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**CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF MUTUAL PERCEPTION OF
FAMILY MEMBERS**

Dissertation for earning a Ph. D. in Psychology

The research in carried out at Tbilisi State University

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Contents

Part I Review of the study and of an existing literature

Chapter I. General Description of the Work**3**

Chapter II. Characteristics of Family Relations.....**10**

Part I Empirical study

Chapter III. Methodology of the Study**15**

Chapter IV. Analysis of Results**21**

Chapter V. Conclusion.....**32**

References.....**38**

Chapter I. General Description of the Work

Significance of the research. Family is one of the basic social institutes, where an individual spends the major part of his life.

In the family a child learns how to communicate and co-exist with others. The Child's personality is formed and the values and norms are interiorized in the family, most probably serving as a guidance principle for the rest of one's life. The Child's adaptation to the social environment and his social competence are mainly determined by the family.

The social-psychological patterns characterizing adequate functioning of the individual in the society are manifested in the family.

Family, as a system, is a complex phenomenon and its study poses many difficulties. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is not so much family research, especially in Georgia. Below an attempt is presented to study the family as a whole, to analyze characteristic features and determinants of correspondence in mutual perceptions. Such an approach to the study of family defines its novelty and significance.

Goal of the research.

Aim of the research was to study the social-psychological preconditions, factors and characteristic features of the relations of the family members.

Tradition of the family research is basically focused on the study of dyadic relations - relations between the spouses, relations between the parents and children or relations between the siblings, only few studies deal with the family as a whole, making enquiry on all the members of the family.

Our starting point was consideration of the family as a whole and studying the mechanisms by which the family fulfills its functions. More specifically, we targeted at studying characteristic features of the family relations as represented in the family roles (mother, father, child) and family sub-systems (parents, spouses, children).

This approach has determined the selection of the participants, as well as the format of the study and data analysis.

The following study is focused on investigating the accuracy of mutual perception of family members. Accuracy of perception is one of the key components of social competence. Correspondence of perception of the person by the others to his/her self-perception is significant at least for two reasons:

1. Presentation of a person to others, how is she/he perceived by others has a great impact on functioning of the individual in the environment.
2. Opinion of the others is a useful source of information. Information about oneself obtained from a competent person helps the individual to discover certain features in the self.

Looking at the self from the other's perspective is very important. The safest environment for such perception is the family. In the focus of interest of the research was mutual perception of family members and the factors, determining such perceptions. More specifically it aimed at the clarification of the following issues:

1. To what extent self-perception of a person corresponds to the perception of him/her by other family members, i.e. correspondence of self-perception with perception by others (Characteristic A)
2. To what extent self-perception of a person corresponds to his/her view on how she/he is perceived by other family members, i.e. reflected perception (Characteristic B).
3. How accurate is a person's view on how she/he is perceived by other family members, i.e.c correctness (Characteristic C).
4. What is the impact of such interrelated variables as the role (mother, father, elder child, younger child), type of relations (parents, children, parents-children), age and sex of the perceiver on A, B and C characteristics.
5. Towards which family members a "positive bias" is shown – attribution of positive features to a salient person.

In addition to the answers to these questions, the study intended to examine two hypotheses:

1. Generalized trust, as personal characteristic permits greater gap between self-perception and reflected perception (Characteristic B), i.e. self-perception and impression on his/her perception by others differs more among individuals with high trust than among those with low trust.

2. The extent of self-disclosure to the other defines the greater correspondence between self-perception and perception of the person by the other (Characteristic A).

Scientific novelty of the work:

The study of Georgian family as a whole, could be regarded as scientific novelty of the work; Perceptual processes taking place in the family and their determinants, are studied according to the family roles (mother, father, elder child, younger child) and family subsystems or types of relations (parents, children, parents – children).

The following issues are in the focus of the study:

Characteristics of mutual perception of family members, characteristics of actual, reflected and biased perceptions, their dependence on the amount of self-disclosure and perceiver's level of trust.

Data, obtained as the result of research could contribute to the family studies. Data and methods used in the study could serve for family consulting.

Family is a complex organism and hence its study is associated with a host of difficulties. As them in the first attempt of studying in family as a whole in Georgia, questions which have arisen in the process of the research require further deliberations.

Main content of the study

Part I, chapter I. Overview of the existing research and sources of empirical data.

The chapter discusses basic approaches to family studies, their history, forms and life cycle of the family and family functions.

1.1 Basic approaches to family research

The following approaches to family studies are considered: sociological approach (Cherlin, 1999); functional approach (Parsons & Bales, 1955); symbolic interactionism approach (Cooley, 1912; Mead, 1934); systems approach (Minuchin, 1974).

The major focus of consideration is the systems approach to family studies.

According to the system theory, family is an alive, developing system, which, like biological and social systems is in the process of permanent development.

As part of an open system, family members are mutually dependent. They interact with one another and with the surrounding systems (school, employment, science, religion, state etc.).

Family, as a system, on one hand, attempts to maintain the existing relationships and on the other hand to develop and move to a higher level of functioning.

1.2. Review of Family Studies in historical perspective

Interest towards the functioning of the family, as a psychological unit and its main features emerged after the World War II and was mostly concentrated around psychotherapeutic issues.

Psychoanalytical (psychodynamic) therapy had great influence on development of family psychotherapy. Nathan Ackerman (Ackerman, 1958) was the first, who working with families applied team work.

The crucial moment in the development of the family studies was consideration of the family as a system.

Representatives of in Palo Alto School were the first, who looked at family from systems perspective. Don Jackson (Jackson, 1965), Jai Haley (Haley, 1976), Murray Bowen (Bowen,1940) and others are regarded as the founders of family system psychotherapy, which became the one of the widely accepted and therapeutically effective approach in family psychotherapy.

According to the family systems psychotherapy, a family is regarded as a whole, where a change in any part causes changes in all other parts. The family, as a live system, is involved in a constant exchange of information and energy with the outer world.

Family fulfills its functions through certain mechanisms. These mechanisms are: the structure of family roles, family sub-systems and the borders between them. Structure of the family roles determines responsibilities and activities of family members and the procedures for their implementation. Standards of the relationships are formed by repeated interactions, which, on their part, determine interrelations of family members. In normally functioning families the structure of roles is of a dynamic nature.

