

Characteristics of Young People's Social Activity in Adaptive Situations

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Received: 24th April 2019, Accepted: 13th May 2019, Published: 30th June 2019

Abstract

The urgency of the topic is conditioned by the necessity to define which characteristics of young people's social activity are expressed to a greater and to a lesser extent in adaptive situations. The purpose of the study is to identify characteristics of young people's social activity in situations of psychological adaptation.

The sample consisted of 200 people, mean age $22,7 \pm 4,2$, 47% male. The authors of the study developed a unique technique for analysing characteristics of personal and group social activity in adaptive situations based on the criteria of direction, range and content (Cronbach α from 0,8 to 0,86 on various scales, which is significant at $p < 0,01$).

It has been found out that the direction of young people's social activity in adaptive situations is related to organization of social interaction, self-cognition and self-changes. In adaptive situations young people more often implement their activity at the interpersonal and small group level. According to the content of social activity in adaptive situations, young people are mainly focused on constructive and productive attitudes, while protest and opposition to change attitudes are opposite in their modality, but nevertheless very well expressed.

Keywords

Social Activity, Young People, Activity Direction, Activity Content.

Introduction

The phenomenon of individual social activity has attracted the attention of many researchers. In psychology the subjects of the study are psychological and socio-psychological characteristics and indicators that affect the result and the process of individual's functioning in the society. Young people are a social group that is at the stage of integration into social, business, and professional relations. The development of society as a whole depends on the direction and content of activity that young people will implement.

Researchers recognize the significant role of young people's social activity in the development of society as a whole, however, young people themselves assess their social activity as moderate one, but higher than social activity in older generations [1], [2], [3]. Scientific sources point out that young people are prone to altruistic social activity in situations and events organized by other people, while their initiative and independence remain at a low level [4]. Among the most influential factors of young people's social activity are the family and career factors, at that the first factor is characteristic of the province, while the second factor is typical of central large cities [5]. Description of young people's social activity is presented mainly through certain forms of social activity, among which educational and leisure activities are the most significant ones [6; 7]. The phenomena of young people's socio-economic and political activity have been recently discussed as well [8].

Under dynamic conditions of the modern society, young people need to adapt to new conditions of life and integrate into social relations quickly and successfully. Since life and activity conditions are constantly transformed, the problem of social activity implementation in adaptive situations arises, due to the fact that these conditions are subjectively new for a person and sometimes difficult to understand and problematic, as the old ways and means of activity cannot be used. There are very few studies on young people's social activity in psychology in connection with psychological adaptation. In order to understand how a person copes with difficulties in new situations, which allows him/her to be more or less active, it is necessary to determine which characteristics of young people's social activity are the most and the least expressed ones in adaptive situations. The aim of the study is to identify the characteristics of young people's social activity in situations of psychological adaptation.

Methodology

The sample consisted of 200 people, mean age $22,7 \pm 4,2$, 47% male. The authors of the study developed a unique technique for analysing characteristics of personal and group social activity in adaptive situations

Using the content-analysis method for free responses to the statement: "Characterize your activity in a new or difficult situation" we identified content areas and manifestations for them, i.e. the direction of social activity in adaptive situations (towards social environment change, towards knowing and changing oneself, towards organizing interaction); the range of social activity in adaptive situations (level of society, social institution, interpersonal level); the content of social activity in adaptive situations (helping others, entertainment, physical activity, learning activity, professional activity, interpersonal communication). The technique's validity has been theoretically substantiated. Based on the sample consisting of 70 people (aged $21,8 \pm 3,1$, 39% male) we proved the study's internal consistency (Cronbach's α from 0.8 to 0.86 on various scales, which is significant at $p < 0.01$). An expert assessment based on a 5-point scale confirmed the technique's validity. 7 psychologists with a scientific degree and experience in psycho-diagnostic activity took part in the expert assessment of the study. The final version of the methodology included

questions that received an average expert assessment of not less than 4.5. There is a total of 48 questions in the methodology.

Results and Discussion

| Social Activity Direction in Adaptive Situations | | | |
|--|--|----------------------------------|--|
| Towards social environment change | Towards self-cognition and self-change | Towards interaction organization | Towards transfer to another social environment |
| 0,83 | 1,7 | 1,9 | 1,28 |

Table 1: Average Values Related to Manifestation of Directions of Young People's Activity in Adaptive Situations (Points, Max=4)

Table 1 shows that in situations of psychological adaptation young people are to a lesser degree oriented towards changing other people in comparison with other directions (Student's $t = 4,93; 5,14; 3,38$, where $p < 0,001$ correspondingly). In subjectively new and complicated situations, which require understanding and acceptance of new activity conditions, young people often cannot be oriented towards their social environment change, possibly, due to diffuseness of ideas about how people are included in these new situations, what role they can play in them, what motivation there is for changing them in accordance with new situation requirements, and whether they will resist the influence of the subject that is trying to change them. Under conditions of adaptation situations young people direct their activity at organizing interaction with other people much more often than changing them and transferring to another social environment (see Table 1) (Student's $t = 5.14; 2.04$, where $p < 0.001$ and $0,05$ respectively). Realizing that joint actions with other people lead to a faster and better coping with difficulties of adaptation, young people tend to organize group discussions and solve the emerging problems, focus on the experience of coping with other people's difficulties, expect emotional support and effective help. Thus, the responsibility for psychological adaptation quality is, on the one hand, distributed among all interaction participants; on the other hand, mutual support and mutual assistance help to achieve optimal distribution of intellectual, emotional and regulatory resources of an individual. Another significant direction of social activity in adaptive situations, if compared to orientation towards changing other people and switching to another social environment, is associated with knowing and changing oneself (see Table 1) (Student's $t = 4.35; 1.97$, where $p < 0.001$ and 0.05 , respectively). This indicates that young people are trying to direct their activity towards the search for internal reserves to a greater extent; they are more likely to change their old ways of activity, opinion, attitudes according to the new conditions of adaptation situation, rather than demand changes or actively change their opinions and manner of other people's actions. Presumably, this may be due both to the predominance of internality over externality, and to the lack of communicative competence of young people and their low self-esteem. From Table 1 we can also observe that the transition to another social environment for young people in adaptive situations is preferable to attempts to qualitatively change the social environment (Student $t = 3.38$, where $p < 0.001$), which indicates, on the one hand, the destruction of usual social connections and the desadaptative result of coping with specific difficult situations; on the other hand, it can be a sign of social courage of young people who are not afraid of the new social environment and associate their subsequent adaptation and activity with it.

