

# MOTIVATIONAL READINESS OF CHILDREN TO SCHOOL IN NUCLEAR AND SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES



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## ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper is a comparison of psychological readiness of the child to go to school in nuclear and single parent families. To obtain the objectives of the paper the following methods were used: 1) methods "Two schools" by L.A Venger to identify the level of formation of internal position of the student; 2) the method "Motivational research studies in older preschoolers" by M. Ginsburg; 3) method "Pattern" by L.I. Tsehanskaya to determine the degree of development of skills training activities; 4) method "Graphic dictation" by D. El'konin to study the ability to follow adult instructions. The investigated group consisted of 40 students from first grade secondary school - 20 students from nuclear families (12 girls and 8 boys) and 20 students from single parent families (9 girls and 11 boys). As a result of qualitative, comparative and correlation analysis it was shown that readiness of children to go to school substantially depends on completeness of their families. The children from families have a higher level of skill training and internal position than children from single parent families. This occurs because both parents pay more attention to the children in the forming of a willingness to learn in school. The studies have shown that in the group of children from nuclear families dominate the highest level of development of skills training activities, increased formation of internal positions and childrens social motivation. These indicators are the hallmarks of readiness to learn at school. Also, some recommendations to teachers are provided as for increase of motivation to learn in children from single parent families.

**Keywords:** psychological readiness of the child to go to school, nuclear and single parent families, motivation.

## INTRODUCTION

Readiness of a child to attend school covers all areas of life and future of first-graders. Therefore, the problem of psychological training is one of the most important in the formation of a developed personality. By definition of Taras

Dutkiewicz psychological readiness – is one of the most important outcomes of mental development of children during preschool childhood (Dutkevich, 2009). Psychological readiness of the child towards school involves formation of the main components of learning activities, mental and cognitive abilities. Discussing problems of readiness for school, Daniil El'konin differentiated the necessary preconditions of educational activity (El'konin, 1999). Analyzing these preconditions, he devided the following parameters:

- the ability of children to follow the rule consciously;
- the ability to focus on a specified system requirements;
- the ability to listen carefully, speak and perform tasks offered orally;
- the ability to independently perform the necessary tasks for a visual model

The new attitude of a child to the environment arising on admission to school, Lidiya Bozhovich called “internal position of the student,” considering as a new criterion of readiness for school (Bozhovich, 2000).

In Marta Boethel's opinion, individuals learn best when they are physically, mentally, and emotionally ready to learn, and they do not learn well if they see no reason for learning (Boethel, 2004). Getting a child ready to learn, creating interest by showing the value of the subject matter, and providing continuous mental or physical challenge, is usually the parental and preschool (social environment) responsibility (Kohen, Hertzman & Brooks-Gunn, 1998; Pianta, & McCoy, 1997; Piotrkowski, 2004).

At the last time there are the growing literatures as for correlations between children's educational outcomes and family structure. Some authors (Ermisch, & Francesconi, 2001; Evenhouse, & Reilly, 2004) find that family structure has a significant effect on children's educational outcomes, while others ones (Björklund, & Sundström, 2002) find no significant effects on children's educational outcomes. Donna Ginther and Robert Pollak also call into question the relationship between family structure and outcomes for children (Ginther, & Pollak, 2004). Thus, in spite of a lot of publications the question of influence of family structure (two parent or single parent families, blended families, etc.) on the children's educational outcomes as well as readiness the child to school interpreted ambiguously. In the paper we want to conduct a comparison of readiness to learn in children taking into account only one aspect – the completeness of their families (single or dual parentage).

## THE PROCEDURE OF INVESTIGATION

The investigated group consisted of 40 students from first grade secondary school. Among them - 20 students from nuclear families (12 girls and 8 boys) and 20 students from single parent families (9 girls and 11 boys).

