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PSYCHODIAGNOSTICS OF EMOTIONAL STATES IN ADOLESCENTS LACKING ADEQUATE SUPERVISION AND CARE

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Abstract. This article examines the psychological characteristics of emotional states manifested in adolescents lacking adequate supervision and care, the socio-psychological factors contributing to these states, and the psychodiagnostic assessment of their emotional experiences. The lack of family supervision and social support during adolescence, difficulties in interpersonal relationships, a diminished sense of security, and problems with social adjustment are analyzed as factors influencing the development of emotional states. In addition, the article describes diagnostic approaches that can be used to assess psychological indicators such as anxiety, depressed mood, emotional instability, self-esteem, and stress resilience. The importance of conducting comprehensive psychodiagnostic assessments that take into account the individual and socio-psychological characteristics of adolescents is substantiated.

Keywords: adolescents lacking adequate supervision and care, adolescence, emotional state, psychodiagnostics, anxiety, stress, depressive symptoms, psychological resilience, social adjustment, psychological support.

Introduction. Protecting adolescents' mental health, creating a favorable socio-psychological environment for their emotional development, and reducing the adverse effects of various social risk factors are among the pressing scientific and practical challenges today. Particular attention should be paid to the emotional states of adolescents who lack sufficient parental or legal-guardian supervision, care, and regular support. Adolescence is a complex developmental period characterized by intensified self-awareness, the pursuit of independence, the development of peer relationships, and the formation of one's social position.

The concept of inadequate supervision and care is not limited to an adolescent spending time on the street or in an unsupervised environment. It may also involve a lack of the care and supervision necessary for a minor's daily life, safety, education, upbringing, and development. At the same time, it would be incorrect to automatically classify every adolescent who does not live with their parents as lacking adequate care. Assessment should take account of the adolescent's actual living conditions, the care provided, legal status, and degree of social protection.

Circumstances associated with inadequate care and supervision may affect adolescents' emotional development in different ways. Some adolescents may experience increased anxiety, insecurity, loneliness, and emotional tension, whereas others may display aggressive reactions, difficulties regulating emotions, or withdrawal from social relationships. However, these signs do not appear in the same way in every adolescent. Their expression depends on individual characteristics, previous life experiences, the availability of supportive adults, and the social environment.

It is therefore important to investigate the emotional states of adolescents lacking adequate supervision and care using scientifically grounded psychodiagnostic methods, identify existing difficulties early, and determine appropriate forms of individualized psychological support.

Theoretical and Psychological Foundations of the Problem

Emotional states represent a person's psychological responses to events in the environment, interpersonal relationships, and internal experiences. They are expressed through mood, anxiety, fear, joy, anger, sadness, psychological tension, and other experiences. Emotional states directly influence behavior, decision-making, communication, and adaptation to the social environment.

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During adolescence, emotional development is closely linked to biological maturation, cognitive changes, social relationships, and the development of self-awareness. At this stage, adolescents seek to assert their independence, are sensitive to the opinions of peers, and actively evaluate how others perceive them. Instability in family relationships, lack of attention and affection, or persistent conflicts may complicate these processes.

According to attachment theory developed by John Bowlby, the relationship between a child and their caregiver plays an important role in developing a sense of security and shaping subsequent interpersonal relationships. Stable, trusting relationships help meet a child's emotional needs. Conversely, inconsistent care or the prolonged absence of significant adults may increase insecurity and caution in relationships among some children. Such outcomes are not inevitable, however: support from other trusted adults, educators, and professionals may serve as a protective factor.

Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory explains adolescent development not only through individual characteristics but also through interactions with the family, educational institution, peer group, local community, and broader social environment. This approach highlights the need to examine the social causes of difficulties when studying the emotional states of adolescents lacking adequate supervision and care.

Consequently, assessment of these adolescents' emotional states requires a comprehensive examination of their family circumstances, social relationships, educational activities, life experiences, and available sources of support, alongside their individual psychological characteristics.

