

SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ADAPTATION OF HIGHER SCHOOL STUDENTS: EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

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Background/Objectives: The purpose of this paper is to describe and analyze the results of empirical studies on the socio-psychological adaptation of first-year students to training in higher school. **Methods/Statistical analysis:** Based on the use of empirical methods system, the authors design and implement an experimental study that allows examining the specific features of socio-psychological adaptation of first-year students. **Findings:** Basing on the research results in the field of socio-psychological adaptation, the authors understand this phenomenon to be an active dynamic process of interaction between both individual and social environment, the result of which is personality's resistance (adaptation) to the internal and external environment conditions, the optimal level of adjustment to it. From the authors' point of view, the structural components of socio-psychological adaptation include the level of development of individuals' intellectual, emotional and communicative spheres, a comprehensive analysis of which can give an objective picture in studying the level of socio-psychological adaptation. **Applications/Improvements:** 32% of the respondents-the study participants have a typically low level of socio-psychological adaptation, which demonstrates the need for the development and implementation of purposeful psychological assistance program aimed at optimizing social and psychological adaptation of first-year students.

Keywords: adaptation, personality, social and psychological adaptation of personality, emotional stability of personality, the role of cognitive processes in adaptation, communicative sphere of personality.

INTRODUCTION

Problem statement

The problem of social and psychological adaptation of personality has been relevant to a number of human sciences for a long time. Many scientists speak about socio-psychological adaptation as about the most important condition for the existence and optimal functioning of a society, which, we believe, is absolutely justified. I. Mnatsakanyan (2004) rightly notes that socio-psychological adaptation implies involvement of every individual in the social environment, providing the individual with his or her own place in the structure of the society.

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Scholars' opinions

Considering the phenomenon of social and psychological adaptation, scientists, first of all, say that it is an active process of human adaptation to the conditions of external and internal environment. At the same time, it is viewed as a person's ability that characterizes human resistance to environment conditions (both external and internal), and the level of adaptation to this environment.

Researchers also draw attention to the fact that socio-psychological adaptation is a dynamic process. The ability to continuous transformations and the mobility of all systems of the body support its stability in constant environmental changes, ensuring survival, development, procreation, etc.

Basing on the conducted analysis of studies on the socio-psychological adaptation, we suggest formulating the following basic definition of this phenomenon: social-psychological adaptation is an active dynamic process of interaction between an individual and a social environment, the result of which is the individual's resistance (adaptation) to the conditions of the external and internal environment, the optimal level of adjustment to it. Besides, each such adaptation enriches the human life experience, making people more socialized and ensuring the success of their further adaptation to subsequent changes.

Addressing the problem of social and psychological adaptation, researchers pay attention to the high complexity of its development, which, we believe, is due to the objective complexity and versatility of the social and psychological adaptation phenomenon:

- L. Petrovskaya (2007) believes: socio-psychological adaptation presupposes that the subject must have a set of skills and methods of interaction. They include: fluency in verbal and non-verbal means of social interaction; comprehension of the environment for activity (social and physical environment of man; understanding of own needs and value orientation, the ability to influence the environment in order to achieve own goals and meet own basic needs); the human ability to recognize own stereotypes in the perception of others, transference reactions, projections and introjections; the individual's ability to cope with stressful situations; orientation to active interaction with the social environment; adoption of social roles; the ability to resolve conflicts and tensions constructively; the ability to take responsibility for own actions and manifestations of feelings; adequate regulation of the functional state of the organism in various conditions of life and activity, etc.
- According to I. K. Kryazheva (1980), socio-psychological adaptation involves the social well-being (internality, self-acceptance, acceptance of others, emotional comfort); integration with the local population;

proactivity (personal activity in achieving the goals, dominance); the consistency of the individual and the environment; optimism.

- From the standpoint of D. Andreeva (1973), social and psychological adaptation is objectively determined by the level of development of the person's emotional and intellectual spheres, as well as by its ability to compensate for the personal traits and individual characteristics.

