

The Problem of Socio-Psychological Adjustment of Personality in the Scientists' Studies

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ABSTRACT

Instability and unpredictability of the present stage of social development make the study of social and psychological adjustment of personality to the social environment a highly topical issue. The article presents the results of an empirical research on social personality adaptation. Evident is the close relations between social and psychological adaptation and socialization of the personality, which both may be considered an indicator of maturity of personality and a high level of development of personal activity and subjectivity. Having applied the method of theoretical analysis, which helped to explore the «social and psychological adaptation» notion, the authors carried out an experimental study showcasing the need for working out programs of psychological content and orientation that are aimed at optimizing adaptive processes. The research results attested to the particular importance of proper social and psychological adaptation in adolescence. The approbated program of empirical research of social and psychological adaptation proved to be fit for a wide use in experimental practice.

KEYWORDS

adaptation, personality, social and psychological adaptation of personality, adolescence, social learning theory

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Introduction

“The personality formation” is a broad concept that reflects manifold facets of upbringing processes, education and socialization of personality, as N. V. Rubtsova maintains (2014). And as the process being multifaceted, multiple-aspect, the effectiveness of the process of formation of personality depends to a large extent on his (that is, a person) adaptive capacities in the first place, - possibilities of social and psychological adjustment.

From our point of view the problem of the study of social and psychological adjustment of personality gains special currency nowadays. Instability, and quite often - and unpredictability of the present situation of development, numerous political, economic and social transformations to be typical of modern society make

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high demands of personality, for which – one is to be appropriate, on the one hand, and on the other hand - to be in inner equilibrium and stability.

The process of adaptation is inseparable from the very notion of «life», writes A.V. Morozov (2000). And it is impossible not to agree with it. As well as a full life is impossible without adaptation and adaptation cannot exist by itself, out of a living organism's life cycle. It is no accident that adaptation is considered in the first place to be one of the most important properties of a living organism and actively studied by the representatives of biology who treat the term «adaptation» as an adaptation of a living organism to environment.

At the same time, person is a complex biosocial system, whose adaptive processes are carried out not only at the biological level.

Literature Review

In consideration of human being as a personality, a subject of social micro- and macrosystems, the representatives of psychology (the works of K. A. Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, G. M. Andreyeva, A. A. Bodalev, I. S. Kon, S. L. Rubinstein, and so on), study the adaptation processes from the aspect of personality development of the subject, which allowed researchers to identify the following related levels of adaptation of man:

- A. V. Morozov identifies and proposes to study physiological, psychological and social adaptation levels (2000);

- Ye. N. Trukhmanova differentiates biological, psycho-physiological, functional and psychological and socio-psychological levels of adaptation (2004).

Tracing a retrospective study of the problem of adaptation by the representatives of psychology, it should be noted that the notion of «adaptation» was used for the first time towards personality by eminent Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1994), considering the relationship of man with microenvironment as homeostatic balancing. According to Piaget (1994), adaptation of man is realized at the expense of interacting and complementary processes of assimilation (including new information into existing structures) and accommodation (change of structures in conformity with the requirements of the external environment). In the theory of cognitive development worked out by Piaget (the 20s years of the twentieth century), the subjective factor of human adaptation to the external environment is considered by the author to be his intellect. From the perspective of the researcher, it is the intellect that «seeks for establishing a balance between assimilation and accommodation, eliminating inconsistencies or discrepancies between reality and its reflection being created in the mind» (Piaget, 1994). The emerging mental schemata (structures) form the basis for acquiring new knowledge that contribute to adaptation.

Many other representatives of foreign psychology also refer to the problem of adaptation. Thus:

- the social learning theory developed by B. Skinner (Hjelle & Ziegler, 2003), from our point of view, deals with the very adaptive human interaction with the social environment. According to Skinner, the success of human actions in a given situation is determined by the «acquired set of the learned behavioral patterns» (Hjelle & Ziegler, 2003) generated in the process of learning. These are the patterns of behaviour that allow a person, as rather rightly from our point of view the researcher observes, to achieve social balance between the individual and the group,

conflict-free relations with the closest social environment - that is, to adapt to the society;

