

Attitudes to the Personal Future of Boys and Girls with Different Degrees of Social Anxiety and Social Fears

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Abstract: The article presents the results of a scientific study of attitudes towards the future in modern young men and women with low, moderate, and high degrees of social anxiety and social fears. Ninety young men and women aged 18-20 years and studying in higher educational institutions of Barnaul acted as respondents. The study used a number of psychodiagnostic techniques: "Questionnaire of social anxiety and sociophobia" (O. A. Sagalakova, D. V. Truevtsev), "A scale of temporary attitudes" (J. Nyutten), as well as factor analysis approaches and techniques. The results showed that social anxiety and social fears in adolescence act as a psychological component in the design of the image of a personal future. Depending on the severity of the studied phenomena, various attitudes towards the future are formed. A high degree of social anxiety and fear is associated with the ideals to idealize a personal future, which makes the representations of boys and girls unrealistic and creates risks of not achieving their goals. For this category of boys and girls, designing the future is described by the "unassigned liability effect." Attitudes towards the future are positive for young men and women with low and moderate levels of social anxiety and social fears. At the same time, they reflect their expectations of various events (not only positive) in the future, which makes the image of the future more realistic. They design an image of the future based on personal responsibility and pay special attention to the near stages of the future.

1. Introduction

One of the important aspects of the scientific understanding of the formation of personality in youth is the appeal to the study of the ideas of modern boys and girls about their life paths in general and the future in particular. Psychological science states that adolescence is sensitive in relation to the formulation and solution of problems associated with the design of a personal future [1]. In young people, a qualitatively new awareness of one's "I" appears, which is built on the basis of matching personality characteristics with a selected vector of self-realization [2]. In turn, this acts as a prerequisite for making life choices for boys and girls, constructing an image of the future, filling it with key life goals, determining leading strategies for achieving them. Along with this, in relation to modern youth, science faces questions that are not yet clear answers. They are associated with the statement of facts that impede the timely solution of problems of age-related development and the search for their scientific explanation. Today, some of the boys and girls are not able to independently and responsibly make decisions; they continue to be guided by other people's patterns of behavior, often conflicting with their personal characteristics and value positions.

Perhaps one of the reasons for this state of affairs lies in the fact that boys and girls experience quite strong anxiety and fears in various social situations. Such behavioral patterns give rise to intentions to avoid communication, to gain new experience, lead to the use and consolidation of habitual behavior strategies that protect against uncertainty and unpleasant emotions. These factors contribute to the consolidation of independence, dependence on other people who can solve many issues for them, create the basis for inadequate life self-determination, and make it challenging to plan a personal future. The discussion of this aspect also becomes important because, today, society sets the ideal of the modern young man as an active, proactive, decisive, able to cope with social challenges, realize breakthrough ideas. From this perspective, the problem of social anxiety and sociophobia is perceived even more acute, acquiring the meaning of the impossibility of achieving compliance with a given ideal. This issue, in turn, further exacerbates anxiety and

fears. The discussion of these issues allows us to emphasize the relevance of studying attitudes to the future of youth in the context of the severity of social anxiety and social fears.

For the scientific study of the indicated problem, the necessary grounds have developed in domestic and foreign psychological science. Temporal issues have a rich scientific research history (S. L. Rubinstein, B. G. Ananiev, K. A. Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, T. J. Cottle, R. Kastenbaum, J. R. Nuttin, Zimbardo P. G., and others). The questions of the content of human ideas about the future are widely represented in the works of our contemporaries (R. A. Akhmerov, E. M. Golovakha, A. A. Kronik, D. A. Leontiev, V. I. Kovalev, N. N. Tolstykh, etc.). Interpretations of “subjective time” by S. L. Rubinstein [3], “personal time” by V. I. Kovalev [4], “psychological time” by E. I. Golovakha and A. A. Kronik [5] allow us to comprehend the image of the future. This image is presented in the individual human consciousness as an interconnected set of planned and expected life events. Despite the fact that to date, ideas about the future have been analyzed in various contexts (gender and age characteristics [6; 7], personality characteristics [5; 7; 8; 9; 10], crucial life events [11; 12] and others), the search for answers to a number of questions remains beyond the scope of scientific research. One of them is the study of ideas about the future of boys and girls with social anxiety and social fears.