METHODS AND DISCUSSION

Utilizing the scholars' indicators of socio-psychological adaptation and considering it as a multidimensional phenomenon, we tend to highlight the following fundamental parameters of social and psychological adaptation:

- the level of the personality's intellectual development. This parameter was chosen for assessing the socio-psychological adaptation because successful adaptation is impossible without involvement of the subject's consciousness in this process;
- the level of the personality's emotional development. This parameter may be the most important for the evaluation system of social and psychological adaptation, since the success of the adaptation process is largely determined by the subject's attitude to the changes that occur as a result of adaptation – both at the level of the personality and the level of interaction with society;
- the level of the personality's communication development. As we noted above, socio-psychological adaptation includes a system of relations with the human community (relations between individuals and groups). In our view, the character and direction of these relationships are the main elements that affect (promote or hinder) the adaptation process.

We also believe that only integrative assessment of these parameters can provide an objective result in evaluating the level of social and psychological adaptation development at the level of each subject or at the level of a group.

Thus, our pilot experimental study uses the methods of tests. We were guided by the following test methods:

“Socio-psychological adaptation”

Objective: To study the features of individuals' adaptation period through the integral indicators “adaptation”, “self-acceptance”, “acceptance of others”, “emotional comfort”, “internality”, “desire to dominate”. This method is a questionnaire containing 101 statements about the surveyed person, his/her lifestyle, emotions, thoughts, habits, and behavior style. Each of the posed statements can be correlated with his/her own way of life. Respondents are asked to read a statement in the questionnaire and correlate it with their habits, their

way of life, and to assess the extent to which this statement refers to their experience. To indicate an answer, they must choose the most suitable variant out of seven assessment options that are numbered from 0 to 6. When processing and interpretation of the results, the indicated numbers should be correlated with the standard parameters for each scale: adaptability (68-136), lack of adaptability (68-136), self-acceptance (22-42), lack of self-acceptance (14-28), acceptance of others (12-24), failure to accept others (14-28), emotional comfort (14-28), emotional discomfort (14-28), internal control (26 -52), external control (18-36), dominance (6-12), submission (12-24), escapism (withdrawal from problems) (10- 20), mendacity (18-36). The scores that fall in with the standard value are considered to be the zone of uncertainty; the results below the uncertainty zone are interpreted as extremely low, and the results above the highest indicator in the zone of uncertainty - as high.

“Self-assessment of psychological adaptability”

A respondent is asked to evaluate 15 statements: 10 in the group A and 5 in group B. If the respondent absolutely agrees with a statement, he/she writes down “yes” near the evaluated statement; in case of disagreement he writes down “no”. The difference between the numbers of affirmative answers in the groups allows indicating the level of psychological adaptability.

“Self-diagnostics of mental states”

This method offers a respondent 40 statements for assessing such mental conditions as **anxiety, frustration, aggression, rigidity.**

The test “Assessment of sociability level”

Respondents must answer 16 questions. The quantitative evaluation of the responses indicates the tested parameters.

In the testing of the developed experimental research program, the respondents were the first-year students of Nizhny Novgorod State Pedagogical University named after K. Minin.

We addressed the audience of freshmen on purpose. N. Rubtsova (2014) notes that “personality formation” is a broad concept that reflects the diverse character of education, training and socialization of the individual.” As a diverse process, the effectiveness of students’ personality formation is largely determined by its adaptive abilities - primarily, by the social and psychological adaptation ability. Successful adaptation in a higher educational institution is a factor for first-year students’ optimization to life and work. On the contrary, ineffective adaptation of students leads to a number of negative phenomena: negative mental states, tensions within the team and others (Andreeva, 1973). A first-year student faces many difficulties. A first-year student faces many difficulties. Former schoolboys try to accept the absolutely new, unfamiliar social role of a student, they start to be a part

of a new social environment created in their educational institution, organize the learning process again, etc.

Emotional immaturity, frequent insufficient development of cognition, openness and suggestibility (both are limitations in this case) may impede first-year students' effective adaptation to the university and, as a consequence, lead to the emergence of a whole range of problems.

The conclusions drawn theoretically were confirmed in the analysis of the experimental data obtained by us.

