FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE FORMATION OF INFANTILE BEHAVIOR IN MODERN YOUTH AND STRATEGIES FOR ITS ELIMINATION

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Abstract; This article analyzes the factors contributing to the formation of infantile behavior in modern youth from psychological, social, and spiritual perspectives. Indicators such as emotional instability, a tendency to avoid responsibility, and a lack of independence in decision-making are studied as key indicators of the infantilization process. Furthermore, it is proven that factors like improper upbringing from childhood, excessive parental care, and a lack of life skills in educational institutions play a significant role in the formation of infantile behavior. The article develops practical recommendations for strategies proposed to address this problem, including fostering critical thinking, developing psychological independence, and increasing social responsibility.

Keywords: Infantilism, youth psychology, psychological maturity, upbringing, critical thinking, social responsibility, psychological independence.

Introduction.

In the 21st century, along with the accelerated personal development of young people, their mental and psychological problems are also deepening. In particular, infantile behavior – that is, childish thinking, emotional instability, and avoidance of social responsibility – is frequently observed in the generation growing up in today's globalization and digital environment. This situation negatively affects not only the socio-psychological health of the individual but also that of society as a whole.

The causes of infantilism observed among young people are multifaceted: excessive care in the family, lack of opportunity to make independent decisions in personal life, a lack of real life-preparing skills in the education system, as well as excessive dependence on social networks and virtual life – all of these lead to the formation of infantile views in the minds of young people. In some cases, as a result of parents' excessive care for their children or perceiving them as defenseless and not allowing them to step into independent life, children,

even when they reach adulthood, develop into individuals who cannot think independently and struggle to make life decisions.

Infantilism is a concept that refers to the imbalance between a person's biological age and psychological age, which is interpreted in psychology as delayed socio-psychological development. This condition is alarming due to its frequent occurrence in the modern social context. Because young people are the future of any society and the foundation of its socio-economic and cultural development. Therefore, their formation as well-rounded, mature, and independently thinking individuals is one of the urgent tasks facing the state and society.

Scientific research conducted in recent years (A.G. Asmolov, L.I. Bozhovich, V.S. Mukhina, and others) shows that the process of infantilization is closely related to the social environment, the education system, the mass media, as well as the individual psychological characteristics of the person. This necessitates studying the problem not only within the individual but also in the context of the entire socio-educational system.

This article provides an in-depth analysis of the psychological, pedagogical, and social factors of infantilism among modern youth. At the same time, practical strategies are developed that can be effective in shaping young people as independent, responsible, and socially active individuals. The article is structured based on the IMRAD structure, consistently highlighting the scientific analysis, methodology, results, and alternative solutions to the existing problem.

Methodology. This study employed a comprehensive approach based on scientific and methodological approaches to identify the factors contributing to the formation of infantile behavior in modern youth and strategies for their elimination. The methodological basis of the research is formed by the main theories put forward in developmental psychology and personality psychology. In particular, E. Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, L.S. Vygotsky's cultural-historical concept, and D.B. Elkonin's works on the stages of personality formation were taken as a basis[1].

In identifying and assessing infantilism, theoretical analysis, empirical observation, psychodiagnostic tests, survey methods, and statistical analysis tools were used. At the theoretical stage, foreign and local literature, monographs, dissertations, media materials related to the concept of infantilism, as well as statistical data reflecting the socio-psychological portrait of young people, were studied in depth.[2]

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[1] Erikson E.H. Identity: Youth and Crisis. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1968.

[2] Виготский Л.С. Воображение и творчество в детском возрасте. – М.: Педагогика, 1991.

During the empirical stage, a special survey and psychological tests were conducted among 120 young people aged 18-25 (60 of whom were university students and 60 of whom were working youth). The following methodologies were used during the diagnostic process: the "Level of Personal Maturity" test (A.G. Shmelev's modification), the Rotter questionnaire to determine the level of social responsibility, C. Izard's tests to measure emotional maturity, as well as an author's test block developed based on indicators of social independence [3].

