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CONSEQUENCES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DEPRIVATION

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Abstract. This article examines the psychological and social consequences of emotional deprivation in early childhood, emphasizing its impact on personality development, attachment patterns, and emotional regulation. Emotional attachment plays a fundamental role in shaping a child's sense of security and social competence. When attachment is disrupted due to parental neglect, institutional care, long-term hospitalization, or repeated separations, children experience psychological deprivation that manifests in cognitive delays, emotional withdrawal, and impaired social functioning. The study identifies several behavioral patterns among deprived children – hyperactive social types, social provocateurs, withdrawn (depressed) types, and those who substitute emotional needs through alternative behaviors. Drawing on the works of Anna Freud, Sophie Dann, and Mary Ainsworth, the paper argues that the intensity and duration of deprivation determine its reversibility. Short-term deprivation may be corrected through consistent care and emotional engagement, whereas prolonged deprivation during the first three years of life leads to irreversible developmental deficits. The findings highlight the irreplaceable role of stable emotional relationships and family-based care in preventing long-term psychological harm. Effective rehabilitation requires not only meeting children's physical needs but also ensuring continuous affection, attention, and social interaction that foster trust, empathy, and resilience.

Key words: psychological deprivation, emotional attachment, child development, social isolation, institutional care, personality formation.

Introduction. Emotional attachment is a fundamental factor in the formation of a child's personality. When, for one reason or another, emotional attachment is absent from a child's life, this leads to psychological deprivation (Bakermans-Kranenburg et al., 2022).

When we observe a child's normal psychological development, we recognize a sequence of predictable developmental stages common to all children. However, attachment development is disrupted in the following situations:

1. The child is deprived of close emotional relationships;
2. The child is cared for by a series of different adults during the first years of life (as in an orphanage);
3. The child spends a long time in the hospital due to illness;
4. The child experiences sudden separation from someone with whom they had a close relationship.

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An illustrative example can be drawn from the Azerbaijani family. At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, Azerbaijani society underwent profound transformations. These structural changes have affected the family both as a small social group and as a social institution – the fundamental cell of society.

It must be emphasized that social change has always existed. Researchers such as A. A. Alizade, U. A. Efendiyeva, M. A. Gamzayev, Z. I. Garalov, G. N. Gakhramanova, E. G. Eidemiller, J. J. Bachofen, J. McLennan, L. Morgan, F. Engels, and others have addressed such transformations in their works. Undoubtedly, it is difficult not to speak of the negative circumstances and even the crisis that contemporary family relations are experiencing.

Discussion. Among modern scholars, S. I. Golod argues that the family is undergoing modernization and remains one of the most stable institutions in society. However, processes such as divorce,

loneliness, declining birth rates, and the growth of dysfunctional families do not fully explain the deeper social and psychological dynamics at play. Indeed, such indicators can be interpreted from two perspectives – either as manifestations of crisis or as elements of modernization (Əliyev, 2007).

One cannot ignore the fact that the transition from the traditional Azerbaijani family to the modern, transformed one has led to an increase in divorces and dysfunctional households, accompanied by a decline in birth rates. Unfortunately, these developments may ultimately undermine the very institution of the family. In contemporary Azerbaijani society, tendencies such as the weakening of premarital sexual norms and the increasing frequency of abortions – thereby limiting the full use of the reproductive period – have emerged. Furthermore, intergenerational ties are weakening, and individual values increasingly prevail over family-oriented ones.

In contrast, the traditional Azerbaijani family has always prioritized collective family values over individual interests, upheld the sanctity of marriage under all circumstances, and sought to protect children within the care of both parents. The woman, traditionally perceived as the keeper of the hearth, was devoted to maintaining the family and caring for her husband and children (Əlizadə, 2015). Of course, divorces did occur in Azerbaijani families, yet they typically stemmed from severe causes such as drug addiction, alcoholism, or infidelity – situations in which preserving the family could endanger future generations.

Today, however, divorces often occur without such critical reasons. Differences in character, temporary unemployment, low income, or a husband's inability to meet his wife's material, emotional, or sexual expectations are often deemed sufficient grounds for dissolution.

The sociologist Pitirim A. Sorokin was among the first to draw attention to the causes of family transformation and crisis. He considered growing individualism in modern society to be the main source of these challenges – most visible in large urban centers, where rising rates of divorce, prostitution, extramarital affairs, and declining fertility are observed. Yet, what about rural regions? Unfortunately, similar issues have spread there as well. Many young people are compelled to leave their families and migrate to larger cities or even abroad in search of work. Such separations inevitably disrupt family cohesion and may lead to dissolution.

