

## Methods of development of conflictological culture in older adolescence

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### Abstract

*The relevance of our study is related to the need to help adolescents effectively cope with the challenges of modern society, which is characterised by increased tension, aggressiveness and conflict. The lack of social skills and demonstration of violent ways of overcoming contradictions by adults leads to an increase in conflicts among adolescents. The purpose of our study is the development of conflictological culture in older adolescents. We adhere to Shcherbakova's definition (2010), according to which conflictological culture is an integrative quality of personality, which is based on humanistic values. Its structure is represented by the culture of feelings and thinking as well as behavioural and communicative culture. The sample consisted of 307 adolescents, 16-18 years old, living in Chisinau. To identify the level of development of conflict culture, we used the method developed by Shcherbakova (2011). Based on the obtained data, we developed the program of conflictological culture development. The cognitive-behavioural approach of A. Beck (2017) acts as a methodological basis of the psychological training program. Twelve adolescents, with a low level of conflictological culture development, participated in the training. The following changes were obtained in the study sample: adolescents demonstrate a greater ability to prevent and manage conflicts at all stages; they show a greater readiness for dialogue, the ability to adequately verbalize their own and other people's experiences; and to a greater extent they possess the techniques of assertive communication compared to adolescents from the control group. The obtained results confirm the effectiveness of the program developed by us and the validity of the hypothesis of the study. The novelty and practical significance of our study is determined by the fact that conflictological culture is studied for the first time in our country. Our proposed program for the development of conflictological culture can serve as a basis for educational programs that develop skills to prevent and overcome conflict situations among adolescents.*

**Keywords:** conflictological culture, conflict, adolescent, competence in communication, psychological training.

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## 1. Introduction

Modern society is characterised by continuous and rapid changes and transformations, increased level of competitiveness, and a complex and contradictory process of social interaction. All this inevitably leads to an increase in the number of conflicts. Recognition of conflict as an everyday, inevitable and frequent phenomenon, actualises the issue of educating a person who is able to live in peace, harmony and tolerance - a person who navigates the cultural environment and builds a decent life. In this regard, the idea of "educated person" is replaced by the idea of "person of culture" (Androva N.A.). Many researchers point to the necessity of forming the psychological culture of personality (Bukhanevich T.H., Ilinykh Y.V., Orlov A.B., Dubrovina I.V., Semikin V.V.) as a component of the basic culture of personality, a systemic characteristic of a person necessary to meet the challenges of modern society with dignity. One of the most important components of such culture is the conflictological culture of personality (Shcherbakova O.I., 2011).

Many works are devoted to the study of conflictological culture. A lot of scientists have conducted research on this issue, which is reflected in numerous publications. Heigl P. (2003) believes that a well-developed conflictological culture contributes to "fair and just conflict". The researcher distinguishes between Streitkultur (dispute culture) and Konfliktkultur (conflictological culture). From the point of view of Kurray M.R. (2008), conflictological culture should be considered not separately, but in combination with other components of corporate culture, in particular communication culture. Noa Davenport considers "conflict culture" as a component of school culture. She identifies "Konfliktkultur" (conflictological culture) with "peace education" of adolescents. The author believes that the development of "conflictological culture" will contribute to the reduction of aggression and violence in schools. Many authors such as Samsonova N.V. (2002), Markova A.K., Chernyaeva T.N., Kukleva N.V. as cited in Shurygina O.V. (2017), Yarychev N.U. (2011) etc. consider conflictological culture as part of the general culture of a specialist. We share the position of Shcherbakova O.I., who understands the conflictological culture of personality as cited: "an integrative quality based on existential-humanistic values, including the culture of thinking, culture of feelings, communicative culture and behavioural culture, and manifested in optimal, context-appropriate strategies of interaction in conflicts, providing constructive problem solving".

Despite some differences in the understanding of the essence of the concept of "conflictological culture" and its content aspects, all authors without exception advocate the importance of developing conflictological culture. This is especially important in teenage years, as it is these teenagers who will enter adulthood and will have to respond with dignity to the challenges of modern society.

