

The Specifics of Social Technologies for Interacting with a Family with Foster Children

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ABSTRACT

In this article, because of socio-philosophical reflection, the problems of the transformation of modern society and the family's traditional institution crisis are substantiated, determined by reasons not only of a socio-economic and socio-political nature but also have socio-psychological and socio-medical grounds. This allowed us to consider the problems proposed in the article, which are associated with social technologies' specifics for interacting with a family with adopted children. As a result of the statistical data analysis, the authors conclude that the number of orphans is steadily growing. Still, the number of foster families willing to take a child into their own family is decreasing. Having conducted a sociological survey among foster families, the authors identified the problems a family faces that find itself in a foster situation. This made it possible to offer specific technologies for working with a foster family in this situation.

Keywords: *Social technologies For interaction with the family, Foster families, Orphans, Social policy.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Changes in Russian society have led to an increase in the social and demographic problems of the age groups of the population. New value-semantic guidelines have appeared in socialisation institutions; the socio-political and economic situation has changed; the standard of living of modern families has sharply decreased, family foundations and functions have been transformed. However, in addition to the reasons mentioned above, some researchers add several socio-psychological and socio-medical factors. The first ones, according to such authors as M.S. Dubrovin, I.L. Krom, M.V. Chizhov "associated with the family crisis, an increase of divorce, with the loss of a parent, custodianship, deterioration of climate in the family, maltreatment of the children with physical punishment, and sometimes sexual abuse by adults" [1]. A mainly discussed topic is social exclusion, which has penetrated the modern family and has produced alienation and family functions loss. This aspect initiated the search for alternative forms of children's family life in the Russian Federation [2, p.290].

As for medical and psychological reasons, according to E.G. Slutsky's research, they are determined by "an

increase in the number of children with pronounced psychophysical anomalies, traits of antisocial behaviour (i.e., the presence of a genetic predisposition)" [3, p.118]. Despite the problems discussed, domestic and foreign scientists agree that a child's family is a considerable value. For example, Marina Lalayants believes that "family reunification remains the primary goal of planning for permanent residence of children in the child protection system" [4].

Nowadays, the foster family institution's formation takes a complicated and somewhat contradictory character; the emerging social problems often do not have sufficient socio-technological support and scientific justification.

A limited number of scientific studies related to foster families' phenomenon, the specifics of relations with children, indicate the problem [5, p.30]. In their works, many researchers emphasise that, firstly, the family is the first institution of socialisation for the child. This social institution is currently transforming, such as de-standardisation, demassification and de-institutionalisation. Secondly, as S.S. Biryukova points out in her publication, "in our country, there are a large

number of orphans of a social type whose biological parents are alive but are deprived of parental rights and cannot exercise their parental functions in the family" [6, p.80]. To resolve such situations, the Russian Federation provides for the institution of custody and guardianship, which is created to assist a child left without parental care for one reason or another and provide a minor with a favourable environment for his life.

Thus, the development of the custodianship's social institution and social technologies in this direction is one of the most important ways of ensuring the normal life of a vulnerable part of the population that requires constant updating.

2. METHOD

Research methods of the stated problem can only be complex. The issue of foster families cannot be solved only by methods of pedagogy or sociology. Therefore, a comprehensive methodological approach will allow you to structure and systematise the consideration of the issue. The study used the epistemological method of cognition of social reality and systemic and structural-functional, institutional approaches. Sociological analysis of social technologies for forming a foster family in the context of these approaches allowed us to identify essential characteristics and determine the basic properties in analysing the institution of a foster family.

3. RESULTS

Statistical data presented on the official website of Rosstat of the Russian Federation give us the following figures for the number of families who would like to take a child for upbringing (table 1) [7].

The data presented in table 1 indicate a decrease in families wishing to adopt a child. In this regard, we have set ourselves the task of finding out the general trend in the development of situations faced by foster families who have taken a child into care.

To determine the state of social problems of families with children under custody or foster children, a sociological study was conducted at the Children's Aid Centre. 40 families participated in the survey. When

analysing the answers to these questions, statistical results were obtained, graphically reflected in figure 1.