Another emerging phenomenon is the formation of marriages on the basis of social status. Prospective spouses and their families increasingly assess compatibility through the lens of social and economic standing. Economic considerations, though significant, should not overshadow emotional and psychological compatibility; (Həməzəyev & Əmiraslanova, 2007); when marriages are built solely on material foundations, they are more likely to collapse over time. This reveals a conflict between the traditional conception of marital roles and the modern understanding embraced by younger generations.

Increasingly, young, educated, and career-oriented women who earn their own income do not perceive marriage as a necessity. Their emphasis on gender equality sometimes generates tension between partners, as each views family life through differing expectations (Əlizadə, 2015). Many men continue to desire a traditional family structure, in which the husband remains the head of the household, the wife raises children and manages domestic life, and the husband fulfills his role as economic provider. However, in modern society, women are less willing to accept these prescribed roles.

Young women educated in Europe or at local universities aspire to have husbands who earn more than they do and who can immediately provide for all material needs – housing, car, and employment – at the moment of marriage. These expectations create significant tension in the formation and sustainability of families. Meanwhile, many men are unprepared to compete in this “struggle for equality,” which, as it intensifies each year, deepens misunderstandings between the sexes.

When we refer to “young families,” we generally mean those within the first three years of marriage, in which both partners are under thirty. This three-year period often proves to be a critical stage that can lead to divorce. Young couples must therefore exercise particular patience and sensitivity

to prevent the disintegration of their families. When a child is born into such a marriage, the consequences of family breakdown extend beyond the couple themselves and affect the next generation, resulting in psychological and developmental problems among children raised in dysfunctional environments – issues that, in turn, impact society as a whole (Doom & Gunnar, 2020).

From the above, several essential questions arise: What should be done? How can the situation be improved?

The current situation in the country requires urgent attention and change. This change must begin with the individual – with self-reflection and one's attitude toward the institution of family. Young people must understand that societal transformations have already occurred and are irreversible. Therefore, anyone establishing a family must respect traditional values while simultaneously modernizing and rethinking their approach to family life.

If families are founded on material advantages or social status, they are bound to collapse sooner or later. Mutual honesty and self-awareness are crucial. A young man who marries for the sake of his partner's family wealth will eventually seek emotional fulfillment elsewhere, while a woman who looks down on her husband and his relatives may provoke lasting family conflicts.

Another important principle in family relations is mutual respect. Neither spouse should humiliate or degrade the other, for a humiliated partner inevitably loses self-esteem and authority within the family circle.

Moreover, it is essential that young couples are socially, intellectually, and psychologically compatible (Əliyev, 2007). A marriage extends beyond the relationship between two individuals – it connects two families. Compatibility in social status can therefore serve as a stabilizing factor.

Trivial disputes must also be avoided. Domestic matters – such as who will wash the dishes, take out the trash, or buy groceries – should be discussed in advance. In a modern family, these roles can be negotiated and shared equitably.

Partners should also refrain from making comparisons with others – such as how much a friend's husband earns or how beautiful another man's wife is.

Laziness must be avoided, as it leads to poverty, which in turn erodes respect within the family. Every young person should cultivate diligence and dedication for the well-being of the family; mutual appreciation and commitment will naturally follow.

Furthermore, family matters should never be discussed with outsiders (Həmzəyev & Əmiraslanova, 2007). This is one of the most common causes of marital breakdown. Many couples, often without realizing it, allow relatives or acquaintances to interfere in their personal affairs, thereby deepening conflicts. Even when couples reconcile, lingering resentment among family members – parents, siblings, or in-laws – may persist, and lost respect is difficult to restore.

Lastly, every individual entering marriage must respect their partner and never resort to humiliation or verbal aggression. They must be emotionally and psychologically prepared for the responsibilities of family life. Only by adhering to these principles can young families withstand the pressures of modernization and societal change.

While there is no universal “recipe” for a happy and enduring marriage, there are practical ways to overcome crises. By following them, families can preserve their integrity as one of the most vital foundations of society.

All these factors affect the child's psychological state. Long-term hospitalization can also influence a child's cognitive and sensorimotor development. Psychosocial deprivation has particularly negative effects on emotional growth, leading to disturbances in attachment processes – namely, impaired social interaction – which generally manifests in two forms:

1. A persistent unwillingness to engage with others (for infants – lack of eye contact or vocal imitation; in older children – apathy, lack of curiosity, or sociability);
2. Excessive familiarity with strangers, indiscriminate friendliness, constant demands for attention, and frequent requests for approval. (Callaghan & Tottenham, 2021)

The root of these behaviors lies in serious deficiencies in care and attention. In most cases:

1. The child's basic emotional needs – comfort, stimulation, and affection – were not met, and harsh corporal punishment was used by the caregiver;
2. The child's basic physical needs – nutrition, hygiene, safety, and protection from abuse – were consistently neglected;
3. Stable attachment was impossible due to frequent changes in caregivers (e.g., in orphanages or hospitals).

