

# The Psychology of the Formation of Adaptive Relationships between Parents and Children of Senior Age with Intellectual Disabilities in Ukrainian Society in the Conditions of Military Operations

Психологія становлення адаптивних взаємостосунків батьків та дітей старшого шкільного віку з інтелектуальними розладами в українському суспільстві в умовах військових дій

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this article is to study psychological characteristics and parents-children interpersonal relationships in the family with a child with intellectual disabilities.*

*Methods of the research. The following theoretical methods of the research were used to solve the tasks formulated in the article: a categorical method,*

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DOI (article): <https://doi.org/10.32626/2227-6246.2024-63.90-112>

*structural and functional methods, the methods of the analysis, systematization, modeling, generalization. The empirical method is a pilot research.*

**The results of the research.** *Such personal characteristics, as aggression, infantilism, shyness (the result of disrupted relationships between a child and his/her parents) can be attributed to three levels of parent-child interpersonal relationships: Level I – the relationships between parents and a child are characterized as passive-defensive ones, children are in a state of hidden conflict, there is no possibility of establishing emotional intimacy; Level II – there is adaptive atmosphere of emotional incontinence in the family. Children adopt this style and treat their parents in a "mirror" way – it is active-defensive style. Children are confident that their requests and desires will not be satisfied. Accusations are responded to them with aggression. They do not know how to restrain emotional reactions; their behavior is dominated by excitability, conflicts and aggressiveness; Level III – there are the same family characteristics as in the second level, but children are noted to have a weak nervous system. As a result, in response to sharp influences from the side of their parents, physiological disorders arise such reactions, as tic, enuresis, stuttering. Typically, such a child is characterized by obedience, but the possibility of outbursts of aggression towards peers cannot be ruled out.*

**Conclusions.** *We showed, that the extreme variant of violations of the relationships between parents and children was "maternal deprivation". This condition is characterized by severe psychological discomfort of the child, occurs in conditions of constant absence of the mother or severe rejection from the side of her attitude to a child. Both in theoretical and experimental studies which deal with the influence of the family situation on the formation of behavioral tendencies and personality traits of children, play the enormous role of the mother. So, in the situation of the absence of the mother or in the situation where the child saw her extremely rarely, the child felt emotional discomfort, cried more often, was stubborn and aggressive.*

**Key words:** *adaptive relationships, interpersonal relationships, intellectual disabilities, maternal deprivation, passive-defensive relationships, active-defensive relationships, aggression, emotional discomfort, conflicts.*

## Introduction

A family is of great importance for the progressive development of any society, the status of which is largely determined by the level and the state of intra-family interpersonal rela-

tionships. A large group of scientists studied interpersonal relationships in families of **normally developing** (healthy) children (Blagovechtchenski, Gnedykh, Kurmakaeva, Mkrtychian, Kostromina, & Shtyrov, 2019). Relatively some papers have a deal with the study of family problems and interpersonal relationships in families with **abnormally developing** (not healthy) children. Scientific analysis of individual problems in the family with **anomalous children** is presented in different researches (Dubovyk, Mytnyk, Mykhalchuk, Ivashkevych Er., & Hupavtseva, 2020). The authors paid a great attention to various aspects of the complex processes of interaction between **anomalous children**, the perception of this child by people close to him/her (relatives, a mother and a father) and the development of the child himself/herself as the individual. But a targeted study of this kind of relationships in families with **a mentally retarded child** has not yet been carried out. One important aspect that needs to be emphasized is that one, that the family plays an important role in the process of adaptation and integration of the child into the Ukrainian society.

Interpersonal relationships in the family occupy one of the important places in the development of **a mentally retarded child**. Under the guidance of parents, the child acquires his/her first life experience, basic knowledge about the surrounding reality, skills and abilities of life in Ukrainian society. At the same time, the problem of interpersonal relationships in the families with **a mentally retarded child** has been extremely insufficiently studied in contemporary conditions in Ukraine, when our society is in the conditions of war.

The study of this problem makes us possible to identify the main characteristics of parental attitudes towards their children and instead of it – we mean the attitudes of children towards their parents, their siblings and grandparents, as well as the characteristics of the personal qualities of children with **intellectual disabilities**. In everyday life, parents of children with **developmental disabilities** face many problems. On the one hand, they

experience great difficulties in choosing educational institutions and educational means of the influence on their children, and on the other hand, they experience deep, internal psychological problems caused by the birth of the **abnormal** child in the family. This is precisely what prevents them from **optimally** organizing interpersonal relationships with their children.

