

## THE PHENOMENON OF LONELINESS AS SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEM OF STUDENTS

V. Bobrikov<sup>1</sup>, Doctor of Education, Full Professor  
L. Pyankova<sup>2</sup>, Candidate of Education, Associate Professor,

Kuzbass State Technical University named after T.F. Gorbachev, Russia<sup>1</sup>  
Branch of Kuzbass State Technical University named after T.F. Gorbachev in Novokuznetsk, Russia<sup>2</sup>

In the article the problem of loneliness as the socio-psychological phenomenon that regulates the development of early youth is revealed.

**Keywords:** loneliness, social and psychological phenomenon, reflection, individual, person, tolerance, youth, identification.

Conference participants

The increasing complexity and intensity of human life, the augmented needs, and the expansion of social contacts stimulate the person's interest in his/her self, but often cause the state of loneliness. As an emotional state, it expresses the feeling causing the complex and acute feeling of the split of the inner world, the main real network of relationships and contacts of the inner world of the person. The state of being alone has different nuances and subtle shades, each person defining it according to the complex of his/her feelings, thoughts and actions. So when the person says, "I feel lonely," he does not necessarily understand the loneliness unambiguously. Hence, we can assume that the state of loneliness is influenced not so much by the real relationships, but by the ideal conceptions of what they should be.

We can divide the process of loneliness origination in 3 stages and present it schematically in the following way: 1) the human society influences the person, forcing him/her to behave in accordance with the socially justified patterns limiting the freedom of action; 2) because of that there occurs the contradictions between the internal true "self" of the person and the manifestations of his/her "self" in the relationships with the other persons, that, in turn, leads to the loss of the meaning of existence; 3) the person becomes lonely, when, having removed the protective barriers on the way to his/her own "self", he nevertheless thinks that he would be refused the contacts with the others.

And there is a vicious circle: the person believing that his true "self" is rejected by the others, withdraws in his solitude, and in order to avoid rejection,

continues to hold on to his social "facades", that leads to the emptiness. In other words, the loneliness evinces the disparity between the actual and idealized "self" [4]. Jung associated it with the concept of "introvert". Considering the functional personality types, he reckoned among the characteristics of introvert "restraint, timidity, protection from external impacts" [3].

On graduation from the school, the objective social position of young people, the structure of their social and interpersonal contacts is being changed. For many students, there is a problem of establishing of new social contacts. It is not surprising; therefore, that loneliness is a serious problem of the students, especially for those who just begins their studies.

The study showed that every fifth respondent of 157 first and second year students of the branch of the Kuzbass State Technical University named after T.F. Gorbachev (KuzSTU) in Novokuznetsk meets the problem of loneliness in some degree. The reasons of loneliness according to the results of the survey are arranged in the following way: dissatisfaction with the communication (62.4%), lack of understanding by the peers, being "black sheep" (45.2%), the differences in opinions and lifestyle (38.2%), and the differences in the characters (28.7%). Disorders caused by the state of loneliness often encourage the person to find some means to withstand it (searching for a new job, hobbies, reading, research activities, etc.).

Researching the individual psychological characteristics of the lonely students, we offered them some tests to determine their own temperaments, values (terminal and

instrumental), capacity for reflection, reflectivity of thinking, and peculiarities of their characters.

With the help of psychodiagnostic techniques of H. Eysenck it was found that among the students who regularly experience the state of loneliness there are only 28.7% ambiverts possessing the intermediate characteristics of the introversion and the extroversion. They combine the features of both types, but in a smoother way. The other students can be described as the introverts. They are generally unsociable, have difficulties with the establishment of communicative contacts with their peers, experience the acute feeling of abandonment, feel themselves "worthless, uninteresting to other people". Introverts, as the results of the survey show, prefer to avoid the excessive external stimulation, do not like to be "visible", quite stable in repetitive work, better at work which requires great efforts, attention and accuracy. However, they show the states of anxiety and tension, which affect their performance. They hardly withstand the situations of waiting. According to the teachers, many of the introvert students are persistent, efficient, but only in terms of individual performance. In general, they are distinguished by peaceful and controllable behavior. They tend to shrink into their shells, be thoughtful, focused on their own feelings.

For university the research data are sufficiently relevant. Extraversion-introversion – is the basis of the formation of the sociability of future engineer, manager, tour operator and so on. Steadiness-unsteadiness as the inherent property for establishing and keeping the normal relationships with customers, suppliers, subordinates in the

course of communication, the strength-weakness of the nervous system as the property, required for productive and efficient work in the process of negotiating, contracting, etc. throughout the working day, have the positive value and influence the choice of profession, determining its efficiency, and in terms of high school training also determining satisfaction of educational, research, and practical activities.

