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# Research on the Content of Co-Overcoming Infantilism of Adolescents and Youth as a Psychological and Pedagogical Problem

Investigación sobre el contenido de la superación del infantilismo en adolescentes y jóvenes como un problema psicológico y pedagógico

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#### **ABSTRACT:**

The research is relevant due to the interest of pedagogical community to the problems of education in modern Russian society, the identification of the means of its development. In this regard, this paper is aimed at disclosure of the theoretical foundations and methods of psychological-pedagogical coovercoming of infantilism of adolescents and youth. The leading approaches to the study of this problem are axiological, personality-oriented and activitybased approaches that allow having a comprehensive view of the problem of assistance to infantile adolescents and youth. The paper presents the essence and content of the concept of "infantilism" and "co-overcoming" in the psychological and pedagogical literature, the content of activities and mechanisms of its implementation, identified in the course of empirical research (experiment). The materials of the paper are of practical value for researchers of problems of education, students and school pedagogues.

**Keywords:** adolescents, young people, co-

#### **RESUMEN:**

La investigación es relevante debido al interés de la comunidad pedagógica por los problemas de la educación en la sociedad rusa moderna y la identificación de los medios para su desarrollo. En este sentido, este trabajo tiene como objetivo revelar los fundamentos teóricos y los métodos de superación psicológico-pedagógicos del infantilismo de los adolescentes y jóvenes. Los enfoques principales para el estudio de este problema son los enfoques axiológicos, orientados a la personalidad y basados en actividades que permiten tener una visión integral del problema de la asistencia a adolescentes y jóvenes infantiles. El artículo presenta la esencia y el contenido del concepto de "infantilismo" y "superación conjunta" en la literatura psicológica y pedagógica, el contenido de las actividades y los mecanismos de su implementación, identificados en el curso de la investigación empírica (experimento). Los materiales del documento son de valor práctico para investigadores de problemas de educación, estudiantes y pedagogos escolares.

**Palabras clave:** adolescentes, jóvenes, superación, infantilismo, métodos de trabajo.

### 1. Introduction

The most important mechanisms of positive changes in human consciousness are the knowledge of the world and self-knowledge, creativity, activity and communication in the process of which it is necessary to develop special qualities: will, optimism, diligence, tranquility (inner balance) and empathy which contribute to the development of his consciousness. However, adolescents and youth have a large number of problems that they often do not realize and that they cannot overcome on their own. This paper will be devoted to the justification of the essence and content of psychological-pedagogical *co-overcoming* infantilism of adolescents and youth.

Co-overcoming is a special kind of psychological-pedagogical activity characterized by a conscious understanding of the problem of an adolescent, the joint search for its causes, the choice of means of overcoming obstacles (difficulties), the implementation of joint activities according to the plan, the reflection on the obtained result, understanding of the acquired knowledge, abilities, new qualities and properties, character traits, as well as the construction of a further path with correction of mistakes, new tasks and methods of achievement. In co-overcoming, each participant (pedagogue, parent, adolescent) overcomes his difficulties, but the educator also renders helps, supports his pupil in the process.

In this paper we will focus on rendering help to infantile children: those who are not aware of their abilities, interests, do not seek to know the world themselves, those with a weak will, those living by inertia, under the influence of others, "burning" their lives.

#### 2. Literature Review

In foreign psychology, the concept, signs and causes of emergence and development of infantilism are revealed: G. Anton (1913), H. Stutte et al. (1967), In the works of L.F. Barrett et al. (2007; Barrett & Wager, 2006), K.S. Blair et al. (2007), J.D. Mayer et al. (2000), R.J. Waldinger et al. (2004), J.T. Ehrenreich et al. (2007), the interaction between emotional intelligence and infantilism as deficiency of awareness of emotions, their regulation, use in mental activity; infantilism as a result of the pathological process of autism and schizophrenia are revealed (Phillips & Seidman, 2008; Prakash et al., 2007; Rechinberg et al., 2006); the development of sexuality of an infantile individual (Kronfeld, 1921; et al.). In these foreign works, studies of mental and psychological infantilism prevail.

