

UDC 371.133.04

DOI: 10.52534/msu-pp.6(2).2020.20-29

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Individual-Typological Features of Students' Psychological Adaptation to the Preparation of External Independent Evaluation

Article's History:

Received: 28.07.2020

Revised: 15.09.2020

Accepted: 01.10.2020

Suggested Citation:

Shtompel, L.M. (2020). Individual-typological features of students' psychological adaptation to the preparation of external independent assessment. *Scientific Bulletin of Mukachevo State University. Series "Pedagogy and Psychology"*, 6(2), 20-29.

Abstract. Undoubtedly, the present is described by socio-economic, political, and socio-cultural transformations, these conditions create a break with the established axiological, value-related, and normative structures of society. As a result, modern youth is faced with a difficult choice of patterns of behaviour; therefore, the development of a modern personality takes place with a sense of confusion, fear, anxiety, and stress. The most influential stressful situation for high school students is the preparation and passing of an external independent evaluation. The author proves that psychological stress of any origin prevents quick and constructive decisions, which leads to confusion and cognitive dissonance. Therefore, the author states that it is necessary to introduce adaptive programmes, trainings that will develop an appropriate level of adaptation, which would facilitate the transition of school leavers to a new level of self-growth, self-confidence, self-belief, and increase self-esteem. The purpose of this study was to determine the individual-typological features of psychological adaptation of students to the EIA. To achieve this purpose, methods such as analysis, synthesis, systematisation, generalisation, interpretation, etc. were used. The empirical part of the study used, in particular, hierarchical cluster analysis, the method of group relationships, the method of comparing the mean values of the Student's T-test for independent samples. It was discovered that the key to successful psychological adaptation of graduates to the external independent evaluation is a stable personal potential. Acquired psychological competences will not only help students to effectively demonstrate their knowledge and skills during the exam, but also use them in their future lives. The author indicates that it is necessary to provide psychological support to leaving students in preparation for the EIT. Professional psychological help would reduce emotional stress and anxiety during testing and develop the necessary skills to achieve high results

Keywords: adaptation, psychological stress, maladaptation, personality, personal potential

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Індивідуально-типологічні особливості психологічної адаптації учнів до складання зовнішнього незалежного оцінювання

Анотація. Безперечно, що сьогодення характеризується соціально-економічними, політичними та соціокультурними трансформаціями, саме ці умови створюють злам усталених аксіологічних, ціннісних і нормативних структур суспільства. Як наслідок, сучасна молодь опиняється перед складним вибором моделей поведінки, тому становлення сучасної особистості відбувається з відчуттям розгубленості, страху, тривожності та стресу. Найбільш впливовою стресовою ситуацією для старшокласників є підготовка та складання зовнішнього незалежного оцінювання. Автором доведено, що психологічне напруження, будь-якого генезу, заважає швидко та конструктивно приймати рішення, що приводить до розгубленості та когнітивного дисонансу. Тому необхідно в процес навчання впроваджувати адаптивні програми, тренінги, які формуватимуть відповідний рівень адаптації, що сприятиме переходу випускників на новий рівень самозростання, а також утвердження таких почуттів, як: впевненість у собі, віри у свої сили та можливості, утвердження самооцінки. Метою статті постало визначення індивідуально-типологічних особливостей психологічної адаптації учнів до складання ЗНО. Для досягнення поставленої мети застосовувались такі методи: аналіз, синтез, а також систематизація, узагальнення, інтерпретація тощо. В емпіричній частині статті використовувались ієрархічний кластерний аналіз, метод групових зв'язків, метод порівняння середніх значень за Т-критерієм Стьюдента для незалежних вибірок. Виявлено, що запорукою успішної психологічної адаптації випускників до складання ЗНО є стійкий особистісний потенціал. Набуті психологічні компетенції не тільки допоможуть школярам під час іспиту ефективно проявити свої знання та навички, а й використовувати їх у своєму подальшому житті. Автор стверджує, що необхідним є психологічний супровід учнів випускних класів у процесі підготовки до складання ЗНО. Професійна психологічна допомога сприятиме пониженню емоційної напруги та тривоги під час тестування, допоможе виробити необхідні навички для отримання високих результатів

Ключові слова: адаптація, психологічне напруження, дезадаптація, особистість, особистісний потенціал

