

INVOLVED FATHERING AS A DEVELOPMENT FACTOR OF GENDER ATTITUDES AND BODY IMAGE DEVELOPMENT IN BOYS

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Abstract: In the paper, we present the results of studying the importance of involved fathering for the formation of gender attitudes and the body image in primary school boys. The research was conducted in Kemerovo Region in January 2020, covering 47 families having primary school aged boys. The experimental group was composed of 21 children coming from families of involved fathers, with 24 children of uninvolved fathers being the control group. Statistical analysis has shown there are significant differences between the groups according to the parameters of gender attitudes, father's masculinity appraisal, and attitudes to one's body and health.

Keywords: involved fathering, gender attitudes, body image, primary school age.

1 Introduction

The relevance of studying formation of the body image is associated with the growing demand for research works dealing with psychological health of individuals. For considering the system of factors determining the body image, the authors suggest using the bioecological concept of U. Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

Under biological factors of the body image establishment, age, sex, sexual orientation, as well as body changes occurring during puberty should be listed.

Individual psychological factors also include individual psychological particularities of personality, e.g. the internality level.

The level of interaction of children and microsocial environment (family and peers) is as close to the person as possible. *Mesosystem* is formed by relationships of two or more Microsystems. *Exosystem* pertains to those aspects of social environment or social structures which influence the person. Unlike other levels, *macrosystem*, or the external level, is not related to any particular environment. Proceeding from the ideas of U. Bronfenbrenner (1998), it has to be concluded that interventions supporting and stimulating the course of development are the most efficient at the macrolevel. It follows from this point that the body image of children, adolescents, and adults can be changed, first of all, by adopting programs to work at the state level, at least, because in this case the effects will be maximum and they will get expressed in the long-term prospect (Cheng & Mallinckrodt, 2009).

2 Literature Review

Summarizing the data accumulated by science as for the specific features of development in childhood and adolescence, the authors single out individual, social and psychological micro- and mesofactors, and social exo- and macrofactors determining the body image in children and teenagers.

Among the individual biological factors, the analysis covers the children's sex and age, body build type, the influence of the puberty onset time and particularities of its progress, features and defects of the appearance, and chronic somatic conditions. The body constitution is an important biological factors the effect of which is checked almost in all studies (Kostanski et al., 2004).

Concerning the impact of somatic and mental conditions on the body image, this problem is extensively studied within clinical psychology (Vasilenko & Blyum, 2017).

Most frequently, when establishment of the body image is in question, the influence of family and peers is mentioned at the micro- and mesofactors level (Goldberg et al., 2012). The authors believe that the feedback received from the parents and siblings, parental modeling, messages and attitudes, and the initial attachment are the key microfactors to determine the children's and adolescents' ideas about themselves and their bodies (Rust et al., 2008; Golombok et al., 2008).

By the adolescent age, peers become those significant others who start having more and more impact on establishment of the body image. Meanwhile, particularities of the appearance are the most frequent reason behind bullying among teenagers (Frisén et al., 2008).

Mesofactors are a combination of several microfactors and their interaction with each other. For example, if a child is under pressure concerning the body both on the part of the child's family members and peers, the probability of his or her developing dissatisfaction with the body and the resulting behavior is much higher (Shroff & Thompson, 2006).

As for social exo- and mesofactors, the authors refer to them, first of all, mass media and the Internet, social networks, images of body in toys and games, coloring books, social and cultural traditions associated with body, belonging to a particular group and learning its stereotypes (Herbozo et al., 2004; Klein & Shiffman, 2005).

Most studies of the formation of body image explore the particularities of forming and assessing the body image in girls and women (Dittmar et al., 2006; Children, Teens, Media and Body, 2015).

Boys have their own problems related to formation of the body image, as paragons demonstrate men having a considerable muscle mass and rather low weight (Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006).

Research shows adolescents develop their gender identity in both spaces – the real and the virtual ones – demonstrating what is considered socially acceptable and hiding the aspects deemed unacceptable (Jewell & Brown, 2014; Tiggemann & Slater, 2013).

