PSYCHOLOGICAL SECURITY OF TEENS IN VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

SECURITATEA PSIHOLOGICĂ A ADOLESCENȚILOR DIN ȘCOALA PROFESIONALĂ

Sergiu SANDULEAC,

PhD, associate professor,

"Ion Creangă" State Pedagogical University, Chișinău

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-2040-4670

E-mail: sanduleac.sergiu@upsc.md

Irina PITI,

MA, "Ion Creangă" State Pedagogical University, Chișinău

ORCID ID: 0009-0003-4209-8237

E-mail: irina.piti87@gmail.com

Abstract. This article highlights the importance of psychological safety for adolescents, focusing on the protection of the individual's mental health. Recent decades have marked a rapid development in this area, with various programmes aimed at ensuring psychological safety in social contexts, particularly in education. Although the level of physical security has increased, today's society feels an increased need for security due to threats such as international conflicts and environmental issues, which can affect psychological well-being.

In this article the authors explored the concept of psychological security which involves a sense of trust and protection, facilitating personal growth and effective social interactions. The results of a study of adolescents studying in vocational schools are presented. The relationship between anxiety and psychological security is explored, finding that higher levels of anxiety correlate with lower psychological security. This study, which involved 110 adolescents, used various scales to measure anxiety and psychological safety, revealing significant negative correlations. Factors such as peer relationships, teachers and

classroom environment play crucial roles in enhancing adolescents' psychological security. Findings highlight that an enhanced sense of psychological security in an environment can increase adaptability and resilience in new and challenging contexts, such as moving from rural to urban settings. Overall, psychological security is a protective factor that supports well-being and adaptability during significant life transitions.

Keywords: psychological security, anxiety, adolescents, vocational school.

Rezumat. Acest articol evidențiază importanța securității psihologice a adolescenților, concentrându-se pe protecția sănătății mintale a individului. Ultimele decenii au marcat o dezvoltare rapidă în acest domeniu, cu diverse programe menite să asigure securitatea psihologică în contexte sociale, în special în educație. Deși nivelul de securitate fizică a crescut, societatea actuală resimte o nevoie sporită de siguranță din cauza amenințărilor, precum conflictele internaționale și problemele de mediu, care pot afecta starea subiectivă de bine.

În acest articol, autorii au explorat conceptul de securitate psihologică ce implică un sentiment de încredere și protecție, facilitând creșterea personală și interacțiunile sociale eficiente. Sunt prezentate rezultatele unui studiu asupra adolescenților ce își fac studiile în școli profesionale. Este explorată relația dintre anxietate și securitatea psihologică, descoperind că nivelurile mai ridicate de anxietate corelează cu o securitatea psihologică mai scăzută. Acest studiu, care a implicat 110 adolescenți, a folosit diverse scale pentru a măsura anxietatea și securitatea psihologică, relevând corelații negative semnificative. Factori precum relațiile cu colegii, profesorii și mediul de clasă joacă roluri cruciale în consolidarea securității psihologice a adolescenților. Constatările subliniază că un sentiment consolidat de securitate psihologică într-un mediu poate spori adaptabilitatea și reziliența în contexte noi și provocatoare, cum ar fi trecerea de la mediul rural la cel urban. În general, securitatea psihologică este un factor de protecție care sprijină bunăstarea și adaptabilitatea în timpul tranzițiilor semnificative din viață.

Cuvinte-cheie: securitate psihologică, anxietate, adolescenți, școală profesională.

Introduction

The concept of psychological safety is at the heart of modern research and is often defined as a state of protection of an individual's consciousness. A new area of rapid development in safety psychology has been observed during the last decades

of the 20th century, with numerous theoretical and practical programmes implemented to ensure psychological security in various social contexts, including educational institutions.

Today's society differs from previous generations in terms of the level of security, which in all essential respects, such as the likelihood of exposure to violence or hygiene standards, is generally higher. However, in today's society, people feel an increased need for security and are concerned about monitoring various potential dangers and threats in the social environment. Events such as international conflicts, the danger of nuclear war and environmental threats generate feelings of fear, uncertainty and can sometimes cause a sense of purposelessness in life. When an individual experiences instability in their environment, their psychological well-being can be negatively affected and they become more vulnerable [1].