Sociophobia is not a rare phenomenon among modern youth. Fear of negative assessments and the public fiasco in a situation of social interactions are becoming the most typical fears of modern boys and girls. Scientific studies of social anxiety and social fears carried out in the framework of behavioral, evolutionary, interpersonal, cognitive theories (B. Shlenker, T. Duvall, S. Carver, R. Ripi, G. Heimberg, I.V. Nikitina, O. A. Sagalakova, I. Ya. Stoyanova, D.V. Truevtsev, A. B. Kholmogorova, and others), allow us to state the complex nature of this phenomenon. Fear of rejection makes a person block attempts to participate in social situations [13]. A high level of social anxiety and fear negatively affects a person's quality of life, increases the risks of experiencing loneliness, suicide, comorbid mental disorders, alcohol abuse, sexual dysfunctions, etc. [14]. Besides, problems often arise in obtaining an education, finding friends, realizing oneself in a profession and career, as well as building family relationships [13].

The scientific research undertaken by us was aimed at identifying attitudes toward the future among young men and women with the low, moderate, and high degrees of social anxiety and sociophobia.

2. Materials and Methods

In order to collect scientific information, the “Questionnaire of social anxiety and sociophobia” (O. A. Sagalakova, D. V. Truevtsev) and the “Scale of temporary attitudes” (J. Nutten) were applied. The “Questionnaire of social anxiety and sociophobia” was used for differential diagnosis of the dominant type of social anxiety, the severity of certain aspects of the manifestation of fear of evaluation in different situations [15]. The “Scale of temporary attitudes” (J. Nutten) was used to diagnose subjective attitudes toward a personal future [16]. The factor analysis was carried out using the statistical package SPSS Statistics 22.0. It acted as a method of mathematical and statistical processing of empirical research results.

Ninety young men and women aged 18-20 years, receiving higher education in various universities of Barnaul, compiled a sample of the study. To achieve the goal of the study, the sample included the following three groups of respondents: low, medium, and high degrees of sociophobia.

3. Results

Through the use of the “Questionnaire of social anxiety and sociophobia”, based on the severity of the degree of social anxiety and fear of assessment, groups of respondents with low, moderate, and high degree of social anxiety and sociophobia were formed. Respondents who scored no more than 15 points according to the results of answering questions were included in the group with a low degree of social anxiety and sociophobia. They are characterized by the unexpressed social anxiety and fear of public presentation. They are dominated by social courage and initiative in various social situations. In general, they are well socially adapted and communicable. Respondents who scored from 16 to 39 points made up a group with a moderate degree of severity of the studied characteristics. Representatives of this group have episodic experiences of social anxiety and fear of evaluation. Respondents with a score of 40 or more from the questionnaire made up a group with a high degree of social anxiety and sociophobia. The boys and girls who made up this group have difficulties with social adaptation, establishing contacts, fear of criticism, negative assessment,

rejection, etc.

The factor analysis was applied to the data obtained during the diagnosis of respondents regarding attitudes towards the future.

In the group of respondents with a high degree of sociophobia, five factors stood out, which account for 81.9% of the total variance. The first factor was called the “illusory future” (27% of the variance). In particular, it included such characteristics as full (0.885), interesting (0.830), warm (0.830), conflict-free (0.769), bright (0.767), pleasant (0.728), excellent (0.705), easy (0.654), trouble free (0.631). The second factor (12.9% of the variance) is formed by the following descriptors: full of hope (0.832), attractive (0.732), definite (0.700), valuable (0.589), useful (0.505). We called this factor “the future as the fulfillment of hopes.” The third factor (11.57% of the variance) is the “locus of responsibility for the future.” In particular, it includes the following descriptors: simple (0.761), fast (0.744), planned by others (-0.590).