The identification of some main features of interpersonal relationships of ideal families **with a child with intellectual disabilities** will allow us to outline the ways and means of psychocorrectional work to optimize child-parent relationships, which, in our opinion, determines the relevance of our research topic being chosen by us.

***The object of our research is*** a family with a **mentally retarded** child (a child with intellectual disabilities) and **normally** developing senior pupil.

***The subject of our research is*** ideal interpersonal relationships in the Ukrainian family with a **mentally retarded senior pupil (a child with intellectual disabilities)** and normally developing child. Also, we have to study psychological conditions of reaching a social success by this child with intellectual disabilities.

***The purpose of our research is*** to study psychological characteristics and parents-children interpersonal relationships in the family with a child with intellectual disabilities.

### Methods of the research

The following theoretical methods of the research were used to solve the tasks formulated in the article: a categorical method, structural and functional methods, the methods of the analysis, systematization, modeling, generalization. The empirical method is a pilot research.

The methodological basis of the research was made up of modern theoretical achievements of Psychology about the objective laws of the child's mental development, about general and specific patterns of mental development of children in ideal Ukrainian families (Ivashkevych Ed., & Onufrieva, 2021) with

## **a normally developing senior pupil and mentally retarded child with intellectual disabilities.**

The Theory of cultural and historical development of higher mental functions and position of the person is very significant for our research (Hornberger & Link, 2012). In the research we've taken into our account scientific data of psychologists (Hogan, Adlof, & Alonzo, 2014), which means the concretization of our research positions.

The reliability of data of our research was ensured by us by the use of a set of complementary methods of psychological study of the main problem, which is adequate to the goals, objectives and logic of our research, by qualitative and quantitative analysis of empirical material, confirmed by statistical calculations, and a representative sample of our results.

The scientific novelty and theoretical significance of our research is determined by that fact that it is firstly when we've studied psychological characteristics and patterns of interpersonal relationships in a family with **a mentally retarded** child (a senior pupil with intellectual disabilities): the relationships of **mentally retarded** children to their closest relatives, as well as the characteristics of parents' relationships to **mentally retarded** children (children with intellectual disabilities); new data have been obtained on the personal qualities of **mentally retarded** children, complementing the modern picture of the formation and the development of a personality of a child with **intellectual disabilities**; the dependence of been identified ideal from the conditions in which **mentally retarded** schoolchildren are trained and raised (upbringing in a parental family or in a boarding school); the possibility of using a set of methods having been used to study ideal interpersonal relationships in a family with a **mentally retarded child** has been identified.

### **Results and their discussion**

The family plays a decisive role in determining the direction of a child's behavior; it is there that, in the process of interper-

sonal relationships between spouses, parents and children, self-awareness, personal characteristics are formed, the foundations of moral norms and rules are laid, and value orientations are presented.

Depending on how these relationships and communication develop, what the family's potential is (family structure, educational, cultural level of parents, social and living conditions of the family, psychological microclimate, distribution of functional responsibilities between family members, etc.), the child's personality is formed.

In Psychology and Pedagogics, the leading role of an adult in the mental development of a child is traditionally recognized (Drigas, & Karyotaki, 2017). The main environment for a child is the family. It is the important component of a social situation of the personal development (Gathercole, Pickering, Ambridge, & Wearing, 2004). Currently, Psychology (Greco, Canal, Bambini, & Moro, 2020) has data on those psychological parameters of the ideal family that are determinants of the individual development of children and the formation of their ideal personal qualities in a given environment.

According to psychologists, a family differs from other small groups in the diversity, depth and duration of the ties that unite its members. They are these characteristics of the family that make it indispensable in raising the younger generation, since they provide a long-term emotional and multifaceted influence on the formation of the child's personality.

