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Adaptive Capacity of Adolescents: Current Status of the Issue

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Abstract

The article analyzes methodological approaches to defining the concept of “adaptive capacity of an individual”. The content of this phenomenon as well as the structural components of the adaptive capacity of adolescents are being discussed.

Keywords: Adaptive capacity of an individual, adaptability, adaptive capabilities of adolescents, the capacity of an individual.

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Introduction

The analysis of publications devoted to individual adaptive capacity in situations of social polarization in society makes it possible to state an increase in the requirements for a person's social mobility.

The phenomenon of adaptation is the object of cross-disciplinary study since it can be applied to various aspects of adaptation including biological, psychological, or social ones. Due to heterogeneity of research in which operationalization of the concept takes place, it seems impossible to form an unambiguous interpretation of the "adaptive capacity" concept.

Purpose and objectives of the study

The lack of research on the adaptive capacity of adolescents does not allow us to draw a complete picture, highlighting the criteria and various indicators. Studying adaptability as a resource becomes even more important when it comes to adolescents with disabilities since recently the issues related to the process of integration of children with various forms of dysontogenesis have become significantly more urgent.

Literature review

Study of the content and essence of the phenomenon of adaptation leads to the need to clarify the concepts derived from the term "adaptation" which have their own specificity of subject areas. These include the concepts of "adaptability" and "maladaptation", as well as the concepts of "adaptation resources", "adaptive capabilities", "adaptation skills" which all belong to such semantic category as "adaptation potential".

The term "adaptation" is commonly understood as a set of individual psychological traits of a person aimed at adapting to changing conditions: both external and internal.

The concept of "capacity" is defined as a personal resource that may be realized or not realized in the current or anticipated situation. The study of capacity as a resource in the process of adaptation of an individual makes it possible to define it as an adaptive capacity.

As an example, we shall provide several approaches to understanding the concept of personal adaptive capacity in the studies conducted by domestic and foreign researchers.

One of the first scientists who made attempts to specify the content of the concept of adaptive capacity at the physiological level was Selye (1960), who reduced it to the source of "deeper" and "surface" energy. The expenditure of deeper energy occurs due to the replenishment of one's own reserves of surface energy, which, in turn, decreases under the influence of the environment (Selye, 1960).

From A.G. Maklakov's point of view (2001), personal adaptive capacity includes mainly interrelated psycho-physiological and socio-psychological characteristics, such as: neuro-psychological resistance to critical situations, person's self-esteem, general level of social support (feeling of one's importance for others), ability to resolve conflicts, experience of diverse social communication, the degree of group identification. The intensity of these factors can serve as the basis for a probabilistic forecast of the range of exogenous environmental factors in which a person will not be able to adapt, therefore, it becomes possible to anticipate the development of a maladaptive process and take early remedial and rehabilitation measures.

The assumptions made by Posokhova (2001) focus on the presentation of adaptive capacity as an integral entity structured in a complex system of socio-psychological, mental, biological properties and qualities actualized by a person in order to create and implement new lines of behavior in altered living conditions. The author highlights the components in the structure of the adaptive capacity as a system:

1. Bioplastic component – reflects the evolutionarily institutionalized instinctive lines of human behavior which manifest themselves in one's biological viability: health, endurance, as well as the ability to resist the adverse effects of the environment.
2. Biographical component – the determining role is played by the interaction of a child with one's significant environment at the stage of maturation, which unknowingly forms an adaptogenic experience in confrontation with a destructive situation, which significantly limits the range of one's own possible strategies in a stressful situation.
3. Mental component is an actual, in some cases hidden, internal mechanism of a personality, which allows to develop a personal program of adaptive behavior.

4. Personal-regulatory component – reaching the necessary level of adaptability becomes possible due to the internal regulation of a person by one's own identifiable capabilities Posokhova (2001).

Bogomolov (2008) considered adaptive capacity as the ability of an individual to adapt to structural changes in qualities. The system presented by the author has different levels of organization of a personality (individual, personal, subject-activity), which include specific resources. The ways of transformation of adaptation resources, their quantitative and qualitative components (deployment, accumulation, replenishment, etc.) occur through the mechanisms of adaptive capacity. These processes serve as a link between the capabilities of an individual and their actual implementation in a purposeful adaptive process (Bogomolov, 2008).

