

## A Study of Psychological Readiness of Parents to Educate Children in a Foster Family

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### ABSTRACT

In the study methods to identify the main components of parents' psychological readiness for raising children in a substitute family were used. The survey was carried out during the study of the cognitive component. The emotional-volitional component is disclosed by using an MMPI questionnaire (abridged version) and techniques for determining the accentuation of personality traits (Leonhard K.). The analysis of the motivational-evaluative component has been conducted using a morphological test of life values (Sopov V.F., Karpushina L.V.). Indicators of the activity component are fixed by two methods – PARI (Schäfer E.S., Bell R.K.) and the analysis of family relationships (Eidemiller E.G., Yustitskis V.V.). The significance of the results obtained has been checked by mathematical statistical methods (factor analysis and statistical criterion for difference – Student's t-test). In the experimental group statistically significant differences that confirm a positive impact of the research-experimental program on the level of formation of parents' psychological readiness for raising children in a substitute family have been indicated.

### KEYWORDS

child, substitute family, psychological readiness, cognitive component, emotional-volitional component, motivational-evaluative component, activity component, program.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

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### Introduction

The most effective method of helping children left without parental care is a foster family that has great compensatory abilities to overcome deprivation. It is economically relevant, available to psychological support and involvement of general population. Problems of such families show us that parents and children need preparation to living in the conditions of a foster family, beginning with psychological and pedagogical study of a family at the beginning stages of the

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work, and corrective and developmental activities to form psychological readiness of the parents to bring up a child in a foster family to create positive family relations at the last stages of the work.

Nowadays specialists study many problems of a foster family as an effective model making for living arrangement of an orphan child [1]. They are problems of motivation to adopt an orphan and a child left without parental care, to bring him/her up in a foster family [4, 15, 16, 22, 24] and attitude of candidates to taking into a family a child with special needs [23]. Characteristics of upbringing [7, 13], specific adaptation abilities [9, 11, 20, 21] and features of children and parents in a foster family [17] are studied. Solving legal problems of transferring a child to a foster family and the family law dealing with agreements on foster families [17]. A system of training of services that support foster families and foster parenting [3, 8] is being formed, and criteria of assessment of conditions relevant for successful living arrangement of orphan children and children left without parental care in a foster family [2], are being elaborated. Psychological risks of a foster family [12] and possibilities of psychological and pedagogical support of a family bringing up a foster child with special needs [19] are identified.

Analysis of these works has led us to the conclusion that many factors make for harmonious upbringing of children in the conditions of a foster family. The most common ones are personal characteristics of a child, the totality of his/her psychological qualities and social experience, the personality of the candidate to be a foster parent, his/her wish to accept the child and the situation with understanding, to tolerate the child's peculiarities, to learn and accept the preliminary program.

#### **Family relationships at every stage of development of a foster family.**

Psychological readiness for parenting is actualizing and adapting all one's strength to create psychological possibilities for success, for emotional, spiritual and educational functions of a family.

The psychological phenomenon of the married couple's readiness to become parents consists at least of four components: the cognitive: the component of emotion and volition, the component of motivation and values, the component of activity [14]. The connection of these components sets criteria of assessment of the level of psychological readiness of a couple to bring up a child.

#### **Materials and Methods.**

The aim of our experimental work was studying the process of formation of parents' psychological readiness to bring up children in the conditions of a foster family. The research consisted of four stages: the theoretical stage (2012), the preparatory stage (2012 – 2013), the experimental stage (2014) and the analytical stage (2014).

30 women took part in the research: 5 women who were going to give birth to a child and 15 women who were ready to become foster mothers. General characteristics of these women waiting for "their own child" were the following: the average age was 32, 8 women were officially married, 7 women were not officially married, 12 women had other children, 3 women were waiting for their first child.