Literature Review

The etymology of the term security comes from Latin, where the prefix "se" indicates separation or removal, and the root comes from "cura," meaning care or concern. Therefore, the origin of the word "security" is identified in the Latin terms "securitatis" and "securitas," denoting carelessness and absence of fear of harm [2].

The concept of personal security, has been a subject of interest since ancient times, explored by thinkers such as Lao Zi and Confucius in ancient China (6th century BC), as well as by the great Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle (4th century BC), and by Cicero, known as the "universal man" (2nd century BC). In Roman mythology, there was also the goddess Securitas, who represented the safety and security of the Roman Empire, ensuring its protection and prosperity. This goddess was associated with a medallion issued during the reign of Hostilian in 251 AD, inscribed "freedom from threat" [3].

The glossary of terms "Religion and Security in 21st Century Europe" states that security "means the situation in which a person, a group of persons, a state, an alliance, as a result of specific measures taken individually or in concert with other actors, is assured that their existence, integrity and fundamental interests are not

endangered". These and many other similar meanings reveal the objective and subjective meaning of the notion of security, as explained in one of the best-known and oldest definitions by A. Wolfers: "security is a value"; "in an objective sense, it measures the absence of threats to acquired values, and in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked" [4].

According to the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language (DEX), security refers to the fact of being safe from any danger; the feeling of security, confidence and peace of mind that the absence of any danger gives to someone [5].

Paul Popescu-Neveanu's dictionary of psychology defines the term security as a balanced psychological state, motivated by the absence of factors that endanger life, health, social and professional status, fair appreciation, etc. It is a fundamental condition of normal existence and progress. In the same dictionary we find the notion of insecurity, which is considered to be at the root of many mental disorders [6].

In the American Psychological Association (APA) dictionary, the term security is associated with a sense of safety, confidence and freedom from fear. The same dictionary defines the term safety psychology, a subdiscipline of applied psychology that involves the study of behavioural aspects of hazardous situations in human-environment systems, especially in occupational contexts [7].

In the Larousse psychology dictionary, we find the term security associated with the belief that the individual has nothing to fear. It is one of man's fundamental needs, an essential condition of his mental health. The child finds security in the serene and affectionate presence of his parents, in the stability of his living conditions, in the regular discipline of his upbringing. In his environment thus defined, he rehearses his position early on, settles into his role and, feeling protected, moves forward confidently in life. The adolescent feels more insecure because, being neither child nor adult, he has no precise status. In men, the means of preserving security is social conformity; many people keep up with fashion, for example, in order not to be conspicuous. He who has reached psychological maturity is not afraid to assert his individuality [8].

In the American Journal of Sociology, reference is made to the terms security

and insecurity, which have recently been accepted by many behavioral researchers and professionals in the field. In other words, in 1954, these terms began to be widely used by specialists in various fields, including psychology. These terms, in general, became present in the literature of social psychology and other related disciplines, such as sociology, psychiatry, abnormal or clinical psychology, and social work. The same publication notes that the concepts of security and insecurity were pioneered by W.I. Thomas and A. Adler [7].

The Canadian psychologist W. Blatz among the first scientists, defined emotional security, as the feeling in which man feels safe, perceives himself out of danger, being a subjective feeling. W. Blatz, stated that all behaviors of the individual's life, can be interpreted in terms of security, and it involves two components:

1. adequate experience with which the individual feels able to control the situation;

2. a sense of adequacy to cope with future situations, which manifests itself in the ability to anticipate and predict consequences [3].

In the field of psychology, the concept of "safety" has been used since the 1920s. In line with the ideas of humanistic psychology promoted by A. Maslow, C. Rogers and other thinkers, they considered the desire for safety as one of the fundamental human needs. A. Maslow places the need for safety in the hierarchy of human needs, placing it immediately after basic physiological needs. This need incorporates concepts such as stability, belonging, protection, freedom from fear, anxiety and chaos, structure, order, law and boundaries, along with other human needs [63].

