

GRIEVING CHILDREN'S SOCIALIZATION: A BRIEF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH REVIEW

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Abstract

Regarding to the context of globalization and various losses that people experience, the socialization specific of children (age 7–11) who have experienced loss in the family was explored in this research. The main socio-moral values, that make the values' internalization content as the basis of socialization, were identified. The peculiarities of values' interception on the basis of behavior and emotions were set as well. Also the differences and similarities were stressed among the grieving and non-grieving children's values internalization mechanisms. The survey has revealed both external and internal factors that may influence socialization processes for such children. Among external ones would be the experienced loss in the family, child's status in the class, teacher's attitude towards the child's experienced loss, and educational help character. Among internal ones – child's need to satisfy self identification through his/her attitude towards the experienced loss within family, towards the school, his/her status in the class, and self.

Keywords: loss, grieving children, socialization, value internalization.

Introduction

Most of the socialization's research is directed towards the individual, as social being's development and his/her participation in society. Thus the socialization is the essential basis of man's participation in a particular society, and also the expression, according to which, the relations with surrounded environment and its events, and phenomena are revealed. On the other hand, socialization is quite a difficult psychosocial process: in a fast developing society, it becomes harder for children to socialize adequately. Various social changes (sudden growth of technologies and science, mobility, urbanization, individualization etc.) have an influence on the participants and determinants of socialization. According to J. Gibson and P. Blumberg (1978), adults are influenced by those changes directly through their experienced anxiety and frustrations. However, children are mostly influenced by those ways that were important to socializing adults. Consequently, the socialization process is strongly linked with a child's need to identify himself and internalize those values that are appropriate to society.

Much research demonstrates (Harris, 1995; Meltzoff and Moore, 1994; Premack and Premack, 1994) the person's identification approach as the basis of socialization: as at first, the individual pursues to identify himself with closely related people or groups. In other words, to comprehend *self* through the relations with others and himself – internalize those sociocultural values of a certain group to which child feels relatedness and perceives as positive. Family, as the main socializational institution, plays the main role in socializing children as they first take family's socioeconomic status that consequently may influence their future possibilities and decisions.

As C. Thornton (2001) conceptualizes, childhood is the time of learning from various experiences. This is a time, especially beginning with the school year, when child develops cognitively, physically, and socially (Černius, 2006; Erikson, 2004; Gecas, 1981). Thus every single moment in childhood is useful, even if it would be the loss of a loved one. The period of 7–11 years in the child-

hood is mainly stressed as the school life comes into child's social field. The school, in many ways, may compensate the grieving child's socialization processes that are laden within non-full family (Broom, 1992 et al.).

Exactly the relation between loss in the family and child's socialization is stressed in many psychological and educational works (Erik de Corte and Weinert, 1996; Sigelman and Shaffer, 1991). Experienced loss is a very difficult matter for a child, who tries to internalize his/her family's traditions, values and also to form his/her identity – *self I*. After the loss a child loses the object of identification *with whom*. As researches show, not satisfied need of identification can laden the value internalization as well (Perry, 2001; Wallerstein, 1995; Furman and McNabb, 1997; Crenshaw, 1990; Dovydaitienė, 2001; Juodaitytė, 2002; Giddens, 1995, 2000; James, Friedman, 2001; Hilliard, 2001). Put in other words, boys, who have lost their fathers and girls, who have lost their mothers, partly lose self identification as a man, and as a woman.

The recent researches have shown that children from incomplete families are more linked to the aggressiveness than others from nuclear families (Андриенко, 2000; Goldman, 2000; Žukauskienė, 2001). On the other hand, children, age 6–7 and even younger, after the loss of one of the parents, experience guilt for the things that have happened (Mishara, 2001 et al.). According to A. Giddens (2005), all that raises a danger for a child becoming *self* core and his/her ontological safety. Thus the loss in the family with its negative emotional charge also makes it more difficult for a child's need of identification, and consequently – value internalization. As a matter of fact the loss lades such children's socialization processes.

