

THE INFLUENCE OF PARENTS ON THE FORMATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS OF TEENAGERS WITH DISABILITY

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The cognitive aim of this research is to examine the level of intensity of needs in the case of teenagers with visual impairments, compared with their able-bodied peers, as well as participation of parents in formation of these needs. The practical aim of the study is to consider the acquired knowledge in programs of early rehabilitation and helping parents who are an indispensable link in the process of need formation for a child.

Human needs take several positions in conceptions of personality: from subconscious forces called instincts by Freud, by hierarchical system by Maslow, by personal experience of man by Murray up to noethic needs in existential psychology. Freud (1939) explains the fact that subconscious mechanisms are responsible for human behavior. Although nowadays Freud's primary concept is strongly modified by his followers, subconscious mechanisms of human behavior are still the subject of interest of neopsychoanalysis. The most popular concept of human needs is the hierarchical system of needs created by Maslow (1974). Maslow, however, states that higher needs appear only after lower needs have been fulfilled. In humanistic psychology, Murray (1964) underlines personal experience of a man and gives human the right to decide about the order of fulfilling his needs. The notion of *noethic needs* appears in existential psychology, which claims that human being never *is* but always *wants to be more than he is*. Therefore, he all the time seeks for new values, the realization of which becomes his need. The creator of existential psychology, Frankl (1984), called these needs noethic.

One integral conception of formation of needs and uniform opinion regarding existing hierarchies of needs does not exist in psychology up to this day. It has been accepted that in all conceptions of needs up to now we are able to find actual aspects of their realization and formation. It means that conceptions from the last century are constantly current. One of the first definitions of need was presented by Cameron. (1947) *A need is a condition of unstable or disturbed equilibrium in an organism's behavior, appearing typically as increased or protracted activity and tension* (Cameron, 1947, p.105). A similar statement is given by McKinnon: *need is a tension within an organism which tends to organize the field of the organism with respect to certain incentives or goals and to activity directed toward their attainment*(Mc Kinnon, 1948, p.126). Golstein (1939) defines a need as an occasion to an explanation of principle self-actualization.

The most known conception concerning needs is the hierarchical theory by Maslow (1974). According to Maslow, satisfaction of a fundamental needs is not a climax of man's development but it is the basis for the formation of more and more complex motives. In Murray's (1964) conception of personality, a need is a basic plane on which he builds his theory. Murray acknowledges the importance of the history of each individual's life and each individual's personal experience in forming a specific system of needs. Needs are not only determined by inborn structure of an organism but also by personal experience of the person itself. Murray is inclined to suspect a very serious influence of parents on the forming of needs of their children because parents award or punish certain ways of behavior and have a share in reinforcing or weakening the effects of respective stimuli. Of special importance in the formation of personality is attributed by Murray to events that took place in early childhood. Individual differences and disturbances in the system of needs occurring in adult age result from unfavorable influences a child was subjected to in its early age. Considering the fact that needs are based on stable (permanent) attitudes, it may be assumed that certain attitudes do not come into existence in case of people with visual impairment. Aesthetic needs based on visual perception may serve as an example

mentioned above. Regarding visually impaired people, the needs of social contact, needs of independence and cognitive needs may be formed in different ways.

Certain needs may not be formed at all or once arising, they can never achieve full satisfaction (for example the need of independence), especially when educational environment is unfavorable. It does not mean that this group of individuals has needs of different qualities in comparison to people who are not disabled. Individuals with visual disabilities come across bigger obstacles in realizing their needs due to objective conditions (environment, other people's attitudes, barriers in obtaining knowledge, social life, organization of their own life etc.), and subjective conditions (result of physical eyesight disability). At the same time, people with disabilities have the same needs as other members of society, the psychophysical structure of their organisms is the same, they live in a specific cultural and territorial environment and they are subject to the same rules of functioning worldwide. Differences may only concern the hierarchy and the degree of intensity of their needs.

Research of needs concerning people with visual impairment is not frequently discussed in scientific literature (Sampaio, Bril, & Brenière, 1989; Stuen, 2000, Sapp, 2001; Celest, 2006). However, the quoted authors do not investigate the influence of parents on the formation of needs of their children. In this investigations, Murray's theory (1964)) of needs is very useful because it allows to reach back to childhood experiences and to the influence of parents on the formation of needs. Furthermore, G.G. Stern (1958) has constructed a method to examine levels of fulfilling needs supported by Murray's theory.

