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Role of Personal Characteristics of Juvenile Delinquents in the Formation of Defects in Legal Socialization



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Abstract

Introduction: the article presents results of the empirical study conducted in the period from October 2021 to February 2022 with the participation of 167 minors aged 14 to 17 years who committed offenses and (or) crimes. *Purpose*: to identify personal characteristics of juvenile offenders underlying the formation of defects in legal socialization (legal negativism, legal infantilism, legal nihilism, conscious criminal behavior) for further construction of adapted (depending on the form of defectiveness) psycho-correction programs aimed at preventing recommission of crimes. *Methods*: to solve the tasks, the appropriate methodological tools are selected: Rogers-Diamond Methodology for Diagnosing Socio-Psychological Adaptation, High School Personality Questionnaire by R. Cattell, the Strategic Approach to Coping Scale (SACS) (as adapted by N.V. Vodop'yanova and E.A. Starchenkova), questionnaire "Diagnostics of Value Orientations of Adolescents" by V.F. Sopova and L.V. Karpushina, methodology "Attitude to Law" by S.P. Beznosov. Statistical processing of the empirical study results was carried out using Microsoft Excel 2010 and IBM SPSS Statistics 22. The obtained results were subjected to primary, frequency, and correlation analysis. *Results*: it is established that legal socialization of a person is understood as person's acquirement of lawful ways of behavior, formation of a sense of legal and social responsibility, and solidarity with the norms of law, provided by the transfer of values protected by society and law into the value-normative system of the individual. The highest level of legal socialization is the law-abiding behavior of a person as a result of a stable moral need to follow norms of law. Forms of defectiveness of legal socialization are models of attitude to norms of law, expressed in legal negativism, legal infantilism, legal nihilism, and conscious criminal behavior. Personal characteristics contributing to the formation of



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defects in legal socialization of minors are revealed. *Conclusions*: defects of legal socialization in the form of legal skepticism, cynicism, nihilism and infantilism are established in the sphere of legal awareness of juvenile offenders. At the same time, juvenile offenders who reject law are emotionally unstable, communicatively closed, externalized and maladapted. While juvenile offenders with an infantile attitude to law are communicatively open, adapted to the environment, and differ in conformity and accountability.

Keywords: legal awareness, legal socialization, minors, criminal behavior, defects of legal socialization, legal nihilism, legal skepticism, legal infantilism.

5.3.9. Legal psychology and accident psychology

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Introduction

Effective prevention of delinquent behavior of minors is possible only if the attention of society and the state is focused on the individual as a carrier of the crime causes and an important link in the mechanism of criminal behavior. Identification of the characteristic personality traits inherent in juvenile offenders and contributing to the commission of criminal acts helps choose the most effective methods and technologies of working with them within the framework of individual and group psychological correction.

Considering the state of crime in Russia, we note that at the end of 2021, 29,126 juvenile offenders were identified, which comprised 3.4% of the total number of criminals. The qualitative characteristics of these persons shows that 7,213 minors (24.8%) were repeat offenders, 3,402 (11.7%) committed a crime under the influence of alcohol, 83 (0.3%) – under the influence of drugs, and 13,151 (45.2%) as part of the group. Minors committed 9,055 (28.4%) grave and especially grave crimes [1]. These characteristics of offenders indicate that legal socialization of minors is defective, which contributes to the use of alcohol and narcotic drugs, joining criminal communities, and ignoring socially oriented groups and organizations. Despite the punishment and condemnation of society that followed after the commission of the first crime, minors continued to follow the criminal path. These circumstances determined the relevance of the study of relations between personal characteristics and defects of legal socialization.

The empirical study was aimed at studying personal characteristics of juvenile offenders underlying the formation of defects in legal socialization.

Personal characteristics of juvenile offenders was an object of the research, while communicative, emotional, regulatory properties, coping strategies, adaptation indicators, value orientations and forms of legal awareness of juvenile offenders were its subject.

Theoretical basis of the study

Formation of socialization defects is a phenomenon that requires a multidisciplinary approach to research and as an object of scientific knowledge is developed in the framework of disciplinary areas: pedagogy (K.S. Milevich [2]; R.T. Bakirov [3]), sociology (A.A. Bochkov, A.A. Sukharev [4]; E.B. Rudenskii [5]), criminology (Kh.I. Gadzhiev [6]; V.G. Pichugin [7]), etc.). However, in the framework of the psychological approach, researchers (K.A. Romanenko, A.Yu. Esenova [8]) are focused on its comprehensive analysis in order to build effective and timely psychoprophylactic and psychocorrective work with minors.

