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PSYCHOLOGICAL RESOURCES OF ADULTS WHO EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE IN CHILDHOOD

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Abstract

The article presents a study of the psychological resources of adults who experienced violence in childhood. The study sample includes 306 people aged 20 to 25 years with different incidence of violence in childhood and severity of consequences. The following tools for data collection were used: ISPCAN Child Abuse Screening Tools Retrospective version (ICAST-R), Tendency to victim behaviour test, Resilience to psychological violence in interaction scale, Responsibility test, Reflective questionnaire of self-reliance, Coping strategy indicator, Hardiness Survey, Motivation for success test, Questionnaire of subjective locus of control, Twenty-Self Statement-Test (TST) and the authors' questionnaire. The results of correlation and regression analyses confirm that the psychological resources of adults who experienced violence in childhood are self-reliance, effective coping strategies, high levels of hardiness and responsibility, motivation for success, internal locus of control, balanced identity, knowledge of violence and ways of coping with it. The differences in the psychological resources of adults who experienced different types of violence in childhood are determined.

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Keywords: Psychological resources, violence experienced in childhood, retrospective analysis.



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1. Introduction

Child abuse is a widespread phenomenon in modern social interaction. According to the United Nations' study on the prevalence of violence within four years, an estimated 275 million children experience violence or witness it each year. In Russia, about 2 million children are exposed to violence, with 40% of children are exposed to violence in families and about 30% – to violence in school (Volkova, 2008).

Theoretical and empirical studies convincingly prove the negative impact of violence experienced in childhood on the further human development. Children who have experienced violence, often have difficulties in both learning and communicating with their peers; suffer from depression, increased excitability and other mental disorders. Alcoholism and drug addiction, juvenile crimes are frequent among these children. They are characterized by increased aggressive behaviour. Frequent violence in childhood can lead to human victimization, which will ultimately affect the responses in dangerous and risky situations. However, a number of researchers argue that the facts of violence in childhood always have a significant impact on the future life. Both points of view can be considered correct, as the human development is influenced by both the perceiving the situation of violence and the psychological and social resources that one has for the successful resolution of the situation. Adults who were victims of violence in childhood are often unable to turn to other people for help, so social resources are unavailable for them. In this regard the urgency of the problem of identifying the personal psychological resources, allowing adults to cope with the delayed consequences of violence experienced in childhood, is high.

Almost every person during the lifetime faces violence against himself: some struggle with physical forms of violence (slaps, blows, beatings, kicks, etc.), others encounter psychological forms, such as disregard, intimidation, manipulation and others. As a result, certain group of adults has obvious or hidden changes in personal structures, emerged as consequences of violence experienced in childhood. Another group is able to successfully overcome all the consequences and do not show any personal changes related to the violence experienced in childhood. The difference between these groups may be explained by resources that they use to solve the emerging difficulties.

2. Problem Statement

Difficult situations are plenty in human life. One of the ways to reduce their negative impact is to search for the person's psychological resources that contribute to overcoming and successful resolution. In psychology, the works of I.A. Baeva (Baeva, 2013; Baeva, Zinchenko, & Laptev, 2016), V.A. Bodrov (Bodrov, 2006), E.B. Laktionova (Laktionova & Matyushina, 2016, 2018), K. Muzdybaev (Muzdybaev, 1998), G. A. Bonanno (Bonanno, 2008), M. Davey (Davey, Eaker, & Walters, 2003), S. E. Hobfoll (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000), S. C. Kobasa and S. R. Maddi (Kobasa, Maddi, & Kahn, 1982), C. B. Lam and C. A. McBride-Chang (Lam & McBride-Chang, 2007) and others dedicated to the study of the personal resources.

In modern studies, resources are understood as internal and external factors that contribute to psychological stability in stressful situations. The most common approach to the classification of resources is dividing them into personal and environmental. A wide range of factors of social environment is considered to be environmental resources, for example, the availability of instrumental, moral and

emotional support from the reference group, social skills, power and money. Personal resources include abilities and individual characteristics of the person (Muzdybaev, 1998, 2010, Solovyeva, 2010).

