

SOCIAL DEPRIVATION AS A RISK FACTOR FOR MENTAL MALADJUSTMENT AMONG THE YOUNGER GENERATION OF UKRAINIANS

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The purpose – to investigate the risk factors of adolescent mental maladjustment.

Research materials and methods. The diagnostic method of the clinical interview (MCI), clinical-psychopathological and statistical method were used among 30 (13 girls and 17 boys) socially deprived adolescents of school age to detect mental maladjustment.

The results. It has been established that psycho-emotional stress, neurotic changes and instability of emotional reactions, especially in deprived teenagers, are caused by psycho-traumatic situations (acute or chronic) and an unsatisfactory social and psychological climate in the family, home, and educational institution.

Strong emotional experiences of 62 % of girls (9 persons) were due to the breakup of friendships, a small number – 28 % (4 persons) due to punishment for failure at school and the least due to the indifference of others 24 % (3 persons). Three girls noted 2 signs each. Among young people, emotional and stressful situations were caused in the largest part due to the indifference of others – 72 % (12 people), a fairly high rate due to the breakup of friendly relations – 32 % (5 people) and the least was observed in cases of punishment for failure – 6 % (1 person). One young man noticed 2 signs in himself. Among those examined, 70 % of teenagers were witnesses of psychological bullying, 27 % of the subjects periodically insulted their peers at school, and 1 boy (3 %) admitted that he suffered beatings from high school students. The difference is probable ($P < 0.001$) in comparison with indicators of mental and physical violence. No one described themselves as criminals.

Conclusions. The application of ways to reduce or eliminate family and socio-psychological deprivation in society among the growing generation of Ukrainian teenagers will create conditions for the harmonious and comprehensive development of the personality that is in the process of formation.

Key words:

social deprivation, adolescents, mental maladjustment.

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СОЦІАЛЬНА ДЕПРИВАЦІЯ ЯК ЧИННИК РИЗИКУ ПСИХІЧНОЇ ДЕЗАДАПТАЦІЇ СЕРЕД ПІДРОСТАЮЧОГО ПОКОЛІННЯ УКРАЇНЦІВ

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Мета – дослідити чинники ризику підліткової психічної дезадаптації.

Матеріали та методи. Серед 30 (13 дівчат і 17 хлопців) соціально депривованих підлітків шкільного віку застосовували діагностичний метод клінічного інтерв'ю (МКІ) за А. Айві (відкриті, закриті питання, відображення почуттів, переказ), клініко-психопатологічний, статистичні методи.

Результати. Встановлено, що психоемоційну напругу, невротичні зміни та нестійкість емоційних реакцій, особливо у підлітків із депривацією, спричиняють психотравмуючі ситуації (гострі чи хронічні) та незадовільний соціально-психологічний клімат у сім'ї, побуті, навчальному закладі. Сильні емоційні переживання у 62 % дівчат (9 осіб) були через розрив дружніх стосунків, невелика кількість – 28 % (4 особи) через покарання за неуспішність у школі і найменша – через байдужість оточуючих 24 % (3 особи). Три дівчини відмічали у себе по 2 ознаки. У найбільшій частині юнаків емоційно-стресові ситуації виникали через байдужість оточуючих – 72 % (12 осіб), достатньо високий показник – через розрив дружніх стосунків – 32 % (5 осіб) і найменше – у випадках покарання за неуспішність – 6 % (1 особа). Один юнак відмічав у себе 2 ознаки. Серед обстежених свідками психологічного цькування були 70 % підлітків, 27 % досліджуваних періодично ображали однолітки в школі, а один хлопець зізнався, що терпів побиття від старшокласників. Різниця вірогідна ($P < 0,001$) порівняно з показниками психічного та фізичного насилля. Кривдником себе не характеризував жоден респондент.

Висновки. Застосування шляхів зменшення чи усунення сімейної і соціально-психологічної депривації у суспільстві серед підростаючого покоління українських підлітків створює умови для гармонійного і всебічного розвитку особистості, яка знаходиться у процесі формування.

