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CRITERIA AND STRUCTURE OF INTERPERSONAL TRUST IN CHILDREN FROM ORPHANAGES

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Abstract

The better part of development theories emphasizes the importance of early emotional experience for children' social and mental development. In particular, attachment theory underlines the fact that at early stages of the child's development emotionally reacting adults are required for socio-emotional development and long-term mental health. As a rule, children from orphanages are exposed to social and emotional neglect. Early traumas and stress can have a lasting impact on the child's development and specifics of building his interpersonal contacts, trust in himself and the world around. The paper shows that trust relationships between children enhance socialization, skills development and higher academic achievement.

The study aims at identifying features of interpersonal trust in children from two-parent families and children from orphanages. The sampling includes 196 children at the age of 13-15 years old. The study confirms differences in trust towards other people in children from nuclear families and those from orphanages. It was proved that the process of the formation of trust towards other people in children from orphanages is of a more complex nature involving a greater number of criteria but they are weakly structured in the children's consciousness. Low self-esteem of children from orphanages manifests in hesitancy, uncertainty in difficult moments, avoidance of everything new and low initiative. In addition, as a result of specific living circumstances of an orphanage, their perceptions of the surrounding world, themselves and other people are indefinite, "inexperience-based", often distorted and insufficient.

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1. Introduction

The first social basic individual mindset emerging at early stages of ontogenesis is trust towards the world. E. Erikson supposed this set to be of vital importance (Erikson, 1994). It is trust towards the world which defines the character of both interpersonal and social relationships in general and is one of the most essential factors providing the society' integration and stability. Trust is a multifaceted phenomenon which represents confidence in trustworthiness of an individual or a group' actions, words and behaviour (Rotenberg, 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Hence, trust is a kind of a buffer necessary for the establishment and maintenance of social relationships (Rotenberg, 2010). Trust relationships mean one's being aware and sure of another's trustworthiness, in particular: keeping promises, keeping secrets and telling the truth (Bussey & Fitzpatrick, 2005; Rotenberg et al., 2004).

From the perspective of personality development the emergence of trust is a crucial factor fostering harmonious relationships, the development of cognitive skills (Harris, 2007) and social adjustment (Rotenberg, 2010; Rotter, 1980).

Most notably, trust emergence is closely related to the formation of attachment (Bridges, 2003; Szcześniak et al., 2012). For instance, Harris argued that 3-4-year olds can understand whether a source of information is reliable or not in diverging situations (Harris, 2007). "More or less adequate situational images appear depending on the situation uncertainties; these images determine the orientation system and the line of behaviour" (Dontsov & Perelygina, 2016, p. 69). Children also shape the opinion depending on the individual's previous actions and non-verbal assessments of the people around (Fusaro & Harris, 2008; Harris, 2007). These studies show that children do not only assess a relationship between trust and trustworthiness but they also can use this information upon defining whether a person deserves their trust, or nor.

The better part of development theories emphasizes the importance of early emotional experience for children's social and mental development. In particular, the attachment theory underlines the fact that at early stages of the child's development emotionally reacting adults are required for socio-emotional development and long-term mental health (Grusec & Lytton, 1988; Sroufe et al., 1999). The child forms a specific model of expectations with a warm and sympathetic caregiver who he trusts, and later uses it as a platform for exploring social and physical world. Such an experience, in its turn, enhances his adequate self-esteem, trust towards the world and himself and mental health. Secure attachment during infancy results in higher social and mental abilities at older age (Avierzer et al., 2002; Landry et al., 2006; Stams et al., 2002; Steelman et al., 2002).

Insecure attachment is associated with problems at older age: a higher level of behaviour's externalization, criminality, mental disorders (Carlson, 1998; Crittenden, 2001; Greenberg, 1999; Stams et al., 2002).

Thus, attachment theory emphasizes the important role of socio-emotional experience of early childcare and predicts psychological problems associated with socio-emotional behaviour in children lacking such experience.

The studies also show that the degree of trusting the world and the self largely depends on an attachment style. Secure attachment positively correlates with trust towards the world and the self, whereas insecurely attached people have a lower trust level (Brennan & Shaver, 1995; Mikulincer, 1998), more

negative recollections associated with trust and document fewer episodes of trusting other people (Mikulincer, 1998). Therefore, assessment and processing of experience associated with trust depend on specificity of interaction with attachment objects at early age.

Trusting relationships between children enhance socialization (Martin et al., 2013) and skills development (Kutnick & Kington, 2005). The development of positive interrelations is connected with a higher level of feeling sympathetic towards school (Ladd & Coleman, 1997; Hughes & Zhang, 2007), higher academic achievements (Bossaert et al., 2011) and a lower level of loneliness (Coplan et al., 2007) during first years at school. In addition, trusting relationships are tied up with successful school adjustment (Betts & Rotenberg, 2007; Betts et al., 2009; Rotenberg et al., 2004). And children with a low level of interpersonal trust are likely to face the problems involving the establishment and maintenance of social peer relationships.

