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Prevention Of Interpersonal Conflicts In Teenagers' Environment

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Abstract

The study of interpersonal conflicts in teenagers' environment, and also the forms and methods of teenagers' interpersonal conflicts prevention has become the aim of the research. 137 eighth grade students of comprehensive schools of the city of Kazan were recruited for the experiment. The battery of tests was used to collect information: T. Leary's technique to diagnose interpersonal relationships; the scale for the assessment of psychological climate in the collective; K. Thomas's test - description of behavior, and also methods of mathematical statistics, Student's T-criterion to check the hypotheses of reliability of the difference between means. The results revealed during the stating stage showed a low degree of psychological climate friendliness in the collective that, in its turn, causes interpersonal conflicts. Such strategies of behavior as compromise and rivalry dominate in the group of testees in conflict situations. After the experiment there were obtained the following results: the psychological climate in the collective has improved up to the average degree of favorability; in conflict situations teenagers have started to choose such strategies of behavior as compromise and cooperation, the latter of which is aimed at the conflict constructive resolution. The number of the respondents in the group of testees who have chosen the friendly type of interpersonal relations has increased i.e. this is the tendency to collaboration and cooperation.

Keywords: conflicts, interpersonal conflicts, teenagers, interpersonal conflicts prevention

1. Introduction

It has already been proved that interpersonal communication is people's life indispensable condition, person's

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full-scale development of any mental function or mental process, or any block of mental properties, or personality on the whole is impossible without it. But there is no communication that can do without conflict participation. Interpersonal and intergroup conflicts negatively affect all processes of life activity. The interpersonal conflict reveals the lack of consent in the developed system of interaction between people. They have opposite opinions, interests, points of view, views of the same problems which at the certain stage of relationship break normal interaction when one of the parties starts working purposefully against the other, and that one, in its turn, realizes that these actions prejudices its interests, and undertakes counteractions. Such situation most often leads to the conflict as the means of its resolution. The full resolution of the conflict will take place in case when the opposing parties consciously defuse the reasons that have caused it. If one of the parties wins the conflict finally, then such state will be temporary and the conflict will surely declare itself in this or that form under favorable circumstances (Dmitriyev, 2000). Teenage years are the most difficult and complicated period of all children's years. It is also called the awkward age because during this period there is a peculiar transition from childhood to adulthood, from immaturity to maturity, all sides of teenagers' development are involved: anatomo-physiological structure, intellectual, moral development, and also various types of their activity (Kashchenko, 2005). At the teenage age interpersonal conflicts are most often observed due to psychological changes. The conflicts between pupils have negative influence both on those conflicting, and the whole class. It is extremely necessary to diagnose and prevent conflicts in school collectives. Firstly, conflict prevention will undoubtedly promote the improvement of educational process quality. Pupils and teachers will begin to spend their intellectual and moral forces not on the fight against opponents, but on their primary activity. Secondly, conflicts have noticeable negative impact on the mental state and mood of those conflicting. The stress arising during conflicts can cause a lot of serious diseases. (Rice, 2000). Therefore, timely preventive measures should influence psychological and physical health of pupils and teachers positively. Thirdly, it is the school period when the child, the teenager develops the skills of conflict resolutions in interpersonal interaction as each person experiences them during his/her lifetime. (Antsupov, 2011; Antsupov & Shipilov, 2006). Conflicts in the teenage environment are characteristic for all times and peoples. As it is noted in the review of school conflicts prepared by Shipilov (2006), the most spread conflicts among schoolchildren are the ones concerning the leadership; they reflect the struggle of two or three leaders and their groups for the superiority in class. As for secondary school, there can be observed some conflicts between the group of boys and the group of girls. The conflict of three - four teenagers with the whole class or opposition of one school student and a class can be designated. According to psychologists' observations (Cornelius & Faire, 2009), the way to leadership, especially in the teenage environment, is connected with the demonstration of superiority, cynicism, cruelty, ruthlessness. Children's cruelty is a well-known phenomenon. One of the world pedagogic paradoxes is that the child is exposed to the feeling of gregariousness more than an adult, is inclined to unmotivated cruelty and persecution of similar ones (Valeeva, 2012). Besides, the teenager's conflicts with schoolmates are caused by age peculiarities – by the development of moral - ethical criteria of the peers' assessment and the requirements to their behavior (Grishina, 2008). Nevertheless, the role of the conflicts at teenage age is great enough. As well as at any other age, the conflicts of teenagers have both positive and negative outcome options. Therefore, the subject of our research is of urgent interest. Many teenagers experience difficulties in contacts with their peers and take their loneliness painfully (Kon, 2005). Any difficulties in the social sphere lead to violation of activity, relations, generate negative emotions and experiences, cause the feeling of discomfort. All this can unfavorably influence the child's identity development. Thus, many researchers consider the decrease of joint activity efficiency, negative development of interpersonal relations, deterioration of in-group relations as the destructive function of the conflict; at the same time the interpersonal conflict has an essential constructive potential (Ivanova, 2007). The following functions of interpersonal conflicts in the teenage environment are regarded by scientists as constructive:

- the interpersonal conflict is an important source of personal development, and in-group relations development as well;
- interpersonal conflicts can change positively and broaden the sphere and ways of interpersonal interaction;
- through the open confrontation the interpersonal conflict releases the group from negative factors of its development;
- the interpersonal conflict promotes the development of mutual understanding between teenagers, develops their social intelligence (Lisetsky, 2006).

