

EUROPEAN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY
RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT STUDIES

VOLUME04 ISSUE11

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55640/eijmrms-04-11-25>

Pages: 160-168



SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS OF EMOTIONAL DISORDERS IN YOUTH

Saidboyeva Barno Endirboy Kizi

Teacher-Intern Of The Department Of Pedagogy And Psychology Karakalpak State University, Uzbekistan

ABOUT ARTICLE

Key words: Emotional attitude to dangerous situations, perception of dangerous situations, recognition of emotional states, youth.

Received: 19.11.2024

Accepted: 24.11.2024

Published: 30.11.2024

Abstract: The article explores the issue of examining emotional states within the framework of psychological safety among adolescents and young individuals with both intact and impaired intellectual abilities. The study hypothesizes that the development of emotional states during the perception of hazardous situations by students depends on their age and the presence of intellectual impairments. The findings can serve as a foundation for designing programs aimed at fostering adolescents' and young individuals' abilities to adequately perceive and respond to dangerous situations, taking into account their age and intellectual integrity or impairments.

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, researchers have increasingly focused on the study of safety issues concerning the younger generation. Psychological studies address various aspects of safe behavior among children in different contexts, such as on the street (traffic safety and interactions with strangers) [10], at home (handling fire, electrical appliances, and medications), in nature (facing wildfires, floods, and earthquakes) [9; 17], online (social networks and websites) [4; 12; 14], and during technological accidents, disasters, or public unrest [3].

Given that children, adolescents, and young people are particularly vulnerable to diverse risks, scholars have directed their attention toward creating educational conditions that promote safe living. This includes fostering knowledge about potential dangers, the ability to anticipate and avoid them, and appropriate reactions when confronted with them [8].

Recently, both international and domestic researchers have concentrated on the psychological safety of the educational environment. This involves examining the causes and conditions of various dangers faced by students in schools, such as bullying and mobbing, and developing a culture of safe behavior [1; 7; 13; 16; 19; 20].

Equally significant is the issue of investigating the behavior of minors (mainly adolescents) in socially hazardous situations that pose risks to their life and health. These circumstances often evoke intense emotional experiences, requiring specialized corrective interventions. For example, research by O.I. Kaluga and E.V. Samal found that adolescents from disadvantaged families in socially dangerous conditions exhibit high levels of anxiety, fear, and anger. They tend to develop destructive and negative attitudes toward themselves and the world [2].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Foreign researchers emphasize that modern youth (adolescents and young people aged 14 to 20) are particularly prone to risky behavior and often lack the ability to evaluate and articulate their own emotions. G. Zimmermann notes that proponents of the cognitive approach to risky behavior argue that adolescents tend to exhibit cognitive egocentrism, dismissing risks and perceiving themselves as invulnerable [22]. However, as the author points out, studies conducted over the past three decades challenge this view, with increasing attention being paid to the role of emotional processes in shaping adolescents' propensity for risky behavior.

B.A. Morrongiello and S. Mateis further observe that susceptibility to various dangers increases with age due to children's tendency toward risk-taking behaviors, resulting in a rise in injury rates, peaking during adolescence. Moreover, the types of dangers faced by individuals vary with age. For adolescents, these dangers include drug use, alcohol consumption, and smoking [21].

E.V. Lizunova asserts that the ability to respond effectively to dangerous situations depends on an individual's life experience and knowledge of safety rules. A lack of these factors breeds anxiety, self-doubt, and fear, which dominate the individual's consciousness and impair their capacity to act appropriately in hazardous situations [9].

The ability to understand one's own emotions, recognize others' emotional states, and manage them is understood in psychology as emotional intelligence. Theoretical and empirical studies have enabled Y.A. Koroleva to establish that adolescents with intellectual impairments demonstrate an underdeveloped ability to comprehend and consider the emotional states of their communication

partners. Their emotional repertoire is limited, and they struggle to differentiate emotions such as resentment, guilt, fear, and anger [5].

The involvement of the emotional component in recognizing dangerous situations has been highlighted in studies by J.D. Henry and colleagues [18]. They emphasize that detecting threats through facial expressions (processing emotions) is a critical aspect of ensuring safety when interacting with potentially dangerous individuals. This ability is notably impaired in individuals with intellectual disabilities.

