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SOCIAL PECULIARITIES OF ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR DEVELOPMENT IN ADOLESCENCE

M. Marusynets, L. Marchuk

National Pedagogical Dragomanov University

Pyrohova str., 9, 02000, Kyiv, Ukraine

Uzhhorod National University

Universytetska str., 14, 88000, Uzhhorod, Ukraine

marusynetsm@ukr.net, lmmar4uk@gmail.com

Annotation. The concept of assertiveness is considered as a quality necessary for a person's effective life-sustaining activity in general and the adolescent's personality becoming in particular. The features influencing the formation of this type of behavior in the studied age period at the macro-, micro- and meso-level are identified, together with its priorities and weak points, in particular, social changes and instability which contribute to the formation of such behavior forms as uncertainty, fear, the lack of assertive behavior, and self-confidence. In order to develop and form assertive behavior, the social support program has been developed. Psychological counseling, individual psychotherapy with the involvement of active methods and techniques are chosen as the main methodology: case-studies – the analysis of life and professional situations; mini-lectures, group discussions, self-analysis of one's own assertiveness level; role-plays, training sessions. Their complex application gives a positive result in terms of the positive dynamics of assertive behavior development in adolescence.

Keywords: *assertiveness; assertive behavior; adolescence; social features.*

Urgency of the research. In the conditions of social changes, it is growing the role of the person's ability to identify behavior patterns that are adequate to the challenges of the prefigurative culture, or “anticipatory” socialization (M. Mid). What it involves is adequate behavior in critical situations manifesting itself in confident

decisions as a timely response to the dynamics of socio-psychological changes and the influence of various factors, as well as in the psychological equilibrium and ethical attitude to other individuals in social relations that is, in other words, assertive behavior. Therefore, the study of social characteristics and patterns of such behavior in general and, in particular, in young people, is becoming important.

The research of various aspects of the person's assertive behavior has been carried out in the works of N. Anufrieva, H. Ball, Ye. Holovaha, O. Donchenko, I. Kon, M. Savchyn, L. Sokhan, V. Tatenko, T. Tytarenko, O. Khokhlova, etc. Scientists consider it in the context of life purposes and emphasize the need to increase life subjectivity, teaching young people the ability to take control over their lives, overcome difficulties, be sure of oneself, and adequately assess oneself and other participants in interpersonal interaction.

Statement of basic materials. Adolescence is crucial in assertiveness development because of sensitivity in becoming mature, the influence of external environment on the formation of moral needs (life purposes and goals, obligations and responsibility, love and friendship, etc.), an individual activity style, boosting conscious motivation, purposefulness, determination and perseverance, independence and zeal, the capacity for self-direction and self-reflection. At the same time, according to the sociological studies [1], modern youth is not always ready to orient themselves in vital and professional situations, to choose an individual behavior strategy and interaction methods that would lead to uncompromising behavior, and in some cases, the ability to be effective and flexible in solving them. Individuals capable of such behavioral actions are referred to as assertive. In scientific circles, the concept of «assertiveness» is used to define a confident, self-sufficient, and successful person as autonomous, independent of external influences and assessments, and as the ability to independently regulate one's own behavior. Based on the above, it is possible to distinguish the two vectors of philosophical and anthropological thought development regarding the determination of confidence in oneself: the inner essence of the «ego identity»; self-perception as a free and independent individual.

For psychological science, the issues of identifying common features between the concepts of «assertiveness» and «confidence» are of research interest. According to scholars, as their essence is almost the same, it could be possible to stick to the latter, especially since its meaning clearly describes individuals' behavioral actions, as well as self-acceptance, adequate self-esteem, responsibility for one's own decisions and life in general, spiritual and physical self-concern, self-satisfaction and satisfaction with life, goodwill, balance and self-sufficiency [2].

Further elaborating on the assertive behavior concept, R. Frich notes that this is not only the confidence and responsibility for one's own behavior and actions but also the assumption of responsibility for them. That is, assertiveness in its essence is the philosophy of personal responsibility. It means that we are responsible for our own behavior and we have no right to blame other people for our reaction to their behavior. Their reflection is found in the behavioral situations occurring in everyday interaction with oneself and others (J. Habermas and K.O. Apel). Factors influ-

encing the development and formation of assertive behavior at the studied age are characterized by the accuracy of setting goals and the ability to control one's actions; the ability not to be subjected to rapid manipulation and emotional pressure from other people; ignoring other people's emotions and expectations (ability to realize certain goals despite the negative pressure from the environment, rational care of one's own interests while taking into account other people's interests); The fact that an individual is impacted by various socialization conditions makes it possible to develop one's own interaction style [3, p. 81]. Constructive interaction at this age carries an existential meaning where another person is seen as a manifestation of life, a manifestation of existence which, in turn, has its own expressiveness not identical to anything. Understanding the value of another person makes youngsters sensible to perceive their own emotional experience as well as what other people feel.