Moreover, the positive sense of the conflict consists in the disclosure of teenagers' own possibilities, in the activation of their personality as the subject of prevention, overcoming and resolution of interpersonal conflicts. Psychological discomfort in class, strained relationships with teachers, and then with parents as well promotes the

situation when negative forms of behavior become fixed and pass into character traits. Besides, the deformation of relationship with people around inevitably leads to the decrease of teenagers' cognitive activity. There can arise a negative attitude to school and to educational activity in general (Grishina, 1995)

Many scientists consider that conflicts are necessary for the personality development. Only overcoming the conflict situation, resolving the conflict, contradiction that can be internal or external, the individual comes to a new phase of the development (Scott, 2007). Therefore, the knowledge of conflicts, their features, ways of solution and prevention is necessary for each person, in particular, for a teenager. It is important to choose the relevant methods and work forms to prevent pupils' interpersonal conflicts. It is much easier to avert the conflict than to resolve it positively. Prevention of conflicts is undoubtedly important, it demands less effort, means and time and averts even such minimum destructive consequences which any structurally resolved conflict has. Pupils and teachers, heads of schools and governing bodies, school psychologists can carry out activities aimed to prevent conflicts. The work can be realized according to four main guidelines (Sulimova, 2006):
• the creation of objective conditions that prevent the emergence and destructive development of pre-conflict situations, (teachers' benevolent, warm, caring, attentive attitude to their pupils, senior pupils' patronage support, teachers and parents' personal example). This model will work if the activity is supported both by teachers and parents, for example, the training devoted to the issues of tolerance can be carried out with teachers and parents and pupils as well.
• the optimization of school organizational and administrative conditions: equitable and public distribution of material and spiritual benefits among teachers and pupils. Praises, approvals, awards, encouragements in the form of diplomas and awards should be promoted. There should be created the "situation of success".
• the elimination of social - psychological reasons of conflicts. At this stage it is possible to develop rules, procedures aimed at any controversial questions solutions, to create the school operating body where children, their parents and teachers can address for support and advice.
• the blocking of personal reasons causing the emergence of conflicts. (theme trainings, cycles of class hours, teachers' methodical associations), etc.

Thus, the study of interpersonal conflicts in teenagers' environment, and also the elaboration of the program aimed to prevent interpersonal conflicts, including various forms and methods has become the purpose of our research.

2. Methods

137 pupils of comprehensive schools of the city of Kazan took part in the research. Proceeding from the research objectives, there was conducted the forming experiment aimed at the approbation of teenagers' interpersonal conflicts pedagogical prevention forms. At the first stage, there was experimentally identified the initial level of studied signs (Nemov, 1999). The correctional program for teenagers was elaborated on the basis of these results. At the second stage, there was arranged some active work aimed to prevent teenagers' interpersonal conflicts with the application of the program "Communication without Conflicts". At the final stage of the research, there was carried out the secondary measurement of studied indicators and the efficiency of interpersonal conflicts prevention methods and forms was checked. The following techniques were applied as diagnostic material: 1. T. Leary's technique to diagnose interpersonal relationships; the scale for the assessment of psychological climate in the collective; K. Thomas's test - description of behavior (Grishina's adaptation). T. Leary's technique to diagnose interpersonal relationships is applied to diagnose the individual properties influencing interpersonal relations. The questionnaire consists of 128 value judgments which are united in 8 octants at processing. The scale for the assessment of psychological climate in the collective allows to identify the degree of social and psychological climate friendliness in the collective. Pupils were offered to estimate 26 statements in connection with their availability in the pedagogic collective. K. Thomas's test - description of behavior. K. Thomas singles out the following types of behavior in the conflict situation: Competing, Accommodating, Compromising, Avoiding, Collaborating. Pupils were offered to choose one item for each pair of statements that most precisely describes their typical behavior in a conflict situation. Methods of mathematical statistics (Student t-test) were applied in the work.