The processing and interpretation of the results obtained upon implementing the method of socio-psychological adaptation diagnostics gave the following observations:

1. The scale "adaptability": high markers were shown by 20% of the respondents, medium markers – by 80% of the respondents.
2. The scale "lack of adaptability": 64% of the respondents showed medium markers, 36% - low markers.
3. The scale "self-acceptance": high markers were shown by 8% of the respondents, medium markers – by 92% of the respondents.
4. The scale "lack of self-acceptance": high markers - 4% of the respondents, medium markers – 76%, low markers – 20%.
5. The scale "acceptance of others": high markers - 56%, medium markers – 44% of the respondents.
6. The scale "failure to accept others": high markers - 4% of the respondents, medium markers – 60%, low markers – 36% of the respondents.
7. The scale "emotional comfort": high markers - 12% of the respondents, medium markers – 76%, low markers – 12%.
8. The scale "emotional discomfort": medium markers – 56%, low markers – 44% of the respondents.
9. The scale "internal control": high markers - 16% of the respondents, medium markers – 84%.
10. The scale "external control": high markers - 4% of the respondents, medium markers – 64%, low markers – 32%.
11. The scale "dominance": high markers - 24% of the respondents, medium markers – 32%, low markers – 44% of the respondents.
12. The scale "submission": medium markers – 64%, low markers – 36% of the respondents.
13. The scale "escapism": high markers - 4% of the respondents, medium markers – 60%, low markers – 36% of the respondents.
14. The scale "mendacity": medium markers – 16%, low markers – 84% of the respondents (which is a testament to the results reliability).

These observations can be represented in a chart (please, see Figure 1).

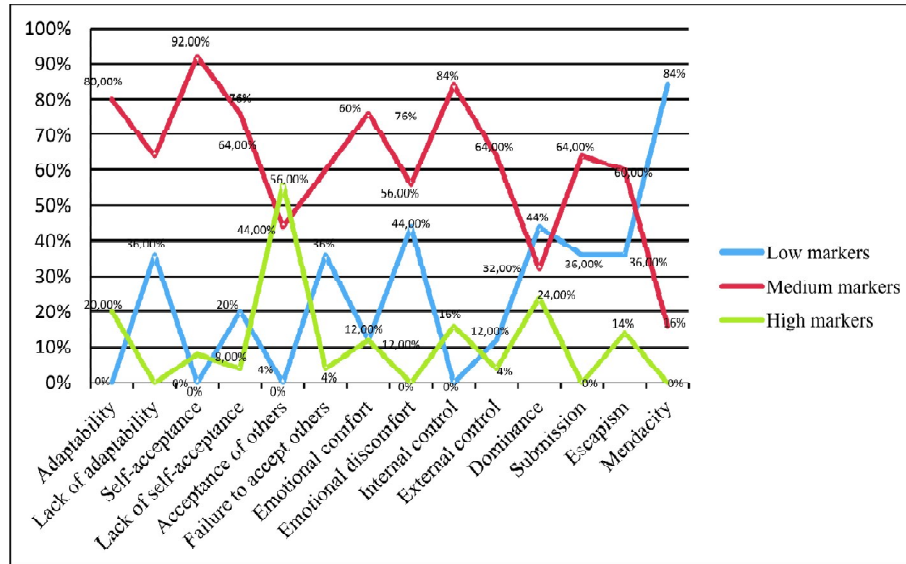


Figure 1: The results of the implemented method of socio-psychological adaptation diagnostics

Thus, the obtained data suggest that high and low markers are most suitable for diagnostics. Their qualitative analysis leads to the following conclusions:

- High markers on the scale “adaptability” and low markers on the scale “lack of adaptability” indicate the subjects’ optimal level of adaptation to the existence in the society in accordance with the society requirements and their own goals, needs, motives and interests, which is typical for a mature personality.
- High markers on the scale “self-acceptance” and low markers on the scale “lack of self-acceptance” reveal that the subjects are generally satisfied with their personal qualities and characteristics. They appreciate themselves and perceive themselves positively, consider themselves attractive in the eyes of others.
- High markers on the scale “acceptance of others” and low markers on the scale “failure to accept others” allow us to conclude that the tested students’ need for communication and collaboration is satisfied. They can easily come into contact without any fear of other people’s opinion about them; they consider themselves open and sociable people, they are free from prejudice.
- High markers on the scale of emotional comfort and low markers on the scale of emotional discomfort suggest that the subjects tend to express

their feelings openly; they believe in themselves, do not suffer from long-term anxiety, restlessness or apathy, show a high degree of certainty in their emotional attitude to the ongoing reality, surrounding objects and phenomena.

- 28% of the respondents have internal locus of control, i.e. the subjects tend to take responsibility for the events that occur in their lives, for the results of their activity, for themselves and to explain the ongoing changes with their behavior, character and abilities.
- 4% of the respondents show external locus of control; this indicates their dominating propensity to attribute the causes of what is happening by external factors (the environment, the fate or a mere incident).
- High markers of dominance, as well as low markers of submission and escapism, indicate that the respondents seek to be leaders, tend to occupy a dominant position; they are not afraid of problematic situations. However, almost half of the respondents (44%) demonstrate very low markers of dominance.

The applied method “*Self-diagnostics of mental states*” and the subsequent quantitative and qualitative analysis of the received data allows us to make the following conclusions:

- High indicators in the level of frustration, aggression, anxiety and rigidity are observed in 1-2 students. They show low self-esteem, fear of failure and difficulties, intemperance, presence of difficulties in interacting with people, the tendency to provoke conflicts and conflict situations. The data reveal high rates of anxiety, which is accompanied by a sense of danger and anticipation of something tragic. Strong rigidity is peculiar to one student. Change of a place for work or study, fundamental transformations in lifestyle or relationships with other people are contraindicated to such people, as these changes may contribute to stresses and deterioration of health.
- The medium level of rigidity, aggression, frustration and anxiety is observed in the majority of the respondents: from 44% to 64%. Our observations suggest that such respondents are more or less calm students, quite active and sociable ones, although there are cases where anxiety is still present - caused by objective circumstances. Such students are characterized by moderate aggressiveness, they are moderately ambitious and self-confident and quite successful in relationships.
- From 32% to 48% of respondents show no anxiety and their self-esteem is high. They are resistant to failures and are quite flexible in relationships and behavior, not afraid of difficulties. It is easy for them to switch from one activity to another. These students do not become very attached to

objects, they are free to change their habits and plans. Students with low levels of anxiety and frustration are not only more satisfied with their lives, but also more positive, optimistic, resistant to failures and have no fear of difficulties.

The data described above are shown in Figure 2.

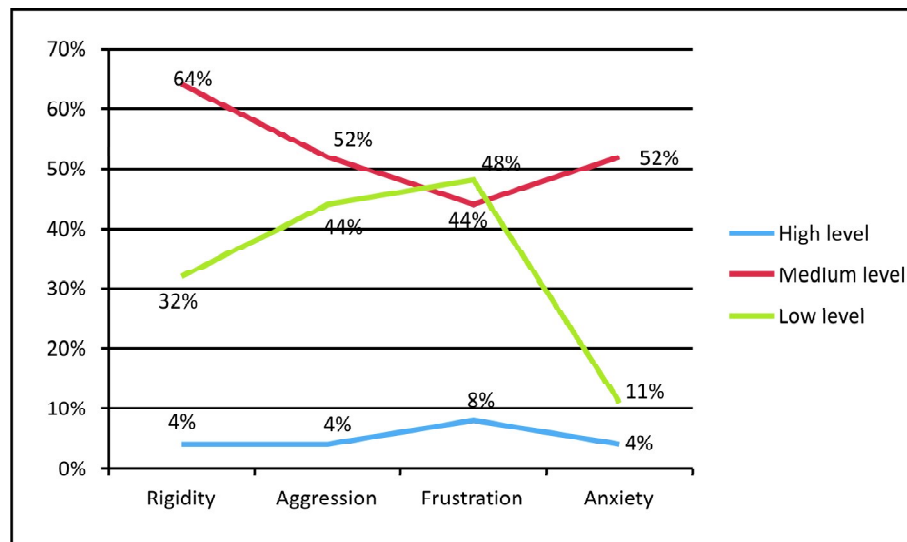


Figure 2: The results of the applied method “Self-diagnostics of mental states”

