

# Проблемы современного материнства: психологический аспект

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В статье рассматриваются проблемы современного материнства, анализируется феномен девиантного материнского поведения. На основании литературных данных проводится анализ таких форм нарушений материнского поведения, как отказ матери от ребенка, жестокое материнское обращение с ребенком; аборт; материнство в раннем репродуктивном возрасте; сознательное материнство в позднем репродуктивном возрасте. Выделяются и описываются факторы, которые способствуют проявлению различных форм девиантного материнства.

**Ключевые слова:** материнство, девиантное материнское поведение, психологические особенности женщин.

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# Problems of contemporary maternity: psychological aspect

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This article deals with the problems of modern motherhood and studies the phenomenon of deviant maternal behavior. Based on the literature, present study analyzes such forms of violation of maternal behavior as mother's refusal from a baby; mother's cruel treatment of a baby; frequent abortions; maternity in the early reproductive age; conscious maternity postponement for a later reproductive age. Also the factors that contribute to various manifestations of deviant motherhood are described.

**Key words:** maternity, motherhood deviant, individual psychological characteristics of women.

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The position of a woman in society, her place and role in a rich variety of interpersonal relations has always been closely connected with maternity. This is proven by historical facts, data of different scientific areas, numerous examples in cultures as well as life practice itself. Being a complicated psychosocial and sociocultural phenomenon, maternity plays one of the leading social roles of a woman, proper realization of which, on the one hand, is a necessary condition for the essential functioning and formation of a woman as a personality, and on the other hand –giving life to and upbringing of a new personality. Permanent changes which are conditions of modern society development cause the transformation of traditional stereotypes of reproductive behavior and family relation patterns. In this connection, lately there has been observed the reduction of maternity value and that of family on the whole, in the hierarchy of modern women's values where primary importance is given to values, connected with professional formation, acquiring material stability, need in self-realization. Such situation is conditioned first of all by the fact that in the current unstable economic situation for the majority of women most important values are professional success and active approach to building their own lives. For a woman, who lately has been becoming more and more independent and self-sustained, it is important to perceive herself as an educated, free and purposeful personality. The presence of such tendencies in the behavior of women makes them perceive their pregnancy and maternity not as necessary stages of their development but as phenomena which impede them. In this case, finding themselves on the way to maternity, many of them are completely unprepared for the appearance of a baby. Unfortunately, such attitude does not only impede the process of acceptance and realization of a role by a woman and functions of a mother, but also produces different violations of maternal behavior. It is namely in such cases that we face the problem of deviant maternity which is one of the most acute social problems of a modern society [2].

Analyzing the nature of this negative phenomenon it is necessary to consider this in connection with the concept of adequate maternity. It is commonly supposed that there is no “norms of maternal behavior” as such, because it is known that the content of maternity and being a parent generally varies in different cultures and social groups depending on

the historical stage of society development [16]. Nevertheless, today, in the basis of manifesting adequate maternal behavior, there is maternal love and care of the baby which are conditions of the preservation of its life and promotes its normal physical and psychic development since the moment of its conception. From the very first days of a baby's birth mother endows him with positive personality qualities, creates conditions for its harmonious development. In so doing a woman gets satisfaction from proper fulfillment of maternal functions which raises her self-appraisal and self-confidence. Stemming from this, deviant maternal behavior is such behavior of a woman which denies the formation of a positive image of a baby, does not help preserve its health (and sometimes life), in addition it violates the process of its normal development beginning with prenatal and perinatal periods which in future will make the process of child's socialization more difficult.

Deviant maternal behavior can show itself in such forms as mother's refusal from a baby; mother's cruel treatment of a baby; frequent abortions; maternity in the early reproductive age; conscious maternity postponement for a later reproductive age [2].

The presence of different kinds of deviant maternal behavior among women conditions mother's attitude to her child. As a rule, mothers with deviant maternal behavior, have a formal character of interaction with their children. This might manifest itself for example, in ignoring its basic vital needs in accepting, love, care, emotional support. Rather frequently, a child causing irritation, for such women becomes an object of covert or even overt aggression. Unfortunately, such behavior of women produces disastrous negative consequences which tell first of all, on the physical and psychic setbacks of children, who had undergone such treatment on the part of their mother. The analysis of a number of investigations shows that the absence of positive between mother and child relations not only negatively influences the health of a child but also injures its psyche and this considerably violates the process of the child's further socialization [1]; [10]; [13]; [17]; [19].

