Ethnocultural differences in role functioning of the family system

Gulnara Slanbekova a *, Maira Kabakova b, Aliya Kalniyazova c, Anargul Kassymzhanova d, Arna Aplashova e

Abstract

This study was conducted in 2010-2012 years, to examine the role of ethnic and cultural differences in family functioning and its relationship with the subjective satisfaction of the spouses family relationships. The objects of research family of Kazakh and Russian. Sample size - 40 families with different experience of life together. The methodological basis of the study was to system-integrative approach, reflecting the holistic and subjective nature of the object and subject of study. As a method of organizing the study was used comparative analysis. Research methods - the complex social and psychological techniques to study various aspects of role functioning family system: questionnaires, the questionnaire "Diagnosis of family adaptation and cohesion," the technique "Role expectations and ambitions in Marriage," questionnaire "marital satisfaction" sociogram Eidemiller. For the processing of the data were used mathematical methods of analysis and processing: two-factor analysis of variance, F-Fisher test, Pearson's coefficient of rank correlations.

Conclusions:
• The structure of the role functioning of Russian and Kazakh families differ in the degree of traditional egalitarianism (Kazakh families in more traditional roles than Russian families), although a trend towards parity between spouses because of integrative processes that take place at the intersection of traditional (collectivist) and individualistic cultures in a multicultural space of the CIS, including Kazakhstan.
• And in the Russian and Kazakh families important family decisions in most cases are not made solely head of the family (even though they both have identified the presence of the traditional concept of head of household), and jointly by both spouses. In this role functioning couples Kazaks due ethnocultural characteristics.
• Considering the Russian and Kazakh in the continuum of individualism-collectivism, Russian than Kazakh culture are more individualistic and Kazakhs - more collectivist. Orientation difference for themselves and the environment in the view model of conduct causes behaviors Russian and Kazakh general and family relations in particular.

© 2013 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd.
Selection and peer-review under responsibility of Academic World Education and Research Center.
Keywords: family system, ethnic and cultural characteristics, marital satisfaction, family roles.

* Corresponding Author: Gulnara Slanbekova. Tel.: +7-775-339-9693
E-mail address: g.slanbekova@mail.ru
1. Introduction

Nowadays all states of the former Soviet Union undergo the considerable transformations caused by social-economic and political changes of society and system of values of the modern person and by orientation on the cultural and historical, national and language sources. In this regard the thesis about importance of interrelation of culture and psychology of people gained public and scientific recognition, but the correct understanding of this interrelation, its main mechanisms, in our opinion, is not yet complete in modern society.

In this plan the important place is taken by the researches of family directed on clarification of its deep essence, studying of its regional and national specifics. It allows revealing adequately both the general regularities of its formation and development, and special and single in their manifestations. Only complete conceptual consideration of family, approach to it as to the multidimensional, dynamic phenomenon in interaction with other social educations will allow making an objective assessment of its status and a role in the modern world constructed on the scientific bases (Gosman, 1995).

Features of the matrimonial relations in family systems of Kazakhs and Russians are caused by specifics of their national mentality, as well as cultural and historical traditions of studied ethnoses.

This research allows revealing social and psychological features of the matrimonial relations in family systems of Kazakhs and Russians in the conditions of uniform polycultural space. It can promote creation of new programs and algorithms of diagnostics, with use of the adapted, reliable diagnostic tools. As a whole, it gives new opportunities for improvement of quality of social psychological assistance rendered to families on problems of the matrimonial relations.

Research goal - studying of cross-cultural distinction of role functioning of a family by means of identification of features of intrafamily interaction of spouses determined ethnically and culturally.

Subject of research is a nuclear family consisting of the main family members (husband, wife, and children) and features of role structure of a family. Research was conducted on the basis of public association "Semya" Center /"Family" Center/ (Karaganda), the object of research was married couples, with a various experience of coupledom, living in Karaganda.

In research we proceeded from the assumption that the features of role functioning in a family are caused by ethnocultural and sociocultural features. In particular, structures of role functioning of Russian and Kazakh families differ in traditional character degree - equality (the Kazakh families are more traditional in distribution of family roles, than the Russian families).

For collecting the main diagnostic information on features of role functioning of the Kazakh and Russian families the questionnaire developed by us and Eidemiller's sociogram were used. The questionnaire allowed receiving information on length of coupledom of spouses, their age and social characteristics. Such parameters of family system as its role structure, existence and the characteristic of external and internal borders, degree of emotional proximity of spouses with a family, existence and the characteristic of family rules and traditions, features of behavior of spouses in the conflict and difficulty and problems in family life were assessed. Besides these parameters of diagnostics of family system, the questionnaire gave the chance to define, what solutions of family problems are undertaken by spouses, what they would like to change in the relationship. At the same time, the projective technique "Family sociogram" allows revealing the provision of subjects in system of the interpersonal relations and defining the nature of communications in a family.