In Russian psychology, the following works are devoted to the problem of infantilism: Yu.B. Gippenreiter (1995), G.E. Sukhareva [6], T. Ushakova et al. (2016)

In pedagogics, the mention of working with irresponsible (infantile) children is found in works by Sh. A. Amonashvili (1980), A.S. Makarenko (1984), et al. Works of V.P. Bederkhanova (2000), O.S. Gazman (2002), A.V. Ivanova (2017), et al. are dedicated to the problem of pedagogical support of an adolescent in solving his personal problems; works of A.V. Ivanov (2017), L.Ya. Olifrenko et al. (2002) deal with socio-pedagogical support of children at risk.

In the Russian philosophy, M.K. Mamardashvili (1994) et al. wrote about the need to develop will as an alternative to human infantilism. In psychological science, interest in the problems of will is reflected in the works of S.L. Rubinstein (1957), A.N. Leontiev (1993), V.K. Kalin (1983) et al., whose key studies were devoted to will as a volitional regulation aimed at mastering behavior and mental processes. Works by L.I. Bozhovich (1997) et al. were devoted to the study of will and volitional qualities in ontogenesis. Works by K.A. Abulkhanova-Slavskaya (1991), A.V. Brushlinskiy (1991), D.A. Leontiev (2005) are devoted to the study of responsibility as a social phenomenon (external form of control). Responsibility is considered by N.I. Fokina (2005) as a problem of developing responsibility at different age stages, the study of the conditions of formation, the leading factors affecting the process of building responsibility, the structure of social responsibility; N.A. Golovko

(1973) considered responsibility in the conditions of joint labour activity as a sociopsychological phenomenon; N.A. Minkina, et al. (1990) considers it as the achievement of the result by their own efforts

# 3. Methodology and Research Methods

The objective of our research is to study the problem of infantilism in the psychological-pedagogical literature, development and justification of co-overcoming as a means of removing infantilism of adolescents and youth by developing their volitional qualities and responsibility.

Research objectives:

- To conduct a theoretical analysis of scientific research on the problem of "infantilism" of adolescents and youth, rendering them assistance to overcome it;
- To justify the development of volitional qualities and responsibility as ways to overcome infantilism;
- To develop and justify the psychological-pedagogical content of co-overcoming infantilism of adolescents and youth.

Basing on the research goal and objectives, we selected and used a range of methods. To analyze the existing experience in the field of research, theoretical methods (analysis and synthesis, generalization and systematization), as well as empirical methods (study of the existing pedagogical experience, experiment) were used, which allowed to introduce the subject of the study - to determine the basic concepts of "infantilism", "volitional qualities", "responsibility", "psychological-pedagogical co-overcoming", "technology", to clarify their essence and content.

It is necessary to examine the study of the problem of infantilism and ways of resolving it through the development of volitional qualities and responsibilities and practical application of psychological-pedagogical co-overcoming in the complex of general methodological and general scientific approaches: axiological (Slobodchikov & Isaev, 2000) which is associated with the assertion of the priority of spiritual values in education; personality-oriented approach determined by the fact that the subjects of education are the personalities of a teacher, a pupil and his parents (Gazman, 2002; Bondarevskaya, 1998; et al.); activity-oriented approach which determines the solution of personality problems, the development of his consciousness only in the process of activity (Leontiev, 2005; et al.).

The study of the problem of infantilism in psychological-pedagogical literature, the development and justification of co-overcoming as a means of eliminating infantilism of adolescents and youth through the development of volitional qualities and responsibility on the basis of the above mentioned approaches will allow revealing one of the directions of modern education.

