

5th icCSBs 2017
**The Annual International Conference on Cognitive-Social,
and Behavioural Sciences**

**INTERVENTION AND SPORTS FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS
FROM COMPLETE FAMILIES WITH SOCIAL RISK**

Svetlana Guseva (a) Valerijs Dombrovskis (b)* Sergejs Capulis (c)

*Corresponding author

(a) Daugavpils University, Parades iela 1, Daugavpils, Latvia, svetlana.guseva@du.lv

(b) Daugavpils University, Parades iela 1, Daugavpils, Latvia, valerijs.dombrovskis@du.lv

(c) Daugavpils University, Parades iela 1, Daugavpils, Latvia, sergejs.capulis@du.lv

Abstract

Due to the lack of assurance of adolescents from complete families with social risk of their parents' love for them, there is a discord of family relationships. Specially organized sports activity and measures of intervention for complete families with social risk promote mutual understanding and the improvement of relationships between adolescents and parents. We studied the views of adolescents from complete families with social risk on the relationships with the father and mother. A specially tailored intervention program promotes the improvement of the relationships between the adolescents and their parents. A version of the inventory "Children's Report of Parental Behavior Inventory" by Wasserman, Gorkovaya and Romitsyna (2004), as well as a specially designed intervention program for improving the relationships between adolescents and their parents was applied. The voluntary participation of adolescents from complete families with social risk and their parents in the intervention program combined with sports activity improves family relationships in a relatively short time: 44% of the adolescents showed improvement of their perception of the mother's attitude to them; 20% of the respondents believe that the hostile attitude of the mother to them has changed to positive; 28% of the adolescents believe that their father's relationship to them has become more positive than inconsistent.

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Keywords: Adolescent, Intervention, Social risk families, Sports.



1. Introduction

A family experiencing various periods of life can either promote a child's development or have a destructive influence on the development of their personality. According to OECD (2011) data, today there are many incomplete families in the world; parents marry more than once or cohabit with casual partners. In the period of global crisis, parents often lose their jobs and become long-term unemployed. After a long time without a constant sufficient income, the family becomes a low-income family, receives social housing and thus falls into the social risk group. A family obtains a special form of being with an adolescent. Therefore the following question becomes important: what is the nature of relationships between parents and children in social risk families?

The psychological climate in the family, the empathic ability of parents, communication and forms of interaction of family members acquire a different nature, i.e. the adolescents interpret the role of the family and their place in the system of relationships, subject the behavior of relatives to a more critical judgment, give priority to interpersonal relationships (Dunn, 1988; Lerner & Steinberg, 2004).

At the age of adolescence, the social context changes – children have a tendency to spend less time with family members. Especially when not feeling love from their parents, they try to win a good attitude of their peers, having a significantly better mood from communication with friends (Larson & Richards, 1991). It is also known that unfavorable relationships in the family create social anxiety and lack of self-confidence in children (Blote, Duvekot, Schalk, Tuinenburg, & Westenberg, 2010) because of the chance of rejection by socially more well-off peers in a new situation of social interaction (Blote, Bokhros, Miers, & Westenberg, 2012; Erath, Flanagan, & Bierman, 2007).

In social risk families, financial trouble can create and transform problems in relationships between adolescents and parents. Children often externalize these problems onto their behavior (Ponnet, Van Leeuwen, Wouters, & Mortelmans, 2015), which can lead to discord in relationships with others and to symptoms of depression (Ehrlich, Cassidy, Lejuez, & Daughters, 2014). Parental stress due to unstable and low family income and related insufficient care of the children can also increase the risk of cruel behavior towards the child (Berger, 2004; Ha, Collins, & Martino, 2015; Sidebotham & Heron, 2006). Nasr, Sivarajasingam, Jones and Shepherd (2010) note that adolescent girls are subjected to especially high risk of gaining trauma related to violence due to material deprivation.