The study focuses on family subsystems, formed by parents, parents and children, and children. Family subsystems, so called holons (Minuchin & Fishman, 1981) are the differentiated sets of the family roles, which allow the family to realize its functions and in this way to ensure its vitality. One member of the family can be a member of several subsystems (e.g. of the parents, spouses, parent-child, children). The systems approach views family as an independent organism, which is more than the mere sum of its independent

subsystems. According to Virginia Satir (Satir,1988), family system is organized by certain sequences. It is viable, when all its components are well functioning.

Two types of system, an open and a closed one are discussed. They differ from one another by their response to the internal and external changes.

Family system is closed, if it prevents internal growth, if the rules in the family are strict, outdated, unclear and information exchange is not in place.

Family system is open, if the members are related, active, sensitive to one another and pass the information within and outside the system. The open system promotes internal growth.

1.3 Forms of the Family

The sub-chapter discusses various forms of the family. Families are differentiated by the following features:

1.Number of children: infertile families; families with one child; families with several children.

2.Composition:- single mother; Nuclear family; extended family; exten family.

3.Duration: Newly wed; young families; family, that is expecting a child; family of medium (3-10 years) duration; family of long duration (10-20 years); elderly couples.

4.Social composition: homogenous spouses belonging to the same social class and heterogeneous, spouses belonging to different social classes.

5.Climate: Happy; stable; cohesive; conflicting; instable; families.

6.Settlement type: Urban or rural.

7.Special conditions: Families of students; distant families-with spouses being in different geographic locations.

8.Management style and power distribution: Authoritative or egalitarian power structure.

1.4 Life Cycle of the Family

The section considers periodization of the family development according to various authors: E. Duvall (Duvall, 1957); M. Vasileva, (Vasileva1992), V. Satir (Satir, 1992); R. Hill (Hill, 1986) Dorothy and Rafael Backers (1992) and M.Erickson (Erickson, 1992). For our research purposes periodization provided by Erickson was chosen.

Erickson considers the following periods of family development:

- 1.Period of seeking of the partner;
- 2.Marriage and its consequences;
- 3.Birth of the children and relations with them;
- 4.Mature stage of the marriage;
5. Children leaving home;
- 6.Retirement and elderly age.

1.5 Functions of the Family

The sub-chapter discusses the main functions of the family. Nine functions of the family are discussed:

- 1.Reproduction function (sexual-erotic function);
- 2.Bringing-up function: Family is the main arena where children get socialized and acquire the features that serve them through the whole life. Family in a greater extent determines norms, attitudes and values of the child.
- 3.Emotional function: Support, respect, psychological defense are provided by the family.
- 4.Spiritual function: Providing the child with education and values.
- 5.Material function: Providing children with care and all necessary material goods, food, shelter and cloths.
- 6.Recreation function: Providing possibility to rest and restore the energy.
- 7.Regulation function: Regulating the relationships of family members with the outer world.
- 8.Family felicitology (giving happiness) function: providing family members with conditions ensuring their feeling of happiness.
- 9.Communication function: Provides privacy and the possibility to communicate.

Chapter 2. Characteristics of Family Relations

The chapter discusses the characteristic features of family relations, which are further analyzed in detail in the study, in particular:

1. Nature of interpersonal perception, correspondence of mutual perceptions in family and role of the family in self-perception;
2. Trust, its role in the family relations;
3. Self-disclosure and factors determining it.

2.1 Nature of Mutual Perception and the Role of the Family in Self-perception

Research on family provides the possibility of a better understanding of mutual perception, as family is an environment for realization of intimate personal relationships. All relationships are based on mutual perceptions. Mutual perceptions acquire special significance in the family, as the family processes determine formation of self – concept of a child. Perception is a complex process, which implies at least two social entities, the perceiver and the perceived. It is determined by both, by the perceiver and his/her experience, needs and condition, and the needs, experience and condition of the perceived. The impacts of the situation and the expectations of the perceiver towards the situation are also of a great importance.

The family is an environment, which provides an individual with the possibility to examine accuracy of his/her perceptions and to try out new behaviors.

Correspondence of perception is defined as a congruence between the self-perception of the target person and the perception of the target person by other. Correspondence is important in as much as it assists the person to define their strategy. Achievement of a specific goal often depends on others and therefore it is important for the person to know to what degree the other's perception corresponds to their self-image.

Character of the perception is dyadic and is mostly determined by three sets of factors (Funder & Colvin, 1997):

1. Features of the perceiver: A good versus a bad perceiver.

2. Features of the target: A person, who can be easily perceived versus a person who is difficult to perceive.

3. Accessibility of information: A big amount of the perceiver is information versus restricted amount of information; visible versus hidden features.

Forms of interpersonal perception in the family

Interpersonal relations are determined by both, the social and the psychological factors. Interpersonal relations are relations formed in real life, among thinking and sensitive individuals. The development of the relationship heavily depends on how people perceive each other. Perception basically is evaluative, as we describe people mostly by the adjectives. Attributing the words to the impression created by the other is a process, which is learned. It is apparently related to the level of verbalization of a person, it develops with the person and influences the formation of self-esteem.

The chapter reviews theories on the development of self-concept: Festinger's social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954); Higgins's self discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1988), Bandura's and his co-author's theory of social learning (Bandura, 1973). In Georgian psychology the issue has been studied by Shota Nadirashvili. According to him (Nadirashvili, 1975), in self-perception an individual creates his self-portrait, which is acceptable for him and in most cases to the social circle, in which he functions.

Theory of imitation is associated with the names of James (1900), Mead (1934) and Cooley (1912). On this concept rests the theory of Symbolic Interactionism. The theory considers self-concept as the reflection of the perception of the perceiver by others. According to this theory formation of the self is realized only in the relationship with the others. Perception, both, actual and reflected, i.e. the perceiver's understanding as how he/she is perceived by the other (especially in case of understanding perceptions of "significant others", according to the terminology of symbolic interactionism) shapes self-concept and hence determines interpersonal relations.

The term "significant others" implies individuals, who are significant for a child, so much that the child feels their influence on life. In early childhood these are the parents, later the teachers and peers who form "significant others".

