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Self-Esteem and Interpersonal Relations in Adolescence

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Abstract

Adolescence is a core period of personality development in ontogenesis. The formation of teenagers' interpersonal relations is one of the central developmental tasks in adolescence (R.J. Havighurst). The study reveals the role of the specificity of adolescents' attachment to parents and peers to form teenagers' self-esteem, and the influence of attachment to parents on development of teenagers' interpersonal relations. 161 pupils aged 13-18 years participated in the research. The researchers used the Inventory of Parent Peer Attachment (IPPA) by Armsden and Greenberg [1], the Research Technique of Teenagers' Interpersonal Relations by Sobchik [2], the Self-Esteem Scale Dembo-Rubinstein version by Prikhozhan [3] in the author's modification were used.

The study showed that adolescents with different types of attachment to parents had specific features of self-esteem and specifics in their interpersonal relations. The research concludes that the system of attachment to parents is important for developing the psychological well-being of an individual adolescent.

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1. Introduction

Adolescence is a period of multiple complex changes in adolescents' personality. The theory of R. Havighurst defines the main tasks of development in the period between childhood and maturity. One of the most important areas of changes is the transformation of relations with parents and peers. The age-specific psychological approach, proposed by L.S. Vygotsky and D.B. Elkonin to analyze psychological development in adolescence is very promising due to its emphasis on the importance of the social situation of development (SSD) (L.S. Vygotsky). The latter is a set of social links and relations into which the teenager is included.

Modern Russian society is described as a rapidly changing crisis situation. The SSD of today's adolescents is a hierarchical structure including different social contexts of teenagers' life (O.A. Karabanova, D.I. Feldstein) [4, 5]. The transformation of the relationship with parents is one of the main developmental tasks during adolescence.

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Adolescents' separation-individuation can be described as a developmental process whereby individuals increase their sense of differentiation and independence from their mother and father. Researchers are in general agreement in viewing adolescents' separation-individuation as a critical process in their development.

The attachment theory formulated by J. Bowlby is widespread and famous in current developmental psychology (M. Ainsworth, K. Bartholomew, M. Mikulincer, R. Fraley, S. Spieker, L. Walters, J. Cassidy).

The formation of adolescents' personal autonomy, their separation from parents are long and complex processes, mediated by the pattern of parent-child relationship [6;7].

The parenting and attachment styles affect teenagers' self-esteem and the development of interpersonal relations in adolescents [8]. The goals of our study were to reveal the role of adolescents' attachment to parents and peers specificity in the formation of teenagers' self-esteem and their interpersonal relations.

2. Methods and sample.

161 pupils aged 13-18 years from Moscow schools (9th – 11th graders participated in the research). We used the following methods: the Inventory of Parent Peer Attachment (IPPA) by Armsden and Greenberg [1], in the author's adaptation to the Russian language; the Research Technique of Teenagers' Interpersonal Relations by L. N. Sobchik [2]; the author's modification of the Self-Esteem Scale by Dembo-Rubinstein, the version by A. M. Prikhozhan [3].

One of the goals of our work was to approbate the IPPA in the Russian sample. The theoretical framework of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) [1] is an attachment theory formulated by J. Bowlby and expanded by others. The IPPA inventory has three forms (two for parents and one for peers) and assesses three dimensions: the degree of mutual trust in parents and peers; the quality of communication; and the extent of anger and alienation. There is a total scale in every form of the inventory that assesses attachment to the significant Other: «attachment to mother», «attachment to father», «attachment to peer», respectively.

The author's modification of the Dembo-Rubinstein Self-Esteem Scale included scales describing adolescents' perception of their important personal lines and their abilities to communicate with peers. For example, we asked the teenagers about their intellect, cheerfulness, popularity with peers, self-confidence, beauty, experience of loneliness and happiness. The Research Technique of Teenagers' Interpersonal Relations by L. N. Sobchik [2] has good psychometric characteristics. The results were statistically analyzed with the Microsoft Windows SPSS program, version 18.0.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Study of Adolescents' Interpersonal Relations

In general, the sample obtained has a middle level of parameters for all eight octants, according to L. N. Sobchik's technique: all the scores are less than eight points. According to the teenagers' assessment of themselves "real", the greatest number of points were obtained by teenagers on octants 1 (5.71), 8 (5.47), 7 (4.95) which corresponds to the Imperious – Leading, Cooperating – Conventional and Responsible – Generous types of interpersonal relations. The smallest number of points were on octant 5 (3.89) which corresponds to the Obedient – Timid type of interpersonal relations.

Some significant differences were revealed. The girls perceive themselves as more mistrustful and sceptical, obedient and timid, dependent and obedient, cooperating and conventional, responsible and generous in interpersonal relationship than the boys do. Those results correspond to the accepted idea of women's social roles, and the well-known phenomenon: the advanced growth of girls in comparison with boys.

One of the goals of our work was to approbate the IPPA with the sample of Russian speaking people. The values of the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the IPPA scales lie in the range of $0.681 \div 0.930$. It shows a good internal coherence on the IPPA scales.

We divided our sample into two groups – the former having a «secure» type of attachment to both parents and the latter having an «insecure» type. The IPPA scales (to both parents) were used as parameters of the cluster analysis method. The adolescents with lower points of trust, communication and low points of alienation from

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