Peculiarities of Social Interest, Emotional Atmosphere and Social Situation: Analysis of Large Family Members’ Reports

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Abstract
The article presents peculiarities of senior adolescents’ social interest and their perceived emotional atmosphere in the family with regard to composition of the family. Research findings demonstrate that adolescents do not differ by manifestation of social interest and perceived emotional atmosphere in the family with regard to gender. Essential differences were identified not in terms of gender but with regard to composition of the family. It was found that adolescents from large families distinguished themselves by bigger manifestation of social interest and more favourably perceived emotional atmosphere in the family. However, weak links between social interest and more favourably perceived family atmosphere are characteristic only to representatives of large families, while answers of representatives of non-large families do not confirm an analogous regularity. This study should be perceived as one of the already conducted and further research stages, the subject of which could be omnidirectional psychosocial analysis of large families as a system.

Key words: large family, social interest, emotional atmosphere in the family.

Introduction
In Lithuania the analysis of family situation, its development trends in the current stage of state development are complicated. The country’s economic problems, social tension mostly affects and is reflected in families, especially large families, changing their behaviour and lifestyle. Families encounter new social, psychological problems and in order to experience success of psychosocial functioning and overcome challenges, often change lifestyles, values, resulting in emerging transformation in the family structure and new family models (The State Family Policy Concept, 2008).

Main prerequisites for the transformation were essential changes in human consciousness, their thinking. Deepening individualization, understanding of human rights and freedoms are changing the attitude towards the family, children and family related behaviour. The family, which has been perceived as important in people’s minds for centuries, nowadays is often not named as a value. Development of programmes related to the family as an institution, to preparation of youth for family life, work activity, learning, to social interest should be among the priorities in the formation of today’s family policy (Alifanovienė, Štriškienė, Kepalaitė, 2012).
Social interest expresses active socially beneficial interaction with people in micro (family), meso (place of residence, school), and macro (community) environments and is a guarantee of mental health (Ansbacher, H., R., 1964, Adler, 2003). Development of social interest is influenced by family relationships with parents and brothers, sisters. These relations enable the child to learn to interact, cooperate with others. If relationships with family members prevent spread of social interest, when the child gets into school community, he/she can has a possibility to develop interactions with classmates and teachers. It is believed that developing social relationships in different spaces (while learning, at work, during leisure time), social interest is developing throughout all further human life. During adolescence spread of social interest becomes even more important because the adolescent aspires to be accepted, acknowledged and find his/her place among others (Blake, Ledsky, Goodenow, O’Donnell, 2001). The feeling of belonging experienced by adolescents, which manifests itself by developed social interest, is related to their higher self-esteem, greater self-confidence, empathy (Crandal, 1991), higher academic achievements because the adolescent has low academic achievements not due to lack of skills but due to experienced isolation, the sense of loneliness (Beck, Malley, 1998). Adolescents with higher feeling of community and more diverse commitments in the family at school are more resistant to involvement in illegal (Mulvey, Cauffman, 2001) and criminal (Daugherty, Murphy Paugh, 2001) activities than the ones who do not have commitments and distinguish themselves by lower level of the feeling of community. This way, social interest is kind of both factor and indicator of normal development. Impacts that hinder spread of social interest harm the adolescent’s full-fledged personality development and can disturb his/her adaptation of in micro, meso and macro social spaces. Therefore, it is relevant to explore and systematize the conditions that are necessary for spread of social interest. One of the main conditions for development of social interest is the family, which from the very birth for the child is a societal unit representing social relationships, ensuring meeting the need of belonging. (Adler, 2003). Adler (2003) stated that parents’ undeveloped social interest, bad interrelationships negatively affect spread of children’s social interest in the family and development of close relationships in later life. It has been found that positive family experience, positive relationships with family members increase development of social interest (Leak, Williams, 1991). In addition, it is believed that the individual’s place in the family, birth order could be other conditions that may affect how the child perceives the family environment, parenting method (Johnson, Smith, Nelson, 2003). One of the key factors characterizing the family environment is the emotional atmosphere in the family, which consists of the whole of interrelationships between all family members (Linhal Malik, 1999). In this study, this wide phenomenon describing the family environment is operationalised by the adolescent’s emotional self-feeling in the family (Овчарова, 1996). It could be maintained that emotional atmosphere in large families could distinguish itself by greater diversity of relationships, the possibility for the adolescent to
compensate unfavourable relationships with relationships with those family members who could provide greater support, care, understanding, this way ensuring the overall positive background of relationships. Meanwhile in non-large families particular importance is attached to relationships with adult members of the family – parents, compatibility / incompatibility of parenting style of whom can affect emotional atmosphere in the family (Sotomayor-Peterson, Figueredo, Christensen, Taylor, 2012), in case the adolescent lacks opportunities to get involved in positive relationships in the children's subsystem. Considering the importance of development of adolescents' social interest and the one-to-many role of the family, it becomes relevant to analyse the role of the composition of the family and the social and work situation of the family for the development of the adolescent's personality. This study aims to compare peculiarities of social interest and perceived emotional family atmosphere of adolescents living in large and non-large families and to disclose social and work situation of large families.

