

# INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS OF OLDER PRESCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN WHO ARE UNDER INSTITUTIONAL CARE

*Alla Kovalenko*

*Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Kyiv, Ukraine*

## **Abstract**

The article presents the research on the characteristics of the interpersonal relationships of older preschool-age children who are under institutional care. It reveals the dependence of the emotional components of such children's attitudes to significant people and themselves on their status in the group. Children being brought up out of family have problems with their relationships with adults and peers; they have some deviations in the most important psychological formations, which in the future may negatively affect their psychological well-being.

**Keywords:** *interpersonal relationships, older preschool age, children who are under institutional care, sociometric status, emotional components of relationships.*

## **Problem challenge**

There is a steady increase in a number of children without parental care in today's society, despite the measures being taken by public authorities to support motherhood. Therefore, the problems of orphans are becoming more and more of a social concern. Particular attention should be paid to such children's interpersonal communication, since full-fledged communications with peers and adults is a prerequisite for their successful socialization. The problem of interpersonal relations is especially acute at the older preschool age, when the mechanisms of social perception (in particular, empathy) begin to be formed. The problems in interpersonal relationships with the environment, increased propensity towards conflicts, inability to establish good relations or to understand other people can cause both social and psychological distress of the individual in the future (Belsky & Pluess, 2010; Klimenko, 2018; Nix, Bierman, Domitrovich, & Gill, 2013; Trentacosta & Fine, 2010; Bakermans-Kranenburg & van Ijzendoorn 2007). However, as the analysis shows, this problem is receiving far less attention than the problem of interpersonal relationships of children living in their biological families (Howe, 2008; Landry, Smith, & Swank, 2006; Wellman & Lagatuta, 2000;).

Until the end of the twentieth century, children's development traditionally was viewed through the prism of a one-way model, in which a mother's influence on her child was recognized as dominant, and children's active role in their development, socialization, and psychological health was not taken into account (Stams, Juffer, & van Ijzendoorn, 2002). Current findings in developmental psychology and psychogenetics prove conclusively that

mother-child interactions are, from the very beginning, a two-way process in which both parents and their child influence each other's behavior and form their relationships (Degotardi, Sweller, & Pearson, 2013; Caspi & Shiner, 2005; O'Connor, 2002; Sagi, Koren-Karie, Gini, Ziv, & Joels, 2002).

The role of a mother at different stages of her child's development was analyzed in different psychology schools (Degotardi, Sweller, & Pearson, 2013; Klein, 2001; Winnicott, 2002). The results of these studies indicate a mother's exclusive role in her child's development, especially at infancy and early childhood. A deep emotional links with a near adult is the basis for further development of children. Children without experience of family life are a special group; we should expect that the factor of maternal deprivation have a negative impact on the development of such children in general, which will be manifested later in life. The studied characteristics of interpersonal relationships and emotional development of orphaned children show that they have expressed violations of relationships with adults (Martinez, Naudeau, & Pereira, 2017). Moreover, some studies (Klimenko, 2018; Juffer & van Ijzendoorn, 2005; Torres, Domitrovich, & Bierman, 2015) show that orphans without family experience have specific characteristics in their development that distinguishes them from children living in families.

The peculiarities of the development of an orphaned child's personality have been shown in numerous studies (Stams, Juffer, & van Ijzendoorn, 2002; Martinez, Naudeau, & Pereira, 2017; Trentacosta & Fine, 2010), which reflect the essence of maternal deprivation, the specific mental development of children being raised outside their families.