The application of the method of “*Self-assessment of psychological adaptability*” and the subsequent qualitative and quantitative analysis of the obtained data lead to the following conclusions:

- The high and above average levels of psychological adaptability (28% and 36%, respectively) indicate that these respondents are characterized by the ability to easily adapt to the static and dynamic environment, have the ability to quickly find a common language with other people, perceive the other as an equal. They have a sense of empathy and psychological selectivity, great self-control and the ability to correct their behavior in accordance with the requirements of the environment.
- The average level of psychological adaptability was not diagnosed; one student showed the below-average level).
- 32% of the students showed a low level of psychological adaptability. One of the sources to disturb, reduce their psychological adaptability is the relationships provoking the emergence of value barriers. They are most often associated with misunderstanding, conflicts in the family or in

professional and educational activities, prediction of the future, attitude to the present, social evaluation. A set of negative emotional experiences against the background of a mismatch between the expected achievement of the values and the mechanisms of their realization creates the mental states, which people often cannot cope with. Then, the deprivation of significant values begins to re-actualize the basic needs for identification and self-preservation, the dissatisfaction of which can lead to abuses in the areas of personality. For the people who belong to this level, “the sense of the situation” is sometimes inaccessible and they can either “guess” the situation and behave adequately or act “inappropriately”. They rarely manage to achieve synchronism in emotional states because of excessive alertness. Mutual understanding is achieved only in a fixed number of issues. The representatives of this level can easily be drawn into a conflict, they are not always reserved. The behavior stereotype generated earlier often helps them.

The described findings are reflected in Figure 3.

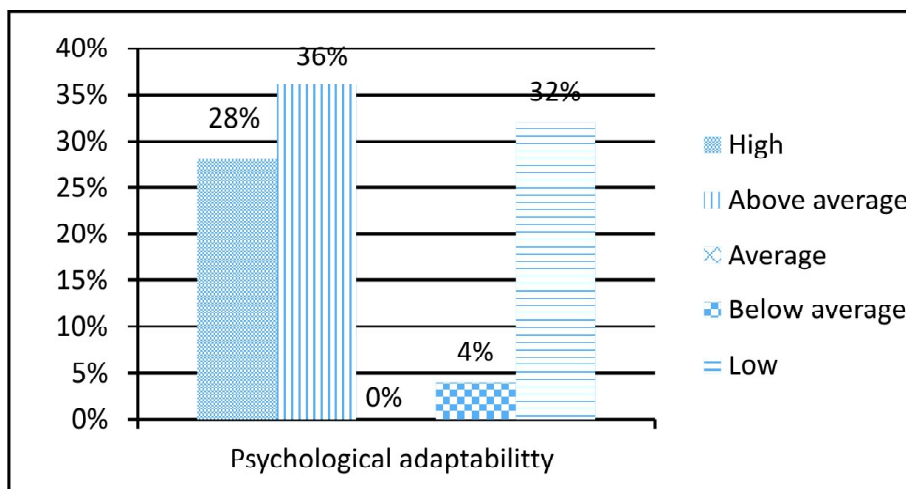


Figure 3: The results of applied method “Self-assessment of psychological adaptability”

Psychological adaptability is considered by scientists as a personal property affecting the functioning of the individual and determining the variants for overcoming the encountered difficulties, as the ability of a positive transition from the level of “adjustment” to the level of “the ascending balance” in social life. Thus, it can be concluded that the respondents, who participated in our study, almost do not have this quality, which may impede the process of their social and psychological adaptation.

