

Conference Paper

Assumption of Moral Values By the Children and Adolescents in the Conditions of the Personality's Psycho-physiological Self-restriction in the Extremal Situations

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Abstract

In the current conditions of the shortage of the ideals, romantic scarcity and difficulties in assimilating cultural values by the younger generation, it is important to study the topic of assumption of the moral patterns by the children and adolescents in the situations of physical and mental stress. L.S. Vygotsky and A.R. Luria's ideas on the cultural and historical conditionalism of the psyche and personality's development have become the methodological basis of the study. The empirical data were obtained during the cultural and historical event of high social significance held in Kirov every year in early June, and this event is connected with the transfer of social and cultural values from one generation to another. During the 2006–2017, the methods of observation, visual methods, an express survey suitable for studying the problem were selected and applied. The important pattern of behavior under the extremal conditions to be self-restriction, which is assumed by the children and adolescents in the process of withstanding the difficulties together with adults was studied. The results obtained showed that the emotional adaptability of children and adults in difficult life situations depends on the social environment and the significance of cultural and historical activities. The results of the embodied, unembodied observation and the express survey showed that the differences in the motivation of children and adults are not a factor of separation and are combined with the consonance of the emotional state to achieve a common goal. The data obtained open up new opportunities to explore the dynamics of self-development in the conditions of psychophysiological self-restriction and the features of the cultural values assimilation by a person and a group of people in non-standard situations.

Keywords: difficult life situation, self-restriction, internal conflict, cultural values, moral values, self-development

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1. Introduction

The investigation of the internal mechanisms of the personality's behavior in a complex social situation connected with great physical and mental stress is vital in the conditions of the growing socio-psychological problems, the threat of political and military conflicts, the migration and the general spiritual and moral crisis of the modern civilization. The determinative factors, the main motivation and the major ways of the assumption of the necessary models of behavior by the person in the given conditions are of a particular interest. The author has made an attempt to explore two aspects of the topic: the essence of the motivation of the adult's behavior and the specific features of children and adolescents' social adaptation to the hardships in the situation of their joint overcoming.

This theme is underinvestigated in the modern psychological science. However, there is a fairly large number of scientific papers on the problem of the personality's behavior in the difficult life conditions called coping behavior [1, 7, 9, 11, 12]. These authors saw the problem of coping behavior to be multisided: an intrapersonal, a behavioral and a social one. The cognitive and phenomenological theory of coping with stress, developed by

R. Lazarus and S. Folkman, is by far the most widely spread. The central point of the theory is the dynamic state of a human's cognitive and behavioral efforts that can exceed the human's personality's resources [8].

The peculiarity of approaches to the problem of overcoming life internal and external difficulties is that such situations are usually seen to be undesirable, brought from the outside, to be avoided, adapted to or to be obeyed. The American Psychological Association released recommendations (2009) on the desirability of teaching children stability to successfully overcome bad times, if they happen, for example, a war and terror. These good skills can be useful in everyday life.

In this regard, the question arises, how can one choose the best line of behavior in difficult conditions and master it for further application? One of the opportunities to observe the children, adolescents and adults in the conditions of physical and mental stress is provided by the cultural and historical event related to the Velikoretskya sanctity. The event has taken place for 600 years already in Kirov region of Russia in early June each year.

1.1. Historical background

In the Middle Ages, the lands around the Vyatka River were inhabited by the migrants from Novgorod, who founded the capital of the region, the town of Khlynov (now Kirov), and also those who fled to the north of the country from the Mongol-Tatar invasion. The pilgrims had had clashes with the local tribes who did not want to live next to the strangers. To strengthen the spiritual forces to overcome difficult life conditions the new Vyatichi in the remote place were given the representation of Nicholas the Wonderworker worshiped in Russia. The transfer of the icon from the wilderness to Khlynov was associated with a vow to bring back the icon every year to the place of its appearance – the village of Velikotetskoe – for one day and then to carry it again on foot in hands to Khlynov (Kirov). This vow is executed by the Vyatichi and their guests to this day.

