ASSESSMENT OF INTERPERSONAL TRUST AND GROUP AFFILIATION OF CHILDREN WITHOUT PARENTAL CARE IN RELATION TO ACHIEVING CONTACT WITH RELATIVES

PROCJENA INTERPERSONALNOG POVJERENJA I GRUPNE PRIPADNOSTI DJECE BEZ RODITELJSKOG STARANJA U ODNOSU NA OSTVARIVANJE KONTAKTA SA RODBINOM I BLIŽIM SRODNICIMA

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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 contact with relatives. The research included a convenient sample of 122 respondents of both genders, who were taken care of in the "Children's SOS Village" Gračanica, "Village of Peace" 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. A t-test was used to determine the difference in interpersonal trust and group affiliation between children without parental care in relation to contact with relatives. The obtained data was processed in the statistical package SPSS 20 for Windows. Based on the results, it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant difference in the assessment of interpersonal trust and group belonging between children without parental care in relation to contact with relatives.

Key words: children without parental care, interpersonal trust, group affiliation, relatives, kinship.

SAŽETAK

Cilj istraživanja bio je utvrditi razliku interpersonalnog povjerenja i grupne pripadnosti djece bez roditeljskog staranja u odnosu na ostvarivanje kontakta sa rodbinom i bližim srodnicima. 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 ostvarivanje kontakta sa rodbinom i bližim srodnicima primjenjen je *t*-test.

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Dobijeni podaci obrađeni su u statističkom paketu SPSS 20 for windows. Na osnovi rezultata može se zaključiti da ne postoji statistički značajna razlika u procjeni interpersonalnog povjerenja i grupne pripadnosti između djece bez roditeljskog staranja u odnosu na ostvarivanje kontakta sa rodbinom i bližim srodnicima.

Ključne riječi: djeca bez roditeljskog staranja, interpersonalno povjerenje, grupna pripadnost, rodbina, srodstvo.

INTRODUCTION

Education or upbringing has an impact on personality development but also on the development of society as a whole. Society is renewed, developed and maintained through education. Education is a specific process that influences the development of all personality dispositions (Tomić, Osmić and Karić, 2006). Slatina (2000), inspired by Brezinka's definition, gives the following definition of education: "Education consists of socio-cultural and psychosocial actions that have the character of improving and stimulating the natural individual life forces of humans for the sake of their personal and unique development as a mental, spiritual and active being" (Slatina, 2000, p. 381). Children are the most sensitive members of a society and are completely dependent on others, primarily the family. The family is the place of primary socialization, in it we say our first words and take our first steps, we experience successes and failures and learn how to deal with it. In this sense, the early influence of the family is crucial for every child.

We should understand the family as a system in which belonging is based on a combination of biological, legal and affective ties. Entry into the family can be by birth, adoption, acceptance, and exit can also be in different ways. A family consists of one or more adults, they can be parents, gradnparents or other relatives and one or more children of different types of relationships. These members do not have to be bound exclusively by blood relations, and the most important thing is that they function so that everyone has equal treatment and that no-one feels excluded, even when they are not related by blood (Pašalić-Kreso, 2012). Parenthood makes a woman a mother and a man a father and their roles are linked. They are mutually dependent, and any change in one role leads to a change in the other (Slatina, 1999). The feeling of belonging is important for both mother and child. In order for the child to develop properly, it needs to feel that it belongs to the mother, that is, to the family. On the other hand, in order for a mother to successfully perform her role, she must also feel that she belongs to her child. It is a path that allows a mother to devote herself completely to her child (Bowlby, 1953). Social changes have placed new tasks before parents. Different expectations, beliefs, the media, the influence of other family members represent a pressure that makes parenting even more demanding (Pećnik and Starc, 2010). The development of certain traits depends on the engagement of the individual, but social influence is also necessary. If there is no educational influence, educational neglect of children occurs. Considering that the child is directed exclusively to the family in the first years, the reasons for such neglect should be sought in the deficient state of the family or the absence of a family. If a child grows up without a mother, especially at an early age, there is a danger that it will, to some extent, lag behind children who grow up in functional families.

