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# THE CORRELATION BETWEEN PERSONAL TRAITS OF SUBSTITUTE PARENTS AND FAMILY POTENTIAL

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### *Abstract*

The study is topical due to the fact that in the modern system of family living arrangements for orphans and children left without parental care, there are certain difficulties: a model of an effective professional foster family has not been formed; insufficiently studied the relationship between the components of the psychological readiness of candidates for replacement parents and family resources; measurable criteria and indicators that provide psychological readiness for the adoption of a child for upbringing have not been determined. This, in turn, makes it difficult to place adolescent children with developmental features in a family, low willingness of candidates for replacement parents to accept children with significant deprivation experience, and the risk of a secondary return to the institution. The article considers the problem of the psychological readiness of future foster parents to adopt an orphan, raising the relationship between the personal qualities of future adoptive parents and the resources of a foster family depending on the gender of the respondents and the experience of raising children. The materials of the article are of practical importance for specialists in organizing the training of future adoptive parents.

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**Keywords:** Children without parental care, orphans, psychological readiness, substitute family.



## 1. Introduction

Social orphanhood is one of the most critical and socially significant problem in modern Russia. The Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation declares that there are 47.100 orphans and children without parental care in 2019. Back in 2015, the number of children brought up in orphanages was 87.2 thousand people. A reduction by was due to the systematic work on the adoption and implementation of various forms of placing children in families (Vasilieva, 2019).

Krasnitskaya and Rudov (2008), Oslon (2016), Semya (2009), Shipitsyna (2013) substantiate the idea that the most effective education occur in a substitute family. The main function of such a family is to provide conditions for the positive development and self-awareness of the child in accordance with their abilities and needs. Recognizing the importance of a substitute family in the development of adopted child, it is necessary to take into account the problems and difficulties that such children face at different age stages, finding themselves in new conditions. When coming across one or another problem in the upbringing of an adopted, substitute parents may return a child to boarding schools and cause them another psychological trauma.

Our conceptual positions of the study was determined in consequence of works of Prikhozhan and Tolstykh (2007), Shipitsyna (2013) that are dedicated to various aspects of social orphanage and the characteristics of the mental development. Mainly they are focused on the deprivation conditions for raising a child. A consequence of the deprivation of a child's need for emotional attachment to a parent is a number of psychological, emotional, intellectual and social disorders. The influence of deprivation experience and disturbed attachment on the characteristics of the child's personality formation are fully described in the works of Bowlby (2003), Langmeier and Matejcek (1984).

Various aspects of the psychological readiness of substitute parents to raise orphans were analyzed by Kotova (2011), Lakhvich (2009), Makhnach, Prikhozhan, and Tolstykh (2013).

A general tendency that is specific for modern approaches to the psychological testing of potential substitute parents is a shift in emphasis from identifying "dysfunctional", "pathological" characteristics to the resource level of each member and family altogether. The factors of the professionally important qualities of a substitute parent and the most frequently considered characteristics are the personal components of vitality, significant for the dyad "substitute parents – an adopted child" (Makhnach et al., 2013). Theoretical analysis and generalization of practical experience reveals that it is significant for a substitute family to have such significant resources as individual resilience, effective family communication, strong skills in solving family problems, the ability to control available resources, as well as realistic perception material capabilities of the family to reduce the risk of abandoning a child, a substitute family should.

We consider the psychological readiness of parents to take a child in a substitute family as a complex multicomponent education that has its own structure, the sustainable formation of all its components is a necessary condition for the successful adaptation of the child and for the substitute family to get used to new conditions of life together. The structure of psychological readiness includes such components as:

1) motivational-personal - includes the motivation for choosing an adopted child, as well as the individual typological characteristics of the parents;

2) cognitive - includes the operational and orientational aspects of parenthood preparedness, which require knowledge of the developmental features of the child, an understanding of how to resolve problem situations, as well as role expectations and claims in marriage;

3) resource-family - reflects the characteristics of family adaptation and cohesion, the specifics of interpersonal relationships in the family, a realistic perception of the educational potential of candidates, socio-economic conditions and socio-psychological conditions of the family, orientation towards reasonable autonomy in raising children.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The research problem is formulated as follows. Find out: if there are differences in the resource indicators of the substitute family and the personal component of the psychological readiness of adopting parents to accept orphans for raising a child, depending on gender and the experience of raising children. If there are readiness indicators for parenthood and the resourcefulness of a substitute family related to such individual psychological characteristics of potential substitute parents as self-esteem, sensitivity, stability of the emotional background, self-image, courage.