The capacity for deeper, existential emotions in adolescence makes it possible to reveal the formation of an assertive position based on the conscious refusal of violent methods of influence on other social interaction subjects. We can say that at the young age it is formed self-conception and self-perception as well as empathy. At the same time, a positive attitude towards oneself and others allows a person to take the position of the subject of interaction [4, p. 117–130]. Responsibility which manifests itself in youngsters' uncertain behavior towards taking responsibility. In this sense, adolescents' behavior becomes constructive and is characterized by the ability to build different strategies, while trying different ways to achieve the goal to find the optimal one. Prerequisites for such behavior are cognitive and personality features of its development allowing a young person to become not only more responsible but to form a conscious attitude to oneself and other people [5]. Uncertainty that manifests itself in the fear of being neglected, undervalued self-esteem, irrational convictions, excessive desire to "keep appearances", the lack of skills for expressing feelings [6].

The complex issues of the assertive behavior manifestation are addressed in the works of A. Bandura [7] which «core» is self-efficacy. According to scientists, high self-efficacy, or awareness of oneself as capable of success, leads to the expected success further reinforcing self-efficacy. Conversely, low self-efficacy and the associated expectations of failure, excessive criticism and self-harm lead to failure further lowering one's self-esteem. People with low self-efficacy are more inclined to imagine overcoming a failed scenario and focus on the fact that everything will be bad. Failure to succeed weakens motivation, prevents adequate behavior development and can lead to an increased level of dissatisfaction with life, inability to plan one's own future, the emergence of social fear.

Social changes taking place in the globalized world largely explain the state of unconscious anxiety among young people about their life scenario and the socio-cultural demands of society and the family where important and unique problems of one's existence are solved (S. Maksymenko) – micro level; the specifics of the social environment in which youngsters live (university studies, professional activity, participation in various social groups, social communication, etc.) and the acquisi-

tion of individual assertive behavior forms in the process of self-development – macro levels; the complex of adolescents' individual characteristics determined by previous life experience and personal immaturity, ambivalent emotional attitude towards others and activity types, and the unresolved intrapersonal conflicts (N. Yablonska) – meso-level. All these factors complicate the acquisition of personal meaning by youngsters in their individual life scenario and future activities and don't contribute to the desire to form personal and professional qualities, among which assertive behavior is assuming a special social significance.

For assertive behavior development in adolescents, it is offered the program of social support developed by the authors. The chosen basic principles are those based on the conviction that no one can successfully manipulate others, unless the latter allow it themselves, and which is called «assertive human rights» where every person has the right to judge their behavior, thoughts and emotions and take responsibility for consequences; not to give explanations and substantiations rehabilitating one's behavior; to decide whether to take care of other people's problems; to change views; to make mistakes and be responsible for them; to say «I do not know»; not to depend on others' goodwill; to weak logic; to say «I do not care»[8].

As a way of the program realization it has been chosen a mindset training over the course of which psychological training is carried out aimed at: 1) formation of ideas on personal rights and obligations; 2) ability to differentiate between assertiveness and its insufficiency or excessive manifestations in different life and professional communication situations; 3) development of self-confidence, the ability to openly express one's thoughts, respecting the opinion of others; to express positive and negative emotions and control them; to initiate, offer and ask preserving one's own dignity and the capacity for self-defense (the ability to say «no»).

The forms and methods used in the training are: case-studies - the analysis of life and professional situations; mini-lectures in which the assertive behavior essence and components, their manifestation in personal life scenarios are determined; group discussions aimed at discussing assertiveness as a personally important quality; self-evaluation of one's own assertiveness level; role-playing in solving problem situations in one's own life as well as dealing with the examples given by other interaction participants and demanding manifestation of assertive behavior, with the obligatory reflection of each participant on the gained experience. In the course of the training the following techniques have been used: open and hidden modeling of specific situations that can provoke non-assertive or aggressive behavior; instructing participants on types of behavior in simulated situations and their possible consequences; role-playing of new behavioral reactions; reinforcement of new behavioral reactions through feedback from the leader and other participants; analysis and development of irrational convictions; providing information on human rights that enhances the assertiveness of the individual; approbation of new behavior in real situations; extrapolation of assertive behavior to new situations, etc.

For young people who experienced persistent difficulties in developing assertive behavior skills, it has been offered individual psychological counseling and individual psychotherapy boosting sort of relationship building between a client and

a consultant. In this respect, it is also important to work on such personal constructs as: self-image and related rational and irrational judgments; goal attaining program; rebellion, defense mechanisms; feelings and ways of expressing them; self-acceptance, positive thinking development; understanding of human rights and obligations; self-confidence; tolerance. In addition, the training involves supervision during which an analysis is made of how assertive the behavior of young people is, its consequences, causes and difficulties in the conditions of social changes and socialization in various vital spheres (families, educational institutions, production, and groups). The social support program developed and approved by the authors has proved its effectiveness in the assertive behavior development and formation in adolescence showing positive changes in their socialization in the conditions of social changes.

Conclusions. Assertiveness is an important personal quality necessary for the productive activity of a person. In adolescents, such a behavior type arises from the subjectivity of the individual expressed in self-dependence, independence from other circumstances, the ability to stand up for one's rights and thoughts with respect for other interaction participants at macro-, micro- and meso-levels. The main tools facilitating a shift towards a positive dynamics of assertive behavior development in adolescence are individual psychological counseling and individual psychotherapy with the use of active work methods and techniques.

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