Orphancy is one of the greatest social problems in modern Russia. According to Ministry of Science and Education of the RF statistics, as of 30 June 2017 there were 54.5 thousand orphans and 1.6 thousand educational institutions for orphans including orphanages, special ("corrective") orphanages and orphan boarding schools. The conditions in which these children are raised are far from being family-like, and it is one of the reasons why so many leavers of orphanages have problems with adjustment to living on their own (Nazarova, 2002).

Children residing in orphanages are exposed to social and emotional neglect (Ernst, 1988). Numerous studies conducted in orphanages indicated atypical forms of children behaviour such as stimming, transition from early passiveness to later aggressive behaviour, hyperactivity and distractibility, ill-formed attachment, indiscriminate friendliness, difficulty in establishing contacts with peers (Sloutsky, 1997; Vorria et al., 1998). Children from orphanages have a noticeable developmental delay (Kaler & Freeman, 1994). Early traumas and stress can cause a lasting effect hindering social competence (Becker-Weidman, 2009).

One cannot deny that there exist significant differences in the ways of assessment, the length of residing in children's homes, the age at which the child enters the orphanage, etc. Still, we suppose that there are certain features associated with trust characteristic of the majority of children from orphanages.

2. Problem Statement

A component approach to the study into psychological features of children from orphanages prevails in present-day psychology and orients to research on the roles of separate personal traits of children from orphanages. In this light, the question about specifics of interpersonal trust in children from orphanages is left open; the structure of this phenomenon has not been revealed and its criteria have not been defined.

3. Research Questions

1. What is the level of general trust children from orphanages demonstrate compared to children from two-parent families?

2. What are the key criteria of trust towards other people children from orphanages have?

3. What is the essence of a functional structure of interpersonal trust typical of children from orphanages compared to this of children from two-parent families?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to identify the specifics of interpersonal trust in children from orphanages and children from two-parent families.

The fulfillment of this purpose supposed that the following tasks should be solved:

1. Identifying the general level of interpersonal trust in the groups of children under study;

2. Defining key criteria of trusts towards other people in the groups of children under study;

3. Revealing the structure of interpersonal trust in the two groups of children.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Subjects

The total sample population was 196 participants (N=196) representing schoolchildren aged 13-15 (average age 13.72). The sampling included children raised in two-parent families and attending secondary schools (the 1-st group-101 schoolers, 62 females and 39 males) and children from orphanages (the 2-nd group of 95 schoolers, 51 females and 44 males).

5.2. Measures and tools:

To identify the features of interpersonal trust, the following psycho-diagnostic techniques developed by A.B. Kupreychenko were used:

– Trust/Mistrust towards the World, Other People, the Self questionnaire;

– Personality Trust/Mistrust towards Other People questionnaire.

For the results' processing the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test and factor analysis were applied. The data were processed and analyzed via SPSS 20.0.

6. Findings

The application of the Mann-Whitney U Test allowed us to determine the absence of reliable differences in the pronouncement of trust towards other people in the two groups of children. The mean value of trust revealed in the first group was 4.32, in the second – 4.24 on a 5-point scale (the Mann-Whitney U Test =4565.500, where p=0.523). These results correlated with the results obtained in earlier studies (Dontsov et al., 2016).

The analysis of criteria underlying trust towards other people revealed differences in the two groups under study. These differences relate to the range of trust criteria used.

Table 01. Comparative analysis of Criteria reflecting Trust towards Other People (n1=101; n2=95)

Group	Parameters of trust towards other people				
	Trustworthiness	**Unity**	**Knowledge**	**Fellow feeling**	**Calculation**
group 1	Δav.=2.26	Δav.=1.24	Δav.=1	Δav.=2.17	Δav.=1.29
group 2	Δav.=2.46	Δav.=2.48	Δav.=2.53	Δav.=2,46	Δav.=2.20
U Mann-Whitney value	4150.000	3054.500	2748.000	4265.000	3433.000
Significance level	.100	.000	.000	.176	.001

Parameters whose indicators (Δ) range from +2 to +4 points acted as criteria of trust towards other people (Kupteychenko, 2008). In other words, while shaping trust the representatives of the groups under study were guided, in the first place, by the imperatives associated with these parameters.

Further factor analysis made it possible to define a factor structure of trust towards other people in groups under study. Data analyses revealed five significant factors.