The problem of deviant maternity has been properly described in psychology, where a great number of both theoretical and experimental papers were devoted to it (D. Pines, J. Bowlby, G. Bibring, D. Winnicot, K. Horney, Г. Г. Филиппова, В. И. Брутман, А. Я. Варга, С. Н. Ениколопов, М. Ю. Колпакова, М. С. Радионова, И. Ю. Хамитова, С. Ю. Мещерякова, О. А. Копыл, Л. Л. Баз etc.). The interest to this phenomenon calls for a lot of discussions and questions not only among psychologists but also among doctors, sociologists, philosophers, teachers. This shows that they are not indifferent to the problems of child- mother interrelations, the investigation of which become especially topical not only from the scientific point of view but also from the point of view of their social value.

While studying the problem of deviant maternity, it should be mentioned that in the history of mankind there have always been different variants of inadequate maternal behavior manifestation, which might have more covert or overt forms [16]. Thus, cases of mother's refusal from her child were known in the period of primitive society. As a rule deliverance from babies in tribes was a frequent and casual occurrence, especially in the period of hunger, when the survival of a child was unlikely.

With the development of civilization there is a marked change of reasons for the deliverance from undesirable children. The reasons acquire not only biological but also social nature. Besides there is a qualitative change in forms of deliverance from a child,

which in comparison with ancient times when a woman might deliberately kill her child to improve her social status, become milder and loyal in relation to the child. Progressively rarer one can meet with direct infanticide which is increasingly stronger criticized on the part of society. More and more often they begin to leave children near churches, monasteries, someone else's houses. It is infanticide as a form of deliverance from undesirable maternity the becomes widespread among women, because in comparison with the other forms such behavior was regarded as the most humane in relation to children and it did not have considerable negative consequences for the physical health of both children and women themselves.

Despite the fact that the problem of mother's refusal from her child has been known for a long time, it should be marked that even today it is considered to be one of the most widespread forms of deviant maternal behavior.

Analysis of research data shows that in the basis of the given maternal behavior deviation in majority of cases there is a serious psychological conflict the content of which is determined by each particular case [3]; [4]; [6]. As a rule the decision to refuse from her child appears in an expectant mother long before the birth of a child. It is conditioned by a lot of reasons which can conditionally be subdivided into two groups. Thus the first group of reasons is the most widespread and first of all connected with life unfavorable conditions (low level of material well-being, anti-social way of life, absence of support on the part of father, nearest parents). The second group of reasons is more complicated and it includes different problems of women who have psychopathological and psychological character. Factors, provoking the refusal, in this case are different psychological disturbances among women which most often are the consequence of negative experience in childhood and adolescence or postnatal depression, which essentially affects the attitude to a child.

Considering individual and psychological peculiarities of personality of women, refusing from their children, one can mark some of their features in common. Thus the distinctive features of the majority of them are the emotional immaturity which is realized in infantilism, egocentrism, affective unrestraint. Typical features of such women are low intellectual level, lowered self-appraisal, lack of self-confidence, unsolved complexes and fears, emotional disbalance, vulnerability, susceptibility to offence and manifestation of aggressive behavior directed at themselves and relatives [2]; [4].

While interacting with women who suffer from problems in accepting maternity, one can notice the absence of effective communication skills, which realizes itself in reserve, distrust to the surrounding people, emotional frigidity that shows itself through indifference to the events taking place. At the same time for majority of women, refusing from their children typical is the sense of loneliness, emptiness around their own selves, confusion [6].

Women stamped by maternal behavior violation strive to idleness, passive choice of position in life, negligence of social norms. Some of them lead antisocial way of life which manifests itself in alcoholism, drug addiction and random sexual connections [4].