The participants of the event go 150 km on foot (90 there and 60 back again) through the forests and country roads every year in June 3–8, taking short breaks for rest in the field irrespective of the weather conditions, sometimes being extremely unfavorable. The procession always includes many children and adolescents who, together with their parents, overcome the external (a hard way, heat, chillness, rain) and personal difficulties connected with psychophysiological limitations. Tiredness as a result of physical overload, suppression of desires associated with rest and physiological needs, resistance, self-pity, are overcome through the resolution of the internal conflict: 'I cannot, I do not want - it is necessary' [6]. Having observed this situation for many years, we tried to explain the children and adults' behavior in this situation using the theoretical and methodological tools available in the science.

2. Methodological sources

The cultural-historical approach is used as a theoretical justification in the article. This approach is based on the investigating of a personality to be the product of the cultural values acquisition by the individual. The foundations of the approach are laid in the joint work 'Sketches on the History of Behavior: A Monkey. A Primitive. A Child' written by L.S. Vygotsky and A.R. Luria. They demonstrated their interest not only in the subjective content of the mental functions but also in the life circumstances of a particular person and his role in the formation of the society, as well as a wide reference to the historical and cultural associations [4].

According to L.S. Vygotsky, the focus for understanding the adult's behavior is the knowledge how this behavior was formed. The important circumstance in the evolution of the individual psychic structure is that while developing, the child not only grows and matures, but acquires a number of new skills and lines of behavior and thus he is rearmed. It is due to this 'rearmament' that a child transforms into an adult educated person. [21]. The effectiveness of changes is influenced by the cultural environment.

Being included in the appropriate environment, the child quickly begins to change and adapt himself surprisingly fast because the current social and cultural situation creates in the child those necessary forms of adaptation which the adults surrounding the child already possess.

The child is practicing and generating the habit to hamper the immediate satisfaction of his needs and inclinations, to impede the immediate responses to the external provocations in order to master the situation easier and better by using the roundabout route and forming the appropriate cultural methods. [21]

It is this impeding the primitive functions and elaborating complex cultural forms of adaptation that makes the transition from the primitive children's forms of behavior to the behavior of an adult educated person. L.S. Vygotsky subsequently calls and substantiates such a transformation of behavior as the appropriation of cultural forms being directed toward the ideal, the ideal form [3]. L.S. Vygotsky wrote in the monograph *The Instrument and the Sign in the Child's Development* that a child embarks on the path of cooperation, socializing practical thinking by sharing his activities with another person. His own activity, which has a goal, provides an opportunity to imagine, plan his further action. The process characterized by the unity of the material and mental aspects, by the unity of the social, presents the 'the social situation of development' as a unique and peculiar relationship between the child and the social reality surrounding him. It is this factor – social reality – that is the main source of changes in the personality of the child and his development [19, 20].

Vygotsky and Luria's ideas were developed in the papers M. Cole, who gave his own vision of the cultural and historical concept of human development through the artifacts. An artifact is an aspect of the material having changed in the course of the history of its involvement in a purposeful human action. Owing to the changes taking place in the process of their creation and use, the artifacts are both ideal and material [2]. According to the M. Cole's theory, the activities of the previous generations is accumulated in the present as a specifically human component of the environment.

People have created certain forms of social interaction: customs, schemes, scenarios, games, rituals and cultural forms.

It is also important to examine the resources that the person possesses in the situation of the utmost use of his psychic and physical fortitude in conditions when the capabilities of the individual are limited [5]. A.V. Suvorov noted that the formation of the human personality under the conditions of restriction passes through the following stages:

1. being aware of one's situation;
2. realizing that not only parents but outsiders are friendly and willing to help;
3. the response readiness to express the same benevolent attitude to others, the attempts to implement it in one's own behavior;
4. rendering active conscious help to oneself and one's own constant willingness to help the others [17].

To study the children and adolescents' behavior in the situation of overcoming difficulties together with the adults, the concept of a pattern can be used. The pattern (model, template) in psychology is usually seen as the stereotyped behavioral reactions (confident, self-destructive, manipulative, altruistic, etc.) or as a sequence of actions, a behavioral model. The basic patterns of behavior direct the person to how to act in a certain situation. We can assume that special situations can form the corresponding patterns of behavior.

