

## Improving the Level of Socio-Psychological Adaptation in First-Year Students of a Russian University Moscow, Russia

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### ABSTRACT

The adaptation process is always very complicated and is determined by the current level of health that minimizes the risk of developing diseases. The study of the adaptive capabilities of a particularly young organism for this reason should be comprehensive and necessarily have a psychological component. The admission of young people to higher education is a serious stress for her. Studying at the university is also a stress, requiring serious strain of various adaptive mechanisms, which affects the physical and psychological status of students. Of particular interest is the adaptation of first-year students to study at the university, which is a complex socio-psychophysiological stimulus for all body systems. Various approaches to the elimination of cognitive distortions are of great importance for optimizing adaptation in psychotherapy. Desensitization with the processing of psychological injuries with eye movements has proven itself to be a highly effective option for psychotherapy. The use of the author's version of such psychotherapy provided a correction for first-year students in the level of socio-psychological adaptation by increasing their psychological age and level of personal self-esteem, willpower while attenuating manifestations of sociophobia.

**KEY WORDS:** STUDENTS, PSYCHOLOGICAL ADAPTATION, EYE MOVEMENT DESENSITIZATION AND REPROCESSING, PSYCHOLOGICAL AGE, WILLPOWER, SOCIOPHOBIA.

### INTRODUCTION

The adaptation process reflects many facets of the interaction of the body with the environment (Bespalov et al., 2018a), is determined by the current level of health

(Makhov, Medvedev, 2020a) and the risk of developing diseases (Karpov et al, 2020). The study of the adaptive capabilities of a particularly young organism for this reason should be comprehensive (Zavalishina, 2018a; Zavalishina, 2018b). A serious stressful environmental impact for young people is admission to a higher educational institution (Makhov and Medvedev, 2018a). The subsequent study at the university also requires seriously straining various adaptive mechanisms. This inevitably affects the physical and psychological status of students, causing significant stress on all body systems (Andrienko et al., 2019).

The success of the adaptation of students in the first year to a large extent determines the overall effectiveness

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of their education (Bespalov et al., 2018b). Difficulties with adequate adaptation to changing conditions of the social environment are manifested by the low level of their socio-psychological adaptation, which prevents the formation of professional competencies in them (Makhov and Medvedev, 2018b). Various sociophobia, the low level of their psychological age, and reduced self-esteem of the strength of volitional processes can seriously hinder the development of social adaptation of students (Bespalov et al., 2018c). Various approaches to eliminating cognitive distortions that complicate the process of socio-psychological adaptation of a person have great effectiveness in optimizing the socio-psychological status and ensuring adaptation in psychotherapy (Makhov and Medvedev, 2020b).

A very effective variant of psychotherapy proven desensitization reprocessing psychological trauma eye movements. This method is considered very effective and successfully applied to recover from emotional shocks. It is used to minimize the manifestation of post-traumatic syndrome, the syndrome of dependence or of depression caused by bereavement (Biserova and Shagivaleeva, 2019). This methodology promotes synchronization of rhythms in the cerebral hemispheres, provides the optimum activated, and provides simultaneous information processing (Cuijpers et al., 2020). It can be applied at any age of a person in a stressful situation. In this regard, the authors felt justified to test the effectiveness of the author's method of desensitization reprocessing psychological trauma eye movements to increase the level of social adaptation of young people who began teaching in higher education. The objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of the author's method of processing psychological trauma to the eye movements relative to the correction of socio-psychological adaptation of first-year students.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study was supported by a meeting of the local ethics committee created at the Russian State Social University on September 15, 2018 (protocol No11). The study was taken by first-year students of the Russian State Social University (Moscow, Russia) with a total of 56 people, average age  $22.1 \pm 0.52$  years, including 9 boys and 47 girls. Examination students did not have bad habits, any mental disorders and chronic somatic diseases before taking into the study and throughout the observation.

To assess the dynamics of students' adaptation to study at the university, all those taken into the study were randomly divided into two equal, comparable, homogeneous groups-the experimental ( $n=28$ ) and control ( $n=28$ ). In the experimental group, the author's methodology was used to increase the level of socio-psychological adaptation at the university. In the control group, the process of adaptation of the observables went naturally without outside interference. The entire study was conducted over one semester (4 months). Testing was carried out in both groups simultaneously: initially and after 4 months of exposure in the experimental group

(Zavalishina, 2018a).

