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THE IMPACT OF SELF-ESTEEM ON THE RESILIENCE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN UNDER CONDITIONS OF WARTIME CHALLENGES

Chekstere Oksana Yuriyivna¹, Prorok Nataliya Vasylivna²

1. Candidate of Psychological Sciences, Leading Researcher

H. S. Kostyuk Institute of Psychology

National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine, UKRAINE

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-2435-3831

2. Doctor of Psychological Sciences, Senior Research Fellow

H. S. Kostyuk Institute of Psychology

National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine, UKRAINE

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-9510-1108

War, as a chronic psychotraumatic factor, creates a specific context for child development characterized by a combination of постій threat, uncertainty, and disruption of the basic sense of safety. This is particularly significant for primary school children, as during this period self-awareness is intensively developing, with self-esteem as its central component.

In contemporary conditions, self-esteem serves not only as an indicator of psychological well-being but also as a resource of resilience, ensuring a child's ability to adapt and cope with stress [8].

In modern psychology, self-esteem is viewed as an integrative creation of self-awareness, which is formed in the process of social interaction and reflects the formation of specialness to the powerful abilities and capabilities [3, 10]. It has been established that self-esteem is dynamic and depends on the social context, particularly the quality of interactions with parents, teachers, and peers [9].

A number of studies confirm the negative impact of traumatic experiences on self-esteem:

- experiences of violence reduce self-esteem and subjective well-being [6];
- school violence complicates social adaptation and increases anxiety [5];
- bullying is associated with depressive symptoms and feelings of inferiority [2, 4].

At the same time, self-esteem is a key factor of resilience, defined as the ability to effectively adapt to adverse conditions [7]. The structural components of resilience include self-regulation, social support, and positive self-perception.

The aim of the study is to theoretically substantiate the role of self-esteem as a factor of resilience in primary school children and to empirically examine its features under conditions of martial law.

This study is part of a broader research project devoted to the role of self-esteem as a resource of children's resilience in wartime [1].

The research was conducted under conditions of martial law in Ukraine, specifically in the city of Kyiv, which at the time of data collection was exposed to chronic stressors (air raid sirens, threat of missile attacks, disruption of daily routines). This allows the results to be interpreted within the context of current wartime challenges and their impact on children's psycho-emotional state and development.

The study involved 104 students of grades 1–4 from a private lyceum. The participants were aged 7 to 10 years, including 49 boys and 55 girls. To assess the self-esteem of children of this age, the “Ladder” technique by V. H. Shchur [11] was used. The method identified: the child's perception of their own self; their perception of how others evaluate them; and the relationship between these perceptions.

Data processing was carried out by calculating mean values on a 1–10 scale and interpreting them according to levels of self-esteem.

The obtained data indicate the presence of age-related dynamics in self-esteem.

In the first grade, optimally high (58%) and inflated (27%) self-esteem predominates, which can be explained by insufficient development of critical thinking and limited experience of social comparison.

In the second grade, an increase in inflated self-esteem (47%) is observed, reflecting a developmental stage of overestimation of one's own abilities.

In the third and fourth grades, a tendency toward stabilization is noted: the proportion of adequate self-esteem increases (15%), while inflated self-esteem decreases (32%). This is associated with the development of reflection and the accumulation of experience.

Low self-esteem was identified in a small proportion of children (2–3%); however, it is precisely this category that constitutes a group of risk for the development of anxiety and depressive conditions.

The findings are consistent with the notion that primary school age is characterized by a predominance of positive self-perception, which performs a compensatory function in development under stress [7].



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At the same time, the specificity of the wartime context lies in the combination of two tendencies:

1. preservation of normative development (learning, socialization);
2. the presence of a chronic stress background.

This creates the phenomenon of a “dual reality,” in which the child must simultaneously integrate experiences of safety and danger.

Another important phenomenon is premature growing up, when a child assumes functions inappropriate for their age, which may lead to internal conflict and destabilization of self-esteem.

The identified features of children's perceptions of adult evaluation indicate the internalization of social standards and increased sensitivity to external evaluation, which is typical for this age.

Conclusions

Self-esteem is a key component of a primary school child's self-consciousness and performs a regulatory function, ensuring the ability to adapt, interpret experiences, and cope with stress, which allows it to be considered a fundamental resource of resilience.

The wartime context, as a chronic psychotraumatic factor, increases the risk of self-esteem destabilization, contributing to its dependence on external evaluation, emotional vulnerability, and fluctuations in self-perception.

The identified age-related dynamics confirm a transition from inflated, uncritical self-esteem in grades 1–2 to more adequate and differentiated self-esteem in grades 3–4, associated with the development of reflection and accumulation of social experience.

The prevalence of optimally high and inflated self-esteem performs a compensatory function, supporting the child's psychological stability under stress, but low self-esteem, even with a low prevalence, is an indicator of a risk group for the development of maladaptive conditions.

The specificity of development under wartime conditions (the phenomenon of “dual reality,” increased sensitivity to adult evaluation, and premature growing up) necessitates targeted psychological support aimed at developing stable, adequate, and positive self-esteem as a foundation of resilience.

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