3. Description of the Research Methods

The aim of the research was to identify the behavioral features of children and adults in the extremal situation connected with the transfer of cultural and historical values. The object of the research is the person's behavior in a difficult social situation. The subject of the research is the transfer and acquisition of patterns of self-restriction (a consent to overcome the difficulties) in the conditions involving physical and mental stress. The hypothesis of the study is: the patterns of the *desires restriction* are adopted by children from their parents or important people by being involved in the situation of cultural and *historical experience assimilation*.

The methods used by us were: combined embodied and unembodied unstructured observation as part of the field experiment with further structured analysis of the material collected. We also applied methods of conversation and an express survey.

Our choice of methods to study the problem depended on the specificity of the object and the conditions for data collection. Due to a large number of people (from 20,000 to 70,000) taking part in the cultural and historical event we selected the tools to record the patterns of behavior when moving from one place to another and while taking a rest at the campsite. Our photography of the participants and the very process of the movement of the column of the people allowed us to compile a visual data database of **2,413** photographs, **438** photographs showing the features of the adults and children's behavior. There was no ethical problem with taking photographs, the media representatives recording with the video cameras and taking photographs of the event. Trust and mutual understanding reigned during the procession. A case-study method was applied to each photo to study the specific situation, the really existing particular case. The visual methods helped to carry out the first part of the study of behavior patterns in an extremal situation. They made it possible to identify the visual elements to be significant for the purpose and objectives of the study, the frequency of their appearance in the sample (the selected collection of photographs), and in the analysis of the quantitative results. In general, the use of visual methods provided the possibility to do the scientific analysis of the subject matter under study [10].

The second part of the study was aimed at researching the motivation (aspirations, attitudes, relationships and feelings) of adults voluntarily participating in the events related to the transfer of cultural and historical values, high demands being imposed on the personality including self-restriction. The conversation was used to identify the main motives that drove the adults to take part in such activities.

The third part of the research was aimed at clarifying the motivation of the children to voluntarily overcome the difficulties. The method of the snap poll was applied there.

Qualitative and quantitative methods of data processing were applied.

3.1. Characteristics of the sample group

The empirical base included **152** people: 145 adults (78 males, 67 females), 7 children and adolescents (4 males, 3 females) and **438** photographs depicting the object of the research. The photographs were selected from the total database being collected for over 7 years of observations. The database included 2,413 photographs depicting the cultural and historical event participated by the adults, children and adolescents. In the second part of the survey, 145 people aged between 25 and 61 (M-78, F-67) were interviewed. In the third part of the study, the subjects were children who participated in this action with their parents (3 girls and 4 boys) aged 7–12.

TABLE 1: Components of the emotional background of adults and children.

People	Emotional condition						
	Openness			Viability		Resistance	
	Joy	Interest	Consent	Patience (overcoming)	Tension tiredness	Dissatisfaction	Avoidance
Adults 370	56	62	82	113	57	0	0
Children 59	10	6	13	22	8	0	0
Adolescents 32	7	8	8	8	2	0	1
460	66	69	103	143	73	2	1
Adults	15.14%	16.76%	22.16%	30.54%	15.41%	0.00%	0.00%
Children	16.95%	10.17%	22.03%	37.29%	13.56%	0.00%	0.00%
Adolescents	21.88%	25.00%	25.00%	25.00%	6.25%	0.00%	3.13%
Total	14.35%	15.00%	22.39%	31.09%	15.87%	0.43%	0.22%

4. Results

The analysis of the data obtained showed a wide range of emotions and emotional states at all three studies.

In the first study the investigation of the visual material allowed us to see the contents of behavior patterns. It is these patterns associated with the affective aspect of volitional action to attain the goal contained various emotions and emotional states with the adults, children and adolescents: joy, interest, consent, patience, tiredness, dissatisfaction and avoidance. The current study gave us the following data: 14.35% showed joy, 15.00% showed interest, 22.39% showed consent, 31.09% showed patience, 15.87% showed tension, while dissatisfaction and avoidance was observed only in 0.43% and in 0.22%, respectively.

