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PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF DANGER PERCEPTION IN STUDENTS

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The article defines the psychological characteristics of dangers in students with different levels of situational anxiety. It is shown that students with low situational anxiety inherent in the higher rating of their own behavior, as compared with students with moderate and high levels of situational anxiety. Coming across dangerous situations students demonstrate various forms of response: subjects with low situational anxiety choose solutions to self-organization and self-control while getting in to a dangerous situation of those with middle and high level demonstrate emotional reactions, avoidance and search for help from relatives.

Keywords: danger, students, situational anxiety.

У статті визначено психологічні особливості уявлень про небезпеку серед студентської молоді з різним рівнем ситуативної тривожності. Показано, що студентам із низькою ситуативною тривожністю притаманна вища оцінка власної поведінки, ніж студентам із середнім і високим рівнями ситуативної тривожності. При зустрічі з небезпечними ситуаціями студенти демонструють різні форми реагування: досліджувані з низькою ситуативною тривожністю активізують процеси прийняття рішень, що направлені на самоорганізацію та самоконтроль; із середньою та високою ситуативною тривожністю демонструють емоційні реакції, уникнення та пошук допомоги у близьких людей.

Ключові слова: небезпека, студентська молодь, ситуативна тривожність.

В статье определены психологические особенности представлений об опасности студенческой молодежи с разным уровнем ситуативной тревожности. Показано, что студентам с низкой ситуативной тревожностью присуща более высокая оценка собственного поведения, по сравнению со студентами со средним и высоким уровнями ситуативной тревожности. При встрече с опасными ситуациями студенты демонстрируют различные формы реагирования: испытуемые с низкой ситуативной тревожностью выбирают решения, направленные на самоорганизацию и самоконтроль при прохождении ситуации опасности; со средним и высоким уровнем - эмоциональные реакции, избегание и поиск помощи у близких людей.

Ключевые слова: опасность, студенческая молодежь, ситуативная тревожность.

Social, economic, and environmental instability of modern life creates a variety of hazards to people. Perception of hazards creates a sense of presence or absence of potential threats. To be aware of danger is to be able to detect, identify threats and respond to them using cognitive, emotional, volitional, and motivational characteristics of a subject. These are characteristics, which reveal threat signals and allow to respond to them on time.

Perception of danger is studied by lots of native and foreign psychologists [1-8]. Z. Freud pointed out that human fears generate deep inner conflict that prevents normal adaptation to any situation, form the idea of them as dangerous. J. Haltunh was sure that the idea of danger is detonated by inability to meet basic human needs. A. Zakharov pointed out that the idea of danger depends on the development of emotional and cognitive process of human and communications between them. T. Sulatov showed that the idea of danger affects the choice of adaptation to the external world. L. Matveeva and and E. Lavrova highlighted the idea of danger as a source, creating dangerous situation. D. Leontiev identified internal and external existential nature of danger. V. Korotets considered the idea of danger in terms of manifestation. T. Kornilova found the degree of negative hazard impact.

So there is enough research on the occurrence of hazards and their insight. However, due to our opinion, not enough research is made on the features of danger in young people. The representatives of this age may underestimate dangerous situation that leads to risky behavior, or, conversely, overestimate the danger that reduces the activity of a young man, makes him indifferent to himself and others. We believe, that one reason for the choice of ways to respond to danger for a young person is a level of situational anxiety.

The aim of our work is to determine psychological characteristics of danger perceptions in students with different levels of situational anxiety.

L. Matveeva considers danger as a very important part of the world picture of a person who significantly affects the qualitative side of human life. Elementary feeling of potential danger influences on the attitude of a person, the level of anxiety. On the one hand, the concept of danger describes objects and events of the real world threatening a human and on the other – psychological reality created by a subject. The idea of danger is closely connected with the concept of fear, anxiety, menace. Fear is understood as emotionally heightened representation of particular danger and anxiety acts as emotionally heightened sense of future danger. Anxiety is divided into situational (manifestation of anxiety in this situation, “here and now”) and personal (stable individual characteristics, which reflect the tendency of a subject to anxiety). The threat appears to be some objectively exiting event or potentially possible phenomenon.