INTRODUCTION

In the context of socio-economic, political, and socio-cultural transformations in modern society, there is the rapid destruction of established axiological systems, value orientations, and normative structures. As a result, young people are faced with a difficult choice of reference models of behaviour and activity patterns. The complexity of such a choice is due, on the one hand, to the lack of appropriate social ideals, and on the other – to a certain crisis of conventional institutions of socialisation. Consequently, any difficulties in the life path of modern youth, quite frequently provoke the feeling of confusion, helplessness, despondency, fear, panic, and stress. One of these potentially stressful situations for Ukrainian schoolchildren remains the preparation and passing of an external independent evaluation. It is clear that any psychological stress

prevents students from making the right decisions quickly, commonly leading to confusion and a certain cognitive dissonance. In this regard, the problem of students' psychological adaptation to passing the EIE becomes relevant, since the level of personal adaptability depends on the ability of school leavers to rise to a higher level of personal development, gain confidence and faith in themselves, their capabilities, and increase the self-esteem of a young person.

The problem of personality adaptation is quite developed within the framework of modern humanitarian knowledge. In this regard, the main paradigms of socio-psychological adaptation can be distinguished. In particular, these are theoretical models shaped within the framework of behaviourism (E. Thorndike, D. Watson, and B. Skinner), symbolic interactionism

(C. Cooley, J. Mead, L. Phillips), structural and functional analysis (T. Parsons), psychoanalytic theory (G. Hartmann). It is also important to mention studies that examine the psychological aspects of the adaptation process. Namely, the studies by L. Vyhotskyi [1], H. Ball, I. Bulakh [2], F. Berezina [3], M. Diachenko [4], N. Zavatska [5], O. Zotova [6], etc.

Upon considering the presented approaches, it can be stated the psychological adaptation of final grade students to the EIE is a rather complex and multifaceted process in which the individual adapts to new conditions and requirements of the social environment, which is the result of the individual's activity and includes the concentration and use of its regulatory capabilities. The success of adaptation depends on several factors, objective and subjective.

The analysis of the above studies allows asserting that the psychological adaptation of a person is a well-developed scientific problem, but the question of determining and substantiating the features of psychological adaptation of students to passing the EIE in Ukrainian scientific discourse is understudied.

The *purpose of the article* is to determine the individual-typological features of the psychological adaptation of students to the EIE.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the course of the research, the author used a number of general scientific methods, namely: analysis, synthesis, systematisation, generalisation, interpretation, etc. Method *analysis* allowed decomposing a complex training system into its component parts. *Synthesis* combines individual parts into a whole. Systematisation summarises a large number of approaches in studying adaptation and maladaptation processes. This method discovered essential connections and relationships between different approaches. The use of *generalisations* was important for the study results since it allows identifying causal relationships and determines the essence of the processes. The *interpretation* made it possible to expound the main approaches to studying adaptation, considering the current living conditions of societies, namely the organisation of the educational process. The empirical study of individual typological features of students' psychological adaptation to external independent evaluation took place in three stages: approximate-search, research, and analytical.

The approximate-search stage involved the compilation of a general work concept and the construction of a theoretical research model, the determination of purposes and objectives, the selection of appropriate

psychodiagnostics tools, and the sampling of representatives. The methodological basis of the study is standardised psychodiagnostics methods: "Methodology for diagnosing socio-psychological adaptation" by K. Rogers and R. Diamond, "Methodology for determining stress tolerance" by T. Holmes, R. Rahe, "Scale of situational and personal anxiety" by C. Spielberger, Yu. Khanin, questionnaire "Indicator of coping strategies" by D. Amirkhan in the adaptation by N. Sirota, V. Yaltonskyi, and self-esteem research by T. Dembo, S. Rubinstein in modification by A. Prykhozhan.

In the course of organising and conducting an empirical study, representatives were sampled, which fully corresponds to the purpose of the study. The sample included 80 students who attend specialised training courses to prepare for the EIE. Lessons take place in secondary General Education School No. 25 in Kyiv and LLC Centre for intensive preparation for EIE "Clever". Thus, children show a high level of motivation and awareness in preparation for testing. The subjects under study are united by a common educational process and preparation for passing final exams. Since 2008, in Ukraine, passing an external independent evaluation is a prerequisite for admission to higher education institutions, and annually, for school leavers, it is quite a serious psychological test since it is a stressful occasion.

At the second research stage, an empirical study was conducted directly. The psychodiagnostics examination took place during September and October 2019. The third stage – analytical, included the analysis and interpretation of the obtained data set and the compilation of research conclusions.

