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ТЮТОРСКОЕ СОПРОВОЖДЕНИЕ ДЕТЕЙ С РАС В АКАДЕМИЧЕСКОЙ СРЕДЕ В РОССИИ

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Целью данной статьи является раскрытие трудностей, с которыми могут сталкиваться люди на спектре, и изменений, которые происходят в инклюзивной среде в сфере образования в Российской Федерации. Особенное внимание уделяется потребности в персонализированной помощи для личностного роста, общего развития и, самое главное, поддержки общего благополучия несовершеннолетних лиц с РАС. Были обнаружены корреляции между использованием цифровых технологий, режимом сна несовершеннолетних учащихся с расстройствами аутистического спектра и иными факторами, влияющими на благосостояние школьников. Результаты статистического исследования представлены как свидетельство необходимости повышения осведомленности граждан с целью предоставления лучших возможностей для получения образования лицам с РАС.

Ключевые слова: расстройства аутистического спектра; цифровая среда; тьюторское сопровождение; осведомленность об аутизме; статистика.

TUTORING OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER WITHIN ACADEMIC SETTINGS IN RUSSIA

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This article serves the purpose of revealing the difficulties that autistic individuals may experience and what we oversee altering. It particularly accentuates the demand for personalized assistance for personal growth, common development and, most importantly, support for their overall wellbeing. The correlations between digital use and sleep pattern as well as the impact on underage students with autism spectrum disorder have been detected. The results of the statistical study are presented as evidence of the necessity of raising awareness among citizens, so as to accelerate the provision of better educational opportunities for autistic individuals.

Keywords: autism spectrum disorder; virtual environment; tutoring, autism awareness; statistics.

As the COVID-19 pandemic struck and had citizens kept under quarantine, it explicitly indicated the presence of a necessity in the

modernization of the education system in Russia. Having said that, it identified the need for implementation of innovative ways of information transferring for students within the school settings regarding both establishing communication with children, their legal guardians, specialists when providing consulting services in general education institutions, and for education purposes. In particular, the question of providing children with special needs with additional support from the school staff and social services has arisen and appeared as the topical issue up till now.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a type of a neurodevelopmental disorder which affects executive function, social interaction sphere including the absence or a lack of eye contact, inability or struggling with following social cues and difficulties with a reciprocal engagement in communication; a majority of autistic individuals are facing sensory issues such as experiencing sensory overload, or they may appear as oversensitive or undersensitive when it comes to behavioral and brain responses to the external stimuli, therefore people with ASD have a need for special accommodation and individualized schedule that is required to be satisfied. Furthermore, individuals with a condition of this nosological category exhibit repetitive and restricted behaviors and fixations on the things related to the field of their interest [1]. Not to mention, the cases of combination and cooccurrence of such disorders as ASD with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and ASD with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) are considered to be increasingly commonplace.

Notwithstanding the elimination of the danger in terms of overcoming the deadly infection such as coronavirus, the question of inclusion of the representatives of the neurodiversity and providing them with assistance, special services and equal opportunities remains open. One of the main trends in the development of education in Russian Federation is the enhancement of digital environment in terms of using it for educational purposes. Not only do physical, economical and technology availability cause concern among caregivers, legal guardians, and human rights defenders, but also the absence or low quality of individualized support for students with ASD and their affiliation with a vulnerable group of society induce people to raise objections.

Besides the presence of difficulties in receiving educational services online, this learning format may have a negative impact on psychological state of autistic children, limit a face-to-face contact with peers and their opportunity to socialize and create socially significant ties in the school environment, to acquire first-hand experience. Transferring lessons from in-person to online, correspondingly influences and curtails the ability for gaining knowledge and self-development.

The tendency for digitalization of education is reflected in one of the federal projects “Modern School” in the frame of implementation of the national project “Education” aimed at ensuring the global competitiveness of Russian school graduates as well as their education and upbringing of children as harmoniously developed, and socially responsible individuals based on the cultural and moral values. According to one of the goals of the project that has been set for the educational system, providing school students with education services via Internet resources is expected to be not less than 70% out of all academic hours throughout the country [2]. Hence, children with ASD, as individuals with a need for special conditions for executing communications, face a number of obstacles and challenges as consequences of implementing lessons in a digital environment which adversely affect the overall level of development of students’ personalities and their wellbeing. In order to gently engage students on the spectrum to the education process with a use of technology, a supply of intensive and effective support system in virtual environment is required for ensuring the right to education and giving the opportunity for inclusion on the basis of equity. This can be facilitated with a help of visual accompaniment, technology which would transmit written words, or the ones selected on an electronic communication device, and convert text into audio, especially for children with hearing loss or impairment. More than that, visual support can be performed and carried out with providing closed captions or with a Russian Sign Language interpreter for autistic individuals with a speech delay or speech impairment, or for hard of hearing students. Peer-to-peer communication is an opportunity for socialization, language development and social integration. As children with ASD exhibit emotional regulation issues and get overwhelmed with a change in routine due to adhering to repetitive behaviors, they can subsequently associate unpleasant social experience with certain actions and external stimuli they have imprinted.