These states in the continuum of their manifestations from positive to negative mode lean toward three basic constructs being openness, viability, resistance. Table 1 presents data on the number of emotions of different modalities and percentages of the total number of observations in each group.

To find out the age-related features of the emotions manifestation, a comparative analysis of the statistical characteristics between the observations of emotions in adults, children and adolescents was done. The cases of emotion manifestation joined by the age were compared between the groups using χ^2 criterion. The samples of interest for certain years were compared using the Mann-Whitney rank-sum test. There were no significant differences between the data for the adults, adolescents and children except for the emotion of interest between adolescents and children $*p = 0.046$, adults and children $p = 0.083$ (tendency) and patience of adults and adolescents

$p = 0.062$ (tendency). However, it should be noted, that the children and adults are the same in terms of the emotions manifestation while the adolescents differ from both groups. This is well seen in Figure 1.

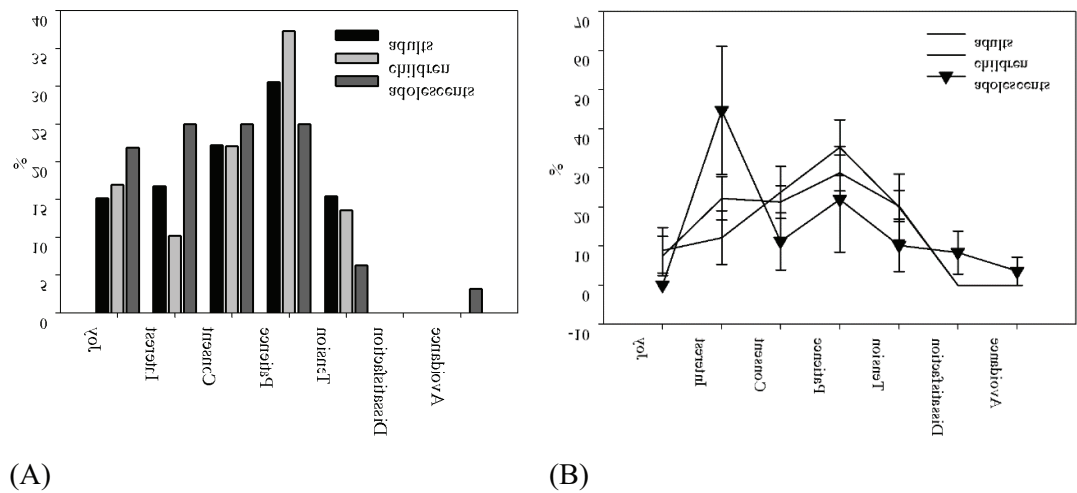


Figure 1: Components of the emotional background of adults and children, %.

Figure 1(A) shows the percentage of the occurrence of the emotions in the sample joined by the age, and Figure 1(B) shows the percentage of the occurrence of emotions, averaged by the age with errors, $M \pm m$.

Thus, the strongest emotions with the adolescents were interest and consent. This can be explained by the psychophysiological characteristics of adolescence, ambivalence, a high degree of involvement in social activities or, in contrast, ignoring and resisting to the social regulations and cultural values. The children have no negative states and, at the same time, they demonstrate a high level of patience. This is due to the fact, that the children do not have any experience of future path difficulties and the possible fears are relieved by the presence of their parents and other adults willing to help.

The result of the **second part** of the research was the material obtained using the qualitative method of conversation, where the key question was: ‘Why do you take part in the event, which suggests great physical and mental stress?’ The respondents’ responses showed many motives for their voluntary participation in the event related to self-restriction. These motives can be combined into the following groups:

The responses about **testing their perseverance**, volitional qualities, endurance, etc., were given by 145 people (78 males, 67 females).

The respondents said that such events help **develop moral qualities**, to strengthen spiritual forces. The similar thoughts were expressed in the responses of 104 people (43 males, 67 females).