### 4. Findings and Discussion

# 4.1. Scientific-Psychological Characteristics of "Infantilism"

Infantilism became one of the most relevant problems in psychology and pedagogy in the second half of the XXth century. Infantilism (from Latin infantilis – childish) is a delay in the development of the body, in which people permanently retain the features of "childishness" in behaviour (Almukhanova, 2007). Infantile children are careless, carefree, and shallow in judgments, do not feel any responsibility for their actions, are not able to restrain their desires. These are children: with various addictions, weak-willed and with a weak character, emotionally loose, impatient, unable to overcome their fears, with communication disorders, with a lack of interest in knowledge, in their intellectual, physical, spiritual and moral development. They are easily influenced by others, easily drawn into alcohol, drug and other kinds of addiction. They cannot define their interests, so they spend time aimlessly. The main criterion of infantilism is the inability and unwillingness to take responsibility for one's life.

Generalizing statements of various scientists-psychologists and pedagogues on the problem of infantilism, the main reasons can be grouped as psychological, physiological and social.

Unfavorable conditions of intrauterine development of an adolescent, pathological childbirth, frequent diseases after birth, head injuries, some brain diseases and genetic features are considered to be the *psychological and physiological causes* of infantilism. Its emergence is affected by infectious diseases suffered in childhood, disorders of the trophic and endocrine glands, digestive disorders and nutritional deficiencies, hereditary predisposition that causes a slow development.

Social reasons are connected with the peculiarities of education of an individual: overprotection, increased parental control, despotic upbringing including constant criticism. The causes of infantilism also determined its types: mental, psychological and social.

### 4.2. Mental and psychological infantilism

"External manifestations of mental and psychological infantilism are similar and they are expressed in the manifestation of children's traits in behaviour, in thinking, in emotional reactions" (Ushakova, 2016). For mental infantilism medication, psychotherapy and psychological counseling of parents are offered.

Social infantilism is associated with the peculiarities of modern social environment, its tensions related to the increasing dangers of terrorism, paedophilia, environmental and economic disadvantage (poor living conditions, rejection of children by adults), the increasing pace of life, the feminization of education, an increase in the scandalous divorces of parents that affected the health and development of children and their upbringing (overprotection and overcare, limiting the independence of child's personality that develops his dependency and irresponsible behaviour). Such education leads to the formation of consumer attitude to life, selfishness, materialism, frivolous attitude to one's duties.

Typical mistakes of education which contribute to the development of infantilism of children are: sacrifice of educators, the solution of all problems for an adolescent, excessive love of parents, regulation of his life according to strict rules without the right for independence, unwillingness to understand the true needs and motives of the adolescent's behaviour, prohibition of expression of his feelings, transferring one's emotional state to the pupil (nagging, humiliation, insult).

How to help them? How to wake their consciousness? The leading idea is that it is necessary to help an adolescent in every way to "see", to feel his Individuality, to overcome difficulties, to take responsibility for his life.

Psychological-pedagogical co-overcoming is to help children to realize the feeling of love and compassion, the need for knowledge and beauty, to develop a sense of responsibility and volitional qualities, thereby to overcome the internal barriers to development and self-development.

If *pedagogical support* serves not only as a type, but also as a valuable basis for the activities of a pedagogue and a pupil for rendering assistance to him in solving his problems, then *co-overcoming* is a type of psychological-pedagogical activity that characterizes not only the solution of problems, but also a *joint* positive attitude to the difficulties and the vital need to experience various hardships for the development of the person.

The meaning of co-overcoming is to overcome difficulties. In adolescence, there is still not enough awareness of the relationship of the acquired knowledge and ways of solving problems. Therefore, it is necessary to work together to overcome difficulties, i.e. to help to find the common threads of solutions, based on the causes of problems, the level of their impact and types of obstacles.

Co-overcoming in controlling the lower emotions of an adolescent will be connected with stopping their negative impact (calm), then awareness of the source of their occurrence, the discovery of actual incentives to overcome them (new needs and motives) associated with the development of new qualities, beauty of the body and spirit, the attraction of the reference group. A pedagogue and a psychologist help to develop the Programme (as well as

in other difficult situations) revealing step-by-step movement and reflection of the gained experience. In the process of moving, assistance in the correction of the ways of activity is rendered. The quality of assistance from pedagogues and other professionals depends on the level of their competence, professional skills, as well as the social environment.

