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PUPILS IN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR SELF-CONCEPT**

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**Abstract**

Research presented herein is relevant due to the importance of studying the preservation and manifestation of psychological space sovereignty, and the imperativeness of investigating the development of self-concept in primary school pupils. An important aspect of this problem lies in the fact that good relationship with parents contributes to the child's psychological sovereignty. Focus here is made on finding a correlation between psychological sovereignty and the self-concept in case of primary school pupils. The researchers used the following methods: the Psychological Sovereignty Test by S.K. Nartova-Bochaver; and Kuhn-McPartland test (Who Am I?), designed to characterize the test subject's self-concept. The respondents' replies were analyzed to quantify their psychological sovereignty. Thus, we found out that the sample included two types of respondents: in some, psychological sovereignty was intact; others were deprived of such sovereignty or had excessively pronounced personal boundaries. As for the quality of the self-concept, different subjects had fully formed self-concepts, partly formed self-concepts, diffuse self-concepts, and unformed self-concepts. This paper analyzes statistically the correlation between psychological sovereignty, the preservation of personal boundaries, and the quality of self-concept in primary school pupils. Psychological sovereignty is what determines and contributes to the self-concept. The more adequately sovereign a primary school pupil is (which means they have flexible and adaptable boundaries), the more harmonious and multifaceted their self-concept will be, and the more productively they will be able to adapt to the changing environment.

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1. Introduction

Today's education requires primary school pupils to be flexible and adaptable, which sometimes may be at odds with psychological stability and positive personality development. Self-concept is the meaningful unit of personality; it becomes the keystone of modern practical psychology in the unstable, unnatural environment that is education (Shuvalov, 2008).

A positive self-concept is fundamental to a harmonious personality; it functions as a healthy psychological framework for understanding oneself, other people, and the world.

Being a dynamic system, the self-concept is subject to change, and that change is guided by the child's relationships with their parents (especially with the mom), peers, etc. A critical part of the process is the dynamics of the child-mother relationships. Vygotsky's cultural and historical concept differentiates the development of primary school pupils and adolescents. Sovereignty, flexibility, and structuredness of a primary school pupil's personal boundaries reflect the qualitative change in their relationships with the mother.

In fact, psychological sovereignty is indicative of the psychological wellbeing of such children (Schipanova, 2015). Weinstein et al. (2013) and Schwartz (2004) claim that lack of flexibility coupled with failure to preserve personal boundaries results in a non-adaptive image of oneself, others, and the world. Weinstein et al. (2013) and Schwartz (2004) also express an idea that non-adaptive, destructive parent-child interactions are linked to a disrespect of personal boundaries (Shklyar, 2019).

Provided that a primary school pupil's age-appropriate personal boundaries are well-respected and not crossed, the child will learn also to respect such boundaries of other people, set their own boundaries appropriately, and build a unique self-concept. Such children find it easier to adapt to change and are more flexible in handling hardships. Their self-concepts are multifaceted and diverse. Nartova-Bochaver (2018) interprets this phenomenon as the emergence of subjectivity at the interface with the outer world. However, for a positive self-concept to emerge, primary school pupils need intact and flexible personal boundaries so that they could experience sovereignty, security, and self-confidence while also being open in relationships (Levkova et al., 2018). These are the qualities of psychological sovereignty according to Nartova-Bochaver (2018).

2. Problem Statement

Self-concept is linked to the personal attitude toward self and their specific traits, their self-worth, and self-acceptance (or non-acceptance). Self-concept is a multicomponent, multilayered personality trait that has cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components. Self-concept develops in the context of self-knowledge that itself splits into several timeframes: past-self (former self-image and childhood experience), present self (current self-image), and future self (an image of who the person will become); and self-attitude (attitude toward self).

Self-concept reflects self-perception at a given time; it contains a certain set of human traits, an internalized repertoire of social and psychological roles that emerge from parent-child interactions.

Self-concept as a set of self-dispositions and a resultant of self-images is transformed by the child's interactions with their parents, especially with the mother (Burns, 1986). Self-concept is a subsystem that contains mental representations of interpersonal relationships; it develops actively in primary school.

More and more aspects of the self-concept open up as the person matures. As early as in primary school (which herein refers to an age timeframe rather than institution), first aspects of the self-concept begin to emerge, including the physical self-concept, personal space, comfortable environment, habitual actions, traits of loved ones, and significant values that guide the person.

Self-concept that emerges from personal experience affects how a person perceives the world and other people, as well as the personal behavior self-assessment. A person's satisfaction with life and happiness depend directly on how consistent their experience, their real self, and their ideal self are, as well as on whether the person is capable of perceiving the boundaries of their self and on where the personal boundaries lie.