Identifying feelings that the students correlate with the state of loneliness, it was found that despair is experienced mainly by the girls. Young men tend to experience boredom and inability to control themselves. The studies of Bragg show that loneliness is not to be always associated with depression. The lonely and depressed people usually express dissatisfaction with both social and non-social aspects of their lives. While the lonely people who have no feeling of depression, feel anxiety only about social dissatisfaction [5].

The research in value orientations was based on the methodology of M. Rokeach, as the system of value orientations determines the content of directedness of the future specialist personality, presents the basis of its attitude toward the outward things, work, self and other people, forms the basis of ideology and the core of motivation for various activities. The three important terminal values of the students, who are disposed to loneliness, are: "knowledge", "development", "social acceptance." The last ones in the list are "fun", "happiness of others," "self-confidence". Among the most popular instrumental values are "good breeding", "education", "self-control", the last places being occupied by "cheerfulness", "intolerance to shortcomings", "high demands".

The data obtained allow stating that for the majority of the students disposed to loneliness, it is important to have the opportunity for the expansion of their horizons, the aspiration for perfection, the respect of their associates. The specified terminal values act as the internal guidelines encouraging the students in their educational and professional activities. The preferred personal properties for the students are good breeding, education and self-control. The least significant values for

the students disposed to loneliness are: absence of responsibility, cheerful and burdensome pastime.

We carried out the research in reflection in accordance with the statement that this quality gives the person the opportunity to realize himself as the subject of future professional activities: his/her inclinations, needs, motives, value orientations, self-compliance with the requirements of the profession. G.V. Pinigina and L.S. Polyakova consider that reflection characterizes social maturity of the person. It provides not only for the orientation of the person to the achievement of social values through the realization of his moral views, but also the flexible ability to react emotionally to the relationship between people, to determine acute sense of justice, the feeling of the other person's pain [2].

The availability of this quality was being revealed on the basis of the comprehensive evaluation of the data obtained during the survey, the analysis of pedagogical situations, the assessment of the partners' states in the course of the trainings. It was found that the lonely students who are focused on themselves and have the limited social contacts, as a rule, have the low level of this quality, they are self-centered and not critical in the selection of the communication techniques in the situation of interpersonal communication.

Reflection, as the high level of development of the personal qualities of the professional, interacts with empathy and tolerance. The specialists possessing these characteristics are distinguished by: the ability to motivate their subordinates, to show the readiness for the teamwork and the open discussion [2]. It is not surprising that the lonely students with low self-esteem, poor communication skills, in some cases shy and anxious, find themselves as unable to work in team, to take into consideration the other persons' interests, common goals and objectives. At the same time, too much focus on themselves and their own feelings are in opposition to the requirements that the specialists must meet. In addition, the students wishing to be alone because of the intense interpersonal contacts, looking for the "outlet" in solitude, possess the skills of socially oriented

behavior. They tend to be observant, to listen and respect the opinions of the others. For them solitude is rather deliberate temporary shrinking into their shells, giving them the possibility to focus on themselves, to implement the process of self-discovery. In adolescence, according to the researches of Vygotsky, the inclination to self-discovery occurs as the primary new formation of this stage of development.

The reflexivity of thinking reveals the person's ability to realize and analyze his own mental activities, which provides higher efficiency of problem solving. We use the techniques in which the reflexivity is manifested by the change the strategy of decision-making during the implementation of the task identified in the course of the analysis of the impact of previous anagram solutions to the following ones. As the main indicator of the development of reflexivity of thinking ("K") we used the coefficient of the reflexivity which ranged within the limits of 0.25–0.96 points, the average being 0.65 points. The students with low coefficient of the reflexivity have chaotic, disordered strategy of thinking, characterized by the unsystematic search and putting forward the significant number of ideas that are logically unrelated. The students with high coefficient of the reflexivity show the dominating content-adaptive strategy, that confirms the maturity of their cognitive functions, the predominance of the analytical and synthetic thinking on the empirical one. Correlating the psychological types described by C.G. Jung and the strategies of thinking, it was found that the introverts have the content-adaptive strategy, and the ambiverts possess the formal algorithmic strategy, characterized by the process of consequent looking over all the possible solutions with the single returns to the previously considered ones, the reproductive movement being the dominant in terms of content and the apparently deficient regulation – in terms of meaning.

In order to determine the relationship between the state of loneliness and the character of the person (sociability, desire for creativity, self-criticism, self-discipline, self-control, responsibility) included in its volitional sphere, the

students were offered the method of expert assessments, observation of their behavior in the situations of academic and extracurricular activities, conversations with the professors and the tutors.