**The research subject** is peculiarities of adolescents' (from large and non-large families) social situation, social interest and perceived emotional atmosphere in the family.

**The research aim** is to disclose peculiarities of social interest and perceived emotional atmosphere in the family of adolescents from large families, compared with adolescents who are not attributed to the category of large families. In addition, it was sought to find out manifestation of social and work interest of large family members.

Research results could be useful for social pedagogues, teachers and professionals related to parental education.

To reach the set goal, the following **objectives** were formulated:

- to identify differences of social interest and perceived emotional atmosphere in the family of adolescents from large and non-large families with regard to gender.

- to disclose differences of social interest and perceived emotional atmosphere in the family between adolescents from large and non-large families.

- to identify links between social interest and perceived emotional atmosphere in the family.

- to disclose and present peculiarities of social and work situation of members of large families.
Research Methodology.
Data Collection Methods.

Quantitative
The level of social interest was identified using the social interest scale (Crandal, 1991), which was adjusted for use in Lithuania by psychologist A. Kepalaitė. The scale consists of 24 pairs of adjectives describing the personality. The respondent must choose from two attributes he/she prefers. The internal consistency indicator of this scale Cronbach’s alpha is 0.66. According to the internal consistency indicator the scale is suitable for group researches (Hedden, 2008).

The emotional atmosphere in the family was identified using Osgood’s semantic differential scale (Ovnapa, 1996). Emotional and psychological atmosphere in the family is revealed through 12 pairs of adjectives: satisfied-unsatisfied, joyful-sad, brave-indecisive, etc. The respondent, using 7 point scale, had to evaluate his/her self-feeling in the family. Adolescents who collected the largest number of points in their family feel free, dexterous, needed, calm, satisfied and the emotional atmosphere in the family of those who obtained less points is not so good and they feel more unhappy, anxious, tired, sad, etc. in the family. The internal consistency indicator of this scale Cronbach’s alpha is 0.81. According to the internal consistency indicator the scale is suitable for group researches (Hedden, 2004).

The additional independent variable: gender, family composition (large, non-large).

Qualitative
To disclose peculiarities and manifestation of social interests of members of large families, the qualitative research methodology was used (Valackienė, Mikienė, 2008). Research data were processed using the content analysis method, employing the open coding procedure. Answers according to meaning were divided into categories, frequency of meaningful units of categories was calculated. According to Merkys (1995), using this method, it is necessary to find characteristic, typical structural units in the content of analysed texts. Data were obtained using the semi-structured interview method, directly communicating with informants. During interviews open-ended questions, which were not restricting possible answers, were used.

The target group. The quantitative research was attended by 64 adolescents, who were 15-18 years old, pupils of 10-11 forms (131 girls -52.4% of all target group and 119 boys -47.6 % of all target group). 28 (15 girls and 13 boys) adolescents were from full large families, 36 (20 girls and 16 boys) adolescents were from full non-large families. The sample of the qualitative research was drawn up using the random sampling method – target sample. Families which raise three and more children were selected as informants (N=14).
**Statistical data analysis techniques.** Quantitative data analysis was performed using the SPSS statistical package. Scores were produced using ranks, therefore, the statistical analysis of data was performed using non-parametric analysis methods. Statistical significance of difference of variables was identified using non-parametric criteria; links between variables were identified using rank correlation coefficients.

**Results and their Analysis**

*Peculiarities of social interest and perceived emotional atmosphere with regard to gender.*

Peculiarities of social interest of the whole sample distinguish themselves by its moderate spread. The level of social interest of the majority of the target group is moderate (6-10 points) - 54 percent. The fourth part of the target group has low level of social interest (1-5 points) - 24 percent of the whole target group, while high level of social interest (11-14 points) is obtained by 12 percent of the whole target group.

Comparing the means of indicators of social interest, it was found that girls' social interest (X = 7.25 s = 1.36) statistically significantly (p> 0.05) did not differ from boys' (X = 7.15, s = 1.48). Thus, in further calculations gender factor will not be considered. Certain researches on social interest confirm the assumption that girls should distinguish themselves by higher social interest than boys because they are more oriented to relationships, are more emotional, empathic (Kaplan, 1991, Hjelle, 1991). Other studies, on the contrary, state that gender factor is not important for social interest (Crandall, 1991). The latter conclusions are confirmed by findings of this study, which indirectly prove universality of social interest and its independence from gender and age.