The following methods of research were used:

1. Methods “Two schools” by Leonid Venger to identify the level of formation of internal position of the student (Venger, & Venger, 1994);
2. The method “Motivational research studies in older preschoolers” by

- Michail Ginsburg to identify the prevalence of a particular motive for admission to the school (Ginzburg, 1988);
3. Method "Pattern" by Larisa Tsehanskaya to determine the degree of development of skills training activities (Gutkina, 2000);
  4. Method "Graphic dictation" by Daniil El'konin to study the ability to navigate in space in order to listen carefully and follow instructions accurately adult play correctly specified direction line (El'konin, 1999).

The given results are processed by the statistical methods with use of computer package STATISTICA 8.0. Accordingly, the comparative analysis following Student's t-criterion and correlative analysis have been conducted for the results interpretation and obtaining the objective conclusion.

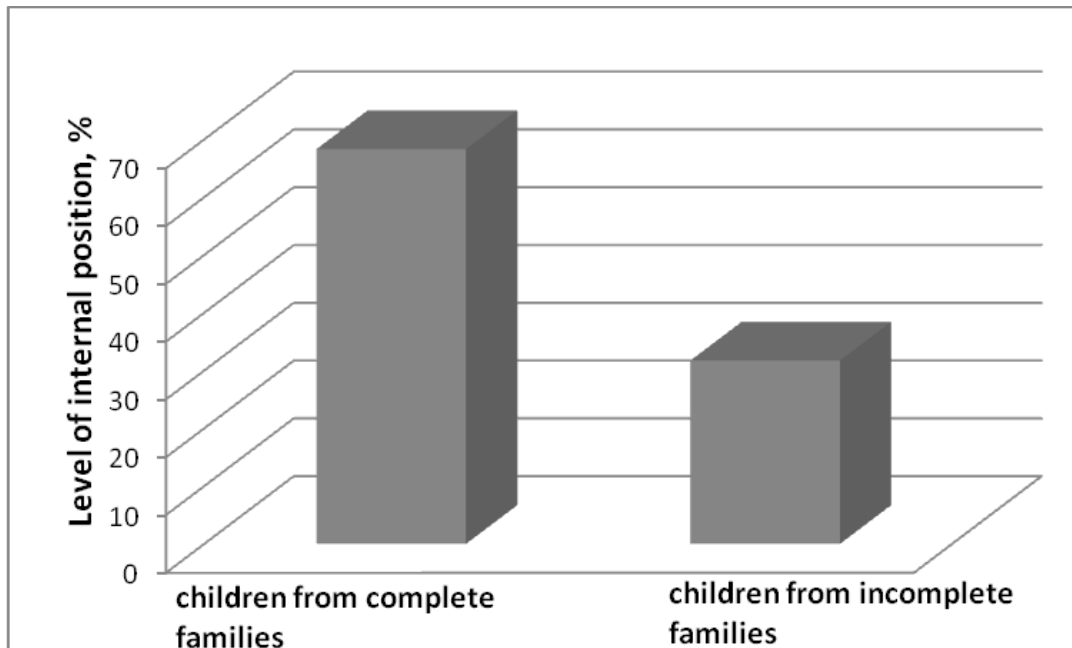
### QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

According to the results of the method "Two schools" by Leonid Venger it was revealed that 68.3% of children with nuclear families have a high level of the existing internal position and 31.7% of children – low level. For children from single parent families a low level of domestic student position dominates (66.5% of children). In children with nuclear families the high level of domestic student arises because they are able to fully communicate with both parents, and they form an internal school readiness.

According to the results of the method "Motivational research studies in older preschoolers" by Michail Ginsburg it was found that in children from nuclear families social motivation prevails (child is in class because it is important and necessary), positional motivation (child engages in school work when in lessons there are many attributes and benefits) and educational motivation (child engages in school work when it is questioning). With children from single parent families the evaluative motive dominates (child is in class, so that it is praised by caregiver), external motive (child engages in school work when a teacher insists) and gaming motive (child cooperates well when classes are built as a game). This indicates different learning motivation in children with nuclear and single parent families. Children from single parent families need more individual approach, teacher approval. In contrast, children with nuclear families show more interest in the learning process and are aware of its importance (See. Fig. 2).

