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## Psychosocial Development in Adolescents in Condition of Family Deprivation

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### Abstract

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This article discusses the features of the perception of relationships with a significant adult in adolescents brought up in full and single-parent families and in orphanages. In parental families, parents act as a significant adult, and in orphanages, the educator, as a person with whom adolescents have formed relatively stable and long-term relationships.

**Purpose.** To study and compare the features of relationships with adults in adolescents with different family situation of development.

**Methods.** The DROP method (child-parent relationships of adolescents) by Karabanova and Troyanovskaya was used to study adolescents' perception of their relationships with significant adult. A total of 286 Russian adolescents aged 15–16 years were surveyed (126 men and 160 women), 104 of them live in full families (53 men and 51 women); 88 – in single-parent families (46 men and 42 women); 94 – in orphanages (45 men and 49 women).

**Results.** It was found that adolescents of orphanages are less likely to note acceptance, empathy, there is a high degree of emotional distancing on the part of the educator. Orphans do not perceive the figure of the educator as aimed at democracy, cooperation, they note his directiveness, authoritarianism and control, they experience a lack of attention, information and ignorance of material needs. Adolescents from single-parent families perceive mother as a person aimed at cooperation and democracy and encouraging autonomy. In the group of adolescents from full families, there are indicators of perception of a positive register, which refers to relations with both mother and father.

**Conclusions.** The results of our study shows the significance not only the presence and participation of parental family in adolescents' life, but also a presence of both parents in it.

**Keywords:** family deprivation, adolescence, social situation of development, orphanhood, interpersonal relationships

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## Психосоциальное развитие подростков в условиях семейной депривации

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### Резюме

В данной статье рассматриваются особенности восприятия взаимоотношений со значимым взрослым у подростков, воспитывающихся в разных социальных условиях: в полных и неполных семьях и в учреждениях закрытого типа (детские дома). В родительских семьях в качестве значимого взрослого выступают родители, а в детских домах – воспитатель как человек, с которым у подростков сформированы относительно стабильные и долгосрочные отношения.

**Цель.** Изучить и сравнить особенности восприятия отношений со взрослыми у подростков с различной семейной ситуацией развития.

**Материалы и методы.** Для изучения восприятия подростками своих отношений со значимым взрослым был использован метод детско-родительских отношений подростков (ДРОП) Карабановой и Трояновской. В исследовании приняли участие 286 российских подростков в возрасте 15–16 лет (126 юношей и 160 девушек), из них 104 проживают в полных семьях (53 юноши и 51 девушка); 88 – в неполных семьях (46 юношей и 42 девушки); 94 – в детских домах (45 юношей и 49 девушек).

**Результаты.** В результате исследования было обнаружено, что воспитанники детских домов реже отмечают принятие, эмпатию, отмечается высокая степень эмоционального дистанцирования со стороны воспитателя. Подростки-сироты не воспринимают фигуру воспитателя как направленную на демократичность, сотрудничество, они отмечают его директивность, авторитарность и контроль, испытывают дефицит внимания, информации и игнорирование материальных потребностей. Подростки из неполных семей воспринимают мать как человека, направленного на сотрудничество и демократичность и поощряющего автономию. В группе подростков из полных семей в характеристиках восприятия отношений с родителями чаще всего отмечаются показатели восприятия позитивного регистра, которые относятся к отношениям как с матерью, так и с отцом.

**Выводы.** Результаты исследования показывают значимость не только наличия и участия родительской семьи в жизни подростка, но и присутствия в ней обоих родителей.

