

**PRRAEPGDA 2020****Personal and Regulatory Resources in Achieving Educational and Professional Goals in the Digital Age****SOCIO-MORAL COMPONENT OF A TEENAGER'S PERSONAL AGENCY: INFLUENCE OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

Tatiana Anikeevna Antopolskaya (a)\*, Aleksandr Sviatoslavovich Silakov (b)

\*Corresponding author

(a) Kursk State University, Kursk, Russia, antopolskaya@yandex.ru

(b) Kursk State University, Kursk, Russia, alssil@mail.ru

***Abstract***

The article reveals the problem of a teenager's personal agency socio-moral component formation in the additional education environment. It considers theoretical aspects of this problem as viewed by different scientists. The authors draw the reader's attention to the substantive aspects of personal agency phenomenon and its connection with various conditions of social environment during the adolescence. The presented component structure is viewed at the following levels: socio-individual, socio-communicative, socio-interactive and socio-moral. The article also describes research results and methods used while studying personal agency socio-moral component of adolescents both integrated in the system of additional education and those who do not participate in its activities. It deals with the controversial issues of personal agency individual components formation, such as: social responsibility and moral-axiological attitude to the social environment subjects. The reader's attention is drawn to the potential of a socially enriched environment of additional education for modern adolescents' personal agency formation. The research revealed some significant dissimilarities in the personal agency socio-moral component of school children belonging to the control group and those belonging to the experimental group. Adolescents from the experimental group showed more positive socio-moral orientation of personal agency as well as a stinger capability to perceive moral codes necessary to interact with the outer world.

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**Keywords:** Personal agency, adolescent, social and moral development, the environment of additional education.

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## **1. Introduction**

Changing sociocultural situation and conditions of modern adolescents' socialization, associated with “live” communication rejection in favour of virtual contacts, along with axiological disorientation and social nihilism defined researchers’ interest in trying to identify personal agency features of a growing up individual.

Personal agency is manifested in various abilities: the ability to transform external conditions, self-organize your own mental and personal capabilities while acting (Abulkhanova, 2016), face the circumstances (Brushlinsky, 2001); recognize the acts committed as “free moral acts” and take responsibility for them (Znakov, 2016).

Preconditions for the personal agency formation are formed in adolescence: the ability to set goals, axiological sphere development, personal autonomy and a sense of adulthood, independence and self-awareness, caused by the process of personalization. Teenagers’ awareness of their social involvement, formation of social positions “I am in society” and “Me and society” let adolescents become more active in social relations (Feldstein, 2005).

These properties and processes are vividly manifested in modern digital generation representatives, who have unlimited opportunities for obtaining and processing Internet information and acting online (Miroshkina, 2017). According to researchers, a modern teenager designs new virtual world for himself, thus acting as an active project figure (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005). On the one hand intensive networking communication implicates risks in the process of personal agency formation. On the other hand, on social media a teenager searches for adults and peers significant for him, joins communities important for him, i.e. gets the opportunity to participate in network social life, ensuring formation of personal agency – the resource defending him from negative influences of real social environment (Grishina & Volkova, 2018).

## **2. Problem Statement**

Considering personal agency formation problem socially, researchers believe that, firstly, personal agency exists initially in a social form. Secondly, it does not exist by itself being formed and simultaneously realized only by given individuals, groups and subjects in the space of relations and interactions. Thirdly, in order to become an individual quality, it must be internalized (Panov, 2018; Saiko, 2006).

In our opinion socially enriched environment of children additional education institutions (Antopolskaya, 2018) allows to cultivate natural uniqueness of each child, ensures accelerated development of a teenager’s new social experience in interaction with significant adults implementing various options for group and individual learning. Free choice of content and activity forms has a huge educational potential focusing on moral, spiritual, cultural and social values.

