



**EVALUATION OF INTERPERSONAL TRUST AND GROUP AFFILIATION
AMONG CHILDREN WITHOUT PARENTAL CARE IN RELATION TO AGE**
**PROCJENA INTERPERSONALNOG POVJERENJA I GRUPNE PRIPADNOSTI
DJECE BEZ RODITELJSKOG STARANJA U ODNOSU NA DOB**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to determine the difference in interpersonal trust and group affiliation among children without parental care in relation to age. The study included a convenience sample of 122 participants of both genders, who were accommodated in the Children's SOS Village Gračanica (Dječije SOS selo Gračanica), Village of Peace Turija (Selo mira Turija), and the Home for Children without Parental Care in Tuzla (Dom za djecu bez roditeljskog staranja u Tuzli). In order to verify the set research goal, the Group Affiliation Scale and the Interpersonal Trust Scale were utilized. Univariate analysis of variance was applied to determine the difference in interpersonal trust and group affiliation among children without parental care in relation to age. The obtained data were processed using 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 affiliation among children without parental care in relation to age.

Keywords: children without parental care, children's age, interpersonal trust, group affiliation.

SAŽETAK

Cilj istraživanja bio je utvrditi razliku interpersonalnog povjerenja i grupne pripadnosti djece bez roditeljskog staranja u odnosu na dob. 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.

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Za utvrđivanje razlike interpersonalnog povjerenja i grupne pripadnosti između djece bez roditeljskog staranja u odnosu na dob primjenjena je univarijatna analiza varijance. Dobijeni podaci obrađeni su u statističkom paketu SPSS 20 for windows. 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 dob.

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

INTRODUCTION

Family assistance and support are essential for the development of every individual. Most children grow up within their families, but every year, across the globe, a certain number of children are left without parental care, and this phenomenon cannot be completely eradicated. Family can be depicted as a system with a clear boundary that separates its elements from the surrounding environment. This boundary acts as a filter, shielding the system from various negative influences while allowing positive ones to be incorporated into family goals and activities (Pašalić-Kreso, 2004). In the past, families tended to have more children, engaging them in household chores as early as 7 or 8 years old. Each child would have specific tasks, contributing to their upbringing. Today, the landscape is different; parenthood is more complex, and being a successful parent is increasingly challenging (DelCampo & DelCampo, 1999). In many cultures, mothers assume more responsibilities in child-rearing as they are the ones who give birth to children. Maternal love and sensitivity to children's needs are crucial factors that promote their optimal development (Pašalić-Kreso, 2004). Although early studies on mother-child attachment were heavily influenced by ethology, advancements in technology and the ability to record behavior have brought about a new wave of observing micro-aspects of mother-child interaction. It has been observed that children as early as the first half of their first year discover and learn the rules of exchange with their mothers. The results of early learning in primary relationships permeate one's personality as a whole and form the core of one's vulnerability to stress (Hanak, 2012). Assessing the attachment of children to their fathers is challenging, but this attachment can be as strong as that between mother and child. Attachment depends on how well the father responds to the signals the child sends. In their interaction with the child, fathers may employ different approaches, enriching the family dynamics. In the parenting process, fathers bring their own parenting style, which complements maternal actions and independently contributes to the optimal development of children (Pašalić-Kreso, 2012). If a child grows up without a mother, especially at an early age, there is a risk of lagging behind children raised in functional families to some extent. Much greater lag occurs when a child is separated from family conditions due to the death of parents, divorce, and so on. However, in most cases, a child is capable of progressing if the conditions that caused the lag are changed. Therefore, it is necessary to create conditions that will positively influence children for them to thrive as children in functional families do (Franković, Pregrad, & Šimleša, 1963). The goals of protecting children without parental care are not limited to completely eliminating the phenomenon but are aimed at reducing the causes that lead to it and improving child protection through various forms of protection. A common characteristic of every child

without parental care is that they have experienced painful events before being removed from their natural environment, that is, their biological family (Grujić, 2005). The choice of forms of protection for children without parental care is very significant to prevent them from experiencing traumatic events again. It is necessary to work in the best interest of the child to achieve better integration into the new environment, which must be supportive for the child to feel accepted. If children live without parents, the caregivers' task is to provide support, not just to meet their biological needs.