- the approach diametrically opposed to the ideas of B. Skinner is traced in the works of A. Bandura (Hjelle & Ziegler, 2003) who argues that human behaviour cannot be explained only from the standpoint of only environmental factors. In everyday life, men are aware of the consequences of their actions and adjust their behavior accordingly. Thus, the social theory of cognition by A. Bandura advances an idea of the activity of individual. «Instead of passively accepting whatever the environment presents, personality can actively control the events that affect his life; he can in some degree control the environmental conditions by selecting a method of his reaction to them» (Hjelle & Ziegler, 2003);

- the representatives of psychoanalytic conceptions also refer to the problem of adaptation accentuating the study of person defence mechanisms. Thus, even in the works of Freud (1991) there are justified the mechanisms of interaction of such substructures of personality as «It» (Id), «Ego» (I) and «Super-Ego» (Super-I), allowing, inter alia, - to adjust, adapt to the environment as well. If we refer to the analysis of later psychoanalytic conceptions, one may conclude that there a rather close attention is given to the analysis of «Ego» (I) as the main adapting instance. For example, in the concept of psychosocial development E. Erickson (1996). The term «identity» is defined as the process of organization of experience in the individual «I». According to the author, psychosocial adaptation is possible in the event of an individual's successful resolution of the «developmental conflicts» arising in certain age periods. And the method of conflict resolution objectively depends on both the social environment and personality characteristics (life experience, etc.). However, from the point of view of the representative of late psychoanalysis as A. Adler (1995), the activity of personality, including his adaptation, are provided by two feelings: inferiority feeling and striving for superiority. From the point of view of the scientist, just these feelings are «energy carriers» (Adler, 1995) and provide the mechanisms of adaptation of the individual in society, leading to failing or full compensation, overcompensation and pseudocompensation.

Concerning domestic psychological theories and concepts, especially, from our point of view, important for understanding the essence of human adaptation mechanisms and regularities is the activity theory (the works of B. G. Ananiyev, A. N. Leontiyev, B. F. Lomov, K. K. Platonov, S. L. Rubinstein and some other scientists). It is the activity psychology that substantiates the concept of «adaptability» as a tendency of functioning of the purposeful system that is determined by the congruence of the goals with the results achieved during the activity, according to A. V. Petrovsky (1981). As the studies of the representatives of the activity approach have shown, human being as a personality intrinsically tends not only to his adapting to the environment, but also to having the environment adapted «for himself». At the same time, adapting, the person responds with «his entire structure» seeking to establish or recover the disturbed balance with the social environment.

Analyzing the common approaches of the scientists to consideration of the problem of adaptation, we also note that the researchers seek to establish a close relationship between the process of adaptation and socialization of the individual. This connection was indicated for the first time as early as the 20th century by the founder of the American sociology and the most outstanding representative of its psychological school F. Giddings, who identified «man's adaptation to society which

provides his successful functioning» as a leading problem of socialization (Belinskaya & Tikhomandritskaya, 2001). Such scholars as D. A. Andreyev, I. A. Mnatsakanyan, A. V. Petrovsky and others also treat it as one of the developmental stages of personality in the process of socialization and adaptation. Thus, according to A. V. Petrovsky (1981), at the adaptation stage, which usually concurs with the period of childhood, a person appears to be an object of social relations, who is turned to by the efforts of parents, teachers and other people around the child and those who are in proximity to it in a varying degree. It is no coincidence that at exactly this stage people enter the world: master some sign systems created by mankind, the essentials of behaviour, social roles; learn simple forms of activity. The man, in fact, learns to be a personality. Hence, the stage of adaptation in the process of socialization is very important.

D. A. Andreyeva (2006) views adaptation and socialization to be nothing than a single process of interaction between the individual and society. At the same time, from the standpoint of the researcher, adaptation expresses man's adjunction to a domain activity being new for him, as a condition for the socialization which is interpreted by the author as a process of personality formation.

Having established a close link between the processes of adaptation and socialization of personality, modern psychologists introduce the concept of «social and psychological adjustment».