The authors analysed psychological resources that helped to cope with difficult life situations in certain periods of ontogenesis. However, there is a lack of research that reveals the resources of psychological protection of the individual from specific difficult situations. There are little retrospective studies of the consequences of violence experienced in the early stages of ontogenesis. One of the most traumatic situations is childhood violence. It can be argued that the delayed consequences of violence affect all spheres of personal development: cognitive, affective and behavioral (Alexander, 2009; Finzi, Har-Even, Shnitt, & Weizman, 2002; Green, 1985; Malkina-Pykh, 2006; pp. 582-611, Pinheiro, 2006; Rigby, 1994; Volkova, 2011).

3. Research Questions

The following questions were posed during the study:

- What are the components which structure the psychological resources of adults who experienced violence in childhood?
- Are there differences in the psychological resources of adults who experienced the various types of violence in childhood?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to identify psychological resources of adults (20-25 years) who experienced violence in childhood. We assumed that the personal resources of adults who experienced violence in childhood are a multi-component entity, whose structural elements are the self-reliance, effective coping strategies, high levels of hardiness and responsibility, the motivation for success, the internal locus of control, the balanced identity, knowledge of violence and ways of coping with it.

5. Research Methods

The study was conducted on the basis of three universities in St. Petersburg. The total number of subjects was 306, among them 132 men and 174 women.

To explore the prevalence of violence and the degree of traumatization for the respondents, we used ISPCAN Child Abuse Screening Tools Retrospective version (ICAST-R) (Volkova, 2008), Tendency to victim behaviour test by O. O. Andronnikova (Malkina-Pykh, (2006), pp. 156-167) and the Resilience to psychological violence in interaction scale by I.A. Baeva (Baeva, 2006).

ISPCAN Child Abuse Screening Tools Retrospective version (ICAST-R) is intended for a retrospective survey of respondents aged 18 to 25 on the prevalence of physical, psychological and sexual violence during their childhood (up to 18 years) in the family by parents, siblings and other relatives and at school by teachers, fellow practitioners and other children. For the study, the tools were adapted. The adaptation consisted in combining several questions into one question on a particular type of violence. The adapted version of the tool consists of 5 statements, with which the subjects may agree, disagree or answer "I do not remember". The answers allow claiming the presence or absence of physical and/or psychological violence in children's experience and the extent of its impact on a person. The Tendency to victim behavior

test by O. O. Andronnikova reveals the human tendency to behave as a victim. We used the scale "Realized victimization" for the purposes of our study. It consists of 18 statements with which the subject may agree or disagree. The scale of Resilience to psychological violence in interaction by I.A. Baeva was used to study the protection from psychological violence among respondents in childhood and at the present time. We determine the index of protection against psychological violence with this tool. We used Responsibility test by V.P. Pryadein (Pryadein, 1998), Reflective questionnaire of self-reliance by T.P. Skripkina (Skripkina, 2000), Coping strategy indicator by D. Amirkhan (Ilyin, 2004, pp. 554-555), Hardiness Survey by S. Maddi, adaptation by D.A. Leontyev and E.I. Rasskazova (Leontyev & Rasskazova, 2006), Motivation for success test by T. Ehlers (Ilyin, 2004, pp. 512-513), Questionnaire of subjective locus of control by S.R. Panteleev and V.V. Stolin (Rogov, 2004), Twenty-Self Statement-Test (TST) by M. Kuhn and T. S. McPartland, adaptation by T. V. Rumyantseva (Rumyantseva, 2006), and the authors' questionnaire to identify the personal resources of psychological safety for adults.

The authors' questionnaire was tested in a pilot study. External validity was determined by theoretical assumptions, the provisions of the theory, in which the study was conducted, and assessed by comparing the distribution of the sample results with a normal distribution using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. P-level is not significant ($p>0.2$), hence, the empirical data distribution is normal.

