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Creativity of First-Graders and Children's Perception of Their Everyday Relationships with Parents

*Kreatywność pierwszoklasistów i postrzeganie przez
dzieci ich codziennych relacji z rodzicami*

SUMMARY

The paper touches upon the issue of creative skills of first grade students of primary school and the selected family-based preconditions for creativity. The purpose of the empirical research was to establish a connection between the creative skills of 7-year-old children and their perception of the parents' involvement in their lives, as well as the extent of the autonomy granted to the children by the parents. The assumptions for quantitative research, performed in nine primary schools in the Podlaskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Provinces, were presented (N = 139). The results of the research analysis presented in this paper demonstrate a connection between the creative skills of 7-year-old children on the one hand, and a subjective evaluation of the parents' involvement in the child's life and the autonomy enjoyed by the latter in their everyday functioning at home and school.

Keywords: child's creativity; early school age; family preconditions for creativity; child's autonomy; parents' involvement

INTRODUCTION

The development of creative abilities, talents, personalities and attitudes in children and young people and the influence of the family on the development of these various dimensions of creativity has frequently been addressed (Stańczak 2019; Szopiński 2016;

Szewczyk 2012; Nogal 2010). A review of relevant scientific literature shows, however, that there are no studies analyzing the issue of children's perception of their relationships with parents, where the aforementioned relationship is defined as the parents' interest in their children's daily activities and the degree to which the parents' accord their children full autonomy. The relationship between young children's creativity and their subjective picture of the relationship with their mothers and fathers has not been studied either.

"Teachers, educators and specialists at school are obligated to discover their pupils' individual developmental and educational needs as well as their psychophysical capabilities" (Uszyńska-Jarmoc, Kunat 2018, p. 11). The duty that obligates school employees (teachers and specialists) to conduct an assessment of the pupils' talents is set out in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 9 August 2017 on the principles of organisation and providing psychological and pedagogical assistance in public kindergartens, schools and institutions (Article 2 (1) (2)). Evaluating the level of creativity in children at the beginning of their elementary education is therefore a matter of importance.

The resources available to individual children at the beginning of their education depend largely on their parents, because it is the family that constitutes the basic context in which the child can develop his or her creative potential and talents. Examining the child's subjective assessment of his or her relationship with the mother and father is a particularly interesting research area within the important subject of family determinants of creativity.

BASIC THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The concepts of "creativity" and "innovativeness", both ambiguous and belonging to interdisciplinary categories, can be difficult to define precisely. They are used both in colloquial language and in many different fields of academic literature (including philosophy, pedagogy, psychology, sociology, and anthropology) (Szmidi 2007). In the research presented here, the concept of creativity is considered as semantically similar to innovativeness and recognized as a personal characteristics (Nęcka 2002) which enables one to generate new and original ideas in various areas of activity (art, verbal expression, movement and music) (Uszyńska-Jarmoc 2003). As shown by relevant literature, creativity is often considered in four aspects, which refer to: Person, Process, Press (relationship between human beings and their environment) and Product (outcome) (4Ps of Creativity) (Rhodes 1961). Using the above four-stranded approach to creativity in my research, I adopt the egalitarian approach (Guilford 1950), also referred to as everyday, personal and subjective creativity (Modrzejewska-Świgulska 2014). The egalitarian approach defines creativity as the individual's personal characteristic thanks to which "every human being is potentially talented, albeit to a different degree or in a different manner" (Uszyńska-Jarmoc, Kunat 2018, p. 13). Therefore, it

can be acknowledged that every person comes into the world with the possibility of achieving high creative results, but whether they succeed depends on a combination of numerous factors which either foster (stimuli) or inhibit (inhibitors) the development of creative potential. As emphasized by Edward Nęcka (2002, p. 23), "in the case of geniuses, this ability is particularly well developed". Such an understanding of creativity encourages one to reflect on its environmental determinants (Uszyńska-Jarmoc 2007; Szmidt 2013; Nalaskowki 1998; Sołowiej 1997) and, in particular, on family determinants of creativity (Czerwinka 2010; Mendecka 2003; Nęcka 2002).

