



ASSESSMENT OF INTERPERSONAL TRUST AND GROUP AFFILIATION OF CHILDREN WITHOUT PARENTAL CARE IN RELATION TO GENDER

PROCJENA INTERPERSONALNOG POVJERENJA I GRUPNE PRIPADNOSTI DJECE BEZ RODITELJSKOG STARANJA U ODNOSU NA POL

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the research was to determine the difference in interpersonal trust and group affiliation of children without parental care in relation to gender. The research included a convenient sample of 122 respondents of both genders, who were being taken care of in the Children's SOS Village in Gračanica, Village of Peace in Turija and the Home for Children Without Parental Care in Tuzla. In order to verify the research objective, the Group Affiliation Scaler and the Interpersonal Trust Test were used. To determine the difference in interpersonal trust and group affiliation between children without parental care in relation to gender, a t-test was applied. The obtained data was processed in the statistical package SPSS 20 for Windows. Based on the results, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference in the assessment of interpersonal trust and group belonging between children without parental care in relation to gender.

Key words: children without parental care, gender of children, interpersonal trust, group affiliation.

SAŽETAK

Cilj istraživanja bio je utvrditi razliku interpersonalnog povjerenja i grupne pripadnosti djece bez roditeljskog staranja u odnosu na pol. Istraživanjem je obuhvaćen prigodan uzorak od 122 ispitanika oba pola, koji su zbrinuti u Dječijem SOS selu Gračanica, Selu mira Turija i Domu za djecu bez roditeljskog staranja u Tuzli. U svrhu provjere postavljenog cilja istraživanja korišteni su Skaler grupne pripadnosti i Test interpersonalnog povjerenja. Za utvrđivanje razlike interpersonalnog povjerenja i grupne pripadnosti između djece bez roditeljskog staranja u odnosu na pol primjenjen je *t*-test. Dobijeni podaci obrađeni su u statističkom paketu SPSS 20 for windows.

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Na osnovi rezultata može se zaključiti da postoji statistički značajna razlika u procjeni interpersonalnog povjerenja i grupne pripadnosti između djece bez roditeljskog staranja u odnosu na pol.

Ključne riječi: djeca bez roditeljskog staranja, pol djece, interpersonalno povjerenje, grupna pripadnost.

INTRODUCTION

Observing a person from birth, we can conclude that his numerical abilities develop through education. If we compare a human with other living beings, it is clear that he cannot continue his life independently immediately after birth (Senković, 2007). Education is as old as mankind. People have always passed on the experiences of their elders to younger generations. This also represents the main meaning of education (Vukasović, 1994). A person brings genetic potential to the world at birth, which will further develop under the influence of heredity, environment and the individual's own activity. In modern civilization, humans could not be what they are if it were not for games, media, communication and educational exchanges (Suzić, 2005). Children are the most sensitive members of a society and in the first years of life they are completely dependent on others, primarily on the support provided by their family. Parents represent a safe base to which the child returns every time it feels insecure. Sometimes only visual contact is enough for children to regain their security and continue exploring new situations (Pašalić-Kreso, 2012). The feeling that someone cares about us and thinks about us is the basis for the functioning of the security base. The concept of family as a safe base is introduced by Byng-Hall. He presents the family system as a network of relationships, in which all members are connected and feel safe. In crisis or traumatic situations, usually all family members feel unsafe, regardless of whether the family is a safe base or not (Byng-Hall, 1995). When the capacity of the family to provide a safe base is reduced, the primacy of caring for the child is lost. This changes the focus from caring for the child to caring for partner relationships (Mihic, 2012). Although most children grow up in their family and meet their basic life needs, a number of children remain deprived of parental care for a number of reasons: death of a parent, illness, child abandonment or inadequate child care. If children are deprived of parental care for any reason, they are taken care of by the state, which is obliged to provide the biological family with social, psychological and other types of support to overcome the crisis situation. When, despite this, the child's future life in the biological family is at risk and its rights and interests are threatened by the child's stay in the biological family, the state is obliged to apply some of the forms of protection provided by law (Grujić, 2005). The state is obliged, after taking care of the children, through competent authorities, to monitor children who are placed in some form of alternative accommodation (SOS Children's Villages International, 2009). According to the Law on Marriage and Family Relations, the state should take all measures to protect children (Official Gazette of RS, 2005). In the Law on Social Protection and Provision of Social Security of Citizens, a child without parental care is considered to be a child who does not have living parents, whose parents are unknown or have disappeared, as well as a child whose parents, for any reason, temporarily or permanently do not fulfill their parental rights

