

IMAGES OF OWN FUTURE OF MOTHERS HAVING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

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Abstract

The article presents the results of research on images of own future for mothers having children without health problems and with disabilities. The differences in the psychological characteristics and time perception of the mothers having children without health problems and with disabilities were found: the mothers having children with disabilities are more negatively perceive the past and estimate higher the present (both hedonistic and fatalistic); mothers having children without health problems percept the past more positively. It's also shown that there is the statistically significant difference between the groups concerning time perception. The article determines that the peculiarities of time perception are determined by the psychological characteristics of mothers, such as their awareness of life and its components, self-actualization and its components, which is reflected in multiple correlations.

Keywords: *image of the future, time perspective, time perception, children with disabilities.*

Introduction

Until recently, psychological peculiarities of families having children with developmental disabilities were studied only as an accompanying aspect at composing of the rehabilitative and educational programs for such children (Malofeev, 2011). Psychological traumatic influence of existence of children's disabilities on their relatives has remained without attention.

Adults' behaviour is changed because their child condition. Families with disabled children face problems that cannot be copied by the parents without external help: interactions with their social environment are disrupted; their circle of relations is limited by close relatives, specialists; the parents become anxious and distressed because their children show developmental retardation in comparison with peers; such parents often do not have necessary knowledge on disabled children psychology and pedagogy and experience of cooperation with psychologists in the early stages of children's development (Barlow & Ellard, 2006; Home, 2002; Miliūnienė, Radzevičienė, & Vuranok, 2016; Pelentsov, 2015). In particular, the subject of analysis includes difficulties and obstacles that mothers having children with developmental disabilities must overcome, because namely mother, as a rule, become responsible for childcare. As a result, such mothers feel obligated to sacrifice their personal, professional life for this purpose in spite of social isolation and lack of support from other people (Home,

2002). Increasingly, supporting programs for parents having children with developmental disabilities takes into account their specific needs, such as: emotional (work with parents' feelings of guilt, aggression, frustration, accusation, weakness, negation, shock, fear, etc.), social (feelings of loneliness and isolation, their need to be supported by their friends and family, to preserve their "life – work" balance, relationships with a partner and other children in the family, compliance with social expectations), informational (access to information, early disease diagnosis, available services, etc.), psychological (depression, stress, coping behavior strategies, self-esteem), physical (fatigue and exhaustion, lack of sleep, loss of appetite, weight loss, headaches, chronic diseases), practical (financial difficulties, work and employment, rest and leisure, transport issues, modifications at home), etc. (Pelentsov, 2015).

Among the numerous challenges a person faces during socialization, the ideas of plans, concepts, expectations for the future are very important. Such ideas are, on the one hand, is the result and condition of individual's developing relations with the outside, and, on the other hand, are the reason for living environment changing world (Lens & Moreas, 1994). That is why the issue of images of the future, created by parents having healthy children and children with certain developmental disorders appears very relevant.

In view of the fact that personal development becomes increasingly important at adulthood, when chronological boundaries of life projects are expanded, the scientific literature presents an opinion that a leading factor causing inner meanings and success of personal self-determination is existence a clear image of own future, its main characteristics and features (Macrae, 2015; Nussbaum, Liberman, & Trope, 2006). Usually, people have more information as for images of their immediate future and are able to make more reliable forecasts on it. At the same time, the more distant in time the future is, the more schematically and abstractly its image is perceived by a person. However, the research results (Nussbaum, Liberman, & Trope, 2006) have shown that such schematic description of an image of the future gives a person a high level of confidence and, as a result, the person feels not less, but even more confident if he/she construct an image of the remote (not closest) future (Nussbaum, Liberman, & Trope, 2006). At the same time, a self-image and an image of own future are less clear if a person is too focused on the expected events, but does not take into account factors influencing his/her behaviour and reactions (Macrae, 2015; Gilbert & Wilson, 2007).

So, an image of own future is a rather holistic view, arising from a person's internal activity and entirely dependent on this person. Therefore, it is quite reasonable to assume that the need to influence own future is one of the leading mechanisms of personal activity, determining directions and nature of this person's actions.