In the recent fifteen years, a counterbalance for the current negative trends has emerged – forming a positive body image studies of which have been launched worldwide (Holmqvist Gattario, 2013; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015).

The said characteristics are formed at all levels of factors but defense mechanisms and capacities for self-acceptance are associated with specific features of the children's family environment (Rodgers & Chabrol, 2009).

For boys, it is the father who is the major figure determining gender ideas, including the ideas about one's own body (Fagan & Lee, 2012).

With regard to this, the authors suppose the specific features of fathering practices (being involved or uninvolved into their children's life (Pleck & Hofferth, 2008) can determine both gender attitudes and the children's I image, the body image (Pleck, 2010a).

3 Research Methodological Framework

This research was aimed at studying the importance of involved fathering for forming the attitudes to their gender and body in primary school aged boys. It included 47 families having boys of the primary school age who were subdivided into two groups

according to the attribute of the father's being involved into the children's life. The first group was made up of the boys (21 people) coming from the involved father families. In the second group, there was 24 children of uninvolved fathers. The research was conducted on the basis of educational organizations of Kemerovo in January 2020.

The tasks of the research were the following: 1. to identify the differences in the attitudes to the role of man in the family in children of the involved and the uninvolved fathers; 2. to identify the differences in the attitudes to their gender and body in primary school aged boys of the families of involved and uninvolved fathers.

In the research, the authors used the theoretical, statistical, and empirical methods, including the following techniques: the technique of studying gender attitudes in children (Semi-standardized interview of V. E. Kagan) (Bespanskaya-Pavlenko, 2013), questionnaire form with the modified technique of self-appraisal of boy's coincidence with gender model based on the Dembo-Rubinstein self-esteem studying technique (Bespanskaya-Pavlenko, 2013), self-portrait drawing, personal growth diagnosing of P. V. Stepanov, D. V. Grigoriev, I. V. Kuleshova (Stepanov et al., 2003). The authors also used the questionnaire details about the children's age, sex, and family. For finding out the father's involvement into the children's life, the background data (according to the parents' and children's answers) and J. Pleck's parental identity questionnaire (Caregiving and Breadwinning Reflected Appraisal Inventory (CBIRAI)) (Pleck, 2010b) were used.

4 Results and Discussion

The comparison of level-related characteristics of the sampling including 47 primary school aged children with the statistical norms confirms this sampling has no special particularities as compared to other children of the same age. Therefore, the findings obtained from this sampling of children can be analyzed further.

The Fisher test check of the data of two groups at the significance level equal to 0,05 has shown that the variances of both group differ insignificantly. All the parameters studied by the authors follow the normal law of distribution according to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

The comparison of these groups according to Student's t-test has shown that the groups differ in the following parameters: gender attitudes, father's masculinity appraisal, moral attitudes, body image, and mind image (Table 1).

Table 1 Student's t-test for the groups*

Parameters	M for the CG **	M for the EG ***	t value	p	Standard deviation for the CG	St. dev. for the EG
Gender attitudes	1,87	1,97	0,02	0,05	0,21	0,08
Father's masculinity appraisal	3,89	4,69	2,53	0,02	1,39	0,42
Family attitudes	9,58	15,14	2,31	0,03	9,17	6,56
Body image	9,50	16,43	2,77	0,01	9,12	7,39
Mind image	9,42	15,67	2,62	0,01	8,94	6,72

Source: authors

* only significant differences are presented

** the control group – children of uninvolved fathers

*** the experimental group – children of involved fathers

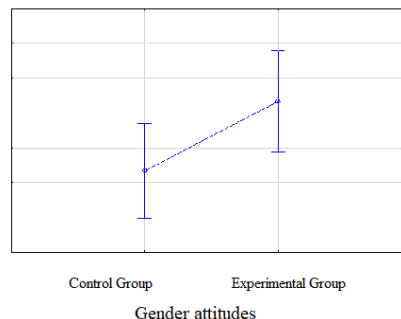
Thus, the children of two group differ according to the parameters describing their attitude to gender characteristics, including the body image.