In school adolescents often fall into a “social risk” group because their relationship problems with parents influence their learning success and social emotional behavior (Bradly, Corwyn, Burchinal, McAdoo, & Coll, 2001; Hurrellmann, 1990). Grigoryeva and Shamionov (2014) single out emotional well-being as a stable predictor of academic success of elementary school children – the more positive the parents' assessment of the children's adaptive behavior in school, the better the child feels emotionally. Even with the presence of learning motivation but with the lack of warm relationships with teachers (Jungert, Piroddi, & Thornberg, 2016), the lack of parental support and rejection from more successful classmates creates a feeling of dissatisfaction with oneself and low self-esteem, which can consequently lead to a bullying-victim status or a reactive-victim status (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010).

Therefore, to form a full understanding of relationships with others, adolescents from complete families with social risk need psychological support. Supporting an adolescent means believing in their abilities, seeing their positive traits, encouraging them verbally and non-verbally, and having confidence

in their success. First of all, psychological support from parents improves family relationships and promotes pro-social behavior of adolescents (Houlberg, Morris, Cui, Henry, & Criss, 2016). With a lack of adequate support, a child of any age experiences disappointment – from early childhood, development of mental deprivation is promoted with a tendency to asocial behavior later (Laugmeier & Matejcek, 1984).

Unfortunately, parents in the process of interaction with adolescents do not differentiate between such concepts as support, praise and reward. Unreasonable demands of adults have a negative impact on the mood of an adolescent (Tseluiko, 2004). The first reaction of parents to a child's failure is often focusing on mistakes, whereas no attention is given to positive actions and reward. Praise is received for strictly fulfilled demands or requests, but support is given in the form of help in completing a specific task or with minimal progress in achieving something. Parents do not realize that support has an enormous importance to adolescents during various types of failures (Levi, 2006).

Unfortunately, many adolescents do not receive timely support and suffer from failures, which is why relationships with parents do not develop the feeling of confidence in children, a desire to achieve success and the feeling of own importance. Constant focus on failure leads to lower self-esteem and decreases the chance of success of the adolescents later in life (Obukhova, 1998). Success creates the desire to achieve something more and increases self-confidence of adolescents (Maksimov, 2016).

Psychological help improves moral balance in the relationships of parents and adolescents in families with social risk (Sinyagina, 2003). Thus, one of the ways to help adolescents from families with social risk can be intervention that promotes awareness of a relationship problem with parents.

2. Problem Statement

Many families have a relationship dissonance, which can be explained by adolescents' perceived lack of assurance of parental love. In the study, we focus on adolescent girls from complete families that fall into a social risk category where one of the parents has been unemployed for a significant period of time.

3. Research Questions

Do organized sports activities and intervention for behavior adjustment foster mutual understanding and improvement of relationships between adolescents and their parents?

4. Purpose of the Study

To examine how tailored programs of sports activities and intervention help improve relationships between adolescent girls and their parents.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Participants

The participants of the study are 25 adolescent girls aged 13-15 representing 25 complete families of an economically poorly developed south-east region of Latvia. Each adolescent has biological parents and is the only child in the family. One of the parents has been unemployed for more than a year and is not receiving unemployment benefits. Because the income level per person qualifies the family for a low socioeconomic status, such families are considered “social risk families”. The families for participation in the study were suggested by social care services. Participation of all family members was voluntary.

5.2. Methods

To study the views of adolescent girls on their relationships with the father and mother, the inventory “Children’s Report of Parental Behavior” was applied (Wasserman, Gorkovaya, & Romitsyna, 2004). The inventory consists of 50 statements, grouped into 5 scales: POS – Positive interest of parents towards adolescents; DIR – Authoritarian attitude; HOS – Hostile attitude; AUT – Autonomous and independent attitude; NED – Inconsistent or wavering attitude.

The respondents filled in a separate form about each parent, giving each statement an assessment on a three-point scale: 2 points – the statement fully describes the parenting principles of their mother or father; 1 point – the statement partially describes the attitude of their mother or father; 0 points – the statement is not relevant to their mother or father.