Legal socialization of a person is understood as person's acquirement of lawful ways of behavior, formation of a sense of legal and social responsibility, solidarity with the norms of law, provided by the transfer of values protected by society and law into the value-normative system of the individual [9]. The highest level of legal socialization is the law-abiding behavior of a person as a result of a stable moral need to follow norms of law [10]. The function of legal socialization is to integrate an individual into the legal environment, accompanied with adaptation to established legal norms, self-control of legal behavior, and development of personal activity in the field of law.

A.A. Sukharev emphasizes that legal socialization of minors is also hampered by the blurring of its boundaries caused by the decades-long transformation of social values and attempts of spontaneous expansion of the Western destructive ideology based on the proclamation of consumer society values [11].

In the Decree No. 809 of November 9, 2022 "On the approval of the Foundations of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values", the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin emphasizes that traditional values are preserved and strengthened, including in the field of education, upbringing and work with the youth. Indeed, the instability of value orientations, as one of the psycho-age characteristics of minors, leads to their vulnerability to the destructive influence of the external environment, and the ideas of consumer society [12] and priorities of the material world broadcast in the media and television contribute to the formation of defects in legal socialization [13].

Defectiveness of legal socialization is accompanied by the assimilation of stereotypes of behavior, knowledge and attitudes in the field of law that distort the legal picture of an individual, contributing to a negative or neutral attitude to compliance with legal norms [14]. Forms of defectiveness of legal socialization are models of attitude to the norms of law, expressed in:

legal negativism (underestimating the value of law),

 legal infantilism (irresponsible, frivolous attitude to the norms of law),

legal nihilism (active rejection of legal norms up to public disregard),

- conscious criminal behavior [15].

Z.N. Kalandarishvili considers conscious criminal behavior as its most difficult form to

study – "a form of legal consciousness that is reborn" to such an extent that its bearer becomes a deliberate violator of the law. The scientist is sure that under the influence of the unstable system of ideas about true human values, different forms of defectiveness of in legal socialization can be developed a minor: from negativism to a reborn legal consciousness. It proves the relevance and urgency of developing methods of psychological correction of defects in legal socialization of the individual [6].

Materials and methods

Organization of empirical research. An empirical study of the personality characteristics of juvenile offenders was carried out in the period from October 2021 to February 2022. The study covered 167 male minors aged 14 to 17 years ($16.4\pm$ 1.1 years) who committed various offenses (mainly, petty stealing, theft, mugging), entailing administrative and (or) criminal liability. The research base: a special educational institution of a closed type, a division for juvenile affairs of the Department of Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Slantsevsky District of the Leningrad Oblast.

To solve the tasks, we used the following methodological tools: Rogers-Diamond Methodology for Diagnosing Socio-Psychological Adaptation, High School Personality Questionnaire by R. Cattell, Strategic Approach to Coping Scale (SACS) (as adapted by N.V. Vodop'yanova and E.A. Starchenkova), questionnaire "Diagnostics of Value Orientations of Adolescents" by V.F. Sopova and L.V. Karpushina, methodology "Attitude to Law" by S.P. Beznosov. Statistical processing of the results of the empirical study was carried out using Microsoft Excel 2010 and IBM SPSS Statistics 22. The obtained results were subjected to primary, frequency, and correlation analysis.

Research results and their discussion

Personal characteristics of juvenile offenders. Table 1 presents data of the primary statistics calculated for the study indicators.

Table

Personality of	characteristics	of juvenile	offenders
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Indicator	М	σ	Indicator	М	σ
1	2	3	4	5	6
Factor A: schizotimia-affectothymia	6.05	1.93	Dominance	22.90	6.83

1	2	3	4	5	6
Factor: emotional stability degree	3.61	1.23	Escapism	13.20	6.59
Factor D: phlegmatism - excitability	5.99	2.01	Assertive actions	19.67	3.94
Factor: passivity - dominance	6.01	1.94	Entering into social contact	22.34	3.43
Factor F: Caution - frivolity	7.27	1.24	Search for social support	23.20	2.79
Factor G: moral norms acceptance de- gree	4.34	1.18	Cautious actions	22.65	3.59
Factor H: Courage	6.15	1.35	Impulsive actions	22.30	4.16
Factor I: realism - sensitivity	5.63	1.68	Avoidance	16.52	2.95
Factor J: neurasthenia	4.73	1.03	Manipulative actions	19.72	4.36
Factor O: self-confidence – propensity for guilt	5.11	1.07	Antisocial actions	21.07	2.67
Factor Q2: dependence group degree	4.95	1.31	Aggressive actions	21.65	3.53
Factor Q3: self-control degree	4.29	1.31	Legal realism	1.89	0.74
Factor Q4: internal stress degree	5.61	1.63	Legal skepticism	3.71	1.67
Adaptability	81.67	20.64	Legal conformity	2.11	1.01
Maladaptivity	160.93	21.70	Legal cynicism	3.83	1.33
Statement	19.75	8.36	Legal fetishism	1.90	0.77
Self-acceptance	47.39	10.04	Legal infantilism	2.93	1.59
Self-rejection	24.09	6.15	Legal idealism	1.71	0.70
Acceptance of others	23.48	5.39	Legal nihilism	2.86	1.60
Rejection of others	17.37	5.65	Cognition as a value	4.95	1.31
Emotional comfort	14.80	7.87	l am a value	5.97	1.43
Emotional discomfort	26.54	5.38	The other person is a value	4.77	1.67
Internal control	21.27	6.59	Socially useful activities	4.01	1.45
External control	34.07	7.69	Responsibility	3.82	1.64

