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THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND THE MENTAL HEALTH OF AN INDIVIDUAL

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ABSTRACT
The family is a system whose members are independent, where each member is influenced by the system as a whole, and at the same time affects the health and functioning of the system. Better family functioning is associated with better mental status of respondents. Long-term changes in family structure can affect family function and thus the mental health of family members. The presence of depressive symptoms in parents is one of the main risk factors for the development of depressive symptoms in children in adulthood. Close emotional relationships with parents result in positive psychological outcomes for children, while bad emotional connections lead to negative outcomes. Family conflicts are most strongly associated with depressive symptoms. The family environment has a very significant role and impact on the mental health of the individual in all population groups. It is necessary to implement policies and strategies for the protection of mental health. The timely identification of dysfunctional families, which will be included in mental health promotion programs, and thus prevent further progression of mental illness, is also important.

KEYWORDS: Mental health, family, family environment, family functioning.

INTRODUCTION
The family is the basic unit of the social community and in all societies an important institution that occupies a very high place on the table of life values. The family is a system whose members are independent, where each member is influenced by the system as a whole, and at the same time affects the health and functioning of the system. Thus the health/illness of an individual affects the family and vice versa, the family structure affects the health/illness of the individual.[1] The family can be a source of health, attitudes about health and a source of family coherence. As an interconnected group of individuals, the family is sensitive to changes in its internal and external environment and is a mediator between the needs of the individual and society. Family crises refer to the disturbed psychosocial balance of the family system and can be developmental and non-developmental, they are important for development, because the further development of the individual and the family as a system depends on the success of overcoming and resolving.[2]

Long-term changes in the family structure could lead to a change in the family function, so measures must be taken to ensure that healthy family functioning continues. Research shows that better family functioning is associated with better mental status of respondents. With irreversible globalization, long-term changes in family structure can affect family function and thus the mental health of family members.[3]

FHC- Family Health Climate
The family environment should influence the behaviour of individuals and individual determinants. One of the relevant aspects of the family environment may be the family health climate. Family Health Climate (FHC) is a degree of family variable that reflects an aspect of a shared family environment. Because of the interactions between the shared family environment and individuals and their interactions, the family health climate should be associated with cognitive, motivational, and behavioural variables of individuals, with interactions related to physical activity or diet in the family, and with family life habits.[4] The impact of self-perception, family climate and social support plays a major role in reducing the incidence of mental disorders.[5]

Emotional security theory

Emotional security theory emphasizes the role of parent-child relationships in shaping children's psychological outcome. Relationships with parents are among the most important social relationships, especially in the early stages of life. Close emotional relationships with parents result in positive psychological outcomes for children, while bad emotional connections lead to negative outcomes. A large number of empirical studies in Western countries have shown that high-quality marital and parental relationships improve adolescent mental health. Adolescents who have good relationships with their mothers and fathers have lower depression scores.[6]

Family environment and mental health

Most studies that study the relationship between a parent's personality and the quality of parenting focus on the links between psychological functioning disorders and parental behaviour. Depressed mothers create a destructive and repulsive environment that adversely affects the child's functioning and psychological adaptation of the child, are less responsible and less adaptable to children's needs, show more anger and sadness, and less positive emotions than non-depressed mothers.[7]

The perinatal period can be a time of psychological adjustment for both parents. Perinatal anxiety and depression in a male family member or father are significant concerns due to the impact on the spouses and their families. Although the mental illnesses of mothers and fathers are correlated, depression in the husband or father exists even after the suppression of the mother's depression. Research shows that children of such fathers face an increased risk of adverse behavioural and emotional outcomes.[8]

Research states that a negative family environment is associated with depressive symptoms in offspring, and that a less supportive and more conflicting family environment is associated with current and future symptoms of depression in children.[9]

The presence of depressive symptoms in parents is one of the main risk factors for the development of depressive symptoms in children in adulthood, especially for female respondents. This effect was found in cases of both biological parents and adoptive parents.[10]

Children whose families are characterized as functional report fewer psychological problems compared to children from families with poor family functioning. Research shows that more than one-third (38%) of mentally ill parents describe their families as dysfunctional.[11] This is confirmed by other studies whose results show that depression is significantly negatively correlated with family functioning.[12]

The most important predictor of mental health is the relationship with parents, followed by parental upbringing, and pressure from parents. The results of many studies suggest that parents are one of the key factors contributing to the mental health of adolescents and as such are of great value and importance for planning the prevention and promotion of adolescent mental health.[13]

The family structure became smaller with increased industrialization and urbanization, and caring for older individuals within the family structure became more difficult. [14]

The results of the t-test show that there is a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) in the severity of depression in third-aged respondents living in institutional accommodation compared to respondents living at home with their families.[15]

Protective factors that affect mental health

The group of protective factors includes: positive and warm family relationships, support, clearly defined roles in the family, positive parental marriage, family harmony, acceptance of change, effective communication aimed at solving problems, time spent together, family traditions, finances (satisfactory economic status), spirituality of the family, health of family members, support.[13]

Risk factors affecting mental health

The group of risk factors includes: conflicts in the family, domestic violence, frequent stressful situations, inconsistent discipline, unrealistic expectations of parents, high-risk behaviours of parents and lack of social support and social isolation of the family. Family conflicts are most strongly associated with depressive symptoms.[13] Given that the support of friends and intimate partners usually replaces or at least complements parental support when adolescents become adults, it is interesting to discover that family relationships in adolescents have such lasting effects until middle age.[16]

CONCLUSION

Based on a review of scientific publications that have studied the family and mental health from different aspects, we can conclude that the family environment has a very significant role and impact on the mental health of the individual in all population groups. It is necessary to implement policies and strategies for the protection of mental health. The timely identification of dysfunctional families, which will be included in mental health promotion programs, and thus prevent further progression of mental illness, is also important.

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