

Innovative Pedagogical Methods For Diagnosing Parent-Child Relationships In Military Families (Based On The Experience Of The UK And The USA)

Kalandarov Khudayor Iskandarovich

Independent Researcher

ABSTRACT

This article scientifically analyzes innovative pedagogical methods for diagnosing and improving parent-child relationships in military families based on the experiences of the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. Specifically, it highlights the mechanisms for diagnosing the psychological state of young children during long-term deployments and territorial rotations using art-pedagogical (the "Draw-a-Family" technique) and cognitive narrative (the "FOCUS" program) tools. Furthermore, scientifically grounded recommendations have been developed for integrating advanced foreign practices into the socio-pedagogical support system for military families in Uzbekistan.

Keywords: military family, parent-child relationships, art pedagogy, visual diagnostics, projective methods, FOCUS program, socio-pedagogical adaptation, rotation.

INTRODUCTION

The professional activities of military personnel, particularly long-term deployments, frequent territorial rotations, and strict disciplinary requirements, directly affect not only the personnel themselves but also the socio-psychological well-being of their family members and children. Recent studies indicate that stress factors associated with military service exert intense pressure on the mental health of spouses and the family's social support system [1]. Such instability and emotional strain in the family often lead to a disruption of parenting practices, including a decline in communication with children and the derailment of child-rearing processes.

In modern family pedagogy and psychology, enhancing children's resilience to unexpected life challenges is considered one of the most pressing tasks. Researchers emphasize that in stressful situations, the most powerful protective factor ensuring children's psychological stability is a healthy and continuous pedagogical relationship between parent and child, grounded in mutual trust [2]. However, the prolonged absence of military personnel for months or their return exhausted from service increases the risk of emotional distance emerging between parent and child.

Young children, especially those aged 3 to 11, cannot fully articulate such relationship crises verbally, which consequently results in behavioral problems such as severe anxiety, rebelliousness, or self-isolation. Therefore, advanced foreign practices are shifting away from standard questionnaires in studying the military family environment, opting instead for holistic, innovative pedagogical approaches that encompass the entire family. For instance, the US defense system has successfully implemented the targeted "FOCUS" (Families Overcoming Under Stress) program, which diagnoses misunderstandings between parents and children through visual-narrative methods (graphic timelines and storytelling) and enhances parents' pedagogical competence [3].

Art pedagogy elements are also of unparalleled importance in determining how young children perceive socio-pedagogical relationships within the family. Assessment methods evaluating the "Parent-Child Alliance" in children's drawings, developed by psychologists and pedagogues, allow for the rapid identification of a child's hidden emotions and instances of family boundary disruptions [4]. This innovative diagnostic method has been directly applied to the families of military personnel in the British Armed Forces, demonstrating high efficacy in the early diagnosis of socio-emotional distancing between a parent on a deployment (rotation) and their child, as well as in the proper organization of pedagogical intervention [5].

The aim of this study is to analyze innovative pedagogical methods for diagnosing parent-child relationships in military families, drawing upon the experiences of developed countries such as the UK and the US, and to develop scientifically grounded recommendations for their integration into the socio-pedagogical support practices of the defense system of Uzbekistan.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, a comprehensive set of empirical, projective, and systemic-analytical methods, well-validated in international practice, was employed to investigate the socio-pedagogical environment and parent-child relationships within military families. Specifically, to scientifically evaluate the adaptability and balance of the family system, the FACES IV (Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale) methodology, developed by D. Olson and widely applied to military families by UK researchers, was utilized as the foundational framework [6]. This methodology enables the quantitative measurement of family cohesion, flexibility, and communication levels before, during, and after military deployments [7]. Consequently, family instabilities, such as extreme rigidity or chaos, are identified, revealing the specific gaps that necessitate pedagogical intervention.

A key methodological feature of this study is its consideration of the inherent difficulties in assessing the socio-pedagogical state of young children (aged 3.5 to 11 years) using traditional written questionnaires [8]. Therefore, the "Draw-a-Family" technique, a projective art-pedagogical method, was employed to non-verbally diagnose latent psychological crises in children and disruptions in family boundaries [9]. Using this visual-diagnostic method, children's drawings are coded based on the specific "Parent-Child Alliance" scale. By analyzing the physical distance between family members, the relative sizes of the figures on paper, and their details, the extent of emotional alienation between the child and the parent—caused by the prolonged absence or rotation of the military personnel—is objectively measured.

