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# Personal characteristics of the young people in a difficult life situation

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## Abstract

The article is aimed at investigating the personal characteristics of the young people who face a difficult life situation. Buss-Durkee questionnaire, Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale and the techniques of detecting the levels of subjective feelings of loneliness of D. Russell and M. Ferguson are applied in this research. As a result, the persons with disabilities manifest comparatively higher levels of aggressiveness, anxiety and loneliness than healthy people. As a conclusion, the idea of the dialogicality of society, provides a possibility to form a constructive interaction experience in communication. Its effectiveness increases through the use of the integrative approach.

**Key words:** Life, Situation, Anxiety, Aggression, Conflict.

# Características personales de los jóvenes en una situación de vida difícil

## Resumen

El artículo está dirigido a investigar las características personales de los jóvenes que enfrentan una situación de vida difícil. El cuestionario de Buss-Durkee, la Escala de ansiedad de manifiesto de Taylor y las técnicas de detección de los niveles de sentimientos subjetivos de soledad de D. Russell y M. Ferguson se aplican en esta investigación. Como resultado, las personas con discapacidades manifiestan niveles comparativamente más altos de agresividad, ansiedad y soledad que las personas sanas. Como conclusión, la idea de la dialógica de la sociedad ofrece la posibilidad de formar una experiencia de interacción constructiva en la comunicación. Su efectividad aumenta a través del uso del enfoque integrador.

**Palabras clave:** Vida, Situación, Ansiedad, Agresión, Conflicto.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The social-psychological problems of the adolescents in difficult life situations, due to which the change of the social status is possible, the changes of the emotional state of underage children, the emergence of diseases often lead to the disadaptation of a person (Sherif; 2017; Issakainen & Hänninen, 2016). The dynamics and profoundness of the social-economic transformations, the personal-environmental conditions of the development, intensify the tension within the society, influence the quality of life and form difficult life

situations. According to the Federal Law On the basic guarantees of the rights of the child in the Russian Federation, this category includes: the disabled persons; the legally free children; and the persons with deviations in their behavior. Let us consider the social-psychological characteristics of a personality field of those persons who find themselves in a difficult life situation. Their life activity is objectively disordered due to the existing circumstances that started as early as in their childhood.

The first members of this category are the persons with disabilities. The disability phenomenon is closely connected with a range of acute problems. The self-definition of a social group of persons with disabilities includes four points: social interaction, stigmatization, identification and habitualization. The interaction is manifested in the fact of communicating in social networks, groups, organizations, etc. The stigmatization is a way of definition of a person according to his/her appearance, to the way of moving (crutches, wheelchair). The identification brightly reflects the way that people with disabilities are used to think: We are not like all the others. They often emphasize their differences by themselves, thus distancing themselves from the society. The habitualization implies the stereotypes that were developed both within the group and society (Shimolina, 2015). The following disorders of the personality sphere of the people with disabilities are mentioned: loneliness, low self-esteem, the absence of social self-confidence, depression, and a feeling of being stigmatized and rejected due to their deficiencies (Sharovskaya, 2009). The persons with disabilities are more self-focused than the

ordinary adolescents (Ignatova & Shchukina, 2018). The disability exerts a powerful influence upon the adolescent's personality, he or she feels guilty for being different from healthy people and for being rejected. They tend to demonstrate a low self-esteem of their own cognitive abilities, of their own body, of the independence of behavior and activity (Demidov and Shabalina, 1988; Dermanova, 2002). This correlates with indicators of self-esteem of their appearance and health.

It is important to build an empathic form of relationships when working with persons with disabilities. It is a precondition of effective work, because they can demonstrate aggression, anxiety and experience a feeling of loneliness (Newman, 2018; Wallace, 2015). The analysis of the problem points to a certain level of its theoretical and practical elaboration. But, despite of this, the issue of conducting of systemic researches of the social-psychological characteristics of the adolescents in a difficult life situation, the search of the ways of their formation with the aim of the adolescents' successful social re-adaptation is still relevant. Thus, the purpose of this article is to consider the adolescents' emotional state using the example of the young people with disabilities and adolescents from disadvantaged families.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The empirical research of the psychic states of the persons with disabilities in wheelchairs was conducted on the basis of Territorial

State Autonomous Institution the center of complex rehabilitation of the disabled, Perm Municipal Autonomous General Educational Institution Lyceum № 3 and Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Education Perm State National Research University. The sample consisted of 100 persons: 50 persons with disabilities in wheelchairs (28 women, 22 men) and 50 healthy persons (25 women and 25 men). Craig's periodization was used. It defines the age between 20 and 40 years as early adulthood. The following methods were used during the research (Table 1).