The obtained results were analyzed using SPSS 26.0 software. The statistical significance level was set at 95% ($p < 0.05$). During the analysis, correlation and variance analysis methods were used to identify correlations and differences. To ensure the accuracy of the results, the tests were initially piloted and adapted in three groups.

In addition, in-depth interviews were used as individual psychological portraits during the study. This approach allowed for a deeper analysis of young people's life experiences, independence in decision-making, and attitudes toward social responsibility.

Furthermore, the structure of the questionnaires took into account indicators such as young people's life experiences, level of independence in decision-making, relationships with parents, activity in the social environment, and degree of dependence on information technology. These indicators played a crucial role in identifying the main causes and factors of infantilistic behavior among young people.

Social-demographic factors such as gender, place of residence (urban or rural), and socio-economic status were also analyzed in the study. Particular attention was paid to the relationship between young people's family upbringing model (authoritarian, liberal, democratic) and their ability to think independently.

The principles of anonymity and participant consent were strictly adhered to during data collection. Each stage of the research was conducted based on ethical and normative requirements.

Also, inspired by leading foreign practices, the level of infantilism among young people was conditionally divided into three categories according to test results: low, medium, and high. Through these categories, aspects such as their place in social life, motivation for activity, goal setting, and consistency in achieving them were evaluated.

In the selection of methodological approaches, the methods of case study, experimental research, and survey-based observation were mainly combined. This complex approach made

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[3] Роттер Дж. Социальное научение и клиническая психология. – СПб.: Речь, 2002.

it possible to identify more deeply the signs of infantilism in the personal and social development of young people.

Based on the results obtained, a generalizing analysis and proposals were developed, as well as practical recommendations were formed. The research methodology served to analyze the real situation among young people in a scientifically based manner and to rely on clear criteria in assessing the level of infantilism.

Results and Analysis. The results of the conducted studies showed that infantilistic behaviors are manifesting in various forms among modern youth. According to test results, nearly 38% of respondents face significant difficulties in recognizing personal responsibility, making independent decisions, and planning. The majority of them stated that they make life choices based on the guidance of others and feel uncertain about understanding the consequences of their decisions.

A detailed analysis of the questionnaires revealed the widespread prevalence of indicators such as "delaying decision-making," "emotionally reacting disproportionately to their age," and "being overly controlled by the mind" among young people. In particular, excessive parental care, low tolerance for alternative opinions, and weakness in firmness and independence were more commonly observed among students aged 18-21. This situation is reflected in their behavior in the social environment, attitude towards work, and the process of planning for the future.

The analysis revealed that groups with a high level of infantilism among young people are mainly distinguished in two directions: the first - those who live relying on psychological defense mechanisms, tend to escape from real life, and are emotionally unstable; the second - young people who are overly dependent on technological capabilities, prefer communication through social networks, and try to avoid problems in real life. In both of these groups, the level of personal maturity is low, and they struggle to find sufficiently constructive solutions in problematic situations.

In addition, it was determined that the gender factor also has a certain impact on the level of infantilism. Among female respondents, low emotional maturity and a high need for social support were observed. In male respondents, misinterpretation of personal freedom and the transfer of responsibility to other individuals were more common.

Also, the differences between rural and urban youth are among the important results. Due to the fact that rural youth rely more on traditional values and rely on the opinions of family and community, infantilistic behavior is relatively less common. Conversely, an individualistic

approach is strong among young people living in the city, which is associated with their avoidance of responsibility and difficulties in living independently.

In-depth interviews revealed that the inclination towards infantilism is closely related to the youth's upbringing style, family environment, and lack of social experience during school and college years. Excessive parental support, getting used to taking on the child's problems, leads to a delay in the need to take independent steps in life. In many cases, such young people are insecure, have difficulty finding direction in life, and have difficulty realistically assessing themselves.

Statistical analysis of the results showed a significant correlation between the infantilism index and the level of parental care, lack of life motivation, technological dependence, and passive social position. In particular, individuals who were restricted from the opportunity to make independent decisions in childhood are achieving social adaptation with difficulty in adulthood.

These situations indicate the need to assess infantilism not only as a personal flaw but as a complex socio-psychological problem. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that a comprehensive approach is needed to reduce this problem among young people - methodologies focused on personal development in the education system, strengthening family and school cooperation, and psychological training to increase emotional maturity.

