



E-ISSN: 3108-4192

APSSHS

Academic Publications of Social Sciences and Humanities Studies

2022, Volume 2, Page No: 52-62

Available online at: <https://apsshs.com/>

## Asian Journal of Individual and Organizational Behavior

### Understanding Family Concepts among Preteen Orphans

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#### Abstract

This article outlines the findings of empirical research on the socio-pedagogical factors influencing preteen children in orphanages in shaping their views about their own families and the family as a spiritual ideal. The study identifies three key components of how children perceive the family as a spiritual ideal: emotional, informational, and behavioral. The research was conducted based on specific criteria (informative-cognitive, motivational-valuable, and activity-based), indicators, and levels (medium, high, and low). It also considered the principles governing spiritual development and the factors that contribute to personal spiritual transformation. The findings demonstrate the effectiveness of socio-pedagogical conditions, such as considering the age, gender, and social background of children in orphanages when shaping their perceptions of family as a spiritual ideal. In addition, creating a supportive educational environment through fostering family-like connections is crucial for the formation of these perceptions. The integration of socio-pedagogical efforts to enhance children's personal experiences is also important in shaping their views of the family as a spiritual ideal. The results of this study support the effectiveness of the research approach, particularly in terms of age and gender differences in the development of these ideas among preteen children in orphanages.

**Keywords:** Orphanage, Family, Preteen Children, Spiritual Ideal, Socio-Pedagogical Conditions.

**How to cite this article:** Uskova A, Murtaziev E, Moskalyova L, Yeromina L, Podplota S, Milchevska H. Understanding Family Concepts among Preteen Orphans. Asian J Indiv Organ Behav. 2022;2:52-62. <https://doi.org/10.51847/GmGFL9lcNr>

**Received:** 08 October 2022; **Revised:** 14 December 2022; **Accepted:** 15 December 2022

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#### Introduction

Humans are inherently spiritual beings, born with goodness. The spiritual development of younger generations must be continuously nurtured through the guidance of teachers and mentors. The level of spirituality of a person is largely shaped by their family environment, as well as the interactions they experience within the educational space.

The process of forming ideas about a spiritual ideal is deeply intertwined with an individual's connection to the spiritual potential of society, where personal transformation and spiritual growth occur. In the Kievisas and Otych [1] Concept of



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Spirituality, the notion of a spiritual ideal is closely linked with an individual's spiritual development. The closer someone is to this ideal, the more refined their spiritual qualities become. Spirituality is expressed through the values upheld in social behavior, such as the recognition of personal identity, respect for differing opinions, opportunities for self-development, and the fulfillment of needs.

Understanding the family as a spiritual ideal is a key concern in the modern educational system. Families play a crucial role in satisfying a child's spiritual needs. However, children in orphanages often grow up within a collective consciousness rather than a family structure. Therefore, their level of spirituality influences how they perceive the family as a spiritual ideal. This article aims to explore and assess the effectiveness of socio-pedagogical strategies in shaping children's ideas about the family as a spiritual ideal in orphanages.

The idea of a happy family life has been explored by scholars both in Ukraine and abroad. For example, Buettner *et al.* [2] argue that it is the responsibility of politicians to prioritize the happiness of society. They suggest that political leaders should focus on strategies that support happiness, provide assistance to vulnerable populations, and improve the social climate by promoting voluntary work and community initiatives. Supporting social networks, investing in meaningful social activities, and prioritizing healthcare are seen as effective means to enhance societal happiness.

The development of society cannot progress without considering the spirituality of its individuals, which is particularly challenging for children in orphanages. We believe that the absence of well-defined social and educational efforts to develop spirituality and the spiritual ideal in these children slows the potential for reform in public life. Thus, fostering the understanding of the family as a spiritual ideal in children should be rooted in interactions with their caregivers and the educational environment.

Bekh [3] outlines 13 principles that govern the spiritual life of an individual, emphasizing key laws that guide personal spiritual development. These include: the law of personal action in spiritual life, the law of continuously expanding the self-spirit (actualizing values over needs), the law of achieving maximum spiritual fulfillment (finding joy in charitable acts), the law of progression from spirituality to spiritualization (enhancing one's moral system through conscience and dignity), and the law of maintaining a motivational-valuable consistency in life (which defines a person's spiritual and practical state as a continuity of goodness). Other laws focus on the creation of spiritual spaces, rational openness and secrecy, spiritual flexibility, and the avoidance of paradoxical growth in pupils' development. Additionally, Bekh emphasizes the importance of self-awareness ("Know Yourself"), the transformative power of knowledge into action, and universal spirituality defined by love, reverence, and respect.

