

THE METHOD FOR INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION ENHANCEMENT AND FOSTERING OF RESILIENCE AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Eva Vancu

Department of Psychology and Pathopsychology (Slovakia)

Abstract

Psycho-social skills that help a person to integrate into society are emotional regulation, resilience and interpersonal communication competence. Adolescence is a stage of development of these skills through training and education. The goal of our research is on the bases of scientific theory and empirical research assemble psychoeducational integrative methodology for improving interpersonal communication competence, development of emotional regulation and resilience of students and adolescents and apply it in chosen classes. The sample consisted of 367 adolescents. The respondents were filling out questionnaires The Child and Youth Resilience Measure, modified version of Situational Test of Emotional Understanding and a questionnaire of trait emotional intelligence. The results have shown that adolescents in middle adolescence have lower rates of emotional regulation and resilience. The application of educational activities on the sample of 78 adolescents has raised psychological resilience and emotional intelligence of adolescents.

Keywords: *Emotional regulation, resilience, interpersonal competence, integrative methodology.*

1. Introduction

A new trend in the investigation of emotional intelligence is also one of the elements of emotional intelligence, namely emotional regulation.

Emotion regulation became the subject of research in the 1980s, initially being incorporated into research dealing with emotions and their development (Thompson, 1994; Cox, 1994; Gross, 1999). According to Gross (1999), we can define emotional regulation as a set of processes enabling individuals to modify the expression and experience of unpleasant and positive emotions. Emotion regulation affects whatever emotions we have when we have them, how emotions are experienced by individuals (Gross, 1999). Thompson (1994) divides emotional regulation based on its regulatory sources into two types: self-regulation and social regulation (parents, friends). The most frequently defined elements of emotional intelligence models written by authors and researchers in their models are: empathy, interpersonal relationships, evaluation and expression of emotions, self-awareness, motivation and communication.

Resilience - psychological resistance is classified as a modern term. Resilience first appeared in the 1980s. to the 1990s (Šolcová, 2009). Křivohlavý (2009) and Šolcová (2009) point to the connection between resilience and social support based on E. Werner's research from 1954. Resilience represents a dynamic process, the ability to become visible later in life after overcoming a problem or an adverse life situation (Newman & Blackburn, 2002). The authors describe the ways in which a child manages a negative life situation as: coping focused on emotions (Coleman & Hendry, 1999), coping focused on a problem (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000). Masten & Obradovič (2006) defines resilience as the ability to withstand an adverse life situation or gain resilience when overcoming a negative life situation (trauma, death) and continue to develop effectively. He characterizes psychological resilience as a person's ability to successfully adapt despite negative and dangerous conditions in 3 forms (Masten & Obradovič, 2006): at-risk children achieve satisfactory development, children manage stressful situations, children are able to recover from psychological trauma. Despite all these definitions, as stated by McLean and Breen (2009), there is no unified and recognized definition of resilience.

We can define communication competences as abilities that allow us to communicate in interpersonal relationships (Hall & Lindzey, 1997). Liptáková et al. (2011) defines communication competences as human abilities enabling communication based on acquired knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, which are related to compliance with norms, principles, rules and tools of verbal interaction.

According to Hall and Lindzey (1997), the basis for communication skills are innate personality traits, intelligence and emotional intelligence, proven ways of communication that are culturally conditioned from the point of view of the environment in which a person developed and currently develops. Assertive behavior is one of the basic communication skills that help us improve interpersonal relationships and mutual communication (Masarik, Ivanovičová, & Szijártoová, 2003).

2. Design and methods

The goal of the thesis is to compile and apply in selected classes a psychoeducational integrative methodology based on scientific theory and empirical research to improve interpersonal communication competences, develop emotional intelligence and resilience of teenage students and adolescents. The partial goals of the work are to determine the level of resilience and emotional intelligence of adolescents.