Some respondents plunging into the atmosphere of the cultural and historical event gain internal strengths in order to set an example in the **establishment of the moral ideals in the society**, for example, 'the feeling of freedom from worries about the material goods', 'pride for one's culture and history', 'the desire to pass on the experience to subsequent generations'). Such an opinion was expressed in the responses of 63 people (24 males, 39 females).

It was noted that such events help them achieve inner harmony, for example: 'I'm tired of the hectic life, I want to stop and understand who I am' (a similar opinion was expressed by 94 people: 53 males, 41 females).

The respondents noted that this situation makes **a psychotherapeutic impact** on them, especially what concerns overcoming resentment, loss, unresolved problems with important for them people (79 people think so: 27 males, 52 females) or a mobilizing impact when one's internal resources are activated to overcome difficult life problems (said by 87 people: 22 males, 65 females).

Some respondents noted that in such a situation, their **altruistic forces accumulate** for interaction with their children (54 people: 3 males, 51 females).

Other respondents said that they **enjoy** the way jointly overcoming the difficulties and realizing this fact (67 people: 43 males, 24 females).

Table 2 shows the respondents' motivational preferences expressed as a percentage of the total number of respondents, the percentage of men and women who expressed their preferences, and the importance of gender differences.

The most common motivation is the need of the individual to test oneself for the strength of the path in the joint event and gaining support (100% noted this importance for their choice, among them 53.79% of men and 46.21% of women). The next strong motivation was the acquisition of identity, the development of moral qualities selected by 71.72% of the respondents (41.35% of men and 58.65% of women). The motivation to summon and activate the internal personal resources to overcome various life problems (60.00% of the respondents, 25.29% of men and 74.71% of women).

Attaining internal harmony and balance along with the motivation to testing their persistence, volitional qualities, endurance proved to be important for the men (64.83% selected this response, 56.38 % of men and 43.62% of women). Finding the cultural and moral identity proved to be important for women (43% of the

TABLE 2: Motivational preferences and gender differences in the motivation of adults, expressed as a percentage.

Motivation	The percentage of emotions n = 145	Men %	Women %	P*
Testing persistence	100.00	53.79	46.21	0.406
Development of moral qualities	71.72	41.35	58.65	0.095+
Establishment of moral ideals in the society	43.45	38.10	61.90	0.077+
Attaining inner harmony	64.83	56.38	43.62	0.256
Psychotherapeutic effect (overcoming resentment, loss)	54.48	34.18	65.82	**0.007
Psychotherapeutic effect (summoning effect)	60.00	25.29	74.71	***< 001
Accumulation of altruistic forces	37.24	5.56	94.44	***< 001
Enjoyment	46.21	64.18	35.82	*0.027

Symbols: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, binomial criterion.

respondents, 38.10% of men and 61.90% of women), altruism (selected by 37.24% of the people, 5.56% of men and 94.44% of women). In addition, the women seek to establish and develop their moral qualities, summon their internal resources to overcome their own and their children's life problems (out of 60.00% of the respondents 25.29% were men and 74.71% were women).

In general, the adults' motivation was: the desire to strengthen identity, to summon spiritual forces and to gain resources to solve life problems.

The third stage was a short (for 30 minutes) rapid diagnostics of children accidentally caught up at the time of rest (with their parents' permission) about whether they regret that they had set out on their journey and if they would like to take part in the event next year. All the answers were the same: none of the respondents regret the journey, and if invited, they willingly would go again. In total, 7 people were interviewed for the specified period of time (Table 3).

The results of this express survey can be assessed qualitatively taking into account a very short period of time and the noticeable feature of behavior and the response to the difficulties on the way. In general, during the interview, the children and adolescents interviewed demonstrated their satisfaction with the event as their own achievement and they said that they had managed to overcome their internal state of 'I do not want but I must' when they felt they did not want to move on.