Building on these laws, the work of Kievisas and Otych [1] further explores the factors contributing to a child's spiritual transformation, including the role of the teacher as a spiritual mentor, the child's response to spiritual influence, and the spirituality of the environment in which the educational process occurs—whether in a formal educational institution or through interpersonal relationships within the process.

In the context of understanding the formation of ideas about family as a spiritual ideal in children raised outside their biological families, the research by Vergara *et al.* [4] stands out. They highlight the cognitive, emotional, and spiritual challenges faced by orphans in the Philippines. They categorize orphaned children into types: "parental orphans" (those who lost their father), "maternal orphans" (those who lost their mother), "full orphans" (those who lost both parents), and "social orphans" (those whose parents are absent due to poverty, alcoholism, or incarceration). These children often struggle with emotional support, and the lack of familial guidance complicates their decision-making and confidence in their actions.

We agree with this view that a child's past life experiences significantly shape their future choices. Teachers, in particular, play a pivotal role in offering support to orphans. Understanding the potential impact they can have on the child's development is crucial. This aligns with the research of Taniguchi *et al.* [5], who emphasize the importance of emotional and social support for orphans. Such support, which includes guidance, stress management, and fostering self-worth, is essential for the child's growth and development.

Given this, we believe that the process of forming the idea of family as a spiritual ideal should be especially emphasized when working with preteen children in orphanages (ages 10-12 years). This age group is particularly receptive to the development of such ideals, and supporting them in this area can have a profound impact on their emotional and spiritual growth.

## Methodology

The empirical research was conducted in two phases: 1) to assess key indicators related to the formation of ideas about the family as a spiritual ideal in preteen children at an orphanage, and 2) to evaluate the effectiveness of socio-pedagogical conditions in the development of these ideas.

A total of 192 preteen children from orphanages in the Zaporizhzhya region participated in the study. The breakdown of participants is shown in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Breakdown of participants

Age (years)	Total	Girls	Boys
10	65	35	30
11	67	35	32
12	60	40	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>82</b>

The study involved 682 observation sessions, 1,046 responses from pupils collected through conversations, and 1,125 completed questionnaires. These included responses from 60 parents (880 answers) and 23 teachers (245 answers).

The research acknowledges that a child's spiritual ideals and moral values are formed in early childhood within the family environment and later evolve into their perceptions of their own future family life. Thus, the concept of the family as a spiritual ideal is made up of three key components: informational (knowledge of marriage dynamics, division of family duties), emotional (relationships with future children and close family members), and behavioral (pre-marriage behavior patterns).

The study aimed to assess the level at which preteen children in orphanages formed their ideas about family as a spiritual ideal using three primary criteria: information-cognitive (measuring understanding of social norms related to family creation and functioning, children's rights and responsibilities, and spiritual development for family well-being); motivational-valuable (assessing motivations to take on roles such as husband/wife or mother/father based on the spiritual values of the family, and motivations related to family creation and responsible parenting); and activity (evaluating the ability to imagine future family life, make decisions, and engage in respectful communication with the opposite sex).

To explain the criteria and their indicators: the first indicator, socio-normative representations, covers moral, residual, and legal aspects of social reality. Our engagement in society is shaped by identification, imitation, and reflection, allowing us to understand children's perceptions of family as a spiritual ideal. The concept of "matrimoniality" in the literature refers to factors that shape how young people view marriage and family life. These factors, such as socioeconomic status, religion, race, and intellectual and age similarities, are influential. Matrimonial representations can be categorized into moral (values related to marriage and children), psychological (the necessary psychological knowledge for married life), pedagogical (skills for raising children), sanitary (hygiene aspects of marriage and family life), and economic (financial and household aspects). These factors are essential in shaping children's views of the family as a spiritual ideal, as the process of socialization teaches them behavior standards and how to choose a partner.

For the second indicator, which concerns children's knowledge about their rights and responsibilities when it comes to creating a family, folk pedagogy elements are considered. These norms, which are found across cultures, revolve around the obligations and values associated with family, social, and public life, including marriage, childbirth, and child-rearing. Understanding these shared cultural values is important in shaping a child's ideas about the family as a spiritual ideal.

The third aspect of the informative-cognitive criterion involves understanding spiritual and moral self-improvement for the well-being of future families. This component stresses the need for integrating spirituality in children's education. As highlighted by Adams [6], a child's spiritual development is influenced by the creation of a spiritual environment that fosters belief, self-confidence, and openness. Adams emphasizes three methods for nurturing spirituality: creating spiritual experiences linked to traditions, adopting a multidisciplinary approach, and enhancing self-awareness. Similarly, Rouholamini *et al.* [7] underscore the role of spiritual education for orphans, focusing on themes such as their relationship with God, finding meaning in tough times, and developing life satisfaction—concepts that can be beneficial in orphanages in Ukraine where spirituality is often neglected in educational practices.