A. Maslow defined psychological security as a feeling of confidence, security and freedom, of satisfaction of needs in the present and future that is separate from fear and anxiety [Ibidem].

The socio-psychological nature of the need for security is highlighted by T. Williams, who points out that "security reflects both social circumstances and constant personality characteristics. The insecurity of the individual is directly influenced by the presence of psychological insecurity, which is the result of

personality traits, existing external conditions and, to a large extent, the individual's early experiences" [1].

Socio-psychological security is based on long-term interaction and affinity of common interests and aspirations, which gives rise to a socio-psychological community characterised by mutual understanding, solidarity and trust. This community context serves as both a precondition and an outcome of effective communication, and in order to interact successfully with diverse parts of the world, a person needs to feel trust based on a sense of security in these interactions [10].

E.A. Bott, in 1939, stated that the term "security" derives from the Latin word "securum," which means "without worry," "without anxiety," "without fear," and "free from uncertainty" [3].

K. Horney, has emphasized the importance of psychological and emotional security in personality development. She brought into discussion the concept of security based on healthy and balanced interpersonal relationships. K. Horney pointed out that emotional security derives from a genuine connection with others, especially in childhood. She emphasised parental influences on children's development and stressed the importance of providing a safe and supportive environment. When children feel loved, accepted and properly supported by their parents, they develop a sense of emotional security which contributes to the formation of a secure attachment, which positively influences personality development. K. Horney introduced concepts such as 'core neurosis' and explored how individuals develop psychological defence strategies to cope with anxiety and insecurity. She argued that the need to acquire a sense of emotional and psychological safety is an essential aspect of an individual's psychological development [11].

Another aspect of psychological safety research in educational settings focuses on human interaction with reality, a topic with a long tradition in psychological research. The work of authors such as И.А. Баева, М.Р. Битянова, Н.В. Груздева, В.И. Панов explore modeling and designing an educational environment in which participants feel safe and satisfy their basic needs [apud 3].

Psychological safety is often discussed in the context of social exchange theory, in which trust between members of a group contributes to a long period of collaboration and satisfaction. This is crucial in educational settings, where psychological safety refers to people's comfort with the consequences of interpersonal risks. According to social exchange theory, trust is closely related to psychological safety and refers to the environment in which people feel comfortable about the consequences of interpersonal risks.

Even though psychological safety is closely related to trust, some characteristics of psychological safety differentiate it from trust. Trust is a belief based on mutual expectations, whereas psychological safety belongs to the individual. Trust in the organisational setting assumes that employees anticipate each other's actions and that these actions will have positive consequences for each of them. However, psychological safety is an individual matter and does not require reciprocity [12].

Kahn (1990) stated that psychological safety is a necessary condition for people to feel connected and involved in their roles at work. He defined psychological safety as „the feeling of being able to show and use one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career" [13].

В.В. Бедрина, А.В. Личутин consider that the concept of psychological safety should also be examined in relation to the concept of psychological culture. Without such a framework of "psychological vision", the problem of psychological safety cannot be addressed. В.В. Бедрина, А.В.; Личутин, define psychological culture as the ability to clearly diagnose, at any given moment, the psychological aspects of a communicative interaction, the behaviour of the student, teacher and parent, the complex set of relationships between them, and the threats and risks associated with these relationships, both in the present and in the future [14].

Methodology

The aim of the research was to establish the relationship between anxiety and psychological security in adolescents

Research hypothesis: There is a relationship between: psychological safety and anxiety in adolescents.

Research sample: Taking into account the hypothesis we put forward, we selected a sample of 110 subjects, adolescents from professional schools, aged between 16 and 18 years, divided by gender, urban/rural area, family/household residence. The distribution of the sample by gender was 32.40% of the selected subjects are girls and 67.60% are boys.