Scientists (Ivashkevych Er., 2023) say that personality as a subject in his/her actions, in acts of his/her creative initiative, is not only revealed and manifested. He/she is created and determined in personal qualities, in their ideal attitudes with the parents. Therefore, what he/she does can determine what he/she is; the direction of his/her activity can determine and shape himself/herself. According to this definition, the activity brings a person into Ukrainian world, and by creating the world the subject creates himself/herself. Scientists (Ferdowski, & Razmi,

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2022) understand the activity of the individual as one of the levels of the initially practical and always inextricable interaction of a person with the world. They argue that such kind of the ideal activity is determined by its object not directly, but through its internal laws, thus external causes can act only through internal conditions. When explaining mental phenomena, a personality with a complex multi-level structure acts as a system of *internal conditions*.

In the structure of the ideal personality, scientists (Jiang, Zhang, & May, 2019) can distinguish such parameters, traits of character that there are system-forming or integral. These features themselves include more private, significant personal peculiarities. Different authors (Ivashkevych, Perishko, Kotsur, & Chernyshova, 2020) most often include into the structure of interpersonal relationships such system-forming personality traits, as: motivation, self-awareness and characteristics of interpersonal relationships (a set of personal qualities that determine the behavior, position and well-being of the individual in a great system of social relationships).

The research of other famous psychologists (Huang, Loerts, & Steinkrauss, 2022) also deal with the problem of studying adaptive interpersonal relationships in the family. The scientists formulated one of the most important fundamental principles of the Theory of Personality in Psychology. Scientists emphasized that the system of social relations into which a person is included from the time of the person's birth to death shapes of his/her subjective attitudes towards all aspects of the adaptive interpersonal relationships. This system of the person's relationships to the world around him/her and to himself/herself is the most specific characteristics of a person, more specific than, for example, a number of its other components, such as a character, temperament, abilities.

According to the theory of scientists (Hamed, & Pishghadam, 2021), they define ideal adaptive family interpersonal relationships as system of relationships between the individual and

the environment, as a holistic and organized system of active connections with the reality. Scientists noted the importance of a comprehensive consideration when studying communication took place not only by the features of reflection, but mainly the relationships of communicating with each other, as well as the modes of behaviour which were practiced. The personality manifests himself/herself in *various forms and ways*. Characteristics of the personality's ideal attitude indicate the presence in its three-component structure, including *cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects*. Mentioning the importance of the innate basis in the formation of the person's attitude towards people, scientists (Murphy, Melandri & Bucci, 2021) specifically and persistently emphasize the role of people's emotional contacts and their attitude of relatives towards youth. Scientists (Vovk, Emishyants, Zelenko, Drobot, & Onufrieva, 2020) identify classes or subsystems of adaptive family interpersonal relationships: the attitude towards the world of some phenomena and objects, the attitude towards other people, also the attitude towards oneself and the attitude towards itself.

The problem of *ideal personal relationships* was understood in different foreign research (Mai, 2022). Scientists showed a great importance of the category of communication among other determinants that predicted the development of a human psyche. They emphasized that in the person's daily existence the individual was connected with other people, among whom the most significant were the child's parents and close relatives, that is, the child's family. Paying great attention to identifying the influence of various communicative situations on the mind, feelings, will and character of the person, we believed that the psychological mechanism for the formation of personal qualities in communication have the most important aspect. Since in the process of communication there is always a moment of knowledge of one person by another one, and at the same time the most important is even greater knowledge of himself/herself by each of them, as well as a moment of experiences caused by one person

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towards another one. Then, communication always turns out to be the strongest mean of forming attitudes towards other people, as well as towards the person himself/herself.

In the structure of ideal adaptive family relationships, a person's attitude towards himself/herself is especially important. This attitude, according to scientists (Mykhalchuk, & Khupavsheva, 2020), turns out to be the most recent formation, but it is precisely that ensures the integrity of the personality's system. The relationships of the individual, united among themselves through the attitude towards oneself, form a hierarchical system that plays a guiding role in relation to holistic behavior, thus determining a social functioning of the person.

It is known that the activity and the process of communication constitute two aspects of the person's social existence, his/her way of life. A real need for communication is determined by the joint life activity of the person. Thus, at each age stage for the successful development of the child the presence of adults is necessary; the most positive will be the case when close and significant people – such as Mother and Father – take part in the process of personality's formation.