**Ключевые слова:** семейная депривация, подростковый возраст, социальная ситуация развития, сиротство, межличностные отношения

## ■ INTRODUCTION

One of the serious and acute problems of modern society are such phenomena as social orphanhood, homelessness and neglect of children and adolescents, which result in deviant, anti-social behavior (substance abuse, alcoholism, theft, etc.), maladaptation in society, violation of social interactions. In this regard, there is a need to understand the nature of such problems of children and adolescents experiencing the consequences of family deprivation. It is worth noting that only 5% of children in orphanages are fully orphaned, while 95% have parents who are alive, but are deprived of parental rights or are restricted in them [1]. Thus, the analysis and solution of many social issues related to behavior and psychic development of young people is impossible without taking into account the presence or absence of a family, the nature of education, experience of interaction with close people and strangers, and other demographic, social and psychological factors.

The social situation of development reflects the relationships between developing person and social environment, determines the place of a person in society, the expectations and requirements that society imposes on him, and sets the vector of development [2]. The nature of social relations, social situation of development, relationships within the family in each age period puts before a person certain developmental tasks for this age, the resolution of which is the essence of psychic development and the appearance of new components of the psyche. The basic situation of a teenager's mental development is usually formed in the family [3].

### **Family and deprivation**

Family is understood as the primary institute of social interaction and a provider of indispensable support for the maintenance of physical and psychological integrity, exercising the functions of protection, affection and social formation. As emphasized by Biasoli-Alves, family corresponds to the social group that exerts a significant influence on the life of people, being seen as a complex organization, inserted in a social context with which it maintains constant interaction. The provision and receipt of support from family members are fundamentally beneficial for physical and psychological processes [4, 5]. In this regard, Baptista et al. found that perceptions of affection, adaptation and autonomy from the family context were correlated with the increase in the number of people perceived as supportive. The more affection the individual receives early in life, the greater will be his willingness to face and overcome stressful events, since affection is developed from infancy and can protect children from internal and external stressors [6], substance abuse [7], and depression [8]. Andolfi, Ângelo, Nicolo-Corigliano and Menghi [9] argue that it is through the family that the individual develops himself psychologically. He or she gradually passes through several stages, from a nondifferentiation state, in which he still perceives himself in a process of symbiosis, to a state of individualization, in which he becomes independent, that is, an individual ready to live in society and to take action in the face of joys and challenges.

Deprivation is a psychic state of a person that arises under such life circumstances where the subject is not given the opportunity to satisfy his vital needs sufficiently and for a long time [10]. One of these needs is the need for positive emotional contact with mother or a significant adult, love, care, affection, trust in early childhood, which creates a favorable atmosphere for psychic development of a child. A number of studies [11] have

shown how significant the atmosphere of trust is already in infancy. Trust is a condition without which the child will not develop even in the presence of favorable external factors. Even when providing ideal sanitary and hygienic care, but at the same time in a situation of deprivation of emotionally positive connections with the adult caring for them, children will lag behind in physical, psychological, social development. The research of J. Bowlby emphasizes that the situation of deprivation and, in particular, the deprivation of trust, leads to a number of often irreversible mental health disorders. The age up to 5 years under the condition of a long (from six months) separation from mother is the key period that affects the distortion in personal development [12]. Most children who have experienced out-of-home care, including institutional and foster placements, have experienced trauma. For example, children in out-of-home care are at an increased risk for abuse and neglect [13]. Violation of emotional connection with parents negatively affects the development of intellectual abilities and personality formation. Children who experience the consequences of maternal deprivation have a low level of emotional intelligence, they are contradictory, and they feel guilty for parental rejection. Later, the child loses self-respect, there is a violation of identification of his own needs, difficulties in determining the boundaries of personality, emotional dependence, fear of being abandoned [14, 15].