According to James, Mead and Cooley, self is a social formation. Self cannot be formed in an individual brought up in isolation, as the formation of self requires social experience and feedback. This emphasizes the significance of the family, as a social environment in acquisition of knowledge about the self. Cooley's metaphor of the "looking-glass self", reflects the importance ascribed to understanding by the perceiver reactions of others on his/her behavior. So already beginning with the early childhood self-concept is the reflection of conceptions that perceiver's social surrounding has of him. The feedback that a person receives from his social milieu is of great importance. Providing the feedback, parents, peers and teachers make an immediate and significant impact on the formation of the self-concept of an individual.

Herbert Mead (1934) stated that the individual cannot perceive him/herself directly, but the perception is formed by other individuals or the entire social group. Looking-glass Self, according to Mead, is not only the reflection of the estimation made by significant others, but of a generalized estimation of the entire social and cultural environment.

2.2 Trust, as a Significant Characteristic of a Person

The concept of trust and its role in family relations is discussed.

Trust is the personality feature, that has a high significance importance in family relations.

Trust is considered to be critical to the human existence, determining the effectiveness of functioning of human systems (Jones., Couch., & Scott, 1997).

According to a number of authors (e.g., Erikson,1950; Rotter, 1967) trust forms a basis for the development of personal relationships of any kind. It is considered as an important factor in adjustment and a "healthy personality".

Erikson (1963) in his theorizing on the personality development declares trust as a stage in the development of personality. The trust to a primary caregiver determines the further developmental route of personality, as serves as a foundation for a subsequent social growth.

Trust is often described as a generalized expectancy that other people in general are reliable and honest (Jones, Couch, & Scott, 1997). Trust implies confidence in others.

Having a high level of trust is regarded to be more advantageous for an individual. People high in trust are seen by others and see themselves as happier, more ethical, more attractive

and more desirable. Research results of the studies also suggest that people high in trust are better adjusted individuals (Schill et al., 1980)

Trust is one of the defining features of a good family. According to Jackson (1965), good family is characterized by the following features: tolerance, trust, mutual respect, faithfulness, desire of being together, similarity of interests and values. Stability of a family is determined by the ability of the family members to deal constructively with conflicts, to negotiate various aspects of joint life and all these apparently rest on trust.

Two types, the generalized and the relational trust are most often distinguished. Generalized trust is higher in case of similarity in social identity – an individual trusts the other to the extent, at which one is similar to him, e.g. for experiencing trust, the belonging to the same group, nation or race is significant. Relational trust is trust that a person experiences towards individual or her behavior. Relationship trust is a result of a specific relationship with the person (e.g. marriage, friendship, relation of the chief with her subordinate, family relations, relations at job, with the neighbors). Research of relationship trust has a short history, though trust, as a variable of relations was identified long ago. In a host of studies relational trust was found to be related with self-disclosure. Trust is even considered as the central component of self-disclosure (Broder, 1987). These two constructs are in positive correlation (Steel, 1991). Trust is also closely related with the satisfaction with relationship, small number of conflicts, conflict resolution in relationships, as well as with attachment and integrity.

2.3 Self-disclosure and its Determining Factors

The role of self-disclosure in interpersonal relations is discussed.

Self-disclosure is one of the significant features of intimate relationships. Self-disclosure is the process of making the self known to other persons by means of intentional verbal communication. The ability of accurately presenting oneself to others is considered as a sign of a healthy personality (Jourard,1964).

Contents, frequency and timing of self-disclosure are considered as its key characteristics.

Factors, that determine self-disclosure could be related to the members of the relationship, the relationship itself or its context. Factors related to the members are: gender, personal features, need of self-disclosure and the internal condition of the disclosing person.

Mutuality, as a factor related to the relationship has a significant impact on the amount of self-disclosure. Jourard (1986) states, that usually, self-disclosure of one individual causes self-disclosure of his/her partner in relationships. Though, self-disclosure never is absolutely symmetric. One of the two always discloses more than the other, and this does not depend on who initiated the self-disclosure process (Davis, 1976).

The type of relationship greatly influences self-disclosure. People mostly disclose in close, personal relationships. The spouse, love object, friends and parents are the most frequently chosen recipients of self-disclosure (Mikulincer & Nacshon, 1991; Nezelek, 1993). Married people, usually more frequently disclose to their spouses and more rarely to their friends or parents (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958).

Women disclose more often and more intimately than men. The content of disclosure also differs among men and women, men's disclosure being more informative and women's more affective (Ginsberg & Gottman, 1986). Self-disclosure depends not only on the characteristics of the disclosing person, but on the features of the recipient of self-disclosure as well (Winstead, 1986). As in the case of the disclosing persons characteristics , the gender of the recipient influences self-disclosure as well. Men more often disclose to a spouse or women friend than to male friends (Komarovsky, 1974; Aukett, Ritchie, & Mill, 1988; Peretti, 1976; Rubin, 1985; Allan, 1989). People usually disclose much more in close and personal, than in more superficial or formal relationships. Consistent violation of this pattern is considered as a sign of disturbance.

A secure interpersonal climate is a necessary condition for opening up the self.

Family is the place, where a person has an opportunity to be open and to disclose, as the family creates a secure interpersonal climate, where the members usually enjoy great trust.

Part II. Empirical Part

Chapter 3. Methodology of the study

Chapter 3 discusses research questions and the methodology of the study.

In chapter 4 data analysis is provided.

3.1 Research questions

From the antique times, the Delphian oracles urged people to know their selves. Socrates is believed to be the most consistent carrier of this idea, according to whom, the way of truth and happiness runs through knowing of one's own self (Robins & John, 1997).

Others, their perception of the person, and person's understanding of their perception determine formation of a person's self-concept. Development of self-concept is a continues process, the base s of which is laid in early childhood and youth. Family members constitute person's "significant others" whose reflected perceptions to a great extent determine formation of the self-concept.

According to the theory of Symbolic Interactionism the reaction of a person on other's behavior is mediated by the interpretation that the person attributes to the other's behavior. So that the interpretation to a great extent is based on the process of interpretation of the symbols (Cooly, 1922; Mead, 1934). The main precondition for the normal functioning of the family is the shared knowledge, based on social roles (spouse, child, parent, etc.) that the persons have in the family.

Family is the safe environment, where an individual tries his behaviors, shares his feelings, ideas, expectations, fears and hopes and where he gets open and true feedback on his behavior. In fact family can be viewed as a laboratory, where the social behavior is learnt and social competence is acquired.