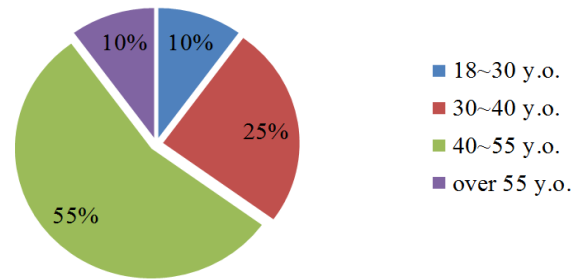


Figure 1 Distribution of responses to the question about the age of foster family members.

Analysing the statistical data presented in figure 1, we can state that 55% of respondents have reached 40 to 55 years. 25% of the respondents reached the age of 30 to 40 years. Respondents who were over 55 years old made up 10%; those aged 18~30 made up 10%.

Based on the answers to the question "Do you have blood children?", it follows that most of the respondents have blood children. A graphical representation of the statistics is shown in figure 2.

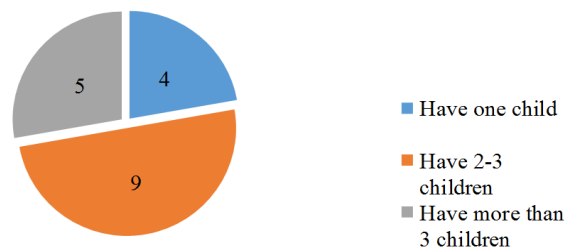


Figure 2 Distribution of answers to the question "Do you have blood children?"

Based on figure 2, it is found that 90% of the total number of respondents have one or more children. Based on the answers to the question, it was found out that most of them have blood children.

From the answer to the question "How many years have you been a foster parent/custodian?", it follows that most of the respondents who applied for help at the Child Care Centre have less than 3 years of custodianship experience. It should also be noted that families who have recently become custodians are more likely to address

Table 1. The growth rate of the number of families wishing to adopt a child (at the end of the reporting year)

Indicator,%	Period				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
The growth rate of the number of families wishing to adopt a child (number of families)	140	132	126	120	102

problems. Their number was 60% of the total number of respondents. However, issues were also addressed by persons with more than 5 years of custodianship experience (see figure 3).

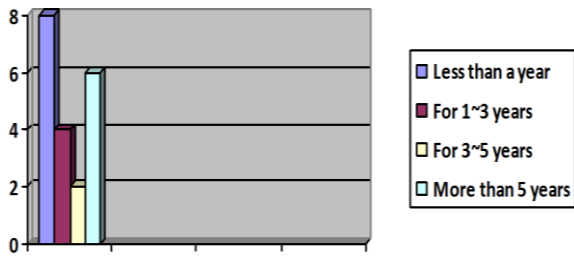


Figure 3 Distribution of answers to the question "How many years have you been a foster parent/custodian?"

After analysing the answers to the question "What kind of problems did your family have to face when taking care of a foster child?", it became known that most families experience problems of various kinds at the same time.

Thus, 65% of respondents experience economic and financial difficulties, 15% of families face psychological problems, and 20% of respondents found an obstacle in solving bureaucratic issues. For greater clarity, we present the results of the survey in figure 4.

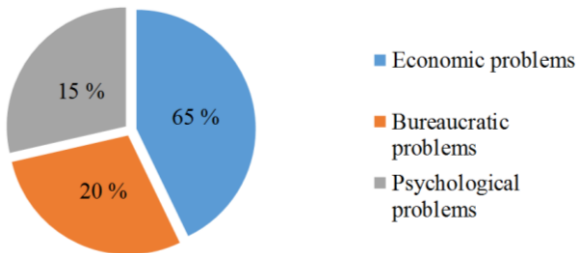


Figure 4 Distribution of answers to the question "What kind of problems did your family have to face when taking care of a foster child?"

Based on the answers to the question "Is there enough social support provided by the state for your family?", the following results were obtained, which allow us to conclude that 25% of respondents answered this question positively. The majority (75%) considered that the state's support is insufficient (refer to figure 5).

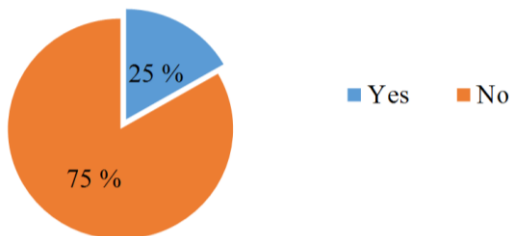


Figure 5 Distribution of answers to the question "Is the social support provided by the state sufficient for your family?"