and duties (Official Gazette of RS, 1991). Choosing a form of protection for children without parental care is very important, so that it does not happen that children go through traumatic experiences again. It is necessary to work in the best interest of the child with the aim of better integration in the new environment, which must be stimulating in order for the child to feel accepted. Children's home as a form of institutional protection ensures proper development and upbringing of children. The teachers in the home take care of the children's physical and psychological development. Children's homes provide accommodation, food, clothing, social, legal and medical assistance. The life of children in the foster home is organized in accordance with the obligations that the children have. Some of the daily activities are: studying, classes, socially useful work, but in addition there is also time for fun (Tomić et al., 2006). What is not in favor of home placement is that life in a foster home is the least similar to family living conditions, which makes this institution the most unnatural environment for a child. Even in the best conditions, when the organization, housing conditions, equipment of the institution and staff are good, the child grows up without a special relationship with one person who would care for it, love it and raise it, as is the case in a family environment (Grujić, 2005). As another form of institutional protection of children without parental care, children's villages are mentioned, which were created as a need to overcome the shortcomings of the classic institutional care of children without parental care (Tomić et al., 2006). In SOS children's villages, they try to create as natural an atmosphere as possible, so the children are divided into family groups and each family lives in a separate house with its mother, who is also a permanent resident of the village. The families are made up of children of different genders and ages and have seven children each. The majority of people in the village are women, but the solution to the problem of identification with men is conceived through identification with the director, pedagogue and the janitor. After finishing primary school, the children move to a foster home for young people, but they still stay in contact with their mother from the village, although now they come under pedagogical supervision. The Village of Peace Turija, Lukavac, was built in 1998 by the Rudolf Walter Foundation. In that village there are eight houses where children live with their aunts. Aunts are in charge of organizing family life. Each house has two apartments and two separate entrances. The director of this village lives in the village together with his family. In order to solve the problem of identification with persons of the male gender, the pedagogue of the village is male, as well as two janitors and four security workers (Buljubašić, 2004). There is no reliable data on how many children in Bosnia and Herzegovina are at risk of losing parental care, but it is estimated that around 100,000 children are at risk. Considering that the exact number of children is not known, we can say that the prevention of separation of children from their parents is quite neglected. The reasons for this are different: lack of financial resources, non-existence of cooperation between key actors, deficient legal regulations and so on (Selimović and Sofović, 2010).

According to the findings of research conducted in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are more boys among children without parental care than girls (53.7% of boys and 45.9% of girls). The situation in Republic of Srpska is similar to that in the Federation, because in this entity there are slightly more boys than girls among children without parental care (51.5% of boys and 48.5% of girls).

Also, this ratio is similar to the structure of the total population of children without parental care in Bosnia and Herzegovina: 52.9% boys and 46.8% girls (Unicef, 2017). Research shows that in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, institutional placement is more common, and in the Republic of Srpska, family placement of children. The lack of a single functional database on beneficiaries of the social protection program, including children without parental care, as well as children threatened with losing parental care, results in inaccurate data on both of these groups of children (Selimović and Sofović, 2010).

The difficulties faced by children without parental care are quite neglected in our society. That is why it is important to examine children's assessments and see the problems they face from their point of view. The aim of this research was to determine the difference in interpersonal trust and group affiliation of children without parental care in relation to gender.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Sample of respondents

The research sample consists of respondents cared for in the Children's SOS Village in Gračanica, the Village of Peace in Turija and the Home for Children Without Parental Care in Tuzla. The research included a convenient sample of 122 respondents of both genders, of which 64 were female and 58 were male. The chronological age of the respondents was from 9 to 18 years.

