

# Child–parent relationships determinant of social status in the child group

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**Abstract:** The material presents a study of child–parent relationships in contemporary Bulgarian families as a determinant of the social status of the child in the child group and their impact on self-assessment. Essential parameters determining the parental position, the confidence of the child in the family and the relationships between them are being explored.

Data interpretation is directed towards characterizing the correlations between: relationships and the social status of children; relationships and the self-esteem; social status and the self-esteem of children for design of the educational potential of the family and proper upbringing and education of the children.

The significance of the results that have been obtained is groundwork of projecting educational potential of the family for adequate upbringing and education of children who are pro-socially oriented. On the other hand the data are a basis for rethinking about the connection between the social organizations—the family and the kindergarten for togetherness in the actions and understandings of the upbringing and development of the child.

**Key words:** family, child-parent relationships, parental position, self-esteem of the child, social status

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## 1. The relationships in the family—determinant of the education and development of the child's personality

The family is of great significance for building the child's personality. It laid the foundation of the child's behaviour, the relationship with the surrounding world. It is by the family that the child joins society and becomes its member. The experience gained from child-parent relationships largely determines the nature of subsequent life.

Pedagogical and psychological literature points that the impact of child–parent relationships reflects development of self-esteem (Stolin, 1981), interpersonal relationships of the child, the occurrence of activity (Baumrind, 1991).

This problem is particularly important because in the field of upbringing and education, there is a behavioural crisis be-

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tween generations. A need for detailed study of their child, reconsidering the relationship with him/ her and adoption of adequate strategies for the age and characteristics of the child to influent, arises in the parents.

Special features of family education are predetermined by the dynamics and changes in social life. The face of the family as a personal environment and social institution, the parent and child generations are being changed.

In ontogenesis especially the first seven years in child's development are important. The experience during that period leaves a lasting mark in the individual and determines his/ her realization and his mental stability.

The proposed development presents a study designed to explore the characteristics and nature of child–parent relationships as a determinant of social status and self-esteem of the child in the peer group, which orientates towards the development of the educational potential of the family.

A leading component in the educational potential of the family are internal family relations, insofar as the family as a social community represents as a system the links and interaction between the members. They arise to meet diverse needs. The internal family relations manifest themselves as interpersonal relationships at different levels: parent–parent; parent–child; child–child. Interpersonal relationships are examined by a number of researchers such as social-psychological mechanism for shaping the individual.

In the theory and practice convincing evidence is shown that families with lasting positive contacts, with respectful attitude towards the child assist him/ her to form positive qualities such as kindness, ability to empathy, ability to overcome conflicts, etc. In these families the child more adequately realizes his/ her own Self, his/ her integrity and sense of human dignity is being build.

The understanding of parental relationships is about system, set of emotional relationships of the parent to the child, parental perception of the child and the means of action and behaviour between them. Parental attitude is a part of the specificity of the parental relationships. It directly influences the attitudes and behaviour of the children. As significant features of the parental relation are indicated their emotional, cognitive, activity-related aspects.

Child–parent relationships are a case study of the humanistic psychology of C. Rogers, the social learning theory (D. Baumrind, E. S. Schaefer), the Russian school of psychotherapy (A. C. Spivakovska, A. Varga and others), the authors of the clinically oriented literature (C. I. Garbuzov, E. Aydemiller, J. Bowlby and others). Parental respect is multidimensional education, in which structure, according to A. Varga, contains the following parameters: acceptance or rejection of the child; interpersonal distance with the child ('symbiosis'); control (authoritarian hypersocialization); social necessity of the behaviour (Andreeva, 2007).

The active position of the child in relationships with parents is a key attribute that characterizes family upbringing. In this sense, child–parent relationships include the impact and acceptance by the child forms of interpersonal relations with parents. The notion of relations with parents within the child has adjusting, directing and controlling nature and determines the tactics of interaction with parents.