The questionnaire consists of 2 parts: the first part includes questions that reveal the respondents' theoretical knowledge of violence; the second part includes questions related to the life experiences of the violence encounter. The questionnaire consists of 6 questions:

1. What types of violence do you know?
2. What actions can be interpreted as physical violence?
3. What actions can be interpreted as psychological violence?
4. Do you know what to do if you face violence?
5. What did you know about violence before the age of 18?
6. Where did you get information about violence before you were 18?

The results were calculated according to following schema: the number of types of violence or sources of information indicated by the subject is recorded in the response matrix for questions 1 and 6. We took into account types of violence or sources of information, which are different from each other.

The respondent can receive from 0 to 2 points for questions 2-5. If the subject have not given an answer or written "I do not know", he is given 0 point, for a short answer - 1 point, for a full, detailed answer - 2 points.

STATISTICA ver. 7.0 was used for data analysis. We used descriptive analysis, Spearman correlation and regression analysis as methods.

6. Findings

The results revealed that 130 of total 306 people did not face violence. This allowed us to divide the sample into 2 groups (the gender of the subjects was not taken into account in this case): a group of subjects who experienced violence in childhood ($N = 176$ people) and a group of subjects who did not experience violence in childhood ($N = 130$ people). Some respondents who experienced violence in childhood noted a high or average incidence of violence in one or more forms or severity of consequences ($N = 109$ people).

They formed a group of people with high incidence of violence. Accordingly, a group of people with a low incidence of violence ($N = 67$ people) consisted of respondents with a low incidence of violence and a low level of trauma.

The correlation analysis of the indicators of two groups (group with a high incidence of childhood violence and a group without incidence of violence in childhood) was carried out to determine the psychological characteristics and resources of adults who experienced violence in childhood. As a result, relationships were established between the levels of realized victimization, resilience to psychological violence and characteristics of violence experienced in childhood. The obtained correlations served as the basis for dividing the sample into 4 groups presented on Table 01.

Table 01. Groups of respondents to define psychological resources

Level of realized victimization / Level of resilience psychological violence	Without incidence of violence	High incidence of violence
High / Low	Vulnerable (n = 38)	Unprotected (n = 49)
Low / High	Adapted (n = 92)	Protected (n = 60)

As a result, the following groups were identified:

- "Adapted" (n = 92) – a group that demonstrates a high level of resilience to psychological violence and a low level of realized victimization, and has no incidence of violence in childhood;
- "Protected" (n = 60) – a group that also shows a high level of resilience to psychological violence and a low level of realized victimization, but has a high incidence of violence in childhood;
- "Vulnerable" (n = 38) – a group that demonstrates a low level of resilience to psychological violence and a high level of realized victimization, and has no incidence of violence in childhood;
- "Unprotected" (n = 49) – a group that also shows a low level of resilience to psychological violence and a high level of realized victimization, but has a high incidence of violence in childhood.

Correlative and regression analyses were conducted among groups of "Protected" and "Unprotected" respondents to identify the psychological resources of adults rooting from the delayed consequences of violence experienced in childhood. Both groups of subjects have encountered violence, but "Protected" subjects have been able to overcome the negative consequences of violence and have the necessary resources, while presumably the "Unprotected" group does not possess them.

The relations have been obtained as a result of the conducted correlation analysis of the facts of physical and psychological violence and psychological characteristics of the studied groups. They indicate that for the "Protected" group, ability to overcome difficulties in early adulthood decreases when incidence and frequency of physical violence in childhood increases. Psychological violence in the school and psychological violence in the family have more relations with other characteristics than physical violence. Psychological violence experienced in childhood leads to increased level of responsibility. Psychological violence in the family experienced in childhood led to use a non-adaptive strategy to avoid problems, reduce levels of responsibility and hardiness in early adulthood.

For "Unprotected" subjects, physical violence experienced in childhood is related to the increase in self-reliance in the sphere of interaction with the opposite sex, internal locus of control, higher hardness and enjoying responsible tasks. Also, the frequency of physical violence is negatively correlated with gender, which confirms the greater exposure of males to physical violence. Psychological violence in the school and psychological violence in the family experienced in childhood are interrelated with the frequent use of social support and avoidance strategies. These subjects worse cope with difficulties, lack confidence and energy, experience negative emotions when performing responsible tasks. They are characterized by a lower level of hardness. They consider their knowledge of violence at childhood ineffective. They have an unbalanced identity and low self-reliance in various spheres of life: in professional and intellectual activities, in solving everyday problems, in the ability to build relationships with relatives and friends.