T. Kornilova highlights external threatening hazards: phenomena and processes. They, in turn, can cause damage to physical and psychological human health, causing undesirable consequences directly or indirectly. Perceptions of danger serves a consequence of negative, harmful and dangerous factors on a receptor. The determining characteristic of hazard is considered to be the degree of direct negative impact [5].

A. Zakharov notes the importance of the links between emotional and cognitive development of the formation, including cognitive processes. Fear, which is closely intertwined with the concept of risk, with increasing of cognitive development begins to decrease and reaches minimum [1].

J. Haltunh identified cognitive component, which reflects the idea of danger. It acts as threatening event in mind. According to J. Haltunh, danger prevents the satisfaction of basic human needs: survival (risk of death), welfare (poverty, illness), identity (risk of exclusion), freedom (danger of reprisals) [8].

Thus, the idea of danger is based on understanding of situational factors threatening physical and mental health. Causes of hazards can be people, technical systems, chemically or biologically active components of the environment, information sources. Danger has external and internal nature, which is the perception of danger in accordance with the subject's own psychological reality. Forming an idea of danger is associated with emotional and cognitive development of a man. The main varieties of hazards are physical, social, existential and infernal (mystical) dangers.

Identifying of hazards is brought to the evaluation of existing threats and identifying the most obvious unsafe situations for people. The identification process involves recognition of hazards and determining its possible causes. The reaction is carried out in cognitive, emotional, motivational and volitional levels.

A threat as a potential danger is defined by objective and subjective character. The subjective aspect is to create hazards by man. Objective side involves external (real) nature of risk, which under specific conditions can lead to undesirable consequences.

Anxiety as waiting for danger is projected into the future and having a social nature, is associated with rational (cognitive) component. Instead of that, fear vector as an emotional parameter has a biological basis and is directed to past experience, which injured a person.

65 students, including 32 boys and 33 girls aged 18-21 years old with low, medium and high situational anxiety took part in the study of psychological peculiarities of danger idea.

To achieve the objectives we used the following methods and techniques: test-questionnaire Spielberger – Hanina (to determine personal and situational anxiety); Assessment L. Matveeva and E. Lavrova methods of dangerous situations (to assess understanding of danger); L. Matveeva and E. Lavrova method of unfinished sentences (to decline group types of dangerous situations); Charles Osgood method of semantic differential; methods of mathematical statistics (U-Mann-Whitney test).

The research procedure included two phases. At the first stage the subjects were divided into three groups with low (group 1), medium (group 2) and high (group 3) situational anxiety. At the second stage there were defined psychological representations of danger features based on the method of unfinished sentences, assessment of hazardous situations and determination of semantic characteristics of students with different levels of anxiety.

The results of Spielberger – Hanin test-questionnaire showed that anxiety indices are normal, indicating a moderate level of anxiety in subjects. Situational anxiety is expressed by low ($x_{ml} = 26.3$), medium ($x_{ml} = 37.4$) and high ($x_{ml} = 47$) indices, respectively, for the three groups studied. This indicates that the sample of students is characterized by rather stable individual characteristics (eg, predisposition to anxiety (PA)), but includes situational, reactive characteristics of subjectively experienced emotion (SA).