To empirically study the individual psychological profile of the subjects and identify the types of students according to the features of their adaptation, the author used hierarchical cluster analysis. This method of multidimensional statistics is used to build a typology. In cluster analysis, the distance between the current object and all other objects is calculated, and the cluster is shaped with the pair for which the distance was the smallest, that is, the two objects are most similar to each other. In this way, each object is either grouped with another or included in an existing cluster.

As a result of clustering using the group relationship method, the variables selected by the author were combined into two clusters (types). The first cluster included 56 subjects, and the second – 24. Thus, it was discovered that one group of students is larger than the other since most students are diagnosed with an average or lower average level of adaptation. Only

24 people have well-developed adaptive capabilities of the psyche and body.

Furthermore, to compare indicators of adaptation, the level of stress tolerance, self-esteem, situational anxiety, emotional comfort, and propensity to seek social support in the selected groups (clusters), the author used the method of comparing the average values of the student's T-test coefficient.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In high school, individuals reach such a level of cognitive ability when they are ready to perform all types of mental activity of an adult. Among researchers, the relationship between an individual's age and social capabilities is generally recognised. In this regard, the famous Soviet psychologist, founder of cultural-historical psychology L. Vyhotskyi noted: "there is a direct relationship between age and the social capabilities of an individual. The chronological age, or rather, the level of an individual's development, directly or indirectly determines one's social position, the manner of the activity, the range of social roles, etc. The gender-age division of labour in many cases determines the social status, the levels of self-awareness and requirements of members of the corresponding age group" [1, p. 248].

Thus, age becomes an important criterion for determining an individual's readiness to perform a certain set of social roles. One of the arguments in favour of this statement is the fact that for individuals to take a certain place in society, they are required to receive an appropriate level of education. Currently, the latter appears to be the defining personal and social capital. Moreover, society associates a system of socio-psychological expectations and sanctions with the age gradation of an individual.

Furthermore, it is worth noting the views of L. Vyhotskyi regarding the fact that age stratification is directly related to socio-economic processes in society. For example, in society, there is a constant redistribution of individuals of the corresponding age groups by social systems and roles. This is due both to objective factors, namely: the social division of labour, the availability of jobs – and to subjective determinants: the ability of an individual to learn the necessary skills, accept and perform appropriate social roles inherent in a particular age Rubicon of a person.

The author clearly supports the idea that when a young person's cognitive abilities increase, they become more active in claiming different social roles. This, on the one hand, has a positive effect on personal

development, but on the other hand, young people are not invariably able to bear responsibility both to society and to their own conscience. As a result, the state of social and individual consciousness "is characterised mainly by fragmentation, a combination of polar values and the lack of a holistic view of the social ideal and the generally accepted system of social values. The ambivalence of mass consciousness prevails (orientation to mutually exclusive values and standards), caused by a sharp transition to another social system" [7, p. 124].

A considerable advance in the development of age psychology was developed by the French scientist J. Piaget. The researcher identified the following age stages of personality development: 1) the sensorimotor stage (lasts up to two years and is characterised by world cognition based on the senses); 2) the preoperational stage (lasts up to seven years and includes two periods: pre-conceptual and intuitive). In the pre-conceptual period (2-4 years), the child discovers the diversity of the world, realises that there are many things that have different characteristics. In the intuitive period (4-7 years), tasks are solved, not based on logic, but using sensations and intuition; 3) stage – concrete operational (7-12 years). At this stage, the child begins to be guided by logic, but at the same time uses sensory images that are easy to imagine; 4) the stage of formal operations (12-15 years when the child's thinking is dominated by forms of abstract thinking – concepts, judgments, conclusions, categories). Teenagers begin to realise the consequences of their activities and bear personal responsibility for them, that is, to act consciously [8].

According to the Soviet scientist I. Kon, the adolescent period is characterised by revolutionary mental and physical changes. During these age periods, individuals are aware and assimilate the features of their physical data, knowledge about their own body, the development of physical qualities, and sexual physiological differences. "Attitudes to the perception of one's own body are established based on the culture of a person's attitude to one's own body that exists in society. They are mastered by the child through the views and statements of other people" [9, p. 85]. In this context, according to the author, for the educational process, it is mandatory to implement an individual-personal approach, which should be an integral part of the modern system of upbringing and education.

