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## Psychological Features of Difficult Teenagers and the Complexity of Educational Interaction Generated by Them

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### Abstract

The article substantiates the need for psychocorrective work with a difficult teenager on the basis of a preliminary detailed study of his or her personal characteristics.

Based on these considerations, the author has set a goal to conduct a psychological study that would identify the specific personal characteristics of difficult adolescents, which can potentially predetermine the asocial characteristics of their behavior.

Cattell's youth 16 factor questionnaire (Cattell, 1989) and Shmishek's test for the assessment of character accentuation (Leonhard, 2001) were taken as personal techniques for the study. Identification of the qualities potentially predisposing to deviant behavior was carried out by comparison of average values of indicators on scales of the specified techniques for two groups: a group of ordinary pupils, and a group of difficult pupils. Assessment of the degree of reliability of the mean differences was conducted using appropriate statistical techniques.

The results obtained in the experimental study confirmed the existence of significant differences in personal qualities between ordinary and difficult-to-educate adolescents. It is established that such differences are manifested, first of all, in such areas of the psyche: the emotional sphere, intelligence, communication abilities, volitional qualities of the individual, mechanisms of control by the teenager of his or her behavior, the presence of his or her labor qualities. In conclusion, the ways and means of using the obtained information as a tool of psychological and pedagogical influence of the teacher on a difficult teenager are proposed.

Key words: difficult teenager, difficult education, behavior, deviant behavior, personal qualities, test scales, personality test, character accentuation.

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## Introduction

At the first stages of his or her career the teacher faces many problems, one of the key of which is the difficulty of establishing good working and human relationships with students. This problem is particularly acute when working with difficult teenagers. Under unfavourable conditions, such students may disrupt all normal work in the classroom.

When talking about difficult adolescents, they are understood primarily as those, whose behavior are atypical and do not fit into the established social norms, violating them. Children whose behavior is difficult to correct are called “difficult teenagers”. This type of behavior is called deviant. In the absence of appropriate correction of such conduct, it gradually becomes tort, i.e., that already violating existing legal norms. The spectrum of such disorders is very wide, from early alcoholism to suicide attempts (Shnejder, 2005).

Difficult teenagers usually differ significantly from their peers in their personal qualities. They do not show respect for teachers and adults, do not want to learn, ignore the opinion of others, are self-centered, gain authority in the group with the help of force, are not able to establish contact with other students of the school group, and therefore, due to the resulting retaliatory isolation on their part, may be in asocial criminal groups (Kondrashenko, 1988). Audacity and cruelty, which is inherent in them, is often appear due to their awareness of such inferiority, they act as a mechanism for its compensation (Almazov, 2009).

A teacher always faces an acute problem to correct in a timely manner the deviant behavior of such teenager. However, due to the inherent mentality of teachers, many of them tend to believe that the reason for the difficult upbringing of a difficult teenager is his or her bad heredity. However, most of the modern Russian and foreign teachers and psychologists believe that natural, hereditary factors, although they may predispose to the emergence of difficulty in the adolescent, but they still affect only indirectly, through the social factor.

We must say that the psyche of a difficult teenager inherent in some features. They are unpredictable and emotionally unstable; they are characterized by a sharp change of mood. On good and caring they can often respond with rudeness and aggression, insensitive, surprise others with unusual behavior. On the one hand, such teenagers themselves can seek the attention of adults, but then begin to bully them (Bandura & Uolters, 2000).

Correction of behavior of the difficult teenager can be carried out by different methods. Bochkareva (1968), for example, suggests realize it by understanding of the installations driving the teenager, and the subsequent their gradual transformation. Currently, the prevailing opinion is that the successful overcoming of the adolescent’s difficulty of education is possible only if the correct understanding of their psyche and adequate attention to him or her from adults and peers (Leus, 2013).

