

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MANIFESTATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFENSE MECHANISMS IN SCHOOLCHILDREN

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20521761>

Bazarbayeva Aynura Raximnazarovna

1st year of Master's degree

Nukus state pedagogical institute named after Ajiniyaz

(Republic of Karakalpakstan, Nukus)

Abstract

This article examines the specific characteristics of the manifestation of psychological defense mechanisms in school-aged students. The study analyzes the age-related stages of students, the socio-psychological factors within the school environment, and the primary defense mechanisms employed in stressful situations (e.g., projection, rationalization, regression, repression). The article also considers the positive and negative effects of these defense mechanisms on students' academic achievement and peer interactions, offering practical recommendations for school psychologists and educators.

Keywords

Psychological defense mechanisms, schoolchildren, adolescence, stress, adaptation, anxiety, personality formation, social communication.

The era of modern development and rapid globalization is having a profound transformational impact on all aspects of human life, particularly on the education and upbringing system. Today, the unprecedented expansion of information flows, the swift integration of social networks into the lives of adolescents, and the blurring of lines between virtual and real life are placing serious burdens on the mental well-being of schoolchildren. Ideological and informational threats, the destructive influence of "mass culture," and intense competition and social pressure within the school environment—all manifesting as negative consequences of globalization—directly affect the psychological health, behavior, and emotional state of students. In such complex socio-psychological conditions, ensuring the mental resilience of the rising generation and fostering in them a sense of engagement and fortitude against various internal and external conflicts has become one of the most pressing scientific challenges.

During the school-age years, the most delicate and crucial stage of personality formation (especially in primary school and adolescence), students' psyches

unconsciously activate special psychological mechanisms to preserve the self and restore internal balance when faced with life's difficulties, academic failures, or crises in relationships with peers and parents. In the field of psychology, this phenomenon is termed "psychological defense mechanisms," which serve to maintain a person's emotional stability and reduce anxiety levels. However, in the context of the unique problems of the globalization era—such as social isolation, cyberbullying, information manipulation, and a crisis of values—the defense mechanisms employed by students can often become destructive in nature. For example, the excessive and improper use of defense mechanisms like repression, regression, or rationalization is leading to students becoming detached from reality, disrupting their social adaptation, and ultimately contributing to the development of neurotic disorders and destructive behavior.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, nurturing the younger generation into comprehensively developed, spiritually rich, and intellectually capable individuals, and protecting their mental health, has been elevated to one of the highest priority areas of state policy. Large-scale reforms are being implemented in our country to increase the effectiveness of educational processes and to fundamentally improve the psychological services in schools. The Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PQ-4467, dated September 30, 2019, "On Measures to Further Improve Psychological Services in Institutions of the Public Education System," as well as subsequent decrees and resolutions on youth policy in recent years, have defined the strategic objectives in this field.

These legal and regulatory documents establish specific mechanisms for providing professional psychological services to study the individual psychological characteristics of each student in general education schools, systematically analyze their social adaptation processes, and prevent juvenile delinquency, emotional depression, and suicidal situations. Within the framework of the requirements set forth by our head of state, the primary task of a modern school psychologist is not merely to intervene when a problem arises, but rather to form constructive (positive) behavioral strategies in students amidst the negative impacts of the global information age, and to promptly detect and correct anomalous changes in their psychological defense systems.

In the context of globalization and the digital economy, the nature of stressors in students' lives has fundamentally changed. Whereas a student's psychological defenses were previously confined mainly to the family environment and direct communication at school, today, the transnational media space, various ideological currents, and uncontrolled content are flooding the individual consciousness of the student. In these complex conditions, to maintain a sense of subjective security,

students often resort to negative defense mechanisms, including escaping into the virtual world (autization, regression), projecting their problems onto others (projection), or completely denying stressful information (denial). As a result, a decline in students' motivation for the educational process, an increase in aggression levels, and the emergence of deep psychological phobias and barriers in relationships with parents and educators are being observed.