## **3. Research Questions**

The subject of the study is the resourcefulness of the substitute family and the personal component of the psychological readiness of foster parents to adopt an orphan.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to consider the psychological readiness of foster parents to adopt an orphan, depending on gender and the experience of raising children, as well as correlation of personal qualities of foster parents and family resources.

## **5. Research Methods**

The study was conducted on the basis of FSBEI HE "Bashkir State Pedagogical University named after M. Akmulla". The study involved 60 people (30 men and 30 women), who are potential candidates for foster parents and undergoing preliminary training.

To solve the stated problems and prove the hypotheses, the psychodiagnostic method was used, which was presented by the following methods:

1. Standardized interview by Oslon (2017) "Assessment of the readiness of foster parents";
2. Multifactorial personal questionnaire (16PF) by Cattell in Kapustina's (2004) interpretation;
3. Methodology "Assessment of the dominant emotional state" by Kulikov (1997).

To accomplish a statistical assessment of the authenticity of differences between the samples, we used the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U-test. Correlation analysis was performed using a linear Pearson coefficient.

## 6. Findings

The readiness and resource capacity of a substitute family was recognized through the Standardized Interview by Oslon (2017) "Assessment of the readiness of foster parents". An analysis of the results showed that no significant differences in the level of readiness for parenthood by gender were found (table 01).

**Table 01.** Results of a statistical assessment of differences in readiness for parenthood depending on the experience of parenting

Parenthood Readiness Factor	Averages		Mann-Whitney U-test	
	No parenting experience	Experienced in parenting	U	P
Family Stability Assessment	1.67	1.42	276 <sup>a</sup>	0.011
Material and economic stability of the family	1.61	1.74	353.5	0.169
The adequacy of the candidates' expectations of receiving the child in the family	1.86	1.77	415	0.649
Possible family risks that could lead to a violation of the child's rights to a safe and secure family environment	1.72	1.58	426.5	0.777
Satisfaction with quality of life and own parental competencies	1.85	1.59	358	0.193
General score on family resources	1.74	1.60	399	0.489

<sup>a</sup>Note: differences that have reached the level of statistical significance.

A comparative analysis of the level of readiness for parenthood, depending on the existing experience of raising children, revealed statistically significant differences in the indicator "Family stability assessment". Interviewed with no parenting experience rate their family's stability higher than parents with parenting experience. This indicates that respondents who have children and experience in their upbringing estimate their family more realistically.

To diagnose the personal qualities of potential substitute parents, a 16PF Questionnaire by Raymond B. Cattell (form C) was used (Kapustina, 2004). The results are shown in table 02.

**Table 02.** Results of a statistical evaluation of differences in personality traits in men and women<sup>b</sup>

Questionnaire Factors		Averages		Mann-Whitney U-test	
		Men	Women	U	p
MD	Self-esteem	7.63	6.00	251	0.003
I	Sensitivity / resolution	4.10	5.83	202	0.001
O	Inclination to feel guilty/adequate self-confidence	4.40	5.80	278	0.01

<sup>b</sup>Note: the table shows the differences that have reached the level of statistical significance.

An analysis of the personal traits of potential substitute parents showed that men compare favourably with women in personal traits, such as self-esteem (MD factor), manifested in a reassessment of their capabilities, self-confidence and self-satisfaction, and sensitivity (factor F3). Men are less sensitive than women, often behave as enterprising, decisive, not inclined to notice life nuances, concentrate on the obvious things. When difficulties arise, they prefer quick action without thinking thoroughly.

Women, compared to men, are more prone to guilt (factor O). The main manifestations of this personality factor are fearfulness, self-doubt and circumstances, anxiety, concern, depression, sensitivity. They easily fall into confusion, have a strong sense of duty, are too caring, full of fears, prone to mood. Sensitivity (factor I) is more characteristic for women - they are sentimental, have developed aesthetic needs, sympathize with themselves and seek sympathy from others, are friendly, require attention, hypochondriacal and fearful. There were no differences in other factors between men and women (table 03).