Furthermore, to restore communication between parents and children and to enhance parenting competence, the family-centered intervention and visual-narrative methodology utilized within the US defense system were integrated. Within this methodological framework, parents and children independently create their own "life timelines" and express their emotional experiences using a visual "feeling thermometer." This cognitive-pedagogical process assists family members in analyzing their differing perceptions of a single event (e.g., the father leaving for deployment or moving to a new military base), alleviating misplaced feelings of guilt in children, and fostering mutual empathy.

The overarching theoretical and philosophical approach of this study is grounded in the concept of "Family Resilience." This framework necessitates studying the military family not merely as a collection of individuals, but as an integral and dynamic socio-pedagogical system that must collectively adapt to and withstand complex stress factors (such as constant rotations, the physical or psychological exhaustion of parents, and prolonged separations). The integration of these projective and empirical methods serves as a robust methodological foundation for developing socio-pedagogical support mechanisms for families within the defense system of Uzbekistan.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The analysis of research results conducted within the armed forces systems of the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada has revealed a number of practical pedagogical regularities regarding the diagnosis and improvement of parent-child relationships in military families.

The results of the study involving British Army families confirmed that family functioning changes drastically depending on the stages of the military deployment (rotation) cycle. Specifically, the spouses (wives) of currently deployed (CDF) and recently returned (post-deployed - PDF) military personnel rated the levels of family communication and satisfaction significantly lower compared to pre-deployed (PrDF) or non-military (NMF) families. In particular, families in the currently deployed group (CDF) reported the lowest quality of communication, whereas the post-deployed group (PDF) showed moderate results, yet considerably lower than those of non-military families. The results of the study involving young children demonstrated that in children's drawings assessed using the "Parent-Child Alliance" (PCA) scale, drawings by children of currently deployed military personnel recorded the highest indicators of instability and disruption. Young children depicted their fathers as physically distanced or separated from the rest of the family in their drawings. These findings empirically prove that the "Draw-a-Family" technique is a reliable visual-diagnostic tool that accurately reflects children's hidden emotions and their ability to perceive changes in family dynamics.

Meanwhile, a study involving 639 families of Canadian Armed Forces members identified the role of social support in coping with stress. The results indicated that the support provided by their personal family members, civilian (non-military) friends, and immediate spouses played a crucial role in maintaining the mental health of military spouses. Interestingly, support provided by other military families or military friends did not yield the expected positive effects. Researchers explain this by noting that military wives might feel embarrassed to discuss their difficulties with people in the same situation or fear that their problems might spread within the military community. Furthermore, it was found that during the deployment period, families primarily rely on the support of friends and relatives, whereas after the return, the direct social support of the spouse becomes a unique factor ensuring family well-being.

A 20-month study conducted within the US defense system's "FOCUS" program on improving parent-child relationships through cognitive-pedagogical approaches demonstrated high efficacy. According to the program's outcomes, post-intervention clinical anxiety levels among parents decreased from 20% to approximately 7%, and depression rates dropped from 25% to 8%. Children's behavioral problems decreased from 50% to 28%, and emotional disturbances were reduced from 40% to 22%. These positive outcomes were directly achieved through the practice of co-creating "life timelines" and visual narratives involving both parents and children. For example, a child's refusal to look at or speak to the father upon his departure for deployment was perceived by the father with a false conclusion and a sense of guilt that "my son hates me." During the narrative exchange process, however, it became clear that the 12-year-old son had isolated himself solely because he was afraid of bursting into tears in front of his father and upsetting him. It was scientifically confirmed that the improvement of resilience indicators such as family communication, problem-solving, and emotional responsiveness through these processes is closely linked to the reduction of psychological distress in both parents and childr

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the stability of the modern defense system and the professional effectiveness of military personnel directly rely on the moral-psychological climate within their families and the strength of pedagogical relationships between parents and children. Global experience, particularly comparative and empirical studies conducted within the armed forces of developed countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada, clearly proves that long-term deployments, regular territorial rotations, and

operational stress factors exert intense pressure on military families. During this process, primarily, internal family communication, parenting practices, and the socio-emotional adaptation of young children face serious challenges. Therefore, departing from traditional approaches and utilizing innovative, projective pedagogical mechanisms in working with military families has become an objective necessity of today.