An image of the future includes the following components: cognitive (a set of expected and planned events, personal understanding of the future, main determined stages of future life, events saturating the pictures of the future, their depth and chronological scope) (Lens, Paixao, Herrera & Grobler, 2012; Wakslak & Trope, 2009), emotional (an emotional attitude to the future and personal meanings given to own life) (Vasquez & Buehler, 2007), behavioural (a set of tendencies for implementation of certain behavioural forms of own life style, an outcome form specific content functioning and form relations between value-semantic, emotional and cognitive components of a person's life perspectives) (Hershfield, 2011; Libby, Shaeffer, Eibach, & Slemmer, 2007; Tal, Liberman, Trope, & Walther, 2004; Wakslak, Nussbaum, Liberman, & Trope, 2008), semantic (a person's ability to actualize meanings of a subjective image of the future, showing his/her personal development and identity) (Kivetz & Tyler, 2007; Husman & Shell, 2008).

The performed theoretical analysis has shown existence of a strong link between an individual's psychological characteristics in adulthood and his/her awareness of the image of own future; his/her image of own future is changed depending on subjective conditions of life. This aspect served as an impetus for development of the methodological scheme for further empirical research.

Research objective: to analyse characteristic features of mothers' own future images having children with developmental disorders.

Research object: images of own future of mothers having children with disabilities.

Methods of the research. The following techniques were used in the empirical research to study the time perspective: the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI) (Zimbardo, 1999); the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory of Ch.Spielberger (Hanin, 1976); questionnaire "Life Meaningful Orientations" (Leont'ev, 1992); Self-Actualisation Test, Shostrom's Personal Orientation Inventory (Shostrom, 1964); the Method of Motivational Induction (MMI) ("Unfinished sentences") (Havličková, 2011) to study time perspective.

For statistical analysis of the obtained data, the following methods of mathematical statistics were used: descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, comparison of group meanings with T-criterion for independent samples at the significance level at $p=0,05$.

Participants of the research. The research was conducted on the basis of the Adaptive Psychology Centre "Our Childhood". The study involved 116 people - mothers having children with disabilities. As for children with developmental disorders, the overwhelming majority (65,5%) were children with developmental problems associated with autism (34,5% had autistic spectrum disorders, 31% had early childhood autism), 23,3% had speech impairments, 7,8% had mosaic delayed development, and another 3,4% has attention deficit and hyperactivity.

The control group comprised 110 mothers having children without health problems of school age. Age of respondents was from 25 to 55 years.

Research results. At the first stage we performed data validation on the normality of distribution using One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test. The generalized indicator – Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) was below 0.05 for each of the indicators, so the nature of the data distribution cannot be considered normal, so non-parametric data processing methods were used for further processing.

The results of the research on the peculiarities of time perception with the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory, the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory of Ch.Spielberger and questionnaire "Life Meaningful Orientations" methods in two groups of mothers are presented (Table 1).

Table 1. Average values of the indicators shown by the two groups studied with the described methods

Time perspective	Mothers having children without health problems	Mothers having children with disabilities	p
Negative past	2,6	3,1	$p \leq 0,01$
Hedonistic present	3,0	3,4	$p \leq 0,01$
Focusing on the future	3,8	3,9	
Positive past	3,5	3,3	$p \leq 0,058$
Fatalistic present	2,7	3,0	
Reactive anxiety	43,7	45,4	$p \leq 0,01$
Personal anxiety	46,9	47,3	
Acceptance of aggression	34,5	44,6	$p \leq 0,01$

Continued Table 1

Cognitive needs	39,0	45,2	$p \leq 0,05$
Awareness of life	97,3	95,4	$p \leq 0,05$
Life goal	32,1	31,4	
Life process	27,5	27,7	
Life results	24,4	24,6	
Locus of Control - Self	20,6	19,6	$p \leq 0,01$
Locus control - life	29,7	27,7	$p \leq 0,05$

Mothers of both groups are focused on the future, are inclined to perceive the past positively, look at the present from the hedonistic point of view and are less inclined to perceive the present as fatalistic (see table 1).

Reactive anxiety of mothers having children without health problems is at an average level, while personal anxiety is high. The mothers having disabled children showed high personal and reactive anxiety. Obviously, greater tension in life, their inability to leave children even for a short time and other adverse factors make the lives of mothers having children with developmental problems more difficult in comparison with that of mothers having children without health problems.

The mothers having children without health problems have awareness of life slightly higher than that of the mothers having disabled children. The respondents were more focused on the future (the "life goals" indicator has higher scores), slightly less on the present (the "life process" indicator has lower scores), and did not pay large attention to the past (the "life result" indicator has the lowest scores). As for the difference between the groups, there are differences in the indicators of locus of control.

As for the ability to accept life situations and other aspects, most of the results are within the normal limits. The values for all indicators are average but the overall indicator of self-actualization is higher for the mothers having children with disabilities (47.7 versus 46.6 points).