**Table 03.** The results of a statistical assessment of differences in personal traits depending on the experience of parenting<sup>c</sup>

Questionnaire Factors		Averages		Mann–Whitney U-test	
		No parenting experience	Experienced in parenting	U	p
Q2	Independence/ dependence on a group	5.11	3.97	302.5*	0.03
F1	Anxiety	5.61	7.16	230*	0.001

<sup>c</sup>Note: the table shows the differences that have reached the level of statistical significance

An analysis of the differences in the personal qualities of candidates for replacement parents, depending on the experience of parenting showed that respondents with a lack of parenting experience are more independent than respondents with experience in parenting (factor Q2). They prefer to rely on their own opinion, are independent in their views, and strive for independent decisions and actions. Respondents with a parenting experience have more anxiety than respondents with a lack of such experience (factor F1). Anxiety is not necessarily neurotic, it may be due to the situation, but its presence reduces the ability to achieve the desired, disrupts productivity and leads to somatic disorders.

Thus, men who are potential substitute parents, more often than women, have higher self-esteem, determination, a tendency to act without reflection, strong will and self-control, and women more often feel guilty and are sensitive. Potential substitute parents experienced in raising children are more often anxious, independent, with strong will and self-control. Potential parents without parenting experience are more independent, have higher self-esteem, are dreamy and extroverted.

To test the hypothesis that the indicators of readiness for parenthood and the resourcefulness of a substitute family are interrelated with such individual psychological characteristics of the personality of potential substitute parents as self-esteem, sensitivity, stability of the emotional background, self-image, courage, a correlation analysis was performed using a linear correlation coefficient r-Pearson. The relation between the indicators of the Standardized Interview Oslon (2017) and the 16PF Multi-Factor Personality Questionnaire by R.B. Cattell in Kapustina's (2004) interpretation, as well as the methodology for determining the dominant state by Kulikov (1997), was analyzed (table 04).

**Table 04.** The results of the correlation analysis of family resources and personality traits of potential substitute parents (men)<sup>d</sup>

Readiness indicators for parenthood and family resources	Factor F3	Scale
	Sensitivity	Self image
The adequacy of the candidates expectation from receiving a child in the family	0.42	
Satisfaction with quality of life and own parental competencies		- 0.41

<sup>d</sup>Note: only statistically significant correlations are shown in the table.

The men's sample revealed a positive correlation between sensitivity and the assessment of the adequacy of the potential parents expectations from having a child in the family, as well as a negative correlation between the positive / negative image of oneself and the assessment of satisfaction with the quality of life and their own parental competencies. This suggests that a positive perception of self-image reduces the requirements for the degree of satisfaction with the quality of life and one's own parental competencies. No correlation was found between other indicators (table 05).

**Table 05.** The results of the correlation analysis of family resources and personality characteristics of candidates for replacement parents (women)<sup>e</sup>

Readiness indicators for parenthood and family resources	Method Scales <sup>f</sup>										
	MD	B	E	F	H	I	L	F2	F3	S	P
Family Stability Assessment	0.5			0.45			0.52		0.42	0.41	
Material and economic stability of the family		- 0.39		0.38		- 0.36			0.43	0.45	
The adequacy of the candidates expectation from receiving a child in the family								0.36			0.4
Possible family risks			0.49	0.43	0.52				0.46		
Satisfaction with quality of life and own parental competencies	0.38										
General score on family resources	0.44			0.43				0.43	0.47	0.37	

<sup>e</sup>Note: only statistically significant correlations are shown in the table.

<sup>f</sup>Note: Scales of methods: MD - Self-esteem, B - Developed / limited thinking, E - Independence / compliance, F - Carelessness / concern, H - Courage / shyness, I - Sensitivity /resolution, L - Suspiciousness / credulity, F2 - Extroversion / introversion, F3 –Sensitivity, Scale S: stability - instability of the emotional background, P scale: positive - negative image of oneself.

**In the sample of women revealed positive correlation between:**

- self-esteem and assessment of the family stability, satisfaction with the quality of life and their own parental competencies, a general assessment of the resource of the family. The higher the self-esteem of women, the higher demands they make on the level of family stability, the degree of satisfaction with the quality of life and their own parental competencies;

- independence / compliance and assessment of possible family risks that may lead to a violation of the child's rights to a safe and reliable family environment, i.e. the higher the level of independence of women, the higher she assesses the risks of violating the rights of the child;

- carelessness / concern and assessment of the stability of the family as a whole, material and economic stability of the family, assessment of the possible risks of the family, which may lead to a violation of the child's rights to a safe and reliable family environment, and a general assessment of the family's resources. The higher the level of carelessness, expressiveness, enthusiasm of women, the higher their assessment of the general and material and economic stability of the family, possible risks for the child, the total resource of the family;