A regression analysis was performed to refine the data obtained in the correlation analysis. It is proved that the level of realized victimization is connected to incidence of physical violence experienced in childhood. Also, relation of incidence of psychological violence in the school and psychological violence in the family to the levels of protection from public abuse and unfriendly attitude in early adulthood is proved. The regression analysis considered the relationship between the levels of realized victimization, the protection against public abuse and unfriendly attitude to the psychological characteristics of groups of "Protected" and "Unprotected" adults.

The following regression model of realized victimization was built for the group of "Protected" subjects (the coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.40$, F-statistics = 3.68, $p \leq 0.001$):

$$y = 1.91 + 34 (0.99) + 32 (-0.93) + 33 (-0.37) + 18 (0.31) + 52 (-0.29) + 10 (-0.29) + 56 (0.24) + 13 (0.23) + 57 (-0.13) + 0.65$$

Note: 10 – self-reliance in relationships with the opposite sex, 13 – problem solving (coping strategy), 18 – cognitive meaningfulness, 32 – control, 33 – risk acceptance, 34 – hardness, 52 – knowledge about violence in childhood: number of knowledge sources, 56 – uncertain identity, 57 – the total number of characteristics of identity.

According to the equation for the group of "Protected" subjects, increase in the level of hardness, with a decrease in willingness to change the situation and learn from their own experience, a greater variety of subjective information about specific functions of the personal quality, a decrease in knowledge about violence in childhood and self-reliance in relationships with the opposite sex, an increase in the ability to tolerate a situation of uncertainty, problem solving as a coping strategy, reduction the differentiation of identity influence on the decrease in the level of realized victimization and, consequently, the delayed consequences of physical violence experienced in childhood.

The following regression model of realized victimization was built for the group of "Unprotected" subjects (the coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.44$, F-statistics = 3.44, $p \leq 0.003$):

$$y = 7.88 + 36 (-0.48) + 49 (0.37) + 51 (-0.36) + 34 (-0.34) + 52 (-0.29) + 55 (0.29) + 35 (-0.22) + 15 (0.18) + 54 (0.17) + 1.57$$

Note: 15 – problems avoiding (coping strategy), 34 – hardness, 35 – internal locus of control, 36 – external locus of control, 49 – knowledge about psychological violence, 51 – knowledge about violence before 18, 52 – knowledge about violence in childhood: number of sources of information, 54 - negative identity, 55 – dual identity.

According to the equation for the group of "Unprotected" subjects, increase in internal locus of control, knowledge of violence and ways of coping with it, balanced identity, decrease in the level of hardness and frequent use avoidance as a coping strategy influence on the decrease in the level of realized victimization and, consequently, the delayed consequences of physical violence experienced in childhood.

The regression model of protection against public abuse, negatively related to psychological abuse in the family, was built for the "Protected" group (coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.51$, F-statistics = 6.66, $p \leq 0.0001$):

$$y = 5.53 + 20 (0.47) + 16 (0.44) + 27 (-0.42) + 9 (-0.34) + 17 (-0.26) + \\ + 4 (-0.23) + 50 (0.19) + 30 (-0.15) + 0.81$$

Note: 4 – self-reliance in intellectual activity, 9 – self-reliance in the ability to build relationships with parents, 16 – dynamic endurance, 17 – socio-centric motivation, 20 – emotional asthenic, 27 – emotional asthenic, 30 – motivation for success, 50 – knowledge of ways of coping with violence.

According to the equation for the group of "Protected" subjects, increase in the level of responsibility, positive emotions, certain passivity of behaviour and a greater desire for mutual assistance in the performance of responsible tasks, greater self-reliance in the spheres of intellectual activity and relationships with parents, increase motivation for success and considering the ways used to cope with violence ineffective influence on the increase in the level of protection from public abuse.