The phenomenon of links between individual and family characteristics at development, when a child and his/her immediate social environment are active agents in this process, was discovered, at first, empirically (New York Longitudinal Study; Stams, Juffer, & van Ijzendoorn, 2002). The concept of "goodness-of-fit" was developed: if a child's capabilities and abilities meet the requirements and expectations of the environment ("good fit"), then this child will be developed psychologically and mentally well; however, if a child does not have the abilities and qualities necessary to cope with the demands and expectations posed by society (especially parents), then he or she is more likely to have emotional or behavioral problems. Later, on the basis of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of development, several theoretical models were proposed that reveal the nature of the links. In particular, the "double risk" model explains the differences in sensitivity to upbringing by the fact that some individual characteristics enhance the influence of other risk factors, increasing the negative family impact; that is, the adverse combination of individual traits and the external conditions can raise substantial risks, but if the family environment best fits the child, his/her development can be more successful (Caspi, Shiner, Belsky, & Pluess, 2005). The "differentiated susceptibility" model suggests that some children are more sensitive to upbringing: they are more likely to be adversely affected by negative upbringing than other children, but, at the same time, are particularly successful under favorable conditions (Belsky & Pluess, 2010; Bakermans-Kranenburg & van Ijzendoorn, 2007).

However, children's development has peculiarities in the case of family upbringing. The authors note that children's development depends on the conditions under which they gain experience of social interactions (presence of siblings, role-playing games, family conversations, etc.) (Landry, Smith, & Swank, 2006; Degotardi, Sweller, & Pearson, 2013; Wellman & Lagatuta, 2000; Howe, 2008; Torres, Domitrovich, & Bierman, 2015; Dunbar & Shultz, 2007; Howes, 2009).

Based on the assumption that family development has significant influence on a child's personality development and family is the main source of early social experience, we have

studied the characteristics of children deprived of the family environment. Identified peculiarities of such children's interpersonal relationships in the absence of family experience in childhood will allow us to assess its importance for the development of children's understanding of the world around, their ability to adequately interact in it, which helps to determine the negative consequences, their factors in order to develop a corrective program for effective socialization.

**The research object:** interpersonal relationships of older preschool-age children.

**The research aim:** to study the peculiarities of the interpersonal relationships of older preschool-age children brought up out of family in order to reveal specific characteristics of their personal development for the purpose to harmonize their development.

Organizing the empirical study, we proceeded from the assumption that older preschoolers are not able to fully understand their relationships with adults and peers, as well as describe their emotional attitudes to the environment and living conditions. Therefore, a comprehensive study was conducted with projective techniques that revealed the unconscious components of children's attitudes. We have identified three areas to explore interpersonal relationships with adults and peers: social adaptation and children's attitudes to their environment and living conditions; the children's sociometric statuses in their groups, that is, their positions in a peer group; children's attitude to significant people and to themselves. Therefore, the following techniques were used in the empirical study: Stott's observation map (Regush, 2001) to identify children's social adaptation to their educational institutions, "Color Test of Attitudes" (Lutoshkin, 2001) to study the emotional components of children's attitudes to significant people and to themselves and reflect both the conscious and the unconscious parts of these attitudes.

The SPSS software package was used for statistical analysis of the obtained data.

The study was conducted with each child individually in the form of a conversation.

**Participants of the research.** The empirical study was carried out on the basis of care institutions where children live for a long time (Boyarka, Kyiv region), (75 persons) and comprehensive school (Oleksandrivka, Rivne region), where children who are out of family environment live permanently as at the boarding school. Totally, 153 children participated in the study. The children's age was 5-7 years.

**Results and Discussion.** To study the older preschoolers' interpersonal sphere, we analyzed their social adaptation to their educational institutions (Regush, 2001). Frequency analysis was used to process the results.

**Table 1.** Attitudes of children who are living out of families to their educational institutions and their environment

Scales	Frequency
Distrust of new things, people, situations	6
Conflicts with children	75
Apathy	6
Children and immersion into themselves	12
Children and rejection of adults	0
Emotional immaturity	48
Children and anxiety for acceptance by adults	39
Children and anxiety for acceptance by other children	3
Children and restlessness	27
Children and neurotic symptoms	0
Children and the environment	30

The data in the Table 1 indicate specific attitudes of orphans to certain aspects of behavior and interpersonal communications. They largely seek attention from adults and can quickly find a common language with them. However, we note certain proneness to conflicts in relations with peers, as well as apathy, emotional immaturity, anxiety. The external environment, in which children are raised, is not always positively perceived by children who are under institutional care. Our findings indicate that they do not need interpersonal relationships with peers, as they are constantly in contact with the members of their group. The children want more attention from adults and compete for it with other children, so their ability to quick contacts with adults is highly developed.

