

## **INFANTILISM DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS AND RESPONSIBILITY FORMATION IN MODERN ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

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**Abstract.** *Responsibility is one of the main characteristics of a mature person. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in the era of increasing infantilism, one of the important areas in modern psychology and pedagogy is the problem of responsibility formation and development in adolescents and young people. There are various hypotheses about the emergence of infantile and irresponsible behavior and their manifestations in childhood and adulthood. The strength of society is the strength of the individuals who make it up, so in modern science it is important to identify the causes of social infantilism and introduce technologies for its prevention and correction.*

*Based on the theoretical analysis, the paper examines the dominant symptoms of the infantilism development (irresponsibility, mental discomfort, loneliness, sexual behavior violation, narcissism and gender chauvinism) and their manifestations in different age periods. The forms of irresponsibility in adolescents and the causes of their occurrence in different age periods are presented in detail. According to the author, the main reasons for infantilism development in adolescent and youth environment are: 1) the lack of collective education and the low influence of teachers, psychologists and educational environment in general on the individual's development; 2) a pronounced style of pedagogy of freedom, provoking selfishness development; 3) delegation of responsibility for education exclusively to the family in the absence of psychological and pedagogical support for family relations; 4) deformation of the family relations model against the background of falling birth rates, shifting gender roles and family values.*

*For the prevention and correction of infantilism among adolescents and young people, specialists in the sphere of modern education need to conduct systematic diagnostic work with the family and pay close attention to the introduction of practical technologies for the prevention of irresponsible behavior among younger schoolchildren and adolescents. In addition, it is necessary to introduce psychological and pedagogical education of the younger generation on the issues of individual self-development, self-education and self-realization.*

**Key words:** *infantilism, responsibility formation, adolescents, young people.*

### **Introduction**

The young generation of any country is the main reserve for the state development. It is no accident that the society power is made up by the strength of its personalities. Therefore, modern education, which is experiencing the traditional system breakdown against the tsunami of the upcoming digitalization, is facing an acute question of how to preserve the viable resources of the future human capital in the society. Traditionally, the markers of a mature personality are responsibility, independence, freedom (economic, too), social activity, moral reliability, adequacy (the formed individual's identity with the society), professional and personal development and self-realization. Accordingly, the characteristics of an immature person are: 1) irresponsibility, lack of independence, economic dependence, social passivity, marginality, immorality, creative stagnation, professional and personal degradation.

The problem of developing psychological maturity and the problem of infantilism have been bothering society for a long time. Legends and fairy tales belonging to many peoples all over the world

describe important character traits of a mature person. The complex ecological, political and socio-economic environment that has surrounded people for thousands of years, the struggle for survival in a confrontation with nature, the large family and the translation of universal values in popular culture contributed to the young generations' maturity and independence development.

The young people's infantilism began to develop rapidly in the 20th century, especially in its second half. Undoubtedly, this was influenced by technological progress, transformation of the family institution, family values, men and women's socio-psychological role in family relations. Currently, the main reasons for infantilism development in the adolescent and youth environment are:

- 1) the lack of collective education and the little influence of teachers, psychologists and the educational environment as a whole on the personal development;
- 2) a pronounced style of pedagogics of freedom, provoking egoism flourishing;
- 3) delegating responsibility for education exclusively to the family in the absence of psychological and pedagogical support for family relations;
- 4) deformation of the family relations model against the background of a falling birth rate, shifting gender roles and changed family values.

### **Literature overview and analysis of theories**

A. P. Chekhov was probably the first who brilliantly described female infantilism: in his story "The Hopper", written in 1891, the writer highlighted the main personal characteristics of infantilism in the female image and showed the fatal consequences of the union of a hyper-responsible husband with an infantile wife. The author for the first time illustrated that infantilism is terrible not only with its parasitism, but also with its desire to psychologically harm close people who demonstrate personal maturity and responsibility. The global problem that A. P. Chekhov raises is that an infantile person will not only live at the expense of a donor economically, but he\she will also hate the donor for his success and ambition, he\she will humiliate, use the donor and enjoy systematic psychological violence (Chekhov, 1986). One of the topical issues of personal development research is the question of how and when infantilism is formed?

Traditionally, the personality development is influenced by three global factors: heredity, environment and upbringing. Numerous experiments that nature has conducted on humans prove that a child can perfectly adapt to the environment of animals, but the longer it stays there, the more rapidly it loses the ability for personal development. Therefore, it is the environment that is the leading factor affecting the future generations' features and qualities. The translator of the environment is culture. Everything that is not nature, everything human-created in a broad sense is culture.

