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SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LONELINESS IN CHILDREN IN FOSTER AND INSTITUTIONAL CARE

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Social and emotional loneliness represent a serious factor in etiology of psychiatric and somatic disorders. Current studies show that individuals suffering from severe social and emotional loneliness in their childhood may show substantial deficits in cognitive as well as in emotional development. It is supposed that children in foster care or institutional care may be exposed to higher level of social or emotional loneliness and thus show changes in cognitive and emotional development, that may play role in further life as well as in etiology of mental illnesses.

We have conducted an extensive study (n=360) monitoring occurrence of social and emotional loneliness in children in foster care (n=120), in institutional care (n=120) and in functional biological families (n=120). We have also evaluated the stage of cognitive and emotional development.

The results of the presented study showed that children in institutional and foster care show substantially higher occurrence of serious level of social and emotional development - comparing to children from biological families

($p, 0.01$). The intensity of social and emotional loneliness is in negative correlation with cognitive ($r=0, 6; p < 0.01$) as well as with emotional development ($r=0, 7; p < 0.01$).

The results of study propose that children in foster and institutional care require substantial psychosocial support and attention especially in the area of social and emotional development.

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