For deeper understanding of specific images of the future, we have studied time positioning of motivational objects by the mothers - respondents using the Method of Motivational Induction (MMI) ("Unfinished sentences").

Table 2. Time positioning of motivational objects (real time) (in %)

Groups of respondents	Now	Day	Week	Month	Year
Mothers having children without health problems	6,4	10,0	3,6	6,4	73,6
Mothers having children with disabilities	4,3	3,5	3,5	7,8	81,0

The data in Table 2 indicates that statements of mothers' form both groups are relating to the longest period - a year (within a year or after a year). This can be explained by the fact that personal planned horizons at adulthood are quite distant. But it should also be noted that most of the statements are extremely abstract and have no at all time limits: "to achieve a desired", "my children will be happy", "there will be peace", "my dreams will come true".

Table 3 show manifestations of the content part of images of the future in the form of categories (Relative frequencies of categories, mentioned at description of images of the future in "Unfinished sentences").

Table 3. Relative frequencies of categories, mentioned at description of images of the future (in %)

Categories	Mothers having children with disabilities	Mothers having children without health problems
“Everything will be fine”	19,8	26,4
“To be” (self-development)	24,1	16,4
Health	19,8	16,4
Family, love	15,5	10,0
Leisure, travels	4,3	6,4
“To have” (material wealth)	7,8	10,0
Relations (“I and others”)	4,3	6,4
Hobbies	3,4	4,5
Peace in the country	1,0	3,3

The statements concerning abstract “well” in the future are prevailed in both groups: “everything will be fine”, “life will be happy”, “the world will become better”, “life will be joyful”.

The “to be” category includes statements related to self-development: “to become better”, “to achieve everything conceived”, “to be happy”, “to be a strong person”, “to fulfil life plans”.

The “health” category is also quite clearly reflected by both groups and is represented by the following expressions: “all children will be healthy”, “to be healthy”, “my child will be healthy”, “the loved ones will be healthy”.

The “family, love” category is centred on respondents’ families, as well as love for their children, husbands, the desire to give birth to a child. Examples of the statements related to this category are: “to make my family happy”, “to take care of my family”, “all my nearest and dearest will be healthy and happy”, “to have peace and comfort in my family”, “to give birth to a child”.

The “leisure / travel” category is presented by more specific statements: “to go on a journey around the world”, “to have a trip”, “to go on vacation”, “to go to Italy”, “to have a rest in the summer”.

The “to have” category refers to material wealth and money: “to refurbish my home”, “to get a lot of money”, “to earn more”.

The “relations” category includes statements related to the desire to improve relationships with others or to prevent deterioration of such relationships: “to do something important for others”, “to talk with them”, “they will do me wrong”; the option “I am trying to avoid ...” was mainly continued by the following: quarrels, conflicts, scandals.

The “hobbies” category is represented by the following statements: “to find something for my soul”, “find a hobby”, “to create something”.

The “peace in the country” category includes such statements as: “to have peace”, “peace will be in the country”, “peace will come”.

To compare the psychological characteristics of the two studied groups, the nonparametric Mann-Whitney’s test for the mean values of independent samples was used.

The grouping variable for comparison of the means was presence/absence of psychophysiological developmental disorders at the children. According to the performed comparative analysis, the level was lower than 0.05, so, the results for the respondents are significantly different.

There are differences between the two groups in the perception of the past negatively ($p < 0.01$), perception of the present in the hedonistic sense ($p < 0.01$) and perception of the past

positively ($p < 0.05$), as well as between reactive anxiety ($p < 0,01$).

The indicators of acceptance of aggression ($p < 0,01$) and cognitive needs ($p < 0,05$) for representatives of the two groups are significantly different. It should be noted that both indicators are higher for the mothers having children with disabilities, which indicates a higher level of self-actualization.

