

**CORRECTION OF ATTENTION OF ADOLESCENTS WITH MENTAL
RETARDATION**

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Abstract

The article analyzes the issue of determining the features of the attention of adolescents with mental retardation and the main theoretical approaches of domestic and foreign scientists to study this issue. It is established that mental retardation is a common deviation of children due to disorders of the central nervous system and unfavorable conditions of education in early and preschool childhood. Psychological features of adolescents with BPD are identified, which allows to identify insufficient use of their own life experience in the process of acquiring knowledge, inability to generalize previously formed ideas, inertia, selectivity and stability of attention as a result of which all children with BPD use of means of correctional and psychological influence. The selection of factors accelerating the mental development of children with BPD requires further study and involves in-depth study of the features of attention, in order to comprehensively identify the relationships between the properties of attention and clarify the importance of their development. These studies indicate the complexity of the simultaneous perception of surrounding objects and distractions during important activities, resulting in no assimilation of relevant information; non-involvement in the activity, the inability of the subject to keep in focus a certain number of objects simultaneously, the impossibility of simultaneous successful performance of two or more activities. There is a significant direct correlation between concentration and selectivity of attention, as well as between concentration and volume, selectivity and volume, stability, distribution of switching with the volume of attention. The results of the study led to the development of a program of psychological support, taking into account the interaction of signs of attention.

Keywords: special psychology, mental retardation, mental processes, attention, adolescence.

Introduction

At the modern stage of development of Psychological science mental retardation is one of the deviations among children and it is defined as a bordering state between normal and pathology. Relevance of this research is based on characterization of this phenomenon, singling out features of children's attention with different forms of mental retardation, as well as argumentation of role of psychological support of children with different forms of mental retardation for timely correction of defects. Mental retardation is defined as a slow rate of maturation of mental functions: thinking, emotional-volitional sphere, attention, memory, which fall behind the generally accepted age norms; it is expressed in limitations of imagination, dominance of gaming interests,

exclusively children's interests, immaturity of thinking. In most certain syndromes, states and disorders, such as anorexia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, enuresis, unmotivated fears, etc., could complicate mental retardation.

Causes of occurrence are also genetic predisposition, brain dysfunction during fetal development, complications during childbirth, chronic diseases in early childhood, inappropriate conditions of upbringing, etc. Study of psychological features of adolescents with mental retardation allows singling out insufficient use of one's own life experience in the process of mastering the knowledge, inability to generalize previously formed ideas. That is the reason why all children with mental retardation have significant difficulties in learning the material, which causes necessity in work with children with mental retardation to apply means of correction-psychological influence.

The purpose of the research is theoretical analysis and empirical study of features of correction of attention among adolescents with mental retardation.

Theoretical background

There is a current growing tendency of occurrence of behavioral disorders in children and their social maladaptation in today's crisis challenges. It is an actual problem of not only age psychology, but of special psychology as well. In the area of special psychology a plan of studying and correction of development of children with mental retardation are developed. They are based on the notion of L.Vygotsky about unity of laws of development of normal and abnormal child, which were defined by him in his concept of cultural-historical mental development, as well as in works devoted to studying specifics of forming of psychological activity during various defect of development.

K.Lebedynka singles out four main variants of mental retardation: 1) constitutional origin; 2) somatogenous; 3) psychogenic; 4) cerebral-organic genesis. In clinical-psychological structure of each one of variants of mental retardation there is a specific combination of immaturity of emotional and intellectual spheres (Astapov, Mikadze, 2008). In research of O. Babiak it is indicated that schoolchildren with mental retardation have internal preconditions of interpersonal interaction; at the same time there are cognitive simplicity with dominance of affectivity, inability to take the position of the other, understand his/her psychological state, which with insufficient level of motivation leads to worsening relationships with peers, complicating social adaptation. In general in the process of complex development the child's psyche is exposed to many factors, level of its disorder depends on a peculiar combination of unfavorable biological, social and psychological-pedagogical factors (Babiak, 2011).