Children are left without parental care for various reasons: the death of one or both parents, abandonment by one or both parents, child neglect, child abuse, and so on (UNICEF, 2010). Child abandonment is a problem that everyone needs to address because it is necessary to create a system capable of early detection of children who are without parental care or who lack parental care for any reason (Arula, 2006). Research shows that institutional care is more prevalent in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while family care is more common in the Republic of Srpska (Selimović & Sofović, 2010). The shortcomings of institutional upbringing can be highlighted: alienation, collectivism, the large number of children in the institution and their various needs, problems, and specific experiences that children bring from their families (Grujić, 2005). Institutional care for children, especially at a young age, was sharply criticized by Bowlby. He believes that institutional conditions are harmful to infants and young children and that children develop faster and stronger when they receive individual attention and are in an atmosphere of family love (Bowlby, 1953). Another form of protection for children without parental care is the SOS Children's Villages, which emerged as a need to overcome the shortcomings of traditional institutional care for children without parental care (Tomić, Osmić, & Karić, 2006). In the SOS Children's Village in Gračanica and Sarajevo, the most represented age group is 7-14 years old. Significant steps have been taken to achieve better social integration. The village has a kindergarten for younger children and various sports and other clubs, or language courses for older children (Buljubašić, 2004). Through the process of socialization, individuals adopt socially acceptable and useful forms of behavior and thus adapt to the society in which they live. Successful functioning and revitalization of society are achieved through the social integration of individuals. The individual's development arises as a result of the integration of the biologically conditioned process of maturation with the socially conditioned process of learning. Human offspring necessarily and naturally develop in human society. The organic, psychological, and social development of each member of society depends on the active relationship of the community (Potkonjak & Šimleša, 1989). SOS Children's Villages provide support to the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in caring for children without parental care and respond to the needs of a large number of children (Selimović & Sofović, 2010). In the Village of Peace Turija, children are placed in families organized similarly to family groups, with each family consisting of five to ten children. The care of children is provided by caregivers who are permanent residents in the village. The lives of the caregivers are mostly tied to the village, so women without own families and widows apply for such jobs. They are, therefore, permanently employed in the village and receive monetary compensation for their work (Buljubašić, 2004). Available data indicate that the largest number of children without parental care are aged from 14 to 18 years (high school age), accounting for 42.1%, followed

by children aged from 10 to 14 years (older elementary school age) at 21.9%, and children aged from 6 to 10 years (younger elementary school age) at 13.3% (UNICEF, 2017).

Society should demonstrate greater sensitivity to the problems faced by children without parental care. It is important to examine the assessments of children of all ages in order to create conditions necessary for adequately meeting the needs for love and belonging of these children, so that they can feel safe, protected, and accepted by society. The aim of this research was to determine the difference in interpersonal trust and group affiliation among children without parental care in relation to age.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Sample of participants

The research sample consists of participants accommodated 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 study included a convenience sample of 122 participants of both genders, with 64 female participants and 58 male participants. The chronological age of the participants ranged from 9 to 18 years.

Method of conducting research

Prior to conducting the research, the management of institutions for the protection of children without parental care was contacted, followed by correspondence requesting permission to conduct the research, and a meeting was held to clarify the purpose and objectives of the research. After obtaining approval, the testing of children commenced. The research was conducted in three institutions for the protection of children without parental care in the Tuzla Canton: the Children's SOS Village in Gračanica, the Village of Peace in Turija, and the Home for Children without Parental Care in Tuzla. The surveying was conducted in groups within households and families. Each group consisted of 3 to 7 members. Children were instructed on how to complete the response sheet, and then each question was read out to them one by one. If children did not understand a question, they raised their hand to request assistance or clarification from the researcher.