Let us analyze the results obtained for separate scales.

The children who are under institutional care have high levels of trust in people and things, as evidenced by minimal or average levels of distrust. The data obtained indicate that only 8% of this group of children show real lack of confidence, and a strong trend to distrust is absent. In general, it can be argued that the overall level of trust in new things, people and situations of older preschool children is high, which is explained by their increased need for attention from adults, for unconditional acceptance and love, which is common to older preschoolers in general.

The children who are under institutional care have a rather high level of aggression, which they show more often at interactions with children than at interactions with adults. At the same time, they are greatly interested in adults and much less in children of their age. This can be explained by the reduced criticality characteristic of all children who are brought up out of family and, in combination with felt deprivation, they manifest high aggressiveness and excitability during interpersonal interactions with other children. The possible reason for the increased children's proneness to conflicts with their peers is often contacts with them, redundancy of such contacts compared to attention received from adults; their proneness to conflicts is also a form of compensation for low self-esteem manifested as external aggression.

The "apathy" indicators are minimal or low, indicating the overall health and activity of the children.

The "Children and immersion into themselves" indicators are low, which indicates children's high activity in general, but a certain number of children who are brought up out of family (16%) showed a strong navel-gazing. This can be explained by their personal characteristics and by caregivers' attitude towards these children.

In addition, the low (28%) and moderate (72%) severity of adult rejection was revealed, indicating this children's group's overall positive attitude towards adults. Such results can be explained by the absence of acute conflicts between children who are under institutional care and adults because children need to ensure minimum security through adherence to an adult, in whom they seek a source of emotional warmth and protection.

According to the obtained results, more than half of the children are characterized by emotional immaturity, because of the unsatisfied need for love, affection and recognition; they also show a strong anxiety about being accepted by adults, which indicate their desire to receive more attention from adults through attempts to establish contacts with them.

The children who are under institutional care have low levels of anxiety about contacts with peers; such contacts are mostly monotonous and unemotional and are most often shown as guidance. Such communications lack empathy, as the ability to understand and share another person's feelings and experiences, because empathy, as a mechanism of social perception, only begins to be formed at the older preschool age.

In addition, this group of children shows an average level of such trait as restlessness, which can be the result of favorable external conditions, as well as the correct and consistent work of caregivers and staff. Also, the study results indicate low or absent neurotic symptoms in the children who are brought up out of family.

The children's attitude to their living environment is positive for more than half of the examined children who are under institutional care; the rest of the children perceive it with a certain amount of negativity. This is due, first of all, to their limited emotional contacts with adults and the strict regulation of the children's and staff's activities. The emphasis on disciplinary issues and children's life within one educational institution, a certain obligation in communications and a very low choice of partners for communication, lack of attention from educators entail limited contacts of children who are under institutional care.

The obtained results on the social adaptation of children are who are under institutional care and their attitudes to their environment and living conditions are rather ambiguous. Therefore, in order to unveil specific traits of interpersonal relationships, it is necessary to find out how children estimate each other (based on each child's status category), what is group cohesion, and how their attitudes toward peers and caregivers differ depending on their statuses in their group.

The results obtained by the Ship Captain (Smirnova, 2005) method lead to the conclusions about a number of positive and negative choices that each child received from group members (his/her sociometric status). Thus, a child who received 5 or more choices can be considered a "star", a child with 3-4 choices is "preferred", a child with 1-2 choices is "accepted"; if a child was not chosen or received more negative choices than positive ones, he/she is "ignored".

The next indicator is well-being of relationships, which is defined by the division of children into favorable and unfavorable categories within an investigated group. If most children are in the favorable categories ("stars", "preferred"), then well-being of their relationships is defined as high; if the number of children in favorable and unfavorable categories is the same, the well-being is average; if children in the group are mainly in the unfavorable categories ("accepted", "ignored"), their well-being is low.