Additional risk factors include parents' mental disabilities, lack of parenting skills, early motherhood, dysfunctional family upbringing, social isolation, and the inability to recognize or respond to a child's needs. When parents' personal needs dominate over the child's, or when the family frequently changes residence, the child's attachment reactions become disrupted. As a result, the child may develop an inability to experience well-being.

Such children often appear passive, withdrawn, and apathetic. They look sad and distressed. Many children who have lived in orphanages and were later adopted display fearful and wary behavior. They are often undernourished, with low body weight compared to peers, pale skin, and poor muscle tone, though their height corresponds to their age. These physical symptoms reflect not only psychological deprivation but also physiological consequences.

Socially, these children are characterized by reduced spontaneity and diminished initiative in communication. A child may show indifference to separation from the mother, which may seem paradoxical. Older children often show little interest in people or toys, even when encouraged. Yet they may begin to engage with caregivers over time. However, due to staff limitations, caregivers cannot form emotionally close relationships with every child. The lack of mutual emotional feedback between caregiver and infant disrupts social interaction and emotional expression (McLaughlin et al., 2021). Consequently, the child withdraws inward, suppressing cognitive and emotional functions, which may lead to personality disorders. Such children often lack guilt, disregard rules, and fail to develop a natural need for affection. They may later become individuals with emotionally detached personalities.

A well-known study by Anna Freud and Sophie Dann illustrates this phenomenon. They observed six three-year-old children who had been separated from their mothers and imprisoned in concentration camps during World War II. After liberation, the children were placed in a family-type care home in England. The researchers found that the children bonded closely with one another but remained unresponsive to outsiders. When another girl from a concentration camp joined them, they accepted her into their group, showing care and solidarity, but continued to distrust others. Their recovery required long-term, patient emotional support before they could change their attitudes toward others (Humphreys et al., 2022).

Deprived children can generally be categorized into several types:

1. The Hyperactive Social Child. These children easily interact with strangers and behave confidently in social situations, but their relationships are superficial and inconsistent. They are curious but participate passively. They lack aggression and show social interest but underperform academically relative to their intellectual capacity. Teachers often find them distracting because they demand much attention yet achieve little.
2. The Social Provocateur. This type of child emerges by the first year of life. They dominate adult attention through crying or tantrums. If denied something, they respond with aggression or jealousy and constantly seek special attention. They provoke conflicts with peers and are often labeled as "difficult." Yet in one-on-one situations, they may appear affectionate and mild. Boys of this type often become increasingly defiant and oppositional with age. Interestingly, they behave more calmly among older children or adults.
3. The Withdrawn (Depressed) Type. These children are passive, apathetic, and may exhibit signs of intellectual disability or autism. Transitions between institutions cause deep sadness and withdrawal. They

interact minimally with adults or peers and show little interest in toys or social interaction. However, when shown consistent care, they can gradually adapt. In adoption settings, they may silently seek closeness – leaning on an adult’s shoulder or holding hands – displaying a subtle desire for attachment. For such children, abrupt environmental changes or separation from established bonds are especially harmful.

4. Children with Substitutional Satisfaction of Affective and Social Needs. These children compensate for emotional deprivation through alternative behaviors. Those raised in orphanages from birth often eat well and gain weight normally. However, children who enter institutions later suffer from depression, poor appetite, and slow adaptation. Some overeat as a substitute for maternal affection. Others, especially school-age children, display tattling behavior as a substitute for genuine social interaction. Such compensatory behaviors reflect regression to more basic biological needs – eating, self-stimulation, or manipulation of objects instead of meaningful human contact.

Research shows that the later children enter institutional care, the milder the deprivation effects, and the better the chances for correction with the help of teachers and psychologists (Menezes et al., 2023). However, deep-seated consequences of social deprivation at the personality level are rarely fully reversible. These children often remain distrustful, envious, critical, and ungrateful toward others, expecting betrayal and rejection.

Conclusion. Studies of children in institutional settings demonstrate that socially isolated children rarely achieve full rehabilitation. The most effective corrective environment remains a family or family-type institution, where consistent emotional bonds can form. The long-term effects of deprivation reduce a child’s vitality and capacity for social engagement.

According to American psychologist Mary Ainsworth, the reversibility of deprivation depends on its duration and intensity:

1. If deprivation is brief and isolated, its effects can be reversed, though increased sensitivity and fear of separation often remain.
2. The younger the child, the greater the chance of recovery, though speech delays may occur.
3. Severe, prolonged deprivation – especially from birth to age three – leads to lasting intellectual and emotional damage that is extremely difficult to correct.

Thus, social and psychological deprivation in childhood is a profoundly detrimental condition that resists correction and leaves enduring marks on personality development and emotional life.

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