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THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN EDUCATING CHILDREN WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT

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Abstract

The article discusses the psychological characteristics of parents of children with special needs and the circle of psychological and educational problems faced by families raising a child with hearing impairment. The optimal paternal position toward children with special needs is then considered. The practice of recent years shows an increase in the number of families with children with hearing impairment. This trend requires a decision on creation of the effective assistance to such families. Numerous modern studies emphasize the importance of the family environment as one of the main factors influencing the improvement of the health of the child with hearing impairment.

Keywords: hearing impaired children, children with special needs, parental attitude, parenting instruction, special features family.

Streszczenie

Artykuł omawia psychologiczne cechy rodziców dzieci ze specjalnymi potrzebami oraz krąg psychologicznych i edukacyjnych problemów rodzin wychowujących dziecko z wadą słuchu. Następnie wskazuje cechy optymalnych warunków rodzicielskiej postawy wobec dzieci ze specjalnymi potrzebami. Praktyka ostatnich lat wskazuje na wzrost liczby rodzin z dziećmi z wadą słuchu. Tendencja ta wymaga decyzji o tworzeniu skutecznej pomocy dla rodzin z tej kategorii. Liczne współczesne badania podkreślają znaczenie środowiska rodzinnego jako jednego z głównych czynników wpływających na poprawę stanu zdrowia dziecka z wadą słuchu.

Słowa kluczowe: dzieci, zaburzenia słuchu, dzieci o specjalnych potrzebach, postawy rodzicielskie, wychowanie, nauczanie specjalne, funkcje rodziny.

There is an increase in the number of families with children with hearing impairment. This trend requires a decision on creation of effective skilled care for such families. Orientation of Ukraine on humanistic values and the realization of human rights requires solving a very important and urgent problem today: the necessity of social support and providing professional psychological and pedagogical support families who have children with hearing impairment. Pressing issues include: facing decision-life situations of a child with a hearing impairment, family welfare, planning of work and leisure time, implementation or rejection of careers and many others. They need timely and specific tangible solutions (Eydemiller 1996, p. 138).

The analysis of the various aspects of the problems of families with children with hearing impairment had been recently made in the works N. Mazurova, I. Mamaychuk, Y. Mastyukova, H. Mishyna, A. Moskovkina, A. Spivakovska, V. Tkacheva and others. Despite a fair amount of research, it is still important to study the problem of parents of children with hearing from the perspective of family relationships.

The concept of family education *Happy Family 2012* states that “modern family should be the main point in bringing up the child, to give it the proper material and pedagogical conditions for the physical, moral and spiritual development.” In recent years, the need increased for active work on the study of the family raising a child with hearing impairment. Specialists are not only interested in the formation of children new skills, but they see the family as the main stabilizing factor of child’s adaptation. Psychological maturity of parents, their ideals, often also experience in social interaction, all are critical in child’s development (Shcherban 1996, pp.15-20).

Family is the microsociety which forms the moral qualities of the child, their attitude towards people and the nature of their interpersonal relationships. This fact can not be ignored in diagnostic and corrective work with a child with hearing impairment. Not always education provided in the modern family is favorable for the development and education of children with special needs. Still, the family of child with hearing problems it is the main institution in socialization. The process of growing up of such children is very difficult and slow in motion. It can be divided into stages:

- » **Socialization stage A** - the child joining the society. The first step is to adapt it to the family. The success of this process depends on how adequately family members respond to the problems of child and how they help in overcoming them. If there are difficulties, they are usually the result of improper position of parents and other family members.
- » **Socialization stage B** – the child in a special institution. An important role that teachers should play tactfully, is to respect the child with special educational needs. Family members prepare the child to stay in the institution, the teachers help in this important new stage in child's life.
- » **Socialization stage C** – the child and his family in the local community. This includes searching for other families with similar problems, establishing contacts, searching for the “social niche”.

The process of socialization of the child should take place in the early years of life. A child with special needs must attend kindergarden, along with the usual children. This helps not only the child but also the social perception by peers, teaching them about special needs. All these processes are impossible without the active work of social and psychological services (district, city, school). However, work with families of children with special needs is clearly impossible to organize without a comprehensive study of family and relations within it.