In her work "Configuration of Cultures", written in 1932, the American researcher Ruth Benedict identifies culture and personality. She claims that culture is the personality of society (Benedict, 1974). Margaret Mead, comparing the adolescence of American women and girls from the island of Samoa, came to the conclusion that puberty in traditional cultures is conflict-free (Mead, 2004). R. Benedict noted with concern that it is difficult for a modern teenager of the 30s of the 20th century to approach the adult world (Benedict, 2006).

At the end of the 20th century, the American psychologist Dan Kiley published a work on Peter Pan syndrome. Peter Pan syndrome is a term in psychology used to describe a socially immature adult. The term has been informally used by both non-professionals and some professionals in popular psychology after the publication of Dr. Dan Kiley's book "Peter Pan Syndrome: Men Who Never Grew Up" in 1983 (Kiley, 1983).

His book became an international best seller and led to a wave of copycat pop-psychology books. Kiley got the idea for "The Peter Pan Syndrome" after noticing that, like the famous character in the J. M. Barrie play, many of the troubled teenage boys whom he treated had problems growing up and accepting adult responsibilities. This trouble continued into adulthood.

Dan Kiley draws attention to the fact that the study of the fairy tale about Peter Pan reveals not only an instructive allegory, but also a rather sad picture to the psychologist. Neither parents nor other loving close people realize that many children are steadily following Peter Pan's path. Thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of young people are afraid of adulthood and this fear doesn't let them leave their childhood. Some of them eventually overcome their fears, but many remain in the ranks of so-called "lost children". If A. P. Chekhov draws a portrait of female infantilism and irresponsibility in his story

"The Hopper", then James Barry, and after him Dan Kiley, skillfully reveal the typical features of infantilism in its male representation. At the end of the twentieth century, the problem of infantilism developing in the society became obvious.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a new type of infantilism state description appeared in the Japanese version — the hikikomori phenomenon. The term became widespread due to the 1998 publication of the book by the Japanese psychiatrist Saito Tamaki "Hikikomori: Endless Teenage Years" (Saito, 2013) Hikikomori are young people who have deliberately isolated themselves from others and are striving for complete social isolation (they may choose not to leave their homes for years). At the same time, hikikomori's decisions are not related to mental pathologies. They do not study, do not work and are dependent on their parents. Hikikomori is in the most general sense "a person without values". Such young people often completely go into virtual reality. The term Hikikomori, along with the abbreviated Americanized name "hikki", refers to people who are found not only in Japan. Yet, it is already obvious that in popular and scientific literature they are called exactly this way, in the Japanese manner (Hayakawa, K., Kato, T.A., Watabe, M., et al., 2018).

In Japanese, hikikomori is a designation for those who voluntarily stay in solitude: they are drawn inside (into themselves, into a shelter, to a specific place in a house or apartment), not outside, not towards other people, even the closest ones. Society scares the hikikomori, they become reclusive and voluntarily refuse to fulfill the society expectations — such as helping their elders, studying or working for a living. At the same time, they are not mentally retarded and do not have mental illnesses that prevent communication. It is believed that most hikki experience discomfort and stress from their own weakness and low resilience, they are oppressed by the inability to return to the Confucian lifestyle, traditional for the Japanese family. Being unable to bring the image of the "Self" and the "ideal Self" closer together, they are ready to "admit being defeated without even entering a fight" (Bowker, 2016).

The Hikikomori phenomenon has cultural and historical roots in Japan. Historically, loneliness for the Japanese is a manifestation of asceticism and self-knowledge. Therefore, interest in the ancient cult of hikki hermits has been renewed in Japan since the 70s of the last century. They write books, make anime films and programs about Hikikomori. There are special groups for helping hermit people. However, the socially determined reasons for the appearance of hikikomori lie in the traditional way of Japanese society, in a system of strict rules and standards that every Japanese citizen must comply with. A prestigious education is a secure future for a Japanese, so parents often require their children to score high on tests in secondary and high school (in junior school, they don't get marks). To school classes (they last up to 4 p.m.), daily classes in sports clubs are added and last till 6 pm (if the child does not show significant achievements in sports, he\she shames the family) and classes at the school of additional education (Nagornova, 2018).

For young generations, living with parents is recognized as a risk factor for the hikikomori pattern development, which hinders normal psychosocial development, in particular, the development of autonomy, and can also lead to the psychological addictions. Refusal to communicate even with the closest people speaks in most cases about the lack of a sense of attachment, low self-esteem and self-doubt, insufficient formation of communication skills, which acts as an obstacle in interactions with both peers and elders. Of course, the hikikomori phenomenon can be considered as one of the variants of Peter Pan syndrome manifestations.