## **3. Research Questions**

The process of a teenager’s personal agency formation in a socially enriched environment of additional education is considered by us at four levels: socially-individual, socially-communicative,

socially-interactive and socially-moral. In this article we discuss the socio-moral component of adolescents' personal agency formation as their ability to be socially responsible and have moral-axiological relations with subjects of the social environment.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to define developmental aspects of personal agency socio-moral component of adolescents engaged in additional education environment. Exploring social environment nature and conditions, mediating personal agency development in adolescents through variety of subjects and activities, will help to specify socio-moral focus of adolescents' personal agency and examine their attitude to social responsibility.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The survey study (experimental group, hereinafter referred to as the EG) was made up of students from the innovative Kursk additional education centre "Dialogue" and adolescents from Kursk educational recreational center "Magister". The control group (CG) was made by adolescents aged 13 to 16 having no experience of training in additional education system. Both groups included 63 adolescents, the total sample size being 126.

The empirical data were collected using the following psychodiagnostic techniques: "Questionnaire for personal agency structure diagnosing" invented by Volkova and Seregina (Volkova, 1998); modified for the purposes of our exploration "Self-assessment of personal agency features, shown in interaction with social environment" (Saraeva, 2018); "Individual mindset altruism-egoism diagnosis" (Fetiskin et al., 2002). To process the obtained data, we used descriptive statistics and Student's t-test.

#### **6. Findings**

Table 1 shows the degree of adolescents' personal agency features development obtained using "Self-assessment of personal agency features, shown in interaction with social environment".

Calculation of arithmetic means of features under study in CG and EG revealed no noticeable differences, which is confirmed by Student's t-test data. "Self-control", "responsibility", "independence" and "self-organization" indicators were close in all examinees. The median values for the features also coincide ( $Me = 4$ ) implying that their development in adolescents is quite high. "My stand" has average values  $M = 3.95$  in CG and  $M = 4.38$  in EG. So, adolescents included in the environment of additional education institutions are keen on forming their own point of view on significant events.

The ability to interact with people is different in the two groups: CG  $M = 3.86$ , EG  $M = 4.24$ . So, the experimental group have more confidence communicating. We attribute it to the fact that adolescents entering the system of additional education have an expanded system of contacts with adults and peers, and are involved in activities they are interested in.

"Creative nature of interaction with people" is also more pronounced in children from EG (CG  $M = 3.76$ , EG  $M = 4.19$ ). It supports developing nature of additional education institutions social environment. "Assertiveness" is also more prominent in EG (CG  $M = 3.48$ , EG  $M = 4.05$ ). Obviously,

adolescents make more sense performing the activities they are interested in than those they are obliged to. The most significant discrepancies were noted for two features. The average value of “interest” reaches maximum among all others in EG (CG M = 3.95, EG M = 4.32). The median values also differ, EG Me = 5, CG Me = 4. The value of t-test is 2.2 indicating 5% level of reliability of the detected differences. It speaks for the positive influence of the additional education environment (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Indicators of the development of personal agency qualities in the control and experimental groups

Personal agency features	t-test	Means (M)		Medians (Me)	
		CG	EG	CG	EG
Activity	4.5**	3.05	4.43	3	5
Self-control	0.7	3.8	3.62	4	4
Responsibility	0.8	4	4.19	4	4
Self-government	0.3	4.1	4.19	4	4
Viewpoint	1.8	3.95	4.38	4	4
Social communication	1.2	3.86	4.23	4	4
Creativity in communication	1.4	3.76	4.19	4	4
Self-management	0.2	3.81	3.76	4	4
Assertiveness	1.8	3.48	4.05	4	4
Involvement	2.2*	3.95	4.52	4	5
General level of personal agency	1.8	3.82	4.11	3.9	4.3

Note: \* ( $p \leq 0.05$ ); \*\* ( $p \leq 0.01$ )

The greatest gap between the two groups is manifested in "activity": average points (CG M = 3.05, EG M = 4.43), median ones (CG Me = 3, EG Me = 5). The significance of differences is at a 1% level. Since “activity” is considered to be the most significant sign of personal agency development by a number of researches, it can be assumed that the additional education environment is most effective for personal agency development in adolescents. The general level of personal agency is expected to be higher among adolescents from the experimental group. Though no statistically significant differences were found in the final parameter, there are some at the level of average and median values.

The empirical data obtained through “Questionnaire for personal agency structure diagnosing” (Volkova, 1998) are presented in Table 2. Each component is evaluated on a 4-point scale.

