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**USE AS A FACTOR OF NEGATIVE EMOTIONAL STATES IN**  
**HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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**Abstract**

The study of negative emotional states (anxiety and aggressiveness) proposed in the article was conducted in grades 10–11 (N=54). In the course of the study, an observation program was developed and used on the topic "USE as a factor in the occurrence of negative emotional states in high school students." The purpose of the observation, the object, the subject, the situation of observation, the number and duration of observations, the list of indicators, signs of external manifestations of anxiety, aggressiveness and fear among students were determined, questions were drawn up. Anxiety (according to manifestations of discomfort, restlessness; repetitive involuntary movements; uncertainty in response) and aggressiveness (aggression towards others, physical aggression, irritability) were studied. The results showed that the indicators of anxiety and aggressiveness in the 11th grade are higher when there is an active preparation for the exam. In the 10th grade, the preparation is still not so intensive, and the students get the impression that the exam is still far away, the level of the studied indicators is relatively lower. However, a number of indicators ("uncertainty in the answer", "irritability") do not differ much from the 11th, which may be due to the natural level of school anxiety characteristic of high school students of this particular school. Other researchers also note that recently the number of schoolchildren with a high level of negative emotional states (anxiety, fear, aggression) has significantly increased, which can adversely affect intellectual and educational activities, especially during the preparation and passing final exams.

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*Keywords:* Anxiety, aggressiveness, high school students, monitoring software, negative emotional states, USE



## 1. Introduction

The modern dynamic pace of social life determines the increase in the number of stressful situations, and, as a result, enhances negative emotional states. At the same time, school life is an integral part of the life of adolescents, while it is filled with stress, psychological stress and conflict (Barker et al., 2019; Baynham-Herd et al., 2018; Russo & Hooft, 2011; Yang, Li, 2018).

Inevitably, the number of students with high levels of negative emotional states is growing (Tan et al., 2018). Negative emotional states are an important component for the study of older students in the preparation for final exam. The Unified State Examination is a form of school graduation exam and entrance exam to higher educational institutions of the country, which increases its significance, and, consequently, the fears of students about passing it. It is the feeling of the upcoming exam that can lead to the increase in the level of negative emotional states, which can adversely affect the exam results.

The study of negative emotional states is an important component for the study of older students in preparation for the final exam. Most of the works of modern researchers on negative emotional states are devoted, in particular, to anxiety and exam stress (Baranov & Zhuchenko, 2015; Dimitriev et al., 2011; Turhan & Ozbey, 2021), however, negative emotional states as a whole are poorly studied. The emotional state is understood as the duration of the emotional process and its greater or lesser intensity. It is emotional states that play an essential role in the mental regulation of the general direction and dynamics of behaviour. There are various classifications of emotional states. This study will use an approach that distinguishes between positive and negative emotional states.

There is no clear definition of a negative emotional state in the psychological literature. However, we can say that it is an integral characteristic of a person's mental activity over a certain period of time, which is distinguished by feelings of discomfort, unhappiness, leading to a temporary disruption of activity.

Negative emotional states affect the system of relationships and behaviour of an individual, are accompanied by strong feelings and destructive self-esteem (Richardson et al., 2020). Negative emotional states reduce the mental activity of a person, especially a teenager, and tend to cause adaptation mechanisms and use functions of a different order that protect the body.

Such conditions include a number of conditions that can cause changes in human behaviour. Such conditions include: aggression, affect, frustration, anxiety, phobias, fear, irritation, aggression, etc.

Anxiety and aggressiveness were chosen as the main negative emotional states for the primary diagnosis. Aggressiveness in older students is characterized as selfishness, indifference to the experiences of others, quarrelsomeness, lack of authority, cynicism, anger, rudeness, irascibility, impudence. Some researchers assess aggressiveness to a greater extent as a negative phenomenon (Dolgova et al., 2019; Dolgova et al., 2020; McLarnon et al., 2019). We can say that the situation of preparation for the exam and the tense atmosphere at school can be factors in the emergence and manifestation of aggression, as a result of which it can negatively affect the results of the exam. It is necessary to emphasize that aggressiveness can enhance the natural features and personality traits of a student.

Anxiety shows how a mental state can manifest itself in various life situations, as experience, fear, anxiety, etc. (Lotz & Sparfeldt, 2017; Valenas et al., 2017; Wuthisatian, 2020). However, a certain level

of anxiety can be beneficial for a person and is a feature of his psyche. At the same time, it can have a negative impact during the examination and pre-examination situation, when the natural level of anxiety is increased.

## **2. Problem Statement**

It is possible to say that the situation of preparation for the USE and the tense situation at school can cause anxiety and aggression, as a result they negatively affects the results of the exam, however, studies of the level of indicators of negative psycho-emotional states in targeted monitoring programs are still carried out insufficiently.

## **3. Research Questions**

The authors make an attempt to draw up and implement a targeted monitoring program for the manifestation of negative emotional states in high school students.

They also study the level of anxiety experienced by high school students according to three indicators:

- Discomfort, restlessness;
- Repetitive involuntary movements;
- Uncertainty in answers.

