

# PARENTS AND FRIENDS AS FACTORS OF CHILD'S BEHAVIOR AT SCHOOL: A COMPARISON OF MULTIPLE CORRELATIONS

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**Abstract.** Why are some children lonely, aggressive or they behaving prosocially at school? This study tends to answer the research question: how are family and peer relations associated with the social behavior of the pupils in mid childhood and early adolescence (3rd grade and 7th grade pupils), respectively. The hypotheses refer to the differences in the connections of the family and peer relations with the student's social behavior at school. The data gathered from 194 examinees were elaborated in the research, as follows: 3rd grade pupils (85) and 7th grade pupils (109).

The data from third grade pupils shows that multiple correlation between family variables in regards to loneliness is more significant ( $R=0.639$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) than multiple correlation of peer variables ( $R=0.352$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) which is not significant. For aggressive behavior both correlations: family ( $R=0.494$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and peer variable ( $R=0.489$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) are significant. For prosocially behavior both family ( $R=0.434$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and peer correlations ( $R=0.423$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) are almost equally significant. Shyness is not significantly associated neither with family nor with peer variables. Satisfaction from school is significantly associated with peer variables ( $R=0.440$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and with family variables ( $R=0.482$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) too.

For the seventh grade students loneliness is significantly more influenced by family variables ( $R=0.617$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) than by peer variables ( $R=0.422$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Aggressive behavior is more significantly related to family variables ( $R=0.577$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) than peer variables. From that data the conclusion is that family variables in more cases are connected with child's social behavior at school than peer variables, in middle childhood but and in early adolescence, too.

**Key words:** family relations, peer relations, behaviour of the child at school

## 1. Introduction

Widespread belief is that child's social skills in the peer relations are determined by the quality and safety of early attachment to the mother [4].

Psychoanalytic assumptions of the interaction child-mother, shows the importance of the childhood, especially the first years of the child's life. Nesha and Lamb (1989) suggest four models that can explain the relationships mother-child and child-peer. The first explanation says that child's sociability develops in contact with the mother, as a precursor to the child's sociability in peer relationships (theory of attachment). In other words, the form of social relationships with the mother is the basis of the later social relationships of the child with the peers. Secondly, the two-way model includes that the child's interaction with one person further converts into a relations with other social partners. Thirdly, the explanation of the correlation between the two forms of interaction (child-mother and child-peers) results from the assumptions of individual differences in the sociability of the child, differences of the temperament (genetic model). These differences are inborn and they are constant. Children who show greater sociability usually show sociability in the interaction with both their mothers and the peers, unlike the children who show less sociability in all social relationships. The fourth model of the interaction child-mother and peers refers to quite different mechanisms of interaction (a model of social net). In fact, according to this model, social skills that are in the basis of the interaction of the child are different in regards of different social surrounding and the child's need that he/she wants to satisfy in that interaction.

## 2. Materials and methods

The research question is: Whether family relations are more important factors than relations with peers at school for the social behavior of the students, in a particular period of their life, in childhood and early adolescence. The assumption is that there is a difference in the level of influence of family and peer relations on the student's social behavior at school, according to their age. Our assumption is that family is a more important factor for the social behavior of the 3rd grade pupils, but in adolescence, with the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students, peers take supremacy of the influence.

The family relations are shown through the following dimensions: satisfaction with the family interaction, acceptance by the mother and by the father, rejection by the mother, and by the father, emotionality from the mother and from the father, control by the mother and by the father. The peers relations are described through the quality of the relations with the best friend, the satisfaction with the best friend, the relations of three best friends with the pupil and vice versa, the acceptance and rejection by the peers. Social behaviors of students (dependent variables) are: loneliness, aggressiveness, prosocially behavior, shyness, perception of social support from the peers and satisfaction from school

Family interaction is measured with: Scale of the quality of family interaction [9] which consists of three sub-scales: the general mood within the family, the interaction with the mother and the father (dimensions rejection and acceptance); Scale of perception of the family relations [5] which measures the styles of the parent's behavior: emotionality and control. Instruments of peer relations are: Friendship quality questionnaire [6], satisfaction with the best friend questionnaire [6], Questionnaire assessing the attitude of three best friends

towards the pupil and vice versa [7], socio-metric procedure. Instruments for social behavior at school are: School loneliness questionnaire [1], Scale for aggressive behavior and Scale for prosocially behavior [12], Scale for shyness [2], Scale for peers social support [10] and Scale for satisfaction from school [3].

194 students (examinees) were included in the research, 3rd grade pupils (85) at the age of 9 and 7th grade students (109) at the age of 13. The research was conducted in May 2007 in one elementary school in Skopje (Macedonia).

## 3. Result

The results, in regards to hypotheses, show differences in the multiple correlations between family and peer relations and social behavior of the child at school.

It should be emphasized that multiple correlations which are not statistically correlated with variables of child's behavior, are not included in procedure of correlation differences (they are marked as F=).