In the process of formation and development of conflictological culture, it is important to rely on the particularities of age and the difficulties faced by older adolescents. Along with social factors and lack of competence in communication, the conflict behaviour of older adolescents is determined by the specifics of the age crisis. Despite the differences in approaches to the content of older adolescence, psychologists are unanimous in believing that the conflict behaviour of this period and its resolution has a significant impact on the formation of personality and its socialization.

Erikson E. (1996) also assigned society an important role in the development of adolescence, since the atmosphere in which their personality develops is subject to dictated values, rules and laws characteristic of the society which they are part of.

According to Elkonin D.B. (2001), older adolescence is associated with the ongoing changes and distinctive characteristics of this period. Features of the psychological development of personality at this age segment allow us to talk about certain predictors of conflict situations, and the relevance of the development of a conflictological culture of personality at this age. It is dictated by the adolescent's adaptation, the characteristics of their relationships in the family, as well as intrapersonal processes. The specificity itself has a protest form, associated with the duality of the adolescent's position and their own inconsistency.

Kulagina I.Yu. and Kolyutsky V.N. (2001) note that older adolescents can be differentiated according to their personal orientation, on the basis of which conflict in adolescents will be different. As such, in the first group there are those adolescents who are distinguished by selfishness and immorality, who do not fulfill any needs other than the basic ones. Their indifference towards themselves is extrapolated to their attitude towards others, when they demonstrate aggressive reactions, rudeness in treatment, hostility and anger towards the whole world. The second group differs from the first in a pronounced deformation of moral values; they receive satisfaction from the oppression of other, weaker individuals. They are also impulsive, often hypocritical, and characterized by changeable moods. The adolescents following them cannot decide between positive and negative views and attitudes. They tend to show apathy and are often hostile. The last group consists of weak-willed adolescents, also apathetic, without expressed interests, and a large number of friends or acquaintances for communication, but suspicious, vindictive, fawning over stronger peers.

According to Bozhovich L.I. (2008), for older adolescents, a sensitive moment is the attitude of an adult when they want to communicate with the teenager confidentially, on equal terms, with unshakable faith in them on the part of the adult. Increased conflict is aggravated by ineffective ways of communicating with the adolescent, usually either too authoritarian or too permissive, as well as by the personality of the parent, which manifests itself in conflict situations, that is, the conflictological culture of the parent.

Kapustina V.A., Karmanova V.V (2018), and Skutina T.V. (2008) say that parents one way or another demonstrate their attitude to conflicts, ways of behaviour in conflict situations, according to the level of social interaction at which this conflict is realized. As part of the diverse communication of older adolescents, patterns of such behaviour can be replenished with quite contradictory strategies, both constructive and negative, as their experience of being in conflict expands.

Summarizing the data from studies of strategies in conflict among adolescents conducted by Khudaeva M.Yu. (2007), Skutina T.V. (2008), Isaeva N.I. (2012), and Karimova L. (2015), it should be noted that they use both avoidance strategies and cooperation, compromise, devaluation and competition. The methods that older adolescents choose in a conflict situation also directly depend on the development of their conflict competence.

According to Grebenkin E.V. (2013), family is not the only place where a teenager learns the concept of conflict and all its accompanying components. This experience is greatly enriched by educational institutions where older adolescents spend quite a lot of time. On the one hand, school can contribute to the positive development of the conflict culture of adolescents; on the other hand, violence among students, forms of conflict mediation, and anti-bullying programs become a separate link in pedagogical and social research. It should be noted that the conflict behaviour of older adolescents involves academic performance, problems associated with socialization, the age of the students (the older, the greater the severity of conflicts), as well as the specifics of the interaction of schoolchildren with teachers and among themselves. Schoolchildren nowadays are more open and confident in confrontation, express their position more freely, and more actively demand democratic relations from the teacher, therefore conflict management knowledge in matters of interaction with students is also important for the latter.