Many authors (Juodaitytė, 2002; Valickas, 1997; Aramavičiūtė, 2005) point to the values' internalization as the basis of child's socialization, because he/she seeks to identify with close people and intercept their values. However, the loss in the family often makes it harder to do so and regression changes children's behaviour, their relations with peers etc. (Kairienė, 2002; Hilliard, 2001; Perry, 2000). For those children, as A. Juodraitis (2004) states, the difficulties of adaptation often arise; they are linked to intercept anti-social values, and even sometimes assume criminal roles. Besides the experienced loss within the family (parents' divorce, parents' death, their unemployment or emigration abroad, grandparents' death etc.) has more negative influence on children's emotional, cognitive and behavioural spheres. Speaking about such children's emotions, much research (Wolfelt, 1999; Dovydaitienė, 2001; Kübler-Ross, 1997; Radzevičienė, 2002; Campos, Campos and Barrett, 1989) reveals that these children emotionally are much more vulnerable than those, who did not experience the loss.

Thus the need to help the bereaved children becomes quite important, as every child may experience trauma or crisis in such situations almost every day, although, in the context of globalization, the society is pretty much withdrawn on that matter and on the other hand – quite cynical (Dickenson, Johnson, 1993; Aries, 1993, 2000; Bucher, 1993; Sloterdijk, 1999). Subject to the kind of support that adults would give such children, the effectiveness to survive crisis will appear (Kurienė and Pivorienė, 2000; Navaitis, 2002).

In that case the **scientific problem** arises: on what theoretical basis the socialization and loss phenomena should be explored; how do these children internalize socio-moral values; do they differ, based on the internalized values' level, from children, who had not experience loss in the family; what internal and external factors make stronger influence for grieving children's (age 7–11) socialization?

The research object **is the socialization of children, who have experienced loss in the family**.

The goal – to reveal the socialization peculiarities of such children, exploring the main factors that influence their socialization.

Based on the *triangulation* principle (Bitinas, 2006; Campbell, Stanley, 1973), these both **qualitative and quantitative methods** were used during the research: 1) **methods for teachers** (*inventory* that allowed gathering information on children's family structure, experienced loss, parents' relations, material conditions etc.; *children's behaviour inventory*, which helped to measure the level of those children values' internalization on the basis of their behaviour stability; *half-standardized interview* with teachers in order to reveal their attitude towards grieving children, relations among school society, and possible ways to assist those children); 2) **methods for primary school children** (*apperception test with pictures*, according to L. Breslav (Бреслав, 2004)), which has helped to measure children's ability to recognize other people's emotions: sadness, happiness, fear, anger, and self-confidence; *discussion* with children in order to set the causes of their emotions and frequency; *observation* (referring to Kardelis, 2005 and Tidikis, 2003) during the classes and out-of-school activities); 3) **methods for primary school children** (*sociometric test* (referring to Barkauskaitė, 1979; Ribes-Iñesta, 2004; McLoyd, 1989; Zambacevičienė, 1989) in order to set grieving children's status among peers; *inventory of attitudes towards self-place in the class* (Helmreich and Strapp, 1974), which allowed to examine those children's attitudes towards themselves while they are in the class; *non-finished sentences* that helped

to set children's attitudes towards their home, parents, and school; *self-esteem inventory* (according to Asher, Hymel and Renshaw, 1984) based on which the children's self perception was set; *the situation analysis* that helped to reveal children's attitudes towards the experienced loss in the family); 4) **method for teachers** (*questionnaire* (referring to Strakšienė, 2002), which allowed to evaluate teachers' attitudes towards child's experienced loss in the family, and also his/her attitudes to the profession); 5) **statistical methods** using MS SPSS 11.0 PC program (*frequency analysis, Factor analysis, Chi square criterion, and Spearman's Rho correlation*).

There were 84 girls and 97 boys in this research, who have experienced different kinds of losses in the family (mainly parents' unemployment or looking for a job abroad, then – parents' divorce, death of grandparents, and death of one of the parents). These children made up to 68% of all the research participants. Also 82 children, who have not experienced the loss, were examined as well.

1. The Theoretical Basis of Socialization and its Factors in the Childhood

The socialization is rather difficult psychosocial phenomenon along with values internalization and self identification mechanisms, and also this process is influenced by other social factors that begin in early childhood and last through the lifespan (Erik de Corte and Weinert, 1996; Aramavičiūtė, 2005; Juodaitytė, 2003; Giddens, 2005). The socialization in childhood starts as a child's full enrolment into the society, taking all the social roles. Besides, the constant influence of the environment in many ways helps child to understand and internalize socially accepted values and also to identify his/her place in the context of various social interactions.

