

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES OF CHILDREN DEPRIVED OF PARENTAL CARE ПРОБЛЕМИ ПСИХІЧНОГО ЗДОРОВ'Я ДІТЕЙ, ПОЗБАВЛЕНИХ БАТЬКІВСЬКОГО ПІКЛУВАННЯ

According to UNICEF living in an institution can have significant negative, life-long consequences for children's physical, psychological and emotional development. Science has proven that children develop best within a family environment, where they will get all the love and support, they need to survive and thrive. If the biological family is not able to take care of a child, due to poverty, disability, adversity or misperception, the children are given to institutions, or other families. This condition has own difficulties, children will develop risky behavior, also suffer from mental health problems, specially depression and anxiety disorders. Children deprived of family environment are accepted as vulnerable group members according to these reasons. They will have attachments problems in their later life, too. Emotional neglect also damages physical state, and development of the children. The main purpose of this article to investigate literature, articles, policy papers about this problem, and to do descriptive analyses.

Closed environment, frequent replacement of teachers, and adults who take care them, lack of necessary emotional support are the main reasons for the slow mental development of deprived children.

Key words: *child development, children deprived of parental care, mental health of deprived children, psychological and social support.*

За даними ЮНІСЕФ, перебування в інтернаті може мати значні негативні наслідки

для фізичного, психологічного й емоційного розвитку дітей, які триватимуть упродовж усього життя. Науково доведено, що діти найкраще розвиваються в сімейному оточенні, де вони отримують всю любов і підтримку, необхідну для виживання та процвітання. Якщо біологічна сім'я не здатна піклуватися про дитину через бідність, інвалідність, бідну або неправильне сприйняття, дітей віддають до інтернатних установ або інших сімей. Цей стан має свої труднощі, діти розвиватимуть ризиковану поведінку, також страждатимуть від проблем із психічним здоров'ям, особливо їм властиві депресії та тривожні розлади. Діти, позбавлені сімейного оточення, визнаються членами вразливої групи відповідно до цих причин. У них також будуть проблеми із прихильністю в майбутньому житті. Емоційна зневага також шкодить фізичному стану та розвитку дітей. Основною метою статті є дослідження літератури, статей, програмних документів щодо цієї проблеми та проведення описового аналізу. Закрите середовище, часта зміна вчителів і дорослих, які ними опікуються, відсутність необхідної емоційної підтримки є основними причинами повільного психічного розвитку депривованих дітей.

Ключові слова: *розвиток дитини, діти, позбавлені батьківського піклування, психічне здоров'я депривованих дітей, психологічний та соціальний супровід.*

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Introduction. Referring to the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, it was determined that the total number of registered children deprived of parental care increased from 1991–2006, and decreased from 2011 till 2022. The following table demonstrates these figures for each 5 years.

Based on the data Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan adoption of the children has decreased in Azerbaijan during the last 15 years.

According the second table total number of children who are adopted gradually reduced, but nearly 22% of this adoption was cancelled in 2021. Unfortunately the figure of cancelled adoption fluctuated during these years, respectively from 56 to 64.

Scientific and psychological studies show that the deprivation of parental care at an early age results in great negative effects on his intellectual, mental and personal development. Majority of the studies note that children brought up in orphanages have physical development problems, retardation in speech development, dependence and loss of interest in the environment. At the early school years, those children have serious problems in mastering educational materials, writing, arithmetic, reading skills. In addition, these children have difficulties in communicating with

adults. On the other hand, they have a strong need for attention and care, caress and kindness, pleasant attitude and positive emotional contact from adults. As a result, children feel useless, they lack confidence in themselves, and other people are perceived by them as unnecessary and insignificant, and no deep connection with people is formed.

Literature review. The articles and research papers in this field analyzed this problem in different aspects: social, psychological, pedagogical, and juridical aspects. But the numbers of these researches in Azerbaijan are limited, and there are gaps in this area.

In her article "Social psychological portrait of children deprived of parental care", G. Huseynova notes that children without parents divide the world into "ours" and "others". "They unite against others, show aggression in relation to them, try to use them for their own purposes. All "others" have their own special norms. However, children living in boarding schools are often separated and isolated even within their "own" groups; they are aggressive and even cruel towards other children. This position arises for various reasons, the most important of which is the unsatisfied need for love and emotional instability of a child deprived of parental care" [5].

Abandonment is a traumatic event for any person, regardless of age. When the abandoned person is a child, and the abandoner is a mother or father, the pain of abandonment is more severe. The severity of the suffering experienced by the child is not only affected by abandonment, but also by the form of abandonment and the events before and after the abandonment. Strong conflicts in the family, fear and violence (to the child or one of the family), etc. causes various traumas in children. Abandoning a child causes the strongest trauma to him. In order for the child to be able to deal with this trauma easily when abandoned, it is necessary to have strong social support from those around him. One of the factors affecting the trauma experienced by a child due to abandonment is the age criterion. If this situation continues for a long time, the child's development is weakened and creates the basis for the emergence of various problems. Due to the increase in mental development, children understand the problems in the family more easily as they get older. If a child of preschool age has difficulty establishing cause-and-effect relationships, at school age he is already aware of the situation in the family. In the period of adolescence, the absence of parents means the absence of parental control and model over the adolescent. This is one of the main causes of personality confusion and pathologies in adolescence. The following features are observed in majority of these children's mental health.

The feeling of deprivation is the most common feeling experienced by children deprived of parental care. The sense of deprivation these children feel is deepened when they see other children with their parents. At this time, even if the

child does not have a father or mother, he dreams of them and the time he will spend with them.

