

PSYRGGU 2020

Psychology of Personality: Real and Virtual Context

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF CINEMATOGRAPHY ON THE YOUTH'S ATTITUDE TO PARENTHOOD

E. I. Zakharova (a)*, O. A. Karabanova (b), J. A. Starostina (c)

*Corresponding author

(a) Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University; 125009, Mohovaya str. 11-9,
Moscow, Russia, e-i-z@yandex.ru

(b) Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia

(c) Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia

Abstract

The search for effective ways to establish a positive attitude of youth towards parenthood constitutes an urgent task to resolve the demographic problem and to increase the birth rate in modern Russia. Cinema art is a significant resource for the personal development. The purpose of the study is to analyze the effectiveness of the psychological impact on attitudes regarding the parenthood of youth as a result of an intervention based on cinema. To assess the effect of the impact, the "Incomplete sentences" technique, the focus group and content analysis method were used. The sample consisted of 18 students aged 19-22 years. 76% of participants transform their attitudes regarding parenthood significantly. Results. The concept of parenthood has become more adequate, complete and harmonious. The ambivalent and neutral attitude towards parenthood has been replaced by a positive one. participants accepted parenthood as a sphere of personal growth and self-realization; recognized their readiness to accept parental responsibility and discovered new ideas of the functions and means of parenting. The psychological conditions for the effectiveness of the intervention were 1) emotional involvement of the participants in the problems of parenting and rising experienced by the characters of the film, 2) group discussion as the base to analyze their own experience of parent-child relationships, reflect, reframe and integrate it as a whole.

2357-1330 © 2020 Published by EuropeanPublisher.

Keywords: Art therapy, attitude towards parenthood, intervention through cinematherapy, youth.



1. Introduction

The study of youth attitudes towards parenthood is due to the catastrophic deterioration of the demographic situation in Russia. In 2019, according to the Federal State Statistics Service, the population decline in certain regions amounted to 22.6% due to a decrease in the birth rate. According to the pessimistic forecast of the Accounts Chamber and the UN the population of the Russian Federation will almost halve by 2100 (up to 84 million people). The development and implementation of state programs of social support for a young family aimed to stop the real danger of depopulation of the Russian population (Ivlev & Cheremisina, 2014). The policy of the Government of the Russian Federation is primarily aimed to eliminate economic difficulties that impede the child's birth in family and to provide family economic support. But it is impossible to ignore the psychological causes of fertility decline.

The decrease of attractiveness of parenthood compared to the possibility of professional achievement is one of these reasons. In modern society, the prevailing attitude towards autonomy and personal success, as opposed to the values of family and parenthood, determines the youth life strategies (Nikitina, 2004; Zakharova, 2015). Parenthood is often perceived as an obstacle to professional and personal self-fulfillment. The priority of professional self-realization leads to postponing parenthood. More than a third of modern young people show a negative and ambivalent attitude towards motherhood (Burmenskaya et al., 2018). Another reason is the problem of identity formation due to general trends in unpredictable social development and the increasing complexity of the organization of culture in the modern world, where the promotion of tolerance provokes "pronounced phenomena of dreamy uncertainty and vagueness in self-determination" of young people (Sokolova, 2015, p. 5).

The psychological and family factors of the formation of youth attitudes towards motherhood were studied: general attitudes of parental family transmitted through intergenerational inheritance; the nature of family relationships; individual-personality characteristics (Burmenskaya et al., 2018). However, the socio-cultural situation as the source of personality development, determines attitude to parenthood and the goals of activity, creating a willingness to choose a strategy for family and professional paths.

It is recognized that parental attitudes evolve value orientation in different periods of history (Badinter, 1981; Gritsay, 2011). Cultural and anthropological studies of historical dynamics of parental attitudes by J. Allen and S. Fariston revealed that desire to give birth to child and parental attitudes towards varies depending on the value of childhood at historical stage. This conclusion is illustrated by the periodization of the evolution of the childhood of L. Demos (from the infanticide to the humanistic helping style) (as cited in Kon, 1989). The development of psychological influence on the attitude to parenthood of young people, revealing to young man the potential for self-realization in parental activity becomes an important task. The implementation of psychological and educational programs aimed to change women's self-awareness and mastering parenthood as a special type of activity has become widespread in modern family psychotherapy practice (Lanzburg, 2011; Vasyagina, 2013).

