

Parental Maturity: Concept Content and Structure in Domestic and Foreign Studies

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The author analyzes the concept of parental maturity with the aim to operationalize it and define the structure. The construct is based on maturity understanding in the context of parenthood. Parental maturity is a complex, diversified form that reflects personal maturity. The structure of the construct is presented as a set of instrumental, motivational, and value components, integrating in the internal position of a parent in life choices regarding the birth, upbringing of children, and responsibility for the decisions made. The development of parental maturity is facilitated by the development of the parent's internal position, including self-reflection. It helps to assess the level of personal maturity and analyze parental position, resiliency, involvement, control of a child's development, and taking risks associated with children growing up. Within parenthood, the development of semantic and life-meaning orientations activates the setting of new self-development tasks by the parents themselves.

Keywords: parental maturity; parenting; components of parental maturity.

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Родительская зрелость: содержание и структура концепта в разрезе отечественных и зарубежных исследований

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Проводятся анализ и операционализация конструкта «родительская зрелость». По мнению авторов, она представляет собой сложное многоплановое образование, совокупность инструментальной и мотивационно-ценностной составляющих, интегрирующихся во внутренней позиции родителя, в жизненных выборах относительно рождения, воспитания детей и ответственности за принятые решения. Утверждается, что становлению родительской зрелости способствует развитие внутренней

позиции родителя, включающей личностную рефлексию, направленную на оценивание степени собственной зрелости, анализ собственной родительской позиции и жизнестойкости, вовлеченности, контроля за процессом развития детей и принятия риска, связанного с взрослением детей. Развитие смысловой ориентировки и смысложизненных ориентаций в рамках родительства активизирует постановку самими родителями новых задач саморазвития.

Ключевые слова: родительская зрелость; родительство; компоненты родительской зрелости.

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Introduction

Parenting is a human ability to transfer mankind experience to the next generations [8]. This activity is not obligatory. It is only a decision of a person to become parent or not. This means that a person has to make such important decision which can be interpreted as an indicator of self-determination and self-identification [19].

Parenting is a complex psychological and social phenomenon. It includes such components as responsibility, definite social roles and rules, motivation, parental position, self-actualization, and self-development. In this context parental maturity plays a significant role for the position of effective parent [6; 10].

The goal of this research is the analysis of contradiction between the existing society demand to have the characteristics of an effective parent, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, a lack of studies of the parental maturity (see, for example, [8; 19; 21]). In this regard, we identified two research objectives: 1) to define the content and structure of the parental maturity in domestic and foreign studies, and 2) to analyse the difference between parental maturity interpretations.

Foreign and domestic approaches analysis

The concept of parental maturity is based on the general concept of maturity set by personality psychology.

Maturity is of multilevel and multidimensional structure. It is the integral characteristic of personality both as a resource of personal development and as its criterion. Maturity implements through performance and human existence. This duality makes a person to act like a stakeholder of his own life, to realise his own self-determination, to set and achieve life goals, to solve different unique problems and build up a system of interpersonal relations.

The significant component of maturity is maturity self-assessment. It can be interpreted as a person's ability to correlate own maturity criteria and real life. In order to obtain the ability to solve life problems one person looking for such criteria at a particular period of life.

Almost all people think about parenting. They should make a decision to be or not to be. Preparation to it faces a person with completely new position to another newborn person [17; 28; 30]. The content of this position dictates a person to implement parent role which includes responsibility and oblig-

atory actions such as childcare, child development and support. In relation to the parent role a person can have a certain opinion. He or she can accept or reject this position because of emotional experience which can vary from joyful acceptance to desperate rejection [21; 24; 25; 29].

The intersection of perception of personality maturity and human implementation as a parent gives us an opportunity to define parental maturity as a complex phenomenon with multilevel structure. In order to do this, we analyse the content of 'parental maturity' concept in foreign and domestic approaches.

Parental maturity interprets as the ability to perceive a child as an 'independent adult' with limitations and needs. Also, it includes the readiness to treat the child as an independent adult, M. Mendonça and A.M. Fontaine think [23]. The ideal situation is when parents perceive their child as an adult who no longer needs care. This means that a child acquires parents' realistic perception.

E. Fromm identifies parental maturity components such as empathy, sympathy, ability and readiness to love, expression of care, emphasising its social aspect [13].

S.N. Nydegger [26] defines parental maturity as a role-specific trait. He describes it as the parents' ability to involve in close and reciprocal relationships with a child. Parents recognise the child as psychologically equal to the adult who has own autonomy, needs, limitations, and abilities.