| Range of Social Activity in Adaptive Situations | | | | |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Social level | Social institutes | Small group level | Interpersonal level | Intrapersonal level |
| 1,2 | 1,1 | 1,8 | 2,1 | 1,6 |

Table 2: Average Values of the Range Characteristic of Young People's Social Activity in Adaptive Situations (Points, Max=4)

Psychological and socio-psychological adaptation of an individual is associated with active transformations at various levels: this can be a social relations level where an individual is oriented towards changes in a large social group (for example, in a region, country, or the planet as a whole); the level of activity within a social institution or organization (for example, manufacturing enterprise, university, school, etc.); the level of a small social group (family, friends, colleagues, classmates, etc.); the level of interpersonal relations with close people and the level where activity of a person is aimed at analysing and transforming internal psychological phenomena, primarily with the help of reflection. Table 2 shows that young people in adaptive situations implement their activity at the interpersonal and small group level. Moreover, interpersonal relations play the most important role for young people in the process of adaptation and overcoming difficulties (all differences are significant at the level where $p < 0.001$ and 0.01). People with roughly the same values, world views, attitudes to certain phenomena, help young people in overcoming difficulties related to new situations to a greater extent, due to the possibility of joint analysis of difficulties, paths and ways of overcoming them, and emotional support. That is why young people's social activity in adaptive situations is associated with the desire for more intensive activity at the interpersonal level.

Activity at a small group level, which is associated with unification of an individual with a group through common activity goals and a rather long-term existence in the same conditions, including adaptation, as well as the intrapersonal level of activity associated with self-analysis of psychological capabilities and reserves required by the new and / or difficult situations, take the second and third places correspondingly.

Wider social environments of social institutions and the society as a whole are less attractive to young people for social activity implementation in the event of adaptation situations (see Table 2) (all differences are significant at levels where $p < 0.001$). This indicates a low transformative potential of young people at the level of society as a whole. Perhaps, this is happening due to the fact that these processes are seen as energy consuming ones, transformations are lengthy and complex, and young people are not ready for them, everything is accompanied by lack of experience in young people's social activity at the level of society or social institution they are a part of.

| Content of Social Activity in Adaptive Situation | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|----------------------|---|----------------------|------------------|
| Help to people around | Entertainment, creativity, activity in another sphere | Joint physical activity, collective sports | Educational activity | Professional activity, business interaction | Subcultural activity | Protest activity |
| 1,7 | 1,3 | 1,3 | 1,9 | 1,3 | 0,8 | 1,9 |

Table 3: Average Values of the Content Characteristic of Young People's Social Activity in Adaptive Situations (Points, Max=4)

Table 3 shows that according to the content of social activity in situations that require adaptation or overcoming difficulties, young people are mainly focused on educational activities, protest against the unfamiliarity of a situation or factors causing it, and on helping others in similar difficult situations. In cases when adaptive situations occur, young people are focused on activity related to entertainment, creativity, collective sports and professions to a lesser extent (the differences are significant at $p < 0.01$). Subcultural activity in young people is expressed insignificantly if compared with other social activity types, as it is associated with informal youth groups, peculiarity of their values and behavior (differences with all types of social activity are significant at $p < 0.001$).

This brings us to the conclusion that opposite types of social activity in young people faced with new difficult situations prevail: on the one hand, humanistic and cognitive social activity, which is associated with creative and productive attitudes, and, on the other hand, protest social activity, which is associated with non-acceptance of changes or opposition to them, sometimes resulting in destructive personal attitudes towards the new situation.

Conclusions

Thus, we have analysed activity characteristics based on the criteria of direction, range and content, which brings us to the following conclusions: 1. The direction of young people's social activity in adaptation situations is primarily associated with the organization of social interaction, as well as self-knowledge and self-changes, which determine the importance of personal potential and social interaction in psychological adaptation and coping with difficulties.

2. Transition to a different social environment for young people in adaptation situations is preferable to attempts to qualitatively change social environment, which indicates, on the one hand, the maladaptation result of coping with specific difficult situations, on the other hand, can be a sign of young people's social courage.

3. In adaptive situations young people implement their activity mainly at the interpersonal and small group level, at that interpersonal relationships play the most significant role for young people in adaptation and overcoming difficulties. The wider social environment of social institutions and the society as a whole attract young people to implement social activity in the event of adaptation situations to a lesser extent, which indicates a low transformational potential of young people at the social level as a whole.

4. According to the content of social activity in situations requiring adaptation or overcoming difficulties, young people are mainly focused on creative and productive attitudes. At the same time, the opposing attitudes of protest and opposition to change are significantly expressed. In adaptive situations, young people are focused on activity related to entertainment, creativity, collective sports and professions to a much lesser extent.

Acknowledgements

The research was carried out at the expense of a grant from the Russian Science Foundation (project No. 18-18-00298).

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