The regression model of protection against public abuse, negatively related to psychological abuse in the family, was built for the "Unprotected" group (coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.56$, F-statistics = 9.09, $p \leq 0.000001$):

$$y = 0.36 + 10 (0.64) + 18 (0.50) + 27 (-0.48) + 23 (0.28) + 48 (0.23) + 6 (-0.19) + 0.81$$

Note: 6 –self-reliance in relationships with relatives and friends, 10 –self-reliance in relationships with the opposite sex, 23 – dynamic instability, 27 – emotional asthenic, 48 – knowledge about physical violence.

According to the equation for the group of "Unprotected" subjects, the increase in the level of protection from public abuse, and therefore, the protection from the negative consequences of psychological violence in the family, is associated with the increase of relying on others in the sphere of interpersonal relations with the opposite sex, responsibility and positive emotions in orderly performance of responsible tasks, clarification of knowledge about physical abuse and greater self-reliance in the sphere of relationships with relatives and friends.

The linear regression equation for the level of protection against unfriendly attitude describes only 20% of the variety in the group of "Protected" adults, and therefore it was not considered.

The regression model of protection against unfriendly attitude negatively related to the facts of psychological abuse in the family was built for the "Unprotected" group (the determination coefficient $R^2 = 0.51$, F-statistics = 6.05, $p \leq 0.0001$):

$$y = 1.88 + 20 (-0.62) + 36 (-0.41) + 17 (0.36) + 10 (0.29) + \\ + 8 (0.27) + 18 (0.22) + 28 (0.16) + 1.02$$

Note: 8 – self-reliance in the ability to build relationships in the family, 10 –self-reliance in building relationships with the opposite sex, 17 – socio-centric motivation, 18 –cognitive meaningfulness, 20 – emotional asthenic, 28 –regulatory externalities, 36 –external locus of control.

According to the equation, the increase in the level of protection against unfriendly attitude is associated with responsibility and positive emotions in the performance of responsible tasks, the internal locus of control, relying on others in building relationships in the family and with the opposite sex.

The resulting linear regression equations for groups of "Unprotected" and "Protected" respondents show that they have the same components, but often the opposite sign. Among these are the level of hardness (the opposite signs) and the number of knowledge sources about violence in childhood (the same signs) for the level of realized victimization; the level of emotional asthenic (the same signs), the level of emotional asthenic and socio-centric motivation (the opposite signs) for levels of protection against public abuse and unfriendly attitude. This allows us to conclude that "Protected" and "Unprotected" subjects have practically the same set of resources, but lowered expression did not allow the respondents from the "Unprotected" group to overcome the long-term negative consequences of violence.

7. Conclusion

The main personal resources of psychological resilience of adults who experienced psychological violence in childhood are self-reliance, effective coping strategies, hardness, responsibility, the balanced identity, the knowledge about violence and ways of coping with it. The main personal resources of psychological resilience of adults who experienced psychological violence in the family in childhood are self-reliance, effective coping strategies, responsibility, hardness, motivation for success, an internal locus of control and knowledge about violence and ways of coping with it.

The assumption that the psychological resources of adults who experienced violence in childhood are a multi-component entity is confirmed. The structure consists of four elements: cognitive (self-reliance, the knowledge about violence and ways of coping with it), emotional (the balanced identity), behavioural (effective coping strategies) and motivational (the responsibility, the hardness, the motivation for success, internal locus of control).

There are differences in the psychological resources of adults who experienced different types of violence in childhood. The results of correlation and regression analysis allow us to conclude that the main psychological resources of adults, who

- experienced physical violence in childhood: self-reliance in relationships with the opposite sex, effective coping strategies, responsibility, hardness, internal locus of control, knowledge about violence and balanced identity;
- experienced psychological violence in childhood: self-reliance, effective coping strategies, responsibility, hardness, knowledge about violence and balanced identity;
- experienced psychological violence in the family in childhood: self-reliance, effective coping strategies, responsibility, hardness, motivation for success, internal locus of control, balanced identity, knowledge about violence and ways of coping with it.

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