Characteristics of Emotional States in Adolescents Lacking Adequate Supervision and Care

Among adolescents who lack adequate supervision and care, emotional states may manifest in different forms. Psychodiagnostic investigations should primarily focus on the following indicators.

First, anxiety and emotional tension may appear when adolescents perceive everyday situations as threatening, feel uncertain about the future, or worry excessively about others' attitudes toward them. These experiences may be accompanied by difficulties with concentration, sleep, academic performance, and communication.

Second, feelings of loneliness and social alienation may be characterized by a sense of separation from others, difficulty seeking help, or problems establishing stable relationships with peers. Loneliness does not necessarily indicate a lack of social contacts; some adolescents may feel misunderstood even when they have many acquaintances.

Third, emotional instability may manifest as rapid mood changes, intense reactions to situations, or difficulty managing hurt feelings or anger. In assessing such manifestations, ordinary emotional changes associated with adolescence must be distinguished from persistent problems that adversely affect everyday functioning.

Fourth, depressive symptoms may include persistently low mood, diminished interest in previously enjoyable activities, hopelessness, feelings of worthlessness, or reduced social activity. When such signs are identified, they should not be interpreted as a diagnosis in themselves; additional evaluation by a qualified professional should be arranged.

Fifth, self-esteem and self-confidence are important indicators of emotional well-being. Adolescents may underestimate their abilities, feel inferior to others, or react with excessive sensitivity to criticism. Some may also display outward confidence or oppositional behavior as a means of self-protection. Self-esteem therefore cannot be determined from outward behavior alone.

Sixth, stress resilience and adaptive resources describe an adolescent's capacity to regulate emotions, solve problems, and draw on sources of assistance in challenging circumstances. Assessing these dimensions is necessary not only to identify problems but also to recognize existing strengths and protective factors.

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Methods for the Psychodiagnostic Assessment of Emotional States

Reliance on the results of a single questionnaire is insufficient when assessing the emotional states of adolescents lacking adequate supervision and care. Comprehensive psychodiagnostics involves the combined analysis of psychological interviews, standardized tests, observation, and, where necessary, information about the adolescent's social circumstances.

Depending on the study objectives, the following instruments and methods may be used:

1. Spielberger–Hanin anxiety assessment method. This method helps distinguish trait anxiety from state anxiety. State anxiety reflects an emotional response arising in a particular situation, whereas trait anxiety refers to a tendency to perceive various situations with anxiety. When working with adolescents, an age-appropriate and properly validated version should be used.

2. Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA) instruments for evaluating behavioral and emotional problems in children and adolescents. The relevant age-specific forms make it possible to assess emotional and behavioral difficulties using information from multiple informants. Comparing an adolescent's self-report with observations from parents or teachers may provide additional insights. Where contact with particular adults is unavailable, informants should be selected with care.

3. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. This instrument may be used to investigate adolescents' general attitudes toward themselves and their evaluation of their own worth. Interpretation should take account of age-appropriate normative data and the suitability of the instrument for the relevant language and cultural setting.

4. Instruments for assessing depressive symptoms in children. For example, the Children's Depression Inventory (CDI) or other validated screening tools designed for the relevant age group may be used. Such tools support the preliminary identification of depressive symptoms but are insufficient for establishing a clinical diagnosis on their own.

5. Psychological interviews and systematic observation. Interviews explore how adolescents feel, whom they turn to for support, how they respond to daily challenges, and the circumstances in which they feel safe. Observation focuses on communication, emotional expression, help-seeking, responses to conflict, and changes in social activity.

When selecting psychodiagnostic instruments, their reliability, validity, age appropriateness, linguistic characteristics, and administration guidelines must be checked. A translated version of an instrument developed abroad is not automatically validated for use in the local context.

Organization of Psychodiagnostic Research and Analysis of Results

The emotional states of adolescents lacking adequate supervision and care may be investigated through several interconnected stages.