The deep meaning of co-overcoming is to discover the understanding of the new and everlasting upward movement only by overcoming difficulties in oneself.

Co-overcoming should be considered from the position of a pedagogue (psychologist, teacher, parent, specialist) and from the position of a pupil.

On the one hand, from the position of a pedagogue, it is necessary to overcome his negative thoughts, feelings, attitude to the infantile adolescent. On the other hand, overcoming is a scrupulous search for the hidden causes, motives that determined the emergence of infantile state, developmental problems, negative actions, finding ways to help and support him.

From the position of an adolescent (young man), it is overcoming his distrust of a pedagogue (parents, etc.), acceptance of the authority, respect and trust in him. On the other hand, it is overcoming internal problems, awareness of them, an active desire to master the ways of self-change and their practical application. Active assistance and support of the adolescent by a pedagogue in overcoming the difficulties of an adolescent in its development appears.

Psychological-pedagogical co-overcoming of infantilism of adolescents and youth involves rendering assistance and support in the development of responsibility and volitional qualities. The awareness of the need to develop volitional qualities and responsibility is also a way not only to eliminate infantilism, but also to develop personal consciousness, because a person is aware of what he is doing and what qualities he is developing.

Human consciousness knows what it needs, what qualities it needs to develop. However, his undeveloped mind and lower emotions strongly impede, hamper the development of the necessary qualities, personal abilities, qualities. Therefore, qualified assistance in this process is necessary.

The indicators of effective psychological-pedagogical co-overcoming of infantilism of adolescents and youth are:

- Acceptance of spiritual and moral values by the community;
- Active interaction of all subjects of educational institution;
- Ensuring effective process of development of responsibility, volitional qualities, abilities, possession of ways of their application;
- Ensuring the effective process of influence of the cultural environment of educational institution and family on the development of an adolescent.

Developed on the basis of theoretical analysis, scientific provisions on the essence, content and structure of infantilism and rendering pedagogical support to its development as co-overcoming became an integral part of the conceptual foundations of the process of this activity.

The process of psychological-pedagogical co-overcoming of infantilism of adolescents and youth covers the whole period of activity on the given problem and on qualitative manifestation conventionally includes *3 steps*:

- Step of education and diagnosis, involving the organization of frontal conversations, interactive lectures, "problematization" of pedagogues, psychologists and children in order to activate the participants on the problem of the development of responsibility, will and co-overcoming of infantilism; conducting diagnostic studies to identify infantile adolescents. The goal is to bring students to the understanding of the need for self-development and self-improvement.
- The next step is to advise infantile adolescents and organize joint activities with them. At this stage, correction and rehabilitation of such adolescents is needed. These teenagers should realize that mistakes teach to distinguish good from bad, they can be corrected, difficulties teach to overcome, to become internally stronger, and the successes fix the mastered skills and determine the transition to the next level of development and overcoming. This step involves the development of a programme (plan) of action to build a model of pedagogical assistance to adolescent in overcoming his obstacles; generalization of all ideas into a complex project, plan of

specific actions.

• Formalization step is reflection, analysis of experience and its verbalization and structuring, control diagnostics, correction and prediction of future actions, views on the process of psychological-pedagogical co-overcoming of infantilism of adolescents and youth.

The conducted research, the comprehensive analysis of its results allowed to establish that the process of psychologial-pedagogical co-overcoming of infantilism of adolescents and youth depends on a number of factors: internal (subject) and external (cultural and educational), which have a direct or indirect impact on the effectiveness of the process.

It is possible to determine the stages of implementation of co-overcoming in psychological-pedagogical activity:

The first stage is the teacher's overcoming his difficulties in finding ways to work with an infantile adolescent.

The second stage is overcoming the resistance of an adolescent in the need for self-change.

The third stage is the joint determination of the causes that gave rise to such kind of lifestyle.

The fourth stage is the adolescent's overcoming difficulties as a result of the adoption of new motives of life activity.

