

ISCKMC 2020**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****FEATURES OF PARENTAL ATTITUDE TO CHILDREN WITH
SPECIAL NEEDS**

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Abstract

The paper deals with a very important problem of parental attitude to children with special needs, the number of which increases every year. The paper notes the importance of a family, due to which the socialization of a child with special needs is carried out, but families are often unprepared for interaction with their disabled children. The paper describes the main characteristics of parental attitude to children with special needs, obtained in Russian and foreign studies. The paper presents the results of an empirical study of parental attitudes of mothers to their preschool children with special needs who attend a specialized educational institution, using various methods. The study established the main life conditions of a family with a child with special needs, showed ambivalence of attitude to a child: hypercontrol with high anxiety towards a child, large emotional distance from him, on the one hand, there is a satisfactory communication with a child, on the other – negative assessment of the past experience of interaction with a child, the presence of anxiety, fears, feelings of guilt for the child's disorder. The paper presents the results of a comparative analysis of parental attitudes to children with special needs and healthy children. The paper describes a group of mothers who need special psychological and pedagogical support.

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1. Introduction

In modern society, there is a steady trend towards an increase in the number of children with special needs (SN). According to UNESCO, 2 million Russian children suffer from mental and physical disabilities. According to the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, every year the number of children with special needs is increasing by 5 %. In addition to the leading defect, this category of children is characterized by the inability to interact with others. Therefore, the correction of problems in children with special needs should be carried out through their socialization. The main role in the process of socialization of children with special needs is assigned to the family. It is in the family that a child receives the first experience of relations with the outside world and acquires communicative skills, learns various forms of interaction with people, behavior and adequate response.

The studies of both Russian and foreign authors show that the families that raise children with special needs face numerous problems: poor understanding of the essence and nature of deviations in the behavior of a child with developmental disabilities; desire to impose demands on a child that do not correspond to his capabilities (Kudaibergenova, 2007; Masood et al., 2007; Rafferty et al., 2001). This may lead to secondary mental disorders in a child and decompensation of his state, raise conflicts between family members, create inadequate forms of interaction.

Thus, the problem of the parental attitude of mothers raising a child with special needs is urgent and requires the practical development of effective methods and means of harmonizing it.

2. Problem Statement

Parental attitude is a relatively stable phenomenon involving ambivalent elements of emotional and values-based attitude capable of changing within certain limits. It is implemented through a contact with a child, forms of control, upbringing, relationships (Ovcharova, 2006). This is an integral system of diverse feelings towards a child, behavioral stereotypes practiced in communication with him, characteristics of perception and understanding of a child's character, his actions. Psychologists believe that a child's mental health is closely related to the style of parental education, depends on the nature of parent-child relations. There are various classifications of the types of parental attitude and child-parental interaction, as well as the consequences of implementing these relationships. The parameters of parent-child relations include the nature of emotional bond, the degree of involvement of a parent and a child in the relationship, the degree of satisfaction of a child's needs, the style of communication and interaction with a child, the way of resolving problem and conflict situations, social control, the degree of stability and sequence of upbringing (Belogay & Morozova, 2008).

It can be said that when a family has a child with special needs it has to face many problems, among which the most significant are the problem of access to educational and medical services for a child, communicative difficulties, financial difficulties and restrictions in the employment of mothers related to the need to care for a child, psychological problems faced by all family members, etc. The family with a child with special needs is often isolated and becomes an increasingly closed system that is experiencing its difficulties within the family system. However, many studies prove the importance of

psychological and emotional support for these families, with no less importance of a favorable emotional situation within the family itself raising a child with special needs (Belicheva, 2015; Loseva, 2015).

Such a complex of stressors and negative emotional experiences forms a parental attitude towards a child with special needs. When parents learn that a child has certain developmental disabilities, they face a difficult task. First of all, they need to change their own expectations and attitudes towards a child. Then, they have to accept the impossibility of changing both the biological and emotional status of a child. Unfortunately, in most cases, mothers reject a child with special needs, which is accompanied by neurotic conditions. Mothers with a child with special needs in mental development are more susceptible to emotional disorders, since the situation of the appearance of such a child in the family is initially psycho-traumatic. This situation frustrates the basic needs of parents thus affecting values significant for them (Grinina, 2016; Smirnova, 2015).

In general, the parent-child relations in families raising children with special needs are characterized by the fact that a mother seeks both cooperation and hyperprotection; lack of emotional attitude is also possible, which contributes to the negative attitude towards oneself and others among children with special needs. Authoritarianism can also manifest itself in maternal terms: mothers impose high demands on their children, declare the need for strict discipline, insist on strict control in the process of upbringing, and try to impose their will on children (Kudaibergenova, 2007).

3. Research Questions

1. The subject of the study is the peculiarities of mothers' parental attitude to children with special needs.

2. The hypothesis of the study is to suggest that there are differences in the parental attitudes of mothers of preschool children with special needs compared to mothers' parental attitudes towards their preschool children attending regular kindergartens and not having such a diagnosis.