According to Leontyev (2002), personal adaptive capacity is an integral characteristic of a personal maturity. There are a number of specific forms of manifestation of the adaptive capacity, including the ability to overcome adverse conditions for its development, which may manifest themselves in genetic features, somatic diseases, and also external negative environmental conditions. The formation of personality can be complicated by any of the unfavorable factors. However, it should be taken into account that it is possible to overcome, mediate and even break the direct connection by introducing additional dimensions into this system – primarily by self-determination based on personal adaptive capacity (Leontyev, 2002).

Adaptive capacity of an individual is defined by Konovalova (2000) as an integrative characteristic of a mental health. At the same time, mental adaptability represents an integral property of a personality as an integral system and may be considered as a combination of internal factors determining the effectiveness of adaptive changes. According to the author, adaptability – which generally characterizes the ability of a person to resist disruptions of mental adaptation – depends on many constitutional, congenital and acquired factors that determine the structure of personality and is closely associated with periodization of personality development. Psychic adaptability here is determined by a number of components including general level of mental development, personality traits and the system of relationships, nature and content of psychological problems, attitude of an individual towards them (Konovalova, 2000).

In the understanding of Rean (2008), the phenomena of adaptation and personal development complement each other and form different directions for self-actualization. It is precisely personal characteristics that largely determine the success or non-success of adaptation while adaptation itself represents a powerful incentive for the development of a personality (Rean, 2008).

Taking into account the urgent tasks of psychology and considering the fact that psychology includes human psyche as a subject of research, the mechanisms of the psyche revealed in mental processes, states and properties become the subject of psychological research of human adaptation. In this aspect, according to Alekhin (2010), adaptation may be studied as a process of formation of such methods of response that are adequate to reality and provide optimal conditions for a person's existence.

Methodology

This issue becomes most relevant in adolescence due to the fact that this life period is characterized by the stage of personality formation.

Adolescents face with socially sustainable ideas about strategies of behavior in certain situations and during interpersonal interaction with other people. They face new areas of responsibility, their position changes which can manifest itself in: appearance, behavior (associated with behavioral identification with gender), inclusion in everyday life (expanding areas of responsibility in intra-family relationships), orientation to self-education in various fields, etc.

At the same time, teenagers experience the feeling of “adulthood” as a special form of self-awareness. However, the adolescent focuses on the uniqueness of one's own identity, identifying oneself with an adult who is worthy to receive an extension of personal rights that did not exist before – not just to get additional responsibilities.

The possibilities of using the adolescent's personal adaptive capabilities will help to solve different problems arising at this stage of personality formation: temporary or permanent (communication within the team), simple (which may be resolved by teenagers themselves) or complicated ones (requiring complicated solution), manageable or intractable.

Findings

When it comes to adolescents with disabilities, we can often talk about the disturbance of the process of social development when there is a disturbance in functional and substantial aspects of socialization. At the same time, disturbance of socialization can be caused by direct de-socializing influences when a society or environment demonstrate patterns of antisocial behavior. We can also note the indirect de-socializing influences that manifest themselves when the reference importance of leading socialization institutions (such as family, school, relatives and friends) decreases. One of the main reasons for the disturbance of the socialization process is the lack of a desire in adults who surround a teenager to purposefully form social skills, traditions and rituals, use them in everyday life and create situations of interaction based on areas of life that seem important for a teenager.

Discussions

The analysis of the definitions of this phenomenon allows us to highlight common points of the concepts presented by the researchers:

1. The adaptive capacity has a complex system and structure, which makes it possible to consider it as an integral variable, which includes a set of individual psychological properties and personality traits;
2. Adaptive capacity includes not only the actual manifestations of adaptation resources, but also latent properties and qualities that can manifest themselves as the content, strength and direction of influence of adaptogenic factors change;
3. Adaptive capacity is associated with age-psychological features. At the same time, individual's own activity acts as a condition determining the level of realization of potential capabilities.
4. Adaptive capacity is formed under the influence of subjective (internal) and objective (external) conditions. The higher the level of an individual's personal adaptive capacity, the more successful and more harmonious will be his/her interaction with the surrounding environment.

Conclusion

Teenagers' potential transforms into a social value through the mechanisms of self-fulfillment. The ability to adequately adjust one's program of behavior is the most important prerequisite for the effective functioning of an individual in society. The success of the adaptation process depends on the choice of life strategies and is determined by the ability to anticipate the situation and predict the outcome of events.

The possibilities of using adolescent's personal adaptive capabilities will allow to solve various types of problems arising at this stage of personality formation: temporary or permanent (communication within the team), simple (which may be resolved independently) or difficult (requiring a search for solution), manageable or intractable.

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