3. Results

There have been obtained the following results. The results of the stating experiment showed that the majority of teenagers estimate the degree of psychological climate friendliness in the collective as low (44%), 28% as average,

8% as initial, high and average degree of adversity is stated by 4% each, however 12% of examinees estimate the degree of psychological climate adversity as strong. It testifies to the fact that some dissociation, low degree of integration prevail in the pupils' collective, besides, it is possible to conclude that interpersonal conflicts can arise on this basis. The analysis of the results according to K. Thomas's procedure testifies that 40% of respondents choose the compromising strategy and 38% stick to the competing strategy when it comes to resolve conflicts. However the collaborating strategy, one of the optimum strategies, is applied less often – by 4% of respondents. Besides, in the group of examinees there dominates such type of interpersonal relations as authoritative - 40%, the dependent type is absent at all. Low indicators of suspicious and aggressive type imply that there is a weak level of aggression in the collective, teenagers are sociable and try to get in touch. 24% of examinees speak about a friendly type of relations. Representatives of the authoritative type are self-confident, determined, persistent, dominant, and vigorous people, but at the same time they can be bossy, despotic, indisposed to accept other people's advice. They like giving advice and can be intolerant of criticism. Certain conclusions can be drawn from the diagnostics made: the low degree of psychological climate friendliness can be explained by teenagers' constructive communication skills underdevelopment that, in its turn, causes misunderstanding and interpersonal conflicts. Teenagers are more inclined to competition than collaboration. The experimental verification allowed drawing the conclusion that the work performed to prevent interpersonal conflicts among teenagers was quite effective. We have obtained valid data that the program "Communication without Conflicts" promotes the development of highly effective behavioural strategies in conflict situations and teenagers' personal resources. After the experiment in the group we obtained the following results: the majority of teenagers (48%) estimate the degree of psychological climate friendliness in the collective as average, each of the following degrees – high, initial and low has 16% of examinees' answers. The assessment of psychological climate as the degree with strong adversity is absent. It testifies to the fact that respondents have become more satisfied with the psychological atmosphere in their collective. Respondents choose the strategy of compromising to resolve conflicts – 36%, and also the strategy of collaboration – 24% (at the first stage it was 8%). Respondents refused such strategy as avoiding at all. The compromising strategy of behavior is characterized by the balance of conflicting parties' interests at the average level. It does not spoil the interpersonal relations, but it promotes their positive development. Such types of interpersonal relations as authoritative 32% and friendly 32% (at the first stage it was 24%) dominate in the group of testees. Representatives of the authoritative type are self-confident, determined, persistent, dominant people, but they can be bossy, despotic, indisposed to accept other people's advice. Representatives of friendly type are inclined to collaboration, cooperation; they are flexible and ready for compromises when it comes to the solution of problems and conflict situations. Such people tend to be in agreement with other people's opinion, they are consciously conformal, follow conventions, rules and principles of "good behaviour" with people, are initiative in the achievement of the group objectives, eager to help, deserve attention and love, are sociable, show warmth and friendliness in the relations. During the experiment the assessment of the degree of psychological climate friendliness in the group of school students did not improve, but behavior strategies in conflict situations changed for better. The control examination of children showed that there is a steady tendency to the improvement of general psychological situation in the collective, to the change of behaviour strategies in conflict situations. Further we carried out the analysis of the results according to Student's t-criterion, we wanted to check if there is a reliable difference between means of studied indicators during the first and third research phases. As a result of Student's t-criterion application we obtained the following data.

1. The differences between average values of psychological climate friendliness indicators before the experiment and after it are reliable, as $t_{emp} > t_{td}$ (t_{emp}= 8,2) at p = 0,01;

2. The differences between average values of behaviour strategies in conflict situations before the experiment and after it are reliable as: Competing $t_{emp} > t_{td}$ (t_{emp} = 2,84) at p = 0,05; the differences between average values of Collaborating before the experiment and after it are reliable, as $t_{emp} > t_{td}$ (t_{emp} = 3,09) at p = 0,01; the differences between average values of Compromising before the experiment and after it are not found; the differences between average values of Avoiding before the experiment and after it are reliable, as $t_{emp} > t_{td}$ (t_{emp} = 5,9) at p = 0,01; the differences between average values of Accommodating before the experiment and after it are reliable, as $t_{emp} > t_{кp}$ (t_{emp} = 3,3) at p = 0,01. The differences between average values of types of interpersonal relations before the experiment and after it are reliable, as: the differences between the average values of Authoritative before the experiment and after it are reliable, as $t_{emp} > t_{td}$ (t_{emp} = 2,63) at p = 0,05.

4. Conclusions and discussion

Thus, the results of the work done show the efficiency of the program "Communication without Conflicts" elaborated by us, forms and methods revealed promote the interpersonal conflicts prevention efficiency among teenagers. We have obtained reliable data that the elaborated program promotes highly effective behavioural strategy developments in situations of conflict and personal resources of teenagers. These data have been confirmed by methods of mathematical data processing, in particular, by Student t-test. The teenage age is the most difficult and complicated of all children's ages. The main teenager's feature is the personal instability. Contradictory traits, aspirations, tendencies coexist and fight with each other, defining the discrepancy of character and behavior. This rather often becomes the most conflict side of teenagers' communication with the senior generation and among themselves. Preventive work with teenagers undoubtedly promotes the development of highly effective behavioural strategies and personal resources of teenagers, the improvement of psychological climate in the collective (class), and also their academic progress gets better. The prevention of teenagers' interpersonal conflicts is possible only in case when various forms and methods of pedagogical and psychological influence are interrelated. Various types of activity give school students a chance to master the knowledge of interpersonal conflicts, ways and means of their prevention, to learn to control feelings and emotions, and also to try to learn to understand others, their position and feelings.

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