Family acts as a system, as a whole, where any more or less significant change in one of the family members is reflected on all other members.

Trust is the corner-stone for the formation of a person and is a necessary condition of normal life (Rotter, 1967, 1980).

Generalized trust, or the belief that most people are reliable is a personality feature and in a considerable extent determines interpersonal perception. Formation of trust takes place in the family and starts in the first ages of life (Erickson, 1963).

One of the characteristic features of interpersonal perception is a “positive bias” – a tendency to estimate a person positively (Sears, 1983). Such a bias, at various extents reveals itself in the perception of family members as well.

The bias is revealed in the tendency to perceive oneself positively (Taylor & Brown, 1988, cited in Robins & John, 1997).

The aim of the study was to determine the extent of the correspondence of mutual perceptions of family members and the factors determining it. More specifically the following research questions were identified:

1. To what extent self-perception of a person corresponds to the perception of him/her by family members (Accuracy of self-presentation, A characteristic)
2. To what extent self-perception of a person corresponds to his/her view on how he/she is perceived by family members (Bias in perception, B characteristic).
3. To what extent is a person’s view on how he/she is perceived by family members corresponds to his/her actual perception of family members (Accuracy of perception, C characteristic).
4. What is the impact of such interrelated variables as a role (mother, father, elder child, younger child), type of relations (parents, children, parents-children), age and sex of perceiver on A, B and C characteristics.
5. Towards which family member a “positive bias” – attributing of positive features to a person, is more salient.

Besides these questions, the study examined two hypotheses:

1. Generalized trust, as personal characteristic allows for a greater gap between self-perception and reflected perception (B characteristic), i.e. among individuals with a high level of generalized trust, the difference between self-perception and their impression as to how others perceive them is greater, than among the individuals with a lower level of trust.

2. Self-disclosure determines greater correspondence between self-perception and perception of a person by the others (A characteristic).

These two concepts, generalized trust and self-disclosure can also be considered as factors in the perceptions of family members.

3.2. Respondents and procedure

The data analyzed below on part of a cross-cultural study: “Functioning of families in different cultures: Values, communication, interpersonal perception and health“, realized by Leiden University, City University of London and Tbilisi State University and supported on INTAS grant.

The study was carried out at the homes of respondents. A group of three-persons as researchers conducted the study at the families during two evenings, lasting about 10 hours. Different methodologies were used in the study: questionnaires, projective tests, group discussions and group games. Each family member, independently filled in the questionnaires. The entire family took part in the discussions and games, which were video recorded.

The number of family members for our research was determined from the beginning. To minimize the difficulties in the process of research we have studied four-member (nuclear) families consisting of the parents and two children, homogenous (similar by social composition) urban families.

The empirical study was carried out in two stages: at the first stage 24, and at the second 31 families were studied. Only families consisting of four members – mother, father and two children were selected. In all, 55 Georgian families, i.e. 220 persons were studied. At the second stage the study instrument was slightly modified. A number of instruments were added. The main part of the data analyzed in the present study (correspondence of perception, self-presentation) is based on the results obtained at both stages, while the data on trust was obtained only at the second stage.

The age of the interviewed mothers varied from 32 to 60 ($M=44.0$; $SD=6.5$), the age of fathers from 37 to 63 ($M=48.0$; $SD=6.7$); the age of the elder from 10 to 24 ($M=19.4$; $SD=3.8$); the age of the younger child from 9 to 23 ($M=15$; $SD=3.9$). 51.2% of the studied children were boys and 48.2% the girls.

The level of education of the parents was high – 87.1% of mothers and 80.6% of fathers had a university degree. The study was carried out in Tbilisi. The parents had at least ten years of experience of living together.

3.3. Instruments

Two questionnaires, one for the parents and the other for children were especially designed for the purpose of the study. Next to original questions a number of standard instruments for the measurement of persons and interpersonal relationships were used- projective test, group discussions and group games were used.

Below we shall discuss only the instruments referred to in the present study. These are:

1. Semantic Differential -Modified version for the family studies (Hentschel & Hickel, 1984).
2. Self-disclosure Questionnaire- Modified version for the purpose of the present study (Jourard, 1971).
3. An interpersonal orientation scale measuring generalized trust (Holmes & Rempel, 1989)

Semantic Differential

Each member of the family was required to describe himself/herself. In this way the data for self-perception and actual perception of the person by each family member were obtained. At the same time the respondents were requested to estimate how each family member perceived them. In this way the data for the reflected perception were obtained. All descriptions of this persons were made on a semantic differential, modified for the family study (Hentschel & Hickel, 1984), based on the original version of semantic differential (Osgood, Tannenbaum & Suci, 1957). The instrument consists of 51 bipolar adjectives with a seven-step scale. The scale has been translated and tested in Georgia, prior to its inclusion in the family study (Sumbadze, 1991-93).

Each family member made 7 evaluations, i.e. self-perception, perception of the three other family members, reflected perception of the self by the three other family members.

Self-disclosure Questionnaire

The availability of information about one another was measured in the study by one of the significant characteristics of access to personal information, i.e. amount of self-disclosure.

Self-disclosure is a process, by which a person intentionally, through verbal communication makes information about himself/herself available to the other (Jourard, 1964).

Self-disclosure of family members to one another was studied through a modified self-disclosure questionnaire for the parents and children (Jourard, 1964, 1971). Respondents were requested to circle from the provided options (1 – have never spoken, 2 – have spoken in general terms; 3 – have spoken in details) the amount they disclosed to family members, a female friend, a male friend and a specific other. Different topics for self-disclosure were presented in parents' and children's instruments. Parents were asked to estimate disclosure on their political views, TV shows, favorite readings, cloths, leisure, main aspirations and life goals, issues related to employment, of what they were ashamed or proud of, what they did think about their families, what were they afraid of, the causes for concern or joy, the childhood recollections and dreams, as well as how, in their opinion, they were seen by others – 18 topics in all. The questionnaire for self-disclosure of the children covered the following areas: what they liked in girls or boys and in political leaders, their favorite books, TV shows, leisure activities, dreams, fears, what they considered the most difficult discipline at school, what they liked at school, school problems, as well as they did think about their schoolmates and what their schoolmates did think about them, what they desired to achieve and how they felt themselves at home – 15 topics in all.