Young children are unable to fully articulate verbally the crises in family relationships, the prolonged absence of the father, or the emotional alienation following his return. The results of studies conducted in the British Armed Forces demonstrated that projective art-pedagogical diagnostic methods, such as the "Draw-a-Family" technique, are of unparalleled importance in identifying the hidden experiences of young children. Specifically, in the drawings made by the children of deployed military personnel, a sharp disruption of the "Parent-Child Alliance" scale was observed; this condition was clearly manifested in the children depicting their fathers physically and emotionally separated and distanced from the other family members. This empirical evidence confirms the scientific validity of diagnosing psychological changes in children directly through their visual expressions.

At the same time, the joint cognitive and narrative activities of family members play an invaluable role in stabilizing family relationships. The experience of the "FOCUS" program, aimed at supporting families within the US defense system, demonstrated that systematically restoring family communication is the most effective way to overcome stress and anxiety caused by deployments. The practice of co-drawing a "life timeline" and visual storytelling (narrative) involving parents and children significantly reduced not only parental depression but also children's behavioral disturbances. This process allowed family members to share their individual experiences in a safe environment and resolve mutual misunderstandings in a pedagogically healthy manner.

Furthermore, studies conducted in the Canadian Armed Forces highlighted the issue of the family's connection with the external social environment. It became clear that in preserving the mental health of military spouses and enabling them to fully fulfill their child-rearing responsibilities, the direct social support provided by informal civilian (non-military) friends and personal relatives yields a much higher and more robust positive effect than the support from military networks.

In summary, the experience of foreign countries proves that diagnosing and correcting parent-child relationships in military families should be implemented not only through stereotyped standard Q&A sessions but via visual, art-pedagogical, and narrative communication tools encompassing the entire family system. These innovative mechanisms serve as the most advanced and scientifically grounded pedagogical solution for creating a healthy environment in military families, ensuring the socio-emotional development of children, and protecting them from various psychological crises.

REFERENCES

1. Skomorovsky, A. (2014). Deployment stress and well-being among military spouses: The role of social support. *Military Psychology*, 26(1), 44–54. https://doi.org/10.1037/mil0000029
2. Luthar, S. S. (2006). Resilience in development: A synthesis of research across five decades. In D. Cicchetti & D. J. Cohen (Eds.), *Developmental psychopathology: Risk, disorder, and adaptation* (pp. 740–795). John Wiley & Sons.
3. Saltzman, W. R., Lester, P., Beardslee, W. R., Layne, C. M., Woodward, K., & Nash, W. P. (2011). Mechanisms of risk and resilience in military families: Theoretical and empirical basis of a family-focused resilience enhancement program. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 14(3), 213–230. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-011-0096-1
4. Leon, K., Wallace, T., & Rudy, D. (2007). Representations of parent-child alliances in children's family drawings. *Social*

Development, 16(3), 440–459. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9507.2007.00392.x

5. Pye, R. E., & Simpson, L. K. (2017). Family functioning differences across the deployment cycle in British Army families: The perceptions of wives and children. *Military Medicine*, 182(9-10), e1856–e1863. https://doi.org/10.7205/MILMED-D-16-00317
6. Olson, D. H. (2011). FACES IV and the Circumplex model: Validation study. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 37(1), 64–80. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.2009.00175.x
7. Klepsch, M., & Logie, L. (1982). *Children draw and tell: An introduction to the projective uses of children's human figure drawings*. Brunner/Mazel.
8. Beardslee, W. R., Wright, E. J., Gladstone, T. R. G., & Forbes, P. (2007). Long-term effects from a randomized trial of two public health preventive interventions for parental depression. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 21(4), 703–713. https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.21.4.703
9. Walsh, F. (2006). *Strengthening family resilience* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.