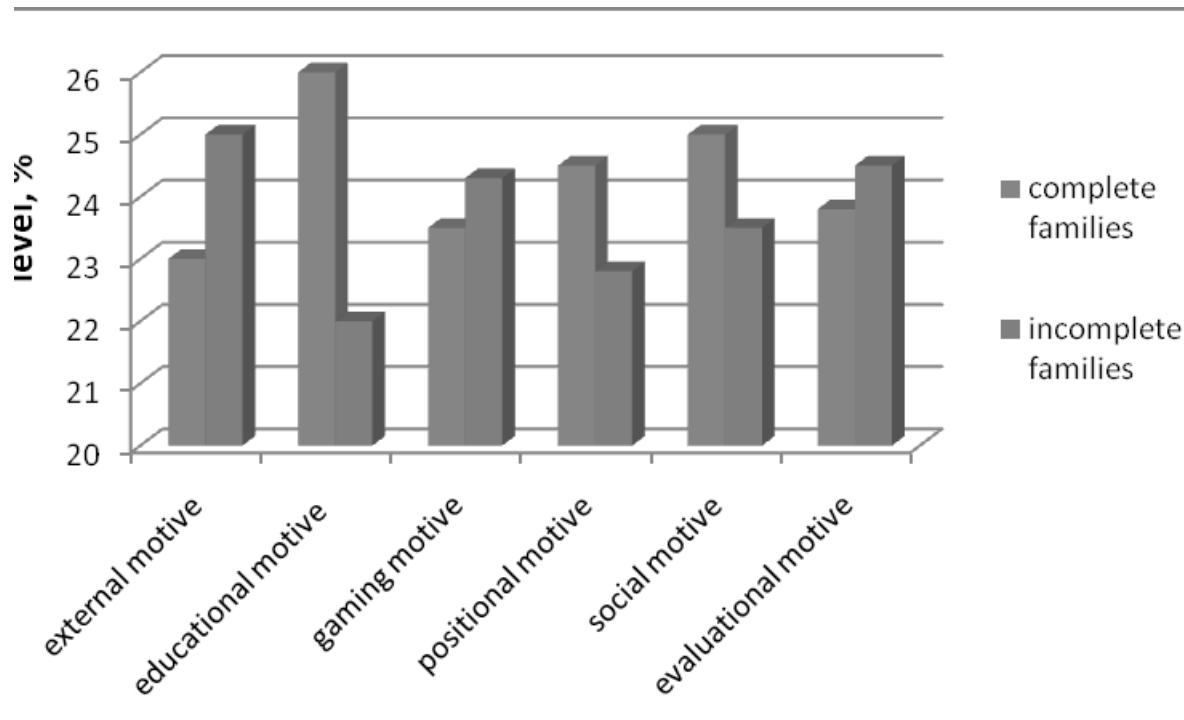
According to the results of the method "Pattern" by Larisa Tsehanskaya it was found that 64.5% of children from nuclear families have high level of development of skills training activities, 18.9% – average, and 16.6% – low manifestation of this feature. In contrast, 26.5% of children from single parent families have high level of development of skills training activities, 42.4% – average, and 31.1% – low manifestation of this feature. Children from nuclear families as opposed to children from single parent families have higher level skill training, resulting from the higher ability to follow the rule (see. Fig. 3).

Fig 1. Differences of forming internal position of the student in children with nuclear and single parent families according to method "Two schools" by Leonid Venger.