Method

To describe the level of fulfilling needs, the author used the questionnaire made by Stern (1958). *Activities Index* is a method constructed on the basis of hierarchy of needs by Murray, published in USA between 1959-1969. The Polish adaptation took place in 1975 in the Laboratory of Psychological Methods of the Polish Academy of Sciences. *Activities Index* of Stern measures and appreciates 37 traits of personalities composed by 20 needs and a dozen intrinsic dimensions of personality isolated by Murray. To calculate results one used the key created by the author of the Test. The key was normalized and standardized on Polish population. Maximal score of intensity of each need is ten. Results range between 4 and 6.9 (the average calculated arithmetically for each group) and have been evaluated in the medium class (below 4 – is low and over 6.9 – is high).

The level of satisfying children's needs in their perception was examined by means of the projective Test of Unfinished Sentences of one's own construction and evaluated by a method of competent judges. Sentences were constructed following the Sacks and Levy's (1959) method. Sixty-five items in the test have been well-chosen from Murray's needs, in order to find the influence of parents on the formation of needs. Answers of the Test were evaluated by six competent judges estimating if parents had positive (+1), negative (-1) or indifferent (0) influence on the formation of each evaluated need. The sum of marks for each answer obtained from the judges described parental influence on the formation of specific needs. Final result for each need was presented as arithmetic average. Results above 5.0 stated significant parental influence on the formation of the evaluated need; results below 5.0 showed less parental influence on the formation of the evaluated need (Konarska, 2002, p.213-217). Interpretation and analysis of results relied on comparison of values, which are divided in higher or lower categories, using both adapted tests.

Teenagers with visual impairments constituted the subject matter of investigations, which was formed by 40 individuals. These individuals, ranged in age from 15-19, consisting of 6 blind persons, 11 with some residual vision and 23 partially sighted persons. Teenagers with visual impairments were selected by the analysis of medical records. They were students of five special schools for visually impaired children. The main criterion was that the visual impairment occurred prior to three years of age. They came from the following types of schools: Secondary School (14 persons), Electrical Technical School (technical high school - 11 persons) and Textiles Technical School (15 persons). Students from these schools graduate after four years after passing final examinations. The results were compared with the results of a group of 30 teenagers of same age without any disabilities. They were students of the same types of schools.

Results

The highest average for the group of visually disabled teenagers and the group of teenagers with good eyesight was recorded in case of the need to experience protection and care ($\bar{x} = 7.5$) in scale of ten

points for teenagers with visual disability and ($\bar{x} = 7.7$) for the other group. It was symptomatic that in both groups of teenagers there occurred analogically low results for an opposite need and the need of autonomy ($\bar{x} = 2.5$ and $\bar{x} = 2.3$).

Table 1.
Intensity need average.

Number of need	Need of	Good eyesight	Visual impairment
1	avoiding injury	4.8	5.2
2	avoiding trauma	5.9	5.7
3	avoiding humiliation in one's own eyes	5.6	6.3
4	abasement	4.5	3.6
5	achievement	5.5	4.9
6	affiliation	7.4	4.4
7	rejection and isolation	2.6	2.9
8	feeding and taking care of somebody	7.3	6.8
9	submission	5.3	5.6
10	experience protection and care	7.7	7.5
11	autonomy	2.3	2.5
12	aggression	4.4	4.4
13	dominance	4.6	3.6
14	compensation	5.3	4.8
15	apologize	5.2	4.4
16	psychological exhibitionism	3.5	2.7
17	cognitive	6.2	4.9
18	nice sensory experience	6.1	4.5
19	order	5.8	5.8
20	amusement	6.1	6.0

The second highest average was recorded for the need of feeding and taking care of somebody, in case of teenagers with disability ($\bar{x} = 6.8$). This need was equally well developed in case of teenagers with good eyesight ($\bar{x} = 7.3$). It suggested that the examined teenagers had a high level of tendency to show sympathy and kindness to others. A need, which was contrary to this one, was the need of rejection and isolation. In both groups of teenagers it reached low level ($\bar{x} = 2.9$ and $\bar{x} = 2.6$).

The differences between teenagers with good eyesight and the disabled ones occurred with respect to five out of twenty examined needs. Difference occurred when level of intensity of the need in one group was below average results and in the other group above average result. This refers to the need to avoid physical injury (No. 1), the need of affiliation (No. 6), the cognitive need (No. 17), and the need of nice sensory experience (No. 18) and to some extent the need to avoid humiliation in one's own eyes (No. 3). The last one maintained slightly above average concerning people without visual impairment (5.6) and clearly above average concerning people with impairments (6.3). Considerable intensity of the need to avoid humiliation in one's own eyes may occur because people with impairment are more often exposed to physical injury, and what follows, they may feel ashamed due to colliding with objects. This situation may manifest as increased need of avoiding injury (No. 1) and relatively high need of avoiding humiliation in one's own eyes (No.3).