Problem of determination of factors, which can influence acceleration of mental development of children with mental retardation, requires further research, it presupposes a deep study of their psyche, determination of psychological-pedagogical conditions of education and upbringing, provision of parents' and professors' counseling support, which could enable the course of their mental and personality development (Hafen, 2015). According to the last ten-years studies (T.Vlasova, V.Morgyn, N.Nikashina, N.Tsipina, R.Triger, Y.Ylenkova, G.Zharenova) mental retardation in a child may be related not only with brain damage, which is formed,

specially in a period of fetal and early development. It also can be caused by unfavorable conditions of microsial and pedagogical influence, because degree of mental disorder of a child depends on a peculiar combination of unfavorable biological, social and psychological-pedagogical factors.

As a result of complex psychological-pedagogical and neuropsychological examination of children with mental retardation L.Shipnitsa and O.Zashirina revealed the following tendencies: limited memory; reduced memory stability and low speed; characteristic inaccuracy of reproduction and quick loss of information, when most effected is verbal memory; decrease of number of objects which child tries to remember, while deterioration of random visual memory compared to involuntary visual one; decrease of amount of auditory memory in conditions of heavy load; insufficient ability to use special memorization techniques. Character of mental activity is reproductive, that is why children with mental retardation have not high skills to creative creation of new images and slow process of forming of mental operations.

In spite of individual peculiarities of personality and behavior of adolescents with mental retardation, development of children of this category follows the general laws of personality formation at the adolescent stage of ontogenesis. However, immaturity and different degree of damage to set of psychological functions make psycho-physical, intellectual and social development more difficult. Adolescent neoplasms, leading activities, needs, interests have specific peculiarities, compared to children with normal development (Andrade, 2010). Adolescents with mental retardation differ in the uncertainty of interests and plans for future, their orientation is characterized as "looking into the past", it is full of infantile interests of previous age stage. Therefore, there is often a paradoxical implementation of some adolescent or adult tendencies in a gaming forms, and vice versa, when gaming interests have adult forms of behavior (Astapov, Mikadze, 2008).

Results of research of G.Gribanova show that adolescents with mental retardation are weakly focused on interaction with peers. Insufficient level of their self-awareness is manifested in unfounded, inflated demands, which is the cause of significant instability of self-esteem, increased suggestibility, lack of independence, stereotyped judgements, uncritical, reassessment of characterological personality traits, instability of positions in deciding some issues, which often leads to antisocial behavior. L.Kuznetsova, when giving psychological characterization to adolescents with mental retardation, indicates a combination of increased emotional instability with anxiety, increased affective saturation with incomprehensibility of specific ways of realization of emotional alienation from close relatives. O. Dzugkoeva determined that adolescents with mental retardation are more conflicting in relationships; in complex conflict situations this group of children often reacts aggressively, with irritation, shows negativism and ignorance of social norms (Vyskovatova, 2001).

V.Lutonian highlights: memory performance in children with mental retardation is lower than in normally developed peers; it is typical to have a decrease in concentration of attention, which reflects in learning process. Damages of voluntary attention of adolescents with mental retardation hinder the realization of children's cognitive activity, slow down the process of concentration and selectivity, complicate

implementation of processes of perception and memory. With mental retardation with syndrome of hyperactivity, there is a disorder of voluntary attention in the form of high level of distraction to insignificant external stimuli. Insufficient volume of voluntary attention is quite often found in children with mental retardation with cerebrastenic and asthenic syndromes, expressed by psychophysical infantilism (Babiak, 2011).

O.Ovsianova indicates that adolescents with mental retardation have the following features of attention: instability, which leads to decrease of productivity, causes difficulties in performing tasks, demands constant control and indicates the immaturity of nervous system; decreased concentration, which reveals in appearance of difficulties in concentrating on the object of activity, quick fatigue; deterioration of selectivity and distribution of attention; difficulties in switching from one activity to another, lack of flexible reaction to changing circumstances.