In orphanages, some children experience relationships that mirror those of family bonds, particularly those from larger families with age differences. This kinship-like dynamic is valuable, as Perez [8] notes that such relationships are crucial for forming strong social connections. For example, during challenging periods, Spanish and Mexican settlers demonstrated an expansive understanding of family by including newcomers in their community for work, which was both a practical necessity and a form of social protection. In orphanages, the constant presence of children allows them to interact not only as peers but as members of a collective family-like unit. Through shared activities like cleaning or gardening, children learn to appreciate family values and relationships.

Research by Stavrova and Luhmann [9] discusses how different attachment types—such as close, relational, and collective—can impact life satisfaction, which, in turn, influences future family dynamics. In orphanages, children's relationships often fall under the category of collective attachment, which can aid in shaping their perceptions of family as a spiritual ideal. Bryant *et al.* [10] also point out that a higher frequency of positive memories and experiences is linked to greater life satisfaction, suggesting that the quality of a child's social interactions plays a critical role in their future outlook on family life.

Historically, the Ukrainian family system has been rooted in a patriarchal structure, with the state and church having strong control over family life. Recently, however, new family forms have emerged, such as "child-centered" families and common-law marriages, reflecting societal shifts towards individualism. These changes, while indicative of evolving family structures,

have also resulted in negative social consequences such as depopulation and difficulties in the social integration of the younger generation.

In orphanages, with the absence of parents as the primary socializing agents, there is a need for a “substitution factor,” where educators and social workers step in to fulfill these roles. These figures must be equipped to guide children in their spiritual and moral development, helping them form a vision of the family as a spiritual ideal.

The second criterion—motivation to fulfill roles like spouse or parent based on spiritual family values—is essential in shaping the perception of family as a spiritual ideal. Motivation is a key driving force in any activity, and research distinguishes between conscious motives (such as ideals and convictions) and unconscious ones (such as desires or impulses). In marriage, common motivations include love, spiritual affinity, psychological compatibility, moral considerations, and material factors. These elements influence how children understand family roles and develop their ideas about family as a spiritual ideal.

The process of selecting a marriage partner can be understood through the “filter” theory developed by Kerckhoff and Davis [11]. In this framework, partner selection is depicted as a gradual process where individuals pass through several filters that narrow down the pool of potential partners. Initially, the “residence filter” ensures that only those who can feasibly meet are considered. The next filter, the “homogamy filter,” eliminates people whose social characteristics don’t align. At this point, individuals begin to interact with others who are socially compatible and attractive. Subsequent filters focus on matching values and role expectations, with marriage being the outcome of successfully passing through all these stages.

Centers [12] proposes an instrumental theory, emphasizing that individuals seek partners to meet their personal needs, with some needs being more important than others. He suggests that people are drawn to those whose needs are either similar or complementary to their own. This theory focuses on the practical aspects of partner selection, considering the alignment of needs between potential partners.

Murstein’s [13] “stimulus-value-role” theory, widely recognized in studies of marital selection, outlines a progression through three key stages: “stimulus,” “value comparison,” and “role compatibility.” The first stage, stimulus, occurs when two individuals meet, and initial attraction forms based on physical appearance, personality, or social skills. If this attraction is mutual, they move to the value comparison stage, where they discuss their views on life, marriage, family roles, and child-rearing. If these values align, the relationship progresses to the role stage, where partners assess if their behaviors meet each other’s expectations for roles within the marriage. Murstein’s theory suggests that the progression through these stages is essential for building a lasting relationship and that decisions made too quickly are unlikely to result in a fulfilling marriage. Similarly, Reiss’s (1976) Wheel Theory of Love explains partner selection through four interconnected stages: initial relationships, self-disclosure, the formation of interdependence, and the fulfillment of basic needs. Reiss’s theory proposes that love evolves gradually, with each stage contributing to the deepening of the relationship. The absence of any stage can hinder the development or stability of love.

Winch’s [14] Complementary Needs theory posits that successful relationships are built on the compatibility of social and psychological traits. Lovers should complement each other’s needs, with one partner fulfilling aspects that the other lacks. However, while this theory identifies traits that might make a person more attractive, it doesn’t guarantee a happy family life, as it doesn’t account for the complexities of emotional and social compatibility.

Bronfenbrenner [15] expands on the influence of external factors on family life through his mesosystem and external environment models. He argues that a child’s development is shaped not only by their immediate family but also by broader environmental influences such as the parents’ social networks and life conditions. His research includes models that examine how children form readiness for adult life, based on their experiences within these systems. The “chronic system” considers normative (life events such as school and marriage) and non-normative (divorce, illness) transitions. The “social address” model, focusing on all aspects of family life, helps in understanding readiness for future family life. The “process context” model emphasizes the relationship between mother and child, highlighting factors such as social class and maternal influence on development.