2. The findings of the study

The obtained data are grouped so that to carry out the analysis of functioning of family systems in two groups. On the basis of integrative model of system family diagnostics used by us such parameters of family system as structure, communications in a family, role structure of a family were considered (Chernikov, 2001).

As the criteria of an assessment of family structure unity, hierarchy, external and internal borders were marked out. The assessment of family communication was carried out on the basis of such parameters as family rules and the traditions regulating interaction between family members. The analysis of role structure of families was carried
out at the same time on the basis of such parameters as initiative in discussion of problems, conflict interaction, and in establishment and control of observance of the family rules regulating family communication. Besides, we also analyzed difficulties in family life, the possible reasons of their emergence, as well as changes wished by spouses in family functioning.

For detection of significant statistical distinctions between groups when comparing data we used $\varphi^*$ criterion (Fisher angular transformation).

So, firstly we estimated the indicator of unity of a family. The term unity is defined as emotional communication, closeness or attachment of family members (Baker, 1991). In relation to family systems this concept is used for the description of degree to which family members see themselves as the connected whole.

The Fisher coefficient of angular transformation $\varphi^*$ showed that on a significance value $\rho \geq 0.05$ between the groups insignificant distinctions in indicators of parameter of unity are observed. Therefore, there is a high degree of unity both in the Kazakh families and in the Russian families. However, in the Russian families this indicator differs a wide spacing of empirical data.

The following parameter of family structure analyzed by us is family hierarchy. In both groups high rates of parity between spouses in decision-making (equality) are found, and between the groups significant distinctions were not found.

It should be also noted that in 30% of Kazakh families domination in a family belongs to the husband, the reverse tendency takes place in some Russian families (25%) in which domination belongs to the wife.

As the following indicator of an assessment of family structure we analyzed external and internal borders of family systems. The term border is used in the description of relationship between a family and a social environment, as well as between various subsystems in a family. Family therapists consider development of borders one of important parameters of evolution of family structures. Family borders can also be expressed through the rules which define who belongs to this system or a subsystem and how they belong to it [4].

Between the groups the essential distinctions on existence of external and internal borders are found: external borders $\varphi^*_{\text{emp}} = 3.54$ ($\rho \geq 0.01$), internal borders $\varphi^*_{\text{emp}} = 2.58$ ($\rho \geq 0.01$).

According to the structural theory the dysfunction of system is set by extreme options. Weakness of external borders of family system in the Kazakh families says that family members have many communications with environment and thus few communications in the system. For example, the family seldom gathers. In this case the family becomes similar to the hotel guests living under one roof (Varga, 2000).

Weak internal borders in the Kazakh families, on the contrary, can testify that parents, probably, do not have enough intimacy, they can function only in parental roles, thus, losing the matrimonial relations.

On the basis of the abovementioned and the additional analysis of answers to questions of the questionnaire it is possible to assume that in the Kazakh families the smear or lack of external borders can be explained with cohabitation of members of the nuclear family with relatives of one or both spouses. As the reason of this circumstance all surveyed married couples mentioned the constrained housing conditions, lack of possibility of their improvement. This fact also can be at the bottom of a smear or lack of internal borders between subsystems in the most family system.

External borders in the Russian families, on the contrary, are too rigid, which can testify that in these families there are few exchanges between a family and an environment. In this group the rigid internal borders between parental and children's subsystems were also revealed, and it gives the chance to assume some distancing of the parents occupied only with themselves and their own interests.

Further we analyzed such parameters of communication in a family as rules and traditions regulating interaction between family members. It should be noted that in two groups the high rates on existence of the rules regulating interaction between family members are observed, and there is the prevalence of public rules which are stated openly, they can be discussed, it is possible to argue on them and they can be changed.

It is known that communicative rules help family system to keep balance. In case rules are not observed, anxiety of family members increases. Among married couples in both groups a certain percent of dysfunctional families was found, in which usually there is a ban on open, verbal metacommunication, there are many unspoken rules. No essential statistical distinctions were revealed between group indicators on this parameter.
The high rates in both groups testify to the openness of married couples, which says about readiness of spouses for open discussion of difficulties and the problems arising in family life. This fact can also serve as confirmation of opinion of the majority of practical family psychologists on an escalating psychotherapeutic role of the family consisting in emotional support by members of the family of each other.