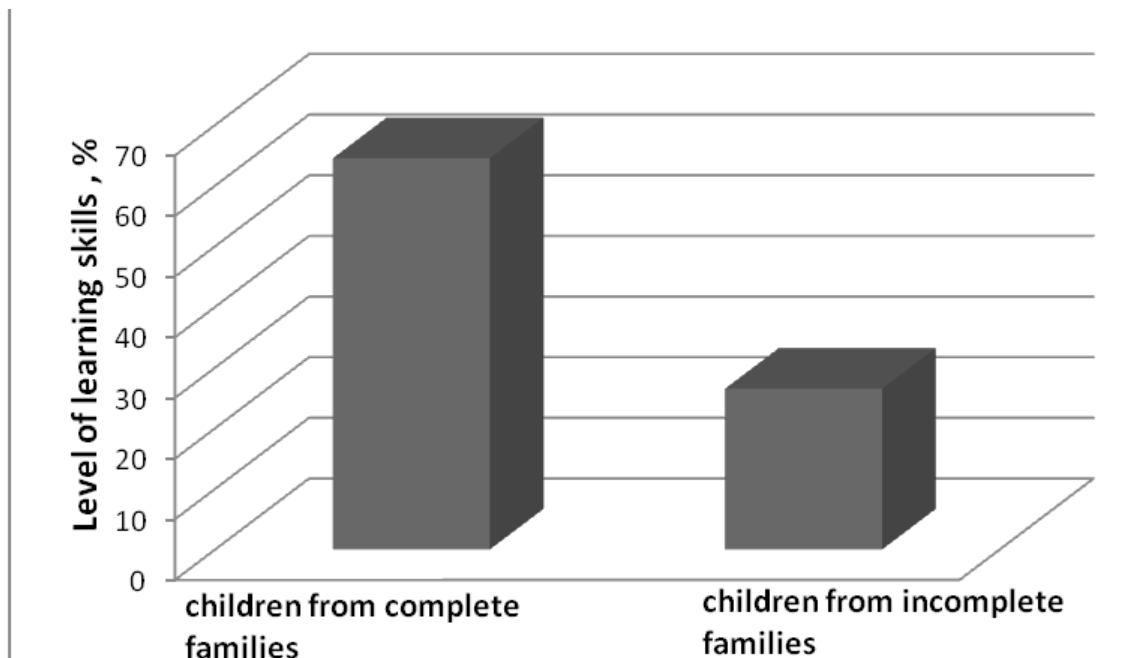
Source: Authors` research.

Fig. 2. Differences in learning motivation among children with nuclear and single parent families according to motivational research studies in older preschoolers by Michail Ginsburg method.



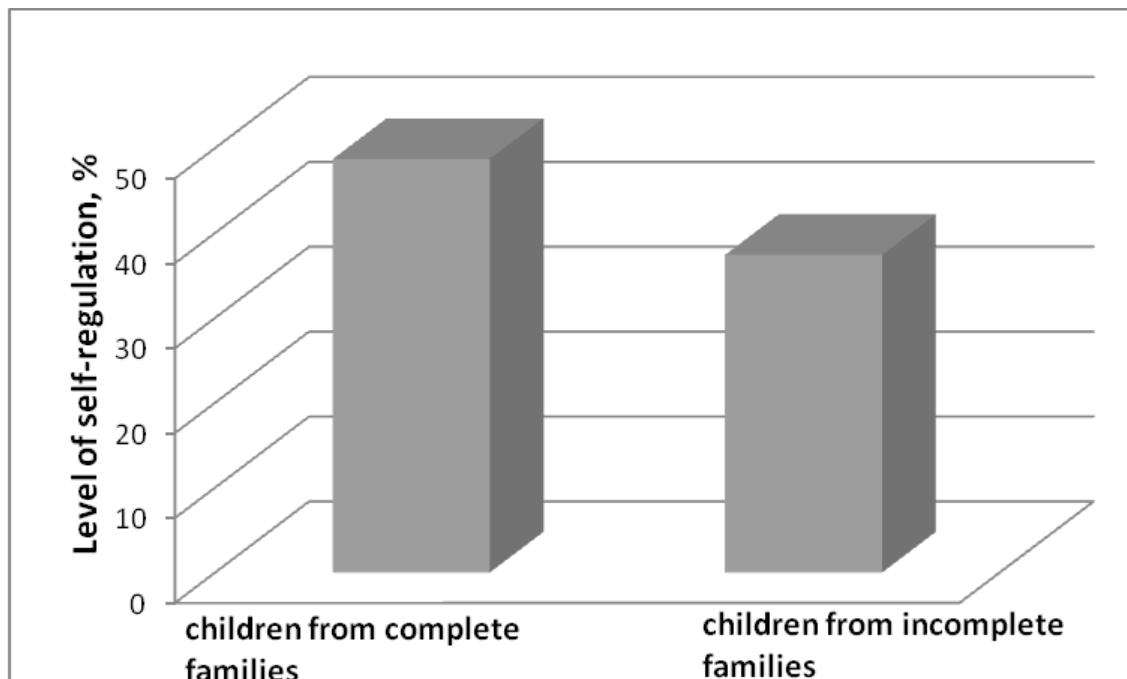
Source: Authors` research.