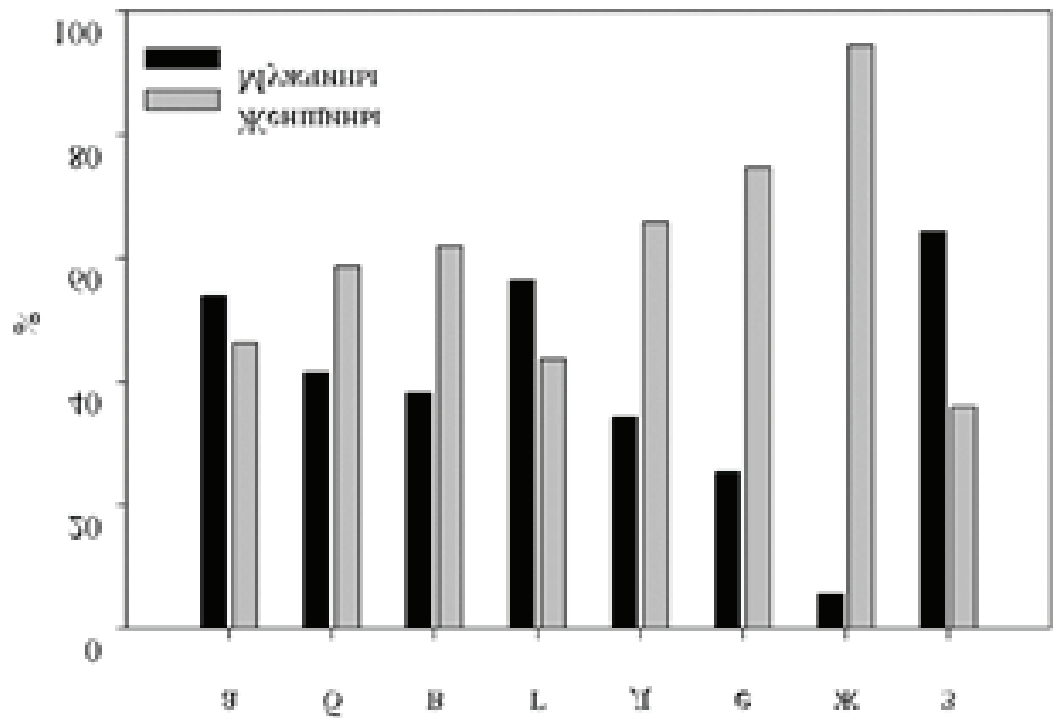


Figure 2: Gender differences in motivational preferences of the adults. a – testing of their persistence, b – development of moral qualities, c – establishment of the moral ideals in the society, d – attaining inner harmony, e – psychotherapeutic effect (overcoming resentment, loss), f – psychotherapeutic effect (summoning effect), g – accumulation of altruistic forces, h – enjoyment.

4.1. Limitations

The study was accompanied by several restraints. Firstly, under the conditions of the cultural and historical event under consideration, the general model was created – to direct all kinds of activity toward the common goal, not being distracted by any other activity. The representatives of the mass media and the writers talked with the participants of the event with a view to acquaint the society with a socially significant phenomenon. There have been no scientific researches conducted to date. Secondly, the researcher’s participation in the event imposes the same difficulties and psychophysiological strain as those of the other participants, which restrains the possibility of constant observation during the entire period of time. These restraints can be avoided if the selected objects are observed every year using the appropriate methodological and diagnostic tools.

TABLE 3: Children and adolescents' self-evaluation of their behavior in a difficult social situation.

Respondents		Questions and answers		
Gender	Age	How did you manage to overcome the difficulties on the way?	Did you cry? Were you sorry that you set off?	Are you going to participate next year?
Boys	8	I was helped by father	No	I want to
	10	It was interesting	No	If I am invited
	12	Myself	No	I will participate
	12	It was not difficult	No	I am going to
Girls	7	I was helped by my parents	No	I do not know
		I was helped by the adults		I will go
	7	Myself	I cried once but I did not regret	
			No	I want to
	12			

