

Psycho diagnostic techniques for the study of parent-child relationships as a tool of psychological counseling

Abstract

The article presents the experience of using the projective technique “Parent essay” and tests for assessment parent-child joint activity. Indicators for assessing the parental attitudes and parent-child relationships are presented. A scheme for drawing up a conclusion is presented, highlighting the main blocks describing the parenting and parent-child relationships.

Keywords: diagnostics, parental attitudes, parent-child relationships, test for joint activities, parenting

Volume 11 Issue 1 - 2020

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Received: July 01, 2019 | **Published:** February 17, 2020

Introduction

The role of the family for personality development is difficult to overestimate because of its importance as the determinants of the individual child development path. Features of the functioning of the family determine alternative ways of development: the genesis of the first social need for communication and secure attachment to a caregiver versus anxious unsecured attachment and lack of need of communication; basic trust in the world, the image of the world as benevolent and caring versus hostility, aggression, pessimism, vulnerability to stress and frustration, adverse effects; positive socialization of the child, mastering new social roles and cooperation versus delocalization and deviant behavior; satisfaction of basic human needs - in security, affiliation, love, self-actualization versus deprivation of needs. The value of parental love for both the child and the parent himself is very great. Parental love ensures child's sense of security, psychological well-being, maintains a favorable state of the emotional and sensual world, teaches love, and generally acts as a source of life experience necessary for a growing child as a potential parent. However, parental love does not always have a positive effect. Inadequate expression of parental love as forgiveness, uncritical exaggeration of the child's talents leads to such negative consequences as emotional addiction, helplessness, selfishness, aggression, inability to build relationships with other people. Parental love components - emotional modality, child acceptance differentiated personality boundaries, autonomy, distance of interpersonal interaction are important for the child's development and well-being. Accordingly, valid and reliable psycho diagnostic techniques are needed to study parent-child relationships. However, there is a shortage of such psycho diagnostic methods.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this paper is to present two instruments for the study of parent-child relationships and parental attitudes, well-established in psychological practice these are projective technique «Parent Essay» and Test for parent-child joint activity.

Findings

The projective technique “Parental essay” is aimed to study the parental position and type of family upbringing. The essay reveals the features of parents' perception of the experience of parenting and communication and interaction with the child.¹ This technique allows you to collect anamnesis and reconstruct the child development story in accordance with the principles formulated by Vygotsky L.S., as well as to identify what problems in the development of the child the parent knows, to detect conflict zones in the child-parent interaction, to determine locus of parental control, identify complaints and parent's request to counselor. The basic themes of the parental essay are “My child” and “I'm like a parent”. Depending on the objectives of the study and the readiness of the parent, the topic can be specified. If you want to know more about the history of the development of the child, you use the topic “My child's life-story”. If you want to analyze the parenting and educational attitudes, you propose the topic “The History of My Motherhood (Paternity)”. To find out the educational values and goals of parents, you can use the topic “How I want to raise my child.” The topics “What I like about my child and what I would like to change” allow us to identify the goals of upbringing, the disciplinary system and evaluate the effectiveness of parenting. Parental essay can be used to analyze family education, identify its “weak points” and in collaboration with the parent to define new parenting approaches, correct mistakes in education. What exactly to write in the essay is not specified. Instruction: you can write whatever you think is necessary. The time for the essay is not limited.

Three groups of indicators should be considered in the analysis of the essay.

1. Parent behavior when performing the task.
2. Formal indicators.
3. Content indicators.

The essential characteristics of the parent's behavior are: attitude to the task (acceptance, refusals, questions about what should be the

content of the essay); repeated trials, rewriting, the presence of draft essays; expression of emotions; speech comments; task execution time. Formal indicators - the volume of the essay; form, language and style of narration (share of problems of education in the general text of the essay, epigraphs, letter to the addressee, official's style); underline in the text with the main; drawings and illustrations; structuring of the leaf space (margins, rulers, "red line", etc.).

Content indicators are most important when analyzing parental essays. These are statements about the difficulty of the task; volume ratio of three essays plans - "child" (what the parent writes about the child), "parent" (what the parent writes about himself), "child-parent relationship" (what the parent writes about his relationship with the child); name or nickname by which the parent calls the child; a description of the child's development story, personality traits and properties of the child, his interests and preferences, the features of the child's relationship with family members; how the parent evaluates the child in direct and indirect form-positive, negative, ambivalent; emotional attitude of the author of the essay to the child; a description of the family education system implemented by the parent; an assessment of its effectiveness.

Test for parent-child joint activity is aimed to identify the characteristics of child-parent interaction. It is widely used in the practice of psychological counseling for a family.² Test has significant diagnostic potential, allowing highlighting and matching the positions of all participants of family interaction. The child and parent are offered a constructive design task that must be completed together. The test can be used with children from 3 years old. Two options for the procedure can be used. In the first case, the dyad is offered to perform a constructive task together without sharing a role in joint activities. The complexity of the task varies depending on the age and level of development of the child (lay out a pattern of cubes, a mosaic, joint drawing, etc.). In the second case, the orientation and execution functions are divided between the parent and the child. For example, one participant of the dial is given a sample, the second - cubes. The first one looks at the sample and directs the actions of the second participant-verbally tells which cube to take, how to place it in space, etc. In other words, directs the actions of the second participant who does not see the pattern.