Thus the values' internalization is quite a complex process with behaviour-volition, cognitive and emotional components that mark values' internalization on the individual level (Martišauskienė, 2004; Aramavičiūtė, 2005; Bitinas, 2004; International Encyclopaedia of Developmental and Instructional Psychology, 1996). The values' internalization is mostly defined as the transformation of social-moral values into person's inner content. In other words, into the motives of man's life and activity: attitudes, emotions, feelings etc. (Bitinas, 2004; Aramavičiūtė, 2005). Thus the internalized value becomes an inner determinant of behaviour or an inner drive, the content of personality that motivates and regulates his/her behaviour and activity.

Speaking on the *factors*, that influence children's socialization, we may state that essentially both *internal* (psychological, cognitive, physiological) and *external* (social, educational) factors undoubtedly influence children's socialization (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Gecas, 1981). However, the *external* factors (family, school, peers etc.) are more obvious and much more important at this time for children as they get more and more involved in various groups' activities (Gecas, 1981; Valickas, 1997). Although the internal socialization factors are important as well: the rapid development of logical thinking, comprehension, imagination, attention and memory (Piaget, 1965). All these components play rather important role for child's socialization tendencies and success. Aside there are not only purposeful, but hardly predictable both internal and external socialization factors that children experience.

Self identification could be defined as specific feature of children (age 7–11). On the one part it is self identification with other people, their groups, and satisfying the need to belong to some of those social groups on the emotional basis. On the other part it is quite complicated psychological phenomenon, which helps to take some another person's characteristics and perceive them as one's own (Первин, Джон, 2001; Harris, 1995; Berk, 2006). The social interactions with others, especially with family members, is an important component of children's identification to whom and also forming their self I. Speaking in other words, through membership the self-awareness and social identities are created, and also that reveals the individuality of child's interaction with him/herself and with others.

Family's role is very important as well as family is one of the essential sources of socialization that leads to child's full enrolment into the society and appropriate values' internalization (Berns, 1989; Macionis, 1995; Chapman and Campbell, 2001). The success of values' internalization mostly depends on what kinds of relations are established within the family. On the other hand these relations quite often are troubled, because of many crises that the family nowadays has to deal with. One of such crises is the rapid spreading of various losses that child experiences. Thus the *loss* in the family can be harmful for children's socialization (James and Friedman, 2001; Perry, 2001; Hilliard, 2001). In the context of globalization there are many different kinds of experienced losses within the family, but mostly explored are: changing the living place, losing the parent's rights, family conflicts, parent's divorce and one of the parent's death.

School along with the family is also very important for a child's socialization. Being as society's agent, school conveys and adds those values, ideology, and rituals that are nourished in the family,

and also develops child's both physical and mental abilities (Vasiliauskas, 2005; Butkienė and Kepalaitė, 1996; Barkauskaitė, 2001; Cole and Cole, 2000). The teacher is the main initiator and supporter of appropriate relations among school community and from teacher's personality and his/her ability to do it correctly depends child's socialization (Barkauskaitė, 2001; Indrašienė, 2004; Ruškus, 2000). Thus the *educational assistance* (support) is presumed as not only the direct intervention in order to eliminate inappropriate child's behaviour or his/her attitudes towards something, but most likely as the wholeness of educationally purposeful actions that help to solve child's psychosocial problems and also to make socialization process not so much complicated (Morrison, McIntyre, 1975; Šlapkauskas, 1998).

2. The Results of Grieving Children's (age 7–11) Socialization Research

During the research it was set that grieving children less than the others internalize openness, believing in self and others, sensitiveness, respect ($\chi^2 = 42.39$ $p < 0.002$), self-control ($\chi^2 = 87.52$ $p < 0.000$), and activity ($\chi^2 = 31.67$ $p < 0.005$). However, they came up as more solidary. Boys in this case were affected more than girls by the experienced loss in the family (see figure 1).