Bronfenbrenner’s conclusion that children facing adversity may make more mature decisions than their peers provides insight into the resilience and adaptive capabilities children can develop, especially when considering their future roles in family life. Pillay [16] explored the influence of psychological and pedagogical services in educational institutions on shaping children’s attitudes toward independent living, identifying key agents of change such as love, attention, and concern. These factors play a crucial role in children’s socialization and emotional development. Gentzler *et al.* [17] also investigated how maternal ideals impact children’s emotional socialization, demonstrating that mothers can project their values and desires onto their children. This suggests that the motives for creating a family are not instantaneous but rather part of an ongoing process influenced by parental guidance and values.

An important unconscious motive for marriage and family life is the “deficiency motive.” This can arise from a range of emotions and experiences, such as low self-esteem, a feeling of inferiority, or the fear of a future without support. In some cases, marriage might even be seen as a way to “rescue” oneself from personal or societal problems. These unconscious motives can influence individuals’ choices of partners, complicating their decisions and shaping their future family lives. Such

motivations, both conscious and unconscious, are crucial in guiding behavior and the decision-making process related to marriage. Factors like social status, gender, age, and personal life values also play a significant role in these decisions.

In their study of orphanages, Ganga and Maphahal [18] highlighted the importance of educators in “dismantling the oppression of children.” Educators and public organizations can help shape children’s visions for a more socially just future, encouraging positive interaction with their guardians or substitute parents. This close communication can help prevent the emotional isolation of children and foster healthier relationships between children and adults.

Empirical research in orphanages revealed that many children had difficulty articulating their thoughts on what constitutes a “spiritual ideal” or why they might want to get married. Some children even expressed a reluctance to have families, citing negative experiences such as parental quarrels. Others spoke of wanting a family for superficial reasons, such as financial security. This suggests that these children are poorly motivated for family life and do not view their parental family as an ideal model. Many of these children have experienced emotional, social, and psychological deprivation due to their upbringing, which impacts their understanding of family roles and relationships.

Living in an orphanage can limit the development of social roles, leading to challenges in forming a clear gender identity. This can result in difficulties in understanding the roles of father and mother in a family setting, which further complicates their perceptions of family life. Research indicates that children in orphanages often struggle with role confusion, which affects their ability to identify with and prepare for traditional family roles.

The moral relationship between future marital partners and between parents and children must be taken into account when forming ideas about the family as a spiritual ideal. In our research, we focused on motivation for responsible fatherhood and motherhood, emphasizing the importance of developing self-control and emotional regulation in children. Yi *et al.* [19] studied how mothers’ reactions to their children’s emotions influence their emotional development. The rejection of positive emotions by mothers can leave lasting impacts on children’s emotional well-being, contributing to discomfort and difficulty in emotional expression. Addressing these issues through self-control exercises and project-based activities is crucial in fostering a healthy emotional environment for children.

Finally, Bryant *et al.* [10] explored the connection between positive memories and emotional experiences, showing that a child’s ability to enjoy life can influence their perception of family. Positive memories from childhood form the foundation for how children perceive their future family relationships and their desire to create ideal family dynamics. These emotional experiences, shaped by both positive and negative interactions, help guide children in forming aspirations for their future family life.

The socialization of modern children occurs under varied conditions, with the process of paternity being influenced by specific circumstances. One crucial factor is the need for children to feel warmth and understanding from their parents—those who are ready to meet their needs and respond to their requests. These early emotional experiences are vital for shaping future parenting. Children also require positive role models and a clear understanding of why certain rules and expectations exist and the importance of adhering to them. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate the formation of ideas about the family as a spiritual ideal into social and pedagogical processes. This idea, centered around “autonomy in conditions of interdependence,” highlights the balance between independence and connection in family relationships.

Grusec [20] emphasized the importance of interpersonal relationships across various cultural environments. Trust and belief in others’ good intentions were identified as foundational for fostering independence and self-esteem in children. Such positive family interactions enable children to regard the family as a spiritual ideal in their adult lives, shaping their future relationships and values.

The third component of the motivational-valuable criterion, as seen in various studies, is the influence of the parental family on shaping family life values. Our research categorized family traditions into four areas: nature management, daily routines (work, leisure), interpersonal relationships and family traditions, and the sphere of artistic culture and creativity. These family traditions deeply influence children’s understanding of family dynamics, preparing them for future family life.

The third criterion—activity—includes indicators such as the ability to model future family life, make decisions, and take responsibility for their actions, as well as communicate effectively with the opposite sex. The ability to model future family life is crucial for understanding the roles, responsibilities, values, and communication patterns within a family. This modeling draws upon the child’s experiences in their family environment and serves as the foundation for understanding the importance of family structures, roles, and support systems.