2. Problem Statement

Cinematherapy is a perspective, but insufficiently studied area of psychological practice. Art therapy covers all types of practice of psychological assistance to a person, to ensure development, training,

correction, diagnosis, based on art and creative human activity. The widespread use of this method in practice is due to the fact that although art therapy cannot cancel past traumas or cure deep emotional disturbances, it can mobilize and develop internal personal resources, open the way to emotional growth and rehabilitation (Kopytin, 2001). The advantages of art therapy are related to the fact that the use of a metaphorical expression of the problem allows us to proceed to its analysis and discussion, while a directive approach provokes defensive reactions of the client, not allowing us to come to its awareness and study. Cinema, allows not only to reveal the projective nature of the viewer's experiences, but also to understand how much personal perception is at variance with the content of the artistic image. The experiences resulting from the effects of the film indicate that the events depicted in the film acquire a personal meaning for each person.

The analysis of the experiences that arose during the viewing of the movie, contributes to a person's awareness of his own life situation and personal position, opening this content for development and transformation. It has been shown that being the "most popular of art", cinema has a significant impact on the person's world perception, the formation of a family value system, moral development, the formation of social (social-role, civic, gender) and personal identity (Zakharova & Karabanova, 2019).

3. Research Questions

- 3.1. What are the possibilities of cinematherapy for the formation of a positive attitude of young people to parenthood?
- 3.2. What psychological conditions ensure the transformation of young people's attitudes towards parenthood?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose is to study the effect of psychological influence on the attitude of students to parenthood and to themselves as a parent as a result of intervention (viewing of films with the subsequent discussion of the "fate of heroes").

The research was aimed to select stimulus for intervention (movies, covering parenthood); to identify youth attitudes regarding parenthood before intervention; to elaborate and implement intervention procedure; to identify youth attitudes towards parenthood after intervention; to analyze the dynamics of attitude to parenthood of youth in the course of a directed psychological impact through cinematherapy.

5. Research Methods

The following methods were used to identify the attitude to parenthood:

1. the projective technique "Incomplete sentences" to reveal the peculiarities of attitude to parenthood (15 unfinished sentences). 4 parameters were evaluated: attitude to parenthood, attitude to oneself as a mother / father, value orientation of a person, ideas about functions and means of parenthood;

2. the focus group method as a qualitative research method in the form of a group discussion “a group in-depth focused interview”, which allows to reveal unconscious attitudes and beliefs;
3. the content analysis of the self-reports of the group members was used. The procedure was as follows: after discussion, the participants presented their ideas and thoughts about parenting problems in the films in the form of a written report (diaries). Categories, reflecting the main semantic units, were selected for the content analysis content of self-reports (Zakharova et al., 2019).

The sample was composed of students of faculty of psychology of Lomonosov Moscow State University aged 19-22 years: 18 people with no experience of parenthood, 15 girls and 3 boys. 15 participants raised in complete and 3 single-parent families. 8 sessions were held for 4 hours over 2 months.

6. Findings

Films corresponding to the problems of parenthood were selected, adequate to the age and psychological characteristics of the participants. We were guided by the following principles: the film should actualize experiences related to parenthood (including fragments of both effective and destructive behavior of parents); the film must have a high artistic level, capable of causing an emotional response and the effect of sympathy for the hero; the behavior of the characters of the film should have cognitive complexity, ambiguity. Only in this case, the orientation in the content of one's position in relation to parenthood is activated and self-centeredness is overcome.

