they incorporate back into the working world after maternal leave	49,1	45,1
That schools and institutions help alleviate the weight of responsibility and the decisions that have to be made with children	22,1	18,8
Workshops or training courses to know how to treat and educate children nowadays	47,6	45,8
More economical resources and social benefits for the families	62,2	63,2
Increase the maternity leave period	31,7	28,5
Place day care in the work places	53,8	52,8
That the institution (town halls, schools, etc...) setup places where the children can play freely and without danger	48,0	43,8
That when parents don't have vacations they may leave the children at school, event when there are no classes	27,8	28,5

It can be seen that flexible hours are the most requested measure, in the opinion of conventional families (73.4%), and single-parent (69.4%), to be able to balance work and having a better family atmosphere. Next in both types of families are greater economical resources, assignments and social benefits for families. There is a greater difference between the needs to "have special permits for sickness, when the children are under eleven years" (55,6+ in single parent) and to have nurseries in the workplace (53.8% in conventional and 52.8% in single-parent). We should remark that both conventional and (47.6%) single-parent (45.8%) families demand workshops or courses to learn how to treat and educate children nowadays. This indicates that families do not feel prepared to educate and wish to receive training in this area.

Raising children has been one of the traditional family roles and, in a way, the result of an evaluation criterion. Therefore we highlight the importance of knowing the perceptions of parents in this sense. Two of the strongest indicators that affect family climate are family and work compatibility measures and the educational analysis that takes place within the family. In the following table we can see what parents think about them.



**TABLE 8: Family education patterns and perceptions (%) (multiple choice)**

	Conventional		Reconstructed		Single Parent		Adoptive		Not adoptive	
	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D
Children are educated at school, that's why they go	6,2-	77,2	16,9	62,7-	7,6	75,7	13,2	76,3	6,8	76,2
Sometimes it is better to lie to children	10,2-	61,4	23,7+	45,8-	11,8	61,8	2,6	57,9	11,5	60,8
I am unable to raise my children as I desire	7,1-	77,4+	22,0	71,2	13,2+	67,4-	21,1	57,9-	8,3	76,4+
I am primarily a friend to my children	55,8	22,1	52,5	22,0	53,5	20,8	63,2	23,7	55,0	21,9
I frequently go to my children's school (meetings, workshops...)	74,6	7,8	69,5	8,5	68,8	5,6	81,6	5,3	73,2	7,6
Regarding the children's education, usually the father says one thing and the mother says another	32,4	37,1	42,4	27,1	34,0	36,1	34,2	36,8	33,1	36,4
It's inevitable to have preferences for one of the children	10,1	77,4	16,9	67,8	7,6	74,3	23,7	57,9-	9,7	77,2+
The most important thing is to give emotional support (acceptance, affection)	93,6	2,1	98,3	-	86,8	4,2	100	-	92,7	2,3
If a child hits another child, the best option is to hit back.	5,7-	67,9	20,3	55,9	7,6	70,1	21,1	50,0-	6,2	68,2+
At home it is not very important to apply conduct rules	7,0	82,1	11,9	79,7	9,7	84,7	15,8	65,8-	7,3	82,9+
On special occasions (holidays, birthdays...) children can try adult things (champagne, wine...)	4,2-	88,0+	10,2	79,7	6,9	82,6	21,1	76,3	4,3	87,2
It is positive that one parent has a strict role in the family and the other is the comforter	9,6+	71,8	11,9	67,8	2,1-	75,7	23,7	50,0	8,2	72,9+

The category of agreement is included in the table (A) with the strongly agree and agree responses. The disagree category (D) collects the answers from neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. We can emphasize that single parents (75.7%) and conventional families (77.2%) are those that score higher to show their disagreement with the idea that the children are educated in school. They consider that children are primarily educated in the family.