Among national studies, the concept associated with conflict culture is the social intelligence of an adolescent, which is an integral part of the development and maintenance of social relationships, in the absence of conflicts (Platon I., 2019). The opportunity to establish constructive and effective relationships in line with modern prospects for the development of society is seen through the flexible behaviour of an individual open to change, where social intelligence performs the function of harmonizing relationships, predicting behaviour, communication, self-knowledge and self-learning throughout life. That is, social intelligence is an essential factor that ensures the success of an individual in life,

and has an adaptive role in transforming the social environment and the success of social interaction.

Thus, we can conclude that the characteristics of the psychological development of older adolescents form the integrity of value orientations, inclinations, their attitude towards others and the world, and awareness of themselves as a unique and integral personality. On the other hand, they are dictated by the inconsistency and complexity of these processes, which increases the likelihood of conflict behaviour among older adolescents, but at the same time, offers an excellent basis for the development of a conflict culture, the purpose of which is to understand the conflict in the direction of positive changes, foster tolerance and emotional volitional self-regulation, as well as prevention and constructive resolution of emerging contradictions.

## 2. Material and methods

**The purpose** of this stage of the study is to develop conflictological culture in adolescents by using the program developed by us. After participation, we expect the development of constructive communication skills, the development of the ability to understand one's emotions; expression of feelings; coping with negative experiences and standstills; and teaching strategies for behaviour in conflict situations. All of the above contribute to the formation of conflictological culture in older adolescents.

**Research hypothesis:** The level of conflictological culture of the adolescents, who participated in a specific Training Program, will significantly increase after the training completion.

**Methodological and conceptual basis of the development program.** In order to diagnose the level of conflictological culture development, we used the method developed by Shcherbakova O.I. (2011). The technique contains 12 pairs of polar judgments that reflect different components of conflictological culture. The judgments relate to human behaviour in situations of conflict, self-regulation of emotional state, desire for cooperation or competition, communication skills, etc. and correspond to 4 scales of the methodology: culture of feelings, culture of thinking, communicative and behavioural culture. Let us present a brief description of the scales:

- *culture of feelings*: the ability to subdue negative emotional manifestations, to keep an optimistic attitude, to be stable in affective reactions, empathetic and tolerant in situations of conflict;
- *culture of thinking*: the ability to critically approach the process of solving situations of interpersonal contradictions, to see the root of the problem, to apply such thinking operations as analysis, synthesis, comparison and abstraction;
- *communicative culture*: possession and readiness to use certain communicative techniques related to effective communication, adequacy of manifestation and

reading of verbal and non-verbal signals of the interlocutor and one's own (assertiveness, active listening, etc.);

- *behavioural culture*: the ability to act in a certain way in a conflict, applying constructive strategies of conflict behaviour in a way that prevents the conflict from developing and resolves it to the benefit of all parties to the conflict.

In developing our program, we relied on a cognitive-behavioural approach which allows us to form a conscious attitude towards the interaction of adolescents with other people, and practice behavioural and communication skills. The theory of cognitive behavioural psychotherapy (Beck A., 2017) is based on the correction of irrational cognitive structures (beliefs, attributions, etc.) that have a destructive impact on a person's experiences and behaviour. These structures are very stable due to the mechanism of self-reinforcing feedback. Awareness of and overcoming one's automatic irrational beliefs and judgments that cause negative experiences help one cope with them by changing their feelings and behaviour.

Psychological training is built considering age characteristics (Vygotsky L.S., 2021; Elkonin D.B., 2001), the basic needs of a teenager (Sukhomlinsky V.A., 1981) and technologies of training work (Fopel K., 2016; Lidars A.G., 2001). The cognitive-behavioural approach is focused on the psychological preparation of adolescents for various unforeseen circumstances, the opportunity to master new forms/strategies of behaviour in conflict situations, overcome difficulties in expressing their own opinions, reduce the level of negative reactions, and improve the culture of communication. The training program takes into account the individual characteristics of the formation of social competence and social competence of adolescents. The advantage of group work is the opportunity to practice independent behaviour in a safe environment, and receive feedback and support from other participants. The thematic richness of the training program allows one to develop diverse ways to change the negative perception of conflict, express negative states and feelings, develop control over destructive emotions and manifestations of aggressiveness, as well as modify and replace maladaptive forms of behaviour with adapted models and consolidate positive behavioural reactions, thus promoting the development of conflictological culture. During classes, students demonstrated adequate forms of behaviour in a situation of social interaction ("I will do this..."), positive psychological attitudes are transmitted ("I will succeed"), and developed algorithms/behaviour strategies aimed at laying the foundations of social values and conflictological culture.