Many researchers address the issues related to the influence of family environment on the development of creativity (Stańczak 2019; Szopiński 2016; Mendecka 2003). It is the family which constitutes the basic context for the child's development, and it can both favor and hinder the development of creative potential (Szmidt 2019; Szopiński 2016; Mendecka 2003). Contemporary understanding of the family favors its systemic perception, where all of its members are seen "as elements of a group in which the behavior of one person inevitably affects everyone else" (Świętochowski 2015, p. 26). It is, therefore, worthwhile to pay special attention to the relations connecting parents and children and their impact on the development of the latter's creative abilities. As can be seen from the research carried out by Małgorzata Stańczak (2019), it is possible to indicate what features of the family favor the development of the child's creative abilities. These are, i.a.: emotional closeness, flexible external borders, focus on the child and enabling the child to make choices. Based on scientific literature in this area of study we can assert that the above mentioned features of families that stimulate the development of children's creative potential correspond to the human needs defined in the theory of self-determination, motivation and needs formulated by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (1985) (self-determination theory, SDT). The researchers recognize that the need for competence, the need for relationships with others, and the need for autonomy affect human motivation and development, and can, therefore, be considered as factors in the development of a creativity.



Figure 1. Relationship between the characteristics of a family which promote creativity and the basic human needs enumerated in Deci and Ryan's theory of self-determination

Source: Author's own study.

The features of the family which aid the development of the child's creativity as specified by Stańczak (2019) are presented on the left side of the drawing. On the right side we see the corresponding basic human needs proposed by the theory of self-determination, motivation and needs by Deci and Ryan (1985) (Figure 1).

One can, therefore, suspect that there is a link between the child-parent relationship and the development of the child's creativity. Fulfilling the child's basic needs which takes place in the family stimulates the development of his or her creative potential.

AIM AND METHOD

The aim of my empirical research was to search for and describe the relationship between the creativity of 7-year-old children and their perception of relations binding them with their mother and father as regards parental involvement in the child's life and the level of autonomy granted the child by his or her parents.

The level of pupils' creativity was measured with Urban and Jellen's Test for Creative Thinking-Drawing Production (TCT-DP) (Matczak, Jaworowska, Stańczak 2000). The instrument assesses creativity with a drawing task on an A4-sized testing sheet, on which there are placed six figural fragments, arranged asymmetrically. Five of them: a line forming the right angle, a curved line, a semi-circle, a point, and a straight dashed line are placed inside a square frame. One element – a small open square – is placed outside the large square frame. The subject's task is to complete the drawing in any way they wish using only one writing tool. The test comprises two variants: version A and version B. Both versions contain the same figural fragments, but in version B they are inverted 180 degrees in relation to version A. To study the relations binding children with their mother and father, and, in particular, to study their involvement in the child's life and support given his or her autonomy, the POPS (perceptions of parents scales) questionnaire was used (Grolnick, Ryan, Deci 1991). The children's subjective perception of their relationship with their parents involves the child's assessment of those parental behaviors which are considered the optimal parenting context from the perspective of the theory of self-determination, motivation and needs (Grolnick, Deci, Ryan 1997); in other words, the extent to which parents are involved in their child's life and the degree of autonomy they grant their child. The term "involvement" should be understood as a conscious and voluntary allocation of parents' own resources to their children: giving them time, being available to them, having knowledge about their lives and expressing concern for what the children do in their free time. The questionnaire comprises 22 tasks. The first part of the survey comprises 11 sentences describing the behavior of the child's mother, while the other 11 sentences characterise the father's behavior. For each sentence describing the possible behaviors of the parents, four possible answers are included. These differ from each other in how often the given behavior is displayed by the mother or father of the child. For example,

- 1a. Some mothers never have time to talk to their child.
 1b. Some mothers usually do not have time to talk to their child.
 1c. Some mothers sometimes have time to talk to their child.
 1d. Some mothers always have time to talk to their child.

One hundred fifty-eight parents expressed their consent for participation in the study; 139 pupils filled in the questionnaires correctly: 70 girls and 69 boys (average age of children: 7.5 years, standard deviation = 0.29). The study group included pupils attending first grades of nine different elementary schools (both urban and rural) in the Podlasie (*województwo podlaskie*) and Warmia-Masuria Provinces (*województwo warmińsko-mazurskie*).

FINDINGS

Table 1 presents data allowing an assessment of the level of creativity of the pupils taking part in the study and the differences among them in this respect. As part of the assessment of their pictorial solutions, each child could obtain 72 points, that is, 144 points altogether in both versions of the test.

Table 1. Results of measurement of children's creativity

Version of TCT-DP test	Average	Standard deviation	Coefficient of variation	Highest score obtained	Lowest score obtained	Range
A	19.5	10.6	54.3	50	3	47
B	20.3	10.9	53.6	51	3	48
A and B	39.8	20.2	50.7	101	6	95

Source: Author's own study.