The following films were selected: “Captain Fantastic” (USA, 2014) Director M. Ross; “Billy Elliott” (Great Britain, 2000) Director S. Daldry; “Stepmother” (Russia, 1983) Director O. Bondarev; “Fashionable Mommy” (USA, 2004) Director G. Marshall; “Once 20 years later” (Russia, 1980) Director Y. Egorov; “Family in a quick way” (USA, 2018) Director S. Anders; “Mermaids” (USA, 1990) Director R. Benjamin. A discussion was organized immediately after watching the film.

For 35% of participants the idea of parenthood was filled with concrete content, expanded and enriched, which made them significantly more complete (t-test - 2.457 at $p = 0.027$). The ideas about both the motivational and operational aspects of parenting became more harmonious. The number of statements with disharmony of ideas significantly decreased (t-test - 1.815 at $p = 0.089$). It led to increase in the number of statements adequately reflecting both motives and means of parenting. The number of harmonious representations after intervention significantly increased (t-test -4.371 at $p = 0.01$). Figure 1 shows quantitative indicators of the degree of completeness, concretization and harmony of parenting plans.

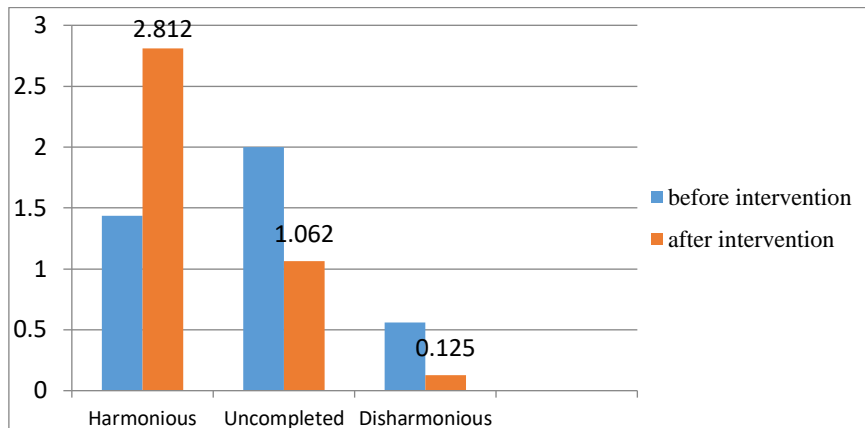


Figure 01. Dynamics of respondents' ideas of parenthood as a result of the intervention

For example, general indifferent answers, describing future motherhood (“I think I will be a mother ... someday”) changed to more meaningful and substantial (“I think I will be a mother ... not ready for self-sacrifice, since it is difficult for me to renounce my freedom, for the sake of another”). This transformation suggests that the films discussion contributed to the development of personal position regarding parenthood. P.M., describing the motives of parenthood, discovers inadequate expectations regarding the child, who should fill the current deficit of close relations: “I’m attracted to motherhood that I will finally have the closest person in the world with whom we will always be together and never part.” After the intervention P.M. declares an adequate motive of love and care with focus on child’s psychological well-being: “I am attracted to maternity ... the opportunity to give love to the child.” The respondents experience anxious expectation of the upcoming “tests” (“presenting myself as a mother / father - I worry about the attendant difficulties”). These experiences changed into positive existential experiences (“I feel happy as a mother / father”) with transition from generalized statements (“a good parent should be able to love and hear”) to specific parental competencies (“a good parent should be able to devote his time to a child without sparing, organize interesting activities, guide and support, be able to switch attention of the child, build contact”). The vector of changes is directed from general words to certain competencies (“the ability to build contact”, “understanding the ways for child’s self-realization”, “moderate use of parental authority”). These changes were occurred both the female and male.

Significant changes were recorded in affective modality of the attitudes towards parenthood. In general, 35% of participants found positive changes. The number of neutral statements was significantly reduced, which allows us to conclude that the participants took a specific position in relation to parenthood (t-test - 2.739 at $p = 0.015$). The share of ambivalent statements decreased, the number of positive statements increased. Thus, the number of participants who demonstrated a positive attitude to parenthood increased significantly (t-test - 6.536 at $p = 0,000$). Figure 2 clearly shows these changes.