In psychological training, the following cognitive behavioural therapy techniques were used, conditionally divided into 4 groups, each of which solves specific problems:

*Group 1* - track destructive cognitions and become aware of them: keeping a personal diary in which thoughts and actions are recorded throughout the day; consider one's thoughts from the perspective of an outside observer;

*Group 2* - challenge irrational thoughts: give arguments for and against; weigh the pros and cons; conduct an experiment: experience first-hand how others react to a specific emotion; go back in time to question a fictitious witness to events; switch roles with the therapist and convince them that their thoughts are irrational;

*Group 3* - activate the imagination: repetition of positive attitudes gradually changes the way of thinking, making it more productive; through the use of metaphors, sayings, parables, quotes includes figurative thinking, the explanation becomes more understandable; modify images, first changing negative perception to neutral, and then to positive;

*Group 4* - minimize resistance: repeatedly testing oneself with positive instructions; detection of hidden motives for unproductive behaviour.

The total duration of the personal resources development program was 12 sessions of 120 minutes each (with a 10-minute break), once a week.

The sample consisted of 12 adolescents aged 16 to 18 years. Each lesson was structured according to a specific scheme, which included several elements: group members greeting each other, warm-up exercise, and reflection on the previous lesson, main exercise or block of information, homework, and farewell.

To determine the effectiveness of the training program for older adolescents, we used the same diagnostic material as in the ascertaining stage of the experiment.

The statistical analysis of the indicators for the studied parameters using the nonparametric method of the Mann-Whitney U test showed that the control and experimental groups were not statistically different, therefore we can state that the condition of homogeneity of groups during the experiment was met.

### 3. Results

The results of diagnosing of the conflictological culture level before and after the experiment in the experimental group are presented below in Figure 1.

Analysing the results presented in Figure 1, we can note an increase in the overall level (50.42 average indicators) of conflict culture among adolescents who participated in the formative experiment. In addition, a significant increase in indicators can be noted on such scales as "Behavioural culture" (15.17 average indicators) and "Communicative culture" (17 average indicators).