### **The role of child-parents relationships in adolescence**

The role of child-parents relationships is highlighted by lots of researches: in the formation of self-esteem [16], identity [17], interpersonal trust etc. [18]. Specific features of child-parent relationships seriously affect the psycho-emotional wellbeing of adolescents [19], character traits [20], coping strategies [21], the ability to control emotions, behavior and independence. Modern researches [22] show that one of the main causes of emotional depression in adolescents is the loss or deterioration of emotional contacts with parents, when parents are not able to adjust their attitudes towards interpersonal communication with growing children. In this way full-family is an important condition for the successful personal development of a child. Single-parent families are extremely vulnerable in terms of upbringing. According to statistics, it can be noted that often hypertrophied increased emotionality, unbalance, reduced self-esteem, vulnerability, and deviant behavior are higher in adolescents from single-parent families. At the same time, the greatest difficulties in socialization, adaptation, and formation of constructive interpersonal relationships are faced by children and adolescents who are brought up in closed institutions in conditions of family deprivation [23–25]. Family deprived adolescents have deformations of motivational, emotional-volitional, personal spheres, as well as psychosomatic disorders [25]. Orphaned children do not differentiate their own and other people's emotions and experiences, they show immaturity, low level of empathy, egocentrism even in adolescence [26, 27]. Pupils from orphanages are often characterized by distrust to others with high suggestibility, concern, emotional instability in stressful situations [28].

The literature describes the phenomenon of "alienation of own experience" in children experiencing family deprivation. It consists in the fact that caregiver does not become a source of life meaning for the child. Educators are carriers of patterns and stereotypes of behavior, knowledge, initiators of rewards and punishments, but emotional relationships with children are often just formal in nature and do not evoke a positive emotional response [29].

### **Current study**

Based on previous studies, our hypothesis is that adolescents who have experienced trauma of separation with both or one parent perceive the relationship with a significant adult as less emotionally close, approving, empathic and liberal.

Objectives: 1) to investigate a character of relationships with significant adult in adolescents from full-families, single-parent families and orphanages; 2) to compare characteristics of relationships with a significant adult in groups, divided by social situation of development.

## **■ METHOD**

### **Participants and procedure**

The schools and orphanages were the sampling unit. A list of different Russian schools and orphanages in Saint-Petersburg was drawn up from information provided by Ministry of Education. A total of 286 Russian adolescents aged 15–16 years were surveyed (126 men and 160 women), 104 of them live in full families (53 men and 51 women); 88 – in single-parent families (46 men and 42 women); 94 – in orphanages (45 men and 49 women). Adolescents from orphanages are so called "social orphans" – these are children whose parents were unable to keep them due to either financial or mental health problems, etc.

### **Ethics**

Respondents were interviewed during the study time. Adolescents were assured that all information they would pass on would remain confidential and they were asked to answer questions individually and with complete freedom. Participants took about 60 minutes to complete the questionnaires.

### **Statistical analyses**

The data was coded and computed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) 20.0 version. One-dimensional statistics were calculated: arithmetic mean values, average square deviations. Dispersion analyses was used to determine the reliability of intergroup differences.

### **Instruments**

Adolescents' relationships with significant adults was studied using the DROP method (child-parent relationships of adolescents) by Karabanova and Troyanovskaya [30]. The research methodology of child-parent relationships allows us to see a complete and differentiated picture of these relationships from the point of view of adolescents. The method consists of 116 questions. Respondents must answer questions on special forms separately concerning mother and father (caregiver in orphans). This is indicated by underlining the corresponding word "mother/father" in the form. The questionnaire contains a description of the characteristics of parents' behavior towards their child. The statements are numbered, and the same numbers are on the response form. It is necessary to assess whether the behavior of parents corresponds to the described methods of interaction with the adolescent. To do this, respondent needs to put the appropriate score in the response form: 1 – if such behavior is not found in the mother or father never; 2 – if such behavior is not found in the mother or father rarely; 3 – if such behavior does not occur in the mother or father sometimes; 4 – if such behavior does

not occur in the mother or father often; 5 – if this behavior is not found in the mother or father always.

If an adolescent from a single-parent family does not live with their father or mother or does not know one of them, he may not fill out a form for this parent. The questionnaire was modified for orphaned adolescents: they answered questions about the caregiver/educator, as a person with whom they have formed a fairly stable relationships.