In numerous research papers (Максименко, Ткач, Литвинчук, & Онуфрієва, 2019) authors note that in order to form a full-fledged member of Ukrainian society, it is capable for regulating the child's emotional life. In order to develop adequate self-esteem, it is necessary for raising his/her own children in the future, a loving and understanding adult must always be the next one to the child. It is quite obvious that such close and constant contact can only be ensured within the family. Informality and emotional richness create the peculiar basis for the deep influence of interpersonal relationships on a person. Correct organization and full functioning of interpersonal relationships is ONE of the MOST IMPORTANT conditions for the full development of Ukrainian personality of a real citizen when we tell about the development of the person in the conditions of war, when adaptive family relationships are of the greatest importance.

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DOI (article): <https://doi.org/10.32626/2227-6246.2024-63.90-112>

Lack of closeness and attachment to the child, understanding of his/her interests and needs by adults leads to the fact that the child does not perceive parents' attitudes and requirements. Inadequate emotional contacts between parents and children have a detrimental effect not only on the formation of the child's emotional sphere, but also on his/her mental health. There is a great number of research in the foreign literature on the study of this problem. Scientists (Horney, 1994) consider the close contact of a child with his/her mother in infancy to be the fundamental basis for the development of such personal qualities as independence, self-confidence, warm and trusting relationships with others. Having been included into these relationships, by the end of the first half of the year the child is already able to differentiate his/her own "Me" from the non-"Me" of the mother. It is this period that is considered the most sensitive one in the development of adaptive family interpersonal relationships, it is called "*attachment behavior*".

The dynamics of the adaptive family interpersonal relationships between trust and distrust in the Ukrainian society in particular and in the world in general, or, to quote some scientists (Tabachnikov, Mishyiev, Kharchenko, Osukhovskaya, Mykhalchuk, Zdoryk, Komplienko, & Salden, 2021), the amount of faith and hope have been derived from the first life experience, it isn't determined by the characteristics of feeling, but by the quality of the child's care, the presence of maternal love and tenderness, manifested in caring about the child. The most important condition is the mother's confidence in her actions. A mother creates a great sense of faith in the love for her child by the type of treatment that combines sensual concern for the child's needs with a sense of complete personal trust in him/her within the background of the life style that exists in the Ukrainian culture. The presence of such an attitude according to the infant (or its absence) is one of the essential prognostic parameters, and not only because of the emotional and personal development, but also according to the mental development of the person in general.

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Some researchers (Engle, 2002) draw their attention to the connection between close and warm relationships between a mother and a child in infancy and independence in early childhood of the individual. Scientists noted the connection between the deficit of emotional contact with the mother in the childhood of the individual and aggressiveness in adolescence. In such a case we have not a possibility to talk about positive adaptive family interpersonal relationships between maternal responsiveness and a child with low cognitive development (or a child with intellectual disabilities).

And let us return again to the consideration of this issue in Foreign Psychology (Horney, 1994). According to scientists (Horney, 1994), affective personal connections of positive content are formed between children and adults already in the first half of their life, which become the basis for the most positive attitude and self-perception of children. These facts form the foundation of their personal development. A mental development of a child in the first half of their life occurs most effectively in their family, where abundant contacts with the same adults who have a constant program of their behavior, which in a great degree facilitates the formation and the development of communicative activities. The brightness of the emotional manifestations of adults addressed to their children in senior school age is of particular importance. According to scientists (Tabachnikov, Mishyiev, Drevitskaya, Kharchenko, Osukhovskaya, Mykhalchuk, Salden, & Aymedov, 2021), children who grew up with a lack of situational and personal communication in “cold families” are fearful, they have a lower threshold of the passive defensive reflex, which prevents them from developing initiative and research activity. Such children develop personal formations that precede stable “low self-esteem” in elder age.

In preschool age, emotional communication between children and their mothers during a game activity was analyzed by scientists (Mykhalchuk, & Onufrieva, 2020), who pointed out that if there is insufficient criticality on the part of the mother

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DOI (article): <https://doi.org/10.32626/2227-6246.2024-63.90-112>

during a game activity, aggressive reactions of the child occur or take a place. When the mother showed excessive criticism that interfered with a game, the child always refused to cooperate with her.

We'll say, that in the process of developing child's empathy parents teach the child to generalize the experience of his/her own life experiences, take into account the experiences of other people and anticipate the consequences of his/her behavior towards the others. Parents discover the meaning of communication between people, encouraging or condemning in one form or another. In such a way adults evaluate and reinforce the child's moral behavior. We'd like to emphasize that the assessments and opinions of an adult become a guideline for the child when there are positive conditions of the child's emotional contact with the adult. In such conditions the adult's willingness to help facilitated the attention of adults to the child's problems and experiences.