As already noted, in high school, an individual reaches such a level of cognitive ability that they are ready to perform all types of mental activity of an adult. At the present stage of civilisational development, due

to the availability of various sources of information, cognitive processes become more flexible and take less time than at the previous stages of the historical development of mankind. Upon using these opportunities, students gain knowledge with the latest means, generally ahead of their personal development. Therewith, youth is a rather stressful process, as there is a moral establishment of the individual, the development of value orientations and principles, a worldview strategy, and civic qualities of the individual. "In youth, there is a degree of psychological, ideological, and civic maturity that makes a young person independent, capable of adulthood and various activity, able to independently make their life plans, find ways to fulfil them" [10, p. 185].

In the final grades, adults require students to focus on preparing for adulthood. That is, during this age period, there is a mixing of emotional experiences, personal, aimed at experiencing events, phenomena, processes determined by individual age characteristics, and generalised social feelings, that is, developed by a person under the influence of the social environment. For example, a sense of beauty, tragedy, comic, freedom, responsibility, justice, etc. These feelings and concepts subsequently become the basis for the establishment of an individual's tastes and preferences, an evaluative attitude to oneself and reality, influence the appropriate life position, etc. Adolescent individuals are more emotionally stable than teenagers, and this depends not only on the state of the psyche but also on social factors. Moreover, during this period, there is an intensive development of general and special competencies, based on such activities as training, communication, and work. In educational activities – general intellectual abilities are developed. In the sphere of interaction, communication skills are established that characterise the ability to defend one's own point of view in a reasoned and consistent manner, to seek consensus and understanding. In practical activities, professional abilities and skills are developed and improved.

Thus, youth is a kind of bridge between childhood and adulthood. During this period, students decide who they should be in the future. As modern Ukrainian researchers N. Kreidun and N. Priadko note, "the image of the future in the mind of a high school student is determined by the features of their intellectual sphere. An important place in the development of personality is not only mental abilities but also features of social and emotional intelligence of high school students" [11, p. 70-71].

These components are quite important for the development of a student's personality, especially when making fateful decisions that are accompanied by rational choices along with strong emotional experiences. One of these events is passing the EIE. During testing, a leaving student is in difficult and uncertain conditions, subjected to psychological stress which is a completely natural form of reaction, and various behavioural options for the individual's further activities are established. Stress occurs in those cases that are most important for a person and are determined by their motives, purposes, etc. For a teenager, successful passing of the EIE is not simply admission to individual choice of a future profession but also an important step into adulthood. According to the author, there cannot be a unified theory of stress resistance and the mechanisms of its development. The author supports the statement that stress tolerance is "a property of the psyche that reflects the ability of a person to successfully perform their life activities in stressful conditions" [12, p. 241]. Therefore, its level depends on the characteristics of the nervous system, the type of temperament, etc. Therewith, the main factors of stress resistance are neurodynamic, psychodynamic, personal, and socio-psychological determinants.

Another important issue that Western researchers, in particular, the Japanese researcher K. Amai, pay attention to is how the social environment can assist students who do not seek psychological help at the primary stage when they have not yet had serious consequences and serious problems [13, p. 688]. In this aspect, the author identifies two groups of students. The first group is those students who do not understand the effect of seeking help from the social environment. Indeed, the effect of asking for help is not clearly overdone. First, because there is no direct relationship between a student's mental health and school performance. Second, those students who seek help become mentally balanced and healthier than their classmates who do not. These authors state that the surrounding people should take the initiative to provide timely assistance to students who need it [14-16]. The second group is teenagers who do not seek help. This group is quite heterogeneous. It can be divided into three subgroups. The first is those who do not need help since their problem is not serious [17]. The second subgroup consists of those who cannot seek help for various reasons, including, for example, the following: lack of support from the social environment [18], negative advisory expectations [19]. The

third subgroup is those who can independently maintain their mental stability and do not need help from the environment [20].

An important task in studying the psychological features of students' adaptation to the EIE is an empirical study of the general individual and personal portrait of schoolchildren. Furthermore, the pre-examination period coincides with the crisis of adolescence, the transition to a new stage of personal development. During this period, communication with peers comes to the fore, and the importance of the reference group in the child's life increases. Communication with peers becomes a source of development of the Self-concept and value sphere of adolescents. They begin to feel their individuality, shape their own worldview and perception of themselves in this world. The leading activity of teenagers is learning. During this period, students decide on their future profession, choose a university, and actively prepare for admission.