The analysis of the data obtained showed that more than 70% of the students disposed to the state of loneliness do not possess the necessary communication skills. At the first stage of the formation of the groups, when the direct establishment of the friendships in the new team is taking place, they do not show any initiative in the course of the communication with the classmates. Such exclusion leads to the fact that for the lonely student it is difficult to incorporate later into already established group activities. All his attempts appear to be unsuccessful; as soon as two or more classmates are included into their own activities, they start to "protect" their world, not allowing outsiders to come in. To make friends and keep friendships, the students must possess a set of communication skills: be able to join the common group activities, be persistent after the first failure, approve the other persons' activities, and learn to resolve conflicts.

But the feelings are not to be expressed too vigorously: such obtrusiveness may alienate the others. It should be taken into the consideration that at the stage of the university education, for the students with the scarce communicative experience it is difficult not to be "the stranger". Moreover, the problem of adaptation to the training conditions, providing for the assuming the new social role, may be actual for a month or two or even up to several years. The events preceding the state of loneliness may include the breakup of the habitual friendships, love relationships, separation from home. These events could affect the adverse relationship between the desired and the actual. And the state of loneliness is exacerbated if the person often thinks about it.

Loneliness has internal and external content. Let us consider in more detail the content of loneliness. The fear of being alone concerns us on a subconscious

level from the birth. Sometimes the fear of being abandoned becomes so powerful that the person knowingly condemns himself to loneliness, and it can be seen as the defense mechanism. According to the psychoanalytic theory, it works to a greater extent if the person (the child) was abandoned by parents or another person, usually in the childhood. On the other hand, the large number of friends does not mean that there is no loneliness. Human desire for solitude in adolescence, his inclination to the personal isolation may be due to the following factors:

- the social status of the student' family (parents') different from his peers;

- the national and religious affiliation, when the cultural and the mental differences between the student and his peers are especially evident against a background the scarce efforts or the absence of the student's willingness to assimilate into the new social community;

- the age, when the difference in 2-3 years, and sometimes in one year can cause some obstacles for entering the new team;

- the temperament, when the representatives of the weak type of temperament (melancholic) disposed to loneliness have some communication difficulties, are sensitive, sometimes shy, diffident, anxious;

- the external features (separation can occur through objects, characters, items, hair).

Belonging to the particular subculture is a kind of isolation, setting apart, separation from the other people on the basis of some attributes. At the heart of the phenomenon of emotional isolation there is the person's assertion of his individual biological and (or) personal nature, opposition of his "self" to the team. The causes of isolation are worth considering. One of them is the spontaneous decay of the collectivism as the principle of life of the members of the collective. Isolation regulates the process of social development in adolescence and early adulthood, it replaces the identification. In early adolescence, isolation can be manifested through the

deep alienation of young people from their peers. It is associated with a certain level of self-awareness. As the mental formation, isolation is manifested by the desire of the person to realize his potential and originality, as the social process such isolation is associated with of the value-oriented human activity [1].

Isolation is the experience of the person, resulting from such relationships between the person and the world, when the products of his activity, himself and other people are perceived as the opposing to himself from dissimilarity to rejection and even hostility. Psychologists consider the phenomenon of isolation as the need for self-realization and self-assertion, and, at the same time, as the internal allocation of the person from community to which he belongs.

Overcoming of loneliness problems for the students as the negative emotional state is the solution of the problems of personal and professional self-determination, the increase of their self-esteem, the development of reflectivity of thinking, formation of communication skills, which determines the formation of key competencies of the university students.

## References:

1. Булгакова Н.Ф. Личностное обособление как фактор профессионального самоопределения старшеклассников. – Томск-Новокузнецк, 2000. – С. 9.
2. Пинигина Г.В., Полякова Л.С. Психолого-педагогическая подготовка специалиста с высшим техническим образованием как социально-педагогическая проблема / Кузбас. гос. техн. ун-т. – Кемерово, 2009. – С. 20.
3. Юнг К.Г. Психологические типы // Психология индивидуальных различий / под ред. Ю.Б. Гиппенрейтер, В.Я. Романова. – 3-е изд., перераб. и доп. – М.: АСТ Астрель, 2008. – С. 680-696.
4. Психология одиночества. – URL: <http://www.it-d.ru/library/p/psiholgiy.htm>.
5. Скорова О.М. Психологические аспекты одиночества. – URL: [http://www.skorova.spb.ru/?mode=articles\\_lonly](http://www.skorova.spb.ru/?mode=articles_lonly).