

## The Particularities of Motherhood for Women Suffering from Epilepsy

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**Received:** November 18, 2019; **Published:** December 04, 2019

### Abstract

Epilepsy is an illness with expressed socio-psychological consequences. The number of pregnancies is growing with each year. This may be explained by a variety of factors, including the efficacy of applied medications. Women with epilepsy (WWE) face a number of difficulties, in particular, the presence of family, personal and maternal problems. Epilepsy affects the further relationship between the mother and the child. However, psychological aspects of motherhood WWE - insufficiently studied topic, despite the large number of available data in the literature on the study of personality characteristics of patients with epilepsy. 24 WWE are between the ages of 25-35, and have one or more children aged 0 - 10 years, were studied using a battery of psychological tests: "Parental Attitude Research Instrument (PARI)" by E.S. Shefer, R.K. Bell (1958), projective technique "Unfinished Suggestions" by Joseph M. Sachs (1950) and other. As a result of using the Manna-Whitney's U-Criteria criterion was obtained: style of upbringing has a directive character and that women are fixated on their own children. The patients feel tired from the role of mother, however they strive to devote much time to inner familial interaction, as well as to control and suppress everything that is happening with the child; according to the used methods the level of empathy is reduced; according to the results of projective techniques, the mothers can be characterized as irritable, emotional, anxious, over-protective, self-indulgent, emotionally distant, hypochondriacs, dependent, religious. Therefore, the nature of upbringing among such patients has an authoritarian and directive style. Such mothers have a low sense of empathy. Mothers with this diagnosis can be described as irritable, emotional, anxious, over-protective, self-indulgent, emotionally distant, hypochondriacs, uncritical, dependent, religious, and vain.

**Keywords:** Women with Epilepsy (WWE); Parental Attitude Research Instrument (PARI)

### Introduction

Epilepsy is an illness with expressed socio-psychological consequences. A part of the difficulties faced by patients lies in the sphere of social interaction.

One of the fundamental reasons for the alienation of female patients with this diagnosis is the presence of familial, personal, and motherhood-related problems. Nevertheless, the number of pregnancies is growing with each year. This may be explained by a variety of factors, including the efficacy of applied medications. Without a doubt, epilepsy affects pregnancy, as well as the character of the relationship between mother and child. This justifies the relevancy of the selected topic.

### Materials and Methods

24 women were studied, all of whom suffer from epilepsy, are between the ages of 25 - 35 and have one or more children aged 0 - 10 years. The absence of accompanying psychological disorders served as the selection criteria. The average age of the respondents was 30.8 and the average age of their children was 5.5. 41.6% of the women named work as their main occupation, while 41.6 are not working (due to a disability or maternity leave), and 16.8% chose the option "housewife". 61.5% of the women are married, 23% are divorced, and 15.5% are single (have never been married, or their spouse died).

The following methods were used for studying the sphere of motherhood: the projective test "Mother and Child" by M.L. Melnikov (2002), "The Isolation Scale of a Child in a Family" by A.I. Barkan (2005), "Parental Attitude Research Instrument (PARI)" by E.S. Shefer, R.K. Bell (1958), projective technique "Unfinished Suggestions" by Joseph M. Sachs (1950) as modified by T.I. Kopystseva and V.V. Titova (2016), and "Methods for the Diagnosis of the Level of Empathetic Abilities" by V.V. Boiko (1996).

### Results

For the processing of the data, Mann-Whitney's U-Criteria were used, in which we compared patients suffering from epilepsy with relatively healthy women. The following characteristics of motherhood were received:

- Based on the results achieved using the PARI method, mothers suffering from epilepsy show the following particularities, as compared to relatively healthy mothers: limited family interests ( $p < 0.001$ ), family conflicts ( $p < 0.05$ ), the super authority of parents ( $p < 0.001$ ), the non-participation of the husband ( $p < 0.001$ ), partner relations ( $p < 0.01$ ), the child's active development ( $p < 0.001$ ), equalizing relationships ( $p < 0.05$ ), anxiety ( $p < 0.05$ ), avoiding contact ( $p < 0.05$ ), over care ( $p < 0.001$ ), suppressing of will ( $p < 0.001$ ), creating safety ( $p < 0.001$ ), exclusion extrafamilial influences ( $p < 0.05$ ), suppression of aggression ( $p < 0.001$ ), suppression of sexuality ( $p < 0.001$ ), over-intervention in child's life ( $p < 0.001$ ), desire to speed up the child's development ( $p < 0.001$ ).

It is possible that the style of upbringing has a directive character and that women are fixated on their own children. The patients feel tired from the role of mother, however they strive to devote much time to inner familial interaction, as well as to control and suppress everything that is happening with the child.

- The analysis of the diagnostic methods for the level of empathetic abilities revealed significant differences on the "identification in empathy" scale ( $p < 0.05$ ).

It is possible that the inability of the respondents to put themselves in someone else's place, as well as to sympathize with someone else are connected with personal qualities of the patients: egocentrism, a fixation on personal interests, and an inner distance;

- According to the results collected from the study of the level of isolation of a child by their parents, no significant differences were observed. A favorable atmosphere is present in the majority of the women of the study, which could indicate the socially acceptable responses of the subjects or a subjective sense of prosperity.
- According to the results of semi-projective and projective techniques, the mothers can be characterized as irritable, emotional, anxious, over-protective, self-indulgent, emotionally distant, hypochondriacs, uncritical, dependent, religious, and vain.

Typical responses of the subjects include: "It seems to me that the birth of a child is like the nine circles of Dante", "upbringing is silly", "I think that the majority of mothers are cuckoo (they have a baby and leave it, such people should be killed!)", "I love my child, but am very afraid of losing him", "when I think about my child, I panic.", "the work of a mother includes love, kindness, and sacrificing yourself," "I always dreamed of my child becoming a famous and respected individual," "when my child grows up, I want them to always sleep with their mother," "I am afraid that my child will leave me when he finds a wife" [1-4].

### Conclusion

Therefore, the nature of upbringing among such patients has an authoritarian and directive style. Women with such a diagnosis are tired of the role of mother, however they strive to devote a lot of time to interaction with their child.

Such mothers have a low sense of empathy, which can be explained by the personal particularities obtained as a result of their illness: egocentrism, fixation on personal interests, and an inner distance. Mothers with this diagnosis can be described as irritable, emotional, anxious, over-protective, self-indulgent, emotionally distant, hypochondriacs, uncritical, dependent, religious, and vain.

All of these particularities of motherhood can be explained by character changes and the escalation of qualities which have arisen as a result of the illness.

The solution of these issues lies in the application of specially developed psycho-corrective programs which will make it possible to complexly approach the solution of any difficulties that arise in the area of mother-child relationships.

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**Volume 9 Issue 1 January 2020**

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