Methodological framework

The problem of social and psychological adjustment in the works of psychologists

Referring to the analysis of works that deal with the problem of social and psychological adaptation, we will first consider the approaches to the treatment of this concept:

- social and psychological adjustment is proposed to be understood in ethnopsychological (Krys'ko, 1999) and encyclopedic dictionaries of psychology and pedagogy as the process and result of interaction between personality and social environment, which leads to optimum coordination of (establishment of optimum relationship) goals and values of individuals and groups;

- M. V. Grigoriyeva (2005) considers social and psychological adjustment to be an element of the activities, the function of which is mastering relatively stable environmental conditions, solving repetitive typical problems through the use of the adopted ways of social behaviour, action. At the same time, the researcher calls the adoption of new norms and values of the social environment (group, collective, organization, territorial community, which the individual enter), the existing forms of interaction (formal and informal relations, leadership style, family and neighborhood relations, etc.), and the forms of subject work as the main ways of social and psychological adaptation;

- according to I. A. Mnatsakanyan (2004), the social and psychological adaptation involves familiarizing the individual with the social group, as well as the activities that are present in this society. This type of adaptation as the author justly believes from our point of view is nothing more than the result of the whole spectrum of personal changes (social, socio-psychological, moral, psychological, etc.);

- and from our point of view, very interesting and the most extensional definition of «socio-psychological adaptation» is suggested by N. M. Aksarina (2011),

who considers its results under favourable conditions will be adaptability. The state of socio-psychological adaptation, according to the researcher, can be described as the state of personality-group relationship, when personality efficiently realizes the activities without lasting external and internal conflicts, finds solutions to all social problems, and, as a result, - ego-trips.

Based on the above exemplified approaches of the scientists to the interpretation of «social and psychological adaptation», we formulate the following definition as a base one within this study: we propose to understand sociopsychological adaptation as a process of personality-social environment interaction, which results in adaptability, implying the personality's efficient mastering the social environment through the adoption of its standards of interaction, values, and forms the subject area activity. Just adaptation as personal education, in our opinion, allows a person to adapt to various reality situations. At the same time, each such adaptation enriches life experience of man, making him more socialized and ensuring successfulness of the further adaptation of personality to the ongoing changes in the environment.

We also believe it is important to note that the scientists use the notion of «adaptability» along with the term «adaptation». At the same time, I. A. Mnatsakanyan notes (2004), a significant difference between these concepts are not observed and they can be and often used as the synonyms.

Types and levels of socio-psychological adaptation

The issues of specific gradation of social and psychological adaptation are of particular scientific interest.

On the assumption that socio-psychological adaptation determines the nature of personality-social group relationship, A. A. Nalgadzhyan (2004) differentiates the following three types of social and psychological adaptation:

- normal adaptation which leads to stable adaptation of the personality in the problem situations to be typical for him. In case of normal socio-psychological adaptation one does not observe any pathological disorder in the structure of the very personality, any irregularity of the social group of activity of this person;
- deviant adaptation - that is, the processes of social and psychological adaptation of the personality which provide satisfaction of the needs of the individual in a given social group. However, the behavior of the individual does not meet expectations of other participants of the social process;
- pathological adaptation is a kind of social and psychological adaptation, which is fully or partly carried out by pathological mechanisms and forms of behaviour and leads to the formation of pathological complexes of character. However, as A. A. Nalgadzhyan notes (2004), this behaviour can be adaptive, - if the very group has pathological behavior standards.

Three types of socio-psychological adaptation are distinguished by I. D. Klaykov (1984) in consideration of adaptation.

- external, which is proposed to be understood as the process of adjunction of the personality to the external, objective problem situations;
- internal, namely, - the process of change under the influence of external conditions of internal qualities of the personality;
- readaptation, that is, the adaptation of the person in the new social environment, which is dominated by other values, norms and forms of behaviour.

According to I. D. Klaykov (1984), this type of adaptation is accompanied not only by partial (or complete) rejection of the norms, values, ways of behaviour, social roles, but some adaptive mechanisms. It is no coincidence that this type of social and psychological adaptation objectively involves significant personality changes.

Very interesting, from our point of view, is the approach to gradation of social and psychological adaptation in terms of the degree of activity of personality displayed to achieve its success (referring to the success of the adaptation process):

- active social and psychological adaptation takes place in cases when a person seeks to influence the social environment, in order to change those things in it with which for some reason he does not happy;
- passive adaptation consists in lack of desire for such interaction and change.