Side by side with the problem of refusal from children rather a widespread form maternal behavior violation is a cruel treatment of a child by his mother. Such a kind of maternal behavior violation manifests itself in leaving the child without attention, ignoring its needs

(nourishment, clothing, medical care, safe life conditions, emotional communication); in different forms of psychic and sexual violation [1]; [10]; [12]. Besides, inadequate maternal treatment can manifest itself in the abuse of a woman in the process of her pregnancy by medicines without doctor's orders, drugs and alcohol.

Availability of such unfavorable life situations as poverty, absence of social support being sources of chronic stress are liable to so strongly exhaust the psychological resources of a woman which may promote the manifestation of a negative attitude to her child. However it should be mentioned that not all mothers who find themselves under stress situations, treat their children in a bad way. Therefore it is topical to consider the reasons which help manifestation of the given form of deviant maternity.

Analysis of the personality of mothers treating their children in a bad way shows that in the basis of adequate maternal behavior violation there is the interaction of complex factors [10, 12, 18]. Thus one of the factors conditioning the manifestation of such a kind of maternal behavior, is the factor of similar treatment on the part of parents, mother in particular to her daughter in childhood. Investigators (*C. Widom, Alfaro, Balton, Leicher, Levis et alia*) have established that children undergoing cruel treatment in the family acquire this style of parental behavior in the family and become aggressive and cruel themselves in future. It should be mentioned that it is not only cruelty of parents in relation to their children, but also cruelty to other people e.g. cruelty of father in relation to mother which is witnessed by the child that is liable to promote the acquisition of a cruel style of behavior [10].

Thus, negative experience of children-parents relations, promotes consolidation of maternal deviant model in a woman which gets realized when she herself becomes a woman.

The next factor favoring the maternal attitude violation is the individual and psychological peculiarities of such women. The investigations of basic specific features of a personality of mothers treating their children in a bad way indicate that the majority of women are characterized by a high level of aggressiveness, anxiety, irritability, emotional non-stability, inadequate self-appraisal, low intellectual level. This kind of women are stamped by undeveloped social contacts, which is realized in reserve, incapability to set friendly, long-term relations, absence of communication skills and habits. In addition, some of them suffer from different kinds of pathological mentality violations, accompanied by the appearance of hallucinations [10]; [17].

Women having the violated maternal behavior demonstrate negative reactions to the changes taking place with them at the time of pregnancy. Right after giving birth to a child most of these women refuse from breast-feeding the process of which makes them feel unpleasant emotional feelings. In the majority of cases this kind of women do not feel any joy of communicating with a child, do not feel his or her needs.

Considering the factors, that determine different kinds of improper maternal treatment manifestations one cannot ignore the influence of socio-economic factors. As a rule most of them are not married, they have neither place of their own to live in, nor permanent place of job. These kinds of women are characterized by incapability to control their drive and impulses which most often manifests itself in leading an unhealthy way of life.

Financial problems produce lowering of social status and self-appraisal of a mother. Therefore in some cases, a woman tries to make up for the loss of social position with strengthening her prestige in her place of living by taking physical advantage over her children.

It should be mentioned that despite the availability of a number of investigation papers on the problem of cruel maternal treatment, it is rather a complicated process stopping the spread of this negative phenomenon. The available programs on preventing violence against children aim first of all, at providing mothers with social support and teaching them to use most effective methods of education. However in some cases this kind of women need special psychological help which should be directed to the correction of irrational purposes, connected with maternity, optimization of motives directed at the interaction with a child.

The next form of deviant reproductive behavior of women is the artificial break of pregnancy. Despite considerable achievements in the sphere of contraception, an abortion, still remaining one of the methods of solving the problem of undesirable maternity, is one of serious medico-demographical problems today.

Investigations show that the conscious break of pregnancy may be conditioned by different factors [9]. The most spread motives that call for women's abortion are the absence of marital relations at the time of pregnancy, pregnancy as a result of promiscuous sexual connections, material difficulties, absence of support and mutual understanding on the part of father of a would-be child and parents, priority of other values. Besides, among the reasons that condition the acceptance of a similar solution on the part of women one should mention the presence of different kind of fear connected with pregnancy, childbirth and maternity, desire to get rid of the unsuccessful past, improper reproductive aims (the absence of desire to have children), low level of psychological preparedness to maternity.