Feldshtein (2013) believes that such correction of the behavior of a difficult teenager can be carried out only by its inclusion in a positive socially useful activity with the participation of adults, in which, thanks to intensive communication with them, he or she has a transformation of his or her motivational sphere and his or her life attitudes (Feldshtein 2013). In any case, the process of working with a difficult-to-educate teenager should be based on preliminary psychodiagnosis of his or her personality traits in order to by taking into account his or her individual characteristics, to be able to include such teenager in collective activities while ensuring a positive attitude to adults (Demyanov, 2004)

This sharply raises the question of obtaining objective experimental psychodiagnostic data, based

on which, such psycho-correction work in the future could be successfully carried out by ordinary teachers and psychologists of educational institutions.

### **Purpose of research**

This fact prompted us to conduct a special psychological study that would identify the specific personal characteristics of difficult adolescents, which can determine the antisocial characteristics of their behavior.

### **Method of research**

To this end, it was decided to conduct a psychological experiment that would allow to identify and compare the personal characteristics of ordinary adolescents, i.e., prone to the manifestation of a typical, socially adapted form of behavior, and those whose behavior can be attributed to the category of behavior of difficult adolescents.

For this purpose, two test methods were selected together for its best characterizes personal features of the examinee: 16 factor Cattell's questionnaire for youth (Cattell, 1989) and the test for the assessment of character accentuation of Shmishek (Leonhard, 2001). The first technique included 16 scales, the second – 10 scales. With the help of these two methods it was supposed to assess the basic personal qualities of students of ordinary and correctional classes. The usual class included 17 students, correctional class – 11 students. For each scale experimentally was determined the values of averages, variances, and the statistical significance of differences between the average values of indicators of the test scales for ordinary students and pupils of the correctional class (Kutejnikov, 2008, p. 81).

### **Results**

The results of the Cattell's test (Cattell, 1989) are presented in table 1. As the indicators on a scale of 10 and 11 were absolutely hardly discernable, guided by editorial considerations save space, in table 1 the data values of the scale 10 and the scale 11 are not represented.

The conducted experiment shows that difficult teenagers on a number of personal qualities really strongly differ from the usual pupils inclined to manifestation of a normal, socially acceptable form of behavior.

The results obtained for the test of Cattell (Cattell, 1989), say the following. With a very high degree of assessment of the significance of differences between the mean ( $p < 0.001$ ) it can be argued that difficult students differ from ordinary students in the following personal characteristics.

They have lower scores on a scale A (sociability – isolation). This fact means that the behavior of troubled teens lead to isolation, indifference, a certain rigidity and little sociability, their mood is dominated by skepticism, they are cold towards others, like to be alone, do not have close friends with whom they could be frank. All this prevents them from establishing normal working relations with their peers

Equally significant are their average values differ on a scale of B (intelligence). Outwardly, this difference is manifested in the fact that the thinking of a difficult teenager is characterized by concreteness, a same rigidity, and they can have an emotional disorganization of thinking.

The third, equally significantly different parameter, is the scale C – (“emotional stability – emotional instability”). This factor characterizes the ability to manage emotions and mood, and especially the ability to find for them adequate explanation and a realistic expression. Such children are characterized

by increased fatigue, emotional excitability. Such low emotional stability is the most common component of all pathological disorders: neuroses, psychopathies, alcoholism, etc.

The fourth, very significant scale in terms of average differences is the scale H – scale “courage – timidity”. Difficult-to-educate adolescents have significantly lower values on this scale. They tend to

The first half of the table on the test Cattell. Scales A -H

consider themselves extremely timid, insecure, tormented by an unreasonable sense of inferiority, slow and restrained in the manifestation of feelings, do not like to work in contact with other people, prefer having one or two friends, and are prone to loneliness. The inner emotional tension that they constantly feel generates excitement, anxiety, frustration, and agitation that do not leave them.

The fifth scale, on which difficult-to-educate adolescents differ significantly from ordinary ones, is the scale L “credulity – suspicion”. Low values on the scale suggest that such adolescents in relation to life inherent practicality, realism, skepticism about the subjective and cultural aspects of life. Sometimes they can be ruthless, cruel and complacent.