However, man cannot always adapt to the social environmental conditions that have changed for external reasons independent for himself. Not by chance it is offered to classify socio-psychological adaptation according to:

- voluntary adaptation which is present in three situations when new values and modes of action dictated by the changes environment do not run counter to the system of values of the very personality or when the norms and values of the social environment fit in with the system of interests and needs of personality, or change of value orientation occur without particular effort for personality and
- involuntary, when the character and orientation of transformation does not correspond to the concepts and attitudes of the individual. For example, personality is trying to change the requirements of the environment without accepting anything new. However, these attempts prove to be unsuccessful, and one has to comply with the new requirements (to adapt to them). Another example of involuntary social and psychological adaptation can be a situation when new ways of social behaviour corresponds to the quality of the individual less than the former ones. However, in order to survive, man has to use them.

There is a classification of social and psychological adaptation in terms of orientation of adaptation processes. Within this classification, socio-psychological adaptation can be

- outer and
- inner.

The adaptation is outer when one adjusts to external situations and carried out by their keeping or obviating, the inner social and psychological adaptation can be oriented to various targets. This may be the resolution of inner conflicts and personal problems, mastering of new adaptive mechanisms, adjustment of the mastered adaptive mechanism to the structure of personality, etc.

Along with gradation of the types of socio-psychological adaptation, the scientists also refer to the study of its levels. As an example, we present the approach proposed by A. A. Nalgadzhyan (2004). As a basis for differentiating the levels of socio-psychological adaptation, the researcher defines the depth of mental reorientation:

- the initial stage - when the individual knows how he should behave in a new environment but consciously does not recognize the values of new environment and, where it is possible, rejects them, adhering to the old system of values,

- tolerance stage - the individual and new environment practice mutual tolerance towards the systems of values and patterns of behaviour with each other,
- accommodation - the recognition and acceptance by the individual of fundamental value systems of the new social environment by simultaneous recognizing some of individual values by his new environment,
- assimilation - a complete coincidence of the individual systems of values and the environmental values.

But the most problematic issue in the study of social and psychological adaptation, from the point of view of scientists, is the definition of its criteria. This is no accident. Socio-psychological adaptation, as we conclude basing on the analysis of the works of scientists, is nothing more than a multidimensional, multi-aspect phenomenon that involves integration of the following indicators:

- the level of development of personal intellectual sphere. We have highlighted this parameter as a parameter for assessing socio-psychological adaptation by virtue of the fact that a successful adaptation is impossible without including the subject in the process of consciousness;
- the level of development of emotional sphere of the personality. We distinguish this parameter as the most important in the adaptation evaluation system of social and psychological adaptation, since the success of the adaptation processes largely determines the attitude of the subject, the personality to the changes that occur as a result of adaptation at both the level of the very personality and the level of interaction with society;
- the level of development of the communicative sphere of personality. Socio-psychological adaptation, as we have noted before, includes a system of relations with society (individual-group relations), and that the nature and orientation of these relations, from our point of view, influence (namely, - promote or hinder) the adaptation process.

Based on the selected evaluation parameters of socio-psychological adaptation, we have projected the program of experimental study of social and psychological adaptation.

Data, analysis and results

The test method is the basis of the program of experimental study.

The system of test methods:

1. «Socio-Psychological Adaptation». The authors are K. Rogers and R. Diamond.

Objective: the study of peculiarities of the adaptation period of the individual through integrated indicators of «adaptation», «self-acceptance», «acceptance of others», «emotional comfort», «internality», «desire to dominate». This method is a questionnaire containing 101 statements about man, his lifestyle, emotions, thoughts, habits, behaviour style. Each of the statements can be correlated with own way of life. A respondent is asked to read the next statement of the questionnaire and correlate it with his habits, his way of life and assess to what extent this statement relates to his experience. To represent the answer, one is to choose one of the seven variants of assessments, numbered from 0 to 6, the most appropriate.

2. «Self-Assessment of Psychological Adaptability» Technique.

Respondents are asked to evaluate 15 statements: 10 by group A and 5 by group B. If the respondent agrees with the statement absolutely, he writes «yes» opposite the evaluating statement. If he does not agree, he writes the answer «no». The difference of sums of affirmative answers allows to determine the level of psychological adaptability.