Fig. 3. Differences in the level of formation of learning skills among children with nuclear and single parent families according to method "Pattern" by Larisa Tsehanskaya.



Source: Authors` research.

Fig. 4. Differences in the level of self-regulation in children with nuclear and single parent families according to method "Graphic dictation" by Daniil El'konin.



Source: Authors` research.

According to the results of the method “Graphic dictation” by Daniil El’konin it was found that in 48.5% of children with nuclear families the high level of self-regulation dominated in 33.7% – average, 17.8% – low manifestation of this feature. In contrast, 37.4 % of children from single parent families have high level of self-control, 22.5% – average, and 40.1% – low manifestation of this feature. This indicates that in children with nuclear families dominates the high level of self-control, resulting from the ability to listen carefully, to navigate in space, follow adult instructions correctly. In contrast, children from single parent families had more difficulty in concentrating during the engagement in the school work (see Fig. 4).

It can be concluded that in children with nuclear families the high level of internal position of the student dominates and the highest level of development of skills training activities and they show more interest in the learning process, having the ability to fully communicate with both parents, and they form an internal commitment to school. In contrast, children from single parent families are more in need of individual approach and teacher approval.

### CORRELATION ANALYSIS

The correlation analysis was conducted between the indices of investigated children. The results of the analysis presented in Table 1. The significant correlation coefficients were denoted by bold type in the Table 1.

Tab 1. The correlation coefficients for personal indices of children from nuclear and single parent families.

		Educational motive	Social motive	Game motive	Level of self-regulation	External motive	Evaluational motive	Positional motive
Nuclear families	formation skills training	<b>0.66</b>	<b>0.38</b>	<b>0.41</b>	<b>0.34</b>	0.08	-0.05	<b>0.34</b>
	formation of internal student position	0.09	0.02	-0.12	0.13	<b>-0.38</b>	<b>0.48</b>	0.11
Single parent families	formation skills training	0.13	0.04	<b>0.43</b>	-0.21	<b>0.45</b>	<b>0.39</b>	<b>0.34</b>
	formation of internal student position	0.14	-0.03	-0.08	-0.16	<b>-0.36</b>	<b>0.44</b>	0.07

Source: Authors` research.

The correlation analysis data indicates in:

- *Absence of any differences in internal student position for children with nuclear and single parent families.* Established inverse correlation between the indices of formation of internal student position and external motive ( $r = -0,38$ , see Table 1) shows a child’s ability to learn only if the teacher

insists, and indicates a low internal position of the student. The child is not internally ready for school. The obtained direct correlation between rates of formation of internal positions and student evaluation motive ( $r = 0,48$ ) can be explained in such a way: the formation of an internal student position is closely connected with the assessment of student by teacher, his/her approval or disapproval. Supporting student, teacher affects the formation of his/her internal positions, self-esteem and self-confidence.

- *There are certain personal indices, for which there are no differences in formation skills training for children from nuclear and single parent families.* The parameters are *positional* and *game motive*. A direct correlation was obtained between indicators of formation skills training and game motive ( $r = 0,41$ ). High level of development of skills training activities is in relationship with a child playing, expressed in pursuit of the child learnt when classes were built as a game. Teaching a child is closely linked to gaming activities, since during the game child training skills are quickly formed. The direct correlation between rates of formation of skills training and positional motive ( $r = 0,34$ ) implies that the learning process benefits and attributes affect directly the quality of education.
- *There are certain personal indices, for which there are substantial differences in formation skills training for children from nuclear and single parent families.* Among the children from nuclear families the parameters are *educational motive, social motive and level of self-regulation*, while for children from single parent families the main role play *external and evaluational motive*.