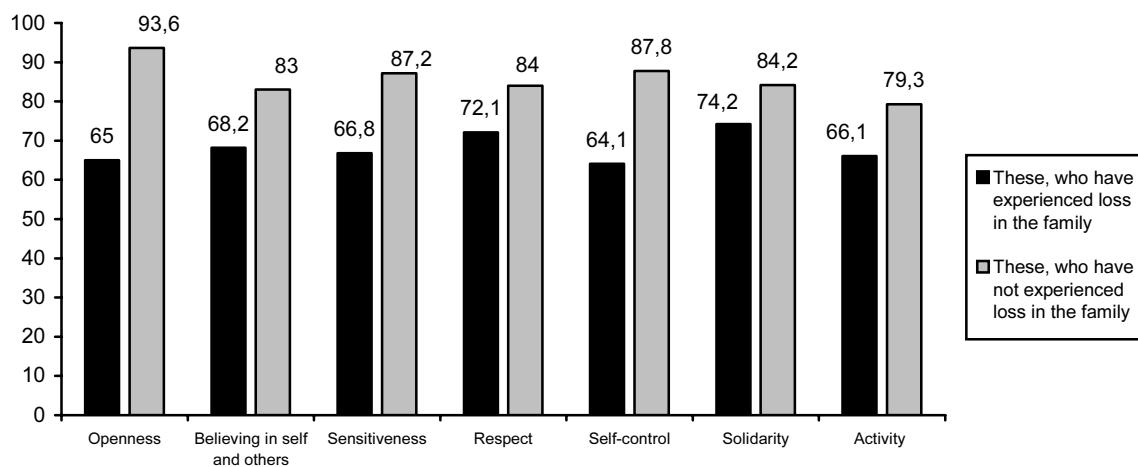


Figure 1. The expression of socio-moral values within boys' behaviour (%)

The results have confirmed that *grieving* boys less than the others internalize the openness ($\chi^2 = 84.14$ $p < 0.000$), believing in self and others, sensitiveness ($\chi^2 = 69.18$ $p < 0.000$), respect, self-control ($\chi^2 = 33.16$ $p < 0.03$), solidarity ($\chi^2 = 29.23$ $p < 0.02$), and activity. These values are more obvious within non-grieving children's behaviour.

Meanwhile *grieving girls'* behaviour in many cases differs much than boys' and other classmates' (see figure 2).

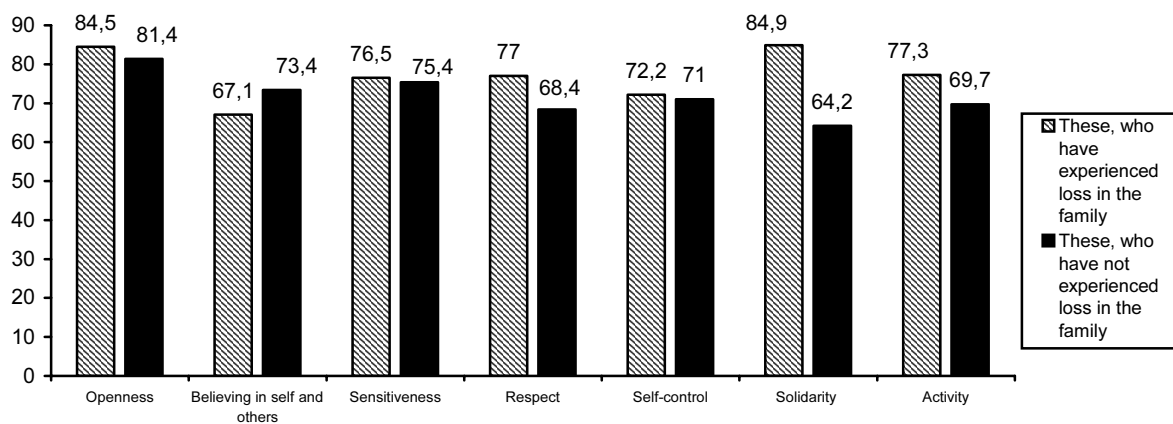


Figure 2. The expression of socio-moral values within girls' behaviour (%)

The data shows that grieving girls *quite more* than the others – non-grieving classmates – practically internalize solidarity, respect, activity, and openness. Although believing in self and others is less internalized value within those girls' behaviour.