In the group of young men and women with a moderate degree of sociophobia, the five leading factors explaining 72.3% of the total variance stood out. The first factor (19.7% of the variance) is called “planning for the required future.” It included the following descriptors: hassle-free (0.885), structured (0.873), simple (0.704), approximate (0.669), beautiful (0.640), depending on me (0.610), ordered (0.564), delayed (-0.644). The second factor (18.8% of the variance) was formed by such descriptors as: pleasant (0.898), full (0.840), attractive (0.840), interesting (0.794), valuable (0.726). This factor is conditionally designated by us as an “attractive future.” The third factor (12.4% of the variance) is represented by a set of the following descriptors: close (0.874), defined (0.672), conflict-free (0.594), ordered (0.593), delayed (-0.508). Therefore, it is conditionally called the “orientation toward short-range planning.”

In the group of respondents with a low degree of sociophobia, five factors significant for the analysis, explaining 80.6% of the variance, stood out. The first factor (38.7% of the variance) included the following characteristics: full (0.938), valuable (0.929), useful (0.902), interesting (0.895), pleasant (0.839), beautiful (0.832), attractive (0.802), full of hope (0.801), warm (0.799), bright (0.797), approximate (0.657), conflict-free (0.632), trouble-free (0.537), coming from me (0.523). This factor is designated as “a carefree, beautiful future.” The second factor (15.9% of the variance), designated by us as “orientation toward short-range planning”, included the following descriptors: dependent on me (0.857), defined (0.782), planned by me (0.702), conflict-free (0.610), simple (0.606), close (0.561).

4. Discussion

The results of statistical analysis show that sociophobia and attitudes towards the future act as related factors. In general, boys and girls, regardless of the degree of severity of social anxiety and sociophobia, present their future as a bright, positive period of their life, full of hopes, and associated with the planning and implementation of important life goals. At the same time, boys and girls with a high degree of social anxiety and sociophobia stand out among respondents with low and medium severity of these phenomena. Their striking differences are the intention of young men and women with a high degree of social anxiety of fears to idealize their future, to construct an image of the future that helps reduce anxiety, prevents the actualization of formed fears, and the emergence of new ones. A similar image of the future fills the perceptions of respondents in this category with illusions about their own lives, hiding possible difficulties and problem points on their life paths. Thus, the grounds for the occurrence of the opposite effect are formed. Namely, instead of protecting from fear and anxiety about the future, obtained through an illusory image of the future, young men and women are not sufficiently prepared to perceive and control problem situations. In turn, this triggers a new wave of anxiety and fear, thereby supporting and possibly enhancing sociophobia.

Factor analysis reveals that the locus of responsibility for the future acts as a parameter that is involved in the construction of the image of the personal future by young people. Respondents with unexpressed social anxiety and social fears show themselves as “a true subject of the life path” (K. A. Abulkhanova-Slavskaya) [17]. At the same time, they are active in designing their future, taking responsibility for the goals and results of their achievement. In the picture of the world of boys and girls, in the case of a high degree of social anxiety and sociophobia, the locus of responsibility for the future is represented by a polemic between personal responsibility for planning your future and shifting this responsibility to other people or circumstances, i.e. the “effect of unassigned liability.”

Another critical parameter for constructing the image of the future for boys and girls is its length. Respondents with low and moderate severity of social anxiety and social fears in the picture of their future pay special attention to the near stage of this time mode, giving it positive expectations. On the contrary, boys and girls with severe social anxiety and sociophobia do not show a similar trend, evaluating the future as a whole.

5. Conclusion

Thus, the undertaken scientific research allowed us to take the next step in understanding the problems of the psychological time of modern boys and girls in the context of social anxiety and social fears, as a psychological component involved in the design of the image of the personal future and the formation of an attitude towards it. The research clearly shows that the temporary attitudes toward the future of young men and women differ depending on the severity of social anxiety and sociophobia. A high degree of social anxiety and social fears objectifies itself through such attitudes to the personal future as “illusory future,” “future as the fulfillment of hopes,” “locus of responsibility for the future.” This made it possible to consider ideas about the future unrealistic and anticipate the risks of shifting the locus of responsibility to other people or circumstances for the success of one's life. In the case of low and moderate severity of the studied phenomena, this trend is not observed among young people. In this case, against the background of a stable dominant of positive temporal attitudes towards a personal future, boys and girls are able to notice different sides of the expected future, which makes the image of the future more realistic against the background of respondents with a high degree of social anxiety and sociophobia. Along with this, they design their future life based on themselves, separately strive to pay attention to its neighboring stages.

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