The fifth stage is thinking and activity of an adolescent with the support of an adult (psychologist, teacher, parents, etc.) to implement ways of self-change and self-development.

The sixth stage is to overcome the desire to stop on the achieved things, the need for further movement in self-development and self-improvement, constant adjustment of their thoughts, feelings and actions (Ivanov, 2017).

The methods of development of volitional qualities and abilities, responsibility, development of spiritual values, activity-oriented participation in the implementation of the movement to achieve the Common Good using responsibility, volitional qualities and abilities are the mechanisms of psychological-pedagogical co-overcoming of infantilism of adolescents and youth. At the same time, a man continues to comprehend the social world, is engaged in the search for his profession in order to realize his genetically specified opportunities in the improvement of the earthly world in harmony with the process of Cosmic evolution as creatively as possible.

#### 4.3. The Main Directions of Work with Infantile Adolescents

A new approach to education is revealed in the pedagogy of consciousness, where the value basis of activity is the education of joyful attitude to difficulties, trust in overcoming obstacles as a way of self-development. The task of a pedagogue is to help to find ways of overcoming, but not to eliminate these difficulties for an adolescent, to support an optimistic attitude to difficulties. These include maintaining interest in the development of volitional qualities, the creation of conditions under which the impetus for their development will become their need passing into the relevant motive.

Will is a tool that allows overcoming the obstacles of infantilism through thoughts, feelings and actions. Only conscious facing different challenges which are constant, and not avoiding them causes the development of volitional qualities. This requires an educator (parent, teacher, etc.) who will explain the importance of the process of overcoming obstacles of different levels. Activities on overcoming difficulties should always be based on spiritual values – striving for Truth, Love and Beauty. Then the process of human ascension becomes indispensable.

Psychological-pedagogical co-overcoming of infantilism of adolescents and youth through the development of volitional qualities is to create conditions for the active inclusion of children in various activities.

The basis of developing will lies in the systematic overcoming of difficulties in everyday life. In adolescence, there arise difficulties in the development of volitional qualities. In order to consciously control the emerging desires, it is necessary to strengthen the awareness of will.

An infantile adolescent or a young man has no need in the development of their will. Assistance in the development of self-consciousness leads to the awareness of his interests and motives, which affects the development of sustainability of character, strengthening of volitional qualities, the development of maturity of will.

In psychology exploring the internal psychological properties of an individual, responsibility is defined as a volitional and personal quality manifested in the control of human activity (Brushlinsky, 1991; et al.).

Responsibility should be brought up first for one's deeds and actions within the framework of the accepted norms and rules. And here responsibility acts as a behaviour regulator. Gradually, an adolescent begins to realize the impact of his responsible behaviour on the causality of events. In the process of his development, a child begins to realize the responsibility for his beliefs and accepted values. By accepting responsibility, personality matures.

With the growth of consciousness, a sense of responsibility develops. In turn, it is necessary to realize, to discover the understanding of responsibility, if the goal is to expand consciousness, where each decision and the action following it is permeated with the awareness of responsibility. At the same time, the sense of responsibility is fully revealed only when a person aspires to spiritual values. Responsibility is interlinked with the will of man, the development of a sense of courage, determination, readiness to continue till the end. The development of the human will encourage the development of responsibility and vice versa.

Responsibility is logically associated with the autonomy of an individual, humanistic and existential theories consider responsibility as an obligatory component of freedom. Personal autonomy is directly related to the awareness of one's responsibility in a situation of choice. Students who take responsibility for the situation showed higher levels of autonomy during the conversation (experiment).