Besides, the study suggested identifying a group of mothers of preschool children with special needs who showed an ambivalent or negative attitude towards their child and therefore in need of special psychological and pedagogical support, the purpose of which is to promote the mother's acceptance of her child and build positive interaction with him.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to identify the characteristics of parental attitude of mothers raising children with special needs.

5. Research Methods

The study involved 28 mothers whose children attend the Center for Therapeutic Pedagogy and Differential Education of Pskov and Pskov Region (Center for Curative Pedagogics – CCP) and have the status of children with special needs – severe multiple developmental disorders.

The comparative group included 30 mothers whose children attend a general kindergarten and do not have the status of children with special needs (Griбанова et al., 2018).

The following techniques were used:

1. Questionnaire *Parent-Child Interaction* by I.M. Markovskaya (PCI). A version for parents of preschoolers and younger schoolchildren.

2. *Parental Essay* by O.A. Karabanova.

The author's questionnaire was developed for parents raising children with special needs, the purpose of which was to identify the psychological features of interaction in a family (parents' emotional experiences about child developmental disorders, psychological difficulties in communicating with other people among parents raising children with special needs). The questionnaire consists of 17 open and closed (with several answers) questions.

Testing and questionnaires were conducted anonymously, individually.

Mathematical and statistical processing of the obtained data included the calculation of mean values, the frequency of occurrence of the trait, comparative analysis using non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test, cluster analysis.

6. Findings

To identify parental attitude to their children with special needs, the questionnaire *Parent-Child Interaction* (PCI) by I.M. Markovskaya (a version for parents of preschoolers and younger schoolchildren) was used. In the group of mothers of children with special needs, there are average and reduced levels of demands and expectations of parents regarding the responsibility of a child, which are manifested in interaction with him (100 %). The findings suggest that there is no severity and coercion on the part of children in the parent-child relationship (100 %). The indicators of the third scale reflect both pronounced autonomy (29 %) and control towards a child (43 %), which allows referring to both petty custody and permissiveness, which can be the result of either indifference to a child or love. Most mothers are emotionally distanced from their children (71 %), which can indicate their emotional fatigue from being almost constantly with a child, possibly emotional burnout.

More than a half of the mothers (57 %) certainly do not accept their children, perhaps resisting their peculiarities, behavior and current level of development. They are characterized by high level of anxiety (43 %), but 29 % of mothers are not inclined to worry about their children, which may be the result of ignoring attitude towards a child. The average level of anxiety, which is typical for 28 % of mothers of preschool children with special needs, is considered adequate.

Most parents of children with special needs are characterized by inconsistency, versatility of their requirements to a child, their attitude towards him (71 %), which makes their interaction difficult. All mothers showed educational cohesion. Their families rarely have disagreements on the upbringing of their child with special needs. The overwhelming majority of mothers are satisfied with the child's relationship with them (86 %).

For more information on the attitude of parents to their preschool children with special needs, the *Parental Essay* methodology was used. The obtained data indicate that 86 % of mothers show a positive attitude towards their children, however, when comparing their child with other children, 43 % of mothers

believe that the development of their child is in accordance with the norm, or a child will definitely recover, and the same amount negatively assess their children. The rest avoid comparing their child to others, which is likely a sign of mothers' protective responses.

Besides, 71 % of mothers identify positive qualities in their preschool children with special needs, while the remaining – neutral characteristics (29 %). The *Ideal Expectations* scale in responses of mothers with children with special needs in most cases is neutral (71 %). Most of the surveyed mothers of preschool children with special needs (71 %) reveal pronounced fears and concerns, high degree of anxiety, feelings of guilt towards a child and his development. Judging by the answers of mothers, the next *Real Requirements* scale, which reveals the characteristics of the educational position of parents of preschool children with special needs, its efficiency and resources, also has a dual focus. 29 % of mothers note a desire to change the behavior of a child, indicate difficulties in educational influences on him. More than a half give a neutral assessment of their judgments regarding children (57 %).

The *Causes of Difficulties* scale allows identifying the properties and qualities of preschool children with special needs that are not accepted by mothers. A number of these qualities are assessed negatively (57 %) and indicate the possible non-acceptance of problems in the development of a child, the reasons why they arose. It was possible to obtain information about the history of the child development, significant events in its development and the nature of parents' past experiences about these events using the *Anamnestic Data* scale. More than a half of mothers are neutral to the events of the past (71 %), only 14 % were positive towards them. However, 15 % of surveyed mothers raising preschool children with special needs experience negative feelings in connection with the child's past.

The *Interests, Preferences of a Child* scale, indicating the preferred activities of children, the sphere of interests of a child through the eyes of mothers, is quite positive for respondents. Thus, most mothers raising preschool children with special needs simply state their presence (86 %), without assessing them in any way. Only 14 % of mothers positively perceive the interests and activities of their children.