The study aimed to explore the specific characteristics of how adolescents and young individuals perceive dangerous situations.

The following hypothesis was proposed: the development of the perception of dangerous situations varies depending on both age and the presence (or absence) of intellectual impairments. Specifically, young individuals are expected to demonstrate a higher level of development in perceiving dangerous situations compared to adolescents. Furthermore, adolescents and young individuals with intact intellectual abilities are anticipated to show a greater ability to perceive dangerous situations than their peers with intellectual impairments.

The perception of dangerous situations in this context includes:

- The type of response to danger.
- Emotional attitudes toward dangerous situations, particularly the ability to identify and express emotions in response to perceived danger.
- The capacity to recognize the emotional states of participants involved in dangerous situations.

The study was conducted in several stages:

1. Selecting a research sample aligned with the study's objectives.
2. Developing a diagnostic framework.
3. Analyzing and interpreting the collected data.

The study was conducted by fourth-year full-time students from Karakalpak State University. Prior to the research, training seminars were held to familiarize them with the methodology and procedures. The data collection process spanned two months (October–November 2024). Each student was individually assessed in a private room during the morning hours.

Participants for the group of students with intact intellectual abilities were selected randomly, ensuring alignment with the required age range. The sample for students with intellectual impairments was formed based on the analysis of psycho-medical-pedagogical documentation (conclusions from the psycho-medical-pedagogical commission) and consideration of the age distribution. The age groups were divided as follows:

- Adolescents (12–14 years old).
- Young individuals (16–18 years old).

This structured approach ensured the reliability and relevance of the participant selection process.

The study employed the following experimental methodologies:

1. Questionnaire on Identifying Attitudes Toward Danger by V.G. Maralov et al. (The reliability of this methodology was not verified) [6].
2. "Adolescents' Emotional Attitudes Toward Dangerous Situations" Methodology, developed by the authors.
3. "Adolescents in Dangerous Situations" Methodology, also developed by the authors [15].

These tools were designed to comprehensively assess participants' perceptions and responses to dangerous situations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of emotional attitudes toward dangerous situations, assessed using the "Adolescents' Emotional Attitudes Toward Dangerous Situations" methodology, revealed significant patterns in responses among participants with and without intellectual impairments.

Participants with Intact Intellectual Abilities

The analysis of responses from participants with intact intellectual abilities demonstrated a predominantly negative emotional attitude toward dangerous situations. These individuals expressed a wide range of emotional states, including:

- Compassion and empathy for the victims.
- Anger and hostility toward those responsible for the danger.
- Surprise and confusion, particularly in unexpected scenarios.
- Shame, often linked to irrational or reckless behavior of participants in the situations.

A smaller proportion of respondents (23.76%) displayed indifference toward participants of dangerous situations. This state of detachment was mostly episodic and appeared in cases where the individual involved in the situation was both a victim and the cause of the danger.

Interestingly, the responses often reflected multiple, sometimes contradictory, emotional states. For example:

- One respondent expressed regret about a person being hospitalized due to medication poisoning but also felt confusion and disgust because the person's actions—taking medication without a prescription—were perceived as irrational.
- Another respondent commented on a scenario involving careless behavior with wild animals, expressing shock, surprise, and anger at someone entering a lion's cage despite warning signs. Simultaneously, they felt sympathy for the individual, recognizing the potential for severe injury or death.

Participants with intact intellect also demonstrated an ability to distinguish emotional attitudes toward different individuals in the scenario. For instance:

- Empathy and sympathy were directed toward victims.
- Anger, disgust, or hatred were expressed toward those deemed responsible for the dangerous situations.

Participants with Intellectual Impairments

The qualitative analysis of responses from participants with intellectual impairments revealed both similarities and notable differences compared to their peers without impairments. While these individuals also expressed negative attitudes toward dangerous situations and showed emotional reactions, their responses were less nuanced and more limited in emotional range. Specific findings included:

- Less frequent expression of complex emotional states, such as regret mixed with anger.
- Reduced ability to differentiate their emotional attitudes toward victims and culprits in dangerous situations.
- More episodic and generalized responses, often lacking detailed reasoning for their emotional attitudes.