Cronbach’s alpha coefficient $\alpha = .812$ for the “Children’s Report of Parental Behavior” reflects the reliability of the results, and the inventory can be used as a valid instrument in Latvian studies in the field of education.

5.3. Procedure

The study was conducted in three stages. At the first stage the character of the adolescents’ views on their parents’ attitude to them was determined. At the second stage, intervention was performed to try and change the views and understanding of the parent’s attitude to the adolescents. The main objective of the intervention was to form a positive attitude to oneself and others and develop cooperation in the family. Apart from counseling and individual work, a sports festival and a sports party was organized. The sports festival had a competitive nature, whereas the sports party involved games without winners or losers. At the third stage the validity of the change and understanding of the adolescents’ views on their relationships with parents was studied.

6. Findings

6.1. First Stage

According to the research plan, diagnostic work was performed to determine the nature of the relationships of the adolescent girls and their parents. It is necessary to study the views of the children on the attitude of both parents to them – the father and mother. Statistical analysis of the obtained data was performed. For convenience, the results obtained are presented in Table 1.

Table 01. Spearman’s rank correlation between the adolescents’ views on their father’s (f1) and mother’s (m1) attitude to them before the intervention program.

	POSf1	DIRf1	HOSf1	AUTf1	NEDf1	POSm1	DIRm1	HOSm1	AUTm1	NEDm1
POSf1	1.000	.513**	-.157	.130	-.098	.339	.150	.015	.359	-.219
DIRf1	.513**	1.000	.412*	.072	.180	-.016	.282	.314	.018	.080
HOSf1	-.157	.412*	1.000	.670	.478*	.211	.536**	.219	.016	.430*
AUTf1	.130	.074	.670	1.000	-.231	.029	.004	.287	.761**	.200
NEDf1	-.098	.180	.478*	-.231	1.000	.028	.519**	.135	-.170	.495*
POSm1	.339	-.016	.211	.029	.028	1.000	.519**	-.016	.307	.089
DIRm1	.150	.282	.536**	.004	.519**	.519**	1.000	.465*	.069	.548**
HOSm1	.015	.314	.219	.284	.135	-.016	.465*	1.000	.294	.513**
AUTm1	.359	.018	.016	.761**	-.170	.307	.069	.294	1.000	.179
NEDm1	-.219	.080	.430*	.200	.495	.089	.548**	.513**	.179	1.000

Note: **p< .01, *p< .05

As seen from Table 1, a positive significant correlation of the adolescents’ views on their parents’ attitudes to them was found at level p< .01 on the following scales:

- Hostile attitude of the father (HOSf1) and authoritarian attitude of the mother (DIRm1);
- Autonomous attitude of the father (AUTf1) and autonomous attitude of the mother (AUTm1);
- Inconsistent attitude of the father (NEDf1) and authoritarian attitude of the mother (DIRm1).

Positive significant correlation at level p< .05 exists between the adolescents’ views on their father’s and mother’s attitude to them on the Hostility scale of the father (HOSf1) and inconsistent attitude of the mother (NEDm1).

Having analyzed the results, it can be stated that in general adolescent girls describe their mother’s attitude to them as authoritarian and demonstrative. When an adolescent believes that one of the parents is hostile to them, then they believe that the other parent has an inconsistent or authoritarian and demonstrative attitude to them. It can be assumed that, according to the adolescents, autonomous and independent attitude of one of the parents means less control and more independence from the other parent. However, inconsistent attitude of the father provokes authoritarian attitude of the mother.

6.2. Second Stage

6.2.1. Intervention Program

In order to improve the family relationships, we organized psychotechnical games with adolescents in groups; interventional and sports activities with adolescents and their parents, and counseling for parents.