At present the problem of child–parent relationships in the family is important and significant, especially when sociologists, pedagogues and psychologists report crisis in the Bulgar-

ian family connected with education, relationships with adolescents, and their personal development. The issues and difficulties in the upbringing of the younger generation have been accumulated over decades—years of transformation and vague image of public relations. In those decades a generation that takes on new functions—as parents, has been developed. The accumulated educational deficit in young parents makes it difficult to adequately upbringing and develop their children. ‘The picture’ of relationships between parents and children is the starting point for determining the highlights of the functioning of the modern family.

The adequate solution to the current problems of family education and development of child’s personality is dependent on the characteristics of the society and its impact on family relationships, which raises the need to examine these phenomena.

## 2. Conceptual bases of the research

The formulations displayed here navigate into the construction of the conceptual basis of the research.

An object of the study are child–parent relationships of children at preschool age and their correlation with social status of the child in the peer group.

A subject of the research are the connection and characteristics of the relationships child–parent to the characteristics of the parental position, self-esteem of the child in the family and its implementation as a subject in the child group.

The aim of the study is to: research the characteristics and nature of parent–child relationships as a determinant of social status and self-esteem of the child in the child group.

Tasks of the study:

1. Study the characteristics of the parental position and attitude to children, i.e. the style of the relationships.
2. Investigation of the dependence between:
  - relationships parent–child and the social status of children;
  - relationships parent–child and child’s self-esteem
  - the social status and child’s self-esteem.

The experimental study was conducted with children at the age 6 to 7 years old and their parents in 2013 and in February–March, 2014. The sample is random in nature and involves people from different regions in Bulgaria: Plovdiv, Sliven, Sofia, Stara Zagora, Haskovo, Yambol.

Contingent of the study are 180 Bulgarian families and 20 Bulgarian Roma families whose children attend kindergarten.

Authors and modified methodologies adequate to the purpose and the tasks: a questionnaire about the style of parents’ education; projective methods of drawing ‘My Family’; ‘the ladder’ methods; test-questionnaire to study the parent relation (on A. Varga, V. Stolin); sociometric methods (J. Moreno); polls; lectures; complex methods of mathematical statistical processing of empirical data (SPSS for Windows, 10.0) have been used in the study.

### 3. Characteristics of the style of the relationships in the family

The style of parent education outlines a certain trend in contemporary Bulgarian family (priority from southern Bulgaria). The survey of parents conditionally is differentiated into two groups: Roma families and families with a wide representation (Bulgarian families).

The ethnic differentiation is provoked by problems that the interviewers present (graduate teachers and teachers in Masters programmes, students in Bachelor's degree programmes) when working with the indicated group of families.

The study presents small but diverse internal family relations in Roma community. The social profile of the Roma families is 'diverse' and reflects the type of family relationships.

The patriarchal type of family in which the role of the elderly parent—father or grandfather—regulates family relationships comes to the fore. The results show that the authoritarian style of behaviour (50%) is typical for Roma families. The dynamics of the Roma life, travel and work abroad do not change the closed nature of the families. The adults have an attitude to strict control, prohibitions, reprimands and physical punishment. There is a noticeable maternal tendency towards 'understanding' behaviour, but the authoritative fathers stick to the selected type of parental authority. This type of parents establishes rules of life requiring strong internal family cohesion and awareness of the roles in the family.

The democratic style of upbringing occurs in some nuclear Roma families (15%) where parents are educated, have good jobs and career. The parents encourage personal responsibility and autonomy of their children according to age capabilities. They try to help them and require meaningful behaviour.

The chaotic style of upbringing has the same amount (15%) of the surveyed Roma families. They have low social status, with temporary or non-labour activities, overcoming the social and living problems with difficulties, unsustainable. They are not interested in educating and preparing their children for a meaningful life. The contact with the child institution does not exist, and parental responsibilities are transferred to older siblings. They refuse to participate in the survey. Trends of indifference of the parents emerge in this group.

Similar trends are found in the liberal style of education represented in 20% of the families. Children are left to 'freedom'. The parents feel reluctant to guide them.

While in the other group (Bulgarian families) the liberal style of relationships is found in child-oriented families, in Bulgarian Roma it is in two social unsuccessful and two disorganized families, almost leading a nomadic life. The attention of the family (as far as it can be considered as one) is to the physical survival of children and kindergarten (according to the interviewers) an alternative for these families.