Authoritarianism, dominance of one of the parents, a lot of conflicts between Mother and Father, disrespect for older family members, inconsistency and contradictory demands on the part of parents. All these facts neurotize the child and frustrates his/her needs for understanding, respect and empathy from the side of other people. Neurotization of the child's personality, in turn, leads to the formation of egoistic forms of empathy, to the development of such forms as envy and aggression.

Violations of the child's emotional contact with his/her parents lead to profound the individual's personal changes. These children are also characterized by a tendency to rapid mood changes and inhibition of reactions. These factors provoked in children's psyche a lack of confidence in their abilities, had been influenced persistent emotional distress, negativism, negative forms of self-affirmation (Комплієнко, 2020). In the paradigm of adaptive family interpersonal relationships with adults these children have a great condition called in the literature a "semantic barrier": if the adult's demands are diverging from the

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child's desires; he/she, as it had been occurred, ceases to hear and to understand them. In such a way broken relationships with parents negatively affect a child's self-esteem.

The analysis of the results having been obtained by us from the study of neuroses of children because of the situation of war in Ukraine allows us to assert that initially emotional disorders are arisen in the family, primarily when relations with the mother, who is the closest person in the first years of life, are disrupted. Scientists (Ferdowski, & Razmi, 2022) in their studies on the prevention of childhood neuroses, also noted that with the correct position of an adult the child is given a great opportunity for the independence of his/her needs, but because of the child's neuroses adults usually limited the child's freedom. This situation leads to the closure of "Me", limited the possibilities of the child's experience, inhibited the development of some the most important, necessary personal qualities, which can cause a number of disharmonies in mental development of children of senior school age and a certain maladaptation of their behavior.

The empirical method was a pilot research. So, we organized our own research in September-December, 2023, in Ukraine. In our research 34 senior children with intellectual disabilities from different schools in Pereiaslav participated. All these children live in full families in Ukraine from the early beginning of war. They were not internally displaced people and did not travel abroad during all hostilities. In our own research we pointed out that two-thirds of neurologically ill children with intellectual disabilities experienced the contradictory educational methods of their parents, emphasizing that educational positions towards children. It was one of the most important factors shaping the child's personality. We cited the evidence that a rejected child feels unwanted and superfluous. Such children sometimes fight for their position in the family or try to attract attention to themselves with bad behavior, which the parents do not approve of, but it helps the child become the center of attention of the family.

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DOI (article): <https://doi.org/10.32626/2227-6246.2024-63.90-112>

We proved, that the stability of the family environment, the relationships between Father and Mother is the most important factor for the emotional balance and mental health of the child. The breakdown of his/her family causes him/her depression and neuroses. Such personal characteristics, as aggression, infantilism, shyness (the result of disrupted relationships between a child and his/her parents) can be attributed to *three levels of parent-child interpersonal relationships*:

– *Level I* – the relationships between parents and a child are characterized as *passive-defensive* ones, children are in a state of *hidden conflict*, there is no possibility of establishing emotional intimacy.

– *Level II* – there is adaptive atmosphere of emotional incontinence in the family. Children adopt this style and treat their parents in a “mirror” way – it is *active-defensive style*. Children are confident that their requests and desires will not be satisfied. Accusations are responded to them with aggression. They do not know how to restrain emotional reactions; their behavior is dominated by excitability, conflicts and aggressiveness.

– *Level III* – there are the same family characteristics as in the second level, but children are noted to have a weak nervous system. As a result, in response to sharp influences from the side of their parents, physiological disorders arise such reactions, as tic, enuresis, stuttering. Typically, such a child is characterized by obedience, but the possibility of outbursts of aggression towards peers cannot be ruled out.

Lack of maternal care, which is explicated both in the form of isolation from the mother and in the form of hidden deprivation, when a child lives in a family, but the mother does not provide adequate care for him/her (treats him/her rudely, emotionally rejects him/her, is indifferent) manifests itself in violations of the child’s mental health. Often these negative consequences are irreversible.