Ключові слова:

соціальна депривація, підлітки, психічна дезадаптація.

Клінічна та експериментальна патологія 2023. Т.22, №2 (84). С. 41-46.

Introduction

One of the most important and urgent problems of modern adolescent psychiatry is mental maladjustment, provoked primarily by mental deprivation of adolescents, which is of significant medical and social importance, since, guided by the new health care strategy, it involves a shift in emphasis from curative to preventive medicine, reorientation of the main focus from disease to health. The state of mental health of the nation is one of the criteria for social and psychological stability of both individuals and society as a whole [4]. Moral and ethical conditions are the factors that mainly affect the indicators of mental health and mental pathology, especially clearly observed in adolescents during their socialisation [1, 3].

The socio-economic changes in Ukraine in recent decades could not but affect the younger generation of the country, namely mental deprivation as a result of insufficient satisfaction of basic mental needs (for a long time and to a rather serious degree) in socially deprived biological, social, migrant orphans, in asocial families and in adolescents with problems in interpersonal relationships, which led to a lack of emotional warmth in parent-child, adolescent-adolescent, adolescent-society relationships [6].

In recent years, the situation in Ukraine has been characterised by ever-increasing demands and psychological stress on the younger generation due to the impact of various mass psychogenic factors, including «social isolation» of social and biological orphans, «social neglect» of adolescents due to the labour «migration boom» and in asocial families, which lead to an increase in mental health disorders. This situation has led to the prevalence of psychotraumatic factors, unfavourable psychological situations in the family, at home and at school, which in itself causes internal tension, provoking instability of emotional reactions, especially in adolescents with a range of psychological problems. Today, social and psychological deprivation has become a widespread deprivation among adolescents [2]. According to research, 24 % of Ukrainian children have been bullied at school at least once. Less than half of them have told their parents, family and friends about this experience. Very often, bullying as aggressive and extremely unpleasant behaviour of one child or group of children towards another child, accompanied by constant physical and psychological influence, leads to irreparable consequences, and therefore, recently, the world has been actively discussing how to stop school violence.

Thus, the psychogenic situations that appear in the life of an adolescent are related to the fact that he or she, as an unformed personality in the psychological sense, is not able to respond adequately to life circumstances and very often remains emotionally isolated in society from the psychological and sometimes physical protection of a loved one (most often parents) for different periods of his or her life, which creates conditions of psychological discomfort and contributes to the emergence of mental disorders and behavioural disorders [5]. The external conditions of deprivation were seen by scientists as: social, hygienic, nutritional neglect, abnormal traumatic positions taken by adults, various conflict situations [7].

The purpose

To study the risk factors of mental maladjustment among adolescents.

Research methods

In order to identify mental maladjustment among 30 adolescents of school age (14-16 years old), who were in mental deprivation, following the principles of bioethics and deontology, a comprehensive examination of 13 girls (43 %) and 17 boys (57 %) was carried out. Among them, the urban population consisted of 14 people (47 %), and the rural population constituted 16 people (53 %). The clinical and psychopathological method and the clinical interview method (CIM), which was used as a diagnostic method (open, closed questions, support, reflection of feelings, retelling, summary), were applied, a method of influence was also used. The statistical processing of the data obtained was carried out using the method of determining the probability of differences (according to Student's test).