The first questionnaire is based on an international project that examines resilience led by M. Ungar & Liebenberg (2005). The questionnaire consists of 36 items based on 4 areas: individuality, relationships – family, friends, school; society, culture. These items determine the perception of the uniqueness of the respondent's personality, the influence of the environment. Respondents circle their answers on the appropriate scale. This scale expresses identification with the given statement from complete disagreement (1) to complete agreement (5).

We used the situational test of emotional understanding (MacCann & Roberts, 2008) as the second questionnaire in the research. With this test, we find out to what extent adolescents understand basic emotions and emotional situations. The situational test of emotional understanding contains 42 situations. Situations offer five emotions as a result of a particular situation. Each situation has only one correct answer, which respondents mark at their own discretion.

The third research questionnaire is the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (Petrides & Furnham, 2001). The questionnaire examines how adolescents perceive their abilities and skills in various emotional situations, which are included in 4 factors: well-being (mental well-being), self-control, emotionality and sociability. Respondents' express identification with the given statement from complete disagreement (1) to complete agreement (7).

We distributed the questionnaire to the respondents in printed form, adapted to the age of the surveyed persons. Administration of the survey took approximately 30 minutes. The research sample consists of 367 respondents. The age of the respondents ranged from 15 to 18 years, the average age of the respondents was 16.01 years, $SD = 2.05$. 231 girls and 136 boys in research.

We implemented educational activities in the period from September 2023 to December 2023. The implementation took place at the gymnasium in Bratislava.

The sample consisted of 78 students (46 girls, 32 boys) aged between 15 and 16 years. To increase the effectiveness of educational activities, we divided the students into several groups of 13 students each. We carried out the activities during 45-minute and 90-minute lessons.

3. Results

Research has shown that, despite negative situations, adolescent boys are in greater mental well-being than adolescent girls. When investigating self-control in expressing emotions depending on gender, it was shown that male adolescents have higher self-control than female adolescents. Students in late adolescence are more psychologically resilient than those in middle adolescence.

Research has shown that full-value relationships (family, friends, school) help adolescents to increase their psychological resilience. The result of the research points out that students in the period of late adolescence are subject to their own self-evaluation, on the basis of which negative emotions (fear, sadness, disgust, frustration) come to the fore. The reason for the appearance of negative emotions is also the cognitive evaluation of negative life situations (Stuchlíková, 2007).

Students in late adolescence in our research know how to evaluate negative emotions more adequately, which increases their emotional intelligence. The factor of psychological resistance, individuality, is correlated with the factors of emotional intelligence.

We justify the research result by the fact that the resilience factor individuality contains elements: self-control, ability to solve problems, empathy, social support (Ungar, 2006). These elements are part of the factors of emotional intelligence: emotional self-awareness, problem solving, empathy, interpersonal relationships (Bar-On, 1997).

The implemented educational activities, which focused on the development of emotional intelligence, resilience and interpersonal communication competences, increased the skills of adolescents. A comparison of the entrance and exit test, which determined the level of subjective perception of emotional intelligence and resilience, showed changes in the level of perception of adolescents.

The results showed an increase in the level of all factors of emotional intelligence and resilience after the application of educational activities.

The most significant changes occurred in the factor of psychological resistance, individuality, relationships, and in the factor of emotional intelligence, emotionality. We justify the result by the fact that adolescents had the opportunity to think about themselves, their feelings, and values during the implementation of educational activities.

4. Conclusions

The results showed that adolescents in the period of middle adolescence have a lower level of emotional intelligence and resilience than adolescents in the period of late adolescence. Based on this finding, we created and applied a psychoeducational integrative methodology to a sample of adolescents (15, 16 years old).

By comparing the input and output test after the application, we achieved an increase in the level of emotional intelligence and psychological resilience. The biggest change occurred in the factor of individuality and emotionality.

We attribute the increase in these factors to appropriately chosen psychoeducational activities that enabled students to gain personal integrity, improve interpersonal relationships, and develop social skills necessary for life and cooperation.

The created psychoeducational activities have proven their effectiveness and we recommend their implementation through the Personality and Social Development classes at high schools.

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