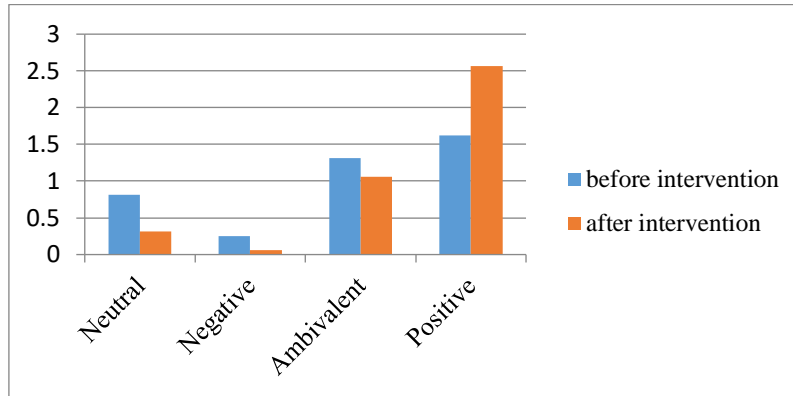


Figure 02. Dynamics of the affective modality of the attitudes towards parenthood

Even in the case of a positive attitude, participants define parenthood as compulsory obligation with abandonment of own interests and self-development, the acceptance of responsibility for the life of child. Parental position was described as sacrificial (“Caring for a child is ... difficult and difficult”). As a result of the intervention, participants began to characterize parenthood as a source of positive experiences caused by satisfying their own needs for love and affection (“Taking care of the child ... it's nice to see your own happiness in his eyes.”) Parenting is no longer perceived as a frustrating factor, but as a sphere of creative self-realization of the personality, providing a high degree of satisfaction.

The attitude towards oneself as a parent changed. The changes have occurred to a greater extent for participants, who initially negatively or ambivalently assessed its parental potential due to lack of confidence in abilities and the idea of the destructive effect of the parental role on the person (“motherhood will make me gray-haired and even more nervous, but even more loving and patient”). After the intervention, the number of negative statements significantly reduced, which is shown in Figure 3. Decrease in the number of neutral statements in favor of ambivalent ones (“motherhood will make me more tolerant, more satisfied, perhaps more disturbing”) can be seen as a manifestation of interest in perceiving parenthood problems, as an activation of the process of self-knowledge under the influence of film experiences. The impression by the heroes of artwork required the development of their own position.

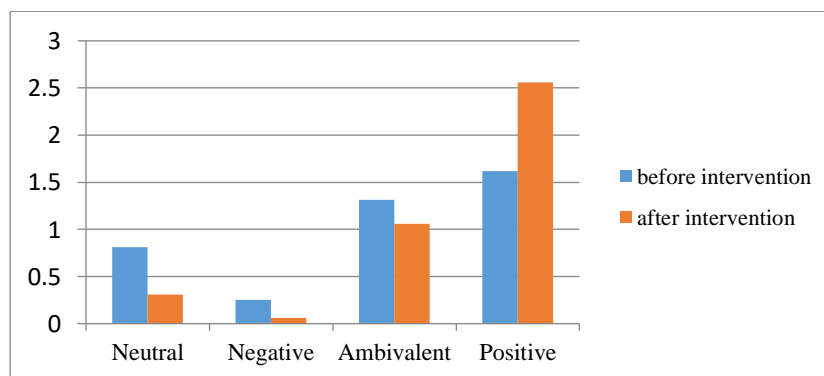


Figure 03. Dynamics of the attitude of the study participants towards themselves as a parent

At the same time, the system of value orientations of participants remained stable. The value of parenthood is not a priority for students both before and after the intervention. ($t - 1, 861$ at $p = 0.083$). This

is due to age-related features. For students, the values of building a professional career take a leading place, and the prospect of parenthood is still very distant and uncertain. Family life does not become a paramount task in life perspective.