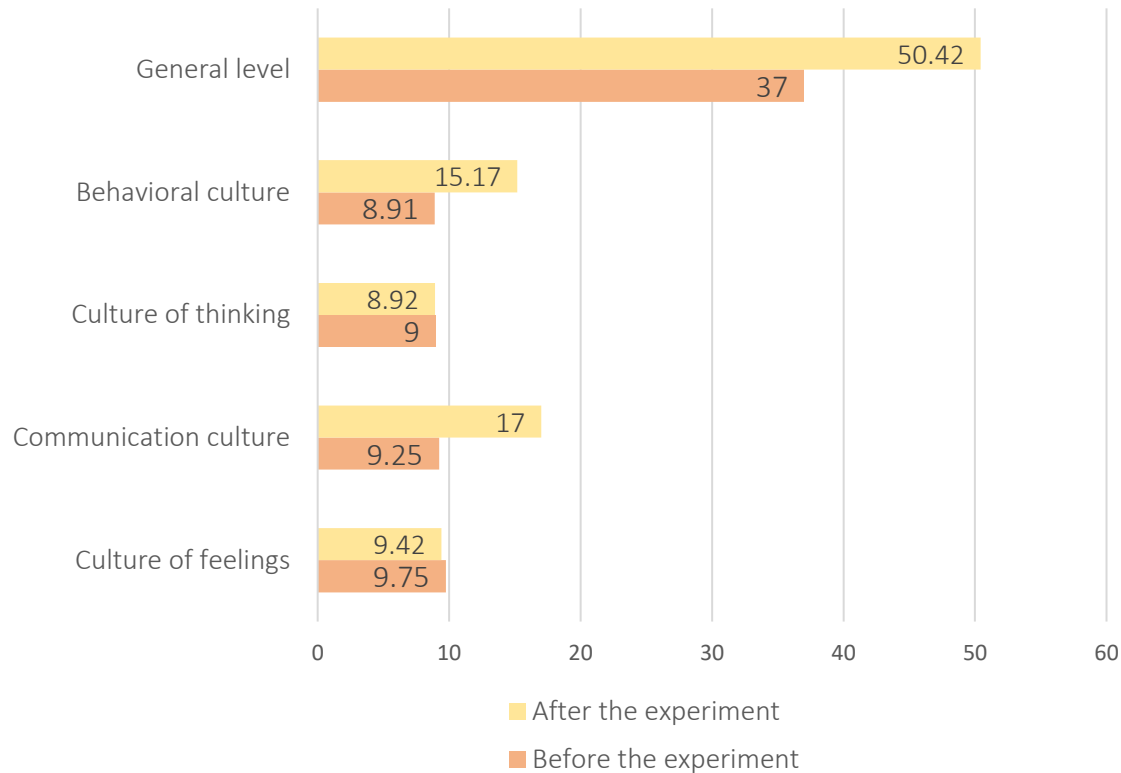


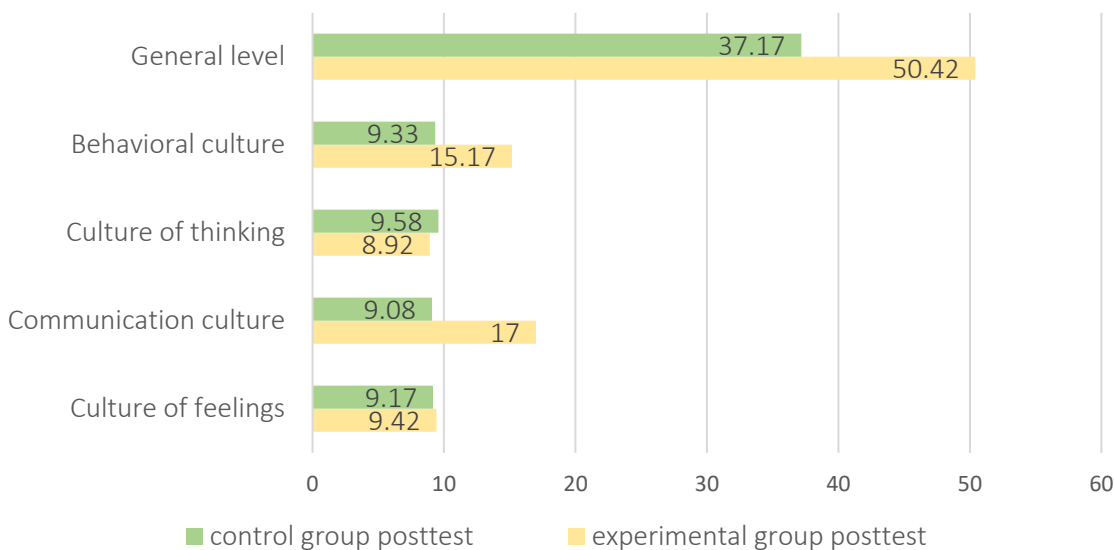
Figure 1. Average indicators according to the method “Level of development of a person’s conflictological culture” before and after the experiment (experimental group)

The statistical analysis carried out using the Wilcoxon T-test for dependent samples confirmed the trends we noted. According to the results obtained, there are significant differences in the results of primary and secondary diagnostics in terms of the General level of conflict culture ( $z = -3.59$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), which indicates that the general level of the property being studied increased after participation in the formative experiment. In addition, significant differences were identified on the “Behavioural Culture” scale ( $z = -3.29$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), which indicates an increase in its level after the formative experiment. There are also significant differences on the “Communicative Culture” scale ( $z = -3.69$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), which also indicates the effectiveness of the formative experiment program. We found similar results in Pochekaeva I.S. (2010), who considers it necessary and effective to develop and implement programmes for the development of conflictological culture of high school students in the general education process.