Further on, the authors compared the groups according to the children's gender attitudes parameter using one-way analysis of variance which has shown that in the first group children (of the involved fathers), more clearcut gender attitudes are observed. Moreover, the children of the first group having clearer attitudes assess themselves according to gender qualities higher than the children of the second group. They also rate their fathers

according to the gender qualities higher, than the second group children do.

The comparison according to the children's gender attitudes parameter is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Differences of gender attitudes in children of the control and experimental groups



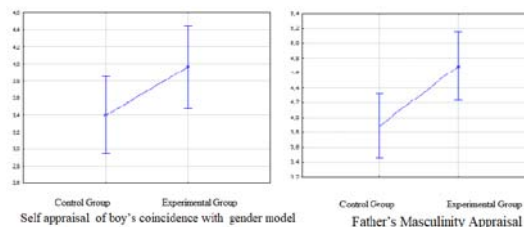
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Therefore, more clearcut gender attitudes are observed in the children of the experimental group.

The comparison in the parameters of self-appraisal of boy's coincidence with gender model and father's masculinity appraisal supplements the data; it shows that the children of involved fathers assess themselves according to gender qualities higher than the second group children, while also having clearer attitudes.

They rate their fathers according to gender qualities higher, too, than the children of the control group (Fig. 2).

Figure 2 Differences in self-appraisal of boy's coincidence with gender model and in father's masculinity appraisal in the control and experimental groups (the authors' data)

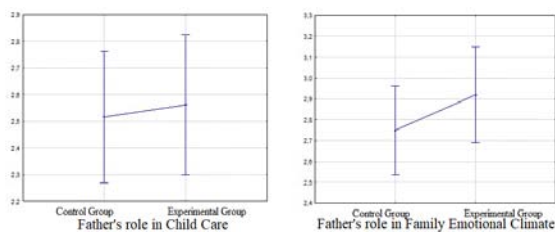


Source: authors

Curiously enough, the experimental group children (those of involved fathers) assess the father's role in upbringing of the children, in creating and maintaining the emotional climate in the family, the father's role in the family culture higher. The children of the first group (of uninvolved fathers) score lower in these parameters.

So, the children of the experimental group rate the father's role in upbringing of the children slightly higher, but as for creating and maintaining the emotional climate in the family, they rate the father's role in it much higher (Fig. 3).

Figure 3 Differences in appraisal of the father's role in child care and emotional climate of the family in children of the control and experimental groups

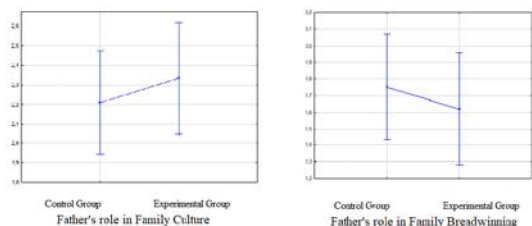


Source: authors

They also assess the father's role in the family culture higher than the control group children do.

That is, the children of the experimental group see versatility of the father's functions in the family and do not limit them by the material sphere only, which is notable when comparing appraisal of the father's role in this sphere by the children of the experimental and the control groups. The children of the experimental group have lower figures in this parameter (Fig. 4). This result is rather curious due to the fact that most frequently, families of the first group have the traditional distribution of roles, with the father being responsible for the material sphere more than the mother.

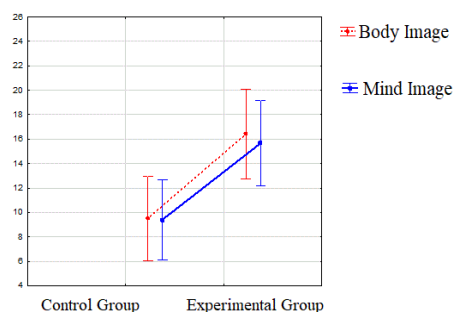
Figure 4 Differences in appraisal of the father's role in the family culture and breadwinning in the control and experimental groups



Source: authors

The children of involved fathers feature higher results in the body image scale (healthy lifestyle) and mind image scale (self-acceptance). Figure 5 clearly demonstrates the results of one-way analysis of variance for these parameters.