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Upon using the statistical coefficient student's T-test for independent samples, the author determined the importance of intergroup differences, which are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Statistical indicators of the importance of Intergroup differences between students in Grades 11 by the level of adaptation (according to student's T-test)

	T-test	Importance	Average difference
Adaptation	-8,139	0,000	-15,357
Emotional comfort	-9,925	0,000	-23,464
Stress tolerance level	12,950	0,000	92,179
Situational anxiety	5,557	0,000	11,821
Search for social support	5,491	0,000	5,929
Self-esteem	-2,971	0,004	-9,929

The results of comparing independent samples show the presence of statistically considerable differences for two groups of high school students in all indicators that affect the level of adaptation to the EIE.

The first, most numerous group of students in Grades 11 (56 studied) are characterised by: low level of adaptation ($x=45.8$), low indicators of emotional comfort ($x=44.70$), insufficient stress tolerance ($x=229.25$), pronounced situational anxiety ($x=56.32$), self-esteem at a lower-than-average level ($x=55.87$), and a pronounced

copied strategy "search for social support" ($x=24.33$).

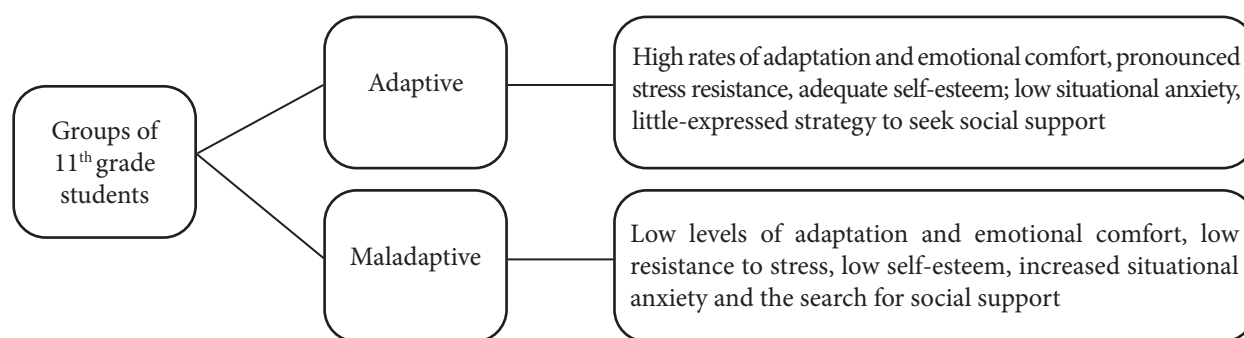
The second group of high school students (24 subjects) are characterised by the following parameters: high adaptation ($x=64$), a high level of emotional comfort ($x=66.75$), and an average level of stress tolerance ($x=210.43$), moderate situational anxiety ($x=44.50$), adequate self-esteem ($x=75.00$), and a moderate strategy for finding social support ($x=19.50$). The discovered average values for the two groups of subjects are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Indicators of variables affecting adaptation to EIE in selected groups of 11th-grade students

Variables	Student groups	N	Average value	Standard deviation
Adaptation	1	56	45.8	7.11
	2	24	64.0	9.05
Emotional comfort	1	56	44.70	9.72
	2	24	66.75	9.62
Stress tolerance level	1	56	229.25	30.44
	2	24	210.43	25.89
Situational anxiety	1	56	56.32	7.73
	2	24	44.50	10.73
Search for social support	1	56	24.33	3.76
	2	24	19.50	5.71
Self-esteem	1	56	55.87	14.00
	2	24	75.00	12.94

Notably, the overall level of adaptation of schoolchildren to stressful knowledge testing is quite low, and in some students, it borders on outright maladaptation. The reason for this can be physiological changes that occur in the body during growing up, and an intrapersonal psychological crisis that leads to self-criticism, rejection of oneself, and devaluation of one's own achievements. EIE for schoolchildren is an intensely stressful factor that most students cannot handle on their own.

Thus, in the general sample, the number of high school students with difficulties in adaptation considerably exceeds the number of students who have a high level of adaptation to passing the EIE. Based on the results obtained by multidimensional statistics methods, the author presents a generalised empirical model of the results obtained. The first group of students can be called "maladaptive", and the second group – "adaptive" – Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Groups of students in Grades 11 (based on psychological features of adaptation to the EIE)

Representatives of the "adaptive" group of high school students have high stress tolerance (which can be caused by innate resistance and stress resistance skills acquired during life) and low situational anxiety. They are characterised by high and adequate self-esteem, students are fully confident in their abilities, so they tend to be optimistic about the future and perceive non-standard situations as challenges that help achieve the desired goals.