Considering the problems of modern maternity one cannot but mention the problem of maternity at an early reproductive age. As a rule early age pregnancy being in the majority of cases non-planned and undesirable, is often finished with an artificial break of pregnancy. This is conditioned first of all, by the social immaturity of a young girl, unpreparedness to accept and execute a new social role, the absence of support on the part of relatives [11]; [15].

The spreading of the given tendency in the behavior of young girls depends upon a number of reasons, most important among which are striving for adult life and independence, which manifests itself in early sexual connections; pregnancy brought about by violation, unfavorable everyday social conditions; low educational and material level of the family; the absence of a positive communicative experience with mother [3]; [11].

In the majority of cases early-age maternity destructively influences the formation of proper maternal behavior and personality development of a young woman [15]. When pregnant, most girls are in the state of shock and disturbance. Often first reactions are a sense of guilt, fear, anger. The majority of young pregnant girls have a distorted perception of the situation of pregnancy, would-be maternity and childbirth, which prevents the formation of adequate maternal behavior [7].

One should also mention that maternity at an early age negatively influences the level of a social status of a young girl. Having no opportunity to form a family of full value due to absence of support on the part of the father of a new-born baby, she becomes devoid of an opportunity to get education, find a good job, achieve material independence [15]. Besides, the situation of a young mother is liable to produce a forced isolation of the girl from her friends and break her life plans. In this connection young mothers are likely to get different kinds of psychological problems which precondition the pathological development of a personality.

So, one might conclude that pregnancy at an early reproductive age, being an additional, often an excessive burden on a young woman's organism not only on the physiological, but also psychological level, is sure to produce the violation of its personality formation in one of the most important periods of ontogenesis and is likely to promote development of deviant forms of maternal behavior.

Together with the problem of early-age maternity in the midst of women today there is a tendency to consciously postpone the birth of a first child until a later reproductive age, which may be conditioned by a number of factors, specially important among which is the striving to get education, make one's career, get material independence [8]; [14].

Analyzing the peculiarities of later maternity one can mention both positive and negative features of the given phenomenon. Thus it is common knowledge that women who give birth at a mature age are psychologically better prepared for maternity than the young girls. In the majority of cases pregnancy for them are a conscious decision and a result of deep thinking which no doubt, positively affects the formation of adequate attitude to the child, whose birth is no longer an obstacle for the realization of the formulated life plans. At the time of pregnancy women of early middle age are lesser subject to ambivalence of feelings, much rarer they suffer from inner conflicts and they are more responsible in fulfilling doctors' recommendations [5].

However despite all advantages of later age maternity childbirth postponement procedure may have a number of negative consequences both for the woman herself and for her new-born child [5]; [14]. Conscious pregnancy postponement on the part of a woman till a more mature age can make it physiologically impossible for her organism to conceive, carry and give birth to a healthy child.

The life of a woman who decided to give birth to a child after thirty five years of age as a rule runs in normal channels. Therefore many expectant mothers of this kind, meet certain difficulties both at the time of pregnancy and after childbirth. Some women who for a number of years have got accustomed to properly organize everything and not to deviate from the plan, there might arise certain difficulties in restructuring their behavior depending upon the life rhythm and newborn child needs. Besides the majority of them manifest a high level of personality and situational anxiety, the presence of different kinds of fear [5].

It should also be mentioned that in some cases childbirth at a woman's mature age is liable to indicate at the presence of problems of a woman's inner personality immaturity, which is accompanied by a woman's unpreparedness to create a family and bring up children [14]. Therefore despite a number of advantages maternity at a later age promotes



appearance of a number of difficulties which may interfere with the normal course of pregnancy, process of adaptation of a woman to the situation of maternity and formation of adequate models of maternal behavior on her part.

So, the analysis of modern maternity problems shows that in the behavior of reproductive age women there are unfavorable tendencies, which violate the process of forming maternal behavior adequate models. The consequence of this is the spreading of a number of negative phenomena, provoking destabilization of any society development. Stemming from this, specially topical are the problems connected with medico-psychological follow-up of pregnant women, the aim of which should be not only the adaptation of a woman to a new situation of development, but also detection, correction and prevention of possible violations of maternal behavior, and formation of responsibility for her own actions and the life of her child.

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