Based on the answers to the question about the state support measures for families, it was found that about 2/3 of respondents indicated that state social support measures for their family are not enough to solve the main social problems of the child, 25% are satisfied with the social support provided to them by the state. Graphically, these data are shown in figure 6.

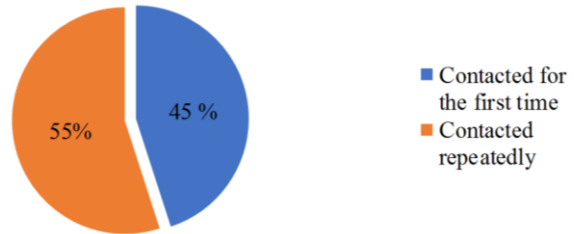


Figure 6 Distribution of answers to the question "Have you previously contacted a specialist with social problems at social service institutions?"

As per the answers to the question "Have you previously contacted a specialist with social problems at social service institutions?", the number of people who contacted a social service institution for the first time and repeatedly does not differ too much. Thus, the number of respondents contacted to get help for the first time was 45%, and 55% of respondents contacted repeatedly.

After analysing the answers to the question "What problems did you manage to solve by contacting the population's social service institution?" it follows that the appeal to the population's social service institution did not fully solve the entire list of applicants' problems. The survey data is shown graphically in figure 7.

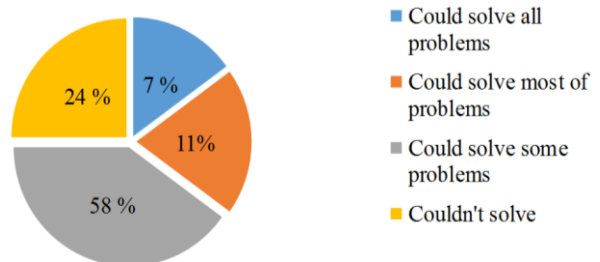


Figure 7 Distribution of answers to the question "What problems did you manage to solve by contacting a social service institution?"

The responses indicate that citizens with foster children regularly apply for social assistance and support in social development institutions and social service but are not always satisfied. However, many respondents claimed timely support to foster families, to which the state provided financial support during the quarantine and could support families, including foster families.

4. DISCUSSION

The foster family's social institution has reflected the transformations that are taking place in modern society and has become somewhat mainstream in solving a

whole range of social problems, as well as the basis for the development of social technologies. One of them concerns the social and psychological support of the foster family.

In our opinion, the social and psychological support of the family that took the child under custodianship includes a set of measures presented in figure 8:

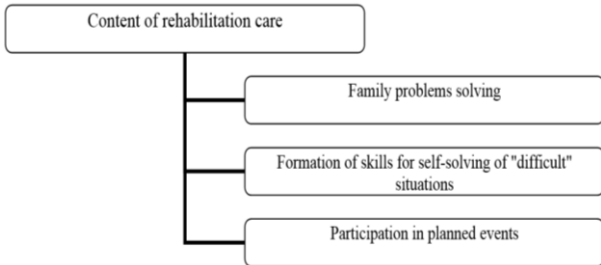


Figure 8 A set of measures for social support of foster families.

Such diverse activities (refer to figure 8) are implemented by specialists in interdisciplinary areas of activity. Their dominant task is to provide rehabilitation assistance to a family in a difficult life situation. The essence of this activity is as follows (refer to figure 9):

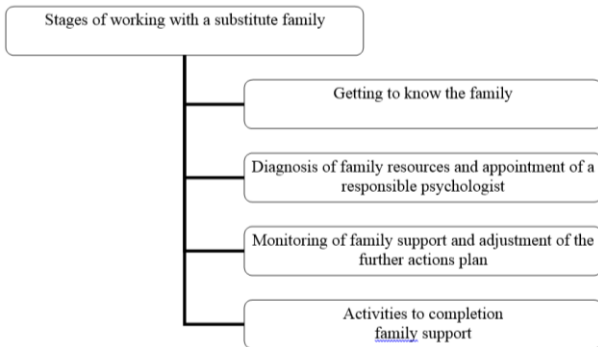


Figure 9 Content of rehabilitation care.