At the first stage, the aims and objectives of the study, participant selection criteria, and ethical requirements are established. Participants' circumstances regarding inadequate care and supervision should be determined from relevant social or legal information; adolescents must not be assigned to this group based solely on their appearance or behavior.

At the second stage, a trusting relationship is established with the adolescents, and the purpose of the study is explained in language they can understand. Research involving minors must ensure the appropriate consent required by law and institutional policy, as well as adolescents' voluntary participation. No pressure should be placed on adolescents who do not wish to participate.

At the third stage, the selected psychodiagnostic methods are administered. Testing should take place in a calm, safe setting with minimal distractions. Questions must be understandable to the adolescent, and linguistic or reading difficulties that could affect results should be taken into consideration.

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At the fourth stage, the findings are scored and processed according to the instruments' official instructions. If the study includes a control group, between-group differences may be examined statistically. Qualitative information obtained through interviews and observation is analyzed alongside quantitative results.

At the fifth stage, a psychological assessment report is prepared, identifying not only the adolescent's emotional difficulties but also protective factors, strengths, and support needs. Where necessary, referral to an appropriate specialist and development of an individualized psychological support plan are recommended.

When interpreting findings, emotional difficulties should not be regarded as the direct and sole consequence of inadequate care and supervision. Family conflict, experiences of violence, economic hardship, educational difficulties, peer influences, and other factors may interact. Therefore, unless findings establish causality, they should be interpreted cautiously as associations rather than cause-and-effect relationships.

The Importance of Psychological Support and Preventive Measures

The primary aim of psychodiagnostic assessment of adolescents lacking adequate supervision and care is not merely to identify difficulties but also to determine forms of assistance that can improve their psychological well-being.

First, it is essential to establish a trusting and respectful relationship with the adolescent. Psychologists should not dismiss adolescents' experiences, blame them, or place them in embarrassing situations in front of others. The principle of confidentiality should be explained, while also making clear that appropriate protective action may be required if there is a serious threat to the adolescent's safety.

Second, it is advisable to organize activities that develop awareness and regulation of emotions. Such activities should focus on naming emotions, analyzing stressful situations, problem-solving, help-seeking, and constructive communication skills.

Third, the adolescent's social support system should be strengthened. Cooperation among teachers, psychologists, social workers, and trusted adults who care for the adolescent can help create favorable conditions for safety and development.

Fourth, when depressive symptoms, severe anxiety, or other difficulties that substantially impair everyday functioning are identified, the adolescent should be referred to a qualified mental health professional. The form and duration of assistance should be determined through individual assessment.

Fifth, the outcomes of psychological support should be monitored regularly. Comparing baseline and follow-up assessments helps identify changes in emotional state. Alongside test results, consideration should be given to how adolescents feel, their social relationships, educational participation, and daily functioning.

Conclusion. The psychodiagnostic assessment of emotional states in adolescents lacking adequate supervision and care is an important scientific and practical field requiring an integrated examination of adolescent psychological characteristics and social environmental factors. Insufficient care and supervision may be associated with anxiety, loneliness, emotional instability, self-esteem difficulties, and depressive symptoms in some adolescents. These manifestations, however, are not uniform and should not be attributed solely to inadequate supervision and care.

Reliable assessment of emotional states requires the integrated analysis of standardized psychodiagnostic instruments, psychological interviews, systematic observation, and information about the social environment. Instrument selection should consider age appropriateness, psychometric properties, linguistic and cultural suitability, and ethical requirements for administration.

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The practical significance of this approach lies in the ability of comprehensive psychodiagnostics to identify adolescents' emotional needs, guide individualized support, and improve preventive interventions. Respect for adolescents' personal dignity, protection of their safety, development of trusting relationships, and expansion of social support opportunities should be priorities in psychological assistance.

Thus, psychodiagnostic investigations of emotional states in adolescents lacking adequate supervision and care should extend beyond identifying existing difficulties and aim to create conditions that promote psychological resilience, social adaptation, and healthy personal development.

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