- courage / shyness and an assessment of the possible risks of the family, which may lead to a violation of the child's rights to a safe and reliable family environment, i.e. the higher the level of courage of women and risk appetite, the higher they assess the possible risks for the child;

- suspiciousness / credulity and assessment of family stability, i.e. the higher the confidence level of women, the higher they assess the stability of the family;

- extraversion / introversion and assessing the adequacy of the expectations of candidates from having a child in the family, a general assessment of the resource of the family. The better the woman establishes and maintains social contacts (extroverted), the more adequate her expectations from the adoption of the child in the family and the higher the total resource of the family;

- sensitivity and assessment of the general and material and economic stability of the family, possible family risks that may lead to a violation of the child's rights to a safe and reliable family environment, and an overall assessment of the family's resources. The higher the reactive balance of women, stability, cheerfulness, determination, enterprise, the tendency to not notice the intricacies of life, the higher they assess the general and material and economic stability of the family, possible risks and family resources;

- stability / instability of the emotional background and assessment of the general and material and economic stability of the family, the total resource of the family, i.e. the more stable the emotional background of women, the higher their assessment of the stability and resource of the family;

- in a positive / negative way of herself and an assessment of the adequacy of the expectations of candidates from having a child in the family: the more positive the self-image of women, the more adequate their expectations from taking the child.

#### **Negative correlation in women was revealed between:**

- developed / limited thinking and assessment of material and economic stability of the family”, i.e. the higher the mental abilities of women, the lower the assessment of the material and economic stability of the family;

- sensuality / firmness and assessment of material and economic stability of the family, i.e. the higher kindness, sensuality, dependence, caution of women, the lower they assess the material and economic stability of the family.

These results indicate that the relationship between the indicators of the personal component of psychological readiness to accept orphans and indicators of family resources have gender differences. Thus, in the male sample, individual relationships were established between the personal qualities of men and their assessment of the stability and resource of the family. In the female sample, the relationship between

personal qualities and the assessment of the resource of the family is much greater. Moreover, in the female sample, a number of personal traits (self-esteem, carelessness / concern, sensitivity, stability / instability of the emotional background) have correlations at the same time with a large number of indicators of family resources.

We assume that, due to socio-psychological characteristics, women are more thorough and scrupulous in their approach to parenthood in general, and in the adoption of a child in the family who was left without parental care, in particular. As a rule, a couple turns to foster parenting at the initiative of a woman who pursues the goal of satisfying her basic need for motherhood. Representing themselves as mothers, evaluating the resources of their family system, women are more prone to introspection of their personal qualities as determining in the formation of readiness for parenthood (table 06).

**Table 06.** Results of the correlation analysis of family resources and personality traits of candidates for replacement parents with experience in raising children<sup>g</sup>

Readiness indicators for parenthood and family resources	Method Scales <sup>h</sup>			
	B	E	I	S
Family stability assessment				
Material and economic stability of the family			-0.355	
Possible family risks that could lead to a violation of the child's rights to a safe and secure family environment	0.51			-0.581
Satisfaction with quality of life and own parental competencies		0.505		

<sup>g</sup>Note: Note: only statistically significant correlations are shown in the table.

<sup>h</sup>Note: B - Developed / limited thinking, E - Independence / suppleness, I - Sensitivity / resolution, Scale S: stability - instability of the emotional background.

An analysis of the resource of the family and the personality traits of candidates for foster parents with experience in raising children showed that there are positive correlation between indicators of developed / limited thinking and an assessment of the possible risks of the family, which can lead to a violation of the child's rights to a safe and reliable family environment. The higher the mental abilities of candidates with experience in raising children, the better they are able to assess the risks of the family for the child. In addition, positive correlation between the indicators of independence / suppleness and an assessment of satisfaction with the quality of life and their own parental competencies was revealed. The higher the authority, assertiveness, independence of potential replacement parents, the more they are satisfied with the quality of life and their own parental competencies.

This sample also revealed negative correlation between the indicators of sensuality / firmness and the assessment of the material and economic stability of the family, as well as the stability / instability of the emotional background and the assessment of the possible risks of the family, which can lead to a violation of the child's rights to a safe and reliable family environment. The more potential parents with experience in raising children have expressed kindness, sensuality, dependence, and cautiousness, the lower they assess the material and economic stability of the family. The more stable the emotional background of parents with parenting experience, the lower they assess the risks of the family, which can lead to a violation of the rights of the child (table 07).