Measuring instruments

For the assessment of interpersonal trust, the Interpersonal Family Trust Test (TIPP) was utilized. This test comprises of 24 questions distributed into the following subtests: 1. Problem-solving; 2. Happiness; 3. Conflict resolution; 4. Challenge, imagination. The first subtest, named Problem-solving, consists of 6 items, while the second, third, and fourth subtests each contain 5 items. For the purposes of this research, the TIPP test was modified to suit children without parental care, where a foster mother is a substitute for a biological mother, a pedagogue for a father, teachers for grandparents, and siblings are joined by household members. Responses are provided on a scale from 0 to 4. Each item is read out to the child, and then they mark one of the following scale values on the response sheet: 0 = does not talk about it at all, 1 = talks about it a little and rarely, talks about it exclusively

with, 2 = talks about it occasionally with, 3 = talks about it regularly, whenever needed, talks about it with, 4 = asks for help and advice on the issue from. The test score is obtained by summing all items. Each subtest has a separate score, and together they comprise the composite score of the entire TIPP test. For the assessment of group affiliation, the Group Affiliation Scale (SGP) was used. This scale comprises of 28 items or tasks. The first 13 items provide a score for group affiliation outside of school, while the remaining 15 items provide a score for group affiliation within the school. In its initial form, this instrument had 20 + 20 items, but through factorization, this number was reduced to 28. This instrument measures group affiliation. Responses to all questions are provided on a Likert-type scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, and 5 = strongly agree. Just like on the Interpersonal Trust Test, each item is read out to the child, and they mark one of the provided scale values on the response sheet.

Data processing methods

To verify the research objective, a univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The obtained data were processed using the statistical package SPSS 20 for Windows. Following is the presentation of the research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Table 1, the indicators of univariate analysis of variance in relation to group affiliation and the age of children are presented. The obtained findings indicate that there is a statistically significant difference concerning affiliation with the group outside of school and the age of children ($F = 4.94$; $p = 0.009$). Similarly, concerning affiliation with the group within school and the age of children, there is a statistically significant difference ($F = 6.90$; $p = 0.001$).

Table 1. Fisher Test Indicators in Relation to Group Affiliation and Age

Affiliation	Children's Age	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Group outside of school	9-11 years	3.78	0.60	4.94	0.009
	12-14 years	3.69	0.66		
	15 years and above	3.36	0.63		
	Total	3.52	0.66		
Group within school	9-11 years	3.77	0.84	6.90	0.001
	12-14 years	3.79	0.70		
	15 years and above	3.22	0.88		
	Total	3.47	0.87		

In Table 2, the indicators of the Scheffe test in relation to group affiliation and the age of children are presented. The findings indicate that children aged from 9 to 11 years are more oriented towards the group outside of school compared to respondents aged 15 and above, which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Respondents aged from 9 to 11 and from 12

to 14 years are more oriented towards the group within school compared to respondents aged 15 and above, which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level

Table 2. Scheffe Test Indicators in Relation to Group Affiliation and Age

Affiliation	Children's Age		Difference	SE	p
Group outside of school	9-11	12-14	0.09	0.18	0.888
		15 and above	0.41*	0.16	0.037
	12-14	9-11	-0.09	0.18	0.888
		15 and above	0.33	0.13	0.058
	15 and above	9-11	-0.41*	0.16	0.037
		12-14	-0.33	0.13	0.058
Group within school	9-11	12-14	-0.02	0.23	0.994
		15 and above	0.55*	0.21	0.034
	12-14	9-11	0.02	0.23	0.994
		15 and above	0.57*	0.18	0.006
	15 and above	9-11	-0.55*	0.21	0.034
		12-14	-0.57*	0.18	0.006

In Table 3, the indicators of the Fisher test in relation to the subtests of interpersonal trust and the age of children are presented. The findings indicate that concerning the "Happiness" subtest, there is a statistically significant difference in relation to the age of children and addressing teachers ($F = 3.03$; $p = 0.052$). In relation to the "Conflict Resolution" subtest, there is a statistically significant difference concerning the age of respondents and addressing teachers ($F = 3.50$; $p = 0.033$). In relation to the "Challenge, Imagination" subtest, there is a statistically significant difference concerning the age of respondents and addressing caregivers ($F = 6.81$; $p = 0.002$), pedagogues ($F = 3.47$; $p = 0.034$), siblings and household members ($F = 4.44$; $p = 0.014$), and teachers ($F = 3.03$; $p = 0.052$).