Method of conducting research

Before conducting the research, the management of institutions for the protection of children without parental care was contacted, followed by letters with a request to conduct the research, and a meeting was held to clarify the purpose and goal of the research. After approval, the children were tested. The research was conducted in three institutions for the protection of children without parental care in Tuzla Canton: Children's SOS Village Gračanica, Village of Peace Turija and Home for Children without Parental Care Tuzla. The survey was conducted in groups by houses and families. Each group consisted of 3 to 7 members. The children were instructed on how to fill in the answers sheet and then the questions were read to them one by one. If the children did not understand a question, they raised their hand and asked for help or an explanation from the researcher.

Measuring instruments

For the purpose of assessing interpersonal trust, the Test of Interpersonal Trust in the Family (TIPP) was used. This test has 24 questions that are divided into the following subtests: 1. Problem solving; 2. Happiness; 3. Resolving conflicts; 4. Challenge, imagination. The first subtest, called Problem Solving, consists of 6 items, and the second, third and fourth subtests contain 5 items each. For the purposes of this research, the TIPP test was modified so that it was adapted to children without parental care, i.e. a stepmother is a substitute for a mother, a pedagogue is a substitute for a father, teachers are a substitute for grandparents, and siblings are joined by housemates. Answers are given on a scale from 0 to 4. Each item is read to the child, and then the children write one of the following scale values on the answer sheet: 0 =

does not talk about it at all, 1 = talks about it a little and rarely, only talks extremely about it with, 2 = occasionally talks about it with, 3 = regularly, whenever necessary, talks about it with, 4 = I ask for help and advice on that issue from. The test score is obtained by summing all the items. Each subtest has a separate score, and they make up the composite score of the entire TIPP-test. The Scaler of Group Affiliation was used to assess group affiliation. This scaler has 28 items or tasks. The first 13 items give a score of belonging to an out-of-school group, and the remaining 15 items give a score of belonging to a school group. In its initial form, this instrument had 20 + 20 particles, but by factorization this number was reduced to 28. This instrument measures group affiliation. All questions are answered on a Likert-type scale where 1 = completely disagree and 5 = completely agree. As in the interpersonal trust test, each item is read to the children, and they circle one of the offered scale values on the answer sheet.

Data processing methods

A t-test was used to verify the research objective. The obtained data was processed in the statistical package SPSS 20 for Windows.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the indicators of the t-test in relation to gender and group affiliation. The obtained findings show that there is no statistically significant difference in relation to belonging to the extracurricular group and gender of the respondents ($t = -0.88$; $p = 0.378$). In relation to belonging to a group at school and gender of the respondent, the results of the t-test showed that there is a statistically significant difference ($t = -2.23$; $p = 0.028$). Female respondents are more group-oriented at school compared to male respondents, which proves statistical significance at the 0.05 level.

Table 1. Indicators of the t-test in relation to gender and group affiliation

Affiliation	Gender	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
To an extracurricular group	Male	3,47	0,59	- 0,88	0,378
	Female	3,57	0,71		
School-group	Male	3,29	0,96	- 2,23	0,028
	Female	3,63	0,75		

Table 2 shows the indicators of the t-test in relation to the individual subtests of interpersonal trust and gender of the children.

Findings on the "*Problem Solving*" subtest showed that there is a statistically significant difference in relation to the gender of the respondent and addressing the educator ($t = -3.68$; $p = 0.000$) and the teacher ($t = -3.53$; $p = 0.001$). The findings are in favor of female respondents. In relation to the "*Happiness*" subtest, the results of the t-test showed that there is a statistically significant difference in relation to the gender of the respondent and addressing the educator ($t = -3.65$; $p = 0.000$) and the teacher ($t = -2.10$; $p = 0.038$). The findings are in favor of female respondents. In relation to the subtest "*Resolving conflicts*",

the results of the t-test showed that there is a statistically significant difference in relation to the gender of the respondent and addressing the educator ($t = -4.40$; $p = 0.000$) and sister, brother and family members ($t = -2.02$; $p = 0.046$). The findings are in favor of female respondents. In relation to the "Challenge, Imagination" subtest, the results of the t-test showed that there is a statistically significant difference in relation to the gender of the respondent and addressing the educator ($t = -2.31$; $p = 0.023$) and sister, brother and family members ($t = -2.50$; $p = 0.014$). The findings are in favor of female respondents. Also, a statistically significant difference was found in relation to the gender of the respondents and addressing the pedagogue, i.e. male respondents, and when it comes to the subtest "Challenge, imagination" they talk more with the pedagogue compared to female respondents, and this is confirmed by statistical significance at the level 0.05.