Family life models include ideas about the division of responsibilities within the family, the choice of a marital partner, and the family hierarchy. These models are shaped by the child’s needs, which include biological needs (such as physical development and health), social needs (family wellbeing, love, communication), and psychological needs (learning, self-development, emotional growth, and self-regulation). Hicks and King [21] discussed the importance of family relationships and how they satisfy these needs. The value of these social relationships forms the basis for the meaning of life, and this must be considered in efforts to develop perceptions of the family as a spiritual ideal, particularly for children in orphanages.



In our study, we also utilized Maslov's [22] hierarchy of needs, which identifies five levels: physiological needs (such as health and safety), the need for reliability (security and stability), social needs (love, belonging), esteem needs (respect, recognition), and self-actualization (personal growth and potential). These stages reflect the importance of fulfilling basic needs before achieving higher goals. However, for the formation of the family as a spiritual ideal, we were especially interested in the work of Pomytkin [23], who expanded Maslow's model to include a spiritual dimension. Pomytkin's hierarchy includes:

1. Motives for spiritual self-improvement – striving for beauty and perfection.
2. Devotion – helping others and multiplying goodness.
3. Wisdom – searching for and disseminating truth.
4. Righteousness – adhering to spiritual principles and harmony.
5. Holiness – fulfilling one's spiritual mission and ascending spiritually.

According to Pomytkin, spiritual development involves not only personal growth but also the awakening of one's higher spiritual nature, which may sometimes conflict with social expectations. This spiritual growth plays a crucial role in shaping the individual's understanding of family life and the ideal family dynamic, where values like love, respect, and mutual support are central.

In conclusion, understanding family dynamics and the role of interpersonal relationships is fundamental to forming a child's perception of the family as a spiritual ideal. Through a combination of emotional warmth, positive role models, and clear expectations, children develop the tools they need to form healthy relationships in adulthood.

The next factor in assessing the activity criterion for the concept of family as a spiritual ideal is the capacity to make decisions and take responsibility for the outcomes of those decisions. In any activity, individuals bring about changes in their lives, and the consequences of these actions depend on the individual's behavior and character. We find the research of Bekh [3] to be valuable in this regard, as it suggests that human activity is composed of actions. Based on this, we argue that five key actions—faithfulness, care, dedication, responsiveness, and sincerity—are essential in shaping one's perception of family as a spiritual ideal. "Activity" refers to specific mental-volitional actions, which form a significant part of an individual's character and behavior. These actions are integral to moral growth. According to Bekh, both direct and indirect actions serve as key indicators of moral development. Direct actions, involving face-to-face interaction, are fundamental and play a vital role in moral and spiritual development. Therefore, children in orphanages need to engage in direct experiences that incorporate these actions, fostering a deeper understanding of family as a spiritual ideal within small social groups.

We agree with Bekh that educators often neglect these critical actions and address them too briefly when discussed. Teachers should intentionally create situations where children can be guided to modify both direct and indirect behaviors. Being thorough and objective when evaluating these situations will help children progress in their development and shape their ideas about the family as a spiritual ideal.

Next, we focus on the third indicator of the activity criterion, which involves developing children's ability to communicate with members of the opposite sex, considering the particularities of gender-role socialization. It is important to recognize challenges such as underdeveloped role-playing abilities in younger children, lack of proper gender identification models, early sexual experiences, and low awareness of psychosexual and gender dynamics. For instance, in educational settings across the European Union, two main categories are used for sexual education: traditional methods (like cross-disciplinary lessons, optional classes, and parent-involved activities) and specialized approaches (including multimedia-based programs, collaborative learning, and group tasks with equal teacher-student involvement). Emphasis is placed on interactive activities like "brainstorming," which encourage student participation.

Based on various criteria and indicators, we categorize the levels of development in understanding family as a spiritual ideal in children in orphanages.

### *High Level*

- Well-formed socio-normative ideas about creating and sustaining a future family.
- Comprehensive understanding of rights and obligations in family creation.
- Knowledge of spiritual and moral development for family well-being.
- Strong motivation to fulfill the roles of spouse and parent.
- Desire to build a family and take on the responsibility of fatherhood/motherhood.
- Recognition of the family as a core value.
- Ability to model future family life, make decisions, and accept responsibility for actions.
- Effective communication with individuals of the opposite sex.

### *Average Level*

- Partial socio-regulatory ideas about family creation.
- Incomplete understanding of the rights and responsibilities of couples in the pre-marital phase.

- Limited awareness of spiritual and moral self-improvement for family well-being.
- General motivation to assume roles of spouse and parent, but with less focus on responsible fatherhood/motherhood.
- Inconsistent recognition of the family as the highest value.
- Difficulty in creating a clear vision for future family life.
- Occasional success in making decisions and taking responsibility.
- Selective interaction with the opposite sex.