The result of social rehabilitation assistance should be the formation of the family's ability to adapt independently in changing environmental conditions. In our country today, social institutions use the technology of support, which involves the algorithm of actions presented in figure 10:

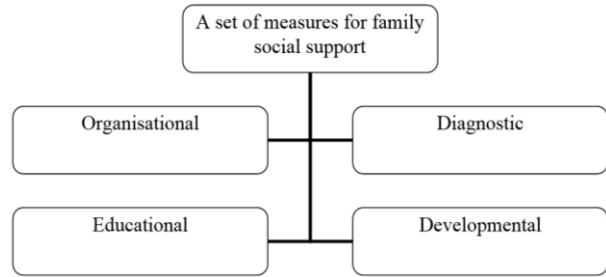


Figure 10 Stages of accompanying a child in a substitute family.

As practical experience shows, the technologies of social support of the substitute begin to work even before the child gets acquainted with the future foster parents. In the future, the period of existence of a foster family will depend on the child's adaptation to new conditions and the number of psychological and pedagogical problems in such families. An important role is played by the particular service of social and pedagogical support in the following years. Foster families are assisted by appropriate training and assistance from specialists in this matter. Such foreign scientists and practitioners as Christine Hadfield and Michael Angar agree with this statement of the question, who believe that it is necessary to expand "the understanding of the mechanisms that create stability, related to the stability of family processes" [8].

Modern researchers of the social sphere consider the foster family as a child's social protection technology left without parental care. From this point of view, it is a set of social measures within the framework of social technologies that make it possible to compensate for the disturbing social aspects in the child's life, and, above all, socialisation, family upbringing, education and maintenance in the family [9, p.21]. Simultaneously, the state is focused on expanding social technologies aimed at family forms of placement of orphans, reducing the number of children in state institutions and developing substitute families' institution [10, p.98].

Today, the negative statistics of children returning to orphanages and care centres remain alarming [11, p.86]. From three to ten per cent of foster children return to orphanages, despite the rate of increasing returns of children to orphanages, according to statistics presented in table 2, you can see a positive result for 2019, where the number of returned children significantly decreased compared to previous indicators.

Table 2. Families of foster parents with whom custody contracts were terminated prematurely

Period	2008	2012	2016	2019
Number of foster parents with whom contracts were terminated prematurely	4475	2250	3363	2297

Analysts also point to an increase in the number of returns of children (about 6%), 5800 children returned to orphanages from replacement families during the year [12, p.305]. Every year, the number of orphanages older than 10 years is growing, about 80%.

Less than one per cent on the initiative of the adoptive parents themselves are real returns of children. Children rejected by close relatives are 6% [13, p. 90]. In most cases, the child is adopted by relatives in the form of custodianship or foster family. Significantly fewer children are transferred to other people's families. This indicates a request for social support of foster families [14, p.107, 15].

As a significant result of the study, it should be noted that today's social technologies not only support the implementation of state social policy concerning the foster carer or the family but also manifest in terms of the trends of modern society diversified properties at the moment [15, p.290]. This leads to the second result: social technologies reflect the contemporary model of social development, which means that social technologies diversify opportunities to solve the social problems of orphaned children [2,15].

For specialists in working with the family, this aspect implies the ability to quickly retrain and get the necessary additional knowledge and skills in their profession's broad framework as a social worker.

5. CONCLUSION

Nowadays, the technology of solving the problem of integrating biological and social orphans into society is the most acceptable for Russia since the institution of a professional substitute family has already begun to undergo and is undergoing numerous difficulties. The main conclusions are as follows:

First, there is active progress in developing the foster family mechanism up to institutionalisation in social work technologies.

Secondly, as the practice of social work and statistics of returns shows, the foster family is very much in need of constant social support for its functioning and social support technologies can take a leading position in the work of childcare centres.

Thirdly, modern social consulting technologies are increasing in social services today due to the complicated epidemiological situation.

Thus, by teaching parents the skills of contact with non-kinship children, helping to advise on the support and interaction with foster children, fostering families from the social phenomenon will reach the state of a full-fledged social institution for children left without parental care.

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