In addition, the reciprocity ratio (RR) was calculated as the ratio of the number of reciprocal choices to the total number of choices. There are four levels of reciprocity: I - RR = 15-20% (low), II - RR = 21-30% (average), III - RR = 31-40% (high), IV - RR = 40% and above (very high).

Let us consider the first parameter of our analysis – the number of positive and negative choices made for each child (Table 2).

**Table 2.** The analysis of children's statuses in peer groups (in %)

Level	Status	
I	Stars	-
II	Preferred	28
III	Accepted	40
IV	Ignored	32

Table 3 shows that only 28% of children are in the favorable status categories (I, II). It should be noted that there are no orphaned children in the first status category – "stars". 72% of the children appeared at the adverse status categories (III, IV). The study suggested that

children could make both positive and negative choices. As a result, only 28% of children did not make any negative choice and 13% did not receive such a choice.

The second parameter of our study is well-being of relationships. We found low levels of well-being of children who are under institutional care. Consequently, the children have mostly unfavorable statuses from the III and IV status category (Table 2), which indicates low well-being of relationships, discomfort felt by the most children, their dissatisfaction with communication, and indifference to peers.

According to the Ship Captain method, we can conclude that well-being of the relationships and the reciprocity ratio in the group of older preschool-age children who are under institutional care is quite low. Another parameter of our study is the reciprocity ratio. The reciprocity ratio is a group cohesion index that expresses the nature of the relationships existing in a group. The reciprocity ratio of the group of children who are under institutional care is 20%, which corresponds to the first level of reciprocity (low). The reciprocity ratio value gives us an idea on the nature of relationships existing in groups: the orphan group has a low level of cohesion.

At the next step we examined the emotional components of children's attitude to significant people and to themselves at both conscious and unconscious levels (with "Color Test of Attitudes", Lutoshkin, 2001). Six colors (red, green, gray, black, brown, and white) were used at the study to describe six concepts ("game", "learning", "friends", "tutor", "group", "educational institution"). The data analysis has been presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** The comparative analysis of the data obtained with "Color Test of Attitudes" (in %)

Color	Game	Learning	Friends	Tutor	Group	Educational institution
Red	20	3	10	40	2	3
Green	60	20	35	35	12	15
Grey	5	3	2	1	8	10
Black	3	3	0	1	15	2
Brown	2	30	8	18	15	16
White	10	41	45	5	48	54

For the "game" concept, 60% of the children who are under institutional care chose green color, which means tranquility, 20% chose red, which means joy. For "learning", 41% chose white, this color is associated with indifference, 20% chose green, and 30% chose brown, which means anxiety. For "friends", 45% chose white, 35% chose green, and the choice of red and brown was recorded one time. For "tutor", 40% of the children who are under institutional care chose red, 35% chose green, and brown color was chosen less often. For "group", 48% chose white, 15% chose black and 15% chose brown. 54% of children who are brought out of family described their institution with white color.

Thus, the children who are under institutional care experience positive emotions mainly at playing; learning lessons cause them the feeling of calmness or leave them indifferent with slight anxiety. Friends are ambiguous for this group of children: almost half of them are indifferent, more than a third are calm and confident, and a small number of them are anxious. The caregivers are associated by them with joy, calmness and confidence, and, sometimes, with anxiety; at the same time, their group is associated with indifference, anxiety and negativity. Their attitude to their educational institutions is mainly indifferent, but sometimes they evoke

calmness, confidence, anxiety or hesitation. It should be noted that children who are under institutional care often chose white color, which is the evidence of indifference to significant people and to themselves. These ambiguous results can be explained by the dependence of the attitude on a child's status in the group, as well as by the age characteristics of older preschoolers.