Generalized trust

One item from the Interpersonal Orientation Scale, a standard instrument used for the measurement of generalized trust – “I think most of people are trustworthy” was included in both questionnaires, for parents and children.

4. Analysis of Results

The results were analyzed by means of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

For indicators of correspondence, the absolute values of the differences in the following scores on semantic differential were used:

1. Accuracy in self-presentation, A Characteristic – Difference between self-perception of the target person and his/her perception by the family members.
2. Perception bias, B Characteristic – Difference between self-perception of the target person and his/her evaluation as to how family members perceive him/her.
3. Accuracy of Perception, C Characteristic - Perception of the target person by family members and target person's opinion about how the family members perceive him/her.

4.1 Aspects of mutual perception of family members

Correspondence in perception is measured by the three indicators: accuracy of self-presentation (A indicator), perception bias (B indicator) and perception accuracy (C indicator).

Accuracy of self-presentation (A indicator) – is the difference between the perception of the self of the target person and actual perception of the target person by family members (self perception minus target's perceptions of three family members); three indicators for each family member were calculated – 12 indicators in total. E.g. in case of mother, there were revealed differences between the mother's self-perception and her perception by father, elder child and younger child, separately.

Perception bias (B) – is the difference between self-perception and as one perceives that the other perceives him/her (self perception minus reflected other). In this case as well, three indicators for each family member, or 12 indicators in total were obtained. E. g. in case of mother there were calculated differences between the self-perception of mother and her estimation as how she was perceived by the father (i.e. her spouse), the elder child and the younger child.

Accuracy of perception (C) – is the difference between how one thinks that she/he is perceived by another family member and how the other actually perceives her/him (the target

person's perceptions of the family members minus the actual perception of the target person by the family members). Three indicators for each family member, twelve in all were obtained. E. g. in case of the mother, there were calculated differences between the mother's impression on how she is perceived by the father (i.e. her spouse) and the father's actual perception of her, the mother's impression as to how she is perceived by the elder child and the elder child's actual perception of the mother; the mother's impression as to how she is perceived by the younger child and the younger child's actual perception of her.

Correspondence in Perceptions of family members

Data analysis showed that the greatest difference was found in the accuracy of self-presentation (A indicator) or self-perception of a person and his/her actual perception by the family members.

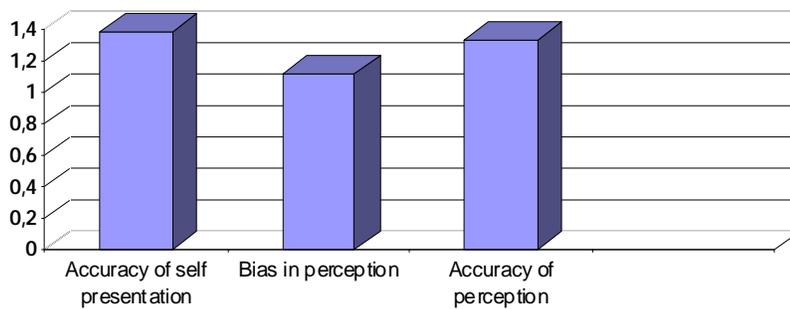


Fig. 1.Correspondence in perception of family members

The difference is the lowest in B indicator, perception bias, or difference between the self-perception and the perception by a person of how family members assess him/her. Respectively, between these data is C indicator, perception accuracy, or the difference between person's estimation on how he/she is perceived by family members and his/her actual perception by the same family member. Results point to the relatively big difference between self-perception of a respondent and his/her perception by the family members, while respondents are quite biased and think that family members perceive them much in a similar way as they do themselves.

These three indicators , as can be seen in Table 1 are interrelated and the correlation between them is quite high ($p < 0.1$).

Table 1. Correlation among the indicators of correspondence of the perceptions.

	A	B	C
Self-presentation accuracy A		.611 p < .01	.533 p < .01
Bias B			.348 p < .01
Perception accuracy C			

Correspondence of perception by types of relations and roles

In nuclear families three types of relations, or family subsystems can be considered. These are relations: between the parents; between the parents and children; and between the children. Two of them are more or less equal (between parents and between children) and one – between parents and children – is hierarchical.

Table 2. Correspondence of perceptions by types of relations (family sub-systems)

Type of relations	Accuracy of self-presentation A		Perception bias B		Accuracy of perception C	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Between parents	1.34	.60	1.10	.62	1.33	.67
Parents and children	1.40	.62	1.13	.62	1.37	.62
Between children	1.43	.66	1.18	.63	1.33	.63
Total	1.39	.63	1.14	.62	1.34	.64

Data allows us to review all three indicators from a relationship is perspective. The difference between the relationship types is not statistically significant, though, it still demonstrates an interesting trend. Table 2 shows that the difference between A and B assessments is the lowest in mutual perceptions of parents and the highest – in mutual perceptions of children. As for the perception accuracy, it is the lowest in relations between the parents and children.