Smaller differences in indicators ( $p < 0.05$ ) of difficult adolescents with ordinary ones are determine on a scale Q4 “tension – relaxation”. Unlike ordinary teenagers, their typical state is characterized by relaxation, lethargy, low motivation, laziness, excessive satisfaction and indifference to what is happening.

Finally, at a very weak level of average differences ( $p < 0,1$ ) we can say that such adolescents are distinguished by some impulsiveness, liveliness, gaiety, carelessness (scale E – “dominance – subordination”).

Table 1

The values of the indicators for the Cattell’s test

Scales	Classes	1 - A	2 - B	3 - C	4 - E	5 - F	6 - G	7 - H
Ordinary class. Averages		,84	,51	,41	,06	,88	,58	,76
Ordinary class. Variances		,23	,61	,13	,32	,11	,03	,94
Correctional class. Averages		,59	,45	,54	,27	,18	,45	,72
Correctional class. Variances		,75	,67	,47	,02	,96	,27	,62
Student t-test		,76	,83	0,88	,93	,55	,173	,86
Significance level differences mean		p < 0,001	p < 0,001	p < 0,001	p < 0,1			p < 0,001

The second half of the table on the test Cattell. Scales I - L, O - Q4

Scales	Classes	8 - I	9 - L	10 - O	11 - Q <sub>1</sub>	12 - Q <sub>2</sub>	13 - Q <sub>3</sub>	14 - Q <sub>4</sub>
Ordinary class. Averages		,85	,82	,41	,53	,29	,06	,6
Ordinary class. Variances		,36	,15	,38	,51	,09	,3	,25
Correctional class. Averages		,18	,27	,82	,82	,72	,6	,72
Correctional class. Variances		,3	,42	,56	,76	,02	,05	,22
Student t-test		,62	,58	,77	,96	,77	,6	,21
Significance level differences			p < 0,001					p < 0,05



Classes											
Ordinary class. Averages	7,12	4,7	6,82	,11	2,53	,18	5,35	0,94	8,	,63	
Ordinary class. Variances	,02	,47	1,52	7,8	1,54	1,78	5,74	9,06	0,12	2,64	
Correctional class. Averages	,09	2	,73	9,64	7,45	,09	,18	6,91	,82	6,36	
Correctional class. Variances	,09	8,21	7,03	,85	8,47	,9	4,56	,89	,56	1,45	
Student test	,06	,59	,42	,69	,51	,82	,26	,63	3,52	,04	
Significance level differences mean	<0,001		<0,001	<0,001	<0,05		<0,001	<0,001	<0,001	<0,001	

Note: below are the critical values of t-student test for different levels of significance:

$t_{kp, 0,9} = 1,705$ ,  $p < 0,1$ ;  $t_{kp, 0,95} = 2,056$ ,  $p < 0,05$ ;  $t_{kp, 0,99} = 2,779$ ,  $p < 0,01$ ;  $t_{kp, 0,999} = 3,435$ ,  $p < 0,001$ .

Scale Name.

1. Demonstrative type. 2. Stuck type. 3. Pedantic type. 4. Excitable type. 5. Hyperthymic type. 6. Distributable type. 7. Anxiety type. 8. Exalted type. 9. Emotive type. 10. Cyclotimia type.

With a very high degree of assessment of the significance of the differences ( $p < 0.001$ ), we can assert that next features are distinguished of difficult adolescents from ordinary ones.

They have lower values of the indicator on the scale of “Demonstrative type”. This means that they are typical of a more standard, inexpressive form of action, the lack of originality in the behavior. The manifestation of pseudo-hooligan actions in such adolescents may be due to an attempt to compensate for

the lack of such originality.

A significantly lower value of the indicator on the scale of “Pedantic type” indicates the lack of accuracy in such adolescents, both in business and in thought. Teenagers relate to work not very responsible and do job badly. The values on the “Excitable type” scale of this test confirm what Cattell’s test (Cattell, 1989) showed earlier: difficult teenagers have extremely poor control over their emotions. This turns their life in society into a big problem: poorly controlled emotions manifested among peers always as an inevitable outcome have a subsequent rejection by the group of people.