Table 1. Summary table of the research methods of the psychic states of the persons with disabilities in wheelchairs.

Methods and techniques	Purpose
<i>Buss-Durkee questionnaire</i>	The diagnostics of the state of aggression
Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale	Measuring of the anxiety manifestations
The techniques of detecting the levels of <i>subjective feelings of loneliness</i> of D. Russell and M. Ferguson	Defining of the level of subjective feeling of loneliness

The research data were processed through the methods of mathematical statistics. Table 2 shows the mathematical methods of data processing that were used in the research of the psychic states of the persons with disabilities in wheelchairs.

Table 2. Summary table of the mathematical methods of data processing.

Kolmogorov-Smirnov test	To check the compliance of the data with the normal law of distribution.
Mann-Whitney U-test	To check the significance of differences by the degree of expression of the psychic states indicators (anxiety, aggressiveness, feeling of loneliness) for two samples: healthy people and persons with disabilities in wheelchairs
Spearman rank correlation coefficient	To identify the characteristics of the relationships between anxiety, aggression and feeling of loneliness

The data were processed via the software package SPSS 16.0.

### 3. THE DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The significant differences were found in the indicator of anxiety level ( $U = 879, 50; p \leq 0,05$ ). It was higher in the group of the persons with disabilities in wheelchairs. Similar results may be found in the research that was conducted by Masiutina (2006) (Candidate's thesis the life quality and psychological status of the persons who suffered a stroke in a young age). It detected the neurotic, anxiety and depressive disorders of various intensity degree among the patients who suffered a stroke and had motor disabilities. Thus, the thought of a negative perception on the part of other people due to a restricted movement provokes the development of anxiety.

The significant differences were detected on the scale of subjective feelings of loneliness ( $U = 668, 00; p \leq 0,001$ ). Basing on

the results of the indicator, the persons with disabilities in wheelchairs experience a feeling of loneliness. Shentseva and Davydova (2013) note that Stigma becomes an additional restraining factor of an individual's life activity and leads to a passive social role. That is why a wide social group of persons with disabilities, together with their immediate circle, are forced to form a new social world that is distant from the world of healthy people. Due to the disruption of the relationships with healthy people, the persons with disabilities experience a feeling of loneliness.

Basing on the results of the Buss-Durkee technique, we detected significant differences in the following scales: physical aggression ( $U = 853,00; p \leq 0,01$ ), verbal aggression ( $U = 876,00; p \leq 0,01$ ), indirect aggression ( $U = 972,50; p \leq 0,05$ ), resentment ( $U = 558,50; p \leq 0,001$ ), suspicion ( $U = 694,50; p \leq 0,001$ ), feeling of guilt ( $U = 892,50; p \leq 0,05$ ), aggressiveness index ( $U = 782,00; p \leq 0,01$ ), hostility index ( $U = 569,50; p \leq 0,001$ ). The indicators were higher in the group of the persons with disabilities in wheelchairs. It seems that the resentment is the consequence of envy and hatred towards healthy people. The reason for the suspicion among the persons with disabilities in wheelchairs can be the distrust in relation to healthy people and, as we have already mentioned, the disruption of social relationships between these two groups. As a personality, a person with disabilities feels unconfident in his or her status in the society and uses aggressiveness as a kind of compensatory or defensive mechanism, as a means of adaptation to the changing life conditions and self-awareness.