The results of the applied method “*Assessment of sociability level*”:

- In the majority of respondents (56%), the level of sociability is high. They are talkative, like to speak on various issues, willingly meet new people, love to be in the spotlight, often cannot refuse requests, although sometimes do not fulfill them. They can be hot-tempered; they often lack patience, perseverance and focus. It is possible to say that to say that the people of this type willingly take up a case, but not always able to finish it successfully. For this very reason, others may treat them with some caution and doubt.
- 44% of the subjects have the medium level of sociability. They are characterized by an intermediate degree of sociability, are not afraid to make new friends and initiate communication and interaction. Despite their level of communicability is not low, such people usually do not like noisy crowds. In communication, they prefer to be receivers rather than senders, and avoid disputes and controversy.
- There were no people with low sociability among our respondents.

The described findings are shown in Figure 4.

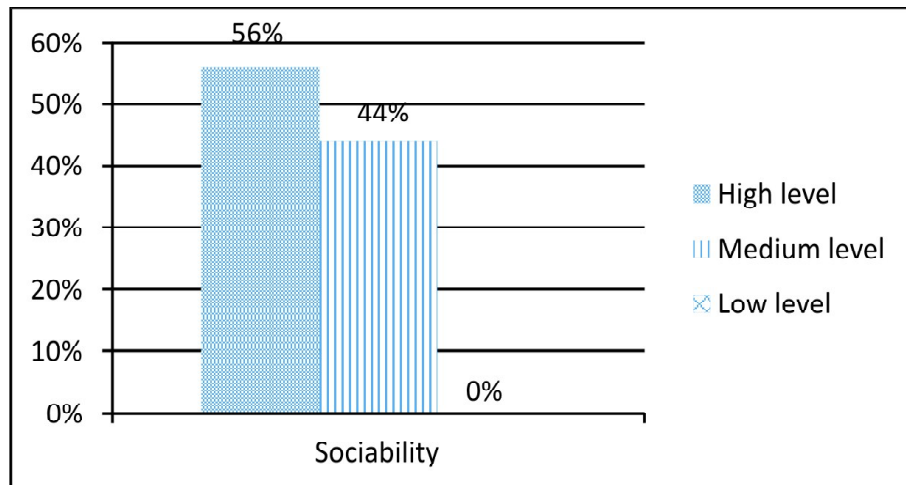


Figure 4: The results of the implemented method of “*Assessment of sociability level*”

CONCLUSIONS

Summarizing the data of the implemented diagnostic methods, we can make the following conclusions:

1. 64% of the respondents have demonstrated a high (28% of the respondents) and upper-medium (36% of the respondents) levels of socio-psychological adaptation. These respondents are characterized by:

- the ability of first-year students to easily adapt both to static and dynamic environment. In particular, this fact is proved by their low level of rigidity, frustration, anxiety and aggressiveness that was identified while implementing the method “Self-diagnosis of mental states”,
 - the ability to quickly find a common language with other people, perceive others as equals, show empathy. This conclusion can be confirmed by the resulting diagnostics of the sociability level (100% of the respondents demonstrate a high and a medium level of sociability), as well as by the criterion of acceptance of others (high indicators were diagnosed in 56% of the respondents) – as per the applied method of socio-psychological adaptation diagnostics,
 - the immanent ability for internal control, adequate self-esteem and the ability to adjust their behavior to the requirements of the existing environment.
2. At the same time, 32% of the respondents have a low level of socio-psychological adaptability. They are characterized by an increased level of mental intensity, a low level of behavioral regulation, breach of interpersonal relationships due to the predisposition to aggression and provocation of conflicts, inadequate social maturity, a tendency to a distorted perception of reality (they perceive many events and situations of social life, including the situations associated with the learning process at the university, as extremely disturbing or risky). A correlation of all diagnostic data of these respondents give grounds to assume that the low level of their socio- psychological adaptation may be caused by the experienced stable emotional discomfort , a sense of alienation from the social environment, a mismatch between their own, already formed, personal values and the values of the society.

The presented results demonstrate the urgency of working out a diagnostic psychological development program, which should be aimed at optimizing the personality adaptation processes.

The design and subsequent testing of such psychological assistance program for first-year students are the prospects of our further experimental work in the sphere of the indicated problem.

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