5. Discussion

The observation conducted and the interviews allowed us to evaluate in the particular social situation the characteristic manifestations of the personality to be the product of the individual's cultural values mastery. A. Luria's talking point that the established social and cultural situation creates with the child the required forms of adaptation which have long ago been created with the adults surrounding the child, was confirmed in the study of the adults and children's attitude to the voluntary trial. A hard way and unfavorable weather conditions (cold, heat, rain) which cannot be avoided, as there are no settlements nearby, create the line of behavior seen by the child in the adults. This is resistance to unfamiliar situations and patience to overcome the difficulties on the way. This pattern can be established if a child or an adolescent, or an adult, has mastered the habit to suppress the immediate satisfaction of their needs and impulses, that is, they were able to control their emotional experience on the way, for example, tiredness, irritation to hardship and self-pity.

In such conditions, the unity as the urge to achieve, overcoming the hardships, the desired highly significant goal – to redeem the promise given to the previous generations – played a very important part. The cultural form of overcoming a difficult extremal situation manifested itself as a universal line of behavior characterized by the predominance of the internal connections over the external ones, internal unevenness (in this case, social attitude, when an adult is responsible for his behavior toward

children and adolescents), the ability to self-reproduce patterns of self-restraint when being personally tested taking part in a socially significant event.

The study of the adults' motivational preferences showed that the assumption of the cultural forms took place and was possible due to the focus on the ideal, the ideal form (moral guidelines, perseverance testing, attaining inner harmony).

The survey of differences in emotions permitted us to find out the features of affective states depending on the age. The adults' feeling of patience and the larger representation of children and adolescents' interest and joy confirm the importance of the feeling of responsibility of the older generation and the acuteness of experiencing involvement in the joint activity of the younger generation.

Gender differences in motivation are explained by the difference in the social roles performed by men and women.

The transfer of the behavior patterns from adults to children when it is necessary to display the physical and psychological efforts occurs through sharing the purpose of the activity and the conditions for its implementation. The parents' confidence positively affects the children's emotional state: they have no negative emotions, anxiety, and a sense of fear. The children adopt their parents' patterns of behavior manifested in their concentration and organization. However, while having a rest, when the situation does not require self-restraint, there appear positive emotions, the children begin to communicate and to share their impressions. Thus, the common goal and overcoming difficulties arising from the goal achievement, in the situation of self-restraint, awakens children's serious attitude toward the event, endurance and patience.

We have not found any confirmation to the fact that the child can find his own solution in a situation of psychophysiological tension. A special investigation is required within the framework of a more fundamental research on the personality's development in the conditions of overcoming difficulties. This problem requires a comprehensive scientific approach, identifying and studying the factors affecting this process.

6. Conclusion

The results of the research allow us to conclude that adults, children and adolescents' behavior in everyday life and in difficult life situations may differ. Having been tested by the extreme life conditions, the children helped by their parents become integrated into the society, they are engaged in their own development, having a number of achievements. The children themselves are ready to contact, they are inquisitive,

sociable, in comparison with their contemporaries, they look less capricious, more open and self-confident.

The research confirmed the idea of the cultural and historical theory of the interiorization of behavioral patterns by the children and adolescents in difficult life situations and a modern idea of the formation of children's emotional psychism under the influence of adults (Over and Carpenter, 2009; Rubin, 2011; Tarantino et al., 2014). Understanding the need to cope with the unfavorable external conditions helps to mold children and adolescents' confident behavior and to suppress the manipulative (whims, discontent) and self-destructive (hysterical, resistance) behavior [13]. This extended in time pattern of persistent overcoming by the adults and children difficulties is a cultural form that unites, according to M. Cole, the present and the past. It is important to investigate the difference in the content of aims to overcome difficulties. Where does the motivation of self-restraint come from and is it a personal resource? [14].

The research confirmed the inner content of the phenomenon of *cultural form* (Latin cultura – cultivation, education, forma – form) where the information-sign content of social life is created, stored and transmitted in knowledge, values, regulators and patterns of behavior from generation to generation: patriotism, a sense of duty, the dignity of the individual in the society, and the pursuit of noble goals. These values are moral ones. They represent the ideal vector of a healthy society and pass through the individual psychic structure.

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