S.A. Anderson and R.M. Sabatelli [14; 15] defines parental maturity is a two-sided complex unity. It combines two multidirectional processes. On the one hand, it includes the child separation from the parent, or distancing, on the other hand, one can observe the child's rapprochement with parents, or understanding.

Parental distancing means the reducing control degree of child's behaviour. It also involves acceptance and encouraging autonomous relationships. This is necessary to make the objective assessment of the child. Parental understanding includes different components such as the acceptance of child's uniqueness and social environment, relationships flexibility and empathy. Parental maturity means accurately balancing two factors (distancing and understanding) [26], and also combining levels of closeness, autonomy and separateness [14; 15]. Thus, it can be said that highly differentiated relationships (high degree of closeness and individualisation) are more adaptive than low-differentiated ones.

H. Ginott [9] treats parental maturity as a part of parent-child communication. Effective communication is based on unconditional acceptance, parents' recognition of child's feelings. The maturity means to give a child opportunity of making own choices in everyday life. Humanistic and psychoanalytic psychologists (C. Rogers, H. Ginott) consider above-mentioned factors necessary for the development of mature parental attitude to a child and his/her harmonious development. H. Ginott paid special attention to developing and improving communication skills and empathy for the child's feelings. The researcher manifested the expression of parents' feelings and emotions openly and sincerely in response to the child's behaviour [9].

D. Baumrind, Y. Kuzgun and D. Levy emphasise the meaning of relationships in the child-parent dyad [16; 20; 22]. They divided parents' attitudes toward children into four types: democratic, authoritarian, permissive, and overprotecting. The democratic type means responsibility, planning and organizing life activities. It shows

high level of maturity. Parents encourage the child's independence and at the same time set boundaries and limits. Authoritarian type can be described in such characteristics as pressure, ignoring abilities, expecting obedience. Permissive type is described in uncontrol, freedom, tolerance, poor concentration and control [16]. Overprotection type means restrictions, lack of responsibility and independence in decision making [20; 22].

A. Isambert [18] emphasises two aspects of maturation in parental maturity. The first one is personal development from dependence to autonomy. This implies the ability to make independent decisions and take responsibility for actions. The second one includes the behavior development from self-concern to concern for the other. These two aspects of parental maturity overlap and reflect parents' effectiveness. Such parents are able or unable to make decisions and take responsibility. The researcher believes that personal maturity is the necessary condition for the parental maturity development. The additional factor of parental maturity is their level of education. It plays an important role in enhancing the quality of personal maturity [18].

In domestic theory and practice parental maturity research is characterized by parental position and child-parent relations.

E.I. Zakharova [4] treats parental position as 'dependent, responsible' and 'highly emotionally intense'. The social maturity of personality is in the focus of the study. It is connected with the development of parent internal position. Such characteristics as empathy, tolerance and closeness contribute to the development of mothers' parental position in relationships. Empathic 'warm' mothers accept the parental position. Alongside with such elements as dependence on the child, responsibility for

another person life and development, constant relations with a child demand emotional support.

O.N. Babyleva [1] points out that parental attitude includes the degree of emotional closeness and control of child's behaviour. At the same time, competence as a component of parental maturity implies the parent's mastering in relationships with the child.

I.A. Kibalchenko [7] notes in the parents' psychological maturity the importance of such mothers' personal traits as reflexivity, locus of control, self-esteem, development of volition and activity. The researcher also marks that mother's high level of creativity plays an important role. Creativity is associated with above-mentioned traits. Mothers with a high level of creativity can be characterised as responsible persons with high level of self-control. They are conscious, empathic, independent, sociable and open. These traits can be treated as the indicators of parental maturity.

Individuals' personal and social maturity have much in common with the image of effective parent. A.S. Spivakovskaya [11; 12] argues that personal maturity features and effective parent features are very close. Parents' psychological maturity appears in the attitude to themselves and to the child. The parent is interested in the acceptance and approving attitude to the child's personality and feelings. He reveals sensitivity to the child's emotional state, feelings and experience.

Discussion and conclusion

In the table below we present the results of the analysis of parental maturity definitions in foreign and domestic approaches.