At the next step, we analyzed the emotional components of children's attitudes toward significant people and themselves, depending on their status in the group. The children who are under institutional care belonging to the favorable status category ("preferred") rated all proposed concepts more positively than children with unfavorable status categories ("accepted" and "ignored"). In particular, children belonging to the favorable status category used red (joy) and green (calmness) colors more often to describe the studied concepts, while children belonging to the unfavorable categories selected mainly white (indifference), brown (anxiety) and sometimes black (negative) colors. This can be explained by the fact that favorable status categories (in particular, "preferred") include children who are confident, kind, able to respond quickly in different situations, accept responsibility, and take risks. Children belonging to the disadvantaged status categories are characterized by proneness to conflicts and aggression, that is why they do not want to play with their peers, as well as are closed, shy, not involved into common affairs.

### Discussion

The psychological characteristics of orphaned children have been researched for a long time, but interest in it is not diminished due to the fact that society cannot solve the orphanage problems. Our study focuses on interpersonal relationships of older-preschool-age children who are under institutional care, as this age is extremely important for the development of social perception mechanisms. The findings confirm the existence of specific characteristics of older preschool-age children's development. Numerous aspects have been investigated and confirmed in our study.

Children who are under institutional care are conflict-ridden, show higher apathy, emotional immaturity, anxiety, they are eager to get attention from adults, to find common ground with them, trust them. This result is consistent in some degree with research findings (Martinez, Naudeau, & Pereira, 2017), which show disrupted relationships between orphaned children and adults, although here we point out the lack of attention from adults. Our findings indicate a close correlation between the two communicative aspects: lack of communications with adults leads to impaired peer relationships. The development of communications between a child and an adult determines largely the nature of this child's contact with other children.

The obtained results of the study make it clear that orphans have specific developmental characteristics that differentiate them from other children (Klimenko, 2018; Juffer & van Ijzendoorn, 2005; Torres, Domitrovich, & Bierman, 2015).

Our study shows that, because of absent mothers, orphans show higher aggression, more at interactions with children than at those with adults, they have much greater interest in adults than family-raised children of their age. A reason for increased inclination to conflicts characteristic of orphans is, probably, their low self-esteem, which is manifested in the form of external aggression (Degotardi, Sweller, & Pearson, 2013; O'Connor, 2002; Sagi, Koren-Karie, Gini, Ziv, & Joels, 2002; Caspi & Shiner, 2005).

The findings show that the children who are under institutional care have relatively low well-being of relationships, and they often have a low status in the peer group. One explanation

for this can be found in the studies (Caspi & Shiner, 2005), which highlight such negative characteristics of this children's group as the limited emotional sphere, delay in the formation of self-control skills and socially acceptable behavior.

Thus, on the basis of the performed study on the interpersonal relationships of children who are under institutional care we revealed certain peculiarities of their most important psychological formations. In the future, these peculiarities can lead to low self-esteem, low stress tolerance and weak psychological hardiness, a high inclination to conflicts, underdeveloped communicative abilities, which, in general, can negatively affect the development of social and emotional intelligence, as well as psychological well-being.

### Conclusions

The empirical study revealed certain peculiarities of older preschool-age children's interpersonal relationships. First, they show higher interest in adults; they often turn to their caregivers and seek to capture their attention in any way. All this indicates that children who are under institutional care are clearly in need of adults' attention. The dominant motive of this group of children is searching for attention and kindness. Insufficient communication with adults also leads to impaired peer relationships.

The older preschool-age children show an increased inclination to conflicts, the cause of which is every-day issues and the struggle for adults' attention and friendliness.

Children who are under institutional care are less and less likely to express their own emotions when communicating. They rarely turn to their partners for some advice, support, and sharing of experiences. Despite the fact that children at an orphanage have many opportunities for communications (living together, sharing toys, the same day mode, etc.), they are indifferent to such environment, rich of opportunities for communications with peers.

Well-being of relationships in the group of children who are under institutional care and corresponding reciprocity ratio are quite low, which is a consequence of the low value of contacts with peers for them. They are not involved in actions of their peers: peers do not have subjective importance for them, peers are an external and rather indifferent object, unlike adults who remain a subjective center in any situation and from whom they constantly require attention and kindness.