According to Russian authors, A. E. Voiskunskiy and G. U. Soldatova it is digital technologies that contribute to the Japanese Hikikomori escapism's transformation into a truly international, global phenomenon. As already noted, many non-Japanese people show their willingness to demonstrate the hikki worldview and behavior. For example, a recent empirical paper investigated the differences between hikikomori from the United States and from Australia, who play computer games and demonstrate psychological dependence on computer-gaming activity (Voiskunskii, & Soldatova, 2019). The hikikomori's tendency to develop psychological dependence on the Internet is assumed by many experts.

The availability of digital technologies has significantly transformed the life of the international Hikikomori community — traditional socialization, which they mostly neglected, has been replaced by a more acceptable digital socialization for them, which allows them to become even more social in the new "digital sociality" than in the pre-digital era. Hikikomori hermits now have the opportunity to watch movies (including their favorite anime cartoons), play computer games (including online multiplayer games that require coordinated actions of large groups of players), find each other on social networks

(presumably closed) and communicate, exchanging impressions and experiences. Nevertheless, they rigidly build borders and minimize contacts. The lifestyle they adopted has become widely known to the younger generations thanks to the Internet, so there is a certain fashion among young people for this style and for the adoption of "hikikomori" term as a self-designation.

We find another psychological portrait of the of infantilism manifestations in modern youth in the "kidult" phenomenon description. According to experts, kidult, as a phenomenon, does not have a specific progenitor; the word was formed from two English words – "kid" and "adult" (Karpov, 2020). . Despite the fact that many experts explaining this phenomenon refer to appearance, the essence of the kidult origin is attributed rather to the problems of psychiatry and pathologies of human social interaction.

Kidult is not a recluse: he\she can be quite successful in everyday life, easily start a family and get a high-paid job. The question lies in the motivation of his\her actions – a person experiencing delayed maturation syndrome does not see priorities in career growth or expanding their own social ties, all these are just means to ensure the need for preserving the stage of "childhood". Many researchers pay special attention to appearance – since kidults retain behavioral patterns characteristic of adolescents, which is also expressed in clothing. Bright colors, prints and contrast distinguish kidults from the general mass of people (Runakova 2015; Karpov, 2020).

It is worth noting that the listed criteria are not distinctive features only of people with delayed maturation syndrome, modern reality tends to move away from both the standards of behavior and appearance. When analyzing the phenomenon of kidult, a more correct name is often used — the syndrome of delayed maturation. The problematic questions remain: when will such a person grow up? and will it happen at all? We will try to analyze the features of infantilism formation in modern adolescents and young men in ontogenesis.

### **Discussion**

An alarming symptom of infantilism is absence of the desire to grow up. Analyzing Dan Kiley and many other researchers' work, it should be assumed that there are six main symptoms of infantilism that parents, teachers and psychologists working with children should pay attention to: 1) irresponsible behavior; 2) mental discomfort; 3) loneliness and hidden fears; 4) mixing of sexual roles; 5) narcissism; 6) gender chauvinism. According to Dan Kiley, all these symptoms develop gradually in the age period from 10 to 22-24 years old (Kiley, 1983).

Irresponsible behavior becomes habitual around the age of 10-11 years. This is the period when a teenager consciously begins to use irresponsible behavior strategies. It should be noted that the faces of this behavior are very diverse and depend on the temperament and character, as well as the circumstances in which this behavior strategy is demonstrated. There are at least four variants of adolescent irresponsible behavior that need to be corrected as early as possible.

The first type of behavior is "angel". The teenager skillfully uses the emotions of innocence and self-pity. The demonstration of this kind of sufferer and offended innocence, complaints about ill health and the severity of life are emotional tools in the implementation of such a behavior strategy. The teenager uses parental love, care and guardianship to justify his behavior.

The second type of behavior, "bully", is an aggressive strategy of irresponsible behavior implemented by the principle of "attack is the best defense". Knowing that few will be able to withstand his\her rudeness and aggressiveness, the teenager openly resists performing the duties. They often resort to emotional blackmail and try to be the first to exert psychological violence. In fact, this behavior hides self-doubt and low self-esteem.

"Deafblind" is the third strategy of irresponsible behavior based on ignoring requests and demands and postponing chores. "I forgot what you told me", "I didn't see your message", "I have no idea of how it happened...", "I will do it later." When this strategy is being implemented, parents are worried that the child has mental problems, but this is far from the truth. It's just a convenient position to avoid one's responsibilities.

Another strategy of irresponsible behavior can be called "sweetie". Such a teenager is quite sociable and willingly offers his help to strangers, but he does nothing in his own family and does not help anyone. It is difficult to take offense at him: not that he refuses to help, but he needs to be reminded many times. Helping others is considered as compensation for one's inaction in one's own family. This

behavior strategy is the most difficult to correct, because responsibility and care are periodically manifested, but it is not aimed at close people who really need help and care.