Foreign definitions of parental maturity often emphasise the instrumental component. C.N. Nydegger focuses on the par-

Parental maturity in foreign and domestic approaches

№	Expert	Definition
Foreign approaches		
1	Mendonça M., Fontaine A.M.	The ability to perceive their child as an 'independent adult' with limitations and needs.
2	Fromm E.	The ability to empathise, sympathise, love, care.
3	Nydegger C.N.	The ability to involve in close and reciprocal relationships with a child. Parents recognise the child as psychologically equal to the adult in terms of autonomy, needs, limitations, and abilities.
4	Anderson S.A., Sabatelli R.M.	The child separation from the parent, or distancing, on the other hand, one can observe the child's rapprochement with parents, or understanding.
5	<i>Ginott H.</i>	The ability of unconditional acceptance, parents' recognition of all child's feelings, giving the child to make own choices in everyday life.
6	Baumrind D., Kuzgun Y., Levy D.	Encourage the child's independence and at the same time set boundaries and limits.
7	Isambert A.	The development of parent's personality from dependence to autonomy. The development of behavior orientation from the self-concern to concern for the other.
Domestic approaches		
8	Zakharova E.I.	Social maturity of personality in the connection of the development of the parent internal position.
9	Babyleva O.N.	Emotional closeness and control over the child's behaviour. competence, parent's mastering in relationships with the child.
10	Kibalchenko I.A.	Reflexivity, locus of control, level of self-esteem, development of volition and activity, level of creativity.
11	Spivakovskaya A.S.	Acceptance and approving attitude to the child's personality and feelings, sensitivity to the child's emotional state, feelings and experience.

ents' communicative competence, the ability to fulfil parent role. S.A. Anderson and R.M. Sabatelli interpret parental maturity as the parents' ability to regulate the distance in relations with a child. H. Ginott highlights the value of communication skills in parent-child interactions. D. Baumrind, Y. Kuzgun and D. Levy emphasise the manifestation of the parent's attitude towards the child, including language constructs, prohibitions and sanctions, childcare.

In domestic studies the parental maturity content reveals motivational and value components. They reflect the importance of parenthood goals, raising a child as an autonomous representative. Some researchers concentrate on the importance of parents' personal qualities (I.A. Kibalchenko,

A.S. Spivakovskaya), the development of value attitude to parenthood (E.I. Zakharova, O.N. Babyleva), the motivation development to parenthood (E.I. Zakharova, O.N. Babyleva). It interprets as procreation and specific contribution to the community of 'inhabitants of the Earth' (definition of A. Gusev).

In parental maturity development special role is given to parent's internal position. It combines instrumental and value-motivational components and reflects self-assessment of maturity in parent's personality structure. It manifests as life-meaning orientations, reflection of the parental position in parent's personality personal resources (E.I. Zakharova, A.S. Spivakovskaya).

Parental maturity is the component of the larger general category of maturity. It can be considered either as a personality characteristic, or as the continuum of person's life. Maturity is interpreted as person's integral characteristic. It is embodied in the concept of 'mature personality' (A. Adler, G. Allport, E. Erikson, C. Rogers, etc.); as an integrative structure developed in ontogenesis (L. Steinberg); as a set of emotional, volitional and motivational traits and value development (A.A. Rean); as a personality's ability to choose (D.A. Leontiev); as a personality characteristic (E.S. Efreмова); as a stable complex of personality traits (Y.V. Rashchupkina, E.V. Lioznova); as a social construct (A.V. Miklyaeva). It can also be considered as a supporting resource in crisis and life choices (S.L. Rubinstein, B.G. Ananyev, E.I. Rasskazova). It can be considered in different contexts: ontogenetic development (J. Levinger), mental development (V.S. Volchenkov), life stage of an adult (N.N. Rybnikov), a model of favourable development (V. Frankl).

At the same time, maturity is considered as a certain level that reflects a concrete development stage of the personality comprehensive system [13; 17]. Personality maturity manifests in parenting. It influences on parents' effectiveness and simultaneously develops and strengthens within the parenting [5; 10; 11]. Parenting maturity is the component personality maturity. It is heterogeneous phenomenon, acting at the same time as personality attribute and stage of personality development. It is a flexible marker on the scale of 'immaturity — maturity' [4; 6; 9].

Foreign researchers note the importance of expression degree of parental maturity components, as well as the life stage when parental maturity can be manifested or labelled as undeveloped [16; 18; 19]. An

additional fact is that a person can manifest the degree of own maturity. Such situations are often associated with meaningful choices made by a mature individual [19; 20].