The method of semantic differential was used in the three groups to determine the evaluation characteristics of the subjects by themselves in dangerous situations. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Average indicators evaluating risk in studied groups

Groups in terms of anxiety	Factor		
	Evaluation	Power	Activity
Group 1	3.8	4.4	5.73
Group 2	2.86	3.62	5.26
Group 3	2.06	1.46	3.13

The investigated of all three groups give themselves rather low estimation in dangerous situations. This may be associated with subjective feelings of a person who was in dangerous situations, and especially his perception. Value factor "assessment" for subjects with low situational anxiety was somewhat higher than in groups with average and high anxiety. In subjects with low situational anxiety value factor "force" was higher than that in the other two groups. The investigated of this group consider that it is possible to influence on dangerous situations that is seen as a minor threat. In the group of subjects with high anxiety value factor "activity" is lower than in the other two groups. This group is characterized by being passive and slow in dangerous situations. Following the procedure of L. Matveeva and E. Lavrova evaluation of dangerous situations it was defined the idea about danger on the following parameters: intensity, probability, intimacy being uncontrolled and global. From them there were allocated maximum (7 points) and minimum (1 point), which were shown in percentage choice of dangerous situations. Accordingly, the data were analyzed in three groups of subjects with low, medium and high situational anxiety.

The highest points on the parameter "intensity" were statements about the danger of social issues. This danger is associated with war, disease and death of loved ones, poverty, betrayal, expulsion from a university.

Lower intensity is given to types of dangerous situations such as: news, information, going to the doctor, becoming a victim of gossip, going by subway. It should be noted that for students, outlined above, situ-

ation does not represent a strong threat. In subjects with average and high situational anxiety intensity values are higher than in the group with low situational anxiety.

Most possible for subject-students are dangers associated with war, change of government, aging, walking along dark streets, making important decisions. Less possible is to get expelled from a university, the possibility of becoming a victim of violence or becoming an outlaw.

Table 2

Frequency distribution of statement selection about the dangers on Matveeva L. and Lavrov E. technique in three groups (table presents the highest and lowest values for the parameters in %).

The statement about the dangers of being	intensity			probability			uncontrolled			globality			proximity		
	1 gr	2 gr	3 gr	1 gr	2 gr	3 gr	1 gr	2 gr	3 gr	1 gr	2 gr	3 gr	1 gr	2 gr	3 gr
Breaking out of war	70	74	81	66	72	80	61	64	72	68	73	82	50	52	63
The death of a loved one	64	72	76				71	67	74	68	67	74			
Illness of a loved person	66	59	73							59	59	67			
Being broke	45	50	72												
Betrayal	49	55	70							43	61	57			
Expulsion from a university	43	48	64	25	32	21							16	17	31
Being victims of violence	46	37	64	25	26	23									
Having dangerous disease	45	42	60										16	31	30
Watching news	27	34	34				19	21	41				29	41	49
Getting a victim of rumors	23	24	27							24	35	42			
Going by subway	24	37	24	62	63	67							58	60	53
Changes in government				62	70	78							56	50	66
Aging				72	70	73	62	65	60						
Walking along dark street				59	53	53	41	57	63						
Making responsible decisions				61	54	52									
Death				66	59	44	62	65	60						
Becoming an outlaw				24	20	22				20	32	38	13	29	22
Earthquake							59	67	74	55	58	67			
Flood, tsunami							70	65	66	57	60	67			
Airplane, train crash							63	52	49						

The highest value of the parameter “uncontrollability” of dangerous situations received statement about loss of a loved one, one’s own death (which, incidentally, shows the impossibility of avoiding fatal events), natural disasters, war, aging. Low rates received the situation associated with watching news and it is the situation, according to students, which is out of their control.

On “Globality” parameter higher values were obtained by hazards of social and biological nature, death, disease, war, natural disasters, which significantly change their life and inner circle. Low rates have dangers of staying in a confinement, at high altitude, getting an outlaw.

On “Proximity” parameter college students often choose the statement, about dangers of war, travelling by subway and change of government. The lowest value was obtained by interpersonal nature of the situation such as getting outlaw having a dangerous disease and being expelled from the university.

Comparative analysis of the studied parameters identified the following significant differences between groups. So, those studied with middle-situational anxiety see hazards as more intense, probable, uncontrollable and those that may affect their social status (of being expelled from the university, becoming a victim of gossip or betrayal) compared to the group with low anxiety.