The method includes 19 scales that are grouped together:

- 1) block of scales, which describes the features of the emotional relationship in dyad "parent-child" (acceptance; empathy; emotional distance – reverse scale);
- 2) block of scales describing the interaction features (cooperation; decision-making; conflict; promotion of autonomy);
- 3) control unit (demanding; monitoring; control; authoritarianism; features of rewards and punishments);
- 4) block of inconsistency/consistency of relations (inconsistency; uncertainty);
- 5) additional scales (satisfaction of adolescents' needs; inadequacy of the child's image; relationship with a spouse; overall relationships satisfaction).

Data is calculated according to the key. Values of age norms are presented according to scales for older adolescents (14–16 years old). The data was collected on a sample of adolescents in the city of Moscow, the total number of respondents was 130.

## ■ RESULTS

According to the results of descriptive statistics, the picture of relationships between teenagers and significant adults is different depending on the social situation of development.

The following parameters are more pronounced in orphaned adolescents: acceptance ( $M=19.52$ ), satisfaction of needs ( $M=19.52$ ), demanding ( $M=19.76$ ), control ( $M=22.36$ ) and monitoring ( $M=21.28$ ). The following parameters are least noted: conflict ( $M=7.96$ ) and the implementation of punishments ( $M=8.08$ ). Almost similar picture can be seen in the group of adolescents from single-parent families: the most pronounced characteristics were such as acceptance of mother ( $M=25.33$ ), mother's satisfaction of needs ( $M=23.80$ ) and her empathy ( $M=23.36$ ), mother's encouragement of autonomy ( $M=23.3$ ). Less pronounced are such indicators as the implementation of punishments by mother ( $M=6.78$ ) and father ( $M=3.94$ ), father's conflict ( $M=6.00$ ) and hostility to the spouse from both mother ( $M=4.58$ ) and father ( $M=4.59$ ), as well as mother's and father's friendly attitude to each other ( $M=6.92$  and  $M=6.47$ ). The most pronounced parameters of perception of relations with parents in the group of adolescents from full families are: acceptance (mother –  $M=25.88$  and father –  $M=24.84$ ), satisfaction with relationships with mother ( $M=24.43$ ), encouragement of autonomy (by mother –  $M=24.49$  and by father –  $M=24.57$ ), satisfaction of the needs of the adolescent by mother ( $M=24.50$ ), empathy (by mother –  $M=24.50$  and by father –  $M=23.45$ ). Less pronounced are such characteristics of relationships as hostility towards the spouse (by mother –  $M=6.95$  and by father –  $M=7.61$ ), the implementation of punishments (by mother –  $M=6.97$  and by father –  $M=7.49$ ).

Significant differences between groups of adolescents from families (full and single-parent) and orphanages were obtained using dispersion analysis. Adolescents from families are more likely than orphans to note empathy, acceptance, emotional closeness, independence in decision-making, cooperation, encouragement of autonomy,

**Table 1**  
**Relationships with mother/caregiver**

Parameter	Family situation of development		Significant differences	P
Acceptance	Orphanage	Single-parent family	-5.197	0.000
		Full family	-6.114	0.000
Empathy	Orphanage	Single-parent family	-5.187	0.001
		Full family	-6.186	0.000
Emotional distance	Orphanage	Single-parent family	-4.856	0.000
		Full family	-5.484	0.000
Cooperation	Orphanage	Single-parent family	-3.981	0.005
		Full family	-5.053	0.000
Decision-making	Orphanage	Single-parent family	-3.709	0.005
		Full family	-4.059	0.000
Promotion of autonomy	Orphanage	Single-parent family	-3.249	0.021
		Full family	-4.874	0.000
Control	Orphanage	Single-parent family	-	-
		Full family	3.321	0.017
Satisfaction of needs	Orphanage	Single-parent family	-3.784	0.002
		Full family	-4.903	0.000
Relationships satisfaction	Orphanage	Single-parent family	-5.281	0.003
		Full family	-7.691	0.000

satisfaction of needs and satisfaction with relationships with mother (in orphans-with caregiver) ( $p < 0.05$ ). Also, adolescents from full families have more pronounced indicators of satisfaction with their relationships with mother ( $p < 0.05$ ) than adolescents from single-parent families, and a less pronounced indicator of control compared to orphaned adolescents ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 1).