The correlation analysis (Spearman correlation coefficient for non-normal samples) was used to study correlations between psychological characteristics (that were revealed by the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory of Ch. Spielberger, questionnaire "Life Meaningful Orientations", Self-Actualisation Test and Shostrom's Personal Orientation Inventory) and images of the future of the mothers having children without health problems and with disabilities (that were studied using the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory and the Method of Motivational Induction). Correlations between time perception and psychological characteristics of the studied mothers have been revealed; the results of this analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlations between time perception and psychological characteristics of the mothers having children without health problems and with disabilities

Characteristics	Mothers having children with disabilities				Mothers having children without health problem				
	Negative past	Orientations on the future	Positive past	Fatalistic present	Negative past	Hedonistic present	Orientations on the future	Positive past	Fatalistic present
Reactive anxiety				0,63*					
Personal anxiety				0,62*	0,49**				0,75**
Life goals		0,59*			-0,50**				-0,61**
Life process					-0,61**				-0,72**
Life results					-0,48*				-0,42*
Locus of control-Self					-0,44*				-0,55**
Locus of control-life					-0,61**				-0,68**
Awareness of life					-0,67**		0,50*		-0,56**
Time ratio	-0,78**			-0,64*	-0,59**			-0,39*	
Inner-directed		-0,85**			-0,66**				
Self-actualizing value	0,75**				-0,70**				
Existentiality				-0,67*	-0,36*				
Feeling reactivity		-0,65*				0,43*		0,39*	
Spontaneity		-0,82**	-0,51*		-0,43*				
Self-regard					-0,69**				
Self-acceptance					-0,57**				
Synergy					-0,48*				
Acceptance of aggression							-0,38*		
Human nature		-0,82**							
Capacity for intimate contact		-0,89**			-0,44*			-0,42*	

Note: ** - there is a correlation at the reliable level of significance $\alpha \leq 0,01$; * - there is a correlation at the reliable level of significance $\alpha \leq 0.05$

Analyzing obtained the results, we can say, that the group of the mothers having children with disabilities showed a smaller number of correlations, but these correlations are stronger.

There are differences in the psychological characteristics and specifics of time perception of the mothers having children without health problems and with disabilities: the mothers having children without health problems showed a higher level of awareness of life (and especially higher indicators of locus of control), but lower level of self-actualization, lower personal anxiety, while the mothers having children with disabilities showed a higher level of self-actualization (especially as for the indicators of synergy and human nature), higher anxiety (both reactive and personality). As for time perception, the mother having children with disabilities perceived more negatively the past, showed higher indicators of the present (both hedonistic and fatalistic), and the mothers having children without health problems estimated more positively the past. There is the statistically significant difference between the group results concerning time perception, namely, perception of the positive and negative past, the hedonistic present.

The time perspective and content of adults' images of the future have been studied; and both groups can be described as future oriented. The content of images of the future presented by the mothers having children with disabilities is characterized by emphasis on the health of their children and family, on their desire to be more "stronger", to have more full-fledged life.

Discussion

The topic of images of the future is not very popular in modern psychological and pedagogical researches, since the phenomenon itself is extremely dynamic and unstable. So, our previous studies (Kovalenko, & Roketa, 2016) substantiated that images of the future depend on the country of residence, but at the same time people are able to separate their seeing of their own future and the future of their country. Young people assess absolutely negatively the present of their country, have little faith in its successful future, but, at the same time, have optimistic and positive images of their own future. At study of adults' images, this paradox was revealed in the content of images of the future. In particular, the determined categories reflect poorly the current situation in the country - the war in the eastern Ukraine, the economic crisis - the category "peace in the country" was mentioned only 1% of the mothers having children with disabilities and 3,3 % of the mothers having children without health problems.

The obtained results agree with the data of other studies, showing that time perception and images of the future have specifics depending on the stage of age development (Bateson, 2010; Pavelková & Havlíčková, 2013; Sircova & Mitina, 2008).

The peculiarities of adults' (including mothers') images of their future are quite interesting. At a mature age, the notion of the future becomes more meaningful, deeper than that of young people; the synthetic estimation of life appeals more to personal emotions than to cognition. In the cognitive plan, life fullness in general and planning of future events reaches its maximum in youth, and then gradually decreases with old age approaching. The behavioural component is greatly reduced due to limited physical resources and reevaluation of values. At the same time, the semantic component significantly increases as compared to youth, which is associated with the awareness of time limits with ageing. The main significant events for mature people are concentrated in their families and in everyday life. The ambitions of youth, associated with self-fulfilment with different spheres of life, fall into the background.

According to this view, the researchers studying an image of the future as a cognitive motivational construct and its connection with personal motivation are important for its

structure understanding (Husman & Shell, 2008; Lens, Paixao, Herrera, & Grobler, 2012; Vasquez & Buehler, 2007). Within such approach, an image of the future is the result of a person's formulation of motivational goals for short or long terms; people differ from each other not only as for their goals, but also as for remoteness in the time of their desired future (how much time it takes to realize their goals). Such differences have motivational effects as they determine significance of these goals for a person and decisions made by him/her, specific actions implemented right now (Lens, Paixao, Herrera, & Grobler, 2012). The idea of future success can sometimes increase people's motivation to achieve it. In particular, when an image of the future has common features with the present, when it is bright, realistic and positive, a person is inclined to make decisions that will have positive consequences for him/her in the distant future (Hershfield, 2011).