Analysis of the data presented in Table 1 indicates that the results obtained by pupils in version A and version B were quite high as compared to the results of other studies (see i.a., Matczak, Jaworowska, Stańczak 2000), where the average score for this group was about 14 points in each version. One should notice that intra-group differentiation was high ($v > 30$), and the difference between the highest and the lowest result achieved was very high (highest score obtained = 50, lowest score obtained = 3). Thus, the level of children's creativity is very diverse.

Table 2. Results of the parents' engagement in the child's life

Parent	Average	Standard deviation	Coefficient of variation	Highest score obtained	Lowest score obtained	Range
Mother	15.7	2.2	14.2	20	9	11
Father	13.7	3.0	22.1	20	5	15

Source: Author's own study.

The results presented in Table 2 show the child's subjective perception of the level of his or her mother's and father's involvement. The term "parental involvement" refers to the parent's desire to devote attention and time to the child, acquire information about the child's life, and care for what is happening to him or her. It is worth noting that the results obtained in the category of the parents' involvement in the child's life indicate that both mothers and fathers are involved. The research shows that mothers are more involved ($M = 15.7$) in children's lives than fathers ($M = 13.7$), but it is worth noting that the difference is small.

Table 3. Results of the child's perception of the parents' support for his or her autonomy

Parent	Average	Standard deviation	Coefficient of variation	Highest score obtained	Lowest score obtained	Range
Mother	16.2	2.7	16.4	24	10	14
Father	15.6	2.8	18.0	23	9	14

Source: Author's own study.

The analysis of the data contained in Table 3 shows that both fathers and mothers support the autonomy of the child. The total number of points that could be obtained was 24. The research shows that mothers support the autonomy of the child slightly more in relation to fathers, but the difference is small.

Table 4. Correlation between the child's level of creativity and their perception of the fulfillment of his or her needs by parents

Type of need	$r_{emp.}$	Interpretation	$r_{theor.}$	Statistical significance	Interpretation
Mother's engagement	-0.03	weak relationship	0.174	0.05	statistically insignificant
Father's engagement	-0.12	weak relationship	0.174	0.05	statistically insignificant
Support of autonomy by mother	0.01	weak relationship	0.174	0.05	statistically insignificant
Support of autonomy by father	0.05	weak relationship	0.174	0.05	statistically insignificant

Source: Author's own study.

Table 4 presents the results of the study of the relationship between the level of the child's creativity and his or her perception of the degree of fulfillment of his or her needs by his or her parents. Negative R^2 of the scores measuring the degree of parents' involvement in the child's life and the results of his or her creativity indicate that the higher the level of creativity, the lower the involvement of the child's mother and father in his or her everyday life and activities at home. There is, on the other hand, a weak and statistically insignificant relationship between the results of children's creativity test and their subjective assessment of the degree of autonomy granted them by both mothers and fathers.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of research results presented in the article do not fully cover the issues pertaining to the role of the family in the development of the child's creative potential. It allows, however, the formulation of two main conclusions:

1. The 7-year-olds tested exhibit a high level of creative talents.
2. The results present a positive picture of the child-parent relationship. As seen by 7-year-olds both their mothers and fathers create favorable conditions for their development. In the light of the theoretical assumptions, the parents' satisfying their children's basic needs: the need for relationships with others and autonomy, allows the child to fully develop his/her creative potential.

What seems to be surprising in this study are the low values of correlation coefficient, which could indicate a lack of covariance between these two variables, i.e. between creativity and the child's perception of his or her everyday relations with his or her mother and father.

At this stage, it is difficult for me to explain the reason for the relationship. Perhaps the children should be tested with a different diagnostic. It is possible that older children (8-year-olds and 9-year-olds) would present a different (perhaps more objective) picture of relationships with their parents. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize the need for further, in-depth studies. An interesting direction for further research in this area may be to analyze the parents' perceptions of their relationships with the child, both in the area of parent involvement in the child's life and the level of autonomy granted to him or her. As emphasized by Grażyna Mendecka (2003, p. 90), "parental attitudes do not always coincide with their perception by children".

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STRESZCZENIE

W artykule przedstawiono założenia badań ilościowych zrealizowanych w dziewięciu szkołach podstawowych na terenie województw podlaskiego i warmińsko-mazurskiego (N = 139). Ponadto zaprezentowano wyniki analizy badań ukazujące związek pomiędzy uzdolnieniami twórczymi dzieci 7-letnich a subiektywną oceną stopnia zaangażowania rodziców w życie dziecka oraz udzielania autonomii w codziennym funkcjonowaniu w domu i szkole.

Słowa kluczowe: kreatywność dziecka; wiek wczesnoszkolny; rodzinne uwarunkowania twórczości; autonomia dziecka; zaangażowanie rodziców