**Table 2.** Features of personal agency structure in the control and experimental groups.

Personal agency components	t-test	means (M)		medians (Me)	
		CG	EG	CG	EG
Activity	2.09*	2.14	2.76	2	3
Introspection	1.6	2.71	3.07	3	3
Free choice and responsibility for it	0.2	2.88	2.83	3	3
Awareness of one's uniqueness	2.1*	3.11	3.57	3	4
Understanding and acceptance of other people	0.3	2.88	2.95	3	3
Self-development	2.1*	2.93	3.33	3	3.5

Note: \* ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).

“Free choice and responsibility for it” and “understanding and acceptance of other people” practically coincide in both groups at the level of average and median values, showing the average level of development. While introspection is more pronounced in EG (CG M = 2.71, EG M = 3.07. However, statistically significant differences were not found.

As for the three remaining components there are statistically significant differences at the 5% level between EG and CG. Thus “activity” has an average level of development both in CG and EG, but while in the former the median value is equal to two, in the latter it is three. Most representatives of EG are at a high level of “self-development”, while in CG they are at an average level (CG Me = 3, EG M = 3.5). Similarly, the representatives of EG have a higher level of “awareness of one's uniqueness” (CG Me = 3, EG M = 4).

The results obtained under “Individual mindset altruism-egoism diagnosis”, reflecting predominance of either altruistic or egoistic attitudes in a teenager’s personality, were distributed the following way: less than 50 % of altruistic attitudes manifestation – low level of development of altruism in interaction with others, 50 % to 75 % - the average level, and 76 % to 100 % - a high level.

There are only isolated cases of low development of altruism in both groups – 3 % in each. The average level dominates in CG – 65 % of respondents, while in EG it is less common – 54 %. The greatest differences between the two samples were revealed at a high level of altruism: detected in EG almost twice as often as in CG: 43 % and 22 % of the respondents respectively. Consequently, the adolescents who attended the additional education institution had more willingness for interaction with others being more focused on taking into account interests of other people.

The undertaken study allows us to state that:

- the prevalence of altruistic attitudes in the individual mindset of adolescents under study allows us to talk about their personal agency positive socio-moral orientation, this aspect being more pronounced in adolescents engaged in socially enriched environment of additional education institutions;
- inclusion in additional education system allows adolescents to perceive moral standards associated with involvement in social interaction, moving away from diffuse assessments and behaviors towards understanding the motives of their actions and actual socially significant values adoption;
- we expected the level of social responsibility in EG to exceed that in CG. But it proved to be false. All the adolescents showed approximately the same level of its development, that had been assessed through different methods.
- the vast majority of adolescents in both the control and experimental groups do not have polar points of view associated with of socially significant moral norms denial. There are either no differences between their attitude to the importance of accepting other people and having successful relationships with them, or they are inconsiderable.

## **7. Conclusion**

Having analyzed the discourse of modern scholars dealing with adolescents’ social and moral development issues the authors revealed some conflicting points of view on the possibilities of personal agency development in modern socio-cultural conditions. Some researchers mention crisis phenomena in this area among young people: growth of individualism, social distance and anomie; lack of variety in

interpersonal communication subjects; the personal dominating over the public; primitive moral assessments of external phenomena and processes; moral norms diffusion (Reprintsev, 2018). There is also an opinion that the lack of value-based attitude towards moral issues in modern adolescents is a myth that has not been confirmed by large-scale studies (Klimin, 2017).

We believe that the complex phenomena associated with adolescents' personal agency socio-moral level study should be considered in more detail, taking into account various factors affecting their formation. The following factors influencing a person's mindset formation should be taken into account: genuine social situation of a teenager's personality development; orientation and diversity of his communication, including virtual; socialization agents' systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Being the most important transition period from childhood to adulthood, adolescence obliges teachers to ensure that entering society yesterday's children are sustained by a system of socially significant moral values. Adolescents' socially responsible behavior is one of the manifestations of their personal agency while they are equipped with conscious acceptance and understanding of an external norm (Lavrentieva, 2015).

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