The insufficient scientific and practical study of this problem creates certain difficulties for school psychologists and educators in conducting individual and group work with students. It is impossible to develop effective educational and pedagogical strategies without a deep diagnosis of the unconscious psychological defenses manifested in students and without determining the dynamics specific to their age characteristics.

Based on the foregoing, the purpose of this scientific article is to systematically analyze the patterns of psychological defense mechanisms in modern schoolchildren, their positive and negative aspects, and to develop a set of scientific and methodological recommendations for school practice. This is framed within the context of the challenges of the globalization era and the tasks set forth by our President to enhance the spirituality and psyche of the youth. The empirical data and theoretical conclusions presented in the article serve as an important foundation for ensuring the psychological health of the rising generation and creating a healthy socio-psychological environment in educational institutions.

The issue of psychological defense mechanisms is one of the most complex and fundamental areas of modern psychology, playing a crucial role in understanding the principles that ensure an individual's internal stability and emotional security. The theoretical foundations of this concept were first developed in Western psychology, specifically by Sigmund Freud, the founder of the classical school of psychoanalysis, and were later systematized and applied to child psychology by his daughter, Anna Freud. In her work, "The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense," Anna Freud revealed the unconscious nature of defense mechanisms and substantiated the features of their ontogenetic development during childhood and adolescence. Another Western researcher, Robert Plutchik, in his psycho evolutionary theory, studied psychological defenses in close connection with basic human emotions (anxiety, fear, anger) and evaluated them as part of the adaptive system.

In the psychology of foreign and CIS countries, the dynamics of the defense system in school-aged children have been extensively studied by leading scientists. Based on the views of prominent psychologists such as L.I. Bozhovich and L.S. Vygotsky, it has been established that during crisis periods, adolescents' defense

mechanisms are sharply activated to preserve their subjective "I-concept." According to Erik Erikson's theory of identity, a student experiences intense "role diffusion" (confusion) in the process of self-awareness and mastering social roles. In such situations, their psyche is protected from anxiety through defense mechanisms such as intellectualization, projection, and regression. Modern Western research (for example, by Kramer and his team) empirically confirms the existence of mature (constructive) and immature (destructive) forms of psychological defense in schoolchildren, as well as their impact on students' academic success.

Representatives of the Uzbek school of psychology have also paid significant attention to the issues of psychological defense mechanisms while studying the personal characteristics of schoolchildren and adolescents, along with their communication and adaptation problems. The scientific works of our republic's leading scholars, such as M.G. Davletshin, E.G. G'oziyev, V.M. Karimova, and G.B. Shoumarov, provide an in-depth analysis of the psychological peculiarities of children growing up in the Uzbek family environment, as well as the influence of the national mentality and values on personality formation.

While studying the thinking and volitional qualities of students, E.G. G'oziyev notes that underperforming students often unconsciously attempt to justify their actions through "rationalization" (seeking excuses). Professor V.M. Karimova, examining barriers in adolescent communication from a social psychology perspective, has shown that the "projection" mechanism (attributing one's own negative traits to peers) is a primary cause of conflict among schoolchildren during the process of group adaptation.

The distribution of psychological defense mechanisms among schoolchildren varies according to age group. Among primary school students (ages 7-10), simple and mechanical defenses—such as denial, regression (reverting to childlike behavior), and repression—are predominant. During this period, when a child encounters the initial difficulties of school life, low grades, and a teacher's reprimands, they reduce psychological pressure by refusing to accept reality or through regressive actions like crying and being capricious. This is because the cognitive functions of young schoolchildren are not yet fully developed.

However, the situation changes fundamentally upon reaching adolescence and early youth (ages 11-15 and 16-17). As a result of the development of abstract and logical thinking and the emergence of interpersonal communication as a leading activity, more complex, cognitively-based defense mechanisms appear in adolescents. These include rationalization, intellectualization, projection, and reaction formation (compensation).