The second group, women, who were waiting for a foster child, had the following characteristics: their average age was 32, 9 women were married, 5 women were not officially married, 1 woman was a widow who had not married again, 12 women had elder children, other women had no “children of their own”, they were bringing up foster children.

The study of the control group (CG) of pregnant women was conducted at Maternity Hospital № 1 and Maternity Clinic № 2; the study of the experimental group (EG) was conducted at the “Social Rehabilitation Center”.

The formative experiment included psychological diagnostic (the preliminary test), experimental work (informative, corrective, consultative, training), psychological diagnostic (the final test). Modelling and planning psychological correction [5, 6] took special place in our work.

To conduct psychological diagnostic of the selection diagnostic methods were selected according to the following criteria: relevance to the object, general aims of the research, psychometric criteria of quality (the methods being standardized, valid and reliable), optimal choice of the number of methods according to the aim of the research, the women’s age and the conditions, complementarity of the methods, their availability in using and processing of the results.

In the process of diagnostic the following requirements to the organization of a psycho-diagnostic study were followed: voluntariness and motivation of the participants, confidentiality of the results, standardization of the procedure of conducting and processing the results, organization of group and individual counselling sessions with the participants on the results of the research.

The empiric methods used in the research were differentiated the following way:

1. Methods enabling to study the cognitive component of the concept “psychological readiness to being parents and bringing up children.
2. Methods studying the emotional and volitional component of psychological readiness to bringing up children.
3. Methods studying the motivation and values of future mothers.
4. Methods aimed at studying the activity component of psychological readiness to bringing up children.

The whole complex of psycho-diagnostic methods is presented in Table 1:

Table 1: The Complex of Psycho-Diagnostic Methods to Diagnose the Level of Psychological Readiness of Parents to Bringing up Children.

Component	Method
Motivation and values	- Morphological test of life values (V.F. Sopov, L.V. Karpushina)
Cognitive component	- Questionnaire (only for foster mothers)
Emotional and volitional component	- MMPI questionnaire (abridged variant), - K. Leonhard’s test of character accentuations.
Activity component	- Method PARI (E. Sheffer, R. Bell), - Method "Analysis of Family Relations" (AFR) (E.G. Eydemiller, V.V. Yustitskis)

The relevance of the results was checked with the help of mathematical statistics (factor analysis and Student's t-test).

### Results and Discussion

Criteria of maturity of psychological readiness of parents to bringing up children was identified taking into account the result of factor analysis of all indexes of the studied characteristic.

The calculations distributed the value of variables according to six factors, in totality explaining 71,722% of the total variance. The first four factors have the most considerable factor loading, 52,187% of the general variance.

It means that the character of indexes of psychological readiness of parents to bringing up children, that are included into the first four factors, are the most important to form a given personal quality.

The total factor loading of two more factors, 11,53%, is not a significant loading. We will see these factors as an additional condition of forming psychological readiness of parents to bringing up children.

Factor analysis helped us to build a significant fixed index hierarchy according to the used diagnostic methods.

The highest variance value (7,112%) corresponds to motives and values, in the context of the component of motivation and values. Factor analysis showed the following components: family conflicts, the mother's dependence, immaturity of the parental feeling, ambition and suppressed aggression, financial state and orientation to professional growth.

The next two components have nearly the same variance value (6,930% and 6,711%), they are the activity component and the cognitive component<sup>4</sup> their indicators are the following: educational uncertainty, verbalization, immaturity of the parental feeling, the feeling of self-sacrifice, and dissatisfaction with the role of a housewife.

At the stage of preliminary test, a comparison was made of average values in main and additional indexes of maturity of psychological readiness to bringing up children in the EG and the CG with the help of Student's t-test, that showed statistically meaningful differences.

But the average score in practically all indicators in one group was less constructive than in the other one, which enabled us to divide the sample into the CG and the EG.

The lowest (and the least satisfactory) results of the level of maturity of psychological readiness to bringing up children, were obtained in the experimental group. In this group, a program of forming the parents' psychological readiness to bring up children in a foster family.