## Conclusions

An extreme variant of violations of the relationships between parents and children is “*maternal deprivation*”. This condition is characterized by severe psychological discomfort of the child, occurs in conditions of constant absence of the mother or severe rejection from the side of her attitude to a child. Both in theoretical and experimental studies which deal with the influence of the family situation on the formation of behavioral tendencies and personality traits of children, play the enormous role of the mother. So, in the situation of the absence of the mother or in the situation where the child saw her extremely rarely, the child felt emotional discomfort, cried more often, was stubborn and aggressive.

We think, that to reach the mental health of a child we need warm, intimate adaptive family interpersonal relationships between the child at the early age and his/her mother or a person replacing the mother. A child needs mutual joy and satisfaction from these relationships (these qualities are necessary for adaptive family interpersonal relationships). Otherwise, the child experiences maternal deprivation.

The significance of the emotional contact between parents and the child can be judged by his/her reactions to separation. Immediately after separation children are very excited, actively show their protests, they cry, scream, refuse food, need a rest and fall asleep only from fatigue. Subsequently, after a certain period of time (often for several days) children become calmer, apathetic and often regress to the previous stage of their personal development. After this stage, along with the deepening alienation from their parents, there is a gradual formation of a more positive assessment of the changed situation. Let us note that children separated from their parents often exhibit anxiety, a strong need for love, and a desire to take revenge on their parents, which results in their feelings of guilt and depression. The absence of the mother as an object of attachment, her indiffe-

rence or coldness limited the possibilities of socialization of the child and his/her assimilation of socially significant standards of the child's behavior.

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**Харченко Наталія.** *Психологія становлення адаптивних взаємостосунків батьків та дітей старшого шкільного віку з інтелектуальними розладами в українському суспільстві в умовах військових дій.*

**Мета статті:** дослідити психологічні характеристики взаємостосунків батьків та дітей в сім'ї за умови, якщо дитина має певні інтелектуальні розлади.

**Методи дослідження.** Для розв'язання поставлених у статті завдань було використано такі теоретичні методи дослідження: категоріальний метод, структурно-функціональний метод, методи аналізу, систематизації, моделювання, узагальнення. Емпіричним методом було пілотне дослідження.

**Результати дослідження.** Показано, що такі особистісні особливості як агресія, інфантилізм, сором'язливість (як результат дезадаптивних сімейних взаємовідносин дитини з близькими людьми), на нашу думку, можна віднести до трьох рівнів дитячо-батьківських взаємостосунків: I рівень – відносини батьків із дитиною характеризуються як пасивно-відгороджувальний, діти перебувають у стані прихованого конфлікту, спостерігається відсутність можливості встановлення емоційної близькості; II рівень – у сім'ї спостерігається атмосфера емоційної неприйнятності. Діти переймають цей стиль поведінки і діяльності та ставляться до батьків «дзеркально» – активно-відгороджувальний стиль. Старшокласники впевнені, що їхні прохання та бажання не будуть задоволені ні матір'ю, ні батьком. На звинувачення діти, зазвичай, відповідають агресією, в більшості ситуацій не вміють стримувати емоційних реакцій, у поведінці переважає збудливість, конфліктність, агресивність. III рівень – характеристики сім'ї співпадають із другим рівнем, але ці старшокласники відзначаються слабкою нервовою системою, в результаті чого у них виникають фізіологічні порушення, такі як тик, енурез, заїкуватість. Зазвичай, така дитина є покірною, але не є виключеними спалахи агресії щодо батьків та однолітків.

**Висновки.** Показано, що крайнім варіантом порушень адаптивних сімейних взаємостосунків є «материнська депривація». Цей стан характеризується важким психологічним дискомфортом дитини, виникає в умовах постійної відсутності матері або різкого неприйняття її точки зору. Як в теоретичних, так і в експериментальних дослідженнях, присвячених впливові сімейної ситуації з формування

*тенденцій поведінки й особистісних рис школярів старшого шкільного віку, у дітей з віком відзначається величезна роль матері. Доведено, що за відсутності матері, чи ситуації, коли дитина бачила матір вкрай рідко, старшокласник відчуває емоційний дискомфорт, частіше плаче, проявляє упертість, агресивність і конфліктність.*

**Ключові слова:** *адаптивні взаєностосунки, міжособистісні взаєностосунки, інтелектуальна недостатність, материнська депривація, пасивно-захисні взаєностосунки, активно-захисні взаєностосунки, агресія, емоційний дискомфорт, конфлікти.*

Original manuscript received 05.01.2024

Revised manuscript accepted 07.04.2024