Reconstituted families agreed (16.9%) with the idea that "children are educated in school, that's why they go". In these families it is important to emphasize the high percentage (23,7+) that considers that "sometimes it is better to lie to children." We highlight both single parents (13,2+) and adoptive families (21.1%) in the inability to raise children item.

All types of families more or less consider themselves their children's friends, conventional (55.8%), reconstructed (52.5%), single parent (53.5%) and adoptive (63.2%). This emphasizes that in all types of families it is a priority to have a close relationship with their children and to provide them with emotional support: conventional (93.6%), reconstructed (98.3%), single parent (86.8%) and adopters (100%). They also consider it necessary to go to school often. The higher percentage is from conventional families (74.6%) and adoptive (81.6%). However, the parent-child relationship should never be a friendship.

Another important issue is the consistency between father and mother when raising children, although this factor is not considered as such by the families surveyed. Only 32.4% agree with this premise in the case of single-parent families, 42.4% in the case of reconstructed, 34% for single-parent families and 34.2% of adoptive families. Single-parent families (9,6+) deemed it appropriate that one of the parents should have a strict role in the family, and the other be the comforter, an 11.9% in reconstructed families and 23.7% in the case of adoptive families.

## **Conclusion**

In this study we have analysed the family climate through the perception of parents' with 6 to 14 year-old children. The variables we used were the relationship between parents and children and between siblings and peers. We have also focused our research on the parents' concerns and the main factors of conflict among children and adolescents and possible solutions.

As overall results we can highlight the different profiles obtained within the different types of Spanish families with children between 6 and 14. Among them, conventional families are characterized by a good relationship between parents and children, and they identify the main sources of conflict; the lack of collaboration at home, the long time spent watching TV or playing computer games. The lack of rules, boundaries and lack of delay time in children (zero frustration) to get what they demand are also a feature of this type of family. As ways to improve and reconcile family, school and working life they agree on the need for more flexible schedules, specific training in educational issues and to be able to use special permits (due to illness, minor children).

Single parents are the families with higher social and educational risk among all the analyzed in our study. Although parents feel they have good communication with their children, they recognise that more conflict exists between siblings. The main sources of conflict usually come from children's lack of effort in studies, because of money; time spent watching TV or playing computer games, alcohol, drugs and children's aggressive behaviour. Children usually have more conflicts and may have a higher risk of further violence in schools, both in the role of victim or aggressor. As ways to improve, they coincide almost entirely with conventional families as they feel the need for special permits to take care of children under 11 years that are sick, and higher social benefits and economic resources to support families.

The reconstructed families surveyed are characterised by maintaining good communication between parents and children. The origin of conflict is focused on the children's lack of effort towards studies, alcohol and drugs, appearance, lack of delay in demands. They also consider that the main reasons that encourage conflict between children comes from the lack of affection, rules and limits, alcohol and drugs, and the existence of violence and conflict at home.

Finally adoptive families, despite showing good communication between parents and children, are very concerned about the aggressive and disruptive behaviour of their children. The identified sources of conflict are the lack of effort in studies, weight loss obsession and long periods spent playing computer games or watching television. According to adoptive parents, the children do not usually have conflicts at school. They consider the lack of rules, alcohol and drugs and also being exposed to conflict and violence at home, the possible source of having problems among children and adolescents.

## Discussion

In our study, it is the adoptive parents who have a higher level of concern about the aggressive and disruptive behaviour of their children, although as noted above, all family types analysed (nuclear, single parent, reconstituted and adoptive) state that communication is good between parents and children. This result would contradict the results obtained by Bernedo et al. (2006) in which adoptive parents report less conflict with their teenaged children than non-adoptive parents. However, it is noteworthy that this research focuses on adolescents, whose age is between 11 and 17, extending the age range of the respondents in this study, rendering comparison results inconclusive.