The most significant for socialisation is the love of the child and the desirability of its birth. However, in the Ukrainian system, there is emphasis on excessive institutional patronage when coping with the problem of hearing loss and in the education. This hampers the development of children's activity, independence, self-confidence. What is practiced by parents is concealment of the child at home to protect it from the dangers of the street and possible risks. This enhances the social and mental disability. The best situation is in the villages, as any child and childhood there is attached to the household, housework and land work. Over a period, the child masters the basic activities and becomes a part of local social life.

The difficulties of families who have children with hearing impairment are significantly different from ordinary families. A child with hearing

problems needs more material, spiritual and physical input than a normal child. People with families of this type usually have a narrow circle of friends and limited communication with relatives. This is due to the condition of the child, as well as personal attitudes of parents. To make things worse, for many families there are other features that characterize the social position of many of the parents. This position can be called inert. This refers to education, development and overcoming the problems of the child with hearing impairment. The parents who are characterised by this approach believe that their child, in overcoming problems, should be helped only by professionals and employees of educational institutions (Bondar and Zasenکو 2005, p. 72).

Problems of disharmony in the family atmosphere, not constructive relationship models, and inadequate parenting styles with relation to developmental disabilities are caused by different factors. This may be the nature and severity of violations of the child, their irreversibility and duration. Personal qualities of parents depend strongly on their psychological characteristics and family value orientations. And the degree of education of parents, social environment and conditions that impede the realization parents of their educational objectives etc. are also crucial (Tkacheva 2004, pp. 46-51).

Parenting a child with hearing problems is particularly difficult and responsible. This is a difficult responsibility, as parents are required to carry for their child and for the society as a whole. If a child with a disability is deprived of proper education, their personal needs are not being met and breach in development becomes aggravated. Such children can become a burden to the family and to society.

According to various researchers, families that have a negative impact on the development of children with impaired hearing, divided into the following types:

- 1. Antisocial family.** Inside the relationship there is an incompatibility of such families with the views and principles of the ideal family, the desire to achieve the goal through the use of the labour of others; desire to conquer their own more. This emotionally dysfunctional family atmosphere is where parents not only indifferent, but cruelly treat children; familial and moral atmosphere is unhealthy.

- 2. Conflicted family.** Parents do not seek to get rid of the character flaws and ignore internal problems.
- 3. Families with inadequate educational resources.** Parents or whole families lack education or are at a socially low overall level. The low education or no education makes it impossible to help children in learning and solving other problems.
- 4. Pedagogically incompetent family.** There is contrived or outdated view of the child. There is a desire to keep the child at certain patterns of behavior that parents like – i.e. obedience and inactivity.

The social fear for abnormality present in the society affects the education and socialisation of the child with hearing impairment further. This is really an obstacle to be overcome. One must not only prepare children with hearing impairment to life in the society of ordinary people. The public must be also prepared to the fact that people with developmental disabilities are full members of the society.

In the meantime, families of children with hearing impairment must be prepared for the fact that development stages of such children are unlike in ordinary families. Children with hearing disorders, if not rehabilitated early and effectively, slowly reach certain life stages, and sometimes do not reach them at all. Their families tend to maintain contact with other families who have children with similar condition. This position of parents significantly expands horizons and offers some forms of assistance to their children, as often parents create community organizations that address the problems of children with special needs.

A harmonious family atmosphere is regarded as a correctional environment for the child. Unfortunately families where children without hearing are brought up, live under the burden of many problems. Not every parent is able to accept the child and teach it to react adequately to recurring problems. This situation has a negative impact on the psyche of the parents and complicates their relationship with the child. Some of the parents are brought to their knees by the tragic situation. Still these are the personal qualities of parents that determine the possibility of the socialization of children and adaptation to life – that is: their future. Important is the skill of parents such as how to handle stress. It is necessary to support the child. Lack of support quality points to the inability of

parents to carry out education and social support of their child throughout the lifetime, and inability to interact with specialists of different levels (Tkacheva 2004, pp. 46-51).