These levels reflect that some children may need additional guidance to enhance their understanding of the family as a spiritual ideal.

The low level is characterized by underdeveloped socio-normative concepts regarding the establishment and functioning of a future family. This includes a lack of knowledge about the rights and responsibilities involved in creating a family, insufficient understanding of the importance of spiritual and moral self-improvement for future family well-being, and an absence of motivation to take on the social roles of husband/wife, father/mother, or to start a family with responsible parenting. Additionally, children at this level do not view the family as the highest value and cannot envision future family life, make decisions, and take responsibility for their actions. They also struggle with effectively communicating with members of the opposite sex.

Experimental work was conducted within the social and educational process at orphanages, where the students were observed at various times of the day: during lessons, breaks, after school, and in their free time. Observation charts were used to track the frequency of certain emotional states and communication situations, which provided insights into the existing perceptions of family as a spiritual ideal among boys and girls. Conversations with the children helped clarify their attitudes toward spiritual values and their ideals, which were evident in their behaviors, interactions with others, and general attitudes toward events and situations.

To better understand the factors influencing children's perceptions of family as a spiritual ideal, surveys were conducted with both parents and teachers. The questionnaires included questions about the children's relationships within their families, family unity, the emotional closeness between children and their parents and teachers, and how external influences, such as cartoons, stories, and peer interactions, shaped their ideas. The questionnaire, developed by L. Moskalyova, was presented to parents and caregivers through the method "The House is Called 'Light.'" An adapted version of this questionnaire was also distributed to teachers working with preteen children. All participants were asked to respond to 15 questions, with the results from 60 parents and 23 teachers being analyzed. In agreement with the orphanage administrators, it was decided to omit the names and surnames of participants in the published results.

## Results

The empirical study (diagnostic stage) of the main indicators related to the formation of the idea of the family as a spiritual ideal in preteen youngsters revealed several notable features. For example, the distribution of results based on age and gender is shown in **Table 2**.

**Table 2.** Results of the diagnostic stage in studying the state of formation of children's ideas about the family as a spiritual ideal (by age and gender)

Criteria	High (%)	Average (%)	Low (%)
<b>Information-cognitive</b>	15% (28)	25% (48)	60% (116)
<b>10 years old</b>	4 girls, 2 boys	6 girls, 2 boys	25 girls, 26 boys
<b>11 years old</b>	12 girls, 4 boys	18 girls, 10 boys	5 girls, 18 boys
<b>12 years old</b>	6 girls, 0 boys	10 girls, 2 boys	24 girls, 18 boys
<b>Motivational-value</b>	12% (23)	20% (38)	68% (131)
<b>10 years old</b>	2 girls, 2 boys	5 girls, 2 boys	28 girls, 26 boys
<b>11 years old</b>	9 girls, 4 boys	13 girls, 13 boys	4 boys, 10 boys
<b>12 years old</b>	6 girls, 0 boys	6 girls, 2 boys	28 girls, 18 boys
<b>Activity</b>	9% (17)	59% (113)	32% (62)
<b>10 years old</b>	2 girls, 2 boys	13 girls, 22 boys	20 girls, 6 boys
<b>11 years old</b>	6 girls, 2 boys	16 girls, 22 boys	13 girls, 8 boys
<b>12 years old</b>	5 girls, 0 boys	23 girls, 17 boys	12 girls, 3 boys
<b>Total Results</b>	12%	36.6%	53.4%

## Discussion

In continuing the study, we propose to consider several socio-pedagogical conditions and reassess their effectiveness. These conditions include:

- Taking into account the age, gender, and social characteristics of preteen children raised in orphanages during the formation of their ideas about the family as a spiritual ideal.
- Creating an effective educational environment by fostering family-like connections, is crucial in shaping their ideas about the family as a spiritual ideal.
- Ensuring the integration of socio-pedagogical influences to enrich the personal experiences of children as they form their ideas about the family as a spiritual ideal.

The developmental features of orphans and children deprived of parental care are shaped by the nature of their deprivation, such as difficulties in building relationships with others, reliance on external instructions, challenges in self-awareness leading to feelings of inferiority, and potential tendencies towards delinquency.

It is essential to highlight the age-related characteristics of orphanage pupils, which often include developmental delays in physical, intellectual, and emotional aspects due to the absence of unconditional maternal love. These children also experience heightened anxiety, a sense of societal hostility, rapid mood fluctuations, and an underdeveloped sense of self due to either a lack of family experience or negative experiences in institutional settings (e.g., group homes). Such children often experience feelings of abandonment, fear, loneliness, and inferiority, which can trigger internal conflicts and defensive behaviors, such as aggression, teasing, or loss of self-control.