Table 3. Fisher Test Indicators in Relation to Subtests of Interpersonal Trust and Age

Children's Age	M	SD	F	p
PS, Caregiver	9-11	3.33	0.73	
	12-14	3.13	1.08	
	15 and	2.77	1.13	
	above	2.96	1.07	
	Total			2.70
PS, Pedagogue	9-11	1.77	1.05	
	12-14	1.55	1.06	
	15 and	1.39	1.10	
	above	1.50	1.08	
	Total			1.03
PS, Siblings, HM	9-11	2.13	1.13	
	12-14	2.16	1.22	
	15 and	2.20	1.28	
	above	2.18	1.23	
	Total			0.03

PS, Teacher	9-11	2.26	1.01		
	12-14	1.89	1.10		
	15 and above	1.58	1.26		
		1.78	1.20		
	Total			2.93	0.057
Happiness, Caregiver	9-11	2.90	1.07		
	12-14	2.78	1.03		
	15 and above	2.45	1.08		
		2.62	1.07		
	Total			1.90	0.154
Happiness, Pedagogue	9-11	1.80	1.21		
	12-14	1.39	1.16		
	15 and above	1.40	1.14		
		1.47	1.16		
	Total			1.04	0.356
Happiness, Siblings, HM	9-11	3.31	0.58		
	12-14	2.81	1.08		
	15 and above	2.83	1.22		
		2.91	1.11		
	Total			1.74	0.180
Happiness, Teacher	9-11	1.84	1.07		
	12-14	1.42	1.04		
	15 and above	1.21	1.00		
		1.38	1.04		
	Total			3.03	0.052
CR, Caregiver	9-11	3.21	1.08		
	12-14	3.01	1.20		
	15 and above	2.69	1.28		
		2.86	1.23		
	Total			1.80	0.170
CR, Pedagogue	9-11	2.10	1.34		
	12-14	1.85	1.46		
	15 and above	1.76	1.76		
	Total	1.84	1.61	0.34	0.711
CR, Siblings, HM	9-11	2.38	1.03		
	12-14	2.50	1.31		
	15 and above	2.35	1.32		
		2.40	1.27		
	Total			0.16	0.855
CR, Teacher	9-11	1.67	0.96		
	12-14	1.72	1.21		
	15 and above	1.18	1.06		
		1.41	1.11		
	Total			3.50	0.033
Challenge, Imagination,	9-11	3.21	0.97	6.81	0.002

Caregiver	12-14	2.58	1.33		
	15 and above	2.13	1.19		
		2.44	1.25		
	Total				
Challenge, Imagination, Pedagogue	9-11	1.90	1.30		
	12-14	1.25	1.15		
	15 and above	1.18	1.04		
		1.32	1.14		
	Total			3.47	0.034
Challenge, Imagination, Siblings, HM	9-11	3.34	0.70		
	12-14	3.03	1.02		
	15 and above	2.64	1.08		
		2.87	1.04		
	Total			4.44	0.014
Challenge, Imagination, Teacher	9-11	1.68	1.27		
	12-14	1.31	1.06		
	15 and above	1.04	1.01		
		1.22	1.09		
	Total			3.03	0.052

Note: PS – Problem-Solving, CR – Conflict Resolution, HM – Household Members

In Table 4, the indicators of the Scheffe test in relation to the subtests of interpersonal trust and the age of children are presented. The findings indicate that concerning the "Challenge, Imagination" subtest, respondents aged from 9 to 11 years tend to address caregivers, pedagogues, siblings, and household members more compared to respondents aged 15 and above.