In accordance with the two aspects of communication-aimed at solving the problem ("business") and emotional, we distinguish two blocks of interaction: cognitive and emotional activities. The characteristics of the cognitive activity are - leadership, the distribution of the roles "master" (leader)-"slave"(guided) (coincidence/discrepancy between actual and formal leadership in the task management); features of parental child's behavior management (the way the parent instructs the child, clarity, accuracy and adequacy of instructions in accordance with the task and age of the child; focus and content of the child's action planning; taking into account the child's initiative actions aimed to clarify the sequence, content and correctness of actions; way to control the actions of the child and assessment of the actions of the child. It is necessary to consider whether the parent takes into account the emotional and functional state of the child (partner orientation); activity level (high, medium, low); the adequacy of the speech expression in the instruction of actions aimed at completing the task, compliance of instructions with the age of the child and his individual characteristics. Significant indicators of the interaction of the parent and the child are the behavior of the follower ("slave")—interest in achieving the goal, motivation

for cooperation with a partner; initiative actions regarding planning, content and sequence of actions, control and correction; relations of subordination and dominance according to separation of roles or opposite to roles, struggle for leadership, negativity and refusal to work together if leadership is not recognized. Typical ways a parent affects a child are orders, commands, instructions; advice, suggestions; detailed explanations; warnings, cautions; negative evaluation, criticism, condemnation; praise and positive evaluation; name calling, ridicule, "labeling"; interpretation of the child's behavior, making a "diagnosis" ("you are tired", "it does not work, because you often get distracted", "you are lazy", "not attentive", etc.); questions, including non-constructive investigations ("Why don't you listen to me?"), "What are you thinking about?") and constructive ones, such as specifying guidelines for performing actions ("What is not clear to you?"); consolation, reassurance, depreciation of failure ("No big deal," "Next time it works," "This task is too difficult for your age"); distraction from failure and an adequate assessment of the success of action.

Non-verbal ways to manage a child are sights, facial expressions, gestures, distance change, direct attempts to help the child to complete the task.

Important indicators of parent-child interaction are the child's reaction to the parent's comments (adequate or inadequate correction of actions, refusal to perform the task; ignoring; negativism, opposite behavior, the nature of the emotional response to the comments); parental accounting of individual and age characteristics of the child (overestimation or underestimation of the child's capabilities); the criticality and adequacy of how the parent evaluates the success of the task performed together (adequate assessment, exaggeration of success, ignoring failure).

The emotional characteristics of parent-child interaction are emotional acceptance (from the parent's unconditional acceptance of the child to open rejection); child's emotional attachment to the parent; child's emotional reaction to success and failure.

Behavioral indicators of parental acceptance/rejection are: use of baby name and nicknames, non-verbal expression of emotional acceptance - gentle intonation, maintaining perceptive contact, smile, etc.; the desire for close distance and physical contact or the avoidance of intimacy and body contact, the expression of empathy and a positive assessment of the child's personality; parent's preference for praise of criticism and censure, or preference for negative evaluations, bringing down, humiliating the child's personality (in case of rejection or ambivalent attitude). Indicators of emotional attachment of the child to the parent are the degree of interest of the child in emotional contact with the parent; child's anxiety in interaction with the parent; sensitivity to parental evaluations; dependence of the child's behavior on the assessments and emotional attitude of the adult; ways to achieve intimacy with a parent (striving for close distance and establishing bodily contact, involving the parent in closer cooperation and interaction, direct requests for help and support, demonstrative expression of his emotional state—crying, tears, complaints, asking the parent to assess the effectiveness of their actions).

The parameters for assessing the child's response to failure are the acceptance/transfer of responsibility; the nature of the response to frustration (extrapunitive, impunitive, intropunitive, obstructive-dominant, self-protective, "resolving" accordingly to S. Rosenzweig). In case of successful completion of the task, we analyze such indicators

as manifestations of joy, pride, positive emotional experiences; placidity, self-reliance; indifference, lack of emotional experience and inadequate response to success.

Conclusion

We elaborated a structure of the conclusion about the parental position, taking into account the indicators of the parental essay listed above: Emotional relationships, communication and interaction in the family (attitude of the parent to the child and the child towards the parents and other family members; affective involvement and differentiation of the parent in relations with the child, symmetry of emotional relationships, family role structure ways of communication); The child's development story (history, how the parent predicts child development), child's psychological features, preferences and interests, social connections, peer relations; child's development problems and difficulties—content, severity, circumstances and time of occurrence, conflict zone, is the problem real, the effectiveness of attempts to resolve the problem; Parent as an educator - declared and actual values and goals of education; type of family education; number, quantity, content and presentation of requirements for the child, their compliance with his age and individual characteristics; control, reinforcements, rewards and punishments; the role of the other parent and grandparents in education and upbringing; inconsistency/harmony of family education; reflexivity, dynamism and predictability of parental position; the phenomenon of mystification, including the delegation and disability of the child; how a parent evaluates the effectiveness of his parenting system, how grandparents influence child rearing; how personal characteristics of parents influence the upbringing of a child; what request does the parent make to the consultant, what is the psychological readiness of the parent to cooperate with a consultant and to transform his educational system.

Recommendations regarding what additional research and diagnostics are needed, what preventive programs are needed? It is

necessary to name what psychological support resources can be used, too. The practice of counseling allows highlighting various options for the assessment of parent-child communication. This will allow you to develop a psychotherapy program to optimize and correct the parent-child relationships. The use of these techniques made it possible to identify the types of correlation of emotional communication and cooperation in child-parent relations, namely harmonious ratio, disharmonious emotional interpersonal communication and lack of collaboration, disharmony and low efficiency of cooperation with harmonious emotional relations, disharmony of emotional relations (emotional asymmetry, rejection, ambivalence) with effective cooperation. Note that the latter option is quite rare, since the difficulties of emotional interaction, as a rule, make cooperation ineffective.

Funding details

None.

Acknowledgments

None.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflicts of interest.

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