The “Anxiety type” scale data confirms the results obtained on the Cattell’s test (Cattell, 1989). Unlike ordinary students, who have a developed sense of responsibility for the assigned job, that inevitably gives them a certain level of anxiety, difficult students in the case does not experience any anxiety. In other words, they are indifferent to a job. This negatively characterizes their motivational sphere.

The same is said by the data obtained on the scale of “Emotive type”. The scale shows that in many situations a difficult teenager tends to show excessive complacency bordering on indifference, to remain emotionally cold when it is simply necessary to show his or her concern.

Confirmation of this assumption is the data obtained by difficult adolescents on a scale of “Exalted type”. The lack of such teenager a certain emotional experience, a sense of empathy, emotional callousness lead to the fact that in emotions he or she does not distinguish halftones. His or her emotions are always bipolar: events are perceived by him or her either exclusively positively or extremely negatively. Such a feature of the emotional sphere of a difficult teenager makes it very difficult for an adult to interact with him.

This is facilitated by a certain genetic predisposition of a difficult teenager. In terms of the scale “Cyclotimia type” a difficult teenager is significantly superior to their conventional school peers. A high score on this scale indicates that the emotions of a difficult teenager can very much spontaneously change from causeless joy to unreasonable sadness. This circumstance complicates the teacher's pedagogical work.

Positive in this vein is only the fact that a difficult teenager in general is dominated by a rather positive emotional background, manifested most often in causeless joy and fun. This is indicated by their obtained higher values of the index on a scale of “Hyperthymic type”. It is evaluated positively because of such an emotional state of a difficult teenager allows the teacher working with him or her to avoid a sharply negative reaction on his or her part to the pedagogical impact, and therefore – to maintain a good relationship with him or her in the future.

### **Debatable question**

Thus, the study confirms our initial assumption that abnormal, asocial behavior of difficult adolescents is due to their specific psychological characteristics. First of all, it concerns the emotional sphere of the personality of a difficult teenager. Such teenager, on the one hand, is emotionally callous, which complicates the impact of the teacher on his or her motivational sphere. On the other – a teenager poorly controls their emotions. They always “play”, and the range of such a “game of emotions” is extremely wide and, moreover, devoid of halftones. The only consolation for the teacher here is that the general emotional background of the majority of difficult teenagers is coloured positively, that facilitates the interaction of the teacher with such teenagers.

Complicate the work of the teacher with such teenager is the fact that adolescent does not know how to communicate competently with anyone and often may not feel the need for this. Such a low level of contact seriously prevents the inclusion of a difficult teenager in joint activities with other children. It

means that the teacher is deprived of a powerful social tool to influence him or her.

The reduced intelligence of a difficult teenager and his or her lack of labor inclinations also do not contribute to successful work with him. Most often, such a teenager, due to the circumstances of life and the nature of his or her training, just not accustomed to a long and systematic work. To any business uninteresting for him or her, he or she is initially indifferent and cold. This means that the involvement in the labor process of such teenager can be carried out only by finding him or her a job for the soul, which is not always possible. This is also hampered by the rigidity and pattern of his or her thinking, which generate difficulties in selecting an interesting job for such a student.

### Conclusion

The experimental study showed that a difficult teenager really is distinguished from an ordinary one by a number of personal qualities, the list of which is not great, but their nature is very significant. The first is the features of the emotional sphere of a difficult teenager. He or she poorly controls his or her emotions and behavior. In fact, he or she is a prisoner of his/her emotions. The second concerns the quality of low intelligence and considerable sluggishness, the rigidity of his/her thinking. They do not only allow a teenager to successfully master the curriculum, but also to understand correctly and adequately what the teacher says to him/her. On the contrary, this stagnation can be the cause of stubbornness and self-will of such teenager. The third personal characteristic is low contact, sociability of a difficult teenager, impeding the normal occurrence in society.

A young teacher who begins to work at school should perceive the psychological specifics of a difficult teenager and build his or her work with him/her, taking into account these features. Only in this way the teacher gets a chance to establish a satisfactory psychological contact with such a teenager, and therefore to achieve in their work quite good pedagogical results.

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