The parents' perception of aggressive behaviour is also linked to sex (behaviour is more troubling in boys than in girls). Lack of affection and family support appear as some of the reasons, in our study, for violence between parents and their children and teenagers, as reported by parents of the different family types analysed (nuclear, single parent, reconstituted and adoptive). So Fuentes, Motrico and Bersabé (2003) found that both from the point of view of parents as teenagers, when parents express more affection, communication and less criticism and rejection, fewer conflicts between parents and children occur. Our study also valued, as another key reason, the lack of rules and limits in the family, in agreement with the previous authors' argument, that when parents are more inductive and less rigid in rule setting, a lesser degree of conflict occurs between them. Villar, Luengo, Gomez and Romero (2003) also found that adolescents had fewer behaviour problems when they had few conflicts and good communication with their parents. Sanchez Sandoval in the longitudinal study six years later, analysing the families that were subjected to the study by Palacios, Sanchez and Sanchez (1996), again emphasized that good family environment is associated with both positive levels of affection and communication between parents and children, and with respect for the children to parental standards, an essential requirement for the proper development of family life. In the study by Pérez (2012), which analyses parental socialization among Spanish parents of children aged 6-14 years old, considering four parenting styles, the results obtained in the Spanish environment revealed that the indulgent is the ideal style for parental socialization.

This falls in line with other recent studies (Garcia and Grace, 2009, 2010; Musitu and García, 2004) as it scores higher in the analysed indicators: quality of interpersonal relationships, psychological adjustment, personal competence and behavioural problems. Concerning the main issues that cause conflicts between parents and children during preadolescence, Palacios, Hidalgo, and Moreno (1998) refer to temporality and autonomy in performing certain activities, attitudes towards certain issues, study time, sibling fights and hygiene and dress routines. In our research, given the age of the children tested, concern begins to appear in areas such as home chore collaboration, study issues, issues related to clothing and appearance (clothes, revealing necklines, piercings ...). This type of conflict is in line with the findings of Robin and Foster (1989), where conflicts in preadolescence as a way to affirm the child apart from the family (discussing curfew times, distributing housework, outings, ..) play a crucial part in the development of the family model.

In terms of the social and economic measures demanded by families to improve family life and harmonize work and family life, nuclear and single parent families emphasize having flexible schedules, specific training in educational issues and obtaining special work leave permits (due to illness or young children). Furthermore single parent families are demanding greater social benefits and economic resources to support families. These demands coincide with specialists in work and labour. Valdeolivas (2006) defends that the family is a nuclear reality within our social organization. That as an institution, it plays a key social function and that these benefits should be adapted to the new ways of life, family structure and household structures that have emerged in recent times. And that these claim, in turn, new policies to meet their needs (single parent families, unmarried and same-sex couples, with or without children, blended families that bring children from previous relations into the new family unit).

The European Council has reported that motherhood, children and families are the so called "poor relations" of the social policies that need to be improved in our country, such as, social and labour coverage to favour both work and family life, favouring the equitable sharing of family responsibilities between the sexes and alleviating or compensating families of welfare duties in the care and support of its members who, in lacking, should be covered by other means and resources. Not to mention the expense that arises, due to age or Special circumstances such as illness or disability, demanding attention and assistance.

Finally, we must remember that a positive family environment has to do with a climate of affective cohesion between parents and children, support, trust and open, empathy filled communication, thus promoting the emotional and psychological adjustment of children (Lila and Buelga, 2003, Musitu and García, 2004). In general, we can conclude that there is a positive family climate in all types of families studied, although as we have noted, there are educational standards such as lack of coherence between parents and the high level of agreement in that it is the schools which educate more than the family, indicating gaps within family education. In addition we also highlight the high degree of agreement between the parents analysed in considering that each parent plays a distinct role in relation to the education of their children, which leads us to believe that parents are not involved equally in their children's education. We agree with Torío et al. (2010) that to go forward with family life we must move towards family co-responsibility where shared paternity and maternity represents an important advance and provides egalitarian opportunities and new models of socialization in the education of children.

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