The analysis of the questionnaire results showed that the families with children with special needs are mainly nuclear, most mothers are not able to work due being busy with a child, for the same reason mothers cannot devote much time to themselves. Since many children cannot be left alone, parents are forced to take them with them at all times, despite the fact that this is not always convenient due to the behavioral disorders of a child. Most parents are concerned about the future of their child, the moral strength of many parents is depleted. The faith in the success of a child is also low. However, the positive aspect revealed during the survey is that most parents have the support of their close friends and relatives.

The use of the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test revealed differences in all indicators of mothers' parental attitudes towards preschool children with special needs and mothers whose children do not have this diagnosis (Table 01).

Table 1. Results of comparative analysis of parental attitudes to preschool children with special needs (n=28) and without special needs (n=30)

n/n	Indicator	Rank sum, parents of children with special needs	Rank sum, parents of children without special needs	U criterion	Significance point, p
1	Exactingness	289	146	26	0.001
2	Strictness	276	159	39	0.01
3	Child control	301	134	14	0.001
4	Emotional bond of a child to a parent	280	155	35	0.01
5	Child acceptance by parents	254	181	61	0.05
6	Collaboration	300	135	15	0.001
7	Parent sequence	291	144	24	0.001
8	Educational confrontation in a family	315	120	0	0.001
9	Satisfaction with the relations with a child	288	147	27	0.001
10	General assessment of a child	161	274	56	0.05
11	Comparative assessment of a child	163	272	58	0.05
12	Real requirements	142	293	37	0.01
13	Past experience assessment	133	301.5	28.5	0.001
14	Interests, preferences of a child	149	286	44	0.01
15	We-interaction scenario	166	269	61	0.05

In the group of mothers of children with special needs, all indicators of parental attitudes turned out to be higher than in mothers whose children do not have this diagnosis: exactingness (U=26, $p \leq 0.001$), strictness (U=39, $p \leq 0.01$), child control (U=14, $p \leq 0.01$), emotional bond of a child to a mother (U=35, $p \leq 0.01$), child acceptance by parents (U=15, $p \leq 0.01$), collaboration (U=15, $p \leq 0.01$), parent sequence (U=24, $p \leq 0.001$), educational confrontation in a family (U=0, $p \leq 0.001$), satisfaction with the relations with a child (U=27, $p \leq 0.001$).

According to the scales of parental essay, on the contrary, some indicators are more pronounced in parents whose children are healthy. Thus, the indicators are higher concerning the “open” scale (U=56, $p \leq 0.05$), comparative assessment of a child (U=58, $p \leq 0.05$), real requirements (U=37, $p \leq 0.01$), anamnestic data (U=28.5, $p \leq 0.001$), child’s interests, preferences (U=44, $p \leq 0.01$), we-interaction scenario (U=61, $p \leq 0.05$).

To identify a group of parents of preschool children with special needs that need special psychological and pedagogical support, a cluster analysis was carried out, as a result of which two clusters were identified:

Cluster 1. Relatively harmonious. It included 86 % of mothers. These parents are characterized by high standards of exactingness, high control over the behavior of a child, anxiety, but also high satisfaction with the relationship with their child. These families are characterized by a lack of confrontation on the issues of raising a child and consistency in their educational actions. The parents of this group highly value their children compared to others, tend to take into account their preferences and

interests, their fears and concerns for the future of a child are not negative. They are neutral in assessing the course of development and try to impose realistic demands on a child.

Cluster 2. Disharmonic. It included 14 % of mothers. These parents are characterized by low indicators of exactingness, low control over the behavior of a child, anxiety for him or her, and an average level of satisfaction with the relationship with their child. These families are characterized by high confrontation on the issues of raising a child and inconsistency in their educational actions. The parents of this group rate their children more negatively compared to others, pay little attention to their preferences and interests, their fears and concerns for the future of a child are negative. They negatively assess the child's path of development and place lower demands on a child.

Thus, mothers included in cluster 2 need special psychological and pedagogical support, which involves not only classes on the development of a child himself, but also work on the development of parental competence.

7. Conclusion

The empirical study made it possible to conclude the following:

1. The attitude of parents to their preschool children with special needs is characterized by lack of strictness, low demand, quite high anxiety for a child with sufficiently high control and a great emotional distance with him.

2. On the one hand, mothers are satisfied with the relationship with a child, rarely encounter disagreements in the family on the issues of raising a child, but they are inconsistent in their own attitude towards him.

3. With a general positive attitude of mothers to their children with special needs, when comparing their children with others, they tend to give neutral or negative assessments. Their expectations and requirements for their preschool children are neutral, they underestimate personal interests and activities of children.

4. Most mothers positively assess the nature of interaction with a child at present, but tend to give a negative assessment of the past experience of interaction with him, indicate the presence of anxieties, fears, feelings of guilt for the state of a child.

5. All indicators of parental attitudes of mothers of preschool children with special needs are more pronounced than those of mothers of children without this diagnosis.

6. The mothers of children with special needs are more negative concerning expectations, requirements, assessment of their children and experience of interaction with them in the present and past compared to mothers of children without this diagnosis.

7. 14 % of mothers of preschool children with special needs require special psychological and pedagogical support demonstrating a negative attitude towards and interaction with their children, imposing inadequate demands on them.

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