A much larger delay occurs when a child is separated from family conditions due to the death of a parent, divorce, and so on. However, in most cases the child is able to make progress if the conditions that caused the delay are changed. Therefore, it is necessary to create conditions that will have a favourable effect on children in order for them to progress like children in functional families (Franković, Pregrad and Šimleša, 1963). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a large number of children are at risk of being separated from their parents. Therefore, the prevention of separation of children from their parents should be an adequately represented activity in centres for social work, through early interventions in families that are unable to provide appropriate protection to children in a certain period (Selimović and Sofović, 2010). The family is a natural environment that enables children's development, well-being and protection, so it is necessary to make every effort so that children stay with their parents. Every child should live in an environment that will promote its full potential. If a child is left without parental care, the state is obliged to provide it with alternative care (SOS Children's Villages International, 2009). The beginnings of organized care for children without parental care in our country were recorded at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. From the second half of the 20th century, a more intensive development of the protection of children without parental care began, carried out under the supervision of the state. The basic forms of social protection for children are adoption, guardianship, placement in another family and placement in a social protection institution. However, the extent of the state's real concern for children without parental care can be seen from the fact that in Bosnia and Herzegovina there is not a single law, by-law, decree or rulebook that would regulate the care of children after they turn eighteen (Arula, 2006). The absence of parental care is not a phenomenon characteristic of a certain time period, culture or social order. In all historical periods there were children deprived of parental care. The common characteristic of every child without parental care is that they have gone through painful experiences until they were displaced from their natural environment, that is, from their biological family (Grujić, 2005). In order for educators to be able to help children adapt to a new environment, they should approach this call full-heartedly. Empathy plays an important role in this call, because the suffering the child went through brought it closer to the world of adults (Mavrak, 1999). Very difficult tasks are set before the educators, a lot is expected of them, they have multiple roles and it is not easy for them, but at no time must they give up the goal of helping these children. The role of parents in a child's life is immeasurable, so their replacement must be adequate (Dizdarević, 1999).

One of the criteria for evaluating the successful protection of children without parental care is the criterion of closeness and continuity. In accordance with the principle of family continuity, the criterion of closeness and continuity refers to the need of children who are left without parental care to, if possible, maintain contact with their parents or family members. In this way, regardless of the type of protection, the child would avoid unwanted psychosocial consequences. Application of this criterion is not always possible, which is dictated by the reasons for which the child is placed in the family. If it is about illegitimate children, usually none of the family members, including the mother, wants to have contact with them. It even happens that the extended family does not want to know about the child, because the birth of a child out of wedlock is considered a shameful act.

There are rare brave mothers who stay with their child, regardless of the condemnation of their family or the environment, even when it was born out of wedlock (Buljubasic, 2004). 75.4% of respondents who participated in this research have contact with relatives and close relatives, and 24.6% do not have any contact. Close relatives visit children in the institutions where they are placed, children also visit their relatives during vacations or holidays, if it is in their best interest. For children without parental care, it is very important that if they have biological brothers and sisters, they should be placed in the same form of care, if possible. Research (Unicef, 2017) shows that half of children without parental care have brothers and sisters under the age of eighteen who are most often placed in the same form of care, as many as 70.8% of children, and 13.3% of children have brothers and sisters who are placed in other forms of alternative care.

The aim of this research was to determine the difference in interpersonal trust and group affiliation of children without parental care in relation to contact with relatives.

MATERIAL AND METHODS
Sample of participants

The research sample consists of respondents 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 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 respondent was from 9 to 18.

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 aim 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" in Gračanica, the "Village of Peace" in Turija and the "Home for Children Without Parental Care" in Tuzla. The survey was conducted in groups by houses and families. Each group consisted of 3 to 7 members. The children were explained how to fill in the answer 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 teacher is a substitute for a father, teachers are a substitute for grandparents, and siblings are joined by housemates. Answers are provided 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, explicitly talks about it with, 2 = occasionally talks about it with, 3 = regularly, whenever necessary, I talk 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 (SGA) 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 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly 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. Below is a presentation of the research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the indicators of the t-test in relation to the respondent's contact with relatives and group affiliation. The obtained findings show that there is no statistically significant difference in relation to belonging to an extracurricular group and making contact (t = – 0.81; p = 0.419). Also, in relation to belonging to a group at school and making contact, no statistically significant difference was found (t = – 0.43; p = 0.666).

Table 1 Indicators of the t-test in relation to establishing contact with relatives and close relatives and group affiliation

Variables	Establishing contacts	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
Belonging to an extracurricular group	Establishes contacts	3,50	0,64	– 0,81	0,419
	Doesn't establish contacts	3,61	0,71		
Belonging to a group at school	Establish contacts	3,45	0,85	– 0,43	0,666
	Doesn't establish contacts	3,53	0,95		

Table 2 shows the indicators of the t-test in relation to interpersonal trust and establishing contact with relatives. Based on the findings presented in Table 2, it can generally be concluded that respondents who make contact with relatives to solve problems turn to teachers more than respondents who do not make contact.

Respondents, who do not make contacts, turn more often to a pedagogue to solve their problems. However, although the respondents differ based on the results of arithmetic means, the results of the t-test showed that no statistically significant difference was found on all subtests of interpersonal trust.