The research data also reveals that *grieving primary school children* more often than other classmates experience *negative* emotions (sadness and anger), and less – *positive* ones (happiness and self-confidence), particularly those, who have experienced parents' divorce or their death. Boys, opposite than girls, are less self-confident (see figure 3).

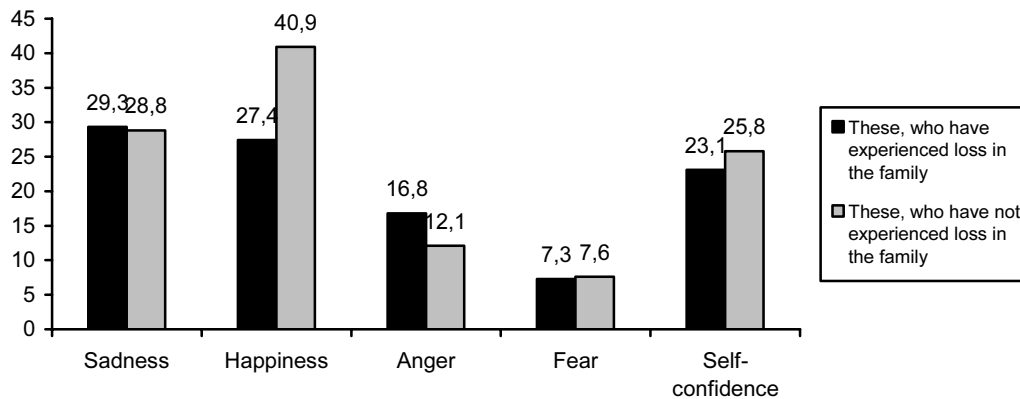


Figure 3. Primary school children's emotions (%)

During the research it was obvious that positive emotions for the grieving and non-grieving children arise more often from socially orientated causes than personally ones, and negative – because of personal reasons, less neutral and partly – social causes. The difference between those children is that that socially oriented causes stimulate self-confidence for the grieving children, and less – happiness.

Also data reveals that grieving children hardly recognize other people's emotional expressions, i.e. happiness, self-confidence, and anger. However, they recognize sadness easier than others. Meanwhile for the non-grieving children it was difficult to recognize sadness, but quite easier – happiness.

Comparing the data on gender basis, it was determined that *grieving girls* have lower status than non-grieving ones. Thereby grieving *girls* are not so often chosen while preparing for the New Year's party, joining some out-of-school activities or as a popular classmate to sit with. However, others would ask them for a help. *Boys*, who have experienced loss in the family, have much lower status in the class than girls of the same experience. Grieving boys would be much less chosen for the various activities, i.e. greeted on occasion; while preparing for the New Year's party or joining some out-of-school activities. However, these boys, same as grieving girls, would be more often chosen as being asked for help. High status within class (particularly linked with asking for a help) may have some positive influence for grieving children's respect and activity. Besides, high status influences positive emotions (happiness) for such children as well.

Analyzing the *expression of self-identification need*, which deals with children's attitudes towards their home, parents, experienced loss, also their attitudes towards their school, their status in the class, and themselves, it was revealed that non-grieving children have a more positive attitude towards home, than those whose parents left their own country for a job abroad. The most negative attitude towards parents was set among children who have experienced one of the parents' death, the divorce or grandparents' death. Non-grieving children have pointed out that they feel rather comfortable while being at home, but these children, who have experienced parents' divorce, their unemployment, grandparents' death or one of the parents' death, do not feel so comfortable at home.

More adequate attitude towards experienced loss in the family is among those, who themselves have experienced the same thing. Also it was stated that non-grieving children have more positive attitude towards their school as well. Besides, the negative attitude towards school has also some negative influence for the grieving children's behaviour, i.e. they are not so open, self-confident and self-controlled.

The data also shows that more negative attitude towards status in the class and self is more typical for the grieving children (e.g. they rather often think as being not so popular among peers in the school, being taunted, mocked, not having as many friends as the others do etc.).