The content analysis of the self-descriptions showed changes in self-identity, attitudes to parenthood as a source of personal growth and self-realization (21% of respondents), acceptance of responsibility for the fate of the family and the child (8.64%) (“I concluded for myself the importance of family relationships for the full fulfillment of life and the value of responsibility for becoming a person and personal growth”). Parental love acts as “giving oneself to another, enriching the other and affirming its value” (Fromm, 2018), a mature “bestowing” love, associated with tolerance, sympathy, care, preserving one's own uniqueness and uniqueness. Discussion and reflection of the relationship of satisfaction with parenthood with the type of parental love caused the greatest emotional response with turn to own family experiences of parent-child relationships and the need to defend their own position. Students actively supported the theme of parental self-realization in children, parental creativity, and personal transformation: “It seems to me that the child’s parents can be compared with the artist and the painting. Yes, while the artist is painting, his back hurts, he does not eat, does not drink, does not sleep. But when he finishes it, he looks at what happened, and it’s wonderful! He did it with his own hands!” The final stage of each session was a group work where participants expressed the main idea of the film. An example was the slogans-drawings expressing the idea of R. May that it is in love that the ability to give and receive in interpersonal relationships is formed.

7. Conclusion

The results reveal changes in the attitudes towards parenthood as a result of intervention by means of cinematherapy. Before intervention respondents were more worried about financial responsibility and educational competencies and, as a result, postponed parenthood indefinitely. After the intervention they declared to be ready to take more responsibility and showed greater awareness of the appropriate functions and means of parenting. The changes have affected the completeness, concreteness and adequacy of the notions of parenthood. Attitudes towards parenthood and to oneself as a parent have changed also. A decrease in the proportion of neutral statements indicates that participants have developed a personal attitude to parenthood. At the same time, the share of ambivalence in relation to the parental role was reduced. A shift was recorded both in the direction of a positive attitude to parenthood, and in some cases - in the direction of a negative attitude. The acceptance of responsibility for the well-being of the family and the child and the discovery of parenthood as a possible sphere of self-realization are the result of deep internal work of the participants, aimed to construct their own position. The enrichment and concretization of parenthood was the result of a high personal involvement and active orientation in parenting. The experience of parental family has repeatedly become the subject of discussion, including both positive episodes of parent-child relationships and traumatic experiences. Two main conditions for the transformation of attitudes toward parenthood as a result of intervention can be distinguished. Firstly, the experience of relationships associated with the parental role, provided by the means of artwork. The experiences caused by watching films, due to the identification and empathy of the hero, ensured the personal involvement of the participants. This contributed to an active orientation in the content of parenthood as a type of human activity. Secondly, a group discussion, like a clash with other personal

positions. The mechanism of emotional decentration provided by the group discussion ensured that participants were able to see the problem from different perspectives and go beyond the "narrowing of the orientation field" (Halperin, 2002). Focus groups had an activating effect on the process of awareness of one's own position and self-determination. An important condition prolonging the experiences was self-description (keeping diaries in which participants entered their thoughts after each session). This task ensured that the participants returned to the experiences caused during the group work for a rather long time, and the need to express these experiences in the form of written speech was an effective way of recognizing them and to change the emotional attitude towards parenthood. Visualization of the events and actions of the characters, created by vivid artistic images, opened up the possibility of deep emotional empathy, provide the way to trace the consequences of a parental action in the long term, creating the conditions for highlighting cause-effect relationships; to revise their own attitudes on the base of empathy and sympathy for the hero; to enrich ideas about the means of parenting. The study of personal and family factors that ensure the greatest effectiveness of the developed procedure of psychological impact is the perspective research vector. The psychological impact of artistic cinematography allows changing youth's attitudes towards parenthood.

The results of the intervention by cinematography means are the forming internal position about parenthood by young people, the readiness to take responsibility for the child well-being, the inclusion of parenthood in their life outlook, parenthood recognition as a source of self-realization.