3. The Eysenck Technique «Self-Assessment Diagnosis of Mental States».

Within the framework of this technique a respondent is offered 40 statements for assessing mental conditions such as anxiety, frustration, aggression, rigidity.

4. «Assessing the Level of Sociability» Test by V. F. Ryahovsky.

Respondents are asked to answer 16 questions. Quantitative evaluation of the responses indicates a tested parameter.

We used questionnaires as an additional technique. Respondents were asked to answer 10 questions allowing to get additional information about their level of socio-psychological adaptation.

For the purpose of testing the projected program of the experimental study of socio-psychological adaptation, we have conducted a pilot study the respondents of which were 30 students of the 1st year of the K. Minin State Pedagogical University of Nizhny Novgorod.

A generalized analysis of the obtained experimental data indicates that a high level of socio-psychological adaptability and the level higher than average is fixed in 40% of the respondents (which is less than half of the participants in the pilot study). Typical for these respondents is the lack of anxiety, aggressiveness and rigidity; they switch over from one activity to another easily and without any problems, are sociable, have self-appreciation; resistant to failures, they are not afraid of problems and successful in solving them (which is indicative of by Q-data).

The average level of social and psychological adaptability is typical of 10% of respondents. These respondents also have anxiety, aggressiveness of allowable level; they are very sociable, curious, which, in our opinion, does not always have a positive effect in terms of adaptation to new conditions of society, all the more so that severe rigidity, constancy of behaviour, beliefs, attitudes are typical of them (even if they diverge, they do not fit the actual situation, life), as well as low self-esteem, the desire to «escape» from difficulties, fear of failures.

And of 50% of respondents (which accounts for half of the total number of participants of the pilot study) typical is low level of socio-psychological adaptability. Despite the fact that these respondents are sociable to some extent, high level of increased anxiety and aggressiveness is fixed in them. In unfamiliar environment, they feel insecure, they are reluctant to contact with new people, they try not to participate in disputes and debates. These respondents have low self-esteem against the background of severe rigidity.

The obtained results of the pilot study suggest the following conclusions:

1) the developed program of empirical research of socio-psychological adaptation can be used in a wide experimental practice;

2) a high percentage of the respondents who are at a low level of socio-psychological adaptation is an evidence of the need for the development and purposeful implementation of the program of psychological assistance aimed at optimizing the process of social and psychological adjustment.

We define the development and subsequent testing of this program for themselves as an objective of further experimentation.

Discussions, conclusions and recommendations

Thus, the analysis of psychologists on the issue of social and psychological adaptation that we have carried out allows, first of all, to make conclusion about the continued relevance of the investigated range of problems (despite a sufficient number of studies carried out in this area).

We offer to treat social and psychological adaptation as a process of the individual-social environment interaction, the result of which is adaptability implying the personality's effective mastering of the social environment through adopting its standards of interaction, value orientations, and also the forms of subject activity. It is adaptability as personal education, in our opinion, that allows a person to adjust to various life situations. In addition, each such adaptation enriches life experience of man, making him more socialized and ensuring the success of further adaptation of personality to the ongoing environmental changes.

Studying the types of socio-psychological adaptation, its levels, and also the criteria and mechanisms of formation, many researchers point, which is absolutely legitimate from our point of view, to the close relationship of social and psychological adaptation and socialization of the personality. Moreover, as I. A. Mnatsakanyan notes (2004), social and psychological adaptation may be considered as an indicator of maturity of personality, the level of development of personal activity and subjectivity.

As a continuous process and such that begins at the basic levels of ontogeny, of particular importance, from our viewpoint, is socio-psychological adaptation in adolescence, - the period of life when a person should not only comprehensively develop, but also become firmly convinced of the correctness of occupational choice, make professional self-determination that cannot but affect the process of social and psychological adaptation complicating it.

This conclusion is supported by the results of our pilot study to be carried out, which has shown that of 50% of the first-year students, typical is a low level of socio-psychological adaptation. Based on the foregoing, the prospect of our further experimental work in the area of problematics that we interest in, we define the development and subsequent testing of psychological assistance program oriented towards optimizing the process of socio-psychological adaptation.

Thus, the theoretical-applied data contained in the article allow to thoroughly and objectively investigate the social and psychological adaptation, which will specify the theoretical and practical aspects of the problem under study.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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