The status of family education in the other group of Bulgarian families is with different characteristics, seemingly better (note).

The democratic style of behaviour have 40% of the surveyed families. The parents say they feel responsible for the development and education of their children; they require meaningful, prosocial oriented behaviour and strive to create order (discipline) in the daily behaviour of the child. They tend to take the initiative for cooperation, exhibited by the children.

Parent-child relationships are bound by the subject-subjective communication.

The authoritarian style of education occurs in 20% (36) of the surveyed families. Authoritarian parents adhere to the traditional form of communication with the child, expressing the need for authority and power of the parents and unquestioning obedience of the children. Verbal communication is weak and parental tactics of education is accompanied by the use of sanctions and prohibitions. It is required from the child to be disciplined, to follow his/ her parents' wishes, because they are in his/ her favour. Parents express an opinion that they do not have to justify their requirements.

From the drawing test conducted with children from the families in which the authoritarian style dominates, detachment and solitude are visible. Children are oriented and tend to stick to embody the authority and power in the family: father, mother or uncle, etc.

The liberal style of education is in 25% (45) of the studied Bulgarian families. It occurs mainly in nuclear, young families at not high, average, social status. The education and professional realization are not in correlation. The parents are representatives of children oriented families where the children are not engaged. According to some authors, this style is 'casual', 'indulgent'. The parents' position is 'aside'. Children feel emotionally accepted and with little level of control. The parents share a penchant for the remission of errors; the rules for necessary behaviour are not needed.

As a result of parental situational actions children do not master permanently the rules of conduct. Inconsistency in feelings towards children is also exhibited. The education is not subject to parents, as most of them assume that the child is free to express him-/ herself and his/ her activities should be directed to the search and expectation of pleasure. Parental beliefs are that 'everything will come with time'. In the drawings of children from families with a liberal style shines inadequacy, confusion in behaviour.

The indifferent style of behaviour unfortunately exists in 15% of families from the second group (Bulgarian). Surveys reveal that parents accept life experience, but not that the intentional influence (through education) is important in a child's life. They reject the manifestation of commitment. Therefore, the problems are solved chaotic, lacking predictability that could orient the child. The characteristics of indifferent parenting style is similar to liberal but non-engagement in the upbringing of children is strengthened by negligence. The survey has shown that there are no clear requirements for the child or that there are contradictions, differences in the choice of educational resources from parents.

In the drawings of children involved in this type of relationships increased anxiety, insecurity, aggression and self-effacement (small, solitary figure of the child in cold shades) are revealed, which is a prerequisite for social disadaptation.

This group includes families from different social composition: with a very high social status, also with a lower one, but all in very good financial condition, as opposed to the group of Roma families.

The summarized data for the studied families show that dominant style of education is the democratic one, which is considered the most successful (37.5%). Interpretation of aggregate expression (62.5%) of other styles of education—considered as negative—is shown in Shneyder (2000) and Karcelianska-Stancheva (2009).

The position of the children in the society outside the family environment is a circumstance determining the development of child's personality and socialization.

This landmark research seeks to determine the social status of the child in the group and its self-assessment to interpret the correlation between: the style of family relationships and social status; the style of family relationships and self-esteem of children; the social status and their self-assessment.

In this type of study, the children do not differentiate by ethnicity.

#### **4. Connection between the relationships in the family and the social status of the children**

The data from the survey on the individual status give an idea of the popularity of each child. Comparing the results of different versions of sociometric survey reveals the sustainability of the child's status. Depending on the index of sociometric status of the child three groups are separated in the kindergarten:

Group I—leaders, with social status (St) higher than 0.20;

Group II—one of the favourite, with social status between 0.07 and 0.17;

Group III—unpopular (not adopted) children, with social status lower than 0.06.

Sociometric pattern of mutual choices in child's group indicates that the group of leaders includes 40 children (20%). Referencing the style of relationships in the family yields the following distribution:

– from families with democratic style—20 children;

– from families with authoritarian style—12 children;

– from families with liberal style—8 children.

The social profile of the families revealed that children with liberal style of relationships are from nuclear, child-oriented families where the ego of the child is tolerated and it has the power position.