As for the comparison of relations with father in adolescents from families and caregiver in orphans, it is worth highlighting caregiver's control, which orphan adolescents note significantly more often than teenagers from families in relation to father (single-parent –  $p < 0.001$ ; full-family –  $p < 0.05$ ). Adolescents from full families are more likely to note acceptance, empathy, satisfaction with relationships ( $p < 0.05$ ), encouragement of autonomy ( $p < 0.001$ ) by father, than orphan teenagers with a caregiver. Teenagers from single-parent families are less likely than teenagers from orphanages to note authoritarianism, monitoring, inconsistency in education ( $p < 0.05$ ), providing incentives and implementing punishments, inadequate image of the child in the eyes of an adult and control ( $p < 0.001$ ) (Table 2).

## ■ CONCLUSION

In the indicators of adolescents' relationships with significant adults in the whole sample, the most pronounced characteristics are those of positive spectrum: acceptance, promotion of autonomy, and satisfaction of child's needs. The parameters of negative register of relations, such as implementation of punishments, inadequacy of child's image, and inconsistency are poorly expressed. Also the parameters of controlling

**Table 2**  
**Relationships with father/caregiver**

Parameter	Family situation of development		Significant differences	P
Acceptance	Orphanage	Single-parent family	–	–
		Full family	–4.813	0.018
Empathy	Orphanage	Single-parent family	–	–
		Full family	–4.731	0.039
Promotion of autonomy	Orphanage	Single-parent family	–	–
		Full family	–6.433	0.000
Monitoring	Orphanage	Single-parent family	6.979	0.007
		Full family	–	–
Control	Orphanage	Single-parent family	9.201	0.001
		Full family	4.082	0.01
Authoritarianism	Orphanage	Single-parent family	6.764	0.003
		Full family	–	–
Provision of rewards	Orphanage	Single-parent family	4.153	0.001
		Full family	–	–
Implementation of punishments	Orphanage	Single-parent family	4.181	0.000
		Full family	–	–
Inconsistency	Orphanage	Single-parent family	6.014	0.006
		Full family	–	–
Inadequacy of child's image	Orphanage	Single-parent family	7.535	0.000
		Full family	–	–
Relationships satisfaction	Orphanage	Single-parent family	–	–
		Full family	–6.654	0.006

block of relationships are presented to some extent in all studied groups. Significant differences were found in the characteristics of relationships with significant adults in connection with the situation of family deprivation. Adolescents from orphanages less often note acceptance and empathy, a high degree of emotional distancing by caregiver was found. Orphaned adolescents do not perceive the figure of caregiver as aimed at democracy, cooperation. They note, on the contrary, his directivity, distrust of teenagers' ability to be responsible for their actions and actions according to age. They feel more authoritarianism and control of caregiver than family teenagers, lack of personal attention in decision-making, information, and disregard for material needs than family adolescents. Teenagers from single-parent families perceive mother as someone who is cooperative and democratic and encourages autonomy. As for the relationships with father, teenagers perceive him as a person who accepts them, empathizes with them, meet teenager's needs. There are indicators of a positive register, which relate to both parents in the group of adolescents from full families: acceptance, promotion of autonomy, satisfaction of needs, empathy, cooperation, emotional closeness. We can say that relationships with both parents are emotionally positive. Thus, we see how the characteristics of relationships with significant adults change depending on the social situation of development. We can see the importance of family relationships in order for a child to feel needed, important, respected, accepted by close people.



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