Table 2 Indicators of the t-test in relation to the subtests of interpersonal trust and establishing contact with relatives

Variables	Contacts	M	SD	t	p
Problem solving Teacher	Establishes contacts	2,97	1,04	0,02	0,984
	Doesn't establish contacts	2,96	1,20		
Problem solving Siblings	Establishes contacts	1,51	1,05	0,24	0,809
	Doesn't establish contacts	1,46	1,20		
Problem solving Teacher	Establishes contacts	2,29	1,23	1,75	0,083
	Doesn't establish contacts	1,84	1,20		
Problem solving Pedagogue	Establishes contacts	1,68	1,14	− 1,64	0,104
	Doesn't establish contacts	2,09	1,33		
Happiness Educator	Establishes contacts	2,66	1,02	0,76	0,447
	Doesn't establish contacts	2,49	1,22		
Happiness Pedagogue	Establishes contacts	1,54	1,16	1,18	0,241
	Doesn't establish contacts	1,25	1,15		
Happiness Siblings	Establishes contacts	3,01	1,08	1,80	0,074
	Doesn't establish contacts	2,59	1,15		
Happiness Teacher	Establishes contacts	1,31	0,95	− 1,24	0,219
	Doesn't establish contacts	1,58	1,26		
Conflict resolving Pedagogue	Establishes contacts	2,82	1,25	− 0,69	0,489
	Doesn't establish contacts	3,00	1,19		
Conflict resolving Pedagogue	Establishes contacts	1,89	1,69	0,53	0,596
	Doesn't establish contacts	1,71	1,36		
Conflict resolving Siblings	Establishes contacts	2,48	1,23	1,22	0,223
	Doesn't establish contacts	2,15	1,37		
Conflict resolution Educator	Establishes contacts	1,36	1,06	− 0,86	0,391
	Doesn't establish contacts	1,56	1,25		
Challenge, imagination Teacher	Establishes contacts	2,50	1,23	0,87	0,387
	Doesn't establish contacts	2,27	1,32		
Challenge, imagination Pedagogue	Establishes contacts	1,39	1,12	1,06	0,292
	Doesn't establish contacts	1,13	1,19		
Challenge, imagination Siblings	Establishes contacts	2,94	0,96	1,40	0,165
	Doesn't establish contacts	2,64	1,24		
Challenge, imagination Teacher	Establishes contacts	1,19	1,00	− 0,46	0,644
	Doesn't establish contacts	1,30	1,35		

Children without parental care come to institutions with different experiences and life stories. The majority of our respondents, 75.4%, make contact with relatives and close relatives, sometimes with one or both parents. Some of them spend vacations and holidays with them. However, there are children who do not know about their biological parents, or relatives.

In support of the obtained results, we will mention the research (Salihović, 2012) on the connection between pedagogical problems and the causes of juvenile delinquency among children without parental care. In this research, it was shown that children without parental care who make contact with relatives and close relatives, as well as children who do not make contact, perceive a lack of love and attention as the main factor associated with the appearance of juvenile delinquency.

Research on the involvement of grandparents in clinical practice (Bachay and Buzzy, 2012) showed that in the last ten years the composition of the family in the USA has changed significantly, and children are increasingly living with their grandparents due to psycho-social and socio-economic reasons. Research participants believe that grandparents are the best teachers of culture and history. Due to the rich experience they have, they enjoy parenthood much more relaxed, passing on family values to their grandchildren. Despite economic problems, aging and the consequences it brings, grandparents establish a deep emotional connection with their grandchildren. Research (Unicef, 2017) shows that children placed in non-relative foster care are much less likely to maintain contact with their relatives than children in institutions. There are no significant differences in the frequency of these contacts, but the number of contacts is difficult to determine due to different record-keeping practices.

CONCLUSION

Based on the obtained research results, it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant difference in the assessment of interpersonal trust and group affiliation between children without parental care in relation to contact with relatives and close relatives. The findings obtained in this way certainly do not diminish the importance of children's contact with relatives and close relatives, because in order to respect the criteria of closeness and continuity, it is very important that children, if possible, make contact, especially if there is a possibility of creating the necessary conditions for the child's return to the family. Children without parental care went through different experiences before they were taken care of by some form of child protection. When placing them in institutions, care is taken to ensure that, if possible, they are placed in the same institution together with their brothers and sisters. In addition, most of our respondents make contact with relatives and close relatives, sometimes with one or both parents, depending on the causes that led to the separation of the child from the parents. Establishing contact is very important and is one of the criteria for evaluating the successful protection of children without parental care.

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