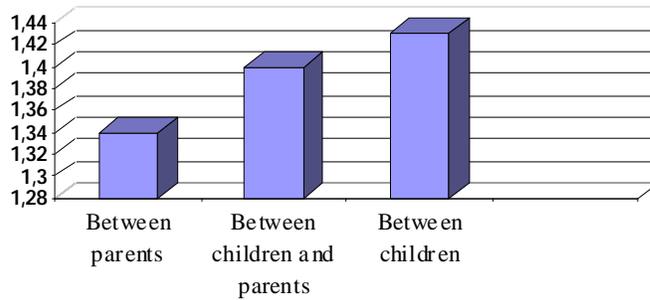


Fig.2. A Indicator - Accuracy of self-presentation by types of relation

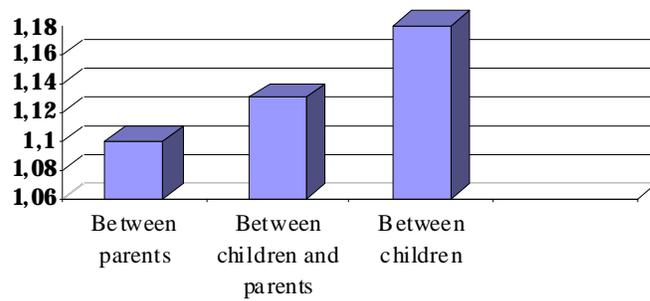


Fig.3. B Indicator - Biased perception by types of relations

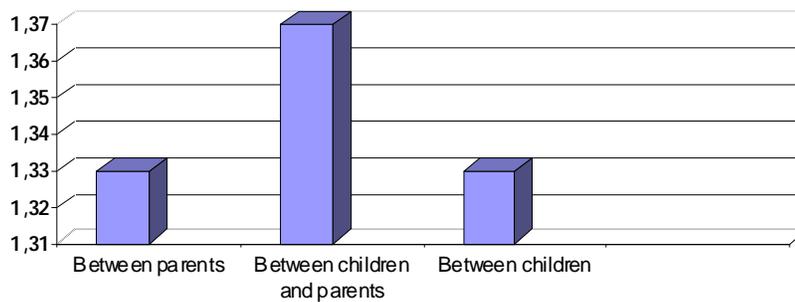


Fig. 4. C Indicator - Accuracy of perception by types of relations by types of relationships

Differences found in 12 relations are presented in Table 3. Data demonstrate that accuracy is the highest in case of the mother's self-presentation with the father ($M=1.28$) and is the lowest in case of self-presentation of the younger child with the mother ($M=1.51$) and with the elder sibling ($M=1.51$).

Table 3. Ranking of accuracy in self-presentation in role relationships

		M	SD
1	Difference between self-perception of mother and her perception by father	1.28	.58
2	Difference between father's self-perception and father's perception by the elder child	1.32	.59
3	Difference between mother's self-perception and her perception by the elder child	1.34	.54
4	Difference between elder child's self-perception and perception of elder child by the younger child	1.35	.60
5	Difference between self-perception of mother and her perception by the younger child	1.37	.62
6	Difference between father's self-perception and father's perception by mother	1.39	.62
7	Difference between elder child's self-perception and perception of elder child by mother	1.39	.61
8	Difference between elder child's self-perception and perception of elder child by father	1.39	.57
9	Difference between father's self-perception and father's perception by the younger child	1.41	.60
10	Difference between younger child's self-perception and perception of younger child by father	1.47	.71
11	Difference between younger child's self-perception and perception of younger child by mother	1.51	.63
12	Difference between younger child's self-perception and perception of younger child by elder child	1.51	.72

Table 4. Ranking of perception bias in role relationships

		M	SD
1	Difference between self-perception of mother and her opinion on her perception by the younger child	0.08	.55
2	Difference between father's self-perception and his opinion on his perception by the elder child	0.96	.55
3	Difference between father's self-perception and his opinion on his perception by mother	1.02	.61
4	Difference between mother's self-perception and her opinion on her perception by the elder child	1.09	.56
5	Difference between elder child's self-perception and his/her opinion on his/her perception by mother	1.13	.55
6	Difference between elder child's self-perception and his/her opinion on his/her perception by father	1.13	.51
7	Difference between elder child's self-perception and his/her opinion on his/her perception by the younger child	1.15	.57
8	Difference between mother's self-perception and her opinion on her perception by father	1.18	.62
9	Difference between father's self-perception and father's opinion on his perception by the younger child	1.19	.61
10	Difference between younger child's self-perception and his/her opinion on his/her perception by elder child	1.21	.69
11	Difference between younger child's self-perception and his/her opinion on his/her perception by father	1.23	.70
12	Difference between younger child's self-perception and his/her opinion on his/her perception by mother	1.28	.74

Thus, by roles, the most biased perception characterizes the relationship of the younger child with the mother ($M=1.28$), i.e. the difference between self-perception of a younger child and his/her opinion on how the mother perceives him/her is the highest. Self-perception of mother and her opinion on how her younger child perceives her is the least biased ($M=0.08$).

Table 5. Accuracy of perception in role relationships

		M	SD
1	Difference between father's opinion on his perception by the elder child and elder child's perception of father	1.29	.50
2	Difference between mother's opinion on her perception by the elder child and elder child's perception of mother	1.32	.60
3	Difference between father's opinion on his perception by mother and mother's perception of father	1.32	.66
4	Difference between the opinion of younger child on his/her perception by the elder child and elder child's perception of younger child	1.32	.56
5	Difference between the opinion of elder child on his/her perception by the younger child and younger child's perception of elder child	1.33	.56
6	Difference between mother's opinion on her perception by father and father's perception of mother	1.35	.70
7	Difference between mother's opinion on his/her perception by the younger child and younger child's perception of mother	1.36	.67
8	Difference between elder child's opinion on his/her perception by father and father's perception of the elder child	1.36	.60
9	Difference between father's opinion on his perception by the younger child and the younger child's perception of father	1.37	.61

10	Difference between younger child's opinion on his/her perception by father and father's perception of the younger child	1.40	.68
11	Difference between younger child's opinion on his/her perception by mother and mother's perception of the younger child	1.41	.61
12	Difference between elder child's opinion on his/her perception by mother and mother's perception of the elder child	1.43	.67

Table 5 demonstrates that the greatest accuracy is found in father's perception of the elder child's perception of him ($M=1.29$), i.e. the difference is the lowest between father's opinion on how he is perceived by the elder child and how actually elder the child perceives him. The least accurate is elder child's perception with respect to the mother ($M=1.43$), i.e. the difference between how the elder child thinks the mother's perceives him/her and how mother actually perceives him/her.

Correspondence in perception, age and sex of the evaluator

Types and kinds of relations are closely linked to the age of participants of relationships. For determining the impact of perceiver's age on perception children were grouped in two age groups, 9-17 years and 18-27 years olds. Parents, whose age varied from 32 to 63, represented the third age group. Results unambiguously point to an age related difference in all three types of perceptions (accuracy of self-presentation, perception bias and accuracy of perception). As demonstrated in Table 6, dispersion analysis proved statistical significance of age for all three indicators of correspondence in perception.