The author's technique applied in the experimental group included the following components. Students were shown 32 copyright videos on a widescreen screen with their display at eye level. The duration of each demonstration was 10-12 minutes. The videos contained materials on 32 topics. The demonstrated material contained forms of human behavior that were approved in society (marriage, parenting, saving animals in natural disasters, harvesting in severe weather conditions, and so on), a direction to increase mental health.

Before each viewing of the video material, the subjects were asked to immerse themselves in the memories of unpleasant moments from their study at the university, which they would once cause psychological trauma and rate on a scale from 0 to 10 (where "0" is complete indifference, and "10" is the maximum possible intense experience) how much it bothers them. In this case, the subjects had to remember what feelings they experienced at that moment, to remember the words or sounds that accompanied them at the time of the formation of these experiences.

After that, a video was included, where the main elements that captured the subjects' attention rhythmically and systematically moved around the screen, producing a cognitive effect in the form of an information load throughout the viewing. At the end of each viewing, the subjects had a conversation about how they would now behave in a traumatic situation and how their feelings for psycho-traumatic situations that were remembered before watching changed. The question was asked - will similar situations affect their mood and emotional background in the future? A number of tests were used to assess the dynamics of the state of students under observation.

1. Test "What are we afraid of." This test contained 60 statements, which are a free statement of basic human fears. Using this test, we determined the general level of social fear and its level in any sphere of life with the differentiation of fear into a conscious and unconscious component (Nekrasov, 2018). With the help of the applied test, sociophobia was diagnosed when the results reached 9 points or more.
2. The test "Self-esteem of willpower" made it possible to determine the degree of assessment of the manifestation of one's own "willpower" (Ilyin, 2009). The results obtained using this test were evaluated based on the following criteria:
  - from 1 to 10 points-low motivation for success;
  - from 11 to 16 points-the average level of motivation for success;
  - from 17 to 20 points-a moderately high level of motivation for success;
  - over 21 points-too high level of motivation for success.
3. Test for psychological age. Its use made it possible

to evaluate the self-awareness of one's psychological age and tone, as well as the degree of psychological maturity of the subject (Stepanov, 2000). The values of the results of the application of this test were expressed in years, making it possible to establish deviations of the obtained data from the biological age of the subject. Mathematical processing of the digital material obtained in the study was carried out by a standard package of

statistical programs using Student t-test, which allows to find the reliability of differences between the level of compared indicators.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained during the study are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Dynamics of indicators of socio-psychological adaptation in the examined students

Parameters	Experienced group, $M \pm m$		Control group, $M \pm m$	
	at the beginning of the study, n=28	at the end of the study, n=28	at the beginning of the study, n=28	at the end of the study, n=28
Sociophobia level, points	9.2±0.01 p<0.01	2.7±0.20	9.1±0.08	8.6±0.11 p <sub>1</sub> <0.01
Self-will, points	12.0±0.75	15.0±0.87 p<0.01	10.0±0.93	11.0±0.97 p<0.05 p <sub>1</sub> <0.01
The level of psychological age, years	19.3±0.65	23.4±0.68 p<0.01	18.9±0.38	19.3±0.54 p <sub>1</sub> <0.01

Legend: p – is the reliability of the dynamics in the groups, p<sub>1</sub> – is the reliability of the differences of the surveys at the end of the observation between the groups.

Initially, the performance of both groups of subjects did not have statistically significant differences. In both groups, at the beginning of the observation, there was sociophobia, low self-esteem, and the level of psychological age was inferior to the calendar.

As a result of applying the author's methodology in the experimental group, it was possible to increase the level of socio-psychological adaptation and achieve significant positive changes in the recorded parameters. By the end of the observation, the experimental group experienced a 3.4-fold decrease in the level of sociophobia, increased self-esteem of willpower by 25.0% and an increase in the level of psychological age of the examined people by 21.2%, with its reaching the calendar level. The natural course of the processes of socio-psychological adaptation in the control group was accompanied by a weak dynamics of the recorded indicators

By the end of the observation in the control group, the level of sociophobia decreased by only 5.8% and was 3.2 times lower than the same indicator in the experimental group. By the end of the observation, the self-assessment of willpower in the comparison group increased by 10.0%, yielding 36.4% at the same time in the experimental group. The level of psychological age in students who made up the control group, by the time the observation was completed, increased by only 2.1%, did not reach the calendar age and yielded 21.2% in the experimental group.