Figure 2 clearly shows the ratio of indicators in the groups participating in the study during posttest.



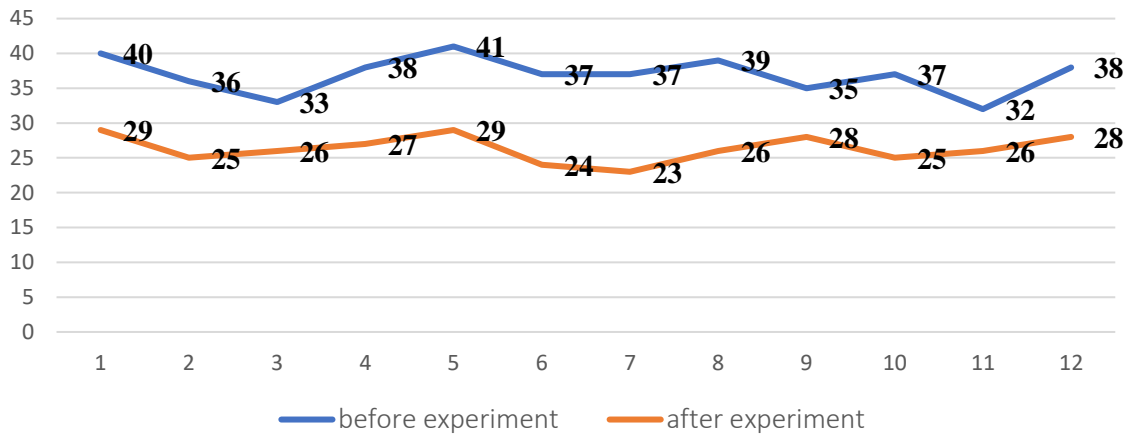
Figure 2. Results of secondary diagnostics using the method “Level of development of one’s conflict culture” in the control and experimental groups (average indicators)



Analysing the results presented in Figure 2, one can note the same trend that was observed when comparing the results before and after the formative experiment in the experimental group. We see that in the experimental group there were positive changes in the general level of conflict culture ( $U=0.0$  at  $p=0.000$ ), as well as on the “Behavioural culture” scale ( $U=4.0$  at  $p=0.000$ ) and “Communicative culture” ( $U=0.0$  at  $p=0.000$ ). It is worth noting that the culture of thinking ( $U=63.000$  at  $p=0.596$ ) and the culture of feelings ( $U=53.000$  at  $p=0.260$ ) did not change significantly, neither in the control group nor in the experimental group. The absence of significant changes, presumably, can be explained by age particularities: the emotional sphere of older adolescents has a contradictory character. They are characterised by high emotional excitability; stability of emotional feelings, especially negative ones; and inconsistency of feelings, impulsiveness, high level of anxiety. Thinking becomes more systematic, but is characterised by polarity and is highly susceptible to emotions and feelings (Alexandrova Y.V., 2010). Perhaps, to influence these mental structures in adolescence, other psychological tools, conditions or time of intervention are needed.

Next, we present the results of diagnosing the level of conflict in the personality of adolescents before and after the formative experiment (Fig. 3.).