Between groups with low and high situational anxiety there are significant differences on the factor “assessment” of dangerous situation as students with high levels of anxiety find much more intense such dangers as an earthquake, expulsion from a university, poverty and betrayal; more probable danger of quarrel; more global – to become a victim of rumors and getting unnecessary, and the closest danger is poor performance.

Students with high anxiety are significantly different from young people with middle anxiety on inten-

sity of hazards such as betrayal, expulsion from a university, poverty and war; on being uncontrolled - feeling of being unnecessary; on proximity – expulsion from the university, getting ill and making a bad deed.

So, between the studied groups significant differences were determined on the dangers of social, biological and existential character. There are dangerous situations such as "expulsion from a university", "betrayal", "seeing themselves below the poverty line", "war", which had the character of loss and can cause considerable damage. Situations of "quarrels", "getting ill", "and expulsion from a university", "bad performance" seem to be relatively close. Uncontrolled hazards include "change of government", "feeling of being unnecessary", "watching news".

By using the technique of unfinished sentences there were shown the main aspects of fear, anxiety, and restlessness, manifested in the ideas of danger in students. We compared the number of use of word-marker belonging to a particular parameter. In the work there were calculated the percentage of certain selected observable hazards. Responses to the sentence "I feel completely safe when ..." determined that the subjects with average and high situational anxiety choose continuation, which is connected with staying in the circle of close friends, rarely speak of personal self-control qualities use.

Responses to the sentence "The most dangerous situation with which I have ever encountered..." showed the features of understanding danger by students. Such risks are related to war, fights, arrests, and the threat of social status loss, death of loved ones. For the subjects threatening situations there were also physical dangers. After all, they have negative impact on their own existence, pain, death, accident. The least threatening danger situations were of natural origin.

Responses to the sentence "I believe that the real threat is ...", revealed that the most dangerous subjects represent human activity: man-made danger and war, followed by physical nature of hazards: earthquakes, hurricanes, typhoons.

The division of responses to the sentence "Hazard information calls me..." identified differences in responses between the studied groups. Students with low situational anxiety continue the sentence choosing cognitive regulation of hazard situation analysis, interpretation of the information received; less often choose excitement and indifference. There are different results in groups with average and high situation anxiety. In response to information about the dangers, they have an anxiety, fear, distrust to information you receive, which could adversely affect their perception.

The division of responses to the statement "Safety for me is ..." showed that the students under the investigation associated the safety with the safe of mind, confidence, control and security. Therefore, they understand the security from the points of view of emotional and managing stability.

The division of responses to the statement "When I'm in a dangerous situation, I ..." revealed differences between the groups of subjects with low and middle situational anxiety demonstrated more cognitive regulations, which suggest control and search for solution. In addition, these groups' answers are less focused on the emotional response to such dangerous situations as fear, anxiety, and panic. Boys and girls with high situational anxiety dominated responses focused on emotional response and lack of effort to change situation.

As the result of the study, the following conclusions can be made.

For students the most threatening situations are social dangers, then – physical and existential dangers. The highest levels of threat to students have situations such as "Breaking out of war", "Death", "Disease of relatives", "Poverty", "Earthquake", "Own illness".

Students with low situational anxiety have higher rating of their own behavior than students with middle and high levels of situational anxiety. Coming across dangerous situations students demonstrate different forms of response: the subjects with low situational anxiety stimulate decision-making processes aimed to self-organization and self-control: with average and high situation anxiety demonstrate emotional reactions of avoidance and the search of the loved ones help.

There were found significant differences between groups with different levels of anxiety: social dangers ("Treason", "Becoming a victim of rumors", "Being expelled from the University", "Being broke", "Breaking out of war") and physical ("Earthquakes", "Going by subway") types. Close and possible were situations "Being expelled from the university", "Quarrels", "Make something bad".

Prospects for further research can be clarifying of the structure of danger idea on certain parameters and making a list of the situations which are often rated as dangerous by students.

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