The research on *the educational help's character* brings out the primary school teachers' experience that they have while working with grieving children, particularly use of individual approach (discussions). Also these teachers try to be more attentive, and keep all children in various activities during the classes. However, there are many alternative ways to help those children, but they are not still in use.

The research's results have also revealed that after the experiment, grieving children tended to perceive their status in class more positively than the control group's participants. Besides, these children have become more positive about self-evaluation.

Conclusions

1. Socialization is a rather multidimensional psychosocial phenomenon, which is more often described as individual's involvement into the social life and internalizing socio-moral values through acceptance of particular social roles. However, the experienced loss in the early years (parents' divorce, one of the parents' death, parents' unemployment and their work abroad, conflicts within the family etc.) may influence negatively the socialization process, especially laden the values' internalization on the basis of child's behaviour, emotions, and cognition.

2. According to the scientific literature analysis and the data of pilot study, the main socio-moral values, that make the basis of favorable socialization for children (age 7–11), were distinguished. The list of such values consists of: openness, believing in self and others, sensitiveness, respect, self-control, solidarity, and activity.

3. Grieving children more often experience negative emotions (sadness and anger), and less – the positive ones. The reasons of positive emotions for such children are social ones (teacher's support etc.). However, negative emotions arise pretty often from personal and sometimes – neutral – reasons. Besides, grieving children have more difficulty recognizing happiness and self-confidence, experienced by others, but sadness they recognize easier than non-grieving classmates. Children, who experience more positive emotions are quite often linked to be self-confident and respectful, and those, who experience negative emotions – tended to be withdrawn, less self-confident, and sensitive.

4. A child's status in the class is a very important factor for his/her personality's development. It was stated though that the experienced loss in the family has more negative influence for such children's (age 7–11) status: there were more grieving children, who have lower status than non-grieving classmates. Besides, in this case boys have lower status than girls, but other children would ask for help for the grieving ones more often than non-grieving. The high status may have a positive influence for such children's respect and activity internalization on the behaviour level, and their happiness experience.

5. The experienced loss in the family negatively affects self-identification processes: grieving children have more negative attitudes towards their home and parents, and also they do not feel so good while being at home. Besides, these children have also more negative than positive attitude towards school and their own status among peers (they have pointed out that nobody misses them when they are not in class, that they have no one to share their sadness or happiness with etc.). All that negatively affects these children's openness, self-confidence, and self-control. The experienced loss has much negative effect for grieving children's attitude towards themselves (they are tend to think as having no friends in the school, that it is difficult for them to find some new friends etc.).

6. One of the remarkable child's socialization factors is a teacher's interaction with his/her students style and also the teachers' attitude towards a child's experienced loss in the family, and the attitude towards teacher's profession. The results of the research have shown that the more positive teachers look into their profession, the more they tended to agree with educational aids importance for the grieving children, and their own role in this process.

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ŠEIMOJE NETEKTŲ PATYRUSIŲ VAIKŲ SOCIALIZACIJA: EDUKACINIO TYRIMO ANALIZĖ

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Santrauka

Atsižvelgus į šiame globalizacijos amžiuje besiplečiančių patiriamų netekčių apimtį, tirta šeimoje netektį patyrusių vaikų (7–11 metų) socializacijos specifika. Išskirtos svarbiausios socialinės-dorovinės vertybės, sudarančios vertybių internalizacijos kaip socializacijos pamato turinį. Nustatyti šių vertybių internalizacijos ypatumai elgesio ir emocijų lygmeniu. Išryškinti šio amžiaus vaikų, patyrusių netektį šeimoje ir jos nepatyrusių, vertybių internalizacijos panašumai bei skirtumai. Atskleisti ir šių vaikų vertybių internalizacijai turintys įtakos *išoriniai* (šeimoje patirta netektis, vaiko statusas klasėje, pedagogų požiūris į vaiko patirtą netektį šeimoje ir pedagoginės pagalbos pobūdis) bei *vidiniai* (vaiko saviidentifikacijos poreikio raiška, atsiskleidžianti per jo požiūrį į šeimą ir joje patirtą netektį, taip pat į mokyklą, į savo padėtį klasėje ir į save patį) veiksniai.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: netektis, gedintys vaikai, socializacija, vertybių internalizacija.