Z.Trzhesoglava defined that significant shortcomings of voluntary attention among adolescents with mental retardation occur with high fatigue, asthenia, lack of motivation to study.

In works of O.Maliny it is noted that psychological support of correction of cognitive process of adolescents should be carried out on the basis of correctly selected specific mental actions and psycho-correctional tasks, implementing integrated management of internalization and externalization processes as effective means of acquiring knowledge, skills and abilities. It was defined that adolescents with mental retardation unlike their peers with normal development do not use enough their own life experience and have significant difficulties in learning educational material, which requires necessity of using by psychologists correctional-psychological influences in working with children with mental retardation (Kolesina,2000).

Methodology

In order to achieve defined objective the complex of theoretical and empirical methods of research was used: analysis, systematization and generalization of theoretical data regarding problem of mental retardation; ascertaining research; psycho-diagnostical methods for identifying features of attention: methods aimed at studying selectivity and concentration of attention "Test of G.Munsterberg", test «Numerical square» to diagnose the general level of attention and psycho-diagnostical test to determine overall level of stability, distribution and switching "Tables of Shulte"; methods of statistical data treatment (T – Criteria of Vilkokson, coefficient of Spearman) (Astapov, Mikadze, 2008).

Empirical research of features of attention among adolescents with mental retardation was performed on the basis of Kremenchug school #19 Kremenchuk City Council Poltava region and Municipal institution of inclusive-resource center "Nadiya" od department of education, youth and sports of executive committee of Omelnyk Village Council of Kremenchuk district Poltava region. Total number of respondents is 30 respondents, aged from 12 to 16 years old, study sample is homogeneous by age category.

Results

Based on the primary data of method "Test of G.Munsterberg" it was defined that: 50 % of schoolchildren with mental retardation have low level of concentration

and selective attention, which indicates presence of difficulties in learning activities (missing words in written tasks, spelling mistakes, inattention during lessons, distraction). Children with low level of concentration and selective attention during lessons are many times distracted to other issues, they are usually under high level of control by teacher and psychologist, require complex approach from professionals and use of correctional program in order to normalize level of development of cognitive area. There is medium level of concentration of attention among 33% of respondents and 17% of respondents have high level of concentration of attention. 47% of schoolchildren have medium level of selective attention, 3% of adolescents have high level of selective attention. After realization of social-psychological training of correction of attention among adolescents with mental retardation, it was noted that indicators of concentration increased from low level – 100% to medium level (93 %), high level of this feature appeared in 7% of participants of experimental group. It was also defined that low level of selective attention, which 100% of respondents had, lowered down to 7%, and simultaneously medium level (80%) became dominating one, 13% of adolescents after realized training showed high values on this scale.

Results of initial examination based on method “Numeric square” showed that general level of volume, distribution and switching of attention among adolescents with mental retardation is low (50%), which indicates complexity of simultaneous perception of surrounding objects and distractions during important activities, as a result there is no assimilation of relevant information, non-involvement in the activity, inability of subjects to keep in focus certain number of objects at the same time, possibility of simultaneous successful implementation of two or more activities. After realization of training, most respondents of experimental group have medium level of general volume of attention (87 %), we also observe appearance of high level of volume of attention among 13% of adolescents.

Method “Tables of Shulte” gives a possibility to check concentration of attention of adolescents. In the initial stage it was noted: 50 % of adolescents have low level of attention, which is revealed in inability to concentrate on necessary stimulus, while pupil can be distracted by noise, thoughts, etc, as a result quality of performed work is worsening. 47 % of respondents showed medium level of concentration of attention, with which it is easier to perform work, minimum level of errors, better memorization of information. Only 3% of adolescents have high level of this variable. Results of adolescents with mental retardation of experimental group after performing training show reduction of quantity of respondents with low level of concentration of attention from 100% to 7%, appearance of dominating medium manifestation of concentration of attention (86 %), manifestation of high level of this variable is observed in 7 % of schoolchildren. In order to determine interconnection between features of attention among adolescents with mental retardation Spearman coefficient was used. Performed analysis gives a possibility to state presence of significant direct correlation between concentration and selective attention, selectivity and volume, stability, distribution switching with volume of attention.