3. Research Questions

Psychological sovereignty of primary school pupils is affected by the quality of child-parent relationships, especially child-mother relationships. Well-preserved personal boundaries and demonstration thereof are crucial to the emergence of the child's self-image and their view of the place in the world. Mothers are more important in the context of parent-child relationships. As early as three years old, separation from the mother pushes the child towards independent life. Good relationships with the mother also give the child a productive experience of interacting with the world, which contributes to their emotional stability, socialization and development of the self-concept. The strength and preservation of personal boundaries are linked to the mother's qualitative boundaries and fully formed identity (Bowlby, 2014).

Being aware that their personal boundaries are intact, schoolchildren can set their own boundaries for productive communication with others (Levkova & Fadeeva, 2019). Intact personal boundaries enable children and adults to behave productively, to perceive the world adequately, to accept themselves and progress towards self-actualization (Deci & Ryan, 1986; Osin et al., 2016). Boundaries are regulated, redefined, and developed throughout the lifetime across all age timeframes. For preschoolers, the integrity of personal boundaries is the most important indicator of a mentally healthy and developed personality.

Psychological space and the child's / adults' perception thereof are what enables the child to perceive their physical (bodily) and territorial boundaries, the autonomy of belongings, the autonomy of habits, the autonomy of social contacts; as a result, the child becomes able to perceive their self in the world, to build social and psychological connections. If the mother and her child are in a symbiotic relationship, the child will perceive the world as a dangerous, dark place, since only what is known and familiar is perceived to be safe in such relationships. In case both the mother and her child preserve their autonomy adequately and productively, the child will develop their baseline constructive model of social activity (Tokarskaya & Lavrova, 2018).

Psychological space is measured by its volume, the number of dimensions, and durability (stability and mobility of the boundaries) (Nartova-Bochaver, 2018). For this research, the core idea is that the

durability (or, more specifically, the preservation) of psychological space that enables primary school pupils to develop a strong and multifaceted self-concept.

4. Purpose of the Study

The goal hereof was to theoretically and empirically analyze the development and concretization of the self-concept in relation to the psychological sovereignty of primary school pupils.

5. Research Methods

The research sample consisted of 112 primary school pupils attending Tarasov School No. 12 in Penza and School No. 14 in Birobidzhan. The sample was made representative by including only Grade 3 and Grade 4 schoolchildren, as this age is deemed the time when the core of the self-concept emerges.

The authors then investigated psychological sovereignty of primary school pupils.

For experiments, we used Nartova-Bochaver’s Psychological Sovereignty Test designed to test the core parameters of such sovereignty: total psychological sovereignty (TPS), body sovereignty (BS), territorial sovereignty (TS), sovereignty of belongings (SB), sovereignty of habits (SH), sovereignty of social contacts (SSC), and sovereignty of values (SV) (Nartova-Bochaver, 2018); and Kuhn-McPartland’s Who Am I test designed to test the essential characteristics of self-concept and their intensity (Kuhn & McPartland, 2006).

6. Findings

Once the sample was concluded to be representative, and the core methods were picked, we went on to test the development of psychological space and self-image in our subjects, see Table 01.

Table 1. Psychological sovereignty of primary school pupils

Psychological space scales	Deprivation of sovereignty, %	Excessive sovereignty, %	Normal sovereignty, %
Total psychological sovereignty, TPS	26.7	6.6	66.7
Body sovereignty, BS	20.0	20.0	60.0
Territorial sovereignty, TS	16.7	13.3	70.0
Sovereignty of belongings, SB	16.7	6.6	76.7
Sovereignty of habits, SH	36.7	10.0	53.3
Sovereignty of social contacts, SSC	13.3	40.0	46.7
Sovereignty of values, SV	16.7	13.3	70.0

In this context, the deprivation of personal psychological space refers to such state of things where children “go with the flow’ and follow other persons” will. Subordination, alienation, inferiority, and

inability to make decisions independently prevail. Such a person cannot identify themselves with territory or time.

Being deprived of borders, they are unable to take responsibility for their own life, remaining vulnerable socially and unprotected from attacks on their personal property, territory, worldview, or even body. Such people are deemed “transparent” because their private life in fact lacks privacy. Such weak boundaries might cause the person to be partially or completely unaware of such deprivation.

Excessive sovereignty is a product of overcompensation for external depriving influences. But still, such children undertake to plan and solve their problems, sometimes even overestimating themselves and their capabilities. A person confident in his/her personal boundaries does not fall victim to internal strife, is able to accept themselves with all their strengths and weaknesses, and has many of the qualities of a self-actualizing personality (Levkova et al., 2018).

Once Kuhn-McPartland test was done, we made a breakdown of the results by personal psychological sovereignty, see Figure 1.