Overall, while participants with intellectual impairments shared some patterns with their peers, the depth and variability of their emotional responses were noticeably less developed. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to enhance emotional understanding and processing in individuals with intellectual impairments.

Participants with intellectual impairments exhibited emotional responses similar in modality to their peers with intact intellectual abilities. Commonalities included:

- Sadness regarding the unfavorable outcomes for those involved.
- Compassion and sympathy for victims.
- Anger and resentment toward those responsible for the dangerous situations.
- Surprise at the irrational behavior of victims.
- Fear of becoming a victim of such situations themselves.
- Frustration that an individual ended up in danger due to others' actions.

These findings suggest that participants with intellectual impairments are capable of experiencing emotions aligned with those of their peers with intact intellects when perceiving dangerous situations.

Table 1

Intergroup differences in the parameters of perception of dangerous situations in the group of respondents of adolescence and youth

Parameters	Adolescents (n=83)	Representatives of adolescence (n=74)	Statistics	
			U	p-level
	Sum of ranks	Сумма рангов		
Adequate type of response to dangers	6486,5	5916,5	3000,5	0,804
Anxious type of response to dangers	6744,5	5658,5	2883,5	0,510
Ignoring type of response to dangers	6575,0	5828,0	3053,0	0,950
Uncertain type of response in dangerous situations	6642,5	5760,5	2985,5	0,764
Emotional attitude	6936,0	5467,0	2692,0	0,183
to dangers of the physical environment	6872,5	5530,5	2755,5	0,267

Emotional attitude	7043,0	5360,0	2585,0	0,087
to dangers of the social environment	6294,0	6109,0	2808,0	0,355
Emotional attitude	7028,5	5374,5	2599,5	0,097
to dangers of the information environment	5140,0	7263,0	1654,0	0,001
Emotional attitude	5357,5	7045,5	1871,5	0,001
to dangers of the educational environment	5671,0	6732,0	2185,0	0,002
Integral indicator of emotional attitude to dangerous situations	5091,5	7311,5	1605,5	0,001

The statistical analysis partially supports the research hypothesis that the perception of dangerous situations is influenced by both age and the presence (or absence) of intellectual disabilities. First, let's address the age-related differences in emotional state manifestation during the perception of dangerous situations. Young adults demonstrated a stronger ability to recognize emotional states compared to adolescents. Among adolescents, the ability to identify emotional states was particularly pronounced across all types of dangerous situations affecting the physical, social, and informational environments.

However, the hypothesis suggesting age-related differences in the development of attitudes toward dangerous situations was not confirmed. Adolescents and young adults exhibited no significant differences in their level of response to danger. Responses such as adequate, anxious, dismissive, and uncertain did not vary significantly between the two age groups.

Now, turning to differences related to intellectual disabilities, this factor accounted for more substantial variations in respondents' perceptions of dangerous situations. Clear distinctions emerged between participants with and without intellectual impairments in both their emotional responses to dangerous situations and their ability to recognize the emotions of those involved.

CONCLUSION

The results of the analysis of foreign and domestic studies have shown that the study of the emotional aspect of safe behavior is only beginning to be considered in psychological science on various social samples in relation to different types of dangers. The need to study this problem is due to the fact that it is the emotional reactions of an individual that determine decision-making and define his behavior in a particular dangerous situation.

The hypothesis that the formation of the perception of dangerous situations will differ depending on both age and the presence (absence) of intellectual disabilities has received partial confirmation, namely:

1. In adolescence, the ability to recognize emotional states is higher than in adolescence. This applies to the recognition of emotional states of people in danger of physical, social and information environments. At the same time, the adolescent attitude to dangerous situations does not differ significantly in the level of formation from a similar attitude in adolescence. There are no age differences in the level of response to dangers;
2. The differences found in children with impaired intelligence compared to their peers with intact intelligence concern both the emotional attitude to dangerous situations and the ability to recognize emotions in people who find themselves in these situations. In general, adolescents and young people with impaired intelligence have lower levels of formation of this attitude and recognition of emotions than children with intact intelligence.

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