Conclusions

The psychological characteristics of mothers having children without health problems and with psychological-physiological disorders have been defined: their anxiety is above average, level of self-actualization is insufficient and awareness of life is within average values.

In general, the mothers having children with disabilities are more self-actualized, which is most likely associated with a higher level of self-reflection and constant self-development in order to overcome a difficult life situation (acceptance of the fact that their children have disorders in their psychological-physiological development).

The studied time perspective and content of adults' images show that both groups can be called future oriented. The percentage of correlated symbols of social time in the respondents' responses indicates that the real and social times in the distribution of motivational objects coincide in both groups. Most of the respondents' statements are related to the distant future, moreover, they are abstract and describe changes in the future: "to be happy", "to be successful", "to become better", "everyone will be happy". As for the mothers having children with disabilities, the "to be" category is represented to a greater extent, and it also has certain specificity; these mothers more often are going "to be strong", "to be better", whereas mothers having children without health problems often note: "to be happy", "to reach the desired". The "health" category is mentioned by the mothers having children with disabilities a little more often than that by the mothers having children without health problems. The "peace in the country" category' statements are more common for the mothers having children without health problems; the mothers having children with disabilities are more focused on problems and difficulties affecting their families.

Significant differences between the two groups have been found for several mothers having children with disabilities. They wrote about a full-fledged life ("so my child be healthful", "I am dreaming on a full-fledged life", "my son will understand this world"), which indicates a certain pity that they cannot have a full-fledged life, as well as importance of a "normal" life for them. Also the mothers having children with disabilities mentioned more statements about "making my child happy", while the mothers having children without health problems formulate the same in a passive version: "I wish my children to be happy".

As follows, the content of images of the future presented by the mothers having children with disabilities is characterized by emphasis on the health of their children and family, on their desire to be more "stronger", to have more full-fledged life.

The differences in the psychological characteristics and time perception of the mothers having children without health problems and with disabilities are the following: the mothers

having children with disabilities are more negatively perceive the past and estimate higher the present (both hedonistic and fatalistic); mothers having children without health problems percept the past more positively.

There is the statistically significant difference between the groups concerning time perception, namely, the mothers having children with disabilities perceive the past negatively and the present (hedonistic and fatalistic) more positively; the mother having children without health problems have a higher level of awareness of life, higher indicators of locus of control, but lower self-actualization, lower personal anxiety; whereas the mothers having children with disabilities have higher self-actualization (especially for synergy and human nature), higher anxiety (both reactive and personal).

The peculiarities of time perception are determined by the psychological characteristics of mothers (their awareness of life and its components, self-actualization and its components), which is reflected in multiple correlations. So, in general, perception of a time perspective of one's life is interrelated with self-actualization and awareness of one's own life.

Thus, the mothers having children with disabilities form specific images of their own future, which differ from the corresponding images of mothers having children without health problems, first of all, by the desire for a "better life" for themselves and their child, as well as by more attention to their positive traits (trying to be better, stronger, to ensure happiness of their children).

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Summary

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The article presents the results of research on images of own future for mothers having children without health problems and with disabilities.

The studied time perspective and content of adults' images show that both groups are future oriented.

The differences in the psychological characteristics and time perception of the mothers having children without health problems and with disabilities are the following: the mothers having children with disabilities are more negatively perceive the past and estimate higher the present (both hedonistic

and fatalistic); mothers having children without health problems percept the past more positively.

The content of images of the future presented by the mothers having children with disabilities is characterized by emphasis on the health of their children and family, on their desire to be more “stronger”, to have more full-fledged life.

There is the statistically significant difference between the groups concerning time perception, namely, the mothers having children with disabilities perceive the past negatively and the present (hedonistic and fatalistic) more positively; the mother having children without health problems have a higher level of awareness of life, higher indicators of locus of control, but lower self-actualization, lower personal anxiety; whereas the mothers having children with disabilities have higher self-actualization (especially for synergy and human nature), higher anxiety (both reactive and personal).

The peculiarities of time perception are determined by the psychological characteristics of mothers (their awareness of life and its components, self-actualization and its components), which is reflected in multiple correlations.

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