Measuring scales: Taylor Anxiety Scale; Philips School Anxiety Scale; Psychological Security Questionnaire (developed by S. Sanduleac and C. Perjan) [15]; URPS Psychological Security of Urban Residents Scale [15].

Findings/Results

At first, we studied the interrelationship between anxiety/general school anxiety and URPS urban psychological safety according to the Pearson linear correlation coefficient.

Adolescents with high levels of anxiety have low levels of psychological security. The sources of psychological security in adolescents are relationships with peers, with teachers and parents, the atmosphere in the classroom, in the family. Here we can mention that many adolescents have difficulties in relating to others, as well as negative judgements about their own traits, characteristics, emotions and feelings. These adolescents show low psychological security which also leads to high anxiety. We will look at each of these correlations in turn. There is a negative correlation between anxiety and URPS urban psychological security (r=-0.212, p≤0.05) Adolescents with high levels of anxiety show lower levels of urban psychological security. This may be related to difficulties in relating to others and negative appraisals of their own traits, emotions and feelings. Urbanity can add additional pressures, contributing to anxiety. The significant negative correlation between general school anxiety and URPS (r=-0.305, p≤0.05) indicates that adolescents with higher general school anxiety have lower levels of urban psychological safety. Academic pressures, relationships in the school environment, and increased expectations may contribute to school anxiety and thus lower urban

psychological security especially for adolescents who have recently changed residence and migrated from rural to urban areas.

Therefore, we confirmed the hypothesis that there is a correlation between anxiety, general school anxiety, urban psychological security and psychological security developed by S. Sanduleac and C. Perjan.

The study of the correlation between anxiety / school anxiety / psychological security / URPS according to Pearson revealed the following results.

Pearson correlation coefficients indicate significant associations between the level of psychological security and various aspects of adolescents' psychological state and school environment. Thus, significant negative correlations are observed between psychological security and school anxiety (r=-0.633), fear of not meeting expectations (r=-0.383), psychological resistance to stress (r=-0.512), fear of self-injury (r=-0.430), fear of checking knowledge (r=-0.504), and general anxiety (r=-0.404). These results indicate that lower psychological security is associated with higher levels of these factors of school anxiety. In addition, a negative but weaker correlation is also observed between psychological security and need frustration (r=-0.366), as well as problems in relationships with teachers (r=-0.171), suggesting that lower psychological security is also associated with difficulties in adapting and relating to the school and social environment. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r=0.235) indicates a significant positive correlation between psychological safety and urban psychological safety.

So, we can say that we have confirmed the hypothesis that *there is a relationship between psychological safety and anxiety*.

Conclusions

The level of psychological security that an adolescent feel in one environment can be transferable and felt in other environments. If an adolescent feels safe and secure in a particular context, this sense of psychological security can be generalised to other situations. This can be explained by the enhanced sense of self-efficacy and self-confidence they acquire in a given environment. Moreover, an environment that

provides a positive experience and encourages a sense of security can also foster an ability to adapt and be resilient in other contexts. Thus, an adolescent who feels safe in a rural environment, for example, may have a tendency to transfer this sense of safety to urban environments or other complex social situations. This idea highlights the importance of positive experiences and building a sense of safety in an environment for the development of general psychological safety, which has a positive impact on adolescents' well-being and adaptability in different contexts. Moving from a rural to an urban environment involves a number of major changes in an adolescent's life, such as moving house, leaving home, new relationships, friendships, a new daily routine and household responsibilities that they have to take on in the absence of adults. In addition, adapting to the specific challenges of the urban environment, such as noisy pollution, heavy traffic and other aspects of urban life, can be extremely demanding. However, the results suggest that adolescents who have migrated from rural to urban environments and who exhibit a high level of psychological security in urban environments seem to have been able to maintain this sense of security and self-confidence despite changes and challenges. This can be attributed to their capacity for adaptation and resilience, as well as their ability to find resources and support in their new environment. Clearly, this underlines the importance of the individual's ability to cope with change and adversity and suggests that high levels of psychological safety are a protective factor even in the face of major transitions and urban challenges.

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