Results of research led to the development of the program of psychological support, taking in to account interinfluence of features of attention. First, we consolidate

stability, distribution and switching of attention; then we move on to development: concentration and selectivity, which are at the low level; then we improve arbitrariness and observation of adolescents.

Forming experiment was held during October-November 2020, experimental group consisted of children with low level of attention development. Classes according to the program of social-psychological training of correction of attention were conducted with respondents from experimental group Task of psycho-correction is to develop attention of adolescents with mental retardation (individual-group form). Psycho-correctional program include exercises, which include presence of deep reflexive components, receiving feedback, turbulent emotional experiences; it is composed of set of specifically organized classes, selected taking in to account individual and age features: five classes during two-three hours for 10-15 persons of adolescent age, frequency of meetings – once or twice a week. Depending on the quality of participants number of classes and their duration were adjusted for specific group.

In order to check revealed in the course of research differences between results of experimental group before and after training session, criteria of Vilkokson was applied. Results obtained after mathematical-statistical processing of data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Results of experimental group before and after corerctional influence

Properties of attention	Concentration	Selectivity	Amount of attention	Concentration
Z	-3,415 ^b	-3,417 ^b	-3,411 ^b	-3,420 ^b
Asimp. value. (bilateral)	,001	,001	,001	,001

Results of checking hypothesis about existence of differences between experimental group before and after training according to criteria of Vilkokson indicate presence of significant differences between groups on selected scales. Therefore, due to mathematical-statistical data processing it was proved that there is statistically relevant differences between adolescents with mental retardation before and after correctional influence; program of social-psychological training is efficient and can be used in leaning process.

Discussion

Relevance of research of problem of mental retardation is confirmed by a number of publications. In particular, T.Tkachuk defines mental retardation as reverse disorders of intellectual and emotional-volitional spheres, which are accompanies by difficulties of acquiring educational knowledge and skills. Such children often have disrupted school adaptation and adaptation to conditions of society in general (Tkachuk, Taube, 2018). The author claims that mental retardation is noted only when entering the school. If in the sensitive period of development child does not receive help in overcoming

difficulties, in adolescence complications accumulate and worsen, and mental development does not reach the same level by itself, as in normally developed peers. (Sergeeva, 2015). From the point of view of O.Malyny, the primary task of practical psychology is to provide effective and timely assistance to children with mental retardation in the initial stage of manifestation of this disorder.

Conclusion

Thus results of theoretical analysis of adolescents with mental retardation reveal existence of tendency to high level of anxiety; difficulties in communicative sphere: lack of ability to clearly define their roles as a communicational partner, increased conflicts, which indicate higher level of frustration in situations of interpersonal communication, difficulties in learning, caused by underperformance of cognitive sphere. Data of empirical research state domination of low level of attention of respondents, which interferes with successful mastering of various types of activities, does not contribute to the normal adaptation to future entry of adolescents into adulthood, and also serves as an obstacle on the way of forming of harmonious, mature personality. Forming and increasing of general features of attention among schoolchildren with mental retardation include use of corrective-developing exercise, gaming techniques, methods, dedicated to improving cognitive sphere and ability to distribute attention properly while performing activities.

Introduction of program of correction of attention of adolescents with mental retardation helped to increase indicators of concentration, selectivity and general volume of attention from low to dominating medium and high levels.

Perspective of further research is analysis of influence of mental retardation on academic performance of pupils, social-psychological climate in a family, checking existence of emotional burnout of parents of children with mental retardation.

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