Multiple studies have shown a direct correlation between exposure of underage individuals with ASD to excessive gadget use for viewing content and the attention span of autistic children and adolescents, their language and speech development, emotional regulation, and social interaction skills. On the one hand, the screen time and use of electronic devices may be beneficial for learning purposes for autistic individuals [3, p. 7]. It particularly concerns the stage of teaching a child with ASD imitation skills, whilst using electronic communication device when switching from PECS (picture exchange communication system) to a broader range of vocabulary. On the other hand, according to the results of the research on the influence of gadget use on school age individuals on the Autism spectrum and with ADHD conducted by Cambridge scientists, it was identified that problematic gadget use entails

sleep related problems getting insufficient amount or a low quality of it. It is especially evident that there is a connection between troublesome sleep patterns, excessive digital device uses and a comorbidity of Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) among high-functioning autistic children (54.3%) and children with ADHD, predominantly inattentive type (76.4%) [4]. Oppositional Defiant Disorder is characterized by violent and defiant behavior, irritability, self-control issues and emotional dysregulation, and it is more common among preteen boys, especially in maladaptive families with a presence of neglect, abusive or harsh child-rearing etc. [5]. Consequently, besides having sensory issues which cause discomfort and disturbance, using gadgets for learning can be an additional risk factor of ODD occurrence or contribution to the intensification of ODD symptoms overlapping with autistic traits. Overall, besides unavailability of proper social integration and due to the absence of suitable assistance and accommodation for students with ASD, children's engagement into digital environment negatively impacts their health, leads to sleep deprivation and co-occurring disorders, and create conditions for enhancement of emotional dysregulation that can increase the frequency of "stimming", disrupting the process of education and communication which are considered as the main forms of activity and learning at the school age.

There is a problem of autism unawareness distinctly and widely presented in a modern Russian society. Based on the quantitative research carried out with the aim of detecting a presence of prejudice, biases, and stereotypes towards people with ASD among citizens, была проведена independent sample of 349 respondents, taking into consideration the population of 858 000 that includes Krasnoyarsk city citizens aged from 14 to 77. One of the questions served as an indicator or so-called litmus test of a necessity in organizing events intending to spread awareness and increase its level regarding neurodiversity, in particular, autism spectrum disorder. It was a single-answer multiple-choice question where respondents were to choose the most relevant for them out of all provided statements varying from "Not interested in learning more about ASD" to "I believe, I know enough about ASD". Based on the results of statistical calculations, using I Proportion Z-Interval, we are 95% confident that the share of people, who confessed to the lack of knowledge of autism signs and behavioral features of individuals on the spectrum is between 51% and 61%. Thus, the p-hat was equal to .56. With all that being said, it was distinguished from thorough analysis of open-ended questions and comments that 189 out of 196 people, willing to learn more about ASD, never stumbled upon any autistic individual. Despite the prevalence of this spectrum of the neurobiological nature considering the fact that ASD is present in 1 in 100 children throughout the globe [6], such

phenomena as labeling and stigma are existent in the modern Russia. More than that, it is related to the problem of inclusion and providing children with special needs with proper accommodation and assistance.

In order to prepare autistic children for school attendance and learning within those settings with neurotypical ones, it requires the initiation of a preparatory process from both sides including the implementation of awareness raising about the peculiarities of autistic individuals among students and representatives of the teaching staff in general education institutions. This task of multidisciplinary nature on coordinating communication between a class teacher, parents and specialists may be successfully undertaken by tutors. The provision of the specialist services for the adaptation of educational environment and teaching students with special needs with Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a right of every child with disabilities according to the Federal Act named “On Education in the Russian Federation” dated 29.12.2012 №273 [7]. Autistic children’s need for additional assistance in the school settings became plainly evident after conducting a number of studies, the results of which revealed positive trends in reducing cases of physical or verbal aggression, increasing academic motivation and the level of social competencies. Due to the unique perception of the surrounding and adverse reactions to change of routines, children with ASD require extra help with emotional regulation, monitoring from the perspective of an acceptable pace of work and the introduction of trainings on functional communication. A tutor, as a certified professional, can help an autistic child to cope with stress when facing a change in a usual way of life, reduce self-stimulatory behavior and create opportunities for redirecting it. In addition, tutoring is a highly beneficial way of learning for autistic individuals as a specialist is always accompanying them, creating personal learning trajectory, and maintaining communication between staff and parents advocating for a child with special needs. Although, as stated in the document “On the support in education of students with disabilities”, the tutor is allocated at the rate of one staff unit for 1 to 6 students with disabilities [7]. These numbers are given based on an inclusive approach to education, when differentiated and integrated are common due to the lack or low level of training of personnel. The existence of this problem substantiates the current situation in which the majority of people with ASD of school age are home-schooled and deprived of opportunities for integration into society on equal terms. There is a social invalidization of people on the spectrum in the public view and creating opportunities for inclusion of neurodiversity at school is merely possible.

Summing up, the education system in Russia in the presence of visible flaws regarding an inclusive approach to working with children with ASD, is undergoing positive changes: the concept of “tutor assistance” is being

introduced, the legislative framework is developing. It is necessary to continue working on creating conditions for the inclusion of students with ASD through awareness-raising events among the population, sign language training and dissemination to the masses, and the provision of modern material and technical equipment in inclusive classes to create equal opportunities and adjust the environment to the needs of children with autism, and not vice versa, because every individual with ASD is unique, and everyone needs to fulfill their potential and receive necessary assistance from the teaching staff, the tutor in adapting the program and timely, constant communication between parents and the educational institution.

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