The analyzed emotional components of children's attitudes toward significant people and toward themselves have shown that these attitudes depend on a child's status in the group. Children with the favorable status category rated their environment and living conditions more positively than children with the unfavorable status categories.

The results obtained during the study indicate certain specific characteristics in interpersonal relationships of children who are under institutional care. Therefore, the prospect of further research is to find the means and methods of working with this group of children that will enable them to meet the urgent need for communication with adults, for support and love of adults, will teach them how to establish interpersonal relationships with peers, as well as how to develop successfully their social perception mechanisms that just begin to be formed in older preschool age.

### References

- Caspi, A., Roberts, B. W., & Shiner, R. L. (2005). Personality development: Stability and change. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 56., 453-484.
- Degotardi, S., Sweller, N., & Pearson, E. (2013). Why relationships matter: parent and early childhood



- teacher perspectives about the provisions afforded by young children's relationships. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 21, 4-21.
- Dunbar R. & Shultz S. (2007). Evolution in the social brain. *Science*, 317, P. 1344-1347.
- Juffer, F. & van Ijzendoorn, M. H. (2005). Behavior problems and mental health referrals of international adoptees: A meta-analysis. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 293(20), 2501-2515.
- Howe, D. (2008). Relationship-based thinking and practice in social work. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 12, 1, 45-56
- Howes, C. (2009). Social-emotional classroom climate in child care, child-teacher relationships, and children's second grade peer relations. *Social Development*, 9, 191-204.
- Klein, R. G. & Pine, D. S. (2002). Anxiety Disorders. In M. Rutter, & E. Taylor (Eds.). *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 4th edition* (pp. 486-509). Oxford: Blackwell Science.
- Klein, V. M., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J., Juffer, F., & Van Ijzendoorn, M. H. (2007). Effects of attachment-based interventions on maternal sensitivity and infant attachment: differential susceptibility of highly reactive infants. *J FAM Psycho.l*, 20, 266-274.
- Klimenko, A. (2018). Psychological features of interpersonal communication of senior preschoolers in the transition to school education. *EUREKA: Social and Humanities*, 6, 19-24.
- Landry, S. H., Smith, K. E., & Swank, P. R. (2006). Responsive parenting: Establishing early foundations for social, communication, and independent problem-solving skills. *Developmental Psychology*, 42, 627-642.
- Lutoshkin, A. N. (2001). Psikhologicheskiy klimat detskogo kolektiva [Psychological climate at a children's collective]. In *Vozrastnaya i pedagogicheskaya psikhologiya [Age and pedagogical psychology]* (pp. 57-58). Moscow: Academy.
- Martinez, S., Naudeau, S., & Pereira, V.(2017). *Preschool and Child Development under Extreme Poverty: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment in Rural Mozambique*. Policy Research Working Paper. Education Global Practice Group. Retrieved from: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/756171513961080112/pdf/WPS8290.pdf>
- Morris, A. S., Silk, J. S., Steinberg, L., Sessa, F. M., Avenevoli, S., & Essex, M. J. (2002). Temperamental vulnerability and negative parenting as interacting predictors of child adjustment. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64, 461-471.
- Nix, R. L, Bierman, K. L, Domitrovich, C. E., & Gill, S. (2013). Promoting preschool social emotional skills with the Head Start REDI Program enhances academic and behavioral outcomes in kindergarten. *Early Education and Development*, 24, 1000-1019.
- O'Connor, T. G. (2002). The effects of parenting reconsidered: Findings, challenges, and applications. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 43 (5), 555-572.
- Pluess, M. & Belsky, J. (2010). Differential susceptibility to parenting and quality child care. *Developmental Psychology*, 46(2), 379-90.
- Regush, L. A. (2001). Praktikum po nablyudeniyu i nablyudatel'nosti [Practical book on observation and observation skills]. St. Petersburg: Peter, P. 57-72.
- Sagi, A., Koren-Karie, N., Gini, M., Ziv, Y., & Joels, T. (2002). Shedding further light on the effects of various types and quality of early childcare on infant-mother attachment relationship: The Haifa study of early childcare. *Child Development*, 73, 1166-1186.
- Smirnova, O. E. & Holmogorova, V. M. (2005). *Mezhlichnostnyje otnosheniya doshkol'nikov: diagnostika, priyemy, korrektsiya [Interpersonal relationships of preschoolers: diagnosis, techniques, correction.]*. Moscow: Humanitarian. ed. center VLADOS.
- Stams, G-J., Juffer, F., & van Ijzendoorn, M. H. (2002). Maternal sensitivity, infant attachment, and temperament in early childhood predict adjustment in middle childhood: A case of adopted children and their biologically unrelated parents. *Developmental Psychology*, 38, 806-821.
- Torres, M. M., Domitrovich, C. E., & Bierman, K. L. (2015). Preschool Interpersonal Relationships Predict Kindergarten Achievement: Mediated by Gains in Emotion Knowledge. *J Appl Dev Psychol*, 39, 44-52.
- Trentacosta C. J. & Fine S. E. (2010). Emotion knowledge, social competence, and behavior problems in childhood and adolescence: A meta-analytic review. *Social Development*, 19, 1-29.
- Wellman, H. M. & Lagattuta, K. H. (2000). Developing understandings of mind. *Baron-Cohen S., Tager-Flusberg H., & Cohen D. J. (Eds.), Understanding other minds: Perspectives from developmental cognitive neuroscience* (pp. 21-49). New York: Oxford University Press.

## INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS OF OLDER PRESCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN WHO ARE UNDER INSTITUTIONAL CARE

### *Summary*

*Alla Kovalenko, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Kyiv, Ukraine*

The article presents the research on the characteristics of older preschool-age orphans' interpersonal relationships. The modern approaches to the studies of interpersonal relationships are analyzed.

The research aim was to study the peculiarities of older preschool-age orphans' interpersonal relationships in order to reveal specific characteristics of their personal development. The sample included 153 preschoolers living permanently at orphanages (at Boyarka, Kyiv region and Oleksandrivka, Rivne region). The children's age was 5-7 years.

The empirical study revealed that orphans show higher interest in adults; this indicates that orphans are clearly in need of adults' attention. Orphaned children are conflict-ridden, the causes for conflicts are everyday problems and their struggle for adults' attention and friendliness.

The orphaned children experience positive emotions mainly at playing; learning lessons cause them the feeling of calmness or leave them indifferent with slight anxiety. Friends are ambiguous for orphans: almost half of them are indifferent, more than a third are calm and confident, and a small number of them are anxious. The caregivers are associated by orphans with joy, calmness and confidence and, sometimes, with anxiety; at the same time, their group is associated with indifference, anxiety, and negativity. Their attitude to their educational institutions is mainly indifferent, but sometimes they evoke calmness, confidence, anxiety or hesitation.

Orphans are less and less likely to express their own emotions when communicating. They rarely turn to their partners for some advice, support, and sharing of experiences. Relationships with peers leave orphaned children indifferent.

The study also shows that the well-being of relationships and the reciprocity ratio of interpersonal relationships for orphaned children are quite low, which is a consequence of the low value of peer contacts. They are also lowly involved into actions of their peers; a subjective center for them in any situation is an adult, from whom they constantly require attention and goodwill.

The analyzed emotional components of children's attitudes toward significant people and toward themselves have shown that these attitudes depend on a child's status in the group. Orphaned children with the favorable status category rated their environment and living conditions more positively than children with the unfavorable status categories.

The results obtained during the study indicate certain specific characteristics in interpersonal relationships of orphans, which can affect negatively their development and psychological well-being in the future.

**Keywords:** *interpersonal relationships, older preschool age, children who are under institutional care, sociometric status, emotional components of relationships.*

**Corresponding author's email:** abk2015@ukr.net