Children with hearing impairment have certain features of development, depending on the degree of hearing loss, depth of the disorder, time the problem occurred and the associated damage. The degree of hearing loss is a base for with hearing impairments distinguishing. The deaf can be identified among two groups depending on whether or not they use language. The number of linguistically impaired children is relatively small, they make up about 2% of all children with special needs. Behavior of children with hearing impairment is diverse and usually depends on the cause handicap. For example, children with early brain damage with limited hearing often present with increased irritability and mental issues. Some deaf children also close themselves "staying in their own world". Some others, in contrast, are characterised by impulsivity, motor disinhibition, or sometimes even aggressive behaviour (Mazurova 1997, p. 16).

Deviations in the development of the child with impaired hearing are various. This may come from not understanding of specific motives, limiting knowledge of the requirements of the peer group dynamics or the inability to compare intentions and desires with common purpose. There is also some isolation of the child from the pupil group. Some children manifest arrogance, overestimate their own strength, skills and place in the peer group. Other children show excessive timidity, shyness and underestimate their own capabilities. We often find uncritical obedience to alien influences here, too. These manifestations are usually caused by underdevelopment of speech or lack of education. In children with hearing impairments, problems with the verbal and logical thinking emerge. Violation of auditory perception results in inability to understand what is said. This leads to unstable behavior.

Such children from an early age are formed on insolation. Many factors make up a bouquet of priorities and parities. Among them, purely biological components: the health of the child and its of parents, their psychophysical condition, evaluation of specialists and parents of the child's development and prospects of hearing impairment. The peculiarity for parents of children with hearing problems is underestimating

the possibilities and abilities of their children, necessary to encourage autonomy and initiative. This is accompanied by the desire to protect the difficulties and troubles of life, constant anxiety for the child (Mazurova 1997, p. 16).

Also important is to the economic stability of the family and the physical presence of parents or at least one of them. Average salaries or pensions should give the ability to meet the needs of child (and of all other children in the family without benefits for the disabled). Of some importance is the success of a child in mastering cultural skills and life-saving knowledge. The hopes and prospects of real development and socialization of the child lay in the educational capacity of the whole family and especially of parents. Social recognition of their professional work and parental education are necessary, too (Mishina 1998, p. 18).

The behavior of parents raising young children with hearing impairment comes from a number of features. Among them: the inability to create a situation of joint activities, unemotional nature of cooperation, inadequate positions towards the child and inadequate parenting style, lack of need to communicate with it (Mishina 1998, p. 18). Parental attitudes towards children with hearing problems generally have the following common features: compassion, care, control, excessive parental care, or extreme devotion, yet accompanied by emotional rejection of the child. This can result even in the mistreatment of the child.

The results of many studies show that most parents seek to spend time with children maintain their interest to help and be proud of their achievements. But they remain quite extraneous, maintain distance, stand in the position of superiority. Others full of emotional stress occur in positions of inequality and lack of feedback. The child is seen as an object, its feelings and opinions are not taken into account. Parents typically use negative methods of communication with the child: orders, commands, threats, moralizing, condemnation, judgment, authoritarianism, suppression of initiative and independence. They prefer to “educate” rather than emotional intimacy, a harmonious coexistence with the child. Sometimes adults wait for the child’s often impossible achievements. This creates a sense of inconsistency from request of the parents, guilt, high levels of anxiety, depression, signs of nervousness. A child fosters its sense of insecurity, perception of themselves as a failure, unable to

succeed. This increases the risk of ill health and appearance of secondary symptoms.

Another feature is acceptance of parents of a child with hearing problems as it being the subject of social relationships. Adults do not create favorable conditions for its adaptation in society, or consider the child as a person who is perceived by the public. In that case, the parents have the desire to protect and hide the child from all. This negatively affects the child adequate forms of interaction with society. Such behavior is often explained by intolerant attitudes of others toward children with special needs. In such situations the child begins to show fear of others, anxiety, or even aggressive behavior towards others (Bozovic 1995, p. 206).