During counseling meetings with parents, their behavioral strategy with children was developed. Recommendations were given on the improvement of their relationships:

- Accept the adolescent the way she is: only behavior can upset you, but not the child; discuss their actions but not the child.
- Praise the adolescent more often and tell her that she is loved unconditionally.
- Help the adolescent see her strengths and understand herself.
- Accept the adolescent's weaknesses; teach her to solve her problems calmly a step at a time.
- Be calm about the changing interests of the adolescents.
- Control your own statements and emotional assessment of the adolescent's behavior.

The following guidelines for intervention in groups were used:

- Individual approach to each adolescent;
- Play and counseling form of work with adolescents to maintain their interest in the activities;
- Kindness in relationships with the adolescents; blame for unsuccessful performance is unacceptable;
- Support using positive emotional assessment of any achievement of the adolescent so that success is experienced as happiness;
- Development of the adolescents' need for independent work and the ability to adequately assess their relationships with parents.

We have developed and conducted a complex of psychotechnical games promoting the formation of positive emotional experiences and views on relationships with parents in adolescents from complete families with social risk.

Individual approach was applied in the intervention group, i.e. we made no attempt to teach the adolescents anything against their will in order to maintain their motivation for participation in the activities (Guseva, Dombrovskis, & Murasovs, 2011). We believe that the need of an adolescent to understand and positively interact with parents can only be formed if her individual activity is developed.

Psychotechnical games were aimed at developing the communicative competence, self-confidence and self-knowledge skills – we used exercises directed at self-disclosure, interpersonal confrontation and at expression of strong emotions, and at formation of positive views on their parents' attitude to them. Game tasks were also used that were necessary as a means of maintaining the adolescents' interest towards the classes. The duration of the program was 15 classes, 45 minutes long, once per week. The group was divided into two subgroups – 12 and 13 people.

To develop the need of the adolescents to understand and to develop a positive attitude to themselves and others, situations were created during the activities that were aimed not at routine task performance but at encouraging personal activity. It was not acceptable to ask an unexpected question and demand an immediate answer. The adolescents were given enough time to think and prepare an answer. Such remarks as “good” and “well done” formed confidence in their abilities; the adolescents were praised for persistence and effort, even if the result was far from what was desired.

Competitive intellectual tasks were an obligatory component of the activities which allowed bringing out the adolescent's desire to be successful. At the beginning of work with adolescents, we used games and exercises that were engaging and did not pose particular difficulty. This was done so that the

adolescents could feel the joy of winning; therefore such activities were conducted with positive emotional background. When tasks became more difficult, the adolescents had to solve difficult problem situations. Therefore it is extremely important to stress that at this stage it is unacceptable that the adolescents lose interest in the activities. Because the group work was also aimed at psychological support of each child, feedback from parents was important. Feedback was discussed at counseling meetings with parents – psychological help needed to be provided at home after classes, discussing what was happening in the group. Therefore, success depended on the extent to which the adults believed in the abilities of their child.

6.2.2. Sports Festival “Sports and Us”

After conducting 10 classes for the adolescents and their parents, a sports festival called “Sports and Us” was organized. Special emphasis was put on the fact that the whole family must participate in the sports competitions and that common result depends on each participant. The main aim of the sports festival was developing cooperation and interaction among all family members. Concurrent aims we were trying to reach were: popularization of healthy lifestyle, meaningful spending of leisure time, participation of the whole family in preserving their physical and mental health, and promoting the development of the adults’ and adolescents’ interest towards active lifestyle.

During the festival, positive emotions, good mood and friendly communication were dominating in the gym. Sports competitions taught both adolescents and their parents social solidarity and tolerance, broke stereotypes and changed attitudes in the family and to other members of society, and improved cooperation skills.

Sports festival consisted of three competitions:

1) „First Competition”. Fathers were the first to participate in the competition (running on a gymnastic bench, dribbling a basketball); then mothers joined the competition (running while repeatedly hitting a balloon upward using a badminton racquet; the decisive match was played by their children (running on hands and knees while pushing a ball with their head).

2) „Second Competition”. Only parents participated in this competition; it promoted the skills of coordinating one’s actions (running when the right leg of the father is tied to the left leg of the mother).