The psychological conditions for the transformation of youth attitudes towards parenthood are: emotional involvement in the experiences of the heroes of film, which allows to discover parenthood as a source of meeting the needs for love and care, respect and recognition of virtues, self-actualization in creative activity; awareness of the inconsistency of personal positions regarding parenthood, activating the processes of self-knowledge and self-reflection; reflection of their own experience of parent-child relationships and the possibility of rethinking and integrating it through catharsis.

Acknowledgments

This research was funded by Russian Foundation for Basic Research under the project 18-013-01213.

References

- Badinter, E. (1981). *Mother love. Myth and reality*. Macmillan.
- Berns, S. A. (2014). Vozmozhnosti art-terapii dlya razvitiya samosoznaniya lichnosti [The possibilities of art-therapy for development of self-consciousnesses]. *Institut psihologii i pedagogiki [Institute of psychology and pedagogy]*, 2, 123-133.
- Burmenskaya, G. V., Almazova, O. V., Karabanova, O. A., Zaharova, E. I., Dolgih, A. G., Molchanov, S. V., & Sadovnikova, T. Yu. (2018). Emocional'no-smyslovoe otnoshenie devushek k materinstvu [emotional-valuable attitude of young women to motherhood]. *Konsul'tativnaya psihologiya i psihoterapiya [Consulting psychology and psychotherapy]*, 26(4), 46-64.
- Filippova, G. G. (2018) *Psihologiya materinstva [Psychology of motherhood]*. U-rai Publisher.
- Fromm, E. (2018). *Imet' ili byt'?* [To have or to be]. AST, Neoclassic.
- Gal'perin, P. Ya. (2002). Lekcii po psihologii: uchebnoe posobie dlya studentov vuzov [Lectures about psychology: handbook for university students]. Knizhnyj dom «Universitet».

- Gricaj, L. (2011). A. Social'noe izmerenie sovremennogo rossijskogo roditel'stva [Social measurement of modern Russian parenthood]. *Vestnik Instituta sociologii [Bulletin of Institute of Sociology]*, 2, 187-201.
- Ivlev, M. I., & Cheremisina, N. V. (2014). Demograficheskaya situaciya v sovremennoj Rossii [Demographic situation on modern Russia]. *Social'no-ekonomicheskie yavleniya i process [Sociol-economical phenomenon and process]*, 8, 48 -53.
- Kon, I. S. (1988) *Rebenok i obshchestvo* [Child and society]. Nauka.
- Kopytin, A. I. (2001). *Sistemnaya art-terapiya [System art-therapy]*, SPb: Piter, 320 p.
- Lancburg, M. E. (2011). Rol' psihologicheskoy podgotovki i podderzhki v realizacii roditel'skih funkcij [Role of psychological preparation and support in realisation of parent's functions]. *Psihologicheskaya nauka i obrazovanie [Psychological science and education]*, 1.
- Sokolova, E. T. (2015). Shok ot stolknoveniya s sociokul'turnoj neopredelennost'yu: klinicheskij vzglyad [Shock from collision with socio-cultural uncertainty]. *Psihologicheskie issledovaniya, [Psychological studies]*, 8(40).
- Vasyagina, N. N. (2013). *Sub"ektnoe stanovlenie materi v sovremennom sociokul'turnom prostranstve Rossii* [Subjective development of mother in modern socio-cultural environment of Russia]. Ural.gos. ped. un-t.
- Zaharova, E. I. (2015). Usloviya stanovleniya negativnogo otnosheniya sovremennyh zhenshchin k materinskoj roli [Conditions of development of negative relation of modern women to mother's role]. *Kul'turno-istoricheskaya psihologiya [Cultural-historical psychology]*, 11(1), 44-49.
- Zakharova, E. I., Karabanova, O. A., & Starostina, Y. A. (2019). Feature film cinematography and its impact on formation of parenthood affirmations in young students. *Proceedings of the First International Volga Region Conference on Economics, Humanities and Sports, 114*, 2019.