Table 02. The Factor Analysis Results of Group 1

Variables	Factors of trust towards other people				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
I love this person	.883				
I hold fellow feelings for him	.792				
We defend the same principles	.704				
I don't know this person well	-.439				
He is aware of the fact that if he violates my confidence, he will lose more than he can gain		.876			
This person understands that to justify the confidence is more advantageous than to lose it		.736			
I usually know how he will act in a certain situation		.643			
He is unpredictable			.893		
I have no knowledge of this person			.643		
I normally know how he will act in a certain situation			-.418		
I know he will always offer his support if something jeopardizes my interests				.825	
I found out that he is reliable especially when it comes to matters which are important for me				.658	
We perceive the world in the same way					.850
I seem to know him well					.650

Factorization method: Principle component analysis.
Method of rotation: VARIMAX with Kaiser Normalization.
Rotation converged in 10 iterations.

The first factor (interpretable variance 28.367%) reflected "Fellow feeling". The second factor (interpretable variance 15.200%) was "Calculation", the third one was "Knowledge" (interpretable variance 13.649%), the fourth factor was "Trustworthiness" (interpretable variance 11.550%) and the fifth factor was "Unity" (interpretable variance 8.367%). It was noteworthy that the content of factors singled out in this group fully correlated with a set of judgments constituting the scales of "Personality Trust/Mistrust towards Other People" questionnaire (Kupreychenko, 2008).

Factor analysis of the children from orphanages group indicated 4 significant factors. The first factor (interpretable variance 30.959%) reflected "Knowledge", the second factor stood for "Fellow feeling" (interpretable variance 28.278%), the third one was "Unity" (interpretable variance 18.276%), and the fourth factor was "Calculation" (interpretable variance 6.091%). In this case the content of the factors was

not homogeneous with regard to the questionnaire structure: statements representing different scales are combined.

Table 03. The Factor Analysis Results of Group 2

Variables	Factors of trust towards other people			
	1	2	3	4
I seem to know him well	,871			
We perceive the world in the same way	,871			
he will always offer his support if something jeopardizes my interests	,842			
He is always ready to offer his support	,836			
I found out that he is reliable especially when it comes to matters which are important for me	,823			
I love this person	,753			
I don't know this person well	-,434			
I like this person very much		,885		
It seems to me that I can predict his behaviour quite accurately		,852		
We defend the same principles		,785		
He is aware of the fact that if he violates my confidence, he will lose more than he can gain		,705		
I dislike him		-,712		
He is unpredictable			,907	
I don't know this person well			,825	
We defend the same principles			-,445	
This person understands that to justify the confidence is more advantageous than to lose it			-,431	
We share common interests			-,380	
He wants to built up a reputation of a person who keeps his promises				,542
He is unreliable				-,761

Factorization method: Principle component analysis.
Method of rotation: VARIMAX with Kaiser Normalization.
Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

7. Conclusion

The study conducted has confirmed differences in trust towards other people in children from orphanages and children from two-parent families.

The general level of interpersonal trust in the two groups under study has not revealed any significant differences. Generally, both children from orphanages and children from traditional family perceive other people as being prone to cooperation and mutual support to the same extent. However, significant differences with regard to criteria underlying the formation of trusting relationships have been found.

The criterion "Trustworthiness" which assesses the individual ability to fully meet his obligations, his responsibility and decency acts as a criterion of trust towards other people in the group of the children from two-parent families. In addition, the children of this group tend to use faith based on fellow feeling as

a substitute for true trust. The range of trust criteria shared by the children from orphanages is much wider. In this case, trust criteria include not only trustworthiness bur also "Unity", – common worldview, principles and interests, shared with another person-, and "Knowledge" which manifests in the possibility to predict another person behaviour, and the way he will act in this or that situation. This group of the children also tends to substitute trust for faith, or, to a lesser degree, for calculation.

Thus, the process of building trust towards other people in children from orphanages is of a more complex nature, involves a greater number of criteria and reference. At the same time the given criteria are weakly structured in the children' consciousness, their close linkage and confounding are seen. The criterion of trustworthiness is woven into the knowledge criterion, i.e. if children perceive the person as someone they know well, they attribute trustworthiness to him. Possibly, it can be explained by the children's lack of self-confidence, which, given favorable circumstances of early stages of the child's development, with time becomes a lasting characteristic of the child's personality. Low self-esteem of children from orphanages manifests in hesitancy, uncertainty in difficult moments, avoidance of everything new and low initiative. In addition, as a result of specific living circumstances of an orphanage their perceptions of the surrounding world, themselves and other people are indefinite, "inexperience-based", often distorted and insufficient. Owing to this, everything familiar is perceived as reliable, secure and trustworthy.

The data obtained can be used by psychologists and educational specialists to diagnose the reasons for difficulties children from orphanages have in the process of socialization: to specify corrective-developmental programs aimed at psychological coaching and improved social adjustment the orphaned children and preparing them for the life on their own.

Acknowledgments

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