Thus, as early as at the age of 10, teenagers skillfully mask their strategies of irresponsible behavior and acquire the skills of its conscious use. In the future, other symptoms begin to develop, which we wrote about earlier. One symptom will complement the other and infantilism is developing more and more actively.

Let us highlight the main topical questions that modern science needs to answer: 1) what affects infantilism development most?; 2) can strategies of irresponsible behavior be inherited?; 3) why do hyper-responsible parents develop infantile children and vice versa, infantile and irresponsible parents develop responsible children?; 4) what methods of correcting infantile behavior are most appropriate and how does the environment affect the infantilism formation?

### **Conclusion**

For individual stable psychological boundaries, responsibility and activity to be formed, it is necessary to have an effective communication system between the individual, family and society. For the effective functioning of the education system, as the main channel for cultural meanings transmission, an active, dialogical interaction between home education, the state education system and the real socio-cultural context should be ensured.

The following should be highlighted as modern preventive measures against infantilism development among adolescents and young people:

- 1) the formation of a pedagogical and social environment that stimulates social activity and young people\ adolescents' social intelligence development;
- 2) the revival of methods of collective and labor education in the educational process, which forms the independence and influence the development of the personality in a group of peers;
- 3) educational, psychological and pedagogical assistance of the society to the family (especially single-parent families) in the diagnosis and prevention of infantilism in the practice of family education;
- 4) creating conditions for the real self-realization of young people here and now in order to prevent them from leaving for mythological worlds (the world of virtual games, digital reconstructions of communication, drugs, illusions, artificially created subcultures);
- 5) the formation of aspiration for independence (including financial one), first of all, developing self-confidence, capabilities and abilities;
- 6) supporting the culture of family relations at the level of the state and society, supporting large families, the decisive role and responsibility of the father as a regulator of legal family relations and the rules of upbringing in the family;
- 7) development and implementation of digital security methods; countering Internet addiction in the educational process in order to promote a creative not a playing person;
- 8) the introduction of self-learning and self-developing subjects (primarily, Psychology) based on the principle of natural conformity in order to develop the younger generations in unity with nature and forming responsibility for their own lives and the lives of other people on the Earth into the practice of teaching adolescents and young people.

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### **PROBLEMI RAZVOJA INFANTILIZMA I FORMIRANJE ODGOVORNOSTI KOD ADOLESCENATA I MLADIH DANAS**

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**Sažetak:** *Odgovornost je jedna od glavnih karakteristika zrele osobe. U 21. stoljeću, u eri sve većeg infantilizma, jedno od važnih područja moderne psihologije i pedagogije je problem formiranja i razvoja odgovornosti kod adolescenata i mladih. Postoje razne hipoteze o pojavi infantilnog i neodgovornog ponašanja i njihovim manifestacijama u djetinjstvu i odrasloj dobi. Snaga društva je snaga pojedinaca koji ga čine, pa je u modernoj nauci važno prepoznati uzroke socijalnog infantilizma i uvesti tehnologije za njegovo prevenciju i korekciju. Na osnovu teorijske analize, rad istražuje dominantne simptome razvoja infantilizma (neodgovornost, mentalna nelagoda, usamljenost, kršenje seksualnog ponašanja, narcizam i rodni šovinizam) i njihove manifestacije u različitim dobnim periodima. Detaljno su predstavljeni oblici neodgovornosti kod adolescenata i uzroci njihovog nastanka u različitim dobnim periodima. Prema autoru, glavni razlozi za razvoj infantilizma u adolescentnom i omladinskom okruženju su: 1) nedostatak kolektivnog obrazovanja i nizak utjecaj učitelja, psihologa i obrazovnog okruženja općenito na razvoj pojedinca; 2) izražen stil pedagogije slobode, izazivajući razvoj sebičnosti; 3) delegiranje odgovornosti za obrazovanje isključivo na porodicu u odsustvu psihološke i pedagoške podrške porodičnim odnosima; 4) deformacija modela porodičnih odnosa u pozadini pada nataliteta, promjena rodni uloga i porodičnih vrijednosti. Za prevenciju i korekciju infantilizma među adolescentima i mladima, stručnjaci u sferi suvremenog obrazovanja trebaju provoditi sustavni dijagnostički rad s porodicom i obratiti veliku pažnju na uvođenje praktičnih tehnologija za prevenciju neodgovornog ponašanja kod mlađe školarce i adolescenta. Pored toga, potrebno je uvesti psihološko i pedagoško obrazovanje mlađe generacije o pitanjima samorazvoja, samoobrazovanja i samoostvarenja pojedinca.*

*Ključne riječi: infantilizam, formiranje odgovornosti, adolescenti, ljudi.*