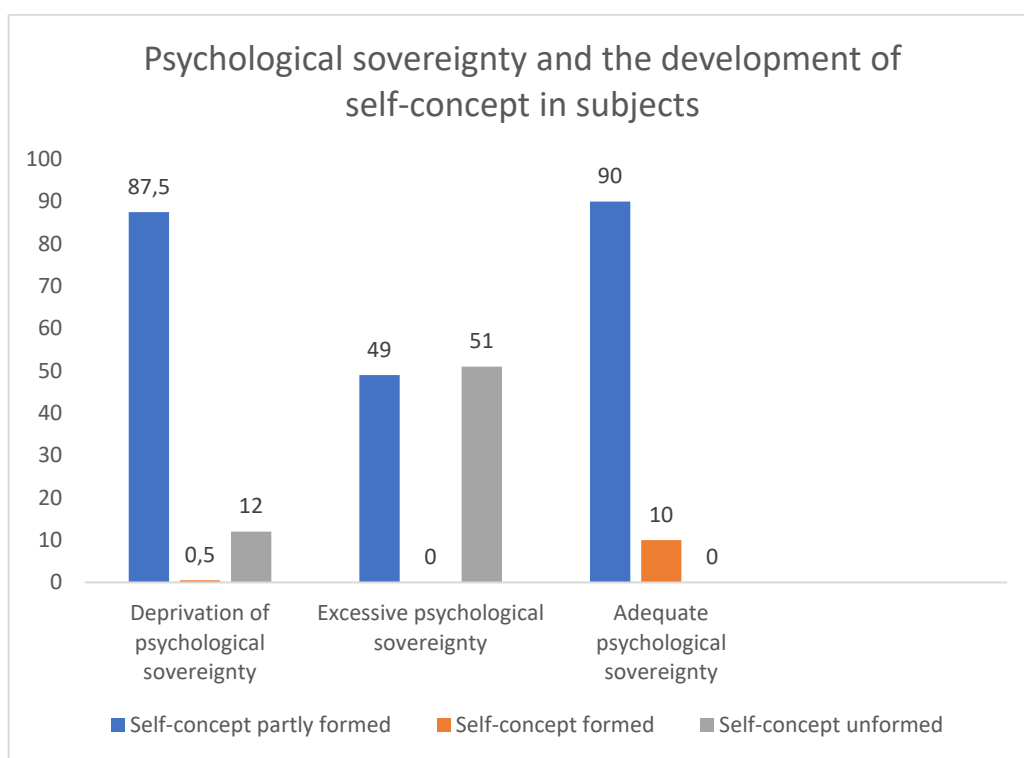


Figure 1. Psychological sovereignty of primary school pupils against the measure of their self-concept

Self-concept was partly formed in those children who preserved the sovereignty of their personal boundaries. This is a sign of integrity and children’s ability not only to control, but also to develop and protect their space, to describe their personality traits, to show self-determination tendencies (Ivanchenko & Plotnikova, 2016). Their self-image enabled adequate self-efficacy in temporal and spatial situations alike. These children showed self-confidence within their personal boundaries. Self-respect and self-acceptance were the qualities that set those children apart.

The respondents deprived of sovereignty did not have healthy self-acceptance and perceived some parts of the self negatively. Their statements in the test demonstrated subordination, alienation, and self-denial of the strengths they had.

Excessive sovereignty was mostly of compensatory nature, showcasing rigid boundaries that would often lead to conflict and failure to understand others, further resulting in failure to develop active reflection, which is something that emerges age-appropriately in primary school pupils.

Factor analysis was applied to the experimental data to test the hypothesis; the method was principal component analysis with Varimax rotation. Table 02 shows the factors applicable to the subjects who had formed, partly formed, or unformed self-concept.

Table 2. Psychological sovereignty of primary school pupils

Scales	F1 (self-concept formed)	F2 (self-concept formed)	F3 (self-concept formed)	F1 (self-concept partly formed)	F1 (self-concept unformed)	F2 (self-concept unformed)
TPS	0.728	0.347	-0.406	0.685	0.214	0.978
BS	0.606	0.694	-0.007	0.787	0.898	0.438
TS	-0.071	0.995	-0.062	0.838	0.993	0.126
SB	0.638	0.691	-0.306	0.775	0.353	0.937
SH	0.984	-0.079	-0.012	0.735	0.897	0.445
SSC	0.013	0.091	0.973	0.657	0.918	0.398
SV	-0.308	-0.349	0.828	0.824	0.975	0.228

Where the self-concept was fully formed, the significant correlation between the self-concept and psychological sovereignty affected the total sovereignty, the body sovereignty, the sovereignty of belongings and habits. In case of partly formed self-concept, all the sovereignty components were found to significantly correlate with the self-concept. Correlation in the first and the second factors was found in children whose self-concept was unformed.

7. Conclusion

Primary school is a sensitive age, during which people develop an adequately sovereign self-concept.

Failure to attain psychological sovereignty may compromise the self-concept and cause regression that will result in psychosomatic disorders, territorial deprivation, ritualization, and excessive control over time in addition to interpersonal difficulties. Such manifestations affect the personality and prevent a complete development of the self-concept.

Psychological sovereignty does correlate with the preservation of personal boundaries and the self-concept quality in primary school pupils. It is what determines and contributes to the self-concept, whether positively or negatively.

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