Table 6. Perception indicators and age

		9-17		18-24		32-63		F	P	Difference between the groups
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
A	Accuracy of self-presentation	1.54	.52	1.30	.58	1.35	.50	3.59	< 0.5	9-17>18-27
B	Perception bias	1.31	.63	1.03	.52	1.08	.51	4.47	< 0.0	9-17>18-27 9-17>32
C	Accuracy of Perception	1.49	.46	1.22	.53	1.33	.50	4.30	< 0.5	9-17>18-27
	Total	1.45	.44	1.18	.50	1.26	.46			

Among the respondents under 17 of age the difference in accuracy of self-presentation ($M=1.54$) and inaccuracy of perception is greater ($M=1.49$) than the difference in the same indicators among the older (18-27 years old) children (In accuracy of self-presentation $M=1.30$; In accuracy of perception $M=1.22$). Perception of the respondents under 17 is also more biased ($M=1.31$) than that of older respondents ($M=1.03$ among 17-27 years olds and $M=1.08$ among 32-63 years olds).

None of the three indicators of correspondence in perception is affected by the gender of the perceiver.

“Positive bias” – attributing positive features to the self and family members

“Positive bias” – attributing positive features to people, is one of the characteristic features of person perception. Such a bias is especially salient in regard to self perception (Taylor & Brown, 1988). In analysis of the results we attempted to determine the extent of positive bias in family relationships.

Table 7. Average positive indicator of perception by roles and targets of perception

Role	Target of Perception							
	Mother		Father		Elder child		Younger child	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Mother	4.90	.46	4.85	.80	5.15	.67	5.21	.55
Father	4.85	.70	4.82	.60	5.06	.73	5.13	.60
Elder child	5.16	.64	4.94	.72	4.93	.60	4.97	.63
Younger child	5.14	.65	5	.72	4.82	.63	4.85	.68

M – average indicator of positive assessment

SD – standard deviation

Data presented in Table 7 provide us with the possibility to conclude that in family relationships positive bias is more pronounced towards the family members than towards the self. Two exceptions were found in case of a mother who assessed a father slightly less positively than she assessed herself and a young child, who assessed her/himself more positively than an elder child.

Dispersion analysis (ANOVA) demonstrated statistical significance of this difference ($F=7.8$; $p < .05$).

Table 8. Self- perception and perception of family members

Role	Self-perception		Perception by the other family members	
	M	SD	M	SD
Mother	4.90	.46	5.07	.70
Father	4.82	.60	5.01	.68
Elder child	4.93	.60	5.02	.69
Younger child	4.87	.68	4.99	.68
Total	4.87	.59	5.02	.68

M – average

SD – standard deviation

Family members are perceived most positively by the mother ($M=5.07$) and least positively by the younger child ($M=4.99$).

The analysis demonstrated a significant difference in positive evaluations of family members by fathers and mothers ($F= 4.17, p<.05$ in case of perception of family members by the mother and $F=2.86, p< .05$ in case of perception of family members by the father). Both, the mother and the father perceive the younger child ($M=5.2, SD=.55$ by the mother and $M=5.13, SD=.60$ by the father) and elder child ($M=5.2, SD=.67$ by the mother and $M=5.1, SD=.73$ by the father) more positively than one another ($M=4.85, SD=.80$ in case of mother and $M=4.85, SD=.70$ in case of father). Thus the parents assess their children more positively than each other.

Family members assess most positively the younger child ($M=5.1$) and most negatively the father ($M=4.90$).

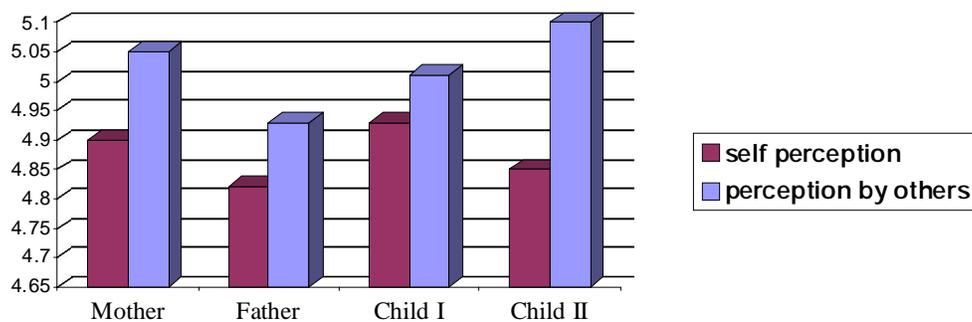


Fig. 5. Self-perception and positive perception of a person by family members

4.2 Self-disclosure and correspondence of perceptions

In interpersonal relations, accuracy of perception is to a considerable extent determined by availability of information (Mallow & Albright, 1990). To determine applicability of this assumption to family relationships, the index of self-disclosure of each family member to the other members was summed up and its impact on the correspondence in perception was then calculated.

Sharing is found to characterize more equal (between children $M=2.47$; between parents $M=2.45$), than hierarchical relations (between parents and children $M=2.22$).

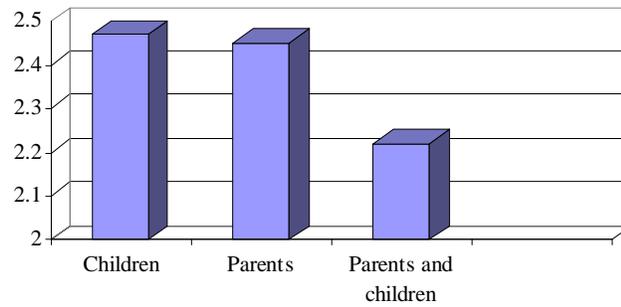


Fig 6. Self-disclosure by relations

Dispersion analysis demonstrated a significant difference in the amount of self-disclosure to different targets ($F=3.59, p<.05$). Self-disclosure is the highest to the mother and the lowest to the younger child. As for the disclosing person, the younger child shares in feelings the most and the father the least.