Thus, the persons with disabilities manifest a comparatively higher levels of aggressiveness, anxiety and loneliness than healthy people. Similar results were obtained in relation to the psychological characteristics of the legally free children and those ones who demonstrate deviations in their behavior. The legally free adolescents worry about the situations that are associated with school, education and communication with teachers; they feel a higher degree of anxiety in the evaluation of themselves, in their self-image in the eyes of other people; they are concerned with anxious feelings in relation to their future and interaction with other people. The relationships between the indicators of alexithymia and anxiety among the adolescents are identified. The development of alexithymia or manifestation of its certain signs is greatly influenced by the adolescents' anxiety that is associated with various spheres of their life. The following four blocks were identified in the structure of the indicators of anxiety, alexithymia and suicidal behavior: personal anxiety, anxiety- and suicide-inciting power, alexithymia. However, in relation to the adolescents, the higher the level of subjective control (internality), the higher the risk of proneness to self-destructive (suicidal) behavior. The factors of the suicidal behavior risk include the situations that are associated with schooling and self-expression. The young people with self-destructive behavior are less inclined to a favorable self-presentation. The negative background of self-perception prevails. They demonstrate a high level of self-criticism. They are less able to control their emotional reactions. They are not confident in their possibilities and doubt their abilities. They are not satisfied with themselves and demonstrate a high degree of readiness for changing their self-conception. Besides, they possess a

high level of reflection that transforms into excessive self-scrutiny. In a problem situation the adolescents with self-destructive behavior are inclined to blame themselves (Ignatova, 2018).

The need to formulate the recommendations for their psychological assistance Ignatova (2015) and for the improvement of their life quality arises. Basing on the research results of the personal characteristics of young people in difficult life situations, the methodical recommendations for their relatives and specialists were formulated. They may be used in the activity of school and medical psychologists as well as in the psych prophylactic measures on the level of the region.

During our research, we came to a conclusion that the development of the constructive interaction experience was associated with the organization of productive communication. The psychological-pedagogical assistance of young people in difficult life situations is led by the idea of the dialogically of society: “dialogicality is a specific form of interaction between equal and equivalent minds. To be is to communicate in a dialogic way” (Rogers, 1994: 12). In its turn, stigmatization of the social environment of higher education requires dialogicality in their interaction with family members, specialists (Khasan, 2003). One of the main research questions is the choice of approach to psychological assistance. The integrative approach was chosen (Ananiev, 1980). The principles of such assistance include the principles of complexity and consistency, complementarity and variability, subject-subject interaction,

orientation towards a personality's self-development. During our research activity, we came to a conclusion about the necessity of identifying of the mechanisms of psychological assistance of young people in a difficult life situation. The reflection and facilitation were chosen as such mechanisms. The methodological guides for identifying of such mechanisms included the following ideas: 1) the idea formulated by Kuliutkin (2008), Rogers (1994): the reflection is "a supra-situational man's activity that gives a possibility to account for various points of view in relation to the problem that needs a solution, to play out the various consequences of the supposed solution" (Kuliutkin, 2008: 2) the essence of facilitation is "stimulating and initiating of the meaningful interaction" (Rogers, 1994: 3) facilitation is a form of mediation. The list of recommendations includes the following points:

1. The ways of establishing of a confidential contact need to be known; both parties in communication need to be on equal footing. Since the young people in a difficult life situation feel a stronger sense of loneliness; the loneliness is associated with the lack of trust and understanding, the ways of establishing a confidential contact with a person need to be known. Rogers (1994) distinguished several conditions for ensuring psychological assistance. One of these conditions is a demonstration of acceptance of the other party in communication.

2. To respect personal space; to resort to criticism only on the basis of arguments. The acceptance is the respect for the other party's right for his or her own feelings, thoughts, behavior; the treatment of a person's feelings, desires and actions as natural under given conditions. The purpose of the acceptance is the creation of a safe atmosphere through which a person gets a possibility to freely express his or her own thoughts, feelings, attitude, perception, etc. There are the ways of demonstrating of acceptance that are realized through verbal and non-verbal means. Let us consider the verbal means of establishing of a confidential contact:

- The expression of approval: Good, Great, etc.

- The expression of consent: Yes, Of course, surely, Natural, There is no doubt, etc.

- The demonstration of understanding: I do understand, I imagine how difficult it was, I understand your state, and your feelings are close for me.

- The demonstration of naturalness and normality of what is happening: What you are experiencing is natural, what is happening to you is natural, this is quite an understandable reaction under such circumstances, it is quite natural in such situation.