The analysis of the results shows that the correlation can be defined as a straight, positive—high social status in the group have children who are a priority among democratic type of relationship.

#### **5. Connection between the relations parent–child and the self-esteem of the children**

The child's personality is represented not only by social status, but also by the attitude towards him-/ herself, i.e. the level of self-esteem.

The diagnostic method 'the ladder' has presented different types of self-esteem:

1. *A d e q u a t e s e l f - e s t e e m*. It implies skill for objective presentation of their dignity and disadvantages. The children show kindness and responsiveness. In this group there are priority children from the democratic style relations within the families (few children, large families, extended families) and some of the authoritarian type. Typically in these families the role and the position of the child is clear—being a subject.
2. *R e d u c e d s e l f - e s t e e m*. These children are characterized by underestimation of their abilities, not having high rigor to themselves. They are often passive or aggressive and distance themselves from their peers. Representatives of this type of self-as-

assessment are children from authoritarian relationships and a small portion of the liberal and indifferent styles. In fact, these are the children with a sense of uselessness and isolation who are not satisfied with interpersonal contacts and having negative experiences in internal family relationships where a clear educational programme lacks.

3. **Inflated self-esteem.** Children do not have a clear idea of their abilities and show arrogance and confidence. They are mostly from liberal and indifferent type of relationships. They favour their own successes and do not notice the problems of others. The high self-esteem provides a good social adaptation and fiduciary relationship between children and parents. The requirement of discipline is bound to respect and autonomy.

The analysis shows a positive correlation between self-esteem of children at preschool age and the style of child–parent relations.

## 6. Dependence of the social status upon the self-esteem of children

The ratio, which can be summarized, is that in the group of leaders the type of self-esteem is of two types—adequate in democratic relationships, and increased—in children, representatives of liberal and authoritarian style behaviour.

In the group of popular kids three types of self-esteem can be observed:

- realistic and inflated in democratic relationships;
- realistic and reduced in authoritarian relations in the family;
- reduced and inflated in liberal and indifferent relationships.

In the group of unpopular also three types of self-esteem could be found:

- 1 child under realistic and equally increased and reduced in authoritarian relations;
- reduced and increased (equally) in liberal;
- increased in children from families with indifferent style of relationships.

## 7. Conclusion

The study has shown that the nature of parent–child relationships determines, i.e. is a determinant of the social status and self-esteem of the child in the child group.

The most favourable conditions for development of positive, realistic self-esteem are when between parents and children are built democratic relationships characterized by emotional involvement, clear rules, governing behaviour, but without preventing the child autonomy.

The social adaptation and the level of the social status of the child in the group is directly dependent on the atmosphere in the family, on the type of relationships that dominates.

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## Relacje między dziećmi a rodzicami determinantą statusu społecznego w grupie dzieci

**Abstrakt:** Artykuł przedstawia studium relacji między dziećmi a rodzicami we współczesnych rodzinach bułgarskich jako determinanty statusu społecznego dziecka w grupie rówieśników oraz ich wpływ na samoocenę. Badane są podstawowe parametry określające pozycję rodzicielską, pewność siebie dziecka w rodzinie oraz związku pomiędzy dziećmi a rodzicami.

Interpretacja danych ukierunkowana jest na charakterystykę korelacji pomiędzy: relacjami a statusem społecznym dzieci; relacjami a poczuciem własnej wartości; statusem społecznym a poczuciem własnej wartości

dzieci, co ma się przyczynić do projektowania potencjału edukacyjnego rodziny oraz właściwego wychowania i edukacji dzieci.

Istotność wyników, jakie uzyskano, jest podstawą projekcji potencjału edukacyjnego rodziny dla właściwego wychowania oraz edukacji dzieci, które są zorientowane prospołecznie. Z drugiej strony dane te są podstawą do ponownego przemyślenia związku pomiędzy organizacjami społecznymi – rodziną i przedszkolem – w celu wspólnego działania i rozumienia wychowania i rozwoju dziecka.

**Słowa kluczowe:** rodzina, relacje w rodzinie, pozycja rodzicielska, poczucie własnej wartości dziecka, status społeczny