Table 9. Self-disclosure with family members

Role	Target of self-disclosure									
	Mother		Father		Elder child		Younger child		Total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Mother			2.47	.38	2.42	.37	2.46	.40	2.45	.38
Father	2.44	.40			2.14	.46	2.25	.45	2.28	.44
Elder child	2.27	.50	2.05	.54			2.54	.56	2.29	.53
Younger child	2.22	.50	1.95	.50	2.41	.55			2.19	.52
Total	2.31	.47	2.16	.47	2.3	.46	2.4	.47	2.3	0.45

M – average index

SD – standard deviation

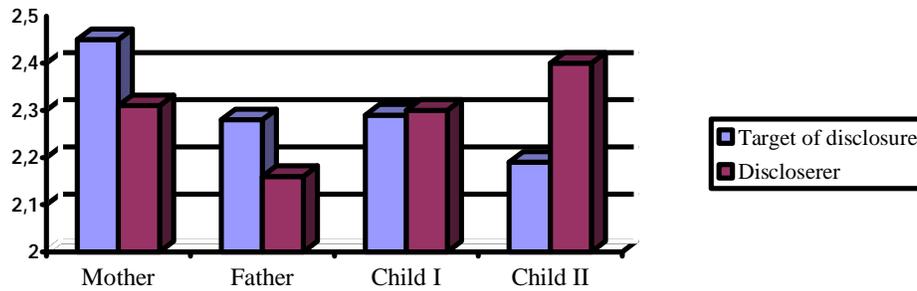


Fig. 7. Self-disclosure of family members

Table 9 provides data on the amount of self-disclosure with the family members. It shows that among the family members the younger child is disclosing the most and all family members disclose more to the mother, than to any other member.

Parents are disclosing to one another most of all, then to the younger child and then to the elder child.

Children are disclosing to each other most of all, then to the mother and least of all to the father.

Thus, self-disclosure in the family is not symmetric – a person to whom the others disclose most of all is not the most disclosing person.

Dispersion analysis did not confirm our assumption on a relationship between the amount of self-disclosure to family members and self-presentation accuracy (A characteristic), i.e. the size of self-disclosure to the family members does not affect the extent of correspondence of the self-perception of a person to his/her perception by the family members.

4.3 Trust, correspondence of perceptions and self-disclosure

Our hypothesis assumed the level of generalized trust of a person to be a determining factor in his/her interpersonal relations, her readiness to risk stability of self-image, to be open or closed towards new experiences.

Therefore a relationship between the generalized trust to the perception bias (B characteristic) and degree of self-disclosure was assumed.

Dispersion analysis confirmed the relation of trust to the perception bias ($F=4.23, p<.05$), but it did not confirm the relation of trust to the amount of disclosure to family members.

The difference between the self-concept and the perception as to how the others perceive one is greater ($M=1.35$; $SD=.66$ among persons with high score on trust and $M=1.15$; $SD=.43$ among persons with low score on trust) among persons with high score on generalized trust.

5. Conclusions

Analysis of the results of the study permitted us to answer the research questions and to test hypotheses, formulated at the planning stage of the investigation.

Correspondence of perceptions

Three outlined indicators of the correspondence of interpersonal perceptions in the family, i.e. Accuracy of self-presentation, bias and accuracy of perception are interlinked and vary by family roles and sub-systems.

Among the three indicators of the correspondence in perceptions, defined in the study as an accuracy of self-presentation, perception bias, and accuracy of perception, the incongruence score is the highest in self-presentation accuracy and is the lowest in perception bias. A person's self-image does not fit to a high degree with how family members view her/him. The correspondence is slightly higher between the actual views of others and the perception that a target person has as on how she/he is viewed by other members, and is significantly higher between the self-perception of the target person and her/his perception as how he/she is viewed by others.

Factors determining correspondence of perceptions

Age and gender.

The age of the children is of a great importance and to a considerable degree determines the correspondence of perceptions. The difference between the all three correspondence indicators of children under 17 of age and older group is obvious.

Gender, neither of the parents nor of the children has any effect on the correspondence scores.

Self-disclosure.

Data analyses provide the possibility to discuss the importance of different features of self-disclosure in family environment.

Self-disclosure is effected by family sub-systems, it is great in equal (parents, children) than in hierarchical (parents-children) relationships.

Self-disclosure thus shows an asymmetric character. The one who discloses the most is not necessarily the one to whom most of family members disclose. Difference in the amount of disclosing is linked with the family roles, the younger child being the most and the father the least disclosing person. The mother is the person to whom most family members disclose. The younger child is the least often the target of self-disclosure.

Our hypotheses on the relation of self-disclosure with the accuracy of self-presentation, i.e. with a low discrepancy between how one sees oneself and how one is seen by us the family members was not confirmed. As the family environment provides much information on a person and she/her behavior, self-disclosure seems not to add much to it, and hence is not reflected in perception.

Trust

Our another hypotheses on the association of trust with the perception bias was confirmed. Persons with a high score on generalized trust allowed more discrepancy between their self-image and their perception as how others viewed them. Hence trust allows a person to be open to new experiences and personal development.

Positive bias

Studies on positive bias demonstrate that persons tend to evaluate themselves more positively than they evaluate others. Our results demonstrated the contrary-that family members directed positive bias more to other members, than to themselves.

Persons differ both in the tendency to evaluate others positively and in positiveness of their evaluation by family members.

Family members are the most positively perceived by the mother and the least positively by younger child, while the most positive features family members associate with the younger child and the least positive ones with the father.

The goal of the study was to obtain data on the characteristics of mutual perceptions of family members and the factors determining correspondence of perceptions. The family can

be considered as a lab – safe environment, which provides opportunities for examining accuracy of self- perception and testing of new behaviors.

Results, obtained in the study and discussed above can be summarized in the following way:

The motivation to maintain a stable self-concept is apparent. This motivation, in accordance with our expectations, is related to personality characteristics, a generalized expectancy that other people in general are reliable and honest. Person's with high trust, compared to others with a lower trust allow more discrepancy between the self-concept and their perception by others. Therefore persons with a high generalized trust are more open to new experiences, more inclined to change their self-concept and have greater prospects of personal development.

The accuracy of self-presentation and perception is a developing concept. It is to a great extent learned in the family setting and is mostly shaped by the age of 17.

The positive bias in perception, tendency to evaluate the target positively is evidenced, but is directed more at family members than the self.

Accuracy of perception of family members does not depend on self-disclosure. Family life provides rich information about personality and behaviors, so that a greater amount of self-disclosure does not have an impact on the correspondence of perception.

As a result of the study information on the characteristic features of the family functioning has been collected which partly filled in the gap in the knowledge of social-psychological aspects of the families.

The novelty of the research is in studying the family as a whole, questioning its all members and discussing the results according to the family roles (mother, father, elder child and younger child) and family sub-systems (parents, spouses, children, siblings).

The family is a complex organism and research on it is associated with many difficulties. The reported study should be regarded as one of the first attempts to study families in Georgia. More than getting answers the study gave rise to questions, that are to be further researched.

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