The authors study the level of aggressiveness experienced by high school students according to three indicators:

- Aggression towards others;
- Physical aggression directed at an object;
- Irritability.

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

The purpose of the study is to identify negative emotional states (anxiety and aggression) in the 10th and 11th grades using the developed monitoring program, in order to create a coherent program of psychological correction in the future.

## **5. Research Methods**

The study of negative emotional states (anxiety and aggressiveness) was conducted in the 10th and 11th grades. Families were prosperous with average well-being. A total of 54 people were included in the monitoring. There were 27 students in the 11th grade, of which 12 were boys and 15 were girls, the average age was 17 years. There were 27 people in the 10th grade, of which 11 were boys and 16 were girls, the average age of the participants was 16 years. Age features were taken into account when compiling the observation program and in the process of its implementation (Imedadze, 2019; Malkova, 2009; Stepanova & Tolstykh, 2016). Giving credit to the merits of the gender approach (Borgonovi &

Han, 2021; Sahanowas & Halder, 2020; Vartanova, 2018), in this study, we did not compare the indicators for boys and girls with each other.

During the course of the study, the monitoring program was developed and used on the topic "USE as a factor in the occurrence of negative emotional states in high school students"

*The purpose of the monitoring:* to study the manifestations of negative emotional states (anxiety, stress and aggressiveness) in the 11th grade students during the period of preparation for the Unified State Examination in order to create a correction program.

*The object of monitoring:* students of the 10th and 11th grades of secondary school No. 51 of Chelyabinsk.

*The subject of monitoring:* the level of anxiety, aggressiveness.

*Monitoring situation:* training monitoring situation.

The number and duration of monitoring: the observation was carried out during the trial exams in the compulsory subjects of the Unified State Examination (December) in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, during the same period (December) the observation was carried out in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade during the educational process. Control monitoring for the 11<sup>th</sup> grade was carried out after the correction program (March).

*The list of indicators, signs of external manifestations of anxiety, aggressiveness and fear among students:*

Anxiety:

- discomfort, restlessness;
- repetitive involuntary movements;
- uncertainty in answers.

Aggressiveness:

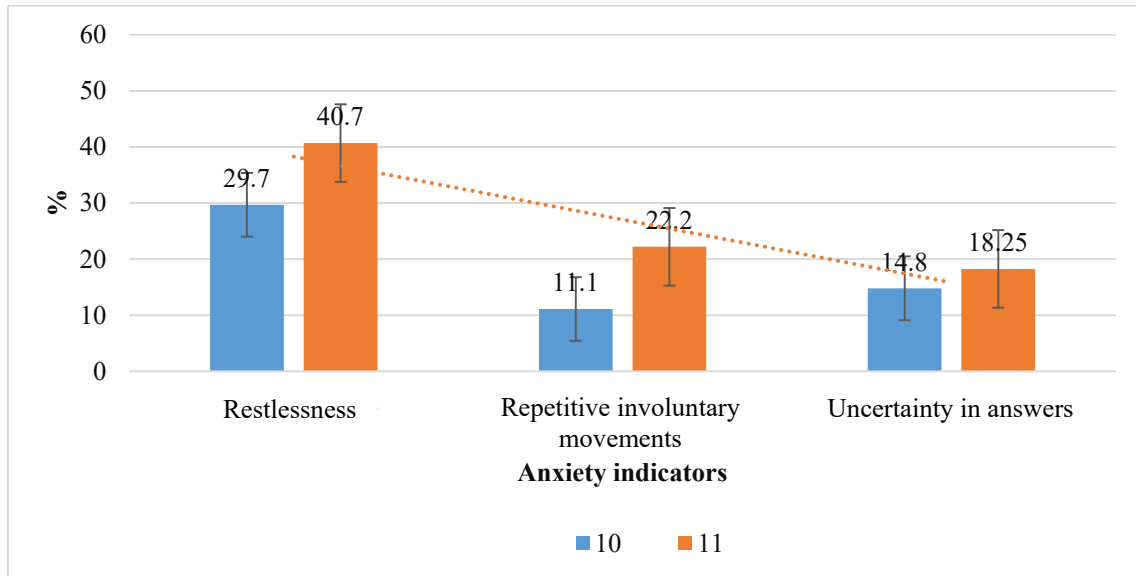
- Aggression towards others;
- Physical aggression directed at an object;
- Irritability.

*List of questions:*

1. Does a student become either excitable when it is necessary to restrain himself, or passive when performing a task?
2. Is a student often distracted and unable to concentrate for a long time?
3. Does a student show hesitation when speaking in front of the class or completing a task?
4. Does a student show aggression towards the participants of educational process?
5. Does the student show aggressive reactions first?
6. Does the student show external signs of aggression (clenching his fists in a state of irritation, anger)?
7. Does the student get irritated when they are reprimanded?