Parents of a child with hearing impairment should understand that the child feature dramatically changes the entire family livelihood, by changing values, aspirations, desires, especially communication, psychological climate, emotional states and reactions of all family members. So successful development, education, training, social adaptation of a child with special needs will depend on the optimal implementation of specific family functions.

Implementing those functions facilitates the formation of emotional acceptance in the family atmosphere of love and support, respect and interest in helping a child with hearing problems and all family members. The child unconditionally accepted by the whole family forms a unique and individual personality. It is easier and faster formed if the necessary knowledge and skills set emotional well-being and optimal stress, allowing to achieve a certain level of personal maturity. The family creates optimal conditions for the exercise of this process and fulfillment of all its members.

Implementation of adaptation – **the adaptive function**, contributes to a child with impaired hearing a higher level of independence and activity in solving various problems in life. Also, it reveals and creates new adaptive capabilities in the child. **Socialising function** helps to shape the child's activity as adequate relationships with others and motivates them to know the world, networking with peers, mastering the knowledge and skills of a feasible profession. **Vocational function**, depending on the damage, promotes employment orientation and helps to determine the

future professional employment. Last but not least, the implementation of **personality oriented function** helps reveal the identity and uniqueness of the child, allowing for an active entry into the cultural environment. Finally, the **recreational function** achieves freedom from prejudice surrounding children with hearing impairment. Joint rest, walks, visits to festivals, theaters, all allow the child to feel included in the world. The mentioned functions allow the child to go beyond the family vacuum and optimize vitality by facilitating contact with the natural world and people (Mastyukova 1992, p. 95).

Rehabilitation and recovery function helps parents work properly in defining the strategy and special aid a child with special needs should get. This optimizes its physical and mental state. Implementation of remedial education function contributes to the parents by right motivation and training. This creates the necessary remedial educational environment. It helps the child develop a positive attitude and interest in the surrounding world, interest in knowledge. Creating such an environment helps to determine the potential and the abilities of the child, it optimizes personal development, helping to overcome internal psychological problems of the child and its parents.

The process of education of children with hearing impairments should take into account the objective difficulties of development. These difficulties relate to speech communication, social infantilism, lack of formation of social competence, emotional misdevelopment, behavior problems, fuzzy picture of the behavior system, delay of general mental development and others. For this reason, the main objective should be to help the family in: (Mazurova 1997, p. 16):

- » choosing the right tactics for education;
- » teaching the child certain skills;
- » informing on age and individual characteristics of the child because of the peculiarities of development;
- » adequate evaluation of the child;
- » learning specific techniques of corrective work;
- » harmonization of internal family relations;
- » solving personal problems of family members related to disability;
- » drawing up a strategy of behavior in typical social stressful situations.

Only open, unselfish, true love of parents, unquestioning acceptance of faith in child's strength and capabilities, attention to their feelings, thoughts and interests, tolerance, consideration of the positive qualities of the child and support its strengths, trusting communication, responsibility and mutuality allow to create the family atmosphere in which a child with special needs will experience a solid foundation for further development and operation in a complicated adult life.

Due to the above, the main tasks of family education are (Volkovska 2003, pp. 62-70):

- » forming positive habits of conduct;
- » positive assessment of the child and adequate assessment of its activities;
- » favorable psychological climate in the family.
- » Parents have to learn the undeniable truth: instead of investing in things, we must invest in children's feelings.

To conclude: a major role in educating children with hearing impairment is played by parents. An important function of family in education and support is awakening the desire to learn and develop in children. Modern school gives the child scientific knowledge and conscious relationship with reality. Family provides practical experience, the ability to build friendships with peers, observe positive social behavior, learn justice. The main task of family education is comprehensive and harmonious development of the child, preparing it for life in social conditions and implementation of its creative potential. Of course, there is no single formula for successful education of children in the family. It always depends on the level of morality and spiritual culture of the parents, their life plans, ideals, deeds and family traditions. The success of this process depends on defining the ultimate goal of understanding and joint efforts of practitioners, scholars, the entire teaching community.

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