Communicative properties of juvenile offenders are moderate openness and propensity to establish and maintain interpersonal contacts. When communicating with other people, they are not always critical of their statements and behavior. They are prone to group activities, open to new experiences and are characterized by flexible attitudes. Juvenile offenders are prone to self-affirmation, leadership in personally significant situations. In other cases, they show less enthusiasm and may be influenced by other people. They are characterized by bold adventurous actions and a careless attitude to social and other norms. They do not always respond to danger signals, and therefore, they can get into an unpleasant situation. They strive for new impressions; in their activities they waste their potential on unnecessary conversations. Juvenile offenders prefer to make decisions and act in a group, love attention, are self-centered and demonstrative. They are full of energy, but lack determination. They are characterized by a high degree of acceptance of group norms and assessments, conformity.

Emotional properties of juvenile delinquents are emotional instability and increased sensitivity to external influence. They are irritable, impulsive, tend to avoid demands of the environment and emotionally excitable. They become easily frustrated and impatient, which manifests itself in the need for immediate problem solution and satisfaction of desires. They tend to self-demonstration, self-confidence, and egocentrism, often feel resentment and jealousy. Juvenile offenders often experience negative feelings in a situation of restrictions and prolonged monotony.

The personality of juvenile offenders is characterized by impulsivity, activity, and frivolity. They are excitable, impatient, and motivated to succeed, as well as adventurous, socially brave, and confident. Liveliness and spontaneity are characteristic of emotional manifestations. Despite their well-developed organizational skills, they tend not to finish what they have started, preferring to switch to another occupation. They are often negligent in their activities, which leads to ignoring dangerous signals. Being artistic, they succeed in creative activity.

Regulatory properties of juvenile delinquents are propensity to avoid responsibility, both in activities and interpersonal relationships, impatience, capriciousness, lack of independence and dependence on the help of others. Juvenile offenders are characterized by a low degree of acceptance of moral norms. Achievement of goals is irregular, rules and requirements are circumvented, the sense of responsibility is low. These young people are selfish and narcissistic. Volitional self-control of juvenile offenders is insufficiently developed, which is reflected in their behavior by impulsivity, inconsistency, propensity to make mistakes, ignoring social requirements.

Characterizing adaptive abilities of juvenile offenders, we should note their insufficient degree of adaptation to the existence in society together with general satisfaction with the specifics of their character and modest desire for interaction with other people. They tend to have a more positive emotional attitude to reality. It is not typical for them to take responsibility for the events happening to them, on the contrary, they tend to avoid personal responsibility in problematic situations.

Analyzing the data from the study of conscious coping mechanisms of juvenile offenders, we come to the conclusion that their coping strategies are of low constructiveness. The coping strategy "Impulsive actions" is often applied by juvenile offenders. Minors tend to act on the first impulse, under the influence of external circumstances or emotions, without premeditating their actions and weighing all the pros and cons and making the most appropriate and reasonable decisions. The values of antisocial strategies "Aggressive actions" and "Antisocial actions" are located above normative ones. They manifest themselves in actions directed at other people, negative feelings during failures and conflicts with other people, blaming others for something, anger, irritation, internal tension, frustration and dissatisfaction. Hostility, distrust, destruction of social ties, egocentrism and the desire to be right in everything are characteristic of this strategy. Besides, juvenile offenders also use an active strategy for overcoming stressful situations "Assertive actions", prosocial strategies "Entering into social contact" and "Seeking social support", passive strategies "Cautious actions" and "Avoidance", and an indirect strategy "Manipulative actions". Thus, among the possibilities of conscious coping with stress, juvenile offenders most often choose strategies of impulsive, antisocial and aggressive actions. These strategies cannot be considered adequate, on the contrary, they can aggravate the conflict situation and make it difficult to solve the problem.

