

Abstract

The aim of the study was to describe the perception of the family by child clients of counselling psychological clinics and compare the perception of family cohesion with children with internalizing and externalizing symptoms. The research file consisted of 124 children aged 5-18 (mean 10.4). Children were administered FAST (Family System Test). We assumed that total family cohesion would be lower in the families of children with externalizing symptoms than in the families of children with internalizing symptoms. This assumption was not supported, there were no significant differences in the level of overall family cohesion among children with externalizing and internalizing symptoms, but the two groups differed from the children without symptoms. The results are in accordance with the theoretical assumption of a linear relationship between family cohesiveness and adaptation of family members. We also assumed that dyadic cohesiveness in the father-mother pair would correlate with dyadic cohesiveness in the child-father pair, and gained data provided support for this assumption. The occurrence of inverted hierarchies and intergenerational coalitions in our sample is higher than in the general population. Qualitative analysis of children's verbal commentaries on family representations supported the outputs of quantitative data analysis: children without significant difficulties more often described the typical situation in the family as being comfortable, children with upbringing difficulties as tense, children with anxiety troubles described somewhat more often quarrels or failed to provide a verbal comment of typical representation. Verbal comments on the representations distinguished among children with different types of symptoms. Boys and girls and younger and older children did not differ in either the quantitative characteristics of family representations or the verbal comments on representations. Most of the children with different types of difficulties distinguished the typical representation including comments on it, the ideal representation children with different types of difficulties described very similarly. Child's information has proved to be useful for understanding, how he or she experiences relationships in their family, and is a relevant source of information about the family life.

Keywords: family, cohesion, child, relationships, influence