In the current era of globalization and the development of cyberspace, the psychological defense system of schoolchildren is undergoing a unique "virtualization" stage. According to the recent scientific conclusions of international experts in internet psychology, gadget addiction and social networks have given rise to a new type of defensive behavior in students. For instance, a student who cannot get along with peers in real life at school and is subjected to bullying (psychological pressure) unconsciously activates a mechanism of escaping into the virtual world (isolation and autization). By creating fake profiles (accounts) on social networks and presenting themselves as a strong, ideal person, students are excessively using "fantasy" and "compensation" mechanisms to escape their situation.

Surveys conducted by young Uzbekistani scientists and practicing psychologists in schools indicate that, in the context of information overload, students experience mental fatigue (information stress) as a result of their inability to filter information. To escape this stress, the student's psyche often resorts to denial of complex parts of a subject and a state of apathy. Particularly in cyberspace communication, which is popular among teenagers, exposure to aggressive content activates the identification mechanism in students (emulating negative characters on the internet), leading to elements of deviance in their behavior. This, in turn, requires school psychological service staff to have a deep knowledge not only of traditional methodologies but also of the principles of media psychology.

Conclusion: Within the framework of this scientific research, the characteristics of the manifestation of psychological defense mechanisms in schoolchildren, their dynamics across age periods, and the impact of modern globalization processes on the students' psyche were systematically analyzed. The theoretical and empirical results obtained show that the age characteristics of schoolchildren are the primary factor determining the architectonics of their psychological defense system. While simple and primary forms of defense, such as denial and regression, are predominant in younger school-aged children due to the immaturity of cognitive functions, by adolescence and early youth, complex cognitive mechanisms such as rationalization, projection, and intellectualization take the leading role.

The boundlessness of the modern information space and addiction to gadgets are transforming the traditional forms of defense mechanisms in schoolchildren. To avoid real-life conflicts and cyberbullying, students are increasingly employing destructive defense strategies, such as unconsciously escaping into the virtual world and creating false personas on social media. Although psychological defense mechanisms naturally serve to maintain a person's emotional stability and reduce

anxiety levels, their long-term and inadequate use diminishes a student's academic achievement, leading to regressive behavior, aggression, and an inability to adapt to the school environment.

To ensure the implementation of the tasks defined in the relevant decrees of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and to create a healthy socio-psychological environment in modern schools, it is necessary to introduce a number of practical recommendations. First, school psychologists must establish a system for the early diagnosis of students' psychological defense mechanisms. In this process, it is important to analyze not only traditional tests but also students' projective methodologies and their behavior in the digital environment based on the principles of media psychology. Second, it is advisable for school psychological service staff to implement special training sessions and correctional programs to transform students' destructive defense mechanisms into sublimation and intellectualization, which are considered the most advanced and beneficial forms for the human personality.

Third, educators and school administrators should make extensive use of an individual approach and a system of positive reinforcement to avoid publicly discussing students' failures during lessons, which could provoke them to make excuses or deny the lesson's importance. Finally, considering that excessively high demands or overprotectiveness within the family environment can hinder a child's development into an independent person and reinforce their defense mechanism of remaining childlike, it is recommended to intensify psychological-pedagogical outreach among parents regarding a child's age-related developmental crises.

REFERENCES:

1. Фрейд А. Психология Я и защитные механизмы = Das Ich und die Abwehrmechanismen (1936) / Пер. с нем. – Москва: Педагогика-Пресс, 1993. – 144 с.
2. G'oziyev E.G'. Umumiy psixologiya. Birinchi kitob. – Toshkent: "O'zbekiston shoiri", 2010. – 320 b.
3. Karimova V.M. Ijtimoiy psixologiya: Darslik. – Toshkent: "Iqtisod-moliya", 2012. – 172 b.
4. Kengesbayevich, R. M. (2025). PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFENCES IN CHILDREN. In *International Conference on Adaptive Learning Technologies* (Vol. 13, pp. 22-23).