Table 4. Scheffe Test Indicators in Relation to Subtests of Interpersonal Trust and Age

Variables	Children's Age	Children's Age	Difference	SE	p
Challenge, Imagination, Caregiver	9-11	12-14	0.63	0.33	0.176
		15 and above	1.08*	0.30	0.002
	12-14	9-11	-0.63	0.33	0.176
		15 and above	0.45	0.25	0.214
	15 and above	9-11	-1.08*	0.30	0.002
		12-14	-0.45	0.25	0.214
Challenge, Imagination, Pedagogue	9-11	12-14	0.65	0.31	0.119
		15 and above	0.73*	0.28	0.037
	12-14	9-11	-0.65	0.31	0.119
		15 and above	0.08	0.24	0.951
	15 and above	9-11	-0.73*	0.28	0.037

	above	12-14	- 0.08	0.24	0.951
Challenge, Imagination, Siblings, HM	9-11	12-14	0.31	0.28	0.541
		15 and above	- 0.70*	0.25	0.024
	12-14	9-11	- 0.31	0.28	0.541
		15 and above	0.39	0.21	0.200
Challenge, Imagination, Teacher	15 and above	9-11	- 0.70*	0.25	0.024
		12-14	- 0.39	0.21	0.200
	9-11	12-14	0.37	0.30	0.473
		15 and above	0.64	0.27	0.061
	12-14	9-11	- 0.37	0.30	0.473
		15 and above	0.27	0.23	0.487
	15 and above	9-11	- 0.64	0.27	0.061
		12-14	- 0.27	0.23	0.487

This study included a convenient sample of 122 participants of both genders. The total sample consists of three subsamples. The first subsample comprises of children aged from 9 to 11 years, both genders (N = 21), the second subsample comprises of children aged from 12 to 14 years, both genders (N = 33), and the third subsample comprises of children aged 15 and above, both genders (N = 68). The findings indicate that younger children without parental care are more oriented towards both groups, outside of school and within school. They also tend to address caregivers, pedagogues, siblings, and household members more for challenges and imagination compared to respondents aged 15 and above.

Research on students' activities during their free time (Đuranović and Opić, 2016) has shown that high school students spend more of their free time socializing, going out, and engaging in relaxing activities. On the other hand, elementary school students spend more of their free time using electronic media and participating in sports. Findings from a study (Kregar-Orešković and Rajhvajn, 2005) conducted on a sample of children without parental care placed in foster families indicate that they perceive a significant amount of social support in their environment.

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 among children without parental care based on age. Looking at the findings of our respondents aged 9-11, who are in the school stage of social development, we can say that they are in line with the characteristics of children of this age. Children in this period strive to be accepted by others and to become members of a group, which we can relate to the indicators on the group affiliation scale. They adjust their behavior to the rules set by adults such as parents or teachers. During this period, the skill of assuming roles increases, therefore, children often imagine future professions, where imagination prevails over reality, which we can connect to the results on the interpersonal trust test because children of this age in the "Challenge and

Imagination" subtest more frequently turn to caregivers, educators, siblings, household members, and teachers. At the end of this period, children are more concerned with impressing their peers. During puberty, which includes our respondents aged 12-14, children socialize in same-sex groups. It is very important for them to be accepted by other children because at this stage they want to have friends with whom they will establish closer relationships. This can also be related to the indicators of the group affiliation scale, where children aged 12-14 are more oriented towards the school group compared to respondents aged 15 and above who are in the period of adolescence. With adolescents, the connections with parents weaken, the need for conformity decreases, and the desire for affirmation of their own identity increases (Šehović, 2005). Although caregivers, not parents, are responsible for our respondents, we can notice by looking only at the means in Table 3 that interpersonal trust in caregivers, educators, and teachers is lower among adolescents compared to respondents in the school stage of development. This finding implies the necessity to work on building trust between adolescents and caregivers, educators, and teachers so that adolescents can more successfully solve the problems they encounter in everyday life or will encounter when they become independent.

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