Indicators of emotional atmosphere of the whole sample demonstrate that the majority of adolescents (46%) perceive family atmosphere very favourably or favourably (44%). The minority of adolescents (10%) perceive family atmosphere unfavourably. The mean of girls' points (61.38) is higher than boys' (58.06) but there are no statistically significant differences (U = -2.667, p> 0.05).

Thus, in further calculations gender factor will not be considered because neither indicators of social interest nor indicators of emotional psychological atmosphere with regard to gender substantially differ (p> 0.05).

*Peculiarities of social interest and perceived emotional atmosphere with regard to family composition.*

As it can be seen from Table 1, indicators of social interest of adolescents living in large and non-large families differ (p <0.05). Spread of social interest of
adolescents living in large families is substantially bigger than that of adolescents from non-large families.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target groups</th>
<th>Indicators of social interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents of the large family</td>
<td>8,54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents of the non-large family</td>
<td>7,43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<0,05

Although it is stated (Adler, 2003) that social interest is innate, environment plays an important role for its development. The first environment in which the person finds himself/herself when he/she is born is the family. The feeling of belonging to the family enables the spread of inborn qualities of social interest or determines their suppression (Albert, 1991). It can be assumed that large family environment, communication with brothers and sisters help the child to belong to the first community of his life and this way develop social interest. Bigger spread of social interest, showing involvement in the experiences of community, compassion for each other and support to each other, could help to better adapt at school, in the society, etc.

Such development is also significantly influenced by the emotional atmosphere in the family and adolescents’ subjective perception of that atmosphere.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target groups</th>
<th>Indicators of emotional atmosphere in the family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents of the large family</td>
<td>60,76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents of the non-large family</td>
<td>55,27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<0,05

As it can be seen from Table 2, indicators of emotional atmosphere among adolescents from large and non-large families differ significantly (p <0,05). Adolescents from large families subjectively perceive emotional atmosphere
in their families more favourably than adolescents from non-large families. Because family atmosphere consists of the whole of interpersonal relationships with all family members, not naming concrete representatives of the family, it can be assumed that large families, which have wider circle of communication, offer adolescents possibilities for bigger self-expression than non-large families. Correlation coefficients between indicators of social interest and emotional atmosphere in the family in the large family show a weak statistically significant relation (r = 0.21, p<0.05), while in the non-large family the correlation coefficient of respective indicators does not show any relation (R = 0.013, p> 0.05) between these variables. With regard to this sample it can be assumed that in case of large families spread of social interest and emotional psychological family atmosphere interact with each other, while spread of social interest of adolescents from non-large families can be more influenced by other factors outside the family and not included in the space of this study.

**Analysis of the Social and Work Situation of Large Families**

In order to disclose peculiarities of work activities as one of social situations of large family members, the interview was aimed at finding out their views on this issue (Table 3). The family is the basis of successful social, psychological integration of its members into the society (Litvinienė, 2002, Rupšienė, 2001, Vaitkevičius, 1995). According to Bajorūnas (2004), social abilities, including work abilities, of the younger generation acquired with other family members are important for the rest of the life. This interview was aimed to find out whether members of large families were satisfied with their work activity, what were possible obstacles in this activity (Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The amount of salary does not satisfy</td>
<td>They pay just minimum for work; when all have to live till next salary, then it is not much; they cut salary down to minimum; if you had a job, at least for the minimum, you wouldn't have to ask for allowances; although salaries are small; you are happy that at least you have the minimum; every work demands, no one gives you money for free; we get very little.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The salary does not correspond to efforts</td>
<td>They pay not much but work is very intensive; I don't even speak about night work; work hard; quite complicated, there is also work at night; and work demands; it is quite difficult with the large family; exhausts you.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue Description</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are discriminated at work</td>
<td>Have holidays in parts and not when they would like to, there are also cases when you have to write an application to reduce a salary; and how they behave at work and you have to keep silent because if you disagree, then shove off; people are classified, some people are more successful at work.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with work</td>
<td>For me psychologically it is easier now when I work; work for me is the most important thing; my work is hard but you are happy that you have at least such work; I work not according to the speciality.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obstacles in the work process</td>
<td>How much money you need for going to work and back if you work in the city; you have to work according to the schedule and at the weekends, family and home suffers; bigger children want to work in summer too; workers of not all specialities are in demand; in winter there are less jobs.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statements which have not been included in categories</td>
<td>Always on trips and little time at home; it's good that I wasn't tempted by a larger salary and continue working here.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the interview members of large families spoke about **dissatisfaction with salary** (10): you are happy that you have even the minimum, no one gives you money for free; **big efforts working** (5): pay little, work is very intensive, exhausts very much. Often members of large families work in the residential area as workers on a large farm, as seasonal, support staff, there are ones who work as drivers and their salaries are small. Motiekaitienė (2001), who investigated issues of residents’ employment and labour market policy, states that almost in all states where fast liberalisation of labour relations took place, mainly due to the reduced number of workplaces in industry and agriculture the inequality of payment for labour force has increased. In addition, there are many other unacceptable phenomena in this area, e.g., even in developed countries people working full-time often experience poverty or elite representatives lose jobs and income. One can only hope that if such processes already take place even in developed Western countries and affect higher social layers, this may force social and work policy makers, representatives of public administration to concern themselves with the negative influence of globalization and take counter-measures (Guogis, 2007). In this area particularly vulnerable are weak members of the society, including members of large families.