- Granting of the right: You have the right to think, act, feel, etc. in such a way, you can act in such way.
  
- Supporting expressions: It is really unpleasant, you are surely right.
  
- The attitude towards acceptance is realized both in the words and in a special intonation. Each emphatic utterance that is expressed with an accepting intonation, will demonstrate to a person that his or her feelings are accepted.
  
- Thus, the relatives and specialists need to know the ways of establishing of a confidential contact Trunov (2008) and to develop the tolerance.

3. To demonstrate tolerance, to avoid the emphasis upon a difficult life situation. To develop the skills of self-regulation, because the reactions of anxiety and aggression may become evident. Taking into account the feeling of anxiety that the persons with disabilities in wheelchairs may feel, we will formulate the recommendations for their assistance by the specialists of the social sphere.

The term anxiety originated from the Latin word *angusto* that means narrowness, narrowing. In the state of anxiety, the tension, agitation becomes blocked. This becomes evident in the quality of a person's breathing. Breathing becomes shallow and rapid. Besides, the

worry and rapid heart rate are distinguished as anxiety symptoms (Sidorov, 2013).

The central element of anxiety is a sense of a threat. The state of anxiety arises when an individual perceived a certain stimulus or situation as actually or potentially threatening, dangerous, harmful. As a normative phenomenon, the anxiety is defined as a sensitivity to the danger that arises in potentially dangerous situations and fulfils an adaptive function (Soloviova, 2012).

As a result of our research, we found out that the persons with disabilities in wheelchairs tended to feel anxiety. Probably, it is associated with the change of cognitive evaluation of the surrounding world and themselves. There are experimental results that were obtained in modern cognitive psychology. They clarify the influence of anxiety upon cognitive processes. For example, the anxiety narrows the field of attention. The persons in the state of anxiety focus upon what they fear of or upon what may be important for their well-being. All the other information is ignored (Sidorov, 2013).

If a person needs to express his or her feelings and to express the anxiety through the words, he or she should be given a chance do to this. Speaking through anxious feelings partly favors the freeing up of a client from the excessive affective overload by lowering the level of psychic tension. This is the element that accompanies an excessively intensive or long-lasting anxiety. The disorganizing influence of anxiety decreases.

When interacting with an anxious person, it is important to account for his or her constant strive to always be ahead of time. It may be evident in the abundance of questions that relate to the patient's future, to what is awaiting him or her. It is important to answer the questions and to fix the present by summing up the results, by summarizing everything that was said or done by the patient during a certain period of time. This will help the persons with disabilities in wheelchair to become aware of their current feelings and will bring them back to reality (Soloviova, 2012).

Levitov notes that the aggression needs to be investigated both as a behavior and/or motive and as a psychic condition. In the opinion of this psychologist, aggressive state can include both direct attack and the threat, desire to attack, hostility. The state of aggression can have an overt external manifestation, for example, in pugnacity, rudeness. However, it can be hidden as well, taking the form of malevolence, resentments. The typical state of aggression is characterized by a sharp, often an affective feeling of anger, impulsive disorderly activity, and malicious intent, in some cases by the desire to "vent the fury on somebody or even something" (Shabalin, 2008: 23).

4. To emphasize planning for the future, to favor the formation of new social relations among the persons with disabilities and to promote the new interests instead of those that were lost. During communication, we recommend to clarify their interests and plans for the nearest future. It is important to favor the formation of the new social relations among the young people in difficult life situations and

to promote new interests instead of those that were lost; to share the information on various communities, clubs, public places where such persons could be accepted and involved into a certain activity; to tell about various web-sites, groups and social networks that provide a possibility to get to know with like-minded people.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Summing up the above, we can make the following conclusions. Overcoming of a difficult life situation may take place with the help of psychological assistance. It is led by the idea of the dialogicality of society. In case of its realization, this idea provides a possibility to form a constructive interaction experience in communication. Its effectiveness increases through the use of the integrative approach. It implies the realization of a range of the following conditions: the formation of attitude towards the establishment of a confidential contact and equality in communication; the respect for personal space; the demonstration of tolerance; emphasizing rather plan-building for the future than a difficult life situation as such.

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