According to the results of the correlation analysis in a group of children from nuclear families a direct correlation was found between rates of formation of skills training and educational motive ( $r = 0,66$ ). This can be explained by the formation of skills training in close interaction with educational motive. A child who is interested in learning reaches a higher level of formation of skills training activities. Also a direct correlation was established between rates of formation of skills training and social motive ( $r = 0,38$ ). This indicates that the formation of skills training activities is connected with the knowledge by the child of the importance of the educational process, its social value. A direct correlation was also found between rates of formation of skills training and level of self-control ( $r = 0,34$ ). This indicates that the child's ability to listen carefully and follow adult instructions correctly is associated with the formation of the child skills training and increases readiness for school.

According to the results of the correlation analysis of a group of children from single parent families a direct correlation was found between rates of formation of skills training and evaluation motive ( $r = 0,39$ ). This indicates that the formation of skills training activities for children from single parent families is in close relationship with teacher assessment. Positive assessment of a teacher motivates learning activities, while negative assessment - reduces motivation for training activities. A direct correlation was established between rates of formation of skills training and external motive ( $r = 0,45$ ). This means that the formation of skills training activities of the children is dependent on teacher training activities.

It can be concluded that formation skills training activities for the children from nuclear families is closely related to educational, social and gaming motive. The internal position is related to the evaluation of the student motivation. Supporting students, a teacher affects formation of internal positions, self-esteem and self-confidence. The presence in the educational process benefits and attributes directly affect the quality of education. In contrast, formation skills training activities in a group of children from single parent families is closely related to the evaluation motive. Positive assessment of teacher increases motivation in learning activities, while negative assessment - reduces training activities.

### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Through a comparative analysis (by Student t-test) children with nuclear and single parent families revealed a difference in terms of formation of skills training activities ( $t = 2,578$ ,  $df = 41$ , with  $p = 0,0045$ ). In the group of children from nuclear families there is a higher level of manifestation of this feature. This can be explained by the fact that children who are raised in full families under the supervision of both parents, who develop their skills and academic interests, have higher levels of skills training activities than children from single parent families.

Also comparable difference was found between subgroups in terms of formation of internal student position ( $t = 2,250$ ,  $df = 41$ , with  $p = 0,0762$ ). In the group of children from nuclear families there is a higher level of manifestation of this feature. This can be explained by the fact that children who are raised in full families, where both parents are paying enough attention to their education, have a higher level of development of internal position. So, such students expressed a greater desire to learn in school.

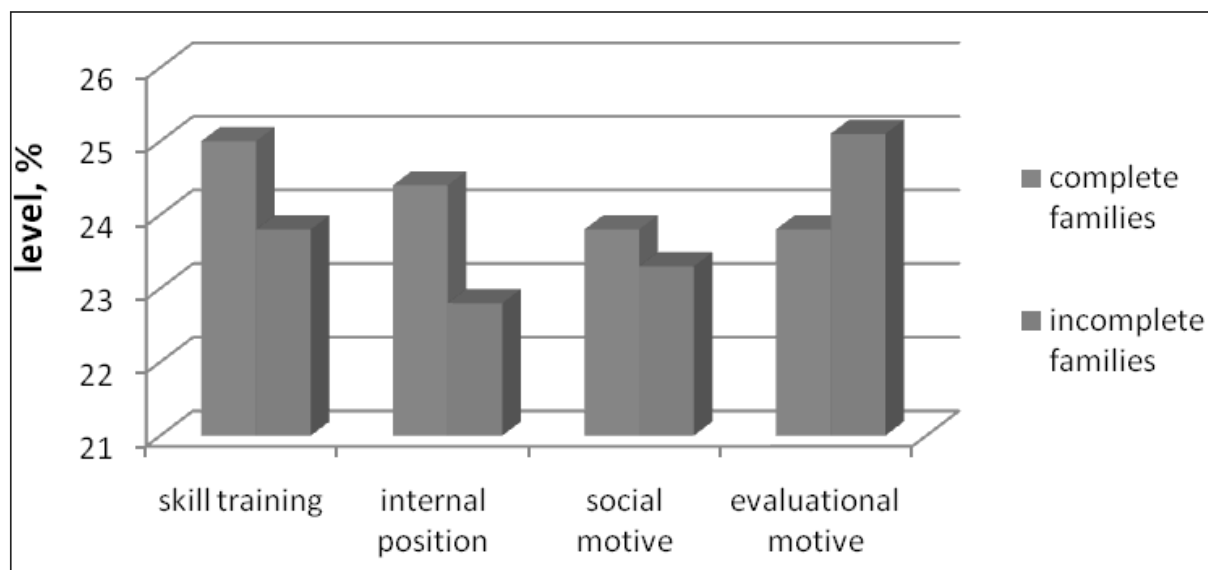
Difference was found in terms of social motive ( $t = 1,276$ ,  $df = 41$ , with  $p = 0,0545$ ). In the group of children from nuclear families there were higher levels of manifestation of this feature. This can be explained by the fact that children who are raised in full families, where both parents are more aware of the importance of the educational process because the parents pay them more attention, they form a willingness to learn in school.