## 6. Findings

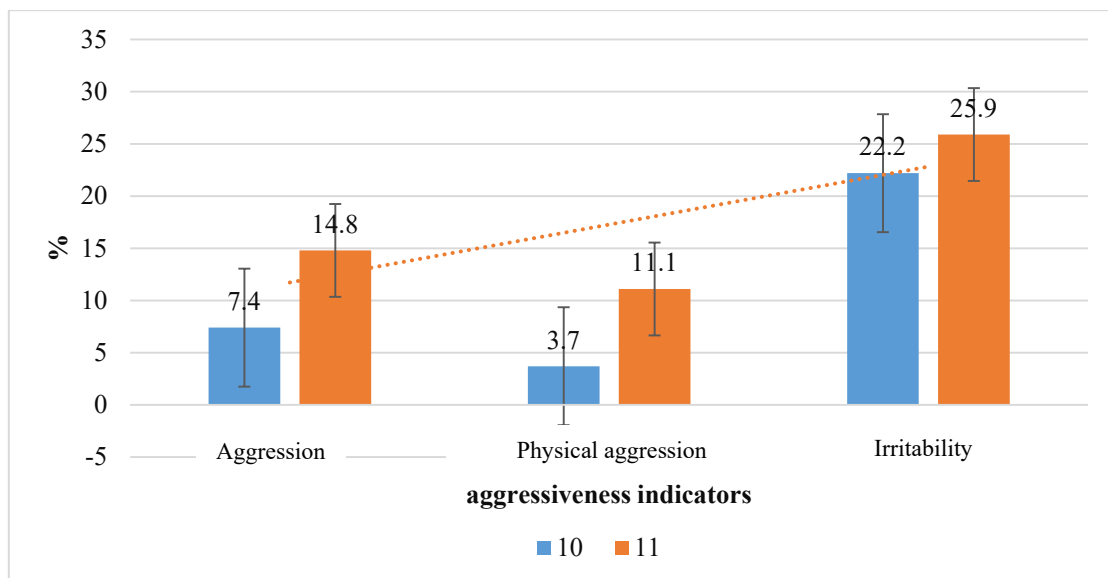
During the course of the study, external manifestations of negative emotional states were observed according to the monitoring program developed within the framework of the research. The manifestation of anxiety indicators is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Distribution of anxiety indicators of students in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades

The distribution of indicators presented in Figure 1 indicates greater restlessness (by 11 %), repetitive involuntary movements (by 11.1 %) and uncertainty in answers among students in the 11th grade (by 3.45 %).

The manifestation of aggressiveness indicators is shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Distribution of aggressiveness indicators of students in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades

Figure 2 clearly shows the modal value for the irritability indicator both in 10th and in 11th grade students, and in the 11th grade it is noticeably higher (by 3.7 %). Rarely irritability is manifested in both classes, aggression (three times less among 10th graders and almost twice as often among 11th graders). Physical aggressiveness in both those (3.7 %) and others (11.1 %) is significantly lower than irritability and physical aggression. All three indicators are higher in the 11th grade, and especially physical aggression is three times higher. During the analysis of the results of monitoring in the 10th grade and

11th grade in the percentage of external manifestations of the level of negative emotional states, it was revealed that, in general, the indicators of anxiety and aggressiveness in the 11th grade are higher in the course of the preparation for the Unified State Examination (Vazieva, 2016). In the 10th grade, the preparation was still not so intensive, and the students got the impression that the exam was still far away, the level of the studied indicators was relatively lower. However, a number of indicators (“uncertainty in the answer”, “irritability”) did not differ much from the 11th grade, which might be due to the natural level of school anxiety characteristic of high school students of this particular school.

Other researchers also note that recently the number of schoolchildren with a high level of negative emotional states (anxiety, fear, aggression) has significantly increased (Robinson et al., 2020; Semrad et al., 2019; Yap et al., 2014), which can adversely affect intellectual and educational activities, especially during the preparation and passing final exams.

One of the reasons for the manifestation of negative emotional states in older students is the situation of passing the exam. In the graduating class, the study load is significantly increased, which is associated with increased responsibility for the results of the exam, admission to a higher educational institution and the choice of future professional activity. In this case, the upcoming exam is one of the main fears of a teenager. The USE causes feelings of insecurity and uncertainty, emotional stress and increased anxiety of students and requires psychological and pedagogical support (Mitina et al., 2020; Nichugovsky & Esmanskaya, 2017; Savina et al., 2019).

Additionally, I can be caused by the worried attitude and increased attention to the final certification of school teachers and parents as well as long preparation for the exam. As a result, by the time the USE is passed, senior students have a high level of neuropsychic stress and anxiety, and the exam itself becomes a strong stress that can negatively affect the results.

## **7. Conclusion**

In the modern school environment, the weakness of the existing forms of psychological assistance to schoolchildren is more and more clearly revealed. Most of school teachers have low psychological competence. There are also difficulties in the use of the methods of psychological prevention and correction. Moreover, one of the problems in modern school education is the backlog of psychological science from the demands of pedagogical practice and from the requests for the protection, preservation and strengthening of the mental children health. In such a situation, active implementation of the results of the latest psychological research in school life is required.

In the process of this implementation, it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that negative emotional states are not an unambiguous phenomenon. Despite the fact that they negatively affect exam results, stress in some situations can have a mobilizing effect on mental processes and increase concentration.

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