Research results and their discussion

The individual world of an adolescent, his or her emotional perception of people and circumstances was studied taking into account the microcommunity – the team (school, educational institution) in which the adolescent gained his or her first social experience. In the course of the study of 50 adolescents, 30 schoolchildren – 13 girls and 17 boys – were selected for further examination using the clinical interview method, namely adolescents who indicated the absence or lack of social incentives in the family in a single-parent family due to divorce (1 girl and 3 boys), which made up 10 %; in the absence of a father or mother due to labour migration (2 girls and 1 boy), which covered 10 % of the study population; if their relatives are away from home most of the day (mostly work) and therefore do not have time to create friendly relations with the adolescent, which prevents manifestations of parental love and care, when relatives do not have a psychological and emotional connection with the adolescent, when they do not pay the necessary due attention to him/her, are not interested in his/her life, only rarely communicate, address him/her mechanically (10 girls and 14 boys), which is 80 %; those whose relationships are insufficient due to an internal psychological barrier, namely, one or both of their relatives drink (1 girl and 1 boy), which corresponds to 7 % where the father, although physically present, is either inactive or has a distorted influence on the upbringing of the adolescent, which is much worse; due to the low economic or cultural status of their family (2 girls and 2 boys), which is 13 %, and is openly concealed by them due to the problematic nature of their positive inclusion in the peer group. Parental care in such families is largely equivalent to the absence of a family at all, due to financial poverty, poor hygiene, unemployment, low cultural level of the family and a poor environment. Three girls and four boys among the population under study indicated two signs each. The clinical interview method (according to A. Ivey) was developed according to the age and gender criteria: living in rural or urban

areas; full and partial family; social attachments; absence of one of the family members at the moment; circle of interests; academic and behavioural success; presence of complaints, bad habits in their environment and their assessment; emotional experiences due to a certain situation; feeling of humiliation and the feeling it causes. The situation, in which a specific connection between an adolescent and his or her social environment (family, school), was studied using the questions of psychological comfort presented in the ICI. This method was used to identify etiological and risk factors for mental disorders, and we used this method to collect psychological and medical history. The ICI was used as a diagnostic method (open and closed questions, support, reflection of feelings, retelling, summary) and a method of influence. The adolescent's own vision of his or her life from the inside was important. Therefore, this research method is considered to be objectively reliable.

Using the clinical and psychopathological method, we studied the life history, factors that were psychologically traumatic for adolescents, thus creating psychological discomfort. The birth of a long-awaited child in a full family is a happiness and joy for parents and the whole family. In the first months and years of life, the child is surrounded by love and care, but over time, the child grows up and begins to lead his or her life «independently» not only within the family but also among peers, often copying the not always positive actions of others or, much worse, encountering the negative side of life, namely, teenage psychological or physical violence, often in the school environment. This situation with bullying has become a scandal in our country and has attracted the attention of the whole society and scientists. To bully a child, bullies can find many reasons: the victim's appearance, which does not fit into their generally accepted framework, their behaviour, opinions that do not coincide with theirs or the vast majority of their supporters and friends, the victim's morality, etc. Excellent or good academic performance, sufficient or poor material opportunities, and even «unacceptable» personality traits can be the basis for bullying. In addition, someone who finds it difficult to communicate with peers, who is modest, shy or provocative can also become a victim of bullying. Vivid examples of bullying include psychological pressure with verbal abuse, deliberate rejection of a teenager into a team, making him or her an outcast, blackmail and even physical violence with beatings. None of those surveyed described themselves as perpetrators, and 7 girls (23 %) and 14 boys (47 %) witnessed psychological harassment, which is 70 %. On the other hand, 6 girls (20 %) and 2 boys (7 %) were occasionally insulted by their peers at school, and 1 boy (3 %) admitted to having been beaten by senior pupils. The difference is significant ($P < 0.001$) compared to the rates of mental and physical violence.

Most often, bullying adolescents consider themselves «cool», strong, and authoritative. Such perpetrators are cavalier, consider it entertainment, revel in their «heroism», enjoy humiliating the victim, believe that it is funny and not a big problem or tragedy, and that adults will not pay attention to it.

However, for adolescents who witnessed, or even more tragically, were victims, this psychological «experience» became the trigger that changed their imagined happy life into an inexplicably cruel one with violence that distorts their happy expectations and, as a stressor, can lead to mental disorders that maladjust them in society. In this context, the fact of psychological discomfort is important by determining the impact of an unfavourable socio-psychological climate on the emergence of internal tension and instability of emotional reactions, which it is desirable to identify in time, to try to harmonise the life of an adolescent in order to prevent his or her mental maladjustment.