Results from the Table 1. Show that loneliness is significantly associated only with the family variables but not with the peer variables. Despite the fact that family and peer variables are significantly associated with aggressive behavior, social behavior, perception of social support and satisfaction of the child from school, there are no differences between those associations. It means that family and peers relations are on the same level associated with child's aggressiveness, social behavior, perception of the social support and satisfaction from the school. There is no significant association between shyness and family or peer's relations (and we didn't measure their differences). These results show that family variables, when compared to the peer's, are to a high degree associated with the loneliness of the child at school.

Table 1. Differences of multiple correlations (F) between peer and family relationships in forms of social behavior among 3rd grade students (N=85)

	Forms of social behavior of the child at school					
	loneliness	agressive behaviour	prosocial behaviour	shyness	perception of social support	satisfaction of the school
peers relations (R)	.352	.494**	.434*	.384	.558**	.440*
family relations (R)	.639**	.489**	.423*	.305	.605**	.482**
F	/	.178	.532	/	1.224	.717
p	/	p > .05	p > .05	/	p > .05	p > .05

\*p< .05 \*\*p< .01

The data pertaining to differences in connection of peer and family variables

with patterns of social behavior of students from 7th grade are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Differences of multiple correlations (F) between peer and family relations in forms of social behavior among students of 7th grade (N=109)

	Forms of social behavior of the child at school					
	loneliness	agressive behaviour	prosocial behaviour	shyness	perception of social support	satisfaction of the school
peers relations (R)	.422**	.396*	.509**	.351	.654**	.320
family relations (R)	.617**	.577**	.396*	.329	.464**	.441**
F	8,317	9,147	4,981	/	19,308	/
p	p< .01	p< .01	p< .01	/	p< .01	/

\*p< .05 \*\*p< .01

From these data shown on the Table 2. (Differences of multiple correlations R) we can see that lonely behavior and aggressive behavior are associated in higher degree to family relations, while prosocial behavior and

perception of social support are higher associated with peer relations. Shyness is correlated neither with family nor with peer variables, and satisfaction with school is associated only with family variables.

Table 3. Differences of multiple correlations (F) between peer and family relations in forms social behavior among students from entire sample (N=194)

	Forms of social behavior of the child at school					
	loneliness	agressive behaviour	prosocial behaviour	shyness	perception of social support	satisfacti on of the school
peers relations (R)	.386**	.438**	.462**	.239	.607**	.351**
family relations (R)	.584**	.575**	.429**	.229	.448**	.590**
F	14,130	8,497	1,401	/	16,735	21,986
p	p<.01	p<.01	p>.05	/	p<.01	p<.01

\*p< .05 \*\*p< .01

The results concerning differences in the multiple correlations of peers and family relations with the social behavior of students from the entire sample are shown in Table 3. The loneliness is significantly more associated with family variables than with peers's. It is similar with the variable aggressive behavior and satisfaction with school. There is no difference in the degree of connection between family and peer variables. The perception of social support is more associated with peer variables. So, family relationships are more important for loneliness, aggressive behavior and satisfaction of the child from school, rather than peer relations, while peer relations are more important for the perception of social support from peers.

So, for the entire sample of students, family relationships are more important for loneliness, the aggressive behavior and the satisfaction of the child from school, than the peer relations, while peer relations are more important for the perception of the social support from peers.

#### 4. Conclusion and discussion

According to this data, family relations are the only factor of influence for lonely behavior of the third grade pupil, while peer relations are not significantly connected. So, it speaks in favor of the importance of family relations, particularly interaction of the child with the mother and the father, like acceptance and emotionality, for the sociability and happiness of the child at school.

Failure to satisfy the need for belonging and love, primarily in the family, reflects on the social dissatisfaction of the child at school and the sense of loneliness. The feeling of loneliness is associated with the inability to satisfy the need for intimacy, emotional support, companionship and acceptance by the friends. In the research of Peplau and Perlman [8] loneliness has a cognitive dimension and is a result of dissatisfaction

with the social relationships, or the perception of the existence of difference between the qualities of the desired and achieved social relationships. So, according to this theory, loneliness is a cognitive experience which is a result of seeing the family relations as inadequate. A lonely child does not have the skills for making friendships, and the feeling of loneliness becomes established. Shyness is affected neither by family nor by peer variables. There are theories that explain the shyness with hereditary factor. For aggressive behavior, prosocially behavior, perception of social support and satisfaction from school, family and peer relations are equally important factors of influence, yet the parents and the peers are equally important models of child social behavior at school.

Although the assumption is that peers are a more significant factor for the social behavior of seventh grade students, our results show that family is still a stronger factor of influence for loneliness, aggressive behavior and satisfaction from the school, while peers are a factor of modification of the sociability and perception of social support of the young adolescents.

Based on the results of the entire sample of students, family relations in comparison to peer relations contribute to a greater extent to the understanding of loneliness, aggressive behavior and satisfaction of the child from school, while peer relationships are more important for the perception of social support from peers.

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