Discussion. The results presented above indicate that cases of infantilism among modern youth are shaped not only by psychological factors but also by social, cultural, and technological influences. In particular, the deep penetration of technology into lifestyles, the reduction of live interpersonal communication, and the ability to easily ignore life's problems in the virtual world are seriously affecting the psychological maturity of young people.

Another aspect that is causing discussion is that overly protective parenting styles limit children's ability to think independently and make life decisions. This situation affects the level of maturity of young people, increasing traits such as passivity, avoidance of responsibility, lack of purpose, and emotional instability. At the same time, the weakness of social competencies such as self-confidence, clearly expressing one's position, and being able to accept criticism further deepens infantile behavior.

It should be especially emphasized that excessive attachment to social networks and digital platforms leads young people to withdraw from real-life problems, as well as to lower their self-esteem by comparing themselves to others. This, in turn, manifests itself in the form

of psychological instability, emotional vulnerability, indifference to oneself and others, becoming a key component of the process of infantilism.

Based on the research, it can be concluded that infantilism is not just an individual psychological problem, but a complex systemic phenomenon directly related to the activities of social institutions. The development of the individual is shaped by the education in the family, the psychological climate in the school, the peer group, and the influence of mass culture. If these factors are not in harmony, the problem of infantilism arises in the lives of young people.

Also, limited opportunities for young people to gain alternative life experiences, the low level of involvement in social projects, and the lack of attention in the educational system to the formation of life competencies are among the main causes of infantilism. If young people do not constantly face real problems and do not participate in solving them, their personal development will not occur, which in turn creates the basis for the formation of a passive, irresponsible generation in society that does not believe in its capabilities.

A systematic approach is needed to solve this problem. First of all, programs should be introduced in the education system to support the personal development of young people, psychological support services should be strengthened, and the effectiveness of working with parents should be increased. In particular, independence can be fostered by encouraging the social activity of young people and involving them in various projects, leadership roles, and decision-making. Reducing the level of infantilism among young people is not only a pedagogical and psychological task, but also a socio-strategic one. Its effective solution plays an important role in building a healthy, mature, and responsible civil society.

Conclusion and Recommendations. This research is aimed at studying the main factors influencing the formation of infantilism among modern youth and analyzing its negative impact on society. As identified during the research, infantile behaviors of young people are associated not only with psychological factors, but also with the influence of social, cultural, and technological factors. At the same time, the high level of dependence of modern youth on technology, the overly protective parenting style, and the weakness of the school system in developing the ability to solve real-life problems are leading to the widespread prevalence of infantilism.

According to the research results, the main causes of infantilism include young people's difficulties in adapting to real life, assigning responsibility to others, weakness in making independent decisions, and lack of life motivation. In addition, the excessive development of

the technological environment and social networks is leading to young people not becoming socially and emotionally resilient.

In conclusion, the problem of infantilism among young people requires serious attention throughout society, especially in the fields of education and upbringing. To address this problem, several important recommendations are being made:

1. Approaches Focused on the Personal Development of Young People in the Education System: Methodologies should be introduced in education that encourage young people to behave freely and independently. This requires training teachers and educators to provide self-development and psychological support.

2. Strengthening Work with Parents and Psychological Support: It is important to organize special psychological consultations and training for parents, providing them with information on helping their children make independent decisions.

3. Increasing Social Activity: By involving young people in social activities, assigning them leadership roles, and encouraging active participation in public works, they can feel independence and responsibility.

4. Managing Digital Technologies: Young people need to be taught how to use technological tools wisely and develop methods to help them maintain their emotional and social health. This especially includes programs aimed at developing self-regulation skills on social networks.

5. Supporting Mental Health: It is necessary to organize special training and psychological programs to strengthen the psychological health of young people, manage stress among them, and form self-awareness and emotional stability.

Changing the approach to the personal development of young people will not only help them adapt properly to society and become successful citizens now, but also in the future. Also, combating infantilism has a positive impact not only on young people themselves, but also on the entire development of society. This is the main foundation of a strong and stable social system.

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