Differences were found in terms of the evaluation motive ( $t = 2,752$ ,  $df = 41$ , with  $p = 0,0243$ ). with a higher level of manifestation of this feature in the group of children from single parent families. This can be explained by the fact that children who are raised in single parent families are more in need of support and approval from the teachers during the educational process because they do not have the support and approval from their parents (see. Fig. 5).

It can be concluded that children in nuclear families have a higher level of development of skills training activities, forming an internal position of the student, a higher level of social motivation and lower assessment motivation. By contrast, a group of children from single parent families have higher level of evaluation motive and lower level of development of skills training activities, formation of internal positions and student social motivation.



**Figure 5. .Results of comparative analysis for children from nuclear and single parent families.**



Source: Authors` research.

## CONCLUSIONS

According to the results of the qualitative analysis children with nuclear families dominates the high level of internal position of the student and the highest level of development of skills training activities, they show more interest in the learning process, having the ability to fully communicate with both parents, and, consequently, they form an internal school readiness. Conversely, children from single parent families are more in need of individual approach and teacher approval.

According to the results of the correlation analysis in children from nuclear families a formation of skills training activities is closely related to educational, social and gaming motive. The internal position is related to the evaluation of the student motivation. Supporting students, the teacher affects the formation of internal positions, self-esteem and self-confidence. The presence in the educational process benefits and attributes directly and affects the quality of education. Conversely, in a group of children from single parent families formation of skills training activities is closely related to the evaluation motive. Positive assessment of teacher increases motivation in learning activities, while negative assessment leads to its reduction. Teaching the children from both groups is closely linked to gaming activities, since during the game their training skills are quickly formed.

According to a comparative analysis in children with nuclear families there is higher level of skills training activities, forming an internal position of the student, a higher level of social motivation and lower assessment motive. Instead, a group of children from single parent families has higher level evaluation motive and lower level of development of skills training activities, formation of internal positions and student social motivation.

The organization of educational work with children from single parent families can highlight the following recommendations to teachers:

- it is important to create an atmosphere of trust and mutual assistance;
- shape the personal qualities of the child, its orientation and position in society;
- should inspire your child self-confidence;
- it is important to help your child with parent families to find and realize themselves.

In conclusion, it is worthy to note that the fulfilled study has some restrictions. Firstly, we have not accounted for mental and behavioral peculiarities of children, e.g. children with disabilities, hyperactive children, children with deviant behavior, etc., for which special conditions should be provided. Secondly, we did not take into account the preconditions of a child's entry to the school – most of the investigated children were at preschool, but we did not account for extra-curricular activities of the children, which could have been mostly in the children from nuclear families. Thirdly, we did not consider the education and social state of the parents, which could influence the children's school readiness. So, a consideration of the above aspects will be the subject of future investigations in the field.

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