At the following stage of our work the role structure of families was analyzed, which was defined by such parameters as an initiative of family members in discussion of problems, in conflict provoking, as well as in establishment and control of observance of family rules. Considerable statistical distinctions were found for the indicator of participation of all family members in statement and discussion of family problems ($\phi \ast r_{em} = 3, 31 (\rho \geq 0,01))$. So, if in the Russian families this indicator is found in 25% of families, in the Kazakh families it equals to zero. It can testify to the bigger traditional character in distribution of family roles in the Kazakh families, unlike the Russian families in which bigger equality in role functioning of all family members is observed.

The further analysis of role structure of families showed that the initiative in conflict interaction in both groups belongs to the wife. This fact can testify to bigger motivation of women in discussion and solution of family difficulties, unlike men who due to various circumstances are usually less included in family interaction.

As the following parameter of role structure of a family the role of family members in establishment and control of observance of family rules was considered. In both groups equality between spouses in performance of these roles is observed. Approximately the same data were obtained at an assessment of participation of spouses in control of observance of these rules. So, in half of the Kazakh and approximately in half of the Russian families the joint control of observance of family rules is practiced, which can testify to high degree of coherence of spouses in distribution of this role.

The analysis of difficulties in family life and the possible reasons of their emergence showed that in family life of the Kazakh and Russian families considerable statistical distinctions are observed. So, in the Russian families practically all indicators considerably exceed indicators of the Kazakh families, except housing problems, since this indicator in the Kazakh families slightly exceeds an indicator of the Russian ones.

The empirical data obtained by means of a projective technique "Family sociogram" allowed revealing the position of subjects in system of the interpersonal relations and defining the nature of communications in a family.

Between the groups the significant distinctions in an indicator of a close arrangement of members of families relative to each other are revealed. The kind of "adhesion" when circles layer one on another, adjoin or are in each other (merge and inclusion), is revealed in half of drawings of Russians and in 25% of the Kazakh families that speaks about not differentiation of "ego" of members of these families, the existence of symbiotic communications in a family.

The further analysis of styles of family communication did not reveal significant distinctions between the groups. In 62.5% of Kazakh and in 60% of Russian families family members use direct style of communication. Use of indirect style of communication takes place in 40% of Russian and in 37.5% of the Kazakh families. It is possible to assume that the families using direct style of communication are more safe in the functioning since such style of communication of family members is more effective than indirect style. Respectively, the families using mostly indirect style of communication can be assigned to the category of dysfunctional families since in them there is a ban on open, verbal metacommunication that creates additional difficulties in functioning of family system.

2.1. Debate

Studying a family today it is possible to allocate a number of social and psychological metamorphoses which allow defining its problem zones, such as: structure deformation; change of its socioeconomic and social and psychological functions; rigidity of the internal and smear of the external borders; increase in percent of the families stopping their life cycle. Therefore, scientific and practical need of studying of a family as some social and psychological integrity in the plane of a current state of CIS countries taking into account socio-historical, social and economic, political, cultural and social and psychological transformations remains.

In psychology there is considerable experience of research of family and family relations which demands integrative and subject judgment in a context of system approach taking into account social and psychological
factors. Today the uniform polycultural space of the countries of the Commonwealth is considered one of the fundamental social and psychological factors. The uniform polycultural space promotes social-psychological unity of the various people of one state, formation of general views, values, behavior. Nevertheless, in connection with the appeal of the people of the CIS to their language and cultural bases, on the first place more and more often there are national and psychological distinctions shown at the level of cognitive, emotional and behavioral social-psychological features.

3. Conclusion

In spite of the fact that in both groups of families the high rates concerning parity between spouses in decision-making (equality) are revealed, approximately in half of the Kazakh families domination in a family belongs to the husband, while approximately in a quarter of the surveyed Russian families domination in a family belongs to the wife.

We also found out considerable statistical distinctions in an indicator of participation of all family members in statement and discussion of family problems that testifies to bigger traditional character in distribution of family roles in the Kazakh families, in which this role is carried out mainly by parents, unlike the Russian families, in which bigger equality in role functioning of all family members is observed.

Thus, the results of the research conducted by us show that the structure of role functioning of the Russian and Kazakh families differs on traditional character degree – equality (the Kazakh families are more traditional in cast, than the Russian families). Considering Russians and Kazakhs in an individualism-collectivism continuum it is possible to note that the Russians in comparison with the Kazakhs have more individualistic culture, while the Kazakhs have more collectivist culture. The distinctions of orientations to themselves and to the opinion of an environment in a choice of model of behavior determine features of behavior of Russians and Kazakhs in general and in the family relations in particular.

References

Baker, K.G. (1991), M. Bowen’s Family systems Theory. Psychology questions, (pp. 6, 56-64)