Table 2. Indicators of the t-test in relation to the subtests of interpersonal trust and children's gender

Variabes	Gender	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
PS Educator	Male	2,61	1,14	- 3,69	0,000
	Female	3,29	0,90		
PS Sister, brother, housemates	Male	1,98	1,19	- 1,73	0,087
	Female	2,36	1,25		
PS Teacher	Male	1,40	1,13	- 3,52	0,001
	Female	2,13	1,15		
PS Pedagogue	Male	1,54	1,14	0,44	0,658
	Female	1,46	1,04		
Happiness Educator	Male	2,26	1,07	- 3,65	0,000
	Female	2,94	0,97		
Happiness Pedagogue	Male	1,66	1,25	1,74	0,084
	Female	1,30	1,04		
Happiness Sister, brother, housemates	Male	2,79	1,17	- 1,08	0,283
	Female	3,01	1,04		
Happiness Teacher	Male	1,17	1,03	- 2,10	0,038
	Female	1,56	1,02		
RC Educator	Male	2,38	1,36	- 4,40	0,000
	Female	3,30	0,93		
RC Pedagogue	Male	1,84	1,89	- 0,03	0,976
	Female	1,85	1,32		
RC Sister, brother, housemates	Male	2,16	1,22	- 2,02	0,046
	Female	2,62	1,27		
RC Teacher	Male	1,27	1,12	- 1,36	0,178
	Female	1,54	1,10		
Challenge, imagination Educator	Male	2,17	1,27	- 2,30	0,023
	Female	2,68	1,20		
Challenge, imagination Pedagogue	Male	1,54	1,28	2,06	0,042
	Female	1,13	0,96		
Challenge, imagination Sister, brother, housemates	Male	2,63	1,08	- 2,50	0,014
	Female	3,09	0,95		
Challenge, imagination Teacher	Male	1,10	1,09	- 1,12	0,264
	Female	1,33	1,09		

Legend: PS – Problem solving, RC – Resolving conflict

The most common cause of children being taken into some form of protection is the socio-economic vulnerability of the family, which can be a result of the difficult socio-economic situation in our country. This research included a total sample of 122 respondents, of which 64 were female and 58 were male.

Research findings (Kregar-Orešković and Rajhvajn, 2005) conducted on a sample of children without parental care who were placed in foster families indicate that they experience a low level of stress in their daily lives. Out of the stress coping strategies, they use avoidance the most, followed by the problem-solving strategy, social support is in third place, and the expression of emotions is in the last place. Young people in foster families perceive a large amount of social support in their environment. In addition, girls are significantly more likely to seek social support in order to cope with problems and difficulties.

CONCLUSION

Based on the obtained research results, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference in the assessment of interpersonal trust and group belonging between children without parental care in relation to gender. Girls are more group oriented at school compared to boys. The reason for this may be the fact that girls achieve better results in school. Namely, comparing gender and school performance, a higher percentage of female respondents achieve excellent results compared to male respondents. Also, a higher percentage of female respondents achieve very good success compared to male respondents. There is no statistically significant difference in relation to belonging to an extracurricular group and gender of the respondents. When we talk about interpersonal trust, girls turn to educators and teachers more for problem solving and happiness, and for solving conflicts, challenges and imagination, they turn to educators, brothers, sisters and housemates more than boys. Boys turn to the pedagogue more than girls for challenge and imagination. We can relate the findings obtained in this way to the organization of institutions for the care of children without parental care. The majority of employees in these institutions are female. In order to solve the problem of identification of boys with a person of the male gender, the principals, pedagogues and janitors are male persons. For this reason, boys do not hesitate to talk to the pedagogue about challenges and imaginations (for example, an interesting book they read or about the future they would like to have), and girls share their imaginations with their sister, brother, other girls in the village or with the teacher. The results of this research indicate that it would be justified to work on changes in the conditions and organization of institutions for the protection of children without parental care. It is necessary to strive towards the formation of complete families, which means the employment of male educators with whom boys can identify.

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