We conducted an empirical research. Testing was carried out among the students of the first and second year of MSPU with the features of infantilism, identified by psychological methods of diagnosis of emotional-volitional sphere (methods of "RAT", "CAT", frustration test of Rosenzweig, etc.) (Testoteka, 2019), methods of observation and conversation. The programme and plan of work with infantile students was developed, which included diagnostic research, conversations, games, trainings, events, excursions, consultations, participation in self-government institutions and volunteer activities, which led to positive changes in them which were identified in the process of re-diagnosis. As a result, we were able to determine the directions of educational activities for the formation of responsibility and volitional qualities of infantile youth. These include: axiological (formation of responsibility and volitional qualities on the basis of spiritual values), emotional and volitional (formation of responsibility and will as the qualities of a person interconnected with other qualities that ensure the development of consciousness), and activity-oriented (implementation of educational work aimed at the formation of responsibility and volitional qualities in the process of activity, performing the relevant actions) directions.

In accordance with the directions of educational work, methods and forms of work were determined.

**Activity-oriented direction**: game method is a creative action for the purpose of developing independence; project method (implementation in accordance with the commitments), cooperation method (organization of joint activities in which an adolescent is able to show his volitional qualities); assignment method is performing actions in order to form a responsible form of behaviour; exercise method (repetition, enhancement, reinforcement and improvement of volitional methods of actions); methods of strengthening the physical health of an adolescent: method of optimal life regime; method of planning one's life: setting goals, objectives, deadlines and ways of achieving are an indicator of the maturity of the emotional-volitional sphere; method of gradualism (performing work stepby-step); method of physical exercise and training (helps to strengthen resilience, valour); method of participation in the economic life of the family – involving an adolescent in the discussion of the family budget, which helps to develop a sense of responsibility, etc.

In the framework of the **axiological direction**: methods related to the spiritual and moral sphere of an adolescent: passion for a good deed; passion for heroic things; method of personal example; method of compassion (creation of emotionally saturated space which is personally significant for an adolescent), method of co-creation (participation in joint creative activity), etc. [24].

**Emotional-volitional direction** involves the following methods: *method of self-observation of one's emotions* is identifying the causes of emotions; *recreation method; method of extinguishing negative emotions* ("thinking over" lower emotions); *method of eliminating bad habits; method of achieving internal balance*, contributing to the development of volitional qualities and responsibility. *Methods of strengthening the sense of responsibility and will*: the method of *trust* – the belief in one's own strength develops; *reminder; question* (the sense of dissatisfaction and a desire to correct their mistakes, to become better is awakened by this method); *agreement with oneself*– the method by which a sense of understanding the internal disagreement is achieved and a desire to correct the character traits appears; *promotion* – if an adolescent successfully copes with things, an educator needs to encourage him, i.e. to fix his positive habit, etc. (Ivanov, 2017).

In the process of educational work, various forms of activity are used, which, in accordance with their orientation, ensure the development of the quality and ability of responsibility of adolescents and youth. These are lectures and seminars on the development of philosophical and social knowledge related to the understanding of human responsibility; interactive forms: quests, trainings of self-knowledge and self-development, creative discussions and conversations, projects, events, excursions, camping, expeditions, etc.

The antipode of infantilism is responsibility directly related to the development of human consciousness, which is considered in psychological and pedagogical studies as an internal form aimed at moving along the path of life, providing the willingness to defend spiritual values, to strengthen volitional and spiritual qualities, to perform actions consistent with the highest goal.

#### 5. Conclusion

Understanding the importance of overcoming the infantilism of adolescents and youth, the development of responsibility and volitional qualities in modern education contribute to a new view and new knowledge inherent in the new education. A pedagogue should reach a new level of awareness of the process of education, the essence of which is the development of his personal and deep consciousness, teaching joyful attitude to overcoming difficulties as a basis building volitional qualities in the process of development.

Understanding the connection of a man not only with a social environment, but also with the cosmic space, the importance of energies in human development and controlling them through will, awareness of the importance of the development of volitional qualities and responsibility in the context of other spiritual qualities, the development of appropriate methods of work contributes to the successful development of an adolescent as a social personality and as a spiritual person in the process of development and self-improvement.

The experimental research on the basis of the institute confirmed the trueness of the developed and proven technology of co-overcoming of the infantilism of adolescents and youth, practical ways to develop volitional qualities and responsibility in the process of individual and joint collective activity with the use of the developed methods of activity.

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