**Table 07.** The results of the correlation analysis of family resources and personality traits of candidates for substitute parents who do not have experience raising children<sup>1</sup>

Readiness indicators for parenthood and family resources	Method Scales <sup>1</sup>							
	MD	H	L	O	Q3	Q4	F3	F4
Family stability assessment	0.56		0.49	-0.57				
Material and economic stability of the family	0.43				0.57	-0.48		
The adequacy of the candidates expectation from receiving a child in the family		0.42		-0.45			0.52	0.42
Possible family risks		0.40		-0.43			0.45	
Satisfaction with quality of life and own parental competencies				-0.40			0.39	
General score on family resources	0.48			-0.54			0.49	

<sup>1</sup>Note: only statistically significant correlations are shown in the table.

<sup>2</sup>Note: MD - Self-esteem, H - Courage / shyness, L - Suspicion / credulity, O - Tendency to guilt / calm self-confidence, Q3 - Self-control, strong will / lack of self-control, Q4 - Internal tension / relaxation, F3 - Sensitivity, F4 - Conformity.

In the sample of candidates with no experience in raising children, positive correlation relationships between the indicators were found:

- self-assessment and assessment of the general and material and economic stability of the family, a general assessment of the resource of the family, i.e. the higher the self-esteem of potential substitute parents, the higher they evaluate the overall and material and economic stability and its resourcefulness;

- courage / shyness and assessing the adequacy of the expectations of candidates from having a child in the family, the possible risks of the family, which can lead to a violation of the child's rights to a safe and reliable family environment. The higher the entrepreneurship and social courage of the candidates, the higher the adequacy of their expectations and the assessment of possible risks;

- suspicion / credulity and assessment of family stability: the higher the level of confidence of potential parents, the higher they assess family stability;

- self-control, strong will / lack of self-control and assessment of material and economic stability of the family, i.e. the higher the self-control of emotions and behavior, the ability to act on a conscious plan, the business is completed, the higher the assessment of the material and economic stability of the family;

- sensitivity and assessment of the adequacy of the expectations of candidates from the adoption of a child into the family, possible risks of the family, which may lead to a violation of the child's rights to a safe and reliable family environment, satisfaction with the quality of life and their own parental competencies, a general assessment of the resource of the family. The higher the emotional stability, cheerfulness, determination, enterprise, tendency to not notice the subtleties of the life of candidates for parents, the higher the assessment of the adequacy of expectations from the child's admission to the family, possible risks for the child, the resource of the family, as well as satisfaction with the quality of their life and their own parental competencies;

- conformity and assessment of the adequacy of the expectations of candidates from the adoption of a child in the family, i.e. the higher the independence, quick wit, and ability of candidates without

experience in raising children (lower conformity), the higher is the assessment of the adequacy of expectations from a child.

Negative correlations in the selection of candidates for foster parents without parenting experience were found between the tendencies to guilt / calm self-confidence and assessment of family stability, adequacy of candidates' expectations from having a child in the family, possible family risks that could lead to a violation of the child's right to safe and reliable family environment, satisfaction with the quality of life and their own parental competencies, an overall assessment of the family's resources. The higher the feeling of guilt, self-flagellation, self-doubt and the vulnerability of potential parents, the lower their assessment of all these indicators of readiness for parenthood, stability and resource of the family. In addition, the inverse relationships between internal tension / relaxation and the assessment of material and economic stability of the family, i.e. the more relaxed, calm, unperturbed the candidates for parents are, the lower their assessment of the material and economic stability of the family.

## 7. Conclusion

Adopting an orphan is a momentous decision for a substitute family, as it has a significant impact on its further functioning and the well-being of the foster child. Substitute family living standards are mainly determined by the personal traits of potential parents. It is the most important condition for the successful discharge of parental duties.

Our empirical study showed significant differences in the indicators of the resource level of the foster family and the personal component of the psychological readiness of foster parents to accept an orphan, depending on gender and the experience of raising children. Interconnections of resource indicators of a substitute family with such individual psychological characteristics of the personality of candidates for substitute parents as self-esteem, sensitivity, stability of the emotional background, positive self-image, courage are found. The interconnection of individual psychological characteristics and the resourcefulness of a substitute family is higher among women and candidates who do not have experience in raising children.

The results of the study are the basis for the training of potential foster parents and successfully implemented in practice in Ufa, Republic of Bashkortostan (Akhmetova et al., 2017).

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