The prevalence of mental deprivation among adolescents in the Chernivtsi region emphasises the importance of a comprehensive approach to studying this problem due to the fact that the formation of mental functions in childhood is influenced by a powerful multifactorial factor, namely raising a child in a harmonious or disharmonious family (for adolescents with family deprivation), or outside the family (among adolescents with biological and social deprivation), among «migration orphans» (among adolescents with maternal deprivation) and among adolescents who do not have good relationships with peers at school or who live temporarily in dormitories due to their studies (among adolescents with social and psychological deprivation).

Studies of the prevalence of mental maladjustment show that among preventive measures, the most important today is timely recognition of patients with non-psychotic and psychotic mental disorders and behavioural disorders among adolescents due to the influence of a significant negative psychogenic factor, their outpatient observation, timely implementation of the necessary treatment and prevention measures in childhood, especially among biological and social orphans, taking into account anti-risk factors.

Thus, knowledge of the true prevalence of mental and behavioural disorders among adolescents, the need for emergency hospitalisation and risk factors for these disorders in different regions of Ukraine, and in particular in Chernivtsi Oblast, is necessary for effective prevention and treatment measures.

The prevalence of mental maladjustment due to deprivation among adolescents in Ukraine has become a mass phenomenon and, accordingly, a social problem in our country and occupies one of the leading places in child and adolescent psychiatry.

The analysis of the results of the studies shows that psycho-traumatic situations (acute or chronic) and unsatisfactory social and psychological climate in the family, home, and educational institution cause psycho-emotional stress, neurotic changes, and instability of emotional reactions, especially in adolescents with a number of psychological problems.

Thus, it has been found that among the situations that cause strong emotional experiences for more than half of the girls (9 people) were the breakdown of friendships, a small number (4 people) were punished for failing at school and the least was the indifference of others (3 people) (Fig. 1).

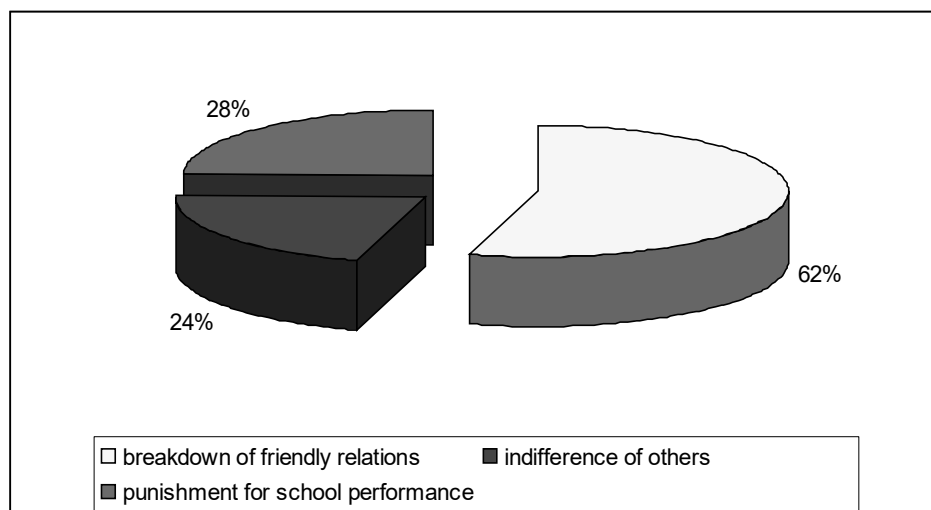


Fig. 1. Distribution of psychotraumatic factors among girls (%)

Three girls noted 2 signs each, namely: breakdown of friendships and indifference of others. Among the girls, the breakdown of friendships was the most significant and took priority in adolescent-adolescent relationships. Punishment for failure and indifference of others were almost equally proportionate and painfully perceived by them. The academic rating among girls is of great importance, so they took their failures at school very hard, often blaming not themselves but teachers who were indifferent to their «fate».