Sex education also plays a significant role in our study, particularly in light of changing attitudes towards intimate relationships. Nowadays, the moral dimension of mutual responsibility in sexual relationships is being overshadowed by a focus on sexual freedom. Both family and educational institutions must provide children with information on the consequences of early sexual activity, the risks of premarital pregnancy, the societal stigma surrounding young motherhood, and the increasing number of children abandoned by young mothers.

We argue for the necessity of considering the social characteristics of children in orphanages. The concept of “sociality” refers to the complex social nature of a person, group, or society, manifested through a positive and creative approach to social life, which helps an individual realize their role in the family, community, and broader society. Sociality encompasses a system of values, qualities, and behaviors aimed at strengthening social cohesion and solidarity.

Based on research, it has been found that the social characteristics of children in orphanages primarily focus on biological and physical aspects of sociality. This is reflected in their limited social interactions, which restrict their choice of friends and contribute to feelings of emotional and social isolation. Such deprivation hinders the development of ideas about the family as a spiritual ideal, where relationships within the family should be grounded in mutual respect and the willingness to prioritize the family’s well-being.

To address the first socio-pedagogical condition, we took into account the type of deprivation experienced by orphanage children and implemented a media-reflective training method. This approach involves mediation activities led by a third party to help resolve conflicts and promote harmonious relationships. This method facilitates conflict resolution and helps mitigate the effects of deprivation on adolescents by fostering a peaceful and cooperative environment.

To implement the first condition, we developed a training program titled “Family happiness is my spiritual ideal,” which consists of seven topics: “Palette of family life,” “Love around the world,” “Birthday of trust,” “On mutual respect and more,” “In the country of health,” “From remarks to dialogue,” and “The road to family happiness.” This training aims to prepare students for family life by exploring and interpreting fundamental family values such as love, trust, mutual respect, health, and communication.

The training objectives include assessing students’ understanding of these values, fostering interest in family life issues, and helping students internalize and apply these ideas. A variety of methods, such as group discussions, role-playing, brainstorming, and critical thinking strategies, were used during the training to engage participants and deepen their understanding of the topic.

The second socio-pedagogical condition focuses on creating an effective educational space through the establishment of family ties, which is crucial in forming preteen youngsters’ ideas about the family as a spiritual ideal. This condition is based on the findings of contemporary research, which define educational space as a time-oriented characteristic that draws on past, present, and future experiences, shaped by the intensity of the information shared within this space. Educational spaces are areas where conditions are created to foster personal development, and for children, particularly social or biological orphans, these spaces are typically orphanages. Unfortunately, orphanages often have a reputation for being environments where children may be more prone to delinquent behavior.

However, we reject the idea that orphanages are socially and educationally ineffective. We believe that children’s primary socialization happens in the family and that orphanages can play a significant role in forming ideas about the family, especially when they provide a nurturing environment. Researchers such as Buschgens *et al.* [24] have emphasized the importance of family parenting styles in shaping children’s behavior. These styles—emotional warmth, rejection, and overprotection—serve as key predictors of a child’s behavior. Adolescents who lack emotional warmth and experience rejection are more likely to exhibit inattentiveness, aggression, and delinquency. Additionally, genetic factors play a role in children’s behavior, with parents and children being 50% genetically related, further influencing how children view family life.



Yet, studies also highlight that children's behaviors can be positively impacted by exposure to various parenting styles and community examples. In our study, we found inspiration in Şahin's [25] approach, where family therapy integrates the creation of a spiritual genogram—a map reflecting the religious and spiritual relationships within the family over generations. This tool has proven valuable in assessing the spiritual health of a family, and we see it as an essential method for enhancing the socio-pedagogical processes in orphanages. By using spiritual genograms, we can uncover the spiritual dynamics within a child's family background and its effects on their current spiritual life.

In line with this, we developed several socio-pedagogical projects aimed at overcoming family deprivation by fostering family ties. One of the key initiatives is the project “The Family Begins with Good,” which includes a variety of activities such as training exercises (“Values of My Family Life”), role-playing games (“Social Role Studio: Fitting,” “Rules of Life,” “Marriage and Family”), and debates on themes like “Official Marriage: Pros and Cons” and “Marriage, Family, and Law.” These activities aim to enhance the children's understanding of family life, its values, and its legal and cultural aspects. Additionally, events like “Happy Family Day” and “Happy Family Week” help establish stronger child-parent interactions, reinforcing the importance of family and joint activities in fostering shared values.

The third socio-pedagogical condition focuses on integrating socio-pedagogical influences to enhance the individual experiences of children. In many orphanages, socio-pedagogical work is limited to diagnostic methods without subsequent corrective measures, resulting in little to no progress in the children's development. Therefore, the pedagogical staff needs to follow structured socio-pedagogical guidelines, not just for imparting knowledge but also for fostering emotional awareness and the ability to analyze one's actions and emotions.