An experienced group of students successfully passed their first debt-free session. The average score for the first session of students in this group was 4.3±0.45 points.

In the control group, according to the results of the first session, there were 10 debts, and the final average score for these students at their first session at the university was 3.8±0.25 points.

Recently comes a clear understanding of the need to identify people have traumatic experiences, are able to form their dysfunctional behavioral patterns and symptoms of social and psychological disadaptation (Makhov and Medvedev, 2018c; Skoryatina and Medvedev, 2019). They degrade their interaction in society in General and especially in their microenvironment (Makhov and Medvedev, 2018d). Early detection and adequate correction of these negative experiences is able to provide quick adaptation of students to training conditions and enhances the success of the assimilation of its educational programs (Nekrasov, 2018).

In this study, it was found that for first-year students tend to have high levels of social anxiety due to low self-assessment of strength of will at the level of mental age below the calendar. Such features obstructs social-psychological adaptation in the learning process at the University and lowered the quality of learning material. Largely at the heart of these phenomena lies the negative information as if "frozen" in the mind and a long time continued in its original, unprocessed form. This is possible due to isolation of the neural networks of the brain that the negative memories from the rest of its associative networks. While in this part of the memory change is not happening, as the information is able to be psycho corrective could not affect isolated information about a traumatic event. In this situation, negative emotions, images, sensations, and views from the past

penetrate the present and cause severe psychological and physical discomfort.

To correct the current situation in students, the Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing method was used, the essence of which was to overcome the consequences of severe mental injuries and stresses that block the activity of the adaptive information processing system in the brain. This method minimizes traumatic memories and related affective, somatovegetative and behavioral reactions that continue to be stored in the brain. This effect occurs due to the activation of eye movements that occur during the implementation of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing. They start processes that activate the accelerated processing of traumatic experience by analogy with what happens at the stage of sleep with rapid movements of the eyeballs (Makhov and Medvedev, 2018e).

The use of the repeated series of eye movements during the Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing procedure with first-year students led to the unblocking of isolated sections of the neural network of their brain with a traumatic experience. Eye movements during the implementation of the method made it possible to “unlock” this part of the brain and process traumatic information (Perlini et al., 2020). Memories that had a high negative emotional charge using this method were translated into a more neutral form, and the corresponding ideas and beliefs became constructive (Shapiro, 1998).

Applying the author’s method, the subjects managed to achieve optimization of all the considered parameters. Gain of the eye movement stimulated the flow of information in the brain of individuals of the experimental group, allowing a more integrative work their bark. In these circumstances, the brain has optimized the processing of information in all its departments (Glagoleva et al., 2018; Podymova et al., 2019). Activities conducted cognitive-behavioural psychotherapy have achieved first-year students a significant increase in the level of General socio-psychological adaptation with the achievement of the optimum values of the studied parameters. Carried out to students of psycho-correction has intensified to have cognitive and behavioral manifestations, “harmonisieren” identity and strengthening its adaptive capacity to situations associated with emotional stress (Savchenko et al., 2016; Makhov and Medvedev, 2019).

The strengthening of awareness of subjects having potential volitional processes have enabled to overcome the difficulties of everyday life and situations of psychological discomfort. Obviously, the result of the correction of the freshmen students have been acceptance of themselves as people with extremely high emotional volitional levels of self-regulation. It appeared from them in the positive dynamics of their reactions to the situation, hazards (real and imaginary). Awareness of these changes helped the students to some a “desensitization” to negative situations in society and strengthen their initial weak points in the system of their

response to external factors. To achieve this effect was made possible by the elimination from first-year students of the phenomena of psychological immaturity due to maturation of neural connections in their brain on the background of conducted disturbance.

## CONCLUSION

Currently, the Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing method has attracted the increasing attention of psychotherapists. This is due to its high efficiency, providing the possibility of accelerated processing of information, which forms a person’s psychological stability. Applying the author’s version of such cognitive-behavioral therapy, the study succeeded in correcting the state of self-esteem of willpower, the level of psychological age and significantly lower sociophobia in first-year students. The obtained result indicated the successful optimization of socio-psychological adaptation in first-year students and a sufficiently high effectiveness of the applied impact. This gives grounds for recommending a proven author’s method for widespread use in any educational institution to increase the level of adaptation of first-year students and greater efficiency in mastering the curriculum.

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