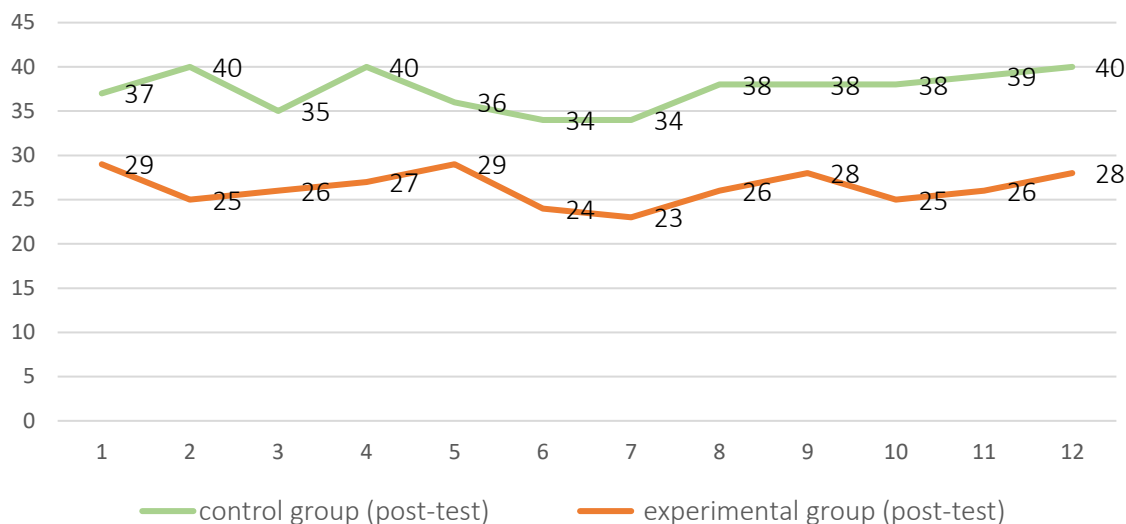
Figure 3. Diagnostic results using the “Level of Personality Conflict” method before and after the experiment in the experimental group



The graph clearly shows the difference in the level of conflict among adolescents before and after the experiment; after the training, the level of conflict among adolescents apparently decreased, which is confirmed by statistical calculations using the Wilcoxon T-test, which indicate that there are significant differences in the level of the trait being studied ( $z = -2.99$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ), namely a decrease in the level of conflict after the experiment. The results obtained show that increasing the level of conflictological culture, which is expressed in the deepening of knowledge in the field of understanding the essence and causes of conflicts; expanding the role repertoire in overcoming conflicts; and mastering the skills of assertive behaviour in communication has a positive impact on the level of conflict in adolescents, leading to its reduction. Noa Davenport (2008) comes to similar conclusions. The author considers the development of conflict culture in adolescents as one of the most important conditions for reducing aggression and violence in schools.

In Figure 4. we see that in the control group no changes in the level of conflict occurred over time.

Figure 4. Results of secondary diagnostics using the “Level of Personality Conflict” method in the control and experimental groups



The effectiveness of our program in relation to personality conflicts is confirmed by the results of comparing the control and experimental groups after conducting a formative experiment. In Figure 4, we can also observe a decrease in the level of conflict in adolescents who participated in the training compared to adolescents from the control group ( $U=0.0$  at  $p=0.000$ ). The comparison of the results obtained in the experimental and control groups allows us to assert that the reduction of the level of conflict in adolescents is possible with the formation and development of conflictological culture.

The statistical analysis of the results of the work confirmed the effectiveness of the program and the correctness and reliability of the hypothesis of our study.

#### 4. Conclusion

- We understand the conflictological culture of personality as an integrative quality, which is based on existential-humanistic values. Its structure includes the culture of thinking and feelings, as well as communicative and behavioural culture.
- The cognitive-behavioural approach we used in creating the conflictological culture development program allowed us to achieve the intended goals. The division of techniques into emotional, cognitive and behavioural ones allowed us to work on the development of each conflictological culture component.
- The overall level of conflict in the experimental group decreased compared to the control group, after participation in the training program. The overall level of conflictological culture in the experimental group increased. The ability to act in such a

way as to prevent conflict escalation has improved. Adolescents demonstrate improved skills in conflict prevention, anticipation and resolution, as well as readiness and ability to dialog.

- Adolescence is a sensitive age for change. Targeted influence on the aspects of personality that interest us can lead to the desired changes. However, age-specific features such as internal conflict, emotional instability, frequent mood swings, polar thinking, and complex contradictions of spiritual life dictate the search for new ways and opportunities for the formation and development of conflict culture at this age.
- The programme we have developed can be used by school psychologists to develop conflictological culture in adolescents. This will allow adolescents to be more conscious of understanding the essence of conflicts and the reasons for their occurrence, to seek constructive ways of interacting and getting out of conflicts, to cope effectively with their negative feelings, to show greater tolerance towards other participants in conflicts, and to master the skills of assertive non-conflict communication.

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