A high level of stress tolerance contributes to rapid adaptation and is the key to mental well-being and an indispensable condition for the social stability of graduates during the period of change. Special attention should be paid to the development of this psychological competence in adolescents, stress resistance determines the effectiveness of activity and psychological comfort of the individual and affects the psychosomatic and autonomic state of students.

High stress tolerance, self-confidence, and the ability to handle anxiety are combined in this group with a sense of emotional comfort in various life situations. Students with a high level of adaptation feel the availability of internal resources, so they are not inclined to use the coping strategy “search for social support”, they do not depend much on the opinion of the social environment, they are guided by their own views and values.

High school students from the “maladaptive” group have low rates of adaptation to passing the EIE, tend to experience anxiety in non-standard or difficult situations, so they commonly seek support and guidance from others (high rates for coping “search for social support”). Coping “Search for social support” is an active behavioural strategy in which a person in a stressful situation seeks help from important people. However, the constant and inflexible use of this strategy can shape adolescents' external responses to critical situations. Such a negative vector of a coping strategy can establish a dependent position of a teenager, the desire to meet the expectations of others, and the inability to use their own internal resources for adaptation. Such students have low self-esteem, are insecure, which is reflected in low resistance to stress factors and feelings of emotional discomfort. Such a group of adolescents may have psychological difficulties in the situation of passing an external independent evaluation. Children may become confused, and their nervous tension will decrease their cognitive and intellectual functions, which negatively affects the exam result.

Self-esteem is one of the main structural components of a person's self-awareness, which is actively developed during the transition period. Self-esteem is called the core of personality, which regulates behaviour, improves adaptation, and participates in the establishment of stress tolerance.

The division of schoolchildren into clusters allowed determining which of the subjects have a low level of socio-psychological adaptation. Students with a low level of psychological adaptation to the EIE are recommended to work with a psychologist or participate in specialised training. For these students, the author developed a special programme to optimise the adaptive potential of the individual and establish functional psychological competencies. Such a set of measures for professional psychological preparation of students for stressful situations is an important prerequisite for successful testing and the mental and physiological health of the individual.

The correctional programme consists of 10 group classes based on values and methodological principles of the cognitive-behavioural approach. The strategic goal of the programme is to optimise the psychological adaptation of graduates in preparing for the EIE. The main objectives of the programme are: the establishment of psychological competencies of schoolchildren, increasing the level of stress tolerance, relieving situational anxiety associated with pre-examination preparation, the improvement of self-control skills, the development of adequate positive self-esteem, increasing the adaptive potential of students, improving time management and planning skills, correcting destructive behavioural response strategies in stressful situations, mastering ways of effective relaxation and concentration.

Working with a psychologist helped reduce anxiety and emotional stress to moderate intensity. Students learned to control their excessive experiences and emotional lability in stressful situations. However, children with high situational anxiety require special attention from a psychologist. Although this type of anxiety is short-term and is directly related to preparing and passing the EIE, it can take a chronic form and turn into personal property.

CONCLUSIONS

The result of successful psychological adaptation of graduate students to the EIE can be considered a stable personal adaptation potential. In this context, adaptation is an extremely important prerequisite for passing the test without such negative feelings as discomfort, anxiety, tension, and stress. In the final grade, learning loads increase considerably which destructively affects students' psyche and nervous system, leads to emotional exhaustion, which is one of the basic determinants of the development of various psychopathologies and somatic diseases. It is vital to take care of the child's mental health and establish a sufficient level of stress tolerance.

Consequently, the main task of psychological adaptation of students to the EIE is to establish a stable psychological and physical readiness to apply all their resources and demonstrate in a short period of time the highest possible level of relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities in new, unusual conditions. The importance of this stage in students' lives is also conditioned by the fact that it is a kind of test that determines the ability to mobilise all skills for successful adaptation to complex situations. The acquired constructive psychological competencies will help students effectively show their knowledge on the exam and maintain

mental and somatic health. In the unstable period of adolescent crisis and active preparation for EIE, which is perceived by schoolchildren as a stressful event, a young person needs attention and support more than ever. That is why the issue of psychological support for final grade students in preparing for

the EIE is particularly relevant. Professional psychological assistance will reduce emotional tension and anxiety during testing, increase the student's level of self-confidence, develop the necessary skills that will allow handling stress during the exam and getting high results.

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