3) „Third Competition”. In this competition, all family members participated again (the parents had to carry their child on crossed arms a certain distance and bring her back). The whole team also had to reach the finish line while playing volleyball with balloons without letting them reach the ground.

Each team had a captain and a name.

After the competitions, all teams received prizes for successful completion of all the competition stages to the applause of spectators.

6.2.3. Sports Party “The New Games or Games without Winners or Losers”

After the end of the interventional group activities with adolescents, a sports party was organized called “The New Games or Games without Winners or Losers”.

In the last decade “the new games” have been popular around the world. The main principle of the games is that there are no winners or losers. The games are based on the idea of cooperation among participants instead of competition: mutual aid in achieving the goal. All participants gain satisfaction from the activity because no participant can be excluded from the game until its end. “The new games” are for people of any age, gender, physical state and level of training. Each participant believes in the help of other participants and has no doubt about their own safety. During the game anyone can take initiative, change the nature of the game and be a leader (LeFevre, 2002; Oatman, 2007; Orlick, 2006).

The sports games organized at the sports party correspond to the model of Spartan Games – “SpArt”: “Spirituality”, “Sport”, and “Art”. This humanism-oriented sports model integrated with art was developed by Stolyarov (2003).

The following are examples of “the new games” that were played during the sports party:

- “Musical chairs” is a game where the players sit on chairs arranged in a circle. When music starts playing, the players get up and start moving from chair to chair while one of the chairs is removed from the circle. When the music stops playing, each player has to sit on a chair or on the lap of another player. The game continues until all players are sitting on one chair (Tczen & Pahomov, 1999).
- “Rolling a ball in a circle”. The players are sitting on the floor making a tight circle. The ball is positioned in the lap of one of the players. The task is to move the ball in circle from one lap to another without using your hands. Each participant can change the direction of the ball if they want to. A verbal signal can be given about the change of direction (“stop”, “to the left”, “to the right”, etc.) (Tczen & Pahomov, 1999).

6.3. Findings of the Third Stage

At the third stage of the study, the diagnostic procedure to determine the views of the adolescents on their parents’ attitude to them was repeated. Results were compared before and after the interventional activities. A dynamics in the views of adolescents from complete families with high social risk on positive attitude of their parents to them was found. For convenience, the results of statistical processing obtained after the interventional activities are presented in Table 2.

Table 02. Results of Spearman’s rank correlation between the adolescents’ views on their father’s (f2) and mother’s (m2) attitude to them after the intervention program.

	POSf2	DIRf2	HOSf2	AUTf2	NEDf2	POSm2	DIRm2	HOSm2	AUTm2	NEDm2
POSf2	1.000	.570**	.152	.115	.108	.210	.416*	.316	.203	-.121
DIRf2	.570**	1.000	.365	.042	.373	.090	.534**	.337	.268	.089
HOSf2	.152	.365	1.000	-.085	.516**	.388	.348	.154	.088	.607**
AUTf2	.115	.042	-.085	1.000	-.227	-.239	-.048	.260	.501*	.254
NEDf2	.108	.373	.516**	-.227	1.000	.419*	.479*	.075	.352	.336

POSm2	.210	.090	.388	-.239	.419*	1.000	.397*	.087	.361	.045
DIRm2	.416*	.534**	.348	-.048	.479*	.397*	1.000	.436*	.309	.270
HOSm2	.316	.337	.154	.260	.075	.087	.436*	1.000	.354	.115
AUTm2	.203	.268	.088	.501*	.352	.361	.309	.354	1.000	.280
NEDm2	-.121	.089	.607**	.454	.336	.045	.270	.115	.280	1.000

Note: **p< .01, *p< .05

A positive significant correlation of the views of adolescent girls' from complete families on their parents' attitude to them is found at the level of p< .05 on the following scales:

- If the adolescent feels a positive attitude of their father (POSf2), but an authoritarian attitude from the mother (DIRm2);
- If the adolescent feels an autonomous attitude of both parents (AUTf2 – AUTm2);
- If the adolescent feels a positive attitude of their mother (POSm2), but an inconsistent attitude of their father (NEDf2);

A positive significant correlation at the level p< .01 exists between the views of the adolescents from complete families with high social risk on their mother's and father's attitude to them on the following scales:

- If, according to the adolescents, both parents have an authoritarian attitude to them (DIRf2- DIRm2);
- If the adolescent feels a hostile attitude of their father (HOSf2) and an inconsistent attitude of their mother (NEDm2).

After studying the views of adolescent girls on their relationship with the mother and father and summarizing the results obtained after a comparison of data of the first and third stage of the study, it must be noted that the view of 20% of respondents on their father's attitude to them became more positive; 44% of adolescents believe that their father's attitude to them became less authoritarian. Hostile attitude of the father to the adolescents, according to the children, has changed to positive for 24% of respondents. The view of authoritarian attitude of the father has been found for 20% of respondents and 28% of adolescents feel that their father's attitude to them became more positive rather than inconsistent.

Overall, for 44% of adolescents, the view on the mother's attitude to them has improved; 32% of adolescents adequately perceive authoritarian attitude of the mother and consider it positive; 20% of respondents believe that the hostile attitude of the mother has changed to positive. According to 16% of respondents, their mother gives them freedom of action and trusts them. The view on inconsistent attitude of the mother has changed for 40% of adolescents.

7. Conclusion

When entering adolescence, relationships with parents are very important to children, as well as the relationship between their parents, which is a basis for stable relationships in the family. Development of the adolescent's awareness of their "Self" depends not only on different social contexts to which they belong, but also on mutual input into the relationship between parents and children (Scabini & Cigoli, 2006). Moreover, parents of anxious and rejected children usually have a negative attitude regarding their children (Laskey & Cartwright-Hatton, 2009).

Often parents, while having high expectations of their children, are unable to offer them a model of career growth corresponding to the knowledge obtained. Often, the views of parents and adolescents on further life prospect do not match, which leads to lack of mutual understanding and harmony in the family. This is why it was important to perform intervention in social risk families in order to harmonize internal relationships where, as a result, the adolescent has become the subject of interaction instead of the object of influence.

In order to create an intervention program, analysis of existing difficulties in the relationships between children and parents was performed; namely, during individual consultations, interindividual causes were found, related to the peculiarities of family upbringing and macrosystemic causes, related to socio-cultural peculiarities of life of the family.

The supportive role of the family as a system for development of a child's personality is mentioned by many researchers (Cox & Paley, 2003; Levi, 2006; Obukhova, 1998). Besides, boys and girls have different emotional reactions to family conflicts – boys react to didactic disturbances, whereas girls react to disengagement in family relationships in general (Lindahl, Bregman, & Malik, 2012). In the context of sustainable education, for developing stability of future trusting relationships, apart from taking into account gender differences, the focus is on the way parents consider the interests and needs of their children at the beginning of school life (Dreilinga, Ilisko, & Zarina, 2015). In this regard, Ryan and Deci (2000) offer to consider three innate needs – competence, autonomy and relatedness, and satisfying each can strengthen self-motivation, positively impact mental health and maintain well-being in the family.

The necessary economic income and relationship culture in the family must become a long term strategy of family upbringing of adolescents (Hurellmann, 1990). Kwon, Janz, Letuchy, Burns and Levy (2016) state that in families with low economic status, the role of the father is important in supporting the adolescents' participation in sports activities. This fact is especially important in our case because in the most of cases, the fathers were the ones who were unemployed.

The results of our study demonstrate that voluntary participation of adolescent girls and their parents from complete families with social risk in interventional activities together with sports activity gives a positive result in the improvement of family relationships in a relatively short period of time. Thus, stable relationships between adolescents and parents can be considered a predictor of further self-improvement and family well-being.

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