Based on the analysis of conducted researches, Danilevičienė (2008) states that the state should adjust forms of family employment, social security for mothers raising children, validate flexible work schedules so that mothers are able to work and have a possibility to spend more time with their children, communicate with
them more, but so far implementation of The State Family Policy Concept (2008) in this area takes place insufficiently smoothly.

In the categories about family members’ discrimination at work (5), obstacles in the work process (4) informants state that they must go on vacation not when they want and not when it is convenient for the family or voluntarily reduce their salary, they cannot express their opinion, contradict because they are afraid of losing their job.

In the category obstacles in the work process (4) research participants named that it was difficult to find a job according to the profession, that even mothers of large families had to work at night, that they needed to work at the weekends, during holidays, in summer adolescents of large families were also involved in work activity. It is stated that they need to go to work to the city, that there is less work in summer. Informants’ statements enabled to distinguish the category satisfaction with work (4), which is illustrated by statements of large family members that psychologically it is easier for them when they work, that work is the most important thing and although work is hard, they are happy that they have at least such work. According to Urmonienė (2003), in addition to supply with salary, work performs other important functions too. It significantly contributes to the formation of personal identity, social interest, the personality’s purposiveness. People often assess themselves, like others, according to their social and work situation, the working person feels socially and psychologically more secure and this ensures success of his/her social functioning.

There are statements that, in our opinion, do not fall into the above mentioned categories. The participant of the research stated being a long-haul driver and staying at home little; he also mentioned the ability to resist the doubtfully higher salary and retaining his workplace. Informants are disappointed with disrespect of employers or employees of state institutions, biased negative attitudes to members of large families. Members of large families are dissatisfied with information about labour market and employment opportunities, reaching them. According to Stankūnienė et al. (2003), families lack information on ways and possibilities of solving economic, social, occupational, psychological problems in changing conditions and legal guarantees for them.

The analysis of interview data shows that social and work situation of members of large families is quite complicated: satisfaction with work activity, obstacles, job search, salaries remain relevant. Their solution requires complex concentration of legal, economic, social-psychological infrastructure powers of the state.

This interview was focused on the analysis of only several in our opinion important aspects of social and work situation of large families, not analysing aspects of their values, education, leisure and other aspects, which could become the subject of further researches.
Conclusions

- Research results confirm theoretical assumptions and empirical data about universality of social interest and its non-relation to gender. No differences between boys’ and girls’ social interest manifestation were identified. The majority of representatives of the given sample have moderately expressed social interest, the minority of them have both high and low level of manifestation of social interest.

- It was found that adolescents from large families of this sample distinguished themselves by a more expressed social interest and more favourably perceived emotional psychological family atmosphere than representatives of non-large families.

- Spread of social interest of adolescents from large families of this sample is weakly related to their perceived emotional psychological atmosphere in the family, while no such links were recorded among representatives of non-large families.

- The analysis of interview data shows that social and work situation of members of large families is quite complicated: satisfaction with work activity, obstacles, job search, salaries remain relevant. Their solution requires complex concentration of legal, economic, social-psychological infrastructure powers of the state.

- This research disclosed the importance of social interest and emotional, psychological family atmosphere among adolescents, highlighted certain tendencies of development of said phenomena with regard to large and non-large families of the sample. Identified peculiarities of social interest and emotional psychological atmosphere in the family and their links cannot be generalized for all families due to limited number of members of the target group and lack of diversity of social and psychological factors influencing adolescents. Therefore, in further researches it would be necessary to avoid these limitations, investigate peculiarities of functioning of large families and their role in adolescents’ life.
References