Among boys, emotional stress was caused by the indifference of others (12 people), a fairly high rate was caused by the breakdown of friendships (5 people) and the lowest rate was observed in cases of punishment for failure (1 person) (Fig. 2).

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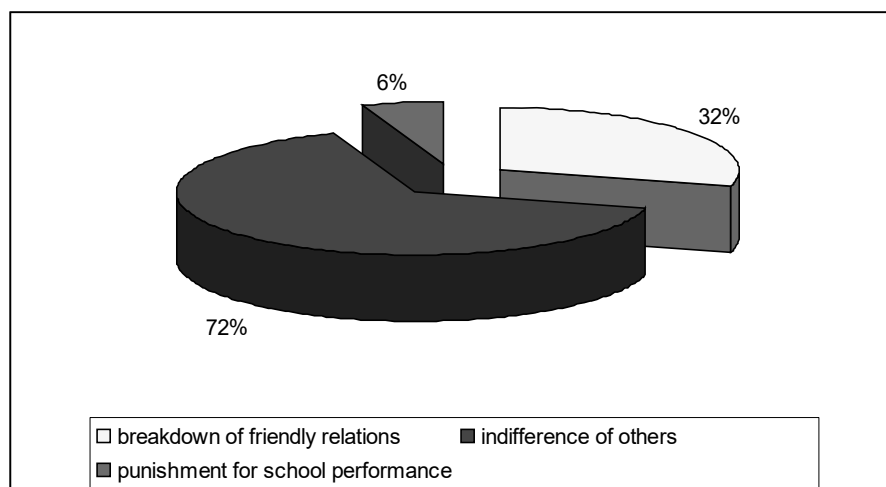


Fig. 2. Distribution of psycho-traumatic factors among the subjects (%)

One young man noted 2 signs, namely: the breakdown of friendships and indifference of others, both adults and peers, to his psycho-emotional problems. Because of this, young men were more likely to be unbalanced, which was manifested by disturbed behaviour.

Thus, psychogenic environmental factors have led to the psychophysical adaptation of adolescents at high risk of developing psychogenic disorders, in particular due to emotional deprivation. The role of social influences from relatives and peers, which are key for this age, was especially noted. The importance of psychogenic influence through humiliation by others for the preservation of mental health is undeniable. It was found that all the subjects who were in mental deprivation, namely 43 % (13) of girls and 57 % (17) of boys, had

been humiliated in one way or another in their lives, which caused psycho-emotional tension in the parent-adolescent, adolescent-adolescent, adolescent-society relationships and led to their mental maladjustment in society.

The role of those feelings caused by humiliation was especially noted, namely: resentment towards the offender among girls was observed in 13 (100 %) of the subjects, irritation – in 12 people (92 %). Among the boys, irritation was observed in 82 % (14), with verbal abuse of the offender, and 3 people (28 %) showed verbal and indirect aggression towards others, which they later regretted. Indifferent attitude to humiliation was observed in 24 % (4) of young men. The revealed resentment of the offender among girls was considered as normative,

as was the indifferent attitude to humiliation by boys. However, irritation among girls (92 %) and boys (82 %) was interpreted as a psychological defence mechanism if this reaction was not constant.

However, 28 % of boys developed a pathological defence mechanism, which was seen as emotional and volitional instability with manifestations of social maladjustment.

Thus, the micro (family) and macro (school, society) environment created the background against which an emotionally unstable and, unfortunately, pathological personality with impulsivity for insignificant reasons was formed, which complicated the life of both the adolescent and society as a whole with the presence of mental and physical violence.

Conclusion

The application of ways to reduce or eliminate family and socio-psychological deprivation in society among the growing generation of Ukrainian teenagers will create conditions for the harmonious and comprehensive development of the personality that is in the process of formation.

Prospects for further research

Since the growth of epidemiological indicators of mental maladjustment among the younger generation of Ukrainians is most often associated with adolescent social deprivation, further study of their clinical manifestations is promising in order to apply timely preventive measures.

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