To achieve this, we developed a program of social and educational activities titled “Spiritual Treasure.” This program consists of nine topics (36 hours) covering areas such as “Matrimonial behavior as a construct of ideal family life,” “World of family emotions,” and “Responsible behavior of girls and boys as a component of family harmony.” The program includes interactions with specialists from various fields—social services, law, medicine, religion—to provide the children with a comprehensive understanding of modern family life, its spiritual and moral foundations, and the roles and responsibilities of individuals within the family unit.

After implementing these socio-pedagogical conditions and methods, the results were re-evaluated. The outcomes of the experiment demonstrated positive changes in the levels of preteen youngsters' understanding of the family as a spiritual ideal, as reflected in the updated data from the study (see **Table 3**). These findings indicate that when socio-pedagogical practices are integrated effectively and tailored to address the needs of orphanage children, their understanding of family life can be significantly enhanced, helping them develop healthier perspectives on family relationships and responsibilities.

**Table 3.** Comparative results of the formation of ideas about the family as a spiritual ideal in children at an orphanage

Criteria	Before the introduction of social and pedagogical conditions			After the introduction of social and pedagogical conditions		
	Levels					
	High	Average	Low	High	Average	Low
Information- cognitive	15% (28)	25% (48)	60% (116)	23% (44)	29% (55)	48% (93)
	10 years old					
	4 girls	6 girls	25 girls	9 girls	1 girl	25 girls
	2 boys	2 boys	26 boys	3 boys	21 boys	6 boys
	11 years old					
	12 girls	18 girls	5 girls	12 girls	18 girls	5 girls
	4 boys	10 boys	18 boys	4 boys	10 boys	18 boys
	12 years old					
	6 girls	10 girls	24 girls	6 girls	5 girls	29 girls
	0 boys	2 boys	18 boys	10 boys	0 boys	10 boys
Motivational- valuable	12% (23)	20% (38)	68% (131)	19% (37)	23% (44)	58% (111)
	10 years old					
	2 girls	5 girls	28 girls	2 girls	15 girls	18 girls
	2 boys	2 boys	26 boys	2 boys	2 boys	26 boys
	11 years old					
	9 girls	13 girls	13 girls	19 girls	3 girls	13 girls
	4 boys	10 boys	18 boys	4 boys	20 boys	8 boys
	12 years old					
	6 girls	6 girls	28 girls	10 girls	2 girls	28 girls

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Activity	0 boys	2 boys	18 boys	0 boys	2 boys	18 boys
	9% (17)	59% (113)	32% (62)	24% (46)	64% (122)	12% (24)
10 years old						
	2 girls	13 girls	20 girls	12 girls	18 girls	5 girls
	2 boys	22 boys	6 boys	20 boys	4 boys	6 boys
11 years old						
	6 girls	16 girls	13 girls	7 girls	24 girls	4 girls
	2 boys	22 boys	8 boys	2 boys	26 boys	4 boys
12 years old						
	5 girls	23 girls	12 girls	5 girls	33 girls	2 girls
	0 boys	17 boys	3 boys	0 boys	17 boys	3 boys
<b>Total results</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>36,6%</b>	<b>53,4%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>38,6%</b>	<b>39,4%</b>

## Conclusions and Future Directions

In conclusion, the study has demonstrated the positive impact of socio-pedagogical conditions on the development of preteen youngsters' understanding of family as a spiritual ideal in orphanages. The empirical evidence confirms that, through carefully designed educational practices and interventions, children's perceptions of family values, emotional connections, and their roles within the family can be effectively shaped.

However, this research does not address all facets of the issue. Therefore, future work can focus on several key areas, including:

1. Expanding spiritual and moral activities: Further development of spiritual and moral education activities for children in orphanages, along with their caregivers and guardians, is necessary. These activities should aim to deepen children's understanding of the spiritual and moral dimensions of family life and help them internalize these values.
2. Involvement of professional specialists: It would be beneficial to involve socio-pedagogical and psychological professionals in conducting workshops and training sessions for staff. Such training would help educators better understand the needs of children and support them in guiding these youngsters toward a healthy perception of family life.
3. Comprehensive family education: Future studies should look into more holistic approaches to family education that include spiritual, moral, legal, and emotional aspects of family life. This will not only help children understand family values but also encourage them to actively engage in building positive family relationships in their future lives.

In conclusion, while the current study offers valuable insights, there is significant potential for further work to refine and expand these efforts, ensuring a more comprehensive approach to shaping the understanding of family in children raised in orphanages.

**Acknowledgments:** None

**Conflict of interest:** None

**Financial support:** None

**Ethics statement:** None

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