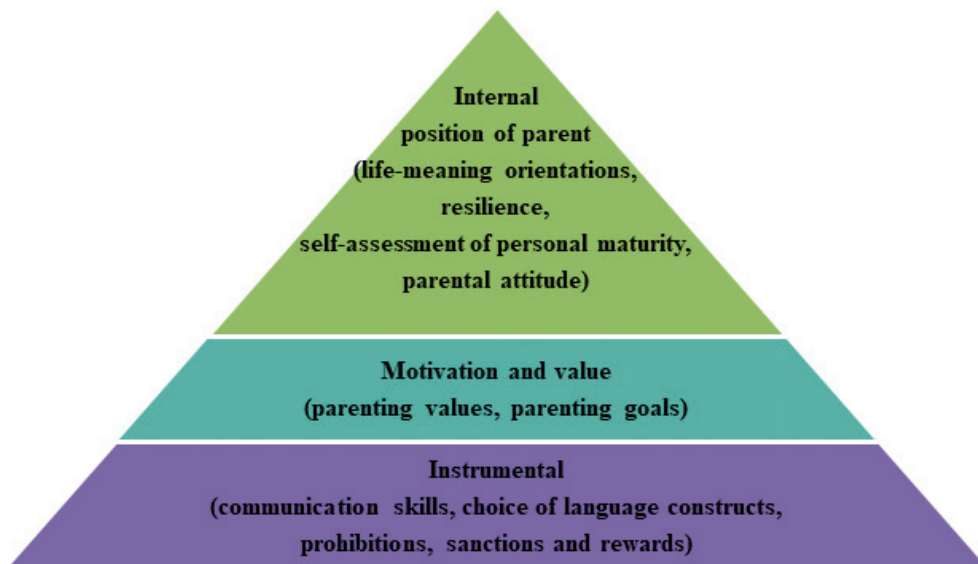
The important feature of research is to consider the social demands making for the person and the conformity of 'responses' to these demands [27]. Person self-determination towards future parenthood is significant at the stage of parental realization. It is inherent to the personality to demonstrate responsibility, independence in decision making when rising up a child. It also includes readiness for parenthood and parental role fulfilment which a person develops independently.

To sum it up parental maturity is a complex multidimensional phenomena. It consists of several levels: instrumental (instrumental skills such as communication skills and distance control); motivation and value (such characteristics as parental goals and value, parent internal position which integrates all other levels) (see picture).

Maturity is not the 'final point' in the process of becoming a parent. It is a constantly changing complex multilevel development. It depends on a person life problems, age of a child, number of children in a family, stage of family development as a system, social context and other factors.

Parent's goal is to bring up a socialised person. To do it qualitatively, a parent needs to be a mature person follow the path of reaching psychological maturity.

To look at the point in more details, the parent figure is extremely significant in providing conditions for the child better development [12; 13]. A parent is a part of a system of child significant relationships. He/she is emotionally close person, and a child expects support, acceptance, love and attention [2; 4; 5]. Therefore, it is necessary for the parent to be mature enough,



Pic. The structure of parental maturity

to possess techniques of contacting with the child, to understand own goals, objectives and difficulties of upbringing a child. Significant foundations in the parenting maturity development are the components of resilience, life-meaning orientations and the development of the ability to self-assess one's own maturity.

Maturity and parental maturity studies reveal and confirm the significance in person and parent development [5; 6; 10; 23]. The problem of identifying maturity criteria reflects the complexity of a human's personal organization which represented simultaneously at different levels — body, psychological and socio-spiritual. Maturity components are highlighted by different authors and often intertwined because they reflect the integrity of a person, for example, socio-psychological maturity, personal maturity [4; 9; 10; 17; 21].

On the basis of above-mentioned studies, we can argue that human maturity contributes to the development of parenthood. On the other hand, parenthood makes its

own contribution to the development of personality maturity. It strengthens the development of choice components, responsibility, self-actualisation and self-development.

Thus, parental maturity is a complex multidimensional phenomenon which represents by a set of instrumental and motivational-value components. These components are integrated in the parent internal position, life choices regarding the birth of a child, upbringing of children and responsibility for decisions. The development of parental maturity is facilitated by the development of the parent's internal position, including personal reflection development. Regarding the reflection it aimed to assess the degree of person's own maturity, analyse own parental position and resilience, involvement, control over the children's development process and accepting the children's growing up risks. The development of parenthood meaning and life-meaning orientations activates the parents to set new tasks of self-development.

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