At the stage of final test the EG showed much higher results in the registered indicators, which is proved by statistically relevant differences.

Having analyzed the dynamics of appearing of the main and additional indicators of maturity of psychological readiness of parents to bringing up children in a foster family, before and after the experiment, we have come to the following conclusions:

On the cognitive level of psychological readiness, a statistically relevant increase was registered in the level of knowledge about psychological, pedagogical, medical and age characteristics of abandoned children ( $p \leq 0,02^*$ ),



the level of understanding the new social role had also grown; it was 7,2 at the preliminary test stage, and 8,06 at the stage of final test, which constitutes a high level of significance ( $p \leq 0,04^*$ ). The shifts in the level of imagining the system of responsibilities of a foster child's a parent ( $p \leq 0,002^{**}$ ) and the level of awareness in the issues of taking a foster child and dealing with specialists ( $p \leq 0,006^{**}$ ), are also significant.

In the level of emotions and volitions the research of the results of the formative experiment in the EG showed that there are differences between the indicators of the first and the second diagnostic measurements of such character accentuations, as psychasthenia ( $p \leq 0,04^*$ ), anxiety ( $p \leq 0,03^*$ ), and demonstrativeness ( $p \leq 0,04^*$ ). We should mention that the first two accentuations suffered changes, and such traits as anxiety, uneasiness, self-doubt and fear of failure, have been reduced. The level of statistical significance was identified in the demonstrative personality type ( $p \leq 0,049$ ), which indicates activation of the personal potential, growing self-confidence, wish to gain recognition in the society, positive mindset and expecting further success in bringing up a child. The analysis of indicators of motivation and values in EG and EG 1 at the stage of the final test, revealed that their correlation in comparison with the preliminary test, had changed. The values that characterize development of one's own individuality ( $p \leq 0,03^*$ ), development of social contacts ( $p \leq 0,04^*$ ) and preserving the individuality ( $p \leq 0,02$ ) of the parents after the finishing of the formative experiment, became significantly higher than the similar ones at the stage of preliminary test. Such values as family and financial position have not suffered significant changes. These indicators were sense-making for the experimental group at the preliminary stage (the results were excessive). The program of correction and development could activate other aspects of the personal potential and uncover social interests.

The statistical analysis of values of parts of the activity component, obtained with the help of the final test in EG and EG 1 makes it possible to say that the appearance of significant differences in such characteristics as feeling self-sacrifice ( $p \leq 0,001^{**}$ ). At the stage of the final test, there was a considerable decrease in this indicator, which tells us that the situation is becoming more normal, and verbal expression becomes more frequent ( $p \leq 0,04^*$ ). In other words, a parent encourages a child to express ideas verbally and strives to discuss problems or just to begin a friendly talk. Development of a child's activity ( $p \leq 0,04^*$ ) has also been identified at the stage of the final test, and the results are better than they were before the corrective measures, significant changes have been identified in the level of irritability ( $p \leq 0,03^*$ ) and suppressed aggression ( $p \leq 0,005^{**}$ ), which shows stabilization of family relationships and the parents' emotional state. We have succeeded in reducing the indicators of "fobia of losing a child" ( $p \leq 0,003^{**}$ ) and "educational uncertainty" ( $p \leq 0,03^*$ ), with the help of corrective and developing measures.

#### Conclusion

The analysis of the results of the formative stage in our research was done in the dynamic of the main components (the cognitive component, the emotional and volitional component, the component of motivation and values, the activity component) of psychological readiness of parents to bring up children in a foster family. Comparing the results of the study of the indicators of the level of psychological readiness of parents before and after the corrective and developing

measures in the experimental group, we have seen statistically meaningful differences, their dynamics has been identified, and the fact of the positive influence of the experimental program on the level of psychological readiness of parents to bring up children in a foster family has been proved.

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