Low self-esteem – children without a parent see themselves as weaker, powerless than children with parents. In order to restore the self-confidence of such children, it is necessary to show them that they are superior to others in various fields (in which field they have skills).

Anxiety from sad looks – one of the most disturbing feelings for a person is that others look at him with pity. As orphaned children grow up, they feel pity from others and worry about it. We should treat such children as we approach other children.

Guilt and shame – deprived children feel shame when telling others that they don't have a mother or father. And for this they feel guilty.

Feeling of insecurity – children who are alone are insecure about life and people. Therefore, they find it difficult to relate to other people. Because they think that one day they will leave.

Feelings of anger – as children who are deprived of parental care move towards adolescence, feelings of anger begin to bubble up. Childhood feelings of guilt and shame give way to feelings of anger towards others. A teenager becomes angry with his parents, life and the God. This deep sense of anger causes him to be angry in front of others. This period is the period when teenagers and young people who are deprived of parental care need the most support.

Avoidance of responsibility – some children who are deprived of parental care blame the reason for all their failures in life on the absence of their parents. Thus, they absolve themselves of all responsibility and do not try to change themselves.

The need for role models – all children choose their parents as role models and repeat their

Table 1

Number of orphans and children deprived of parental care in boarding schools

	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021	2022
Number of children deprived of parental care in boarding schools-total of which	955	839	2 484	2 441	1 259	602	771	737
Nurseries	150	96	107	59	43	–	2	2
Children's home	50	101	139	438	351	23	49	64
Special boarding-school for children with limited health	90	105	280	280	162	82	28	51
Boarding homes for children with limited health	70	35	203	61	44	39	39	29
General educational boarding schools	595	502	1755	1603	659	458	653	591
<i>of which number boarding schools for orphans and children deprived of parental care</i>	505	293	368	330	398	401	449	441

State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2022.

Table 2

Number of adopted children

	2005	2010	2015	2019	2020	2021
<i>Number of adopted children-total</i>	803	798	805	660	234	283
girls	365	404	375	315	111	132
<i>Including, by age of children</i>						
Under 1 year old girls	134 65	204 113	166 85	175 89	57 28	54 29
1–5 years old girls	324 138	330 165	360 165	296 138	78 38	136 59
6–10 years old girls	198 97	148 70	176 79	115 58	53 25	56 26
11–17 years old girls	147 65	116 56	103 46	74 30	46 20	37 18
<i>Number of children whose adoption was cancelled girls</i>	56 19	59 30	66 30	82 23	59 25	64 23

State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2022.

behavior. When there are no parents, children can choose the wrong role models and lead their lives in the wrong direction. Therefore, in orphanages and boarding schools, there should be male and female teachers from whom children can get the right role models.

N. Osmanli, A. Babayev and M. Mammadov evaluated the mental health of children deprived of parental care and it was determined that the assessment of children’s psycho-social development, as well as the identification of protective and risk factors play an important role in supporting their mental development and increasing their quality of life in their research (N. Osmanli, A. Babayev and M. Mammadov, 2019). As a result of analysis, 32,3% of the children were evaluated as the total difficulties score, 18,4% of the children had emotional symptoms, 43,9% had conduct problems, 28,8% hyperactivity/inattention, 42,4% had peer relationship problems and 7,6% were abnormal in the pro-social behavior subtest [7].

N. Najafova studied the social aspect of this problem, and noted that children sent to orphanages and boarding schools usually treat aggressively to their parents and do not forgive them. There should be a rehabilitation center for such children to get used to their parents, to support relationship with them. The facts show that many of the children placed into families by the government try to run away after a short time. Children who grow up in orphanages, and boarding schools have difficulties interpersonal relationships. Some of these children have not been rehabilitated, they tend to commit crimes after leaving orphanages, and are represented in various criminal groups. In foreign practice, various social projects are realized. Sociologists and psychologists also support this idea, and to enlarge rehabilitation centers

programs. These rehabilitation centers can play a major role in preparing children for life and in their acquisition of socially important family habits [6].

Majority of studies and research in this field mention that children grow and develop best when they live in stable, dependable families providing them with care and support.

According to K. Marinova, deprivation, frustration and the presence of the mothers during the forming of a child’s personality result in decreasing of the child’s development. If the need of maternal care has not been satisfied, children cannot build up stable relation with others and have communication problems. Author mentioned that some of these children are apathetic children, who are selfish, and do not learn to share like other children. The problematic behavior can be observed as masturbating, swinging or hitting their heads [14].

A. Zlateva and N. Zdravkova reach a decision that children raised in institution demonstrate social, emotional and cognitive skills which does not correspond to their calendar age, their skills are lower than others. The authors find connection between low skills and living conditions, monotonous environment, and the non-individual approach to children [12].

Result and recommendation. The literature analyses determine that raising children outside their family has negative influence on their direct experience on his life later as a grown up. This influence can be reason of future mental and physical health issues. The literature review show that the institutional conditions of boarding schools reflect negatively on the emotional-social development of children. Institutions cannot provide children with the emotional support and care. The lack of family and deprivation leads to serious consequences in children’s mental development.

UNICEF suggest working together with the health system and social work services, to prevent abandonment, and separation of children from their families as a solution.

UNICEF also support the revision of primary child protection, child care, family protection, social services and social assistance legislation and development of regulations and minimum quality standards for all services and processes which form an effective social services system.

Moreover, working on increasing public awareness and understanding of how community-level services can deliver better outcomes for children, as well as on the general importance of living in a family environment for the development and the general well-being of children [15].

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