As for the value sphere of juvenile delinquents, they refuse engaging in new types of activities and solving cognitive tasks, as well as denying their responsibility for their own behavior, actions, and problems in relationships with others. Juvenile offenders are characterized by positive self-perception and interest in ways of self-expression. They can demonstrate earnestness in relation to other people, though experiencing difficulties in assuming these people's individuality. The value of the indicator showing the desire to do good to society is at the lower limit of the normative range. Juvenile offenders are dependent on encouragement and support and are not inclined to show initiative and creativity.

The study of legal consciousness of juvenile offenders reveals the presence of defects in the forms of its manifestation: infantilism (47%), nihilism (60%), skepticism (35%), and cynicism (38%). At the same time, legal realism is characteristic of only 20% of the juvenile offenders. The data obtained indicate the presence of defects in legal socialization of the surveyed, which, in our opinion, requires psychocorrective intervention.

At the next stage of the study, we established significant correlations between indicators of personal characteristics of juvenile offenders and various forms of defects in legal consciousness (Spearman correlation coefficient). Legal skepticism and legal cynicism of juvenile offenders is significantly associated with their communicative closeness (r=0.52, p≤0.01), desire to dominate communication (r=0.47, p≤0.01), impulsivity (r=0.42, p≤0.01), excitability (r=0.42, p≤0.01), inclination to adventurous acts (r=0.39, p≤0.01), laziness (r=0.33, p≤0.01), and low moral normativity (r=0.29, p≤0.01).

Minors who are skeptical of legal norms are maladapted, prone to rejection of others, emotional discomfort, and external locus of control (r=0.42, p \leq 0.01).

When coping with stress, they mainly use maladaptive strategies of avoidance, antisocial and aggressive actions (r=0.34, p≤0.01). Legal skepticism is significantly associated with a low value of a responsible attitude to business and a lack of respect for others, as well as a lack of the ability to communicate kindly and constructively with them (r=0.29, p≤0.01).

Legal infantilism of juvenile offenders is significantly associated with their communicative openness (r=0.41, p≤0.01), phlegmatism (r=0.37, p≤0.01), compliance and obsession in behavior (r=0.36, p≤0.01), frivolity (r=0.34, p≤0.01), dependence on others (r=0.33, p≤0.01), and laziness (r=0.29, p≤0.01). Minors who show infantilism in relation to legal norms are well adapted, tend to accept others, and experience emotional comfort (r=0.47, p \leq 0.01). Legal infantilism is significantly connected with a minor's positive attitude towards him/herself (r=0.52, p \leq 0.01).

Legal nihilism of juvenile offenders is significantly associated with their communicative closeness (r=0.46, p≤0.01), emotional lability, excitability, overactivity, impulsivity (r=0.37, $p \le 0.01$), and low moral normativity (r=0.29, p≤0.01). Minors showing nihilism are maladapted (r=0.31, p \leq 0.01), prone to self-acceptance while rejecting others (r=0.31, p≤0.01), emotional discomfort (r=0.29, p≤0.01), external locus control (r=0.28, p≤0.01) and nonconformism (r=0.28, p \leq 0.01). When coping with stress, a non-adaptive strategy of aggressive actions is mainly used (r=0.29, p≤0.05). Legal nihilism is significantly associated with an irresponsible attitude to business, unwillingness to engage in socially useful activities, a lack of respect for others, and a lack of ability to communicate kindly and constructively with them (r=0.43, p≤0.01).

Conclusions

Thus, the empirical study of personal characteristics of juvenile offenders reveals their emotional lability, impulsivity, excitability, low normativity of behavior combined with a lack of self-control and externality. Communicative programs require psychocorrectional interference, as well as coping strategies, which manifest themselves as unconstructive aggressive, antisocial and impulsive behavior.

In the sphere of legal awareness of juvenile offenders, defects of legal socialization in the form of legal skepticism, cynicism, nihilism and infantilism are established. At the same time, juvenile offenders who reject the law are emotionally unstable, communicatively closed, externalized and maladapted. While juvenile offenders who demonstrate an infantile relation to the law, are communicatively open, adapted to the environment, differ in conformity and accountability.

The conducted research makes it possible to expand existing ideas about the role of personal characteristics in the formation of defects in legal socialization of juvenile offenders. The revealed characteristics contribute to the development of psychocorrection programs adapted depending on the form of legal socialization defects, which, in our opinion, will be an effective means of preventing further offenses by minors.

Prospects

The results obtained will form the basis for the development and testing of psychocorrection programs, taking into account the form of defectiveness of legal socialization of juvenile offenders.

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