Figure 5 Differences in the body image and mind image parameters in the control and experimental groups



Source: authors

Next, correlation analysis was performed individually for each group. As a result, significant correlations of parameters in both groups have been found. However, the quantity and content of the correlations differ. So, in the control group (the children of uninvolved fathers), there is a negative association between self-appraisal of boy's coincidence with gender model and positive attitudes towards education, father's masculinity appraisal and the body image. Meanwhile, self-appraisal of boy's coincidence

with gender model and father's masculinity appraisal are correlated positively. So are family attitudes and the body image, family attitudes and the mind image; there is a positive association of the body image and the mind image, too (table 2).

Table 2 Correlations in the control group

Correlations		Correlation coefficient *
Self-appraisal of boy's coincidence with gender model	Positive attitudes towards education	-0,44
Father's masculinity appraisal	Body image	-0,41
Family attitudes	Body image	0,98
Family attitudes	Mind image	0,99
Body image	Mind image	0,97

Source: authors

* only the significant correlations (at $p=0,05$) are presented

For the involved fathers' children, correlations of the following parameters are observed: gender attitudes and self-appraisal of boy's coincidence with gender model ($r=0,45$), family attitudes and the body image ($r=0,83$), the body image and the mind image ($r=0,88$) (Table 3).

Table 3 Correlations in the experimental group (the authors' data)

Correlations		Correlation coefficient *
Gender attitudes	Self-appraisal of boy's coincidence with gender model	0,45
Family attitudes	Body image	0,83
Body image	Mind image	0,88

Source: authors

* only the significant correlations (at $p=0,05$) are presented

Notably, the children of uninvolved fathers feature more correlations but they have different signs at the same time, which indicates disagreement of the parameters. In particular, self-appraisal of boy's coincidence with gender model and positive attitudes towards education are correlated negatively (then, it turns out that for children assessing themselves higher in gender, positive attitudes towards education are not characteristic. This is correlated to other studies of masculinity but it also points to difficulties establishing a positive masculine behavior model). The negative association between father's masculinity appraisal and the body image is indicative of the same, too (the higher a boy rates his father in gender, the lower his parameters characterizing the attention to one's body, health, and healthy lifestyle are). That is, the children of uninvolved fathers feature a negative model of masculine behavior.

There is a positive correlation between gender attitudes and the attitude to the world and the human (in the group of the uninvolved fathers' children, gender aspect turns out to be the most urgent one, which could be related to some inconsistencies within the gender model), self-appraisal of boy's coincidence with gender model and father's masculinity appraisal. This is not observed in the children of involved fathers.

As for correlations in the children of involved fathers, they are much fewer but all of them are positive. Gender attitudes and self-appraisal of boy's coincidence with gender model are related directly, which is indicative of the presence of criteria for father's masculinity appraisal.

Similar associations for the two groups are observed, too, differing in the correlation coefficient only. So, in both groups, the family attitudes are correlated to the body image and the mind image, which are interrelated, in their turn. That is, the value of family and acceptance of family values are associated with a positive attitude to one's body, health, and self-acceptance which are interrelated.

5 Conclusion

Thus, in the first group (the children of involved fathers), all parameters describing the value-based attitude to one's gender, body, mental and somatic health at this age are higher, which points to the significant role of involved fathering in forming

positive value attitudes towards gender, the body, mental and somatic health in the primary school aged children. Further studies of involved fathering and possibilities of creating a favorable environment for forming the value-based attitude towards gender, the body, mental and somatic health in children of other ages will help supplement these findings. These studies will also help create an integral psychological basis for practical work of psychologists dealing with problems of the family and health, developing techniques of working on acceptance of one's corporeality, forming the positive body image, appreciation of the body, comprehending beauty in a broader context as compared to the rigid social and cultural norms, the value-based attitude to the body, and forming a defense filter.

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