It would not be any exaggeration to ascertain that the above mentioned needs were directly connected with limitations resulting from visual disability. Teenagers with visual impairment could suffer from physical injuries, pain and misery connected to treatment, medical care or running into an obstacle and therefore a strong need to avoid humiliation in their own eyes. They may be determined by the lack of experience in achieving success or fear concerning results of the actions they may undertake. With teenagers who were visually disabled, there occurred a low level for the need of affiliation (No. 6), which may be interpreted as visual limitation in its realization. The barrier of eyesight hinders a non-verbal contact expressing disapproval or reattempt, and poor experience of this kind blocks formation of the need of affiliation based on visual sensations. However, it did not mean that there was no need to be acknowledged because the need to avoid humiliation in one's own eyes (No. 3) remains on high level.

The average level of the cognitive need (No. 17) in case of teenagers with disabilities was intriguing. It might be a result of faulty organization of educational process characterized by little attention paid to development of abstract thinking and replacing visual sensations (experience) with other senses. Despite great parental effort, the level of intensification of cognitive needs was relatively low (see Table 2). It was much easier for parents of teenagers without impairments to create cognitive needs. Their efforts were slightly lower (compared to parents of teenagers with disabilities), and nonetheless they reached much better results. Probably, parents of teenagers with disability would benefit from professional help.

The need of nice sensual experience (No. 18) was situated below average level of intensity in case of teenagers with visual impairment and clearly above average level of intensity in case of teenagers with good eyesight. This meant that extra-visual sensual experience in case of teenagers with visual impairments was poorer compared to visual experience of their able-bodied peers.

The Test of Unfinished Sentences was a tool to analyze behavior of parents that might influence the reinforcement or weakening of the development of the examined psychological needs. Six competent judges marked each answer. If judges acknowledged that parental behavior influenced formation of definite needs in a positive way, the answer was given one point with a plus sign; if judges acknowledged that parental behavior inhibits formation of definite needs, the answer was given one point with a minus sign. Marking an answer was not always obvious; giving plus or minus sign depended on a kind of the need and its influence on social and emotional functioning of a human. For example, inhibition of need of abasement (No. 4) should be judged as a plus point. However, parental behavior stimulating development of need of abasement should be judged as a minus point. On the contrary, the need of autonomy (No. 11) developed by parents will be given a plus point; inhibited will be given a minus point. Zero mark was given when parental behavior was judged neutral on the formation of need. Table 2, illustrates the influence of parents on the formation of needs researched by means of the Test of Unfinished Sentences. Numbers of needs correspond to numbers and names of the *Activities Index* of G.G. Stern (1958).

Table 2.
Influence of Parents on the Formation of Needs.

Number of need	-1 negative influence		0 indifferent influence		+1 positive influence		Total %	average intensity of needs	
	impairment	non impairment	impairment	non impairment	impairment	non impairment		impairment	non impairment
1	4.9	19.2	4.3	6.7	90.8	74.1	100	5.2	4.8
2	4.3	33.3	13.9	11.7	81.8	55.0	100	5.7	5.9
3	71.8	80.0	4.0	6.7	24.2	13.3	100	6.3	5.6
4	66.6	59.2	6.2	8.3	27.8	32.5	100	3.6	4.5
5	13.4	18.3	3.5	5.0	83.1	76.7	100	4.9	5.5
6	24.1	21.3	25.5	11.7	50.4	66.0	100	4.4	7.4
7	56.8	46.7	28.1	24.2	15.1	29.1	100	2.9	2.6
8	5.1	8.3	4.3	6.7	90.6	85.0	100	6.8	7.3
9	24.2	13.3	8.5	7.5	67.3	79.2	100	5.6	5.3
10	13.1	20.8	11.7	6.7	75.2	72.5	100	7.5	7.7
11	32.1	14.2	2.0	8.3	65.9	77.5	100	2.5	2.3
12	85.6	70.0	4.1	5.0	10.3	25.0	100	4.4	4.4
13	47.6	49.2	11.1	7.5	41.3	43.3	100	3.6	4.6
14	26.4	40.2	1.9	8.3	71.7	51.5	100	4.8	5.3
15	62.8	65.8	5.4	5.8	31.8	28.4	100	4.4	5.2
16	13.7	8.3	15.0	15.8	71.3	75.9	100	2.7	3.5
17	14.7	16.7	4.2	8.3	81.1	75.0	100	4.9	6.2
18	32.3	46.7	6.6	11.7	61.1	41.6	100	4.5	6.1
19	17.3	16.7	1.4	6.7	81.3	76.6	100	5.8	5.8
20	42.7	41.7	2.1	6.7	55.2	51.6	100	6.0	6.1

Analyzing the need of avoiding physical injuries, the group of teenagers with good eyesight, as well as with the group of teenagers with visual impairment, the influence of parents on their formation was

very strong. Though, parents of teenagers with impairment cared very much about development of need of avoiding physical injuries (No. 1), what could suggest overprotection. Teenagers with disability showed greater (than their able-bodied peers) intensity of need of avoiding injury, what – in their case – might be connected with negative experiences resulting from the limitations of spatial orientation. Lack of vision exposes to injuries i.e. collision with furniture or fall down (sudden fault of a landscape).

Parents of teenagers with impairment showed big influence on the formation of need of avoiding trauma (No. 2). The level of intensification of this need was approximately the same as in case of teenagers without impairment. Parents of able-bodied peers paid attention to the formation of this need to the same degree as parents of teenagers with disability. Referred to the formation of need of avoiding humiliation in one's own eyes (No. 3), parental efforts in both examined groups were little. On the contrary, it seemed that parental behavior aimed at humiliating children in their own eyes (in both examined groups). Maybe it was due to parent's expectations. Despite that fact, teenagers showed well-developed need of avoiding humiliation in one's own eyes. There was significant difference in the level of intensity of need of achievement (No. 5) between teenagers with and without visual impairment. Despite great parental efforts, level of intensity of need of achievement in case of teenagers with disability was relatively low. Parental effort of their peers without disability was slightly lower but level of intensity of this need was much higher. These results suggested that parents of children with impairments inspire the need of achievement in an incompetent way, although they understand its meaning.

Parents of teenagers with disability paid relatively much attention to the creation of the need of affiliation (No. 6) but this fact did not explain a low level of this need in case of teenagers with visual disability. Probably development (growth) of this need in case of teenagers mentioned above, cannot be solely connected with educational endeavors but also with negative experiences in social contacts, which result from noncommittal attitude of people without disability towards people with disability. The low level of this need might be a defensive mechanism: weakly developed need of affiliation justifies rare social contacts and is protection against exclusion. The author in earlier publications presented similar results of own research. (Konarska, 1991, 2002, 2003).

The cognitive need (No. 17) and the need of nice sensual experience (No. 18) were not well developed in case of teenagers with disability. Parents of teenagers representing both groups motivated their children to develop their cognitive interests and nice sensual experience. The average level of the cognitive need (No. 17) in case of teenagers with disability suggested that stimulus given by parents was not strong enough or incorrect. As far as the need of nice sensual experience (No.18) is concerned, parental care of its development in the group of teenagers with visual impairment was not proportional to the level of its intensity. The average level of intensity of this need confirmed that the above-mentioned assumptions, concerning an incorrectly organized educational process in this respect, are justified. By forming the need of nice sensual experience, parents probably did not take into consideration possibilities of delivering nice sensual experiences by other senses than vision. There was a contrary dependency in case of teenagers with good eyesight. Parents did not strengthen the growth of this need but still it was situated on clearly higher level than teenagers with disability.

Probably, visual stimuli delivered so many pleasant experiences that additional parental efforts were dispensable for the formation of the need described above. Teenagers with good eyesight sufficiently take care of their pleasant sensual experience themselves.

The need of being fed and taking care of somebody (No. 8) and the need of protection and care (No.10) were well developed in both groups. These needs completed each other. Both teenagers with and without impairment show lack of self-sufficiency and search for support from somebody stronger. On the other hand, they are ready to offer the same to the weaker and people in need.

Parents of all examined teenagers took special care of the development of the need of order (No.19) and they reached good results. This was especially important for people with visual impairment, because having tidy environment as well as habit of systematic ordering of all possessed information makes functioning in the society easier. Each changing place of an object in the house of a person with visual impairment makes mess and what follows complicates everyday life because it requires looking for it.

Concerning the presented research, it was very positive that both groups of teenagers with and without disabilities had equally well developed need of amusement (No. 20). This means that disability was not an obstacle to enjoy life. Parents seemed to understand it as well. The best evidence for that was their positive influence on the development of this need.

A very low level of the need of autonomy (No. 11) in both groups of teenagers is reflective. This happens despite great parental effort to form it. Effort of parents of teenagers with visual impairment was even bigger than in case of their peers with good eyesight. However, the level of autonomy was very low in both examined groups. At the same time, parents of teenagers of both groups very strongly form the contradictory need of experience protection and care (No. 10) and they fully succeed. Both groups show high intensity of this need. When teenagers without disability grow up, they become autonomous for necessity but in case of their peers with disability, it is not so evident. Previous research shows tendency to parental overprotection concerning children with visual impairment (Fraiberg, 1977; Konarska, 1993; Obuchowska, 1995). According to this research, parents cannot clearly manage to cope with their own tendency to overprotection and with their consciousness that they should teach their children autonomy.

The analysis of the definite educational influence of parents and their impact on the quality of psychological needs of the examined teenagers did not always explain the direct connection between educational influence of parents and formation of needs of their children. Parents of teenagers with impairment sometimes did not reach effect, which was proportional to their efforts, because they did not consider specific conditions of development and social functioning of their children.

Conclusion

The analysis of needs presented in this study was a part of a broad investigation of conditions of social behavior of people with disability (Konarska, 1991, 2002, 2003, 2003 a, 2005, 2007). This study showed connection between examined needs and parental influence on their formation.

Formation of needs and values that result from them is one of the basic aims of rehabilitation of people with disability. Needs of people with disability decide about direction of their efforts in order to overcome limitations of their impaired body. They also influence human relations with their environment and general level of life satisfaction (Chodkowska, 1994). Parents have principal participation in forming of children's needs: they may incite or limit activity of their children in definite direction. Parents of children with visual impairment have exceptionally difficult task because children's own activity is not autonomously incited through the sense of sight. Moreover, anxiety to invisible space favors passiveness rather than activity, concerning behavior directed to development of psychological needs (Konarska, 2008). Parents, however, caring about their children's safety, tend to overprotective rather than inciting attitudes, or they show lack of consequence (Fraiberg, 1977; Konarska, 1993, 2002).

Typhological literature lacks investigations on psychological needs of people with visual impairments, especially if these needs are not directly connected with organization of educational process (Rutter, 2000; Andrzejewska, 2005; Palak, 2008). Research on early parental educational influence and their influence on the formation of needs have not been carried out. Needs of children with visual impairment and needs of their parents are described in all programs of early intervention but not as one of the aims of rehabilitation but as one of the aspects of social services.

In the author's investigation, the connection between early influence of parents on the formation of needs of the examined teenagers and the level of intensification of the needs they present was not always direct and clear. This research showed that despite great parental efforts, level of some needs was not sufficient to make building a relationship with other people easier in the future. Weak needs of achievement, low needs of autonomy, low compensation ability, and weakly developed cognitive needs, indicated that great effort of parents in order to create these needs, was not successful.

Obtained results suggest that if parents do not reach intended educational aim, it means, they need professional help. The reason for that may be their own anxiety to children's future, which does not let them take correct attitude towards their child. It may be also possible that lack of success in the formation of some needs is influenced by other social experiences, independent from parents, such as children's individual emotional feelings which discourage development and realization of some needs.

Explanation of the above doubts requires further research where apart from the connection between parental efforts and needs one takes into consideration experiences of the examined teenagers during realization of their needs, their own satisfaction or its lack. The dependence between teenager's needs and their personal features is also worth investigating, in particular stress resistance and behavior in difficult situations. Social perception of disability may also make the realization of needs outside the family more difficult and what follows – lack of satisfaction from their realization may weaken the level of their intensity (Kirenko, 2007). Search for connection between needs and their formation is still a challenge for scientists, mainly for methodological reasons.

The above results concerning parental participation in the formation of needs, regarding teenagers with visual impairment, were not so clear as in case of teenagers without disabilities. . Analysis of results indicates that it was not enough to have intuition. Without professional knowledge and help of specialists, it might not be possible to achieve educational satisfaction proportional to the performed efforts.

Achieving life satisfaction by people with visual disability depends on forming features of personality. The problem of connection between early educational process in the family and forming of these personal features was rarely a subject in the professional literature. Concerning conscious forming of needs, parents faced a very difficult task. Those were needs motivating them to act towards improving independence, self-esteem through overcoming own physical imperfection and often unfavorable social conditions. In order to help parents, one should equip them with interdisciplinary knowledge on psychosocial conditions motivating people with impairments to go beyond the limits